How Police Officers In England And Wales Learn To Construct And Report ‘Official Reality’.

A Dissertation Submitted For The Degree Of Doctor Of Philosophy By Clive John Owen

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I would like to record my deep sense of gratitude to Professor Mike McConville for his inspiration, support and unstinting patience shown to me throughout the period of study.

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Summary

This research examines the way police officers learn to make sense of, and report, 'official reality'.

100 in-depth, tape recorded interviews were carried out with police officers at various stages of service including probationers, Tutor Constables, Trainers and a group of experienced officers. Full transcripts of the interviews were prepared and then subjected to a close-grained, qualitative analysis in which various themes were identified. The results were then subjected to a statistical technique known as logistic regression.

The findings reveal, inter alia, that an officer's interpretation of incidents will change with experience. Probationers at first treat incidents as self-contained legal 'texts' with semiosis limited to consideration of 'points to prove'. Later they begin to take into consideration contextual factors. More experienced officers introduce experiential or 'intertextual' factors into their semiotic activity so that their interpretation includes not just synchronic but diachronic elements. Various 'interpretive communities' are identified linked to structural groupings within the policing institution and impacting on the way incidents are interpreted and reported. Police culture[s] is shown to largely determine what elements of an incident are seen as salient and what are ignored.

Officers develop socio-spatial cognitive frameworks during their Tutor Constable attachments made up of detailed local knowledge and historical practices which shape the way they approach incidents, and interact with the public.

The substantive criminal law was found to offer little guidance to patrol officers who utilise normative and evaluative conceptual frameworks grounded in personal and family value systems. Law is used by police officers to legitimise decisions arrived at through a parallel process of decision-making that is grounded in police operational culture.

Anglo-American legal discourse assumes an unproblematic relationship between language and 'reality'. The present findings support a social constructionist theory of the semiotic encounter in which the patrol officer is not a passive observer of events, but constructs a version of 'reality' from various potential interpretations.
Chapter One

Introduction: A Statement Of The Research Problem.

The overall objective of my research is to gain an understanding of the processes by which police officers both 'make sense' of, and report, the incidents and events with which they deal. This initial categorisation of the incident by the police officer will often be the crucial factor in the decision as to whether or not the incident enters the criminal justice system in the first instance, and will have an important bearing upon the way any incident is actually dealt with within the criminal justice system.

My research starts with an analysis of police probationer training and examines how officers are taught the primary orientation of the organisation. Secondly, the 'pivotal' role of the Tutor Constable is examined since it is at this stage that probationary officers are introduced to street duties by an experienced officer who mediates between the somewhat artificial world of the Police Training Centre [PTC] and the often harsh reality of street policing. Thirdly, my research examines how experienced police officers, that is officers who have completed their two-year probationary period, categorise and report the incidents and events they deal with, and how they achieve consistent, authoritative and institutionally acceptable categorisations. Finally, I examine how police officers report 'official reality',
in terms of transforming concrete social events into narratives of evidence for a prosecution file.

The focus of my research will be the processes which result in the creation of 'official' police accounts. A large body of existing research has shown that 'official' police accounts of interactions between themselves and both suspects and witnesses cannot be taken as unproblematic; and that officers tend to construct social reality in particular ways to support the specific course of action, case disposition, or outcome they wish to pursue.

Whilst police interactions with the public cover a multitude of matters, a measure of their influence on the lives of citizens can be shown in the volume of prosecutions. In 1994, 1.95 million people were prosecuted in the criminal courts. Of this total, 497,000 defendants were prosecuted for indictable offences: 592,000 for summary [non-motoring offences]; and 859,000 for summary motoring offences. Of those prosecuted in the magistrates' courts, 40% had been arrested by the police.

In each of the cases where a defendant had been arrested an 'official version' of the original incident would have been prepared by a police officer in accordance with the guidelines set down by the Crown Prosecution Service [CPS]. It is the police account of events which tends to control what happens to those prosecuted. Police influence is not, however, restricted to the fact of prosecution: police priorities deeply shape the nature of the prosecution itself.
That the police version of events is accorded dominance is shown by the fact that 82% of all defendants in the magistrates' courts plead guilty. Of the remaining 18%; 9% pleaded not guilty, and the remaining 9% were found guilty "in their absence". Of the 9% who eventually went to trial, 68% were found guilty [Home Office 1995:29].

The police are assisted in achieving this result by the resources they command. As Lord Devlin observed, in our system of adversarial justice there is a large mismatch of resources between the prosecution and the defence, even after consideration is given to the provision of Legal Aid:

"For in criminal cases the state has in the police an agency for the discovery of evidence superior to anything which even the wealthiest defendant could employ". [Devlin 1981:71]

The huge structural advantages of manpower and resources, coupled with the fact that the police version of events is generally accorded dominance in the courts, means that the process by which "official reality" is arrived at becomes a critical area for research.

The process by which police officers are taught to categorise and report the incidents they deal with is an area in which very little research has been carried out. McConville et al [1991:10] point out that the way "official reality" is arrived at:
"...may not be apparent or discoverable from official records and indeed, official actors may have an interest in suppressing the process which led to the officer's reality gaining dominance ".

Whilst considerable attention has been paid to the way in which information is sifted, processed, refined and presented by the police; comparatively little is known about how officers learn to construct cases. The only text to deal with police probationer training in any depth is now dated [Fielding 1988], the fieldwork having been carried out in the early 1980s, prior to the present system of modular training being introduced.

Robert Reiner has noted the lacunae in this area of research:

"There is a clear need for further research of a more qualitative kind on the experience as well as the long-term impact of recent training reforms, along the lines of Fielding's study." [Reiner: 1992a: 471]
Chapter Two

The Research Traditions: A General Review Of The Broad Field

Discretion.

One of the ways scholars have looked at the processes by which police officers make sense of events is by focusing on the subject of discretion. American observational studies of the police published in the 1960s revealed that police officers did not "mechanistically" enforce the law, but tended towards a selective enforcement, based on a subjective interpretation of the particular incident by the individual police officer.[Goldstein 1960; LaFave 1962; Davis 1969,1975.]

Similarly, the use of discretion by the police was noted, inter alia, by early British researchers such as Banton [1964]; Lambert [1970] and Cain[1971].

The problem with the police use of discretion is, as Robert Reiner points out, that it is not an "equal opportunity phenomenon"[Reiner 1994 : 725 ] in that the criminal law is used disproportionately against young, black or ethnic minority, working class males.
Recent research has reinforced the fact that police officers have a very broad discretion over where, how, and against whom they decide to exercise their powers [McConville et al 1991: Dixon et al 1989: Smith and Gray 1983]. More disturbingly, the combination of unfettered discretion and the often 'low visibility' of street policing generally, can allow police officers to construct "post hoc accounts of their actions" [Reiner 1994: 730] which have been shown on occasions not to accurately reflect the true basis for their decisions. [Manning 1977: McBarnet 1981: Chatterton 1979: Ericson 1981: Holdaway 1983: McConville et al 1991: Sanders 1994].

The problem with a great deal of these observational studies is that they have assumed an unproblematic correspondence between legal rules and police behaviour. Whilst it is clear that police officers operate within a bureaucratic, rule-bound institutional setting, positivistic approaches to research which rely primarily on empirical accounts of behaviour often fail to account for social complexity; in terms of the difference between appearance and the underlying subjective reality, or 'deep structure', that these surface 'rules' often have for individual police officers [Cicourel 1968: Manning 1978; Goffman 1961].

The limitations of a positivistic approach to understanding socio-legal phenomena is illustrated by McConville et al [1991: 9] where apparently inconsistent and indeed "aberrational police prosecution decision making" could only be explained by taking into account unofficial police "social rules" and norms. In addition, the researchers found that in relation to the
prosecution cases they examined there was "...no single reality but rather competing versions of reality" and that in the process of deciding which version will be accorded dominance the "facts" as well as the "rules" are "malleable" [McConville et al 1991 : 10].

**Police Personality**

In addition to an analysis of police discretion and how this affects the decision making process, other researchers have focused on the psychological make-up of individual police patrol officers in terms of their attitudes and values. Westley [1970] identified the social isolation of police officers from the general population and explained how a culture of violence and secrecy cemented police working relationships and group norms which were often at odds with 'official' departmental rules. Skolnick [1966] identified what he called the police officer's "working personality" resulting from what Skolnick saw as the twin elements of the risk of personal danger to the officer, in his or her working environment, and the authority invested in the police role. Further researchers also identified how attitudes and values can affect the way a police officer carries out his or her job [White 1972: Muir 1977: Black 1971: Lundman 1974]. In terms of an occupational role orientation or 'style' of law enforcement some officers have been identified as carrying out an aggressive, law enforcement style of patrol [Brown 1981], whilst others carry out a more community or 'service' orientated style.
This has led some researchers to construct a typology of policing styles based on the officers' role orientation or attitude. James Q Wilson's book 'Varieties of Police Behaviour' [Wilson 1968] was based on an analysis of eight American police forces and identified three distinctive styles of policing that Wilson called "Watchman"; "Legalistic" and "Service" styles. Similarly, Muir [1972] identified four styles of policing: the "Professional"; the "Reciprocator"; the "Enforcer" and the "Avoider".

The trouble with attitudinal explanations is, as Robert Worden points out, that evidence from social-psychological research shows that attitude is only weakly related to behaviour [Worden 1989: 670]. Such psychological models are also reductionist in that officers often change their role orientation or style to suit the contingencies of the particular encounter or situation. It is known that officers can change their style of policing to generate overtime payment for example [Snipes and Mastrofski 1990]; for career purposes or other personal considerations, all of which would impact on enforcement practices [Mastrofski et al 1994: 116]. This also reinforces the point that studies that do not take into consideration the police officer's personal perspective on the situation are of limited value.

**Situational Research**

The other broad perspective researchers have adopted in seeking to understand police decision making relates to studies that have focused on situational or contextual variables. For example, whether the offence takes
place in public or private: the demeanour of the suspect [Piliavin and Briar 1964 : Black and Reiss 1970 : Black 1970 : Worden 1989 : Berk and Loseke 1980, 1981] ; whether or not the suspect showed respect for the police officer ; the social class or status of the offender; whether alcohol had been consumed, and so on. Most of the research into situational factors has focused on the decision to arrest [Black 1971, 1980 : Lundman 1974]. As Worden [1989] notes, further research has shown that in terms of the police officer's choice of informal actions, situational variables have little effect on the eventual outcome. [Parnas 1967].

**Working Rules**


Working rules encompass elements of psychological and situational variables already considered and include such elements as suspiciousness, stereotyping and various incongruity factors. Since the early 1960s, several researchers have noted the use of working rules in police street level decision making processes. For example, Werthman and Piliavin [1968 : 75] commented that :
"Policemen develop indicators of suspicion by a method of pragmatic induction... the police divide the population and physical territory under surveillance into a variety of categories, make some initial assumptions about the moral character of the people and places in these categories, and then focus attention on those categories of persons and places felt to have the shadiest moral characteristics."

Similarly, Adams [1963] listed approximately twenty "suspicious circumstances which should trigger an officer's interest" based on a number of incongruity factors of the type suggested by Harvey Sacks [1972], and other ethnomethodologists.

In a careful review of this literature, Paul Rock [1973] sets out what he calls a "police theory" of judging persons and places. Rock suggests that the generation of these perspectives arises from what he refers to as a police officer's suspicion or 'epoche' of his natural attitudes and the development of what we could call a working mind-set which is, Rock maintains, "...somewhat estranged from...commonsense thinking...in everyday life". Rock's approach is heavily influenced by Schutz's phenomenological theories, and draws on this terminology, but there are similarities with both interactionism and labelling theory. Although these approaches have been criticised for allegedly ignoring structural factors such as the political and economic dimensions [McBarnet 1981; Jefferson and Grimshaw 1987] they have provided important insights into organisational decision making and the application of bureaucratic rules.
Cicourel's [1968] ethnomethodological studies, based on intense observational fieldwork undertaken in two Californian cities revealed, inter alia, the importance of "background expectations" that officials such as police officers and probation officers bring with them to the situations with which they deal:

"My observations suggest police and probation perspectives follow community typifications in organising the city into areas where they expect to receive the most difficulty from deviant or difficult elements... The partition of the city into areas of more or less anticipated crime provides... police officers... with additional typifications about what to expect when patrolling... in the area. Thus an officer's preconstituted typifications and stock of knowledge at hand leads him to prejudge much of what he encounters... thus particular ecological settings, populated by persons with 'known' styles of dress and physical appearance, provide the officer with quick references about 'what is going on' although not based on factual type material he must describe sooner or later in oral or written form." [Cicourel 1968: 63]

Many observational studies since have confirmed Cicourel's findings, especially with regard to the use of "recipes and shortcuts" in which police officers seek to reduce complex social reality into official categories required by the police institution and the courts. There is now a substantial literature on police working rules [Ericson 1981, 1982, Smith and Gray 1983, Dixon 1997, Dixon et al 1989, Hoyle 1998 and many others].

The most important recent empirical study of police working rules [McConville et al 1991] identified six such rules used by operational officers. This major work develops a social constructionist approach to police decision making, building on Cicourel's point that at each stage of the law enforcement process:
participants select from available 'facts' or created interpretations about motives, intent, and the like, those propositions which are to be accorded a factual status in their particular explanation..." [Cicourel 1968: 53 ]

In the process of their research McConville et al [1991] interviewed operational police officers to try to ascertain what particular aspect of a suspect's behaviour made them suspicious. Most officers were unable to explain the basis for their suspicion. By probing at this aspect of case construction, Cicourel's ethnomethodological insight into the importance for research of obtaining an actors' own description of social reality is developed.

**Police Culture**

One of the advantages of using a construct such as 'working rules' is that there is an acknowledgement of 'verstehen' or the interpretative approach that is lacking in objectivist and positivistic accounts of police behaviour. The importance of the symbolic domain in police decision making becomes apparent when one considers the essentially contextual nature of meaning in complex social interactions where working rules, shared knowledge, and tacit, unspoken meanings enable operational police officers to quickly make sense of and categorise the events and incidents they deal with, often within a very narrow time frame. In short, an understanding of police culture[s] is essential in order to appreciate how ambiguity and uncertainty becomes fixed.
and stabilised by police cultural codes which allow signs to be grouped
together to form domains of meaning, or paradigms, of legal categorisation.

Before a detailed analysis of police culture is attempted it is necessary to
distinguish between police occupational culture [micro culture], and the
macro culture of the wider society. Macro culture consists, inter alia, of the
influence that such factors as age, gender, class, status, ethnicity have on
members of a social demographic grouping, with the subsequent dispositions,
orientations, norms and values that result.

Manning [1989: 360] provides an insightful and critically informed definition
of police culture. He states that an occupational culture is:

"...a reduced, selective, and task-based version of culture that is shaped by
and shapes the socially relevant worlds of the occupation. Embedded in
traditions and a history occupational cultures contain accepted practices,
rules, and principles of conduct that are situationally applied, and generalised
systems of belief. Such cultures highlight selectively the contours of an
environment, granting meaning to some facts and not others, and linking
modes of seeing, doing and believing." [Manning 1989: 360]

Manning goes on to state that occupational culture connects "cognition and
action, environment and organisation" into an "interwoven tapestry". What
Manning does not explicitly state but implies in this definition is the powerful
constraining force that membership of a particular structural grouping within
the police imposes on individual officers, with the subsequent influence this
will have on the decision making process to ensure that culturally positioned
and institutionally acceptable categorisations of events are made. This aspect
will be explored later within the concept of the 'interpretive community.'

Although reviews of the literature of police occupational culture normally
trace the concept back to Michael Banton's comparative study [1964] of a
Scottish and an American force, it was Westley's American research
conducted for a Ph.D in 1951[ but not actually published until 19 years later]
that first identified the social integrating function of police culture, in terms
of setting police officers apart from the wider society in which they worked
and lived. Both Banton and Westley identified the social distance of the
police from the wider society with Banton pointing out that police culture
tended to increase in strength inversely to the proportion of police
integration into the community. Police officers in the urban areas felt more
isolated than their rural counterparts and therefore tended towards a stronger
sense of cultural grouping or 'them' or 'us', and a greater reliance on each
other [confirmed by Cain 1973]. Westley was also the first researcher to
identify the themes of violence, closing ranks, secrecy and distrust. Several
subsequent studies, both British and American have confirmed these
Manning 1974]. Other themes to emerge in studies of occupational culture
include an occupational outlook that sees the world as hostile, uncertain,
with a tendency to erupt into disorder, to challenge police authority and to be
split into sub groupings based on the crudest stereotyping and race. Recent
Shepherd 1992] confirms the essentially negative world outlook of police occupational culture.
Chapter Three

A Review Of The Literature

Since the focus of my research is to gain an understanding of the way police officers make sense of the incidents with which they deal, or the way they 'juridify' social reality [Luhmann 1985]; then it appears that two broad features of this process need to be addressed. For, as Manning and Hawkins note:

"In discussing legal decisions, the world outside is never fully screened out, for the personal values, ideologies, and beliefs of individuals are the 'background' against which they are able to order the 'foreground' of facts that cohere in the decision field." [Manning and Hawkins 1990: 209]

As a structuring device with which to review the literature, and as a conceptual framework, it is helpful to distinguish between background assumptions and influences in the decision field, and the actual situational determinants that inform policing decisions.

Therefore, this review will move from the general to the specific by firstly considering the scholarship on the influence of police culture[s] on decision-making. Secondly, research that has focused on police discursive practices and the constraining effects of discourse. Thirdly, the research that has been carried out on the pre-categorisation of messages by control room staff, together with the problematic nature of the task itself. Fourthly, the review will consider the effect of the dispatcher's message on the patrol officer and the type of information officers require whilst en route to incidents. The focus then shifts to the actual patrol officer as we consider the 'horizon of expectation'
that is created in the mind of the officer by the combined influence of the message content; the socio-cognitive frame linked to the officer's previous operational experience and the symbolic nature of the incident location. Finally, we consider the research that has focused specifically on how officers make sense of incidents on their arrival at the actual scene.

**How Police Culture(s) Impact On The Background Assumptions Of Patrol Officers: And What Police Officers Themselves Bring To Incidents**

Although a number of scholars both in Britain and America have made reference to 'cop culture', 'canteen culture', and other variations of terminology, the concept of police culture[s] remains problematic.

As Chan [1996: 110] points out, the generic concept of police culture is "...poorly defined and of little analytic value". Raymond Williams [1976] regarded 'culture' to be one of the most complicated words in the English language, and the accuracy of this observation becomes apparent when one tries to fix 'culture' as an analytic concept. This is because 'culture' is multi-discursive in that it can be "mobilised in a number of different discourses" [O'Sullivan 1983 : 57]

Studies emanating from the Centre For Contemporary Cultural Studies [CCCS] in Birmingham, notably the works of Stuart Hall, have revealed that 'culture' is itself a signifying practice [Hall 1987 : 30]. As Fiske [1987 : 5] points out, "What passes for reality in any culture is the product of that culture's codes...reality is always already encoded, it is never raw."

Culture can be best thought of as being primarily concerned with the production and exchanges of meaning in society. It refers to the way police officers, as members of a specific structural grouping or 'interpretive community' [Fish 1983, original spelling...
retained], interpret the events with which they deal in ways that each individual officer or member of the group can understand in terms of shared meanings and understandings. In this way, culture provides the 'glue' that fixes meanings and reduces polysemy to enable the rapid categorisation of incidents in institutionally acceptable ways. This function is extremely important in policework since so many potential interpretations[and offence categories] can be found within a specific incident.

This concept of culture within police work falls broadly within the social constructionist approach [see Hall 1997 : 5] in the sense that meaning is not found unproblematically by police officers in a straightforward examination of concrete events [the mimetic plane]; but rather involves an interpretation of the event according to a shared cultural code. Meaning is therefore 'constructed' and not 'found'.

Stuart Hall asserts that the power to recurrently signify problematic social reality in a certain way, especially where meanings are disputed, is an ideological power. Police culture, 'cop culture', and 'canteen culture' have all been used by writers as a convenient label with which to refer to examples of negative attitudes typically involving crude stereotyping, racist or sexist language, that is attributed to rank and file officers [see Chan 1996 and Hoyle 1998].

Social psychological research has shown that that the link between attitudes and behaviour is weak and socio-legal researchers have noted that officers who privately expressed negative attitudes and feelings did not let this interfere with the impartial discharge of their duties. [see McConville at al 1991 : McConville and Shepherd 1992 : Watson 1995 : Hoyle 1998].

Shearing and Ericson [1991], moving beyond their earlier work on police 'recipe' rules have suggested that culture is best conceived as operating through "figurative action" rather than in terms of a rule-based framework that constitutes the conventional view of
socio-legal researchers. Their critique of police recipe rules builds on Wittgenstein’s point that “rules cannot be used to generate or predict action.” From this a critique of rule based action is made out by Shearing and Ericson in which they state that the “...absence of empirically locatable rules” that generate police action has forced researchers working within the “rule-based paradigm” to posit “implicit rules” that “fit” the activity the individual police officer is carrying out. Therefore, Shearing and Ericson state, in studies of everyday street policing scholars have “examined the fit between legal rules, viewed as instructions, and police decisions” and “typically” reported deviations from these rules.[Shearing and Ericson 1991 : 482]. Instead of questioning their initial assumptions, Shearing and Ericson maintain, socio-legal scholars have been “compelled to seek still further rules” such as police standing orders or instructions as evidence of the rule-based paradigm:

“...This has led them to posit implicit sub-cultural rules; these rules fit the contours of police action perfectly, as the evidence for these rules is the activity they are supposed to explain” [Shearing and Ericson 1991 : 483]

Shearing and Ericson have attempted to move beyond the tautologies of the rule-based paradigm by using ideas on culture developed by the ethnomethodologists, especially Garfinkle and Sacks, in terms of moving away from a “reified determining culture” towards an interpretive conception of culture as a “tool kit” which Shearing and Ericson feel is closer to the ‘craft’ element of policing.

Previous research has shown that police officers often have difficulty in articulating, or even explaining the reasons for their operational decisions, for example, to stop and search [Bayley and Bittner 1984 : McConville et al 1991]. Shearing and Ericson draw on this research to further criticise the rule-based paradigm.
This, however, is to allow themselves to fall victim to faulty reasoning. For example, the majority of language users can be classed as competent, in terms of their ability to communicate and understand language, even though very few of them could articulate or explain the grammatical rules underlying their speech. This is not to deny that such rules exist, but rather that they have been absorbed over time so that they appear to be 'natural'. It may well be that police officers have internalised a particular trait of police culture: that legal rules can rarely help them in 'real' police work, and so have developed a form of 'internalised professionalism'.

Shearing and Ericson claim that stories "provide direction" and guidance for police officers in how they should interpret and "experience the world". In other words, stories police officers tell are "cognitive devices" which they use to gain "practical insight" into street policing. These stories, the authors claim, "capture the sedimented residue of generations of police experience" in a form to which all officers can relate. In sum, these stories provide, according to Shearing and Ericson, "tropes" for "analogous thinking" and transfer of knowledge; a "library" of "gambits and precedents", and the use of silences to provide a way of "seeing the world".[Ibid]

One cannot help feeling that Shearing and Ericson, whilst trying to avoid the determinism of a rule-based paradigm, have 'thrown the baby out with the bath water' in that each paradigm contains part of the answer to the problem, but does not provide the complete answer. Recipe rules, first used in a legal context by Cicourel, are an essential aspect to understanding police decision making, and indeed psychological research supports this.
Whilst the objective of my research was to gain an understanding of the processes by which operational police officers both ‘make sense’ of, and report, the incidents with which they deal, what quickly became apparent was that different levels and types of analysis could be used to address this specific area. Indeed, an enormous amount of psychological research has examined this problematic which traditionally has been classified as 'decision making' and 'problem solving'.

Although one is aware of the dangers of oversimplification and reductionism in trying to synthesise and evaluate such a large area of scholarship; nevertheless some sort of critical evaluation of cognitive psychological approaches to this subject is necessary in order to assess the strengths and limitations of this research orientation, especially with regard to ‘recipe’ knowledge and ‘working rules’.

**Decision Making And Reasoning.**

As Ashcraft [1989] points out, there is a common thread that runs through much decision-making and reasoning research, and that is the effect that stored information in our memories has on our judgment:

"The influence of stored information is quite pervasive; it affects how we perform in the classic forms of reasoning as well as in less well-defined judgment and decision making situations" [Ashcraft 1989: 523]

Research into the inferential decision-making of lay persons has revealed that everyday, informal decision-making is prone to "...systematic and fundamental errors in judgment and inference." [Nisbett and Ross 1980: 7]. The most influential research in this area was done by Amos Tversky and Daniel Kahneman [1973, 1974, 1980: Kahneman and Tversky 1972, 1973]. Two broad types of ‘intuitive tools’ are used in everyday decision making, these are known as "knowledge structures" and "judgmental heuristics".

**Knowledge Structures.**
Since, as Nisbett and Ross [ibid.] point out, "few, if any" situations are "approached for the first time" by adults, situations are processed through "...pre-existing systems of schematised and abstracted knowledge" such as, "beliefs, theories, propositions and schemas". [ibid] These "knowledge structures" enable the individual to speedily "label and categorise" events and objects. The negative aspect of this is that such guides are not infallible, and can provide inaccurate and poor representations of social reality.

**Judgmental Heuristics.**

Judgmental heuristics can be regarded as 'rules of thumb' that people can use to reduce complex inferential tasks to simple operations. Kahneman and Tversky [1972] focused on two such heuristics which are known as the 'representativeness heuristic', and the 'availability heuristic'. Both of these are relevant to an understanding of police decision making.

Firstly, the representativeness heuristic enables individuals to reduce complex inferential tasks to "simple similarity judgements". This is done by placing the object or event in a conceptual category on the basis of whether or not its principal features, "...represent or resemble one category or another." [ibid] According to Kahneman and Tversky the representativeness heuristic is a judgment rule by which the "subjective probability" of an event is determined by the degree to which it "...is similar in essential characteristics to its parent population; and[ii] reflects the salient features of the process by which it is generated." [Kahnemen and Tversky 1972 : 430]. [1]

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[1] Thus a patrol officer would use the representativeness heuristic to judge whether or not an incident should be classified as an event 'A' or 'B' to the extent that the incident is either representative of 'A' or 'B', or resembles 'A' or 'B', or resembles the process that 'A' or 'B' is known to be in essential characteristics. What this research also found is that the representativeness heuristic becomes problematic when it is used as the only judgmental strategy. An important bias in this heuristic is the use of stereotyping which, as many researchers of policing have noted, is a stable feature of police culture. [Holdaway 1991, 1997; Chatterton 1992; Manning 1997; Piliavin and Briar 1964; McConville at al 1991].
It is interesting to note that the work of theorists such as Tajfel [1981] has shown that stereotypes are functional parts of normal cognitive processes in that they provide a "well differentiated, ordered and predictable social environment". Some stereotypes "...may initially stem from veridical aspects of social reality.." [Manstead et al 1996], however the "grains of truth" can become distorted in the more prejudicial forms" [ibid]. This research would seem to support Holdaway’s point that stereotypical thinking is "...formed and sustained within a work context that continually demands the immediate summarising of ambiguous situations.." [Holdaway 1997: 24].

**The Availability Heuristic**

The availability heuristic is used when judging "frequency, probability, and causality." [Nisbett and Ross 1980: 7]. Thus, events are assessed as frequent, probable or "causally efficacious" to the extent that they are easily "available" in memory. Researchers have found that the availability heuristic is a fallible guide for judgment because it ignores so many other factors. In addition, when weighing up the relevance of data people tend to assign inferential weighting according the 'vividness' of this information. This, as Nisbett and Ross [ibid] point out, is dangerous because the vividness of information tends to be "...related only obliquely at best to its true value as evidence." [2]

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[2] Yarmey [1990: 249] correctly points out that this raises concerns for police officers who have to make rapid, split-second, life and death decisions because, "Those factors and events that are the most emotion-arousing, vivid, concrete and salient, such as racial characteristics and related beliefs about risk" will be more accessible within a police officer's memory, and will be therefore, "believed to be more probable" [Yarmey 1990 :249]
In sum, heuristics and knowledge structures are judgmental tools that people use to "...go beyond the information given" [Nisbett and Ross 1980:42] And, although valuable as aids to understanding complex social reality they are misleading because [i] they are poor representations of reality; [ii] they exclude important details and features of events; [iii] data are weighed in proportion to their vividness, and vividness is increased in proportion to one's temporal, spatial and sensory proximity to the event. [See Nisbett and Ross 1980: 49]

**Schemas and Scripts.**

These are forms of more complex conceptual structures that also reflect the causal and temporal aspects of the social world. These knowledge structures are known as schemas. As Eysenk and Keane point out [1995:262], schemas were originally proposed by the philosopher Kant who suggested innate, *a priori* structures in the mind. Various socio-legal scholars have identified synonymous schema-like structures in the working practices of police officers and others in the criminal justice field.

In 1968 Aaron Cicourel's ethnomethodological fieldwork in California revealed that police officers used "recipes and shortcuts" as heuristic devices with which to reduce complex social reality into institutionally acceptable categorisations. Since then many theorists have confirmed the existence of what has become known as 'recipe rules'.

Social Psychologists have identified social 'schemas' and categories which enable someone to quickly make sense of a situation on the basis of limited information. This work stems from Bartlett's [1932] study of reconstructive memory that showed that memories are constructed and organised to facilitate understanding of events by combining elements from the original event with existing knowledge stored in the
memory. Bartlett called this structure a ‘schema’. A schema can be defined as a
cognitive structure which contains a stored framework of knowledge about a subject. It
is activated by cues and then provides a set of assumptions about a person, a role, or an
event. An associated term with schema is ‘script’ which again refers to a mental
representation of ‘‘what is supposed to happen’’ at social events, in terms of what to
expect, and what order events will take. As such they help people to simplify reality and
also set up expectations about what kind of information will follow. In this respect
scripts are knowledge structures that ‘‘...encode the stereotypical sequence of actions in
now constitute a large body of published research. [Schank and Abelson 1977]
The use of heuristics such as schemas and scripts is probably a function of the fact that
our short-term memory capacity is very limited, but we have enormous capacity for
long-term memory. As Hogg and Vaughan[1995] point out, it is beneficial for us to
store information ‘schematically’ in our long-term memory and to ‘‘call up’’ schemata to
aid inference. Social inference is therefore likely to be’’ heavily theory/schema driven
with the consequence that, ‘‘...it is biased towards conservative, schema-supportive
inferential practices.” [Hogg and Vaughan 1995 : 71]
A large body of schema-based research has been carried out in various organisational
settings. Harris [1996] has actually identified five ‘‘in-organisation schemas’’ which, he
maintains, captures the range of knowledge needed for ‘‘sense-making efforts’’ within
organisations. Of these, ‘Event Schemas’ are most relevant to an understanding of
police decision-making. Event schemas are knowledge bases regarding what is
considered appropriate behaviour in social contexts, situations and encounters. Event
schemas or ‘scripts’ probably come closest to the concept of ‘recipe rules’ developed by
socio-legal scholars. An example of scripted knowledge would be a patrol officer’s
response to a 'typical' domestic dispute where, often under severe time pressures and workload factors, scripted knowledge or 'recipe rules' would allow a rapid processing of the incident to take place allowing the officer to move on to the next call.

Harris maintains that individuals within an organisation have a "vested interest" in establishing common meanings "...so that a predictable social order is possible."[Op Cit 291]. Drawing on the work of Schein[1985], Louis[1985] and Van Maanen and Barley [1983], Harris argues:

"Since schemas are summaries of experiential knowledge, sharing experiential space and time...interacting and solving common problems facilitates and encourages the development of similar schemas."[Harris 1996 :292]

Drawing on the work of other researchers in the field, Boon and Davis [1966 : 155], explain that the "cognitive economy" associated with the "rapid comprehension of social information" is achieved at a high cost since there is a risk of biased judgment in that personal schemata, and the prevailing circumstances, combine to produce negative effects in memory accuracy. Hogg and Vaughan [1995] relate that the time pressures of being forced to make judgments with insufficient time can increase schema use at a cost of inaccuracy' stereotyping and prejudice.[3]

[3]Wagennar et al[1993] point out the problematic nature of schematic memories for police officers in terms of evidence for court :

"because we do not notice the difference, reconstructed memories have a ring of truth - a dangerous phenomenon."' Schematised memories are not recollections at all, but reconstructions, and :

"' Investigations follow strict rules, stored in memory as a schema, when a police officer has no recollection of what was done long ago in a particular investigation, he or she can fall back on a reconstruction of what must have happened according to the schema and state that everything went normally..." [Wagenaar et al 1993 : 147]
Critical Evaluation Of Schema Theory For My Problematic

Although an important element in my research, schema theory is reductionist in that it is unable to explain the whole of semiosis. Hogg and Vaughan [1995], for example, point out that a growing body of research is critical of the fact that many of the "postulated processes and structures" are unaffected by social context but focus instead on the link between an "isolated person and a social object"[Op Cit 73]. In other words, the social context is excluded, especially "language and communication"; "interpersonal processes within groups"; the affective domain"[ibid].

With regard to police officers’ categorisation of events, recipe rules in the form of schemas and scripts obviously play a part, especially when officers are working with heavy workloads and tight time constraints. However, they cannot account for the whole semiosic process. In sum, such heuristic devices are essentially conceptually driven- and this is the most important point- they are ‘top down’, as opposed to data-driven signifying processes from the immediate context of the actual incident in question, that is, ‘bottom up’ [ see Hogg and Vaughan 1995 : 49]

Effects Of Categories On Social Cognition.

In a police officer’s attempts to make sense of the events with which he or she deals it is important to note that the categorisation of social information ‘cues’, and therefore precedes, the use of schemas. Categorisation is the primary step before a schema can be applied. This is because one first has to decide if a person or incident fits a certain category since "...schemas centre more on describing the various attributes shared by class members.”[Manstead et al 1996 : 98] Social categories are at the heart of the semiosic or ‘sense-making’ process that constitutes the focus of my research.
Recent Scholarship On Police Occupational Culture That Attempts To Synthesise Developments In The Field Of Cultural Studies.

This section will critically assess recent work on police occupational culture that has utilised theoretical insights from cultural and organisational studies to move beyond the rule-based paradigm of earlier research. Some of the limitations of this research will also be addressed.

Janet Chan [1966] has developed a theoretical framework for understanding police occupational culture which draws on Bourdieu's concepts of 'field' and 'habitus'; as well as using Sackmann's [1991] four dimensions of cultural knowledge in organisations, in an attempt to understand police culture in terms of its "interpretive" and "creative" aspects.

Chan draws on Shearing and Ericson's phenomenological use of culture in an attempt to synthesise the active and creative 'tool kit' aspects of culture that officers use to guide their working practices and to reinforce with storytelling. To this she adds Bourdieu's relational theory:

"...which explains cultural practices as the result of interaction between cultural dispositions [habitus] and structural positions [field] which situates culture in the social and political context of police work..." [Chan 1966: 112]

To this mix Chan adds the four dimensions of organisational cultural knowledge identified by Sackmann. These are:

1. Dictionary knowledge, which Chan explains provides the "definitions and labels of things and events" in organisations.

2. Directory knowledge, which Chan explains contains descriptions regarding "how things are done within an organisation."

3. Recipe Knowledge, which prescribes how things should or should not be done in an organisation.
4. Axiomatic knowledge, which, as Chan explains, "represents the fundamental assumptions about why things are done with the organisation."

Sackmann's theory, which has parallels in Weick's [1969] enactment theory, sees "cultural cognition" as being held by groups rather than individuals, and that these cognitions are "socially constructed". Over time these cognitions "become imbued with emotions and acquire degrees of importance" [ibid]. This formulation, Chan explains, allows for "multiple cultures" within an organisation, so that whilst "top management" may hold a consensus regarding the rationale of an organisation [axiomatic knowledge], this does not mean that this is true of the lower levels.

Chan accepts Shearing and Ericson's [1991] critique of the "deterministic" and "rule-based" theory of police action but interprets police officer "story telling" as a means of providing cultural knowledge in that it "...provides officers with ready made schemas and scripts" that assist officers to "limit their search for information, organise and categorise information, and to provide repertoires of legitimate action." [ibid]

Whilst Bourdieu's concept of 'habitus' is closer to "cultural knowledge" inasmuch as it is a system of "dispositions" that "integrates past experience", Chan explains how this integrates with Sackmann's theory in terms of its application to street policing:

1. Dictionary knowledge "sets up categories about people police come into contact with."

2. Directory knowledge "informs officers on how to go about getting work done."

3. Recipe knowledge "prescribes the menu of acceptable and unacceptable practices in certain situations."

4. Axiomatic knowledge "constitutes the basic rationale of policing." [Chan 1996 :119]
In sum, Chan has attempted to draw together several of the more important theoretical elements in an effort to create a more analytically rigorous concept of police occupational culture. She states that culture should not be understood as "internalised rules or values" that are "independent of the conditions of policing". Thus Bourdieu's concept of field and habitus helps to synthesise the relationship between the "social, legal and organisational context of policing" with the "schemas, classifications, and vocabulary of precedents" which she also states are central to the "craft of policing". [Chan 1966: 131]

Chan's attempt at formulating an adequate and analytically rigorous concept of culture is a good attempt to draw together the main elements identified by other theorists in the fields of sociology, cultural and organisational theory. However, the issue of 'agency' in terms of how cultural issues influence action is not addressed, nor is the question of consistency in decision making and incident categorisation considered. Whilst 'multiple cultures' are identified in the police organisation, no attempt is made to address the issues of the individual police officer's semiotic process, or to confront the symbolic or ideological dimension of police culture. In the technical language of social semiotics, Chan's construct acknowledges the 'mimetic plane' but neglects the 'plane of semiosis'.

There now exists a substantial literature on the subject of police culture, much of it embedded within studies of patrol officers' interactions with the public. A useful review of the literature is provided by Simon Holdaway [1989: 55-87] who argues that researchers should move away from a rule-based paradigm towards a more phenomenological approach which incorporates the 'world view' of the operational officer.
Chatterton [1979], although working within the rule-based paradigm, was moving away from seeing working rules as rather rigid, formulaic 'laws' towards a more subtle analysis involving an appreciation of the specific, situational context of the police/public encounter.

Similarly, Fielding [1989], drawing on the work of Garfinkle, argues that researchers should move away from viewing the police organisation as an absolute "chart like, rigid structure" and that the occupational culture consists of "several cultures formed around the adjustments to the job." [Fielding 1989: 81]

Fielding, drawing on his empirical research into police probationer training is aware of the limitations of a behaviouristically orientated analysis of police culture and urges researchers to study "linguistic and paralinguistic devices" that operational officers use to facilitate their interactions with the public.

Both Fielding and Holdaway comment on aspects of police culture[s] that I consider crucial to a full understanding of how police officers make sense of events. Firstly, there is an acknowledgement of multiple cultures, which I will argue are linked to specific structural groupings within the police organisation. Secondly, there is an acknowledgement of the ambiguous and highly contextual nature of the meanings arising from police/public encounters.

I will further assert that the primary purpose of police occupational culture[s] is to pin-down and stabilise ambiguous contextual meanings in the sense of providing a constraining interpretative framework. This framework includes both explicit and implicit 'rules of the game' which allows officers to produce consistent, authoritative and institutionally acceptable categorisations of complex social reality. [ Fish 1980 : Jensen 1990 : Manning 1989 : Bourdieu 1977]. As Manning states, "...the volatile and
unstable contextual nature of meaning is reduced by shared codes employed within a culture...” [Manning 1988: 5]

Building on the work of Chan [1996], Carolyn Hoyle [1998] agrees that the term police culture has become a “convenient label” with which to subsume a collection of negative attitudes and values. Hoyle points out that these “negative attitudes and values” do not constitute the whole of ‘police culture’, nor can they be used to explain decision making, they are merely “cultural expressions” of attitudes. Hoyle correctly notes that attitudes are often weakly related to behaviour, and therefore explores the “conceptual distinctions” of ‘cop culture’ that focus on either attitudes or behaviour[Fielding 1994: Smith and Grey 1983: Black 1971].

Hoyle maintains that “canteen culture” is a more appropriate term with which to refer to the way officers communicate with each other. Canteen culture, which is a subset of police culture, “allows officers to articulate their fears, and vent their frustrations and anger. But it neither causes them to behave in a certain way...nor corresponds with their actual practices.”[Hoyle 1998: 75]. However, Hoyle is at pains to point out that attitudes are “to some extent” linked to police behaviour, and she criticises Waddington for arguing that ‘cop culture’ is “...not a causal agent, but a rhetoric that gives meaning to experience.”[Hoyle 1998: 80]

Again, as with Chan’s account of police culture, the way culture affects semiosis is not explained by Hoyle; neither is the issue of officer modality addressed. Indeed, although the work of key theorists is cited in the text, there is little attempt to critically engage with such work or to embed her own research within a wider theoretical context.

Language And Semiosis.

Stuart Hall, drawing on the work of Foucault, has suggested that discourses not only provide a way of referring to a particular topic or subject, but also “...define what is and what is not appropriate...” in relation to a subject or social activity and, “...what knowledge is considered useful, relevant and ‘true’ in that context; and what sort of persons...embody its characteristics.” [Hall 1997 : 6]

Discourse and ideology relate to the symbolic dimension of social practices and are bound up with each other to the extent that various theorists cannot agree whether they can be separated[ Hall 1983 : 59]. Perhaps the most insightful point Hall makes with regard to ideology is as follows:

“...The more one accepts that how people act will depend in part on how situations in which they act are defined, and the less one can assume either a natural meaning to everything or a universal consensus on what things mean...the more important, socially and politically, becomes the process by means of which certain events get recurrently signified in certain ways. This is especially the case where events in the world are problematic...The power involved here is an ideological power: the power to signify events in a certain way.” [Hall 1982 : 356]

Several recent British studies have underlined the importance of discourse as an element of police occupational culture[s]. Sean Watson’s study of officers in the Avon and Somerset force was an attempt to map the contours of a police officer’s world view or occupational outlook in its discursive and affective [emotional] dimensions. Watson based his study on a set of 48 in-depth interviews with constables, and the results were subjected to a thematically orientated content analysis. Watson, who is a sociologist, combines insights from social anthropology, such as the work of Mary Douglas on
symbolic boundaries and social pollution, with the psychoanalytical work of Slavoj Zizek.

Watson found that the police world view, in its affective and discursive dimensions, as fear driven, almost to the point of "paranoia". Watson found that the constables he interviewed were 'paranoid' about, inter alia, the "working classes...the criminal justice system...travellers, hippies, squatters, drunks, drug users." and that threats were seen as emanating from various sources within their "conceptual universe" [Watson 1995: 108]. Although a small scale study confined to one police area, Watson's study is confirmed by other research findings, especially with regard to his point that police officers are subject to "internal antagonisms" that are the product of the "contradictory positioning" of the police as they try to reconcile their task of maintaining the Queen's Peace with the enforcement of the criminal law. [Manning 1971: Jefferson and Grimshaw 1987: Reiner 1985: Jefferson 1990]

As an institution with over 150 years of history, and a strong sense of tradition, discursive formations enable the normative and evaluative modes of judgment to be passed on and sustained through generations of officers. In this sense, discourse defines protocols and serves to ensure institutionally acceptable categorisations of events. Research by Sheptycki [1993], based on the content analysis of 110 domestic violence files in the Metropolitan Police area, revealed that police officers used police analytic categories to strictly define what constituted 'real' police work and what was to be excluded. Police officers' responses to incidents were "filtered through the discursive framework of operational policy" [Sheptycki 1993: 79]. What this means is that in relation to innovative efforts to improve police responses to domestic violence incidents, such efforts failed because officers categorised events to fit in with existing discursive structures, or as Sheptycki refers to them, "traditional linguistic authority structures".
The normative nature of police discourse, in the semantic sense of defining what is and what is not ‘real’ police work serves to:

“...homogenise human experience within the confines of preformed categories, both to annul the unique details of everyday life and subsume them within the discursive parameters of an instituted community which evokes itself by giving life to its own linguistic authority structures.” [Sheptycki 1993: 135]

As Sheptycki points out, an examination of the formal processing of the police institution, in semantic terms, is necessary in order to recover the central analytical categories at the disposal of operational officers, as well as the institutional logic with which it is applied, since this linguistic frame “circumscribes the basis of practical policing”.[Sheptycki 1993: 41]

Sheptycki also identifies the fact that officers categorise incidents within the narrowest of temporal and spatial frameworks in order to prevent ‘domestic’ assaults intruding into the category of ‘real’ police work. Mark Kelman [1981] showed how an incident can be placed within either a broad or a narrow time frame as an “interpretive method” to block the perception that “...intentionalist or determinist issues” are a causal factor in the incident. [Kelman 1981: 594]

Malcolm Young, an ex-police superintendent, has written about the police mind-set, based on his social anthropological ethnographic research in two British police forces. Youngs’ work, which is heavily influenced by structural anthropology, especially the work of Mary Douglas, emphasises the binary world of police classificatory systems, with police officers’ “structures of significance” being dominated by the “primacy of crimes over offences”.[Young 1991: 254]
Crime is, for Young, the “central tenet for action” in that it “pervades and sustains” police ideology and cosmology in terms of providing clear boundaries of what is, and what is not, ‘real’ police work.

There are common threads that connect the work of Sheptycki, Watson and Young in their analysis of police discursive practices. Firstly, all three draw heavily on the theoretical insights of Michel Foucault. Secondly, all three acknowledge the importance of the historical [Victorian] legacy for modern street policing practices, especially the way police officers divide up the social world into ‘in-groups’ and ‘out-groups’. [ see Brogden 1981, 1984, 1985: Brogden and Brogden 1982: Dixon et al 1989: Steedman 1984].

At this point it is clear that an analysis of police discursive practices reveals aspects of the patrol officers’ mind-set that is essential to an understanding of the semiosic activity involved in both categorising, and reporting, ‘official reality’.

**Background Assumptions And Influences: the pre-categorisation of information by control room staff.**

For the majority of patrol officers semiosis begins at the point at which they receive a call over their personal radio from the communications room dispatcher deploying them to an incident. This is an important aspect of semiosis because it serves to establish the patrol officer’s ‘horizon of expectations’. There is now a substantial literature both in Britain and America focusing on the influence the dispatcher has on the way patrol officers categorise incidents. [ Reiss and Bordua 1967: Manning 1977, 1988, 1992 : Ericson 1982 : Shearing 1984 : Ekblom and Heal 1982 et al]. The most important work in this area remains the large empirical study carried out by Peter Manning into the
workings of police communications rooms both in Britain and America [Manning 1988].

What is common to Anglo-American communications room staff is the need to quickly transform a telephone message received from the public into an official police category. All police forces in England and Wales use computerised command and control systems into which the encoded message is entered and a police patrol deployed to deal with the incident. The actual encoding of the original message is itself a problematic process often exacerbated by the sheer volume of calls received and waiting to be processed. The limited number of official Home Office incident codes often results in the operator choosing an inappropriate category resulting in a "Procrustean bed" into which the original message is 'forced'. As Manning has correctly noted, messages received from the public can be problematic in a number of ways:

1. Events can change "temporally and spatially" as they are interpreted by the caller and reported to the police.

2. Many callers have their own 'agenda' in reporting an event to the police and therefore may "distort, omit, forget, lie, conflate or otherwise confuse details" [ibid]

3. Police patrol officers are often suspicious about the initial categorisation made by civilian communications room staff [Hoyle 1998]

4. The original message is often changed as it moves from one police organisational unit to another. This can be further distorted by movement between different discourses [Sheptycki 1995]

Despite these qualifications, the incident category assigned to the message by an operator and passed to a patrol officer sets up a 'horizon of expectations' in terms of incident typifications that the officer will expect to encounter.
What Manning's research did not consider is whether the 'horizon of expectations' will invariably change with an officer's operational experience, a point that will be pursued in the current research.

**The Significance Of Location**

Socio-spatial cognitive mapping, defined as the significance socially constructed space has for patrol officers, constitutes one of the most important elements of operational decision making. It has long been known that location is linked with the construction of suspicion, especially what Sacks[1978] referred to as 'incongruity factors' that divide up social space into what is to be regarded as 'normal' or 'abnormal'.[Powis 1977: Werthman and Piliavin : Dixon et al 1989 : Watson 1995: Smith and Grey 1983: Manning 1977 : McConville et at 1991]. Brogden [1985] attributed this to historical practices when the prime function of police patrol work was to control the poor and marginal groups in society. Spatial and temporal boundaries still impact on decision making, especially with regard to discretionary decisions regarding potential public order offences.[Herbert 1997 : Moran and McGhee 1998 : McGahan 1984]

**En Route To Incidents.**

The period between receiving a message via the personal radio and driving to the location often constitutes an important stage in police decision making since it allows officers to:

1. Reflect on similar incidents they have dealt with.
2. To draw on socio-spatial cognitive maps in anticipation of the type of person they are likely to encounter at that specific location and so adopt a suitable 'personal style' [in terms of deference, language, aggressiveness etc.,] for the encounter.

3. To reflect on recent criminal intelligence, patterns of criminality, likely suspects etc.,

4. To consider the need for 'back up' or additional, sometimes specialist, resources.

5. To rehearse powers of arrest, offence categories and legal definitions as well as evidential 'points to prove'.

6. Probe police computer systems in order to gather as much relevant information about the protagonists as possible. For example, is the complainant/offender 'known' to the police; is there a pattern of previous incidents [domestic violence, neighbour disputes]; are there any 'warning signs' regarding the participants [use of weapons, drug user, mentally unstable]; are the occupant[s] shotgun/firearms holders?; are there injunctions in force, or children on the 'at risk' register?

This list is not exhaustive but illustrates the way patrol officers prepare themselves for the eventual encounter with the public[see also Parnas 1967: Manning 1990, 1992: McConville et al 1991: Pepinsky 1975, Ericson 1982].

7. Common to officers at various stages of service is the demand for as much information from the operator about the job to which they are being dispatched as possible. What is important in this regard is Hoyles' observation that in relation to domestic violence incidents in the Thames Valley Police area, communications room operators followed "consistent patterns" in incident categorisation so that "...there was very little difference in operators' interpretation of the facts elicited from callers."[Hoyle 1998: 54] This suggests the characteristics of an interpretive community within the communications room staff enabling consistent categorisation to be made within
extremely narrow time frames. In turn, this may generate in officers scepticism towards the reliability of such categorisations as guides to action.

Factors Affecting Semiosis At The Scene Of Incidents.

This section will examine the research that has been carried out on patrol officer semiosis by critically examining the various elements that have been identified as relevant to police decisions 'in the field'.

Firstly, it is important to point out that one should be cautious in approaching Anglo-American research in terms of identifying similarities between British and American policing practices; and, further, in using dated research material [in some cases the field work having been carried out in the 1950s] which no longer accurately reflects the demographic, educational and cultural make up of contemporary police forces.

There is another important aspect to be considered, and this concerns what British and American police officers consider to be their primary role. Throughout England and Wales police probationers are still taught that the primary duties of a police constable, as defined by the first Commissioners of the Metropolitan Police, Rowan and Mayne, in 1829, are: "the protection of life and property, the maintenance of order, the prevention and detection of crime and the prosecution of offenders against the peace."

It will be noted that the prosecution of offenders is the lowest priority in the list, and this is mirrored in the Association Of Chief Police Officers' [ACPO] "Statement of Common Purpose and Values" that defines the purpose of the police service as follows:

"The purpose of the Police Service is to uphold the law fairly and firmly to prevent crime to pursue and bring to justice those who break the law to keep the Queen's Peace to protect, help and reassure the community."
and to be seen to do all this with integrity, common sense and sound judgement..." [The Probationer Training Programme Notes 1988]

Although one could argue that these definitions are ideological, or merely management rhetoric, they are instilled in each generation of probationers as the primary orientation of the police service. Thus, British probationers are taught, for example, that their primary duty at the scene of road traffic accidents is the "preservation of life" and the prevention of further accidents, with the prosecution of offences as a secondary consideration.

American police officers, by way of contrast, tend to see their primary role as 'law enforcement'. Many American statutes are worded in such a way as to require strict enforcement by police officers; although empirical research has noted a wide use of discretion by patrol officers [Goldstein, 1963, 1977; Piliavin and Briar 1964; Werthman and Piliavin 1967; Black 1970; Pepinsky 1976]. These factors however tend to make a purely legalistic analysis of police semiosis problematic; especially research that has assumed that the police role is primarily one of law enforcement.

Situational Factors Affecting Police Decisions.

Robert Worden [1989] has carried out an important synoptic theoretical and empirical assessment of "situational" and "attitudinal" variables affecting police behaviour, in a review that draws specifically on north American research. Worden argues that the "theoretical utility" of situational variables is "limited for the most part to the arrest decision ..." adding that situational factors have only a "modest effect on officers' choices among informal actions."[Worden 1989: 667]. Worden reaches this conclusion by a combination of a theoretical perspective from the literature on administrative decision making; and previous empirical research [the Police Services Study] based on
observational and survey data of patrol officers in 24 American police departments in which trained observers accompanied officers for a total of fifteen patrol shifts in sixty beat areas. The observers, who were graduate students, recorded their observations on standardised forms. These data, which were separated into three "domains of police activity": 'traffic enforcement'; 'aggressive preventive patrol', and 'interpersonal disputes', were later subjected to a statistical factor analysis. Worden's analysis of the PSS data was then compared with the findings of other, similar research on patrol officers' decisions[ Black 1970,1971,1980 : Sykes et al 1976 : Berk and Loseke 1980, 1981 : Ericson 1982, and others]

Worden defines 'situational factors' as comprising of, inter alia, the "severity" of the offence; the visibility of the encounter[ public or private setting]; the characteristics of the subject [ sex, race, age, social class, demeanour, sobriety] ; characteristics of the victim [sex. race and dispositional preference]; and the relationship between the parties. This list of factors appears to be heavily influenced by the work of Donald Black and, to a lesser extent, Sykes et al [1976]. Worden states that multivariate analysis of these variables has demonstrated, "that many of these relationships hold even when other variables are controlled."[ Ibid. ]

Worden argues that such situational explanations of police/citizen encounters are influenced by "structural characteristics" of the immediate situation summarised as the nature of the incident; the attributes and actions of the participants, and contextual variables. Worden cites Berk and Loseke's work on domestic violence to support the view that an officer's behaviour is "...largely a response to situational cues." [Berk and Loseke 1980].
Worden's work, which is positivistic in its theoretical orientation, largely neglects the important influence of what I have referred to as the "background assumptions" that officers bring with them to incidents. Thus, there is no mention of the pre-categorisation of the incident by the communications room staff, of the 'horizon of expectations' that officers develop en-route to incidents and which initially impact on semiosis. There is no appreciation of the socio-cognitive frame that is directly linked to specific locations, nor of the 'inter textual' or experiential factors that feed in to the semiotic process. In fact, although Worden acknowledges the influence of both the "formal" and "informal" organisational factors, there is no acknowledgement of a symbolic dimension in his analysis of patrol officers' decisions.

The second part of Worden's analysis relates to "attitudinal" explanations of police patrol officer decisions. Worden notes that many attitudinal explanations have been "formulated and evaluated primarily through the construction of typologies of police officers" [op. cit. 669]. Worden notes that situational and attitudinal explanations should not be seen as "competing" explanations, but that inasmuch as situational factors "constrain but do not determine" an officers' behaviour, then Worden finds it, "... plausible [and tempting]." to attribute what he calls the "residual variation of behaviour" to an officer's "attitude and values." [ibid]. Worden is aware of social psychological research that states that attitude is only weakly related to behaviour, but he maintains that since officers work within an "organisational milieu" a theory of police behaviour should reflect this and also reflect the "ambiguity and uncertainty" of the task environment, and that this mix serves to "attenuate" the link between situational factors and officers' behaviour. Worden avoids the term 'working rules', but acknowledges Mannings' point that rules are ambiguous [Manning 1977: 161-179], and cautiously approaches the subject of cultural influence by noting:
"The informal organisation, and especially the police culture, may be an even more important source of decision premises for police officers... police culture presumably stems from a set of assumptions about police work that is widely shared among officers, and it includes a 'code' to which they are expected to adhere." [op. cit. 672].

Citing work by Westley[1970]; Van Maanen[1974]; Manning [1977,1979,1982,1987]; Brown [1981]; and Reuss-Ianni [1973], Worden concludes that the code is as "ambiguous" as the situations officers are faced with on the street: therefore, "valid judgments can only be made with the personal knowledge of the contingencies" of a situation, and that the code therefore produces no "necessary correspondence between attitudes and behaviour". Thus Worden acknowledges the influence of a normative evaluative framework in semiosis but conservatively relates this to organisational influences. He does not acknowledge the issue of officer modality; nor the influence that membership of a particular structural groupings within the police institution might have, or of the influence of an officer's previous operational experience on the decision process [intertextuality]. Finally, this research illustrates the point that explanation cannot be reduced to the "subsumption of facts under empirical regularities" [Ricoeur 1990: 117].


An important piece of empirical research on police handling of disputes was carried out by Kemp, Norris and Fielding[1992], and published in book form entitled Negotiating Nothing: Police Decision-making in Disputes. This study was carried out over a period of two years [1986-87] at three Metropolitan Police Divisions and at one Division in
Surrey. The research was "broadly concerned with contrasting styles of policing associated with reliefs and community policeman."

The researchers accompanied officers and observed 1200 "encounters" between the public and police. Of these, 60 qualified as disputes, [i.e. "small scale, personal disputes"]. The average contact time for these disputes is stated to be 16 minutes, and the authors rationalise that this is due to "procedural constraints" regarding expectations of divisional performance; the absence of personal injury among disputants, and whether the action minimises the possibility of a complaint against police. The extremely narrow average time-frame also tends to suggest an increased use of 'schema-type' responses to these disputes by officers working under extreme time pressures in busy urban environments.

Detailed narrative notes were taken of these disputes and these form the basis of the book. The theoretical basis for the research draws largely on previous work by Bayley and Bittner [1983]; and on the work of Jefferson and Grimshaw [1984]. The authors state that in their analysis of disputes they set out to "...unravel the complexity of the process whereby police officers negotiate resolutions to disputes." To this end the authors argue that such dispute settlement by the police is a "negotiated social reality" wherein the logic of the process is contained within various "parameters and constraints" which, they argue, is derived from law, police organisation, and police occupational culture, and that the process of negotiation between police and disputants is underpinned by the notion of "situational dynamics, goals and resources" [op cit P2].

From their empirical data of 60 disputes the authors construct a heuristic model of police decision-making. This model of decision making, which they acknowledge simplifies the actual process, consists of 7 formal stages: these are broadly sequential, and related to the 'beginning', 'middle' and 'end'. The model also parallels other
attempts in the literature to understand the dynamics of decision making such as Black 1981: Sykes and Brent 1983: and on Norris's unpublished Ph.D thesis from the University of Surrey[1987] which states, inter alia, that the overriding situational aims of the police in disputes are[i] to establish authority[ii] to effect a temporary solution;[iii] to exit.

The authors note that police officers in seeking to make sense of incidents:

"Like the lawyer...must select from the case what is materially relevant to the construction of a specific outcome. This requires that the unique specificity of an incident be translated into more general terms which make possible legal interpretations. These translations are not neutral. In the process of translation from one discourse to another [i.e. from common sense to law], the text is filtered through personal, occupational, and organisational concerns of the patrol officer."

[op cit 94]

The authors opinion that dispute resolution is at heart underpinned by legal rules is problematic since the law offers very little in terms of guidance for officers. Before this specific point is addressed, I want to take issue with the assertion that disputes do not constitute a legal category. In fact, generations of officers have applied the common law 'breach of the peace' powers to all such disputes. These powers not only provide a wide power of arrest, but also provide a power of entry to private property in order to deal with the suspected breach. In R. v Podger [1979] Crim.L.R. 524 and R. v. Howell [1981] reference was made to Halsbury's Laws [4th Ed.] Vol.11, paragraph 108:

"A private person or a constable may at common law arrest without warrant any one who in his presence commits a breach of the peace where the offence is continuing, or if it is not continuing, where there is reasonable grounds for apprehending its renewal. A private person or a constable may also arrest without warrant anyone who there is reasonable grounds to suppose is about to commit or about to renew a breach of the peace in his presence."

Therefore, I would argue, all domestics disputes are embedded to some extent in this very wide legal definition, and this is certainly taught to all probationers, something
Fielding would have been aware of given his previous research on police probationer training. [Fielding 1988]. I do not accept the authors' point that, in practice, police officers use the definition of a breach of the peace specifically in relation to public order offences. [op. cit. p5]

The authors are right to argue however, that police officers employ normative and evaluative conceptual frameworks grounded in their personal and family value systems. This is to a large extent a result of the fact that the substantive law does not offer guidance to the police. The authors quote Chatterton's valuable comment that patrol officers at disputes draw on their impression conveyed by the condition of the dwelling, and the amount of care received by children of the disputants, in apportioning moral blame. [Chatterton 1975: 366-88]. This is an important part of the semiosic process and often is drawn from the officer's socio-cognitive frame of that specific location.

The authors are disinclined to accept the importance of non-legal criteria in dispute processing.

The authors are experienced researchers who approach their material with critical objectivity and balance. They point out the weakness of their approach by quoting Gidden's point that an observer's "...tendency to impute thoughtfulness to actions of police officers" can "obscure numerous other motives" that officers can employ, and that "attributions of competence" to police officers are "highly susceptible" to "ex post facto rationalisation." [Kemp et al 1992: 13]

The authors' actual model of decision-making is, I believe, an accurate heuristic device and is worth setting out in its various stages:

1. Arrival
In view of the potentially misleading nature of dispatch calls...first impressions, establish immediate grasp of what is happening.[A] Confirm/reject possibly erroneous preconceptions held prior to arrival.[B] make sense of possibly confusing events or situations which are clearly out of control.

2. Contact.
Establish contact with participants [a] assert fact of police presence[b] where necessary establish control.

3. Information Gathering.
Initiate processing of incident by information gathering and initial identification of issues[a] sort out what actually happened[b] establish whether physical harm or injury has been done.[c] sort out different versions of event[d] establish points of agreement[assess the degree of danger, risk and volatility.[f] attribute roles to participants[ husband/wife, offender/victim].[g] apportion innocence, blame, responsibility...[h] reassert control of situation.

Decision Taking.
[a] decisions difficult due to lack of information and/or cooperation.[b] decide whether police matter[c] consider event in light of perceived legal powers...procedures[ goals and resources][d] decide on police role in the incident[ peacekeeper, 'official', neutral][e] choose options.

5. Implementation.
Negotiate implementation of chosen course of action [a] present options[b] negotiate police role[c] continue to reassert control.

6. Conclusion.
[a] decide whether the situation is sufficiently quiet for police to leave.[b] assess likelihood of recurrence...[decide how and when to exit from the scene.]

7. Aftermath
[a] decide how to report back to dispatcher[b] organise further police action if required[c] construct paperwork version of incident to satisfy...administrative/legal criteria.

[Kemp et al 1992: 22-23]

The authors also acknowledge the influence of "non verbal information" on semiosis by stating that information can be conveyed by "body language, tone of voice, state of mind, attitude, behaviour and appearance."[ op. cit. 40] Many of their own comments on what they encountered when accompanying police officers to disputes also reveals a semiotic decoding of social reality, but this is not developed within their analysis since they confine their discussion to substantive elements within each dispute, and specifically to underline the role of the law which they see as being "at the heart of the negotiation process" . [ op. cit. 118]
There is no acknowledgement of officer modality within the research, nor any attempt to introduce elements of intertextuality or of the socio-cognitive frame. This research was carried out before either Sheptycki's or Watson's work on discourse was written, but the authors do acknowledge the influence of power differentials between the police and disputants, and the fact that the police assume the role as central definers of reality. Overall, a valuable piece of research limited only by the constraints of the chosen methodology.

Another important empirical study of how patrol officers deal with domestic disputes was carried out by Carolyn Hoyle [1988] on officers of the Thames Valley force. Hoyle states that the major influences on her work was Mc Conville et al [1991] The Case For The Prosecution, and Negotiating Nothing [1992] by Kemp et al. However, although Hoyles' work is in many ways a similar study to Negotiating Nothing, it is theoretically much more sophisticated, and embedded within a wider field of scholarship. Hoyles' work is primarily concerned with how patrol officers deal with cases of domestic violence; and a large part of the work examines the decision whether or not to arrest in terms of offence seriousness and evidential criteria. Hoyle also analyses the factors impacting on semiosis and provides a model or heuristic device that sets out the relevant elements involved.

Hoyles' study relates to a sample of 1269 cases of domestic violence attended by police that occurred in two police divisions in Thames Valley between 1st February to 31st of August 1993. Hoyle interviewed control room staff from the 4 shifts that worked on the two police areas. This resulted in semi-structured interviews with 55 of the 65 control room operators broadly concerning the categorising of incidents and the decision of whether or not to deploy officers to the call.
Police Officers were interviewed regarding their response to the 1269 incidents captured on the control room computer. These cases were sub-divided into two groups: [i] incidents which had resulted in an arrest; and [ii] incidents in which no arrest was carried out. A stratified random sample of 3 out of 4 arrest incidents and 1 in every 5 non-arrest incidents were selected and the attending officer interviewed. This resulted in officers being interviewed about 387 cases. Hoyle used a combination of open-ended and 'pre-coded' questions in order to capture both quantitative and qualitative data. The resulting data were also examined from the point of view of the victim and from Hoyles' own perspective as an observer to a smaller subset of the incident sample. [106 patrol observation hours]

Hoyle also had access to police records such as witness statements, crime reports and, in cases which had resulted in a prosecution, the whole prosecution file. Hoyle, however, was aware of the danger of ex post-facto justifications that might be contained in police statements:

"Of course, the printed information pertaining to each case, including witness statements, had been 'constructed' by the officers...and so it could be argued that these were not independent checks on the reliability of the interview data." [Hoyle 1998: 36]

Firstly, Hoyle acknowledges previous research that has identified the important role of the control room operator in pre-categorising the incident.[Ekblom and Heal 1985: Parnas 1971: McConville et al 1991: Pepinsky 1976: Ericson 1982: Manning 1992]. She draws on this research to ascertain the mediation between control room operators and patrol officers in terms of incident categorisation and the provision of information to patrol officers dispatched to incidents.

It should be noted however that at the time this research was carried out the two Thames Valley control rooms studied did not have access to their force intelligence.
computer, and so were unable to provide patrol officers with more than the basic
message taken from the caller. This goes some way towards explaining the
dissatisfaction expressed by patrol officers with the quality of information they received
when dispatched to incidents.

In an effort to ascertain what Hoyle refers to as the "negative" aspects of police culture
on semiosis at domestic violence incidents, a quantitative analysis was carried out on the
387 case sample in an effort to ascertain the influence of four attitudinal variables:

[1] the gender of the officer.


[3] the attitude of the officers towards the victim.

[4] the extent of victim provocation or 'victim blaming'.

In line with previous studies, "none of the four variables were found to be correlated
with the decision to arrest when two-way cross tabulations were carried out." [Hoyle
1998: 71]. Hoyle concludes that an analysis of the qualitative evidence shows that an
understanding of the negative values and attitudes of patrol officers is "not very
helpful" in explaining outcomes in domestic disputes.

Next Hoyle undertook a qualitative analysis of police culture by attempting to
"problematize" the concept of working rules. Hoyle is aware that the concept of
working rules has been criticised for "rigidity and determinism". She counters this by
citing Hart's [1961] argument that rules are not necessarily rigid but "incorporate a fluid
element" that nearly always allows for discretion[ that is, rules have 'a core of settled
meaning', and a 'penumbra' of uncertainty]. Dworkin's [1977] well known counter
argument is also cited in that "it is not the rules which are fluid but the principles which
underlie and fill the gaps between rules." [op. cit. 20]. These two points, Hoyle argues,
show that an understanding of police decision-making at domestic disputes cannot be "dictated by legal rules." [ibid]

Hoyle proceeds by stating that the biggest problem with the concept of working rules is that it "ignores" or takes for granted a "crucial stage" in the decision-making process which is the negotiation between "suspects, victims, and police officers." [ibid] Hoyle correctly argues that working rules do not explain the process of "deciding what has happened" [semiosis] and that this does not take place in a vacuum but is "informed and structured by various legal, social, and organisational factors." [ibid]

This process of sense-making Hoyle refers to as "working assumptions", and she maintains that it is only when the 'working assumptions' have been made that officers can apply their 'working rules'. In other words, Hoyle is talking about the semiosic process of incident categorisation that logically precedes questions of outcome or disposal. Unfortunately, Hoyle's concept of 'working assumptions' is not subjected to an in-depth analysis and so is only of limited value in understanding the semiosic process.

However, Hoyle identified five working rules during her research by using a statistical technique called 'logistic regression'. These were:

1. perceived seriousness of the offence [if serious, then arrest]
2. the risk of further violence [arrest if risk of recurrence].
3. demeanour [if confrontational or aggressive then arrest].
4. victim's demeanour [if very distressed arrest suspect]
5. victim's preference regarding arrest.

Hoyle summarises her position concerning patrol officer semiosis by saying that the "principal explanatory variables" are contextual; and that their influence can only be understood when considered "within the context of the occupational subculture of the
police." [op. cit. 144]. Thus it is the culturally informed 'working assumptions' that
'make sense of the contextual factors presented to officers.' [ibid]

Although Hoyle acknowledges previous research that identifies variations within police
culture [Fielding 1989: Reiner 1992: Chan 1996], and is aware of the difference
between the cultural values of police training and operational street policing, the issue of
officer modality [apart from issues of gender] is not addressed within her research.
Neither is the issue of the socio-cognitive frame, or of the inter textual, experiential
factors that experienced patrol officers draw on in the semiosic process.

Perhaps the most influential empirical study of police decision-making to emerge within
the last decade is McConville, Sanders and Leng's The Case For The Prosecution
[1991]. Although this work is an analysis of the prosecution 'process', focusing on the
construction of 'official accounts' of police/citizen interactions, mainly from the point of
arrest, the scope of the work is such that many of the factors affecting the semiosic
process are considered. This work needs to be embedded within a wider collection of
books and articles produced by a small group of socio-legal scholars known collectively
as the 'Warwick School' [Dixon 1997: 40]. A common theoretical thread running
through all these works is an attempt to integrate research by structuralists [Mc Barnet
1881: Jefferson and Grimshaw 1987], within an interactionist framework to create a
The study was based on a very large empirical random sample consisting of over 1000
cases. The field work was carried out within three English police forces; two
sub-divisions per force being selected for study. The field work was augmented by
interviews carried out with various key decision-makers[ CPS Prosecutors, or police officers] and cases were tracked as they progressed from arrest to final disposal.

The authors state, inter alia, that when police officers are faced with situations that "require [an] immediate decision" they firstly decide what "...they want to do" and then," fit their legal powers around that decision."[ibid 16]. The authors argue that the criminal law is "sufficiently vague and flexible" to allow officers a wide discretion.[McBarnet 1981 : Dixon et al 1984]

They further assert that police discretion is exercised according to "police criteria" rather than legal criteria, and that many patrol officer decisions to stop and search or to arrest are often based on stereotypical cues [Piliavin and Briar 1964 : Smith and Gray 1983], and that the law is used as a resource to achieve police operational ends.

With specific reference to semiosis, the authors build on a point made by Shapland and Hobbs [1987 : 148] that, "the officer is likely to respond not so much to the facts of the alleged incident, as to the social context in which it is alleged to have taken place." by adding that:

"The police definition of the situation structures that initial construction process...So in 'domestics' certain types of fact would not be sought, leading to different types of construction for different types of context..."[McConville et. al. 1991 : 34]

What the authors describe is basically a logonomic system in which various elements of the incident in question are filtered through institutional lenses that prescribe 'semiotic production' [Hodge and Kress 1988], in terms of the constraints of ideology and power differentials found within that particular interpretive community.
A series of papers written by Peter Manning and Keith Hawkins [1989, 1990, 1992] set out what the authors refer to as a "frame analytic perspective" on legal decision-making. This theoretical position extends the work of Erving Goffman [1974] on frame analysis. Manning and Hawkins have built on Goffman’s insights and have augmented this with research from, inter alia, organisational decision-making and semiotics. ‘Framing’, according to Manning and Hawkins, constitutes the ‘cognitive isolation of an event’ in that it ‘...names the process by which the rules or principles governing ‘what is going on here’ may be brought to the surface.’ [Manning and Hawkins 1992: 259]. These frames are activated by ‘cues or signs’ which stand in a ‘part-whole’ relationship to the incident or object which is framed. An organisational frame is defined as a ‘structure of knowledge, experience, values and meanings’ that people in organisations “bring to a decision”. [Ibid] This information, however, does not determine what actual information the individual will see as ‘relevant’ or ‘significant’ but tends to ‘pattern’ what information is sought. The existence of such a frame does not, the authors point out, “isolate the particular relevant facts” needed to make the decision:

“A frame must be applied to an event; ‘facts’ must be selectively organised by the application of the frame. Further actions are needed to define the implications of the use of this frame and apply it to an event; these actions are guided by organisational routines and practices.” [Ibid.]

The authors point out that, in practical terms, frames organise unique incidents and events to “organisational routines”. However, the influence of the “external world” is not fully excluded in organisational decisions in that “...personal values, ideologies, and beliefs” form the ‘background’ against which individuals can “order the ‘foreground’ of salient facts in the decision field.” [op. cit. 261]
Manning and Hawkins assert that the ‘primary frame’ in policing is “routine patrol” and that this is “keyed by cues that set the frame as normal”. The authors go on to state that the decision field for patrol officers on mobile patrol is set by radio calls, the content of which is sorted into “domains and paradigms” that are used to classify events being reported as “crimes/non-crimes”; “rush/don’t rush” and that this “sorting” of calls draws on the “symbolic resources...found in the occupational culture.” [op. cit. 264]. Thus ‘domestics’, ‘family fights’ and ‘neighbourhood quarrel[s]’ are, according to the authors [Manning and Hawkins 1990:213], “…amongst the most elastic and weakly bounded frames, and are most likely to be redefined on the ground by officers…” [ibid 213]

It is necessary to question whether Manning and Hawkins are right to posit a single organisational frame which does not allow for modification by what officers encounter at the scene. Also, Manning and Hawkins underplay the influence that the socio-cognitive element has for the individual police officer and how this in turn influences semiosis and make no mention of officer modality, apart from a reference to Chatterton’s work on the CID [Chatterton 1983].

Manning and Hawkins conceptual framework regarding patrol officers’ decisions is extremely valuable; especially the division of semiosis into ‘background’ and ‘foreground’. There are many parallels with social psychological work on schema and script theory, but this is implicit rather than acknowledged within their papers. Another major element left out concerns ‘time framing’ by which officers intentionally interpret events within the narrowest of temporal frames in order to simplify their task and resume patrol.
In reviewing the literature on police semiosis a variety of models and heuristic devices have been considered. It is important to remember however that no model can ever completely explain or be entirely predictive of police semiosis or agency. The indeterminacy of police/public encounters is a factor of the unique situational and contextual factors of the encounter, together with the normative and evaluative conceptual framework that the individual police officer brings with him or her to the incident.

Indeed, I will maintain that police officers bring with them a variety of socio-cognitive frames including inter textual or experiential factors; spatial frames dividing populations into categories in terms of social power and status, or an absence of these, and the consequent effect on semiosis. Contextual frames based on such factors as time, location, age, sex, class; officer modality linked to membership of various structural groupings within the police institution that I have referred to as ‘interpretive communities’. This list is not exhaustive, but sets out some of the factors affecting semiosis that will be considered by my research findings including how the policing institution prepares officers to interpret and report ‘official reality’.
CHAPTER FOUR

METHODS AND PROCEDURES

The purpose of my research is to gain an understanding of the processes by which operational police patrol officers both make sense of the incidents and occurrences with which they deal; and to examine how ‘official reality’ is constructed and reported as narratives of evidence prepared for the Crown Prosecution Service.

The Research Paradigm

Since the essence of my research involved gaining an understanding of the individual police officers’ perspective or point of view, a qualitative approach was adopted in an attempt to capture rich descriptions of the semiosic process which would be difficult, if not impossible, to fully explore using inferential, quantitative techniques.[Denzin and Lincoln 1994 ] My research explores the complex world of organisationally-embedded intersubjectivities; the lived-experiences of operational police patrol officers as they explain the way they make sense of complex social reality.

Qualitative research is often multidisciplinary in its approach and this study draws on insights gained from recent research in social semiotics; narrative theory and
social psychology, to gain a critical insight into the socially constructed nature of ‘official reality’.

In an effort to avoid the criticisms sometimes levelled at qualitative research that, for example, it lacks objectivity, or is merely impressionistic, this study is supported by, inter alia, an examination of empirical materials such as official texts, comparison with the findings of other researcher in the field; together with visits to key institutional sites including observation of actual teaching practices. This research combines quantitative and qualitative techniques as well as incorporating empirical methods and materials in an effort to obtain triangulation and analytical rigour.

**Grounded Theory.**

Since the data gathering extended over a period of several years it was possible to develop the theory inductively, by systematic analysis of the findings, and then ‘grounding’ these accounts by empirical observation and further data comparisons. In this way it was possible to continuously feedback analysis of findings from the data collection into subsequent data gathering and analysis.

**The Data Set**

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The data set consists of 100, semi-structured, in-depth interviews, the average length of which is 45 minutes. All the interviews were tape recorded and 100 full-length typed transcripts prepared to assist with issues of reliability, validity and possible future replication of findings.

In addition to the interviews, a large quantity of official textual material was used, both in terms of instructional notes and texts for probationers prepared by National Police Training, as well as instructional material prepared for police trainers and the academic and philosophical sources on which this material was based. In addition, various Home Office Circulars and other official texts have been drawn on where these impact on police training methods and policy.

I fully acknowledge the fact that my analysis is itself filtered through the subjective lens of my individual theoretical approach, as well as my language, gender, social class and ethnicity. I have, however, striven to maintain a critical awareness and sensitivity towards the research material, especially as this research is informed by an insiders [emic] perspective. However, this research remains an interpretation of the interpretations of others.

The Researcher.

The researcher is a police officer with almost 30 years operational experience, both in Britain and abroad. The resultant operational experience has provided what Young [1991] refers to as an "insiders' hermeneutic" into the policing institution.
I believe that the richness and detail of the ethnography is in part a result of the researcher’s position as an ‘insider’; and this has resulted in a greater degree of candour and openness on the part of the subjects that were interviewed than is normally found in the research literature.

The position of the ‘insider’ is of itself problematic and this subject has already received a great deal of attention in the literature. I have, however, been at pains to maintain a critical distance and objectivity from my research. I would point out that despite possessing the critical insight provided by an ‘insider’s hermeneutic’, the results of my data has changed my initial understanding by a wide margin.

**Case Study Of The Rodney King Incident.**

This study also draws on an analysis of the infamous Rodney King arrest involving police officers from the Los Angeles Police Department and the California Highway Patrol. The incident is treated as a case study or illustrative example to explain the nature of the semiotic process and to gain an insight into the construction of evidential accounts.

The theoretical constructs that I developed from this incident were fed back into the analysis of my data set resulting in an extension of the present theoretical debate in this area.

**Research Strategy**

My research approaches the issues of organisational sense-making [the construction of official evidential accounts] from the perspective of police
probationer training. Through an analysis of the theory, methods and the
underpinning philosophy of police training one can gain an insight into the way
probationary constables are taught to categorise and report 'official reality'.

**Focus Of Research**

My research begins at a much earlier stage of the decision-making process than
previous studies in this area. Peter Manning [1988] showed that information from
the public entering the police institution via calls to communications rooms is
transformed into official police categories by communications room staff. Thus,
information from the public is transformed semiotically into a police category
and, in the process, the original sense is very often changed. This process is now
even more relevant since all information is entered onto computer screens which
necessitates an immediate categorisation [often in seconds] of the message
contents into one of several dozen Home Office incident categories.

As will become apparent when my findings are presented, these incident
categories or codes set up 'horizons of expectation' or cognitive 'frames' in the
minds of patrol officers. Frames are interpretative schema that enable individuals
to "...locate, perceive, identify, and label occurrences within their life space and
the world at large" [Goffman 1974:21] Members of organisations act to stabilise
uncertainties in their operational environment by developing certain routines and
assumptions about commonly occurring events [Berger and Luckmann 1967;
Weick 1995]. Studies of organisational decision making have shown that the

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"...taken-for-granted background factors embedded in language, metaphor and ideology." [Manning 1992: 253] constitute an important element of routine decision making.

What is of critical importance is the realisation that meaning is not always created at the point of encounter between the police officer and the individual member of the public but is frequently informed and influenced by factors contained in the officers' cognitive map of the area. [For an insight into the spatial strategies of the LAPD see Herbert 1997].

These factors are not accessible to the observer and are frequently omitted from the police officer's subsequent evidential account. Semiosis often begins at a much earlier time than previous interactional studies of police patrol work have assumed and, more importantly, the actual basis for operational decision-making will rarely be apparent to observers.

This insight goes some way towards providing an explanation for the difficulties encountered by researchers when trying to explain police actions in terms of the actual concrete social event they have observed within a rationale based exclusively on a consideration of legal rules. My research emphasises the interconnectedness of background assumptions, previous operational experiences and contextual factors that feeds into and informs the semiosic process of operational policework.
Specific Structural Grouping Sampled.

In an attempt to gain as comprehensive and thorough insight into how police officers are taught to categorise and report ‘official reality’, my research focused on the following areas:

1. NPT Harrogate. [production of official texts and materials]

2. Interviews of Harrogate training staff. [The underpinning philosophy]

3. Interviews with police trainers. [In terms of how training is delivered]

4. Interviews with Tutor Constables [How training is delivered on the street]

5. Interviews with police probationer groups at Post Foundation Stages A [12 months service]; B [18 months service]; and C [22 months service] to gauge the influences informing operational practices.

6. Interviews with experienced police officers [defined having between 2 to 30 years police service]
7. Interviews with a group of experienced operational police officers including detectives, with reference to the way narratives of evidence are produced.

**An examination of the research instruments including the rationale behind each question and the specific research area targeted.**

**Probationer Sample**

Three groups of probationers were interviewed, all of whom were in the second year of their probationary period and had qualified for, and had experience of, independent patrol.

PFA. 17 officers interviewed. [approximately 12 months service]

PFB. 5 officers interviewed. [approximately 18 months service]

PFC. 9 officers interviewed. [approximately 22 months service]

Total probationer sample amounted to 31 officers.

**How Subjects Were Selected For Interview**

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All probationary officers were interviewed whilst attending their respective Post Foundation courses at a Force Training School.

Probationers were asked by their class trainers whether any of the group wished to volunteer to be interviewed on the subject of probationer training. The interviewer had no control over the selection process.

All probationer interviews took place at a location away from the classroom and each interviewee was asked whether or not they objected to the interview being tape recorded. All subjects were told that the interviews would be anonymous in terms of not identifying them either in name, rank or force. All officers agreed that the interviews could be tape recorded and all of them participated fully in the interview process, even when the subject matter touched on politically sensitive issues.

Similarly with the more experienced, post-probationer sample, all were volunteers who gave freely of their time.

Full typed transcripts were prepared from the 100 interviews and these were subjected to a close-grained analysis resulting in a coding frame of 52 categories being chosen. This proved to be a massive undertaking in terms of time and effort but the richness of the data justified this. Indeed, the richness of the data obtained
through the open-ended questions and face-to-face interviews produced insights into the semiotic process that no amount of statistical data could reveal.

**Training-expectations and reality.**

The first section in the probationer instrument explored the expectations they had about the type and style of instruction they would receive at the Probationer Training Centre. The reality of the training actually delivered was then explored, including whether or not they felt it had been successful, and if so, in what ways. Similarly, where it was felt that the training was not successful, the specific problematic areas were explored.

**Making sense of incidents.**

The semiotic process was explored by dividing the time frame into [i] the officer’s thought processes whilst en-route to an incident; and, [ii] their attempts at making sense of incidents at the scene. These questions were designed to probe what sorts of thought processes occurred when officers were actually deployed to incidents via their personal radios and what sorts of things they would look for in order to categorise the incident.

What aspects of behaviour do officers find acceptable or unacceptable and what do they use as a ‘benchmark’ of acceptability?
This question explored a problematic area for many probationers since, with limited patrol experience, they are often faced with difficult, deeply subjective decisions, involving normative and evaluative modes of judgment including a contextual dimension. The law in respect of public order offences offers little guidance to inexperienced patrol officers.

Specific, commonly occurring incidents, are then explored including how police officers make sense of ‘domestic disputes’ in terms of what factors are salient in deciding on a course of action, and what ‘time frame’ [narrow or wide] is applied to this process.

Probationers were asked how they made sense of complex [incidents involving several people] public order incidents. In that many cases of street disorder such as fighting in the street and various assaults have often occurred prior to the arrival of the police and therefore involve an element of reconstruction.

The specific elements that can affect an officers’ initial categorisation of an incident is then explored to shed light on the accuracy of the officers’ horizon of expectations or initial framing of the incident set up on receipt of the call from the communications room despatcher.

**Post Probationer Sample**

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The same set of questions that were asked of the probationers were also asked of the more experienced officers minus questions 1 to 5 which relate specifically to probationers. This enables direct comparisons to be made of the responses of both groups both qualitatively and quantitatively.

**Police Trainer Sample**

Police trainers were drawn from officers encountered on field trips to critical sites such as National Police Training, Harrogate and to a Probationer Training Centre and a Force Training School. The Harrogate site is important because it is there that officers are prepared to carry out the role of police trainer in the various Probationer Training Centres throughout England and Wales. Harrogate is also where the probationer training materials are written and policies are formulated. Harrogate provides the philosophical and academic underpinning of probationer training.

Interviews of police trainers at the force training school took place at the same time that probationers attending PFA, PFB and PFC were interviewed.

Questions asked included the following:

1. Whether or not they had experienced problems using the student-centred method of teaching.
2. How they got probationers to think and see things as a group when dealing with specific issues. This can be problematic in terms of the student centred approach which encourages an individualistic perspective.

3. How they get students to 'make sense' of the various training incidents at the PTC.

4. Whether Harrogate[NPT] is trying to get students to develop a single perspective or an individual perspective on policework.

5. The status of training for operational officers working on Division.

6. Whether the trainers teach any 'rules of thumb' to their students.

7. Whether individual trainers supplement the Harrogate package with their own materials.

The Influence Of The Tutor Constable Attachment.

This set of questions probed the influence the Tutor Constable had on the individual probationer. Firstly, the importance of the Tutor Constable phase was
examined and, secondly, whether or not this differed from what the individual probationer was taught at the PTC.

The speed at which officers are able to make an assessment of patrol incidents is then analysed, together with an examination of who taught them this method of assessment.

Next, the question of whether or not probationers felt under pressure to perform in their role and how this might impact on the way they dealt with operational incidents.

Probationers were asked whether they considered practical experience to be a better guide to resolving incidents that the law; and whether the law forced a particular course of action or left them with a choice.

They were then asked whether the way they dealt with incidents had changed from when they first started independent patrol.

Finally, probationers were asked how they thought the traditional core of policework is passed on from generation to generation of officers.

**The Tutor Constable Instrument.**

Firstly, Tutor Constables were asked what sort of training they received to prepare them for their very important role of teaching probationers to make sense and report incidents they encounter on operational police patrol work.
Whether or not this training adequately prepared them for the role was probed, including whether specific elements of the training were felt to be in any way inadequate.

Next, questions were asked that specifically focused on the way probationers are prepared for independent patrol.

Tutor Constables were asked how they teach probationers to make sense of:

[i] Domestic Disputes


The question of whether or not there is a ‘right’ way and a ‘wrong’ way to deal with an incident was explored.

How Tutor Constables personally defined ‘good policework’ was explored; as was the question of whether or not they passed on to the probationer anything that had been taught to them by their Tutor Constables.

How probationers are taught to compile witness statements was explored, as well as the question of whether or not there is a particular police style of producing written work.
Tutors were asked whether the Tutor influences the style of policing the probationer eventually develops?

How Tutors get probationers to think like 'police officers' was probed.

Finally, how important for the development of a competent police officer is the role of the Tutor Constable.

**Narrative Section**

The second part of my research explores how operational police officers transform the events they deal with on the street into narratives of evidence for a prosecution file. For this section I only interviewed experienced officers. Some of the officers in this sample were experienced detectives who had worked on major incidents and enquiries including murders. Others were very experienced patrol officers who were able to draw on vast operational experience.

Some of the questions explored the following:

1. What guidance did they receive when being taught to write statements of evidence concerning what to include and what to leave out?
2. Who taught them this method?

3. What role did their Tutor Constable play in influencing the style and content of their written work?

4. Does the police force teach officers to develop an ‘official’ standard style of writing or to develop an individual style?

5. Is it possible to produce balanced and objective narratives?

6. Is it possible to produce an objective report when you have been involved in the original incident?

7. How do you emphasise points that you feel are important for a court?

8. What elements of a statement do you think a court would find persuasive?

9. Finally, and this builds on earlier questions that probed semiosis at actual incidents, how do officers reconstruct events when several officers were involved?

Analysis of the data.
When non-continuous, nominal qualitative research such as this is coded the results can be subjected to non-parametric statistical tests. Statistical tests require a minimum of 20 to 30 subjects per group for meaningful scientific comparison to be made and this also impacted on the choice of suitable statistical tests.

Finally, the results of the manual coding process were analysed using SPSS following expert advice regarding which non-parametric statistical tests were most appropriate given the limitations of the data and the research aims.

**Statistical Analysis.**

To allow for maximal use of the collected data, responses to questions were analysed in both a qualitative and quantitative fashion, providing the potential for statistical significance to be investigated whilst retaining the richness of the original data set.

The data acquired from the interviews was of a quite disparate nature demanding multiple forms of analysis. Of the 52 items that officers responded to, 30 were asked of only one of the groups of interest, or were answered by too few participants to allow inclusion in statistical analysis [items 22 to 52]. Therefore, with those items, no direct statistical comparison between the groups was possible, but for these items, it was still appropriate to consider the modal responses and themes in order to allow a qualitative debate to take place.

The remaining items [1 to 22], spanning some or all of the groups, provided data that could be analysed in a quantitative fashion. Items 20 and 21 did not yield
enough responses from groupings to allow for analysis, and so were excluded *a priori*. Since, as stated above, the data was of a non-continuous nominal level only, assumptions of parametric forms of analysis would have been violated and no useful inferences could be obtained through most forms of analysis. The coding of responses differed from question to question and responses could not always be ranked from one tangible extreme to the other; as such, responses represented entirely separate and categorical information. Since my interest in terms of the quantitative analysis of items 1 to 20 was in whether different groups responded in differing fashions, and bearing in mind that there was one grouping variable [comprising of the three stages of probation] Post-Foundation A; Post-Foundation B, and Post-Foundation C, referred to as PFA, PFB, PFC], and multiple discrete response variables, the form of analysis that was chosen was that of logistic regression.

Logistic regression allows predictor variables to be entered in a user specified or sequential statistical model or equation in order to maximally differentiate groups. In other words, the questions asked are which of the predictor variables maximally separates groups, which combination of them is most predictive of group membership, and are those variables significant in differentiating groups. The method also allows for predictor variables that have levels that are wholly separate and unrelated [as is the case with the present data], as the analysis creates a linear combination of the log of the odds of being in one of the possible groups [see Tabachnik and Fidell: 1966].
Items 1 to 5 were asked of all three levels of probationers, and so could be examined using logistic regression to determine which of them is best differentiated between those three levels and whether those were statistically significant. Of prime interest in this first regression was the differentiation between the three stages of probationary training.

Items 6 to 20 were asked of all groups and so allowed for a second logistic regression to determine which of them best differentiated between groups and whether those were statistically significant in doing so. Of prime interest in this second regression was the differentiation between probationary groups and post-probationers: to that end, all three probationary groups [PFA, PFB, PFC] were coded as one group while all post-probationers were coded as a second group.

**Limitations Of The Research**

The present research was limited by the time available to carry out fieldwork given the demands of a full-time occupation. In addition, the fieldwork was carried out at a time when most forces were not recruiting and so the number of probationers available for interview was limited. Similarly, the sample size, when the various sub-groupings are considered, imposed limitations on the choice of statistical techniques. However, the only assumption infringed by the logistic regression of the data was the ratio of cases to variables. When there are too few cases relative to the number of predictor variables, logistic regression may...
produce "extremely large parameter estimates and standard errors and, possibly, failure of convergence when combinations of discrete variables result in too many cells with no cases" [Tabachnik and Fidell 1996:579]. However, the statistical package used can be set to warn if this is the case [4], and no such problems were encountered. The strength of the analysis lies in the close-grained qualitative analysis of the data and the statistical analysis is of secondary importance to the ethnographic evidence.

[4] The analysis was carried out using a forward stepwise procedure, as recommended for such an exploratory, theory building exercise. Constanza and Afifi [1979], based on Monte Carlo studies of 48 sampling situations and investigations into the comparative efficiency of various stopping rules and levels of F entry and removal in stepwise regression, suggest a choice in the range of .15 to .20 in order to allow variables of interest to enter the equation. Whilst this is not as strict a level as some other authorities suggest [Wonnacott, 1981; Neter et al 1989; Brook and Arnold, 1985] it must be remembered that the more strict cut off points are generally employed where the analyst is trying to achieve a good balance in the trade-off between maximum predictive power and the prospective costs of collecting the data for included variables in making future outcome-blind predictions. Since no future predictions of outcome group by the variables included were planned, or indeed would be appropriate, and the rationale for using the analysis was purely theoretical, and exploratory, the cut off employed was a less strict F to enter of 2.0
In order to understand the process by which police officers are taught to make sense of, and report, 'official' reality it is necessary to explain the complex, if not labyrinthine structure of the police training institution. Researchers in this area will find that terminology and structure change constantly [5], adding to the difficulty in trying to achieve a comprehensive overview of the organisation.

In order to explain the organisational structure of police training I have prepared a chart setting out both the hierarchical political structure and the various committees and subgroups involved in the decision making process. [Figure 1]

[5] In September 1998 the Probationers' Course was changed following the findings of the 1995 Probationer Training Review and a successful pilot in four police force areas. Module 4 is now removed from the course structure. In addition, the worst excesses of the student-centred approach to teaching have been moderated. These were criticised by HMI in their annual reports on the various PTCs. See also the article in Police Review [3.10.97] by Chief Inspector Eddie Coggle, a former Director Of Studies at Harrogate for a scathing criticism of student-centred teaching methods featuring what he refers to as "death by flip chart". More importantly, ACPO now have much more direct influence on the curriculum via the ACPO Personnel and Training Committee input to the Police Training Council.
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The structure of National Police Training:

1. **Home Secretary**
   - **Director Of Police Policy**
     - **Police Training Council**
       - Composition includes:
         - HMIC, ACPO, Supts' Association,
         - Police Federation, COLPA, AMA,
         - Director NPT, Metropolitan Academic Advisor.
         - Chaired by Home Office.
   - **Police Training Council Executive Committee**
   - **ACPO Council Chairman and Secretary Chief Officers**
   - **Other ACPO Committees**
     - Personnel & Training (inform its representative on PTC)
     - Crime Committee
     - Traffic Committee
     - General Purposes Committee

2. **Director Of National Police Training**
   - [Chief Constable rank]
   - accountable to Home Office Police Policy Director

3. **ACPO Regional Meetings 1-8 Regions**

4. **Subordinate Conferences**
   - Regional Force Training Officers
   - ACCs Training

5. **Secretariat**
   - **Finance & Administration**
   - **Training Support Services**
   - **Higher Training**

6. **Regional Training**
   - **ACPO Areas 1 and 2**
   - **ACPO Areas 3, 6, and 7**
   - **ACPO Areas 4 and 5**

**Figure 1.**
A comprehensive explanation of the structure and philosophy of National Police Training (NPT) is central to the development of my thesis because it enables one to gain an insight into the ideological and political dimensions that underpin the primary interpretive community. The changes that occurred to the present system of probationer training were essentially driven by a powerful political agenda that sought to change the attitude of police officers towards sections of the community, since this had been identified as a possible causal factor in the inner city riots that occurred during the early 1980s.

The present system of probationer training was the result of extensive collaboration between academics from the University Of East Anglia and police trainers at Harrogate. The product of this marriage, however, will be shown to be a sickly child that rarely survives infancy. The major changes that occurred in probationer training was a move away from being a law-based, didactic, 'chalk and talk' system, towards a facilitative, student-centered style that concentrated on attitudes and the 'affective domain' of learning; literally the 'hearts and minds' of the students. My research will reveal a paradox that lies at the very heart of this system.

A further element that I wish to develop within NPT relates to the key question of power-relations. This is an area of some complexity that has been neglected by previous researchers [6] but will repay a careful analysis.

[6] Some researchers, notably Ainsworth [1995], have pointed out the low status that training has in the world of operational policing when he notes that training is seen as 'wasted time' in terms of acquiring the range of practical experience needed for promotion.
since it provides an illuminating insight into the political dimension of policing; especially when power-relations are examined in both their internal and external aspects. A fuller analysis of this area will be undertaken in the light of the present findings. Suffice to say at this juncture that the present research will reveal a structural imbalance of power between the police training estate and the wider policing institution. The present research will shed new light on this area and will move the debate into the political arena by identifying a tacit strategy of domination that effectively marginalises, disperses and fragments the Harrogate philosophy.

Thus, I intend to show how an examination of power within NPT can be linked to the production of knowledge and 'truth':

"Truth isn't outside power... truth is a thing of the world: it is produced only by virtue of multiple forms of constraint... Each society has its regimes of truth: this is, the types of discourse which it accepts and makes function as true, the mechanisms and instances which enable one to distinguish true and false statements, the means by which those who are charged with saying what counts as true." [Foucault 1980: 131]

The power dimension of knowledge identified by Foucault is the key to understanding the move probationers make away from the primary interpretive community.

In order to contextualise and develop these arguments it is necessary to set out in some detail the structure and philosophy of NPT. This, of course, also constitutes unknown territory for many both within and outside the police institution. Secondly, I will explore the philosophy of NPT as disseminated by Harrogate through the Police Trainers' Course, the Police Training Centres, including the training of Tutor Constables. Finally, I will explore how the Harrogate philosophy impacts on the probationers themselves, especially in terms
of how they are taught to categorise and make sense of the incidents they will encounter on operational patrol duties.

The National Structure Of Police Training.

National Police Training is part of the Police Policy Directorate of the Home Office and is the responsibility of the Police Under Secretary of State who, in turn, reports to the Home Secretary.

The National Directorate of Police Training is headed by a Director General who reports to the Under Secretary of State via the Director of Police Policy at the Home Office. The National Directorate of Police Training is responsible for the provision of national and regional police training, including curriculum design.

An important element in National Police Training is the Police Training Council [PTC] which was set up in 1970 to advise the Home Secretary on matters of training policy including the appointment of a National Director. Membership of the PTC includes representatives from the Home Office; H.M. Inspectorate; the three staff associations; Training Support, Harrogate; the Association Of Chief Police Officers [ACPO]; and Metropolitan Police Academic Advisers. The Training Council provides a forum within which corporate decisions can be reached on all aspects of training in line with the strategy set out in Home Office Circular 39/1983 Part 11, the Police Training Council strategy document.
The Police Training Council Executive Committee was established in 1990 and its role is essentially to ensure that the agreed training strategy is implemented throughout National Police Training. Its terms of reference include, inter alia, the following:

[i] To monitor and assess whether police training provided nationally is following the agreed strategy.

[ii] To identify areas of excellence or shortcomings in the training provided and to report back to the National Director.

[iii] The identification of specific issues to be brought to the attention of the Police Training Council.

[iv] To evaluate and report on any major review of training to the Police Training Council.

It is important to note that the training strategy set by the PTC includes all police training and not only that provided by NPT. This is potentially problematic since the PTC has no direct authority to influence the training provided by individual police forces 'in-force', and allows for regional variations to occur which sometimes varies from the curriculum set out by NPT, as will be seen when the probationer training system is examined later in the dissertation.

The National Director of Police Training is accountable to the Police Training Council for national, regional and nationally prescribed training, but not for in-force training which remains the personal responsibility of individual Chief Constables. The post of National Director is supported by personnel having responsibility for each of the following areas:

1. Finance.
2. Training Support Services.
4. Regional Training.

National Police Training provides services to the 41 provincial and 2 London police areas. It is financed through the Common Police Services Fund to which all police forces contribute under powers contained in Section 41 of the Police Act 1964.

The Association Of Chief Police Officers [ACPO] have divided England and Wales into 8 geographical areas or regions as follows:

Region 3. The Midlands.
Region 4. East Anglia and North Midlands.
Region 7. Wales.
Region 8. Metropolitan area.

Each ACPO Region sends their probationary police constables to one of six Police Training Centres [PTCs] as follows:

Ashford, Kent.
Bruche, Warrington, Cheshire.
Cwmbran, Gwent.
Durham, Aykley Heads.
Ryton On Dunsmore, Coventry.

Shotley Gate, Ipswich, Surrey.

In addition, the Police Staff College, Bramshill, Hampshire is presently functioning as a PTC for probationer training due to the national shortage of available student places.

Each recruit to the police service commences a 31 week 'Foundation Course' consisting of 7 Modules. Of these, Module 2 [10 weeks duration], and Module 4 [5 weeks duration] are held at the Police Training Centres [until recently also know as District Training Centres]. During this time students study law and its "practical application"; interpersonal skills, self-defence, lifesaving etc.,

Training Support, Harrogate.

Training Support, Harrogate [until recently known as the Central Planning Unit or CPU], is responsible for "developing and co-ordinating core police training within the national curriculum", namely police probationer training at the Police Training Centres.

Home Office Circular 29/1994 established three representative Regional User Groups to monitor the effectiveness and quality of National Police Training, in the context of the agreed PTC strategy. These are known as:

Regional Practitioner Group.

Membership of the Regional User Group is made up as follows:

[i] One ACPO representative from each force in a Region.

[ii] One representative from the Police Authorities in a Region.

[iii] Up to two representatives from the National Directorate; the Superintendents' Association; the Police Federation; and a representative from HMIC.

National User Group.

This group is made up of the following members:

[i] Chairman [Head of Police Policy Directorate, Home Office]

[ii] An ACPO representative from each Regional Committee.

[iii] The Chairman of ACPO Personnel and Training Committee.

[iv] A representative from the Superintendents' Association; the Police Federation; HMIC; the National Directorate, and the Home Office.

[v] the Association of County Councils and the Association of Metropolitan Councils will receive copies of committee papers and can attend meetings if they so desire.

The stated purpose of the NUG is, inter alia, to monitor whether the training provided regionally is meeting national requirements in terms of HMIC Training Inspection Reports, to identify 'best practice', and perceived problems, and to report back on these issues to the Police Training Council.

Regional Practitioner Groups

Membership of this group comprises representatives from Probationer, Sergeant and Inspector training within the ACPO Region, the Head of Regional Training and the Regional Training Co-ordinator. This group does not have official terms of reference.
but monitors training at 'grass roots level' and feeds back to the National Director via the Regional Training Co-ordinator.

It can be seen from the breakdown of membership of the various structural groupings that people can sit on several advisory committees. This is a deliberate policy by the Home Office as set out in Home Office Circular 39/1993

The Origins Of The Modern Training System.

The background to the present system of training can be traced to the criticism made by Lord Scarman of the behaviour of young and inexperienced police officers who were involved in the Brixton disturbances that occurred between the 10th to the 12th of April, 1981.

Following Lord Scarman's Report a major review of police probationer training was commenced by the Home Office on the recommendation of the Police Training Council. The review team was based at the University Of East Anglia [UEA] at the Centre For Applied Research in Education, and consisted of a team of academics led by Professor McDonald, and two seconded police officers, who were required to make recommendations to the Police Training Council who would, in turn, advise the Home Secretary.

The review commenced in 1984 and was not completed until the end of 1986. In 1987 the review team published its recommendations in a detailed report entitled Police Probationer Training : The Final Report of the Stage 11 Review [ McDonald et al 1987]
The authors of the report state in their introduction that they have "...some unpleasant things to say about what we saw", referring specifically to what they termed the informal or "hidden curriculum" of the old probationer training system:

"The problem posed by the question of strengthening or changing operational practice is compounded by a special factor in the case of probationer training. It is carried out almost entirely by operational officers although they do not [apart from the Met.] design the formal curriculum, they significantly influence the probationers' developing image of both the occupation and the organisation of policing. That being so, it must be conceded that at least the informal or 'hidden curriculum', to which we have taken great exception, corresponds to some substantial reality in their experience." [MacDonald et al 1987: 3]

The main points of the Stage 11 Review Teams' critique of probationer training were summarised as follows:

[1] The law enforcement role of constables was "overemphasised" and was supported by a "narrow examination system", and by a "militaristic" type of discipline. The Review Team recommended a more "humane" environment, as well as a student-centred approach to learning.

[2] The curriculum was "too front-loaded" in that students were given intensive law inputs before they were "exposed to the realities" of policing. The Review recommended a modular or sandwich type course in which students combined periods of instruction with time spent actually interfacing with the public.

[3] That the training of trainers be improved and their period of secondment be expanded to ensure continuity, and to meet the needs of the more complex curriculum.

Adoption And Implementation.

As a result of these recommendations a new modular system of probationer training was introduced from July 1989 for 42 out of the 43 forces in England and Wales.[7]

7. The Metropolitan Police are the exception since they have continued with their own system of training although this has been modified to fall broadly in line with the Harrogate philosophy.
The probationary period continued to be two years in length but was split into a Foundation Phase, made up of 7 modules lasting 31 weeks in total; and a Post Foundation Phase consisting of a minimum of 30 days training based around 3 two-week sessions, known as Post Foundation courses A, B and C.

The major changes to the probationer training programme have been summarised by Police Support, Harrogate as:

[1] Modular, sandwich-type course, in and out of force to PTC, and back to force.
[5] The training experience to reflect the practical requirements of policing.
[6] The student-centred training model to be used in order to "facilitate others' learning".
[7] Student assessment to be on a continuous basis, including self-assessment, peer assessment, and Tutor Constable assessment, to encompass the overall ability of probationers.
[8] Each skill area that a probationer has to reach is described by a statement setting out the various levels of skill required to meet the performance levels. These are set out as follows:

Level One.

Statements describing behaviour which is "unacceptable to the service".

Level Two.

Statements describing the behaviour that each probationer should be exhibiting before he or she is allowed to go on independent patrol.

Level Three.
Statements describing the behaviour that each probationer should exhibit before being confirmed as a constable.

**Level Four**

Statements describing behaviour identifying probationers with "early potential".

**The Foundation Phase.**

Module One takes place within the recruits' own force and is designed to be an "introduction to policing". Within this module probationers have the opportunity to visit various departments within their own force and to spend time working with a shift of operational officers. The theory behind Module One is that recruits will gain observational experience of practical policing, both within the police station, and out on patrol, that they can later build on when they attend Module Two at the PTC.

**Module Two.**

Module Two is of 10 weeks duration and takes place at the PTC. Students build upon the observational experiences they have acquired during Module One, as well as using 'Case Studies' of real policing situations. Case Studies are used with the intention of providing students with "vicarious" or "second-hand experiences" of actual policing situations enabling the trainer to explore all aspects of the incident under discussion such as social skills, community relations, application of the law, for example, to illustrate the complexity of social reality.

The Case Studies used in Module Two are designed to cover the areas that the probationer is likely to deal with on operational duties such as 'theft from store', and 'taking a conveyance without consent'.

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Module Three.
Module Three takes place back in force and gives probationers 5 weeks street-duties experience with a trained Tutor Constable. The probationer is able to observe the Tutor Constable deal with the more complex incidents and to reflect on the way these incidents were dealt with.

In terms of how the institution equips officers to construct and report 'official reality', the Tutor Constable phase is pivotal, since it is at this stage that the officer comes up against the weight of traditional practice, stabilised logic and discursive regularities that underpin street policing.

Module Four.
During Module Four probationers goes back to the Police Training Centre for a period of 4 weeks where they concentrate on more Case Studies. At this stage officers are usually able to draw on their experiences of working with their Tutor Constables and so are able to contribute actual policing experiences in discussions of 'domestic disputes' and public order offences.

Module Five.
Students are given 7 days leave.

Module Six.
This consists of 5 weeks street duties with a Tutor Constable. During Module Six the probationer will be expected to take the lead in dealing with the incidents he or she is sent to, under the guidance of the Tutor Constable, and will take on more complex incidents as his or her confidence grows.

Module Seven.
Module Seven is the 'assessment' module where evidence from the previous modules is examined in order to assess the suitability of the probationer to undertake
independent patrol. In addition, present and future developmental needs are identified. However, any analysis of probationer assessment must be seen against the background of the provisions of Regulation 17[1] of Police Regulations, 1987, which state:

"Subject to the provisions of this Regulation, during the period of probation in the force the services of a constable may be dispensed with at any time if the Chief Officer of police considers that he is not fitted, physically or mentally, to perform the duties of his office, or that he is not likely to become an efficient or well conducted constable."

Probationary constables are under a very real pressure to perform well during their first two years until they have successfully completed their probationary period and are "confirmed in their appointment".

The Post Foundation Phase.

This phase lasts from week 32 to week 104 and takes place at the probationer’s own in-force training school. This training is based on 3 phases: Post Foundation A, Post Foundation B, and Post Foundation C. [PFA, PFB and PFC] Each phase deals with a specific Case Study, organised by local forces in line with national guidelines.

Training Support, Harrogate.

Training Support, Harrogate constitutes an important area for the researcher since it is here that a number of key elements of probationer training are provided. Harrogate represents a centre of expertise in terms of the theory, philosophy and evaluation of probationer training for all 42 provincial police forces in England and Wales.

Training Support, Harrogate is responsible for providing, inter alia, the following:

1. The Police Trainers' Course, introduced in 1986 following the recommendations of the Stage 11 Review, for all officers who are involved in probationer training at one of the six Police Training Centres, or force training schools.
Harrogate maintains strict, almost Jesuitical control over the content and delivery of probationer training and monitors the performance of all trainers who have successfully completed the course and are teaching at the PTCs. The Trainers' Course is primarily attended by police constables and sergeants but occasionally by Inspectors.

The aims of the course are to provide the "knowledge, understanding, skills, attitudes and behaviour" necessary to fulfil the training function. In reality the Police Trainers' Course is heavily biased towards the psychological elements of training, known in Harrogate as the 'affective domain'; and is clearly aimed at the 'deconstruction' of the operational police officer who is then 'reconstructed' as a police trainer.

2. The Evaluation Course.

This course is for sergeants and inspectors from various forces who have already completed the Trainers' Course and have had some experience at teaching at one of the six PTCs, to prepare them to assess the performance of student trainers who are undergoing teaching practice. The course follows the guidelines set out by the Police Training Councils' Steering Group in 1990 and adopted in Home Office Circular 105/1991.


The content and design of all training texts, videos, etc., including the Probationer Foundation Notes, is carried out by the staff at Harrogate.

The Police Trainers' Course at Harrogate is of particular interest to my research since the trainers who have successfully completed this course will in turn provide probationers with the primary orientation of the policing institution. As such, both Harrogate and the six PTCs constitute the primary interpretive community for
probationers, both in terms of making sense of, and reporting, the various training incidents and case studies that form part of the probationer curriculum.

The Trainers' Course is of 11 weeks duration— the first seven weeks [known as the generic phase] is at Harrogate under the guidance of two [sometimes three] Inspectors known as the Directors of Study. Thus, at any one time, all the training staff at the six PTCs will have been trained by the two Inspectors at Harrogate, resulting in a remarkable consistency of teaching style and theoretical orientation among the training staff. The Trainers' Development Programme consists of 6 stages:

1. The selection of personnel to attend the course following applications from officers in-force.

2. A distance learning programme consisting of an introductory pack, workbooks etc., is sent to officers prior to them joining the course at Harrogate.

3. The Generic Phase at Harrogate.

4. Workplace briefing.

5. Teaching practice at one of the six PTCs.

6. Development week [held back at Harrogate].

Student trainers are assessed on their performance in accordance with the 36 skills and abilities adapted from the probationer training programme.

The Generic Phase of the Trainers' Course.

Following the Stage 11 Reviews' criticism of the old-style instructors course at Harrogate that it was too "front-loaded" and prescriptive, the course underwent a
radical and fundamental change as result of consultation with non-police experts in education and training.

The new style Trainers' Course includes a substantial psychological element which aims to increase a trainers' self-awareness whilst identifying any personal prejudices. As with probationer training, student trainers are issued with Personal Development Portfolios [PDPs] in which they are expected to record details of their personal feelings and critical reflections as they progress through the course. The notes accompanying the PDP point out that developing personal skills, especially when "feelings are involved" necessitates a "safe learning environment" where individuals:

"...can pursue their development without fear of ridicule or insensitive feedback... and:
"At times the process of personal development can be painful...and may involve facing up to facts which we would prefer to ignore."[CPU Police Trainers' Course PDP notes 3A].

In order to bring about the 'deconstruction' of the individual the Trainers' Course includes several examples of what one could refer to as 'mind games'. Probably the most extreme example of this involves a group session called "Johari's Window" [Figure 2] which involves an element of self-disclosure in front of a student trainer group, who then give feedback to the individual in the form of highly personal criticism.

Self-disclosure is encouraged in the student trainer in terms of their responsibility as trainers to create a safe learning environment for their probationers when at the PTCs. The student trainers are therefore instructed that self-disclosure, is "productive":

"...By exposing your feelings, values, opinions and attitudes it is, simultaneously an act of self-disclosure, an expression of risk-taking and an affirmation of trust in others..."[CPU Police Trainers' Course PDP notes 3A i].
The Johari Window
Prior to the Johari's Window session students complete a 'self-disclosure questionnaire" which covers seven sections including financial status i.e. "size of mortgage"; H.P commitments"; "whether I gamble / extent of gambling"; "behaviour I am ashamed of"; "things I don't like about my body" etc., The result is then scored in relation to how much of the "target area" the student trainer would reveal to others.

Finally, the Johari's Window session involves an intensely personal episode of self and group disclosure. For example, "Pane 2" involves the "blind spot" or "knowing things others know about you but you don't know about yourself":

"...This is sometimes referred to as the 'bad breath and dandruff pane'...if you are unaware of some mannerism that aggravates others or that make you appear foolish...accurate feedback can help you make a better choice and shut this pane." [CPU Trainers Course PDP notes 3]

Pane 3 relates to the students' hidden self and contains "things you do not want others to know about you".

Pane 4 relates to information "...that neither you nor others know. Discovery in this section often occurs under conditions of extreme stress and conflict."

Following what is often a traumatic and painful session students are sent to their rooms to 'reflect' on what has been revealed to them in the Johari's Window session. What has to be borne in mind is that Harrogate in some ways resembles Goffman's 'total institution' in terms of its isolation, lack of privacy [the accommodation is very cramped and basic], psychological intensity, and compulsory residential element. The residential element is important here since student trainers are required to reside at Harrogate during the course and are allowed home only at weekends. Because of the fact that Harrogate has students from around the country, many students from the southern forces do not travel back every weekend. This intensifies the psychological
impact of the course with sessions extending into the evening and students completing work in their rooms.

Teaching staff also monitor the behaviour of student trainers in the bar at night, especially in terms of heavy drinking and inappropriate language, as well as looking for signs of a cynical attitude towards the course content and philosophy. Every aspect of the student's behaviour is monitored at this stage and it is not an exaggeration to state that the 'politically correct' atmosphere resembles a religious training college rather than a police training college.

These 'mind games' are not without danger as one of the staff revealed to me during the fieldwork stage, "They are very good at taking the wheel off but can't put it back on afterwards". The truth of this statement became apparent when I learned that several student trainers had suffered a mental breakdown whilst on the course. One student was unable to drive and was sent off from Harrogate by ambulance.

In addition to the 'deconstruction of the individual', student trainers are given an intensive input on: student-centred learning; groups and how they react; counselling; assessment of self, peers and Tutor Constables; teaching and debrief methods. There then follows a period of teaching practice at a PTC.

**Police Training Centres: putting theory into practice.**

The model of learning used at PTCs is that outlined in the Stage 11 Review document, and is aimed at the development of 'reflective practice' in probationers, allowing them to "reflect in depth" on the various incidents that they will have to deal with whilst on operational duties. The principal role of the trainer at the PTC is to facilitate the learning process in which:
"...the recruits are invited to reflect on their responses-interpretations, judgements, decisions, actions and reactions-to the situations they are presented with."

and:

"...The task of instructors as facilitators is to manage the process of reflection...

[MacDonald et al 1987: 125]

In practice, the technique used involves first giving the students a 'pre-read' of the subject to be covered. The trainer then asks questions to assess the level of understanding in the class. Student trainers are taught how the "learning by experience" process can be structured and accelerated in the classroom by the 'student centred' approach. This technique involves the use of the students' own life experiences or, in the terminology of Harrogate, 'live data'. In this way trainers can give students the opportunity to build on each others' experiences in a way that ensures that the discussion "...progresses organically but coherently." [MacDonald et al 1987: 126]

Trainers are encouraged to integrate 'social issues' into the session by capitalising on the 'live data' contributed by the students. This, as my fieldwork reveals, is a potential minefield for the trainer when exploring such sensitive issues as sexual offences where it is possible that one or more of the students has been a victim of child abuse. The combination of the 'safe learning environment', together with the emotional outpouring that 'live data' can produce, demands a high level of sensitivity and control on the part of the trainer. In practice, very few trainers are able to achieve this.

Thus trainers are expected to maintain an open discussion in the classroom in which individual students can freely express their own views. Trainers are actively discouraged from introducing their own views from a position of authority into the
discussion, "...on the presumption that they have expert knowledge which is not open to question." [Op Cit 126] Instead, trainers are taught to intervene only to "clarify or elaborate" or to expand a point raised in the discussion as well as to 'reflect' on the views of others.

This approach is greatly influenced by the work of Donald Schon [1983,1986] and his development of the idea of the 'reflective practitioner'. Schon argues that issues in the 'real world' require more than the skilful application of rules alone but requires a degree of "professional judgement" accessed through reflective practice. In this way trainers are taught that they can accelerate classroom learning by utilising not only the experiences of individual students, but the collective professional experiences of operational officers distilled in various 'case studies'.

Unfortunately for Training Support, Harrogate, the training techniques they use actually work against the outcome they are trying to achieve. Operational officers cry out for clearly defined objectives that will steer them through the minefield of their two year probationary period. By failing to provide clear guidelines for operational policing the primary interpretive community drives probationers into the arms of the very culture they try so desperately to overturn.
Chapter 6

Tutor Constables: The Model

The Tutor Constable phase in probationer training is without question the most important stage of police training in terms of how probationers are taught to 'make sense' of the incidents and occurrences they encounter 'on the street'. The Tutor Constable role is indeed 'pivotal' in that the Tutor mediates between two interpretive communities: that is, the primary interpretive community of official police training; and the secondary interpretive community of the particular shift or section within which the probationer will work.

I will first set out the model for the Tutor Constable role and then explain how the training is actually delivered on Division.

In order to become a Tutor Constable an officer must first have completed his or her probationary period and have recent experience of, and be competent in, operational patrol duties. In terms of 'qualifications' required for this very important role, the criteria set out above are clearly minimal in the extreme, and yet this still constitutes the norm in the majority of forces. A telephone survey of 43 forces carried out by Smallwood and Wild[1994] revealed that few forces employed objective assessment criteria for applicants in order to judge suitability for the role, and racial and gender monitoring was "rarely carried out".
Tutor Constables are defined by Harrogate as: "...experienced police constables specially selected for their personal and professional qualities, skills and abilities ...[who have] received appropriate training to develop existing skills and abilities in preparation for the role." [CPTU Trainers' Guide-no date]

Tutors are expected to provide "...support and encouragement for the trainee" so that the probationer may be guided through a "...series of work-related experiences" to develop the skills and abilities which are "...essential in an effective, operational police officer". In order to achieve this goal, Tutors are told they must "...embrace a reflective approach" which will then "enhance their own professional development". [op cit 2]

The importance of the Tutor Constable attachment was first highlighted in the Report of the Police Training Council Working Party on Probationer Training [Home Office, 1983]. These recommendations were implemented in 1984 as follows:

1. The Tutor Constable phase was extended from 4 to 10 weeks.

2. It was agreed that probationers should not be allowed to patrol alone until the conclusion of the Tutor Constable attachment.

3. Chief Officers should recognise the status of Tutors by publishing their appointment to the role in Force Orders;

4. Tutor Constables should carry out a two-week period of training to prepare them for their new role.

When the Stage Two Review Team looked at how the recommendations of the 1983 Working Party had been implemented they found that instead of a probationer working with a single Tutor for the 10 week attachment, more
commonly "...members of the cohort had 3, 4 or even 5 Tutors during the scheme, some as many as 7, 8 or 9." [MacDonald et al 1987: 55].

In addition, they found that the Working Party recommendation that tutors undergo a two-week training course had not been implemented in three out of the four forces they sampled. This situation still exists, with some forces giving only 3 day courses to Tutors. When one considers the complexity of the present modular probationer training within which the Tutor plays a key role in assessment and monitoring it is clear that the lack of preparation for the Tutor Constable role will invariably be problematic in terms of the actual delivery of the Harrogate philosophy of training.

The Probationer Training Review 1995: Final Report [Training Support, Harrogate 1996] published the results of a survey carried out in 42 police forces and 6 Police Training Centres in England and Wales in which over 600 officers were interviewed. This survey revealed the reality of the national picture regarding the Tutor Constable role. For example, although Module 4 is intended to provide probationers with a "...structured development programme of duties under the guidance of a Tutor Constable", in reality "...the Tutor Constable in many forces is seen and used as an operational resource. Therefore the probationer accompanies the Tutor to whatever incident arises with very little consideration being given to developmental requirements." [Training Support, Harrogate 1996: 21] What this situation again reinforces is the low status training in general is accorded within the policing institution. A further effect will be to diminish the status of the probationer training programme within
the mind of the probationer and to facilitate the change to the values of street policing where pragmatic, speedy processing of the incidents to which officers are sent becomes the norm.[8]

The Probationer Training Review 1995 Final Report also pointed out the anomaly between the length of time given to the training of trainers at Harrogate and the short time devoted to the training of Tutors:

"The selection and training of Tutor Constables is recognised as having a considerable effect upon the development of the probationers. The one or two weeks in-force training of Tutor Constables appears out of proportion to the time allocated to 'training of trainers' which, in 1966, will comprise a detailed distance learning package and 6 weeks of classroom work, followed by teaching practice."

and:

"Tutor training is particularly important in relation to debriefing skills as it is recognised that the best learning opportunities can be through debriefing immediately after live incidents. If the experiences of probationers are to be used for effective learning, then time to debrief incidents must be made available. This is often not the case, as one incident follows closely to the last. Failure to provide adequate time for debriefing and learning from reflection undermines the whole philosophy of the modular system." [Training Support Harrogate 1996 :21]

[8]In the HMIC Report Police Integrity [June, 1999] Her Majesty’s Inspectors found that there was still a "...clear mismatch between the virtues extolled during their [i.e. probationer’s] training and the views and attitudes of Tutor Constables and other experienced colleagues." who informed the Inspection Team that "...new starters go with the flow, it’s part of the police culture." They also found, inter alia, that Tutors were selected by ad hoc methods and training for the role was generally inadequate. HMIC also called for a standard course for tutors designed by NPT [Ibid para 5.5]
Not only is the training period for Tutors seen as inadequate but research by Smallwood and Wild[1994] revealed that there was a general dissatisfaction by Tutors of the training they were given inasmuch as the majority felt that the training did not prepare them for the role. Tutors wanted a more competency-based training programme rather than a theory-based, Harrogate designed course. The Tutors questioned also stated that a lack of "perceived support from senior officers" substantially affected their "confidence, stress [levels] and effectiveness".

It is interesting to note the feedback the 1995 Review Team researchers received from probationers regarding Module Four [this is when students return to the PTC after their first field placement with the Tutor Constable]: probationers "...often reported they did not want to return to this Module and did not value the time spent on it." and, "...probationers still indicate an underlying feeling that...time would have been better spent on operational duties." [op cit 22]. Taken together, these remarks underline the low status of training in the wider policing organisation. The fact that the institution countenances the delivery of operational policing skills by what are, in effect, untrained officers shows the widespread belief that 'real training' occurs at street level, by actually performing the role and learning from operational colleagues in 'hands on' situations. Because of this, any officer who has the relevant practical experience is seen as adequate for the role of Tutor.

The Tutor Constable: Delivery In-Force.
According to the Harrogate guide for Tutors, the overall aims of Modules 3 and 6, within the probationers' curriculum, are:

"[a] To develop professional abilities to a level which will enable Probationers to undertake independent patrol on the division to which they will be attached.

[b] To develop professional abilities in the range of typical and critical practical policing situations an officer would be expect to deal with competently on that division.

[c] To reinforce and apply theory to practice, through the practical application of the knowledge, skills and abilities necessary to enable an officer to deal competently with such situations.

[d] To promote an open, trusting and supportive learning environment for Probationers.

Module 3 and 6 activities and learning experiences should be organised and implemented within the established criteria approved by the Police Training Council."[CPTU Tutors' Guide-no date]

Harrogate stresses the point that the relationship between Tutor and probationer is "critical" and set out the following as a guide:

" [1] Tutors should encourage probationers to form their own views on how a particular incident or situation ought to be handled, rather than impose a typical position of their own, thus encouraging the impartial consideration of possible alternatives.

[2] When demonstrating how to handle situations or incidents, Tutors should encourage their probationers to consider possible alternative ways of dealing with the same occurrence.

[CPTU Tutors' Guide-no date]

In addition to the above, the Harrogate guide acknowledges that each police officer "operates in a very personal and individual manner", and that there is "no single 'right' way "[to deal with an incident]. In this way, it is claimed, probationers will become "more effective" police officers if "each develops an individual manner". To encourage this approach Tutors should "...consider a wide
range of alternatives" when "deciding how to deal with an incident", and not merely "demonstrate a manner of dealing with incidents for the Probationer to copy".[op cit : 10]. In reality, this is exactly what happens with probationers acquiring scripted knowledge in order to deal quickly and effectively with their workload. [The 1995 Probationer Review found that probationers and Tutors were still consistently being deployed nationally as operational resources. This fact speaks volumes about the status of training within the wider police institution.]

**The Tutor Constable Assessment During Modules 3 And 6**

The particular skills and abilities that are now used to assess the progress of probationary constables were developed by the Stage 11 Review team using the following method:

"...The first was to ask as many police officers as possible to list the skills and abilities they saw as important in new officers. The second was to ask a university researcher and a police Inspector to carry out some research to obtain a similar list. " [Guide To Assessment For Police Probationer Training, Police Support, Harrogate, no date : 4]

The results of the research produced a list of 78 skills and abilities which were then amalgamated into the present system based on 36 skills and abilities, grouped into 8 skill areas. The Harrogate guide explains that the system is based on a process of continuous assessment using the "8 cluster groups of skills and abilities". This, in turn, will provide a "diagnosis" of each probationers' needs in the form of a profile[ the PDP], which sets out areas of strengths and weaknesses. The 36 skills and abilities include the following:
DESIRED CHARACTER TRAITS

Punctuality
Pride in appearance
Reliability
Concentration
Morally and physically courageous
Creativity
Self-motivation
Attitudes towards others
Professional/personal responsibility

Monitoring Personal Performance

Self-monitoring
Stress
Fitness/Health
Learning from experience.

COMMUNICATION AND RELATIONSHIP WITH OTHERS.

Consideration of the feelings of others.
Non-Verbal Communication [NVC or body-language]
Oral Communication
Effective Listening
Self Control
Use Of Physical Force
Relationship with others.
INVESTIGATION
Assess the total situation.
Questioning
Collation and Analysis of information

KNOWLEDGE
Knowledge of Law
Knowledge of technical skills
Knowledge of procedures
Community awareness

DECISION MAKING, PROBLEM SOLVING, PLANNING
Decision making
Planning
Flexibility
Dealing with conflict and ambiguity

PRACTICAL EFFECTIVENESS
Initiative
Confidence
Responsibility
Leadership

WRITTEN REPORTS
Written reports.
Under the 36 skill areas Harrogate provide a set of statements "...describing the behaviour or standard of behaviour that is required." These are referred to as 'Performance Statements' and there are different statements for each of the 4 levels of performance.

Level ONE [unacceptable behaviour for the police service].

Level TWO [Independent Patrol] probationer must display this sort of behaviour before being considered for independent patrol].

Level THREE [ statements describing behaviour probationer must exhibit before consideration is given to 'confirmation' as a constable].

Level FOUR. [ Above average ability, showing signs of 'early potential']

In terms of time, the probationer should "exhibit level two behaviour" by the end of week 31[ at the end of Module 7]. By week 104[end of probationary period]officers "...should exhibit Level Three behaviour in the 27 skill areas being assessed."

Assessment During Module 3.

Probationers are required to hand their assessment logs to their Tutor Constables on the first day of the Module. This ensures that the Tutor is aware of the assessments made at the PTC of progress made to date. Tutors are required to assess the probationer using the same 8 cluster areas by a system of continuous assessment based on observations of the probationer carrying out operational duties. These must be backed by evidence using specific examples to justify the evaluation of either strengths or weaknesses. Tutors are also required to compare the assessment made by the PTC staff with their own assessment and then to "... adjust or tailor the operational duties that [are] planned for the probationer."[op cit : 24]. By week 19 a further assessment is done by both the probationer and the Tutor Constable for the probationer's senior officers.
By Module 6[week 26] the PDP will contain a detailed assessment of the individual probationer. Tutor Constables are told to use the information in the form of action plans to improve perceived areas of weakness. During week 30 another 'self' and Tutor assessment takes place and this time the Tutor Constable is instructed to concentrate on the areas of "...weakness identified...in Module Three, or by the PTC [staff] in Module 4."[op cit : 29] Following the assessment the probationer's PDP is passed "...as far as the Sub-Divisional Commander" in order that "all the evidence" is examined so that "suitable recommendations" can be made "as to the probationers' future."

'Puppy Walking' and the reality of street policing.

The Tutor Constable attachment is universally known in the Metropolitan Police by the term 'Puppy Walking'. Whilst this has pejorative and derogatory connotations, it is an extremely apt metaphor that succinctly encapsulates the powerlessness and total dependence of the probationer on his or her Tutor Constable.

At this early stage in the probationers' career the probationer is under pressure to perform, in terms of producing work in the form of arrests or 'process'[ persons reported for summons]. At the same time he or she is totally dependent on the Tutor to point out the offences, and to explain the correct procedure for reporting the offender, including the correct forms to be submitted, and how to construct a narrative of evidence. Not only is the probationer in a liminal position[ not yet accepted as a fully fledged constable], but the Tutor will be required to prepare a written assessment on the probationers' progress which, in
essence, will describe how well the individual adapts to the culture and practice of street policing.

Although each probationer brings with them a certain amount of cultural knowledge of what is considered acceptable or unacceptable social behaviour, this is inadequate for the production of competent institutional coding of incidents. It will be the task of the Tutor Constable to pass on to the probationer what Foucault refers to as the "historically enduring discursive regularities" or 'epistemes' [Foucault 1981 : 53] that will provide the probationer with what Hunt and Wickam refer to as:

"... grids for perception[that]...impose a framework of categories and classifications with which thought, communications and actions occur." [Hunt and Wickam 1994 : 9]

In sum, the probationer is immersed in a world where events are coded within institutionally acceptable categories at all levels of the organisation. For example, communications room staff transform calls from the public into police coded categories literally within seconds of receiving the call[ see Manning 1988], and on the basis of minimal information. The probationer will experience his or her Tutor categorise an incident, decide on a course of action, and then carry out that action, often within the space of a few minutes, and then pass the 'result' back to control via the personal radio.

When the probationer begins to submit official forms or witness statements, especially traffic reports and 'breathalyser' forms, he or she will discover that many of these follow formulaic or 'set' formats. As Andrew Sanders points out:
Assigning 'legitimate history' is made easier by using stereotypical accounts...and by standardisation. Standardisation is facilitated in many forces for certain traffic offences...by special pre-printed forms. All the officer has to do is to fill in the gaps and all legal requirements are automatically fulfilled.[Sanders 1994 :120]

The sum total of exposure to this institutional coding is the tendency to legitimise and make acceptable a practice, [notwithstanding the pressures of pragmatic decision making, workload factors and time constraints] that, in effect, countenances a crude reductionism and reduces complex social reality into the 'black and white' world of police institutional coding.

The processes of construction identified by Mc Conville et al[1991] in a study of police prosecution files is mirrored in the micro-decision making that occurs at street level.
Chapter 7.

The Effect Of Training On Probationers: How 'Outsiders' Become 'Insiders'.

This chapter explains the process of identity transformation, or 'newcomer socialisation', that occurs in recruits as they undergo police training and start to acquire a sense of 'police identity' that sets them apart from the wider community. Previous research in this area is examined, and expanded, to explain how the complex interplay of both macro [institutional], and micro[individual], elements combine to precipitate the transition from the primary to the secondary interpretive community. Foucault's notion of power/knowledge is used to explain this transition in terms of addressing the 'reality gap' that exists between NPT and operational policing. Finally, these elements are considered in terms of how they impact on individual practices and semiosis.

NPT provides the 43 police forces of England and Wales with 6 Police Training Centres [PTCs] specifically to provide probationer training based on the national curriculum. The stated objective of the PTCs is to "assist in the personal and professional development" of probationers so that they can "efficiently and effectively" carry out their duties. In order to become "efficient and effective" police officers, probationers must absorb the normative and evaluative modes of judgment that inform and orientate the police role.

Since policework in Britain has a tradition extending back over 150 years, many of the accepted practices, and the attitudes that inform such practices, are passed on from generation to generation of police officer. Indeed, the maintenance of the traditional core of policework depends on the acquisition and retention of
shared beliefs and practices in order that the organisation can continue to achieve common aims and stated goals. As Peter Manning notes:

" organisations are not ephemeral : the normative imagery of the organisation constrains the meanings that actors can impute to their relationship." [Manning 1977 : 28]

Similarly, organisational labels are what Manning refers to as "symbolic canopies" that bind officers into "collective moral obligations" that demand their personal loyalty. During probationer training officers will acquire a set of values and predispositions that will structure their individual practices by providing a cultural positioning that parallels Bourdieu's [1984] notion of the 'habitus'.

An important shift of orientation and style occurs between the 31 week Foundation period of probationer training and the Post-Foundation training that takes place within the probationers' home-force training school. Because PTCs are regional facilities and take recruits from various forces within that region, the style of training provided tends to be 'broad-brush' and generic in that it provides officers with general policing skills to equip probationers to deal with commonly recurring policing situations.

One important ingredient that is missing from the training environment at PTCs is of course the vital contextual dimension that plays such an important part in operational decision making. An attempt has been made within case studies to provide a realistic backdrop for the studies and to acknowledge the complexity of social reality. This, however, is a poor substitute for what they will encounter 'on the street'. The purely 'textual' analysis that results restricts semiosis to a synchronic coding that is stripped of the symbolic or connotational dimension.
Thus, case studies, and the practical incidents staged by the students themselves, are incidents isolated in time and space. Because of the way the curriculum is structured, incidents are not polysemic in the sense that the content can give rise to several potential cases or 'offences'; and students know beforehand the nature of the practical incident with which they will be dealing. Those students who attempt to introduce a different interpretation are informed that they are dealing with an example of 'X' and not 'Y'. All this is carried out within strictly confined time limits, and within a 'safe learning environment' devoid of hostility and aggression.

By contrast, the training provided in-force; especially during the Tutor Constable attachments, emphasises the contextual and, increasingly during operational duty, the intertextual dimension of semiosis. Thus, the primary conceptual framework that initially informs the normative and evaluative modes of judgment of probationers is that of the primary interpretive community that is National Police Training. The absence of the contextual and intertextual dimensions of incident coding within NPT results in probationers becoming aware of a 'reality gap' between the artificial world of PTCs and the signifying practices of operational policing. This realisation, I will contend, precipitates the move from the primary to the secondary interpretive community.

When probationers return to their respective forces and experience operational policing they see for themselves the importance that the contextual dimension of incident coding assumes in street policing. The contextual dimension constitutes an important pragmatic filter that allows officers to screen incidents either in or out of the categories requiring police attention. Similarly, probationers on
division notice that semiosis is not confined to the synchronic axis but includes diachronic elements as officers draw on their experiential store of knowledge acquired when dealing with previous incidents and offenders.

In this way, the normative and evaluative modes of judgment learned within the primary interpretive community start to weaken and fade under the hegemonic pressure from operational practices, logonomic systems and discursivities.

The interpretive scheme used by operational officers is essentially grounded in the conventions and practices of their respective structural grouping within the organisation. Thus, in the illustrative example of the Rodney King incident, the interpretive community of the CHP officers constrained semiosis specifically to consideration of possible traffic violations, limiting coding to the synchronic axis, and filtering out indexical signs that the 'crime control' orientated LAPD officers used to construct their paradigmatic frame of "PCP-dusted felony evader". The elaborate mental structure of suspiciousness, constructed from layers of connotative meanings within a diachronic time-frame [both backwards and forwards in time], that moved the incident into an intertextual dimension, illustrates the interplay of contextual and experiential and symbolic elements that typifies operational policing. The 'closure rules' or logonomic system that constrains semiosis should be regarded as a function of membership of a specific interpretive community. Logonomic systems also include, as Foucault pointed out, linguistic constraints on meaning construction found within various discursive practices [Sheptyki 1993: Jackson 1988: Hall 1997].
When considering the move probationers make away from the primary towards the secondary interpretive community, Foucault's point that knowledge is also a form of power, in the sense that it permeates questions concerning when, and under what circumstances, knowledge should be applied, becomes increasingly relevant. Whilst the individual probationer might have sufficient knowledge of the law to recognise when an offence has been committed, questions of application in terms of the actual circumstances in which the law should be applied, are controlled by the Tutor Constable. The powerless, almost liminal, position of the probationer when being 'puppy walked' serves to further undermine and weaken the Harrogate message. This should also be seen against a backdrop of performance assessment and appraisal that is carried out and evaluated by operational officers and Tutors within a value system grounded in the exigencies of operational policing.

In this way operational discursive formations not only help to construct the suspect population for the probationer, in terms of producing attributes and characteristics that typify 'subjects'; but, according to Foucault's theory, these [operational] discourses also construct a "place for the subject", in this case the individual probationer, from within that particular discourse.[Foucault 1980 : 115]

Stuart Hall explains the process by which individuals become located as 'subject positions' within a particular discourse:

"... Individuals may differ as to their social class, gendered, 'racial', and ethnic characteristics [among other factors], but they will not be able to take meaning until they have identified with those positions which the discourse constructs,
subjected themselves to its rules, and hence becomes the subject of its power/knowledge..."[ Hall 1997 : 56]

Foucault's theory of discourse is controversial, and not without its critics. However, I find his arguments particularly compelling; since they are often focused on institutional settings, and contain an awareness of historical influences, which are particularly important in relation to research on the police.

**The Process By Which 'Outsiders' Become 'Insiders'.**

The transitional period in which recruits become transformed into police officers has been subject to previous research, and there is now a substantial psychological literature on 'newcomer socialisation'. The primary text on British police training remains Fielding's, now very dated, [the fieldwork having been carried out in 1979/80] longitudinal study of 125 Derbyshire police officers. This study, although still able to provide valuable insights, was based on the 'old style', didactic and law-based, classroom style training that was replaced in July, 1989.

Fielding's research focused on attitudinal changes amongst 4 intakes of police probationers as they attended courses at Derbyshire Constabulary's in-force training school. Fielding administered a questionnaire to the recruits at induction[that is, prior to attending the PTC]; at 12 months service; and finally, when the officers had successfully completed their probationary period. This research was augmented with interviews with police trainers[or 'instructors' as they were then called], and with an analysis of the recruits' autobiographical essays that they submitted with their application to join the police.
Fielding's findings suggested that, in terms of the recruits' attitude towards the police role, a shift had occurred towards a more "pragmatic" conception of police work. Thus, at induction [and before any formal instruction] the occupation identified by recruits as most resembling police work was the military; the second choice being a "public relations officer". After 12 months service, Fielding notes, "these responses were reversed". The data also indicated a move away from an "idealistic"[implying notions of "service","duty", and the "common good" etc.], towards a more "pragmatic" [implying a shift towards a task oriented, instrumental outlook] attitude to police work. This, it could be argued is hardly surprising, since young people are typically idealistic and, at induction, have no actual experience of police work. After intervals of 12 and 24 months one would expect a move towards a pragmatic, task oriented, attitude.

The subtle point produced by Fielding's research is not just to confirm the impact that occupational culture has on attitude change, but to note that this convergence is not absolute, and that recruits can be "insulated" from the extremes of occupational culture by their education, background and life experiences. This, Fielding, states, shows that police occupational culture is not as "solidary and monolithic" as has often been stated[Fielding 1988]. Fielding also questions the "linearity" of occupational socialisation by emphasising that "formal organisation" is initially most persuasive to probationers but that this diminishes as operational experience increases and "idealistic" outlooks move towards "instrumental" and pragmatic outlooks after 12 months service. This also confirms Manning's[1977] point that "occupational socialisation is a process of
identity transformation" rather than a series of distinct 'stages' at which probationers arrive.

Within social psychology, Fielding's study would be located in 'self categorisation' theory[SCT] which has emerged from research on Social Identity Theory, or SIT [see Turner 1985, 1987]. SCT focuses on the variations between personal and social identity; and especially on the shift that can occur in self-categorisation[individual differences that make a person unique] towards self-categorisation in terms of 'social identity'.

Whereas SCT theory focuses on the shift in self perception from "...self categorisation in terms of personal identity to self categorisation in terms of social identity"[Manstead et al 1997 :502], SIT refers to the social categorical self; that is 'us' versus 'them', ingroup versus outgroup.

Manstead et al summarise this research with regard to group behaviour:

"...it hypothesises that as shared social identity becomes salient, individual self-perception tends to become depersonalised. That is, individuals tend to define and see themselves less as differing individual persons and more as the interchangeable representations of some shared social category membership..." [Manstead et al 1977 : 502]

The depersonalisation of the self also has the effect of "subjective stereotyping". That is, probationers would tend to accentuate their similarities to other probationers and enhance the differences between the police group and outsiders.

Research by Tajfel[1981] has shown that members of 'in groups' will strive to attain a "positive social identity" in comparison to 'out groups' as a means of enhancing esteem.
One of the negative factors associated with the social categorisation process, although a useful cognitive device in reducing complex social reality, is the number of "pernicious judgmental biases" that result:

"...once a person has been classified into a particular social group, it may be assumed that he or she possesses all the attributes that categorise the group as a whole...the person is deemed to possess a range of category-relevant attributes..." [Manstead et al 1977 : 537]

Categorisation, of course, necessarily precedes schema activation and so cues the type of response with which the officer is likely to respond.

Hogg and Abrams[1988 : 17] summarise the essence of SIT theory by stating that whereas traditional approaches in social psychology have "...focused upon the individual in the group", the SIT approach examines the "group in the individual".

Work by Stradling, Tuohy and Harper [1990], and Tuohy, Wrennall and McQueen[1993] with police officers at various stages in their service, including probationers, sheds light on how 'in group' and 'out group' factors influence the decision to prosecute.

Tuohy et al build upon the earlier work of socio-legal scholars such as Davis[1975], Skolnick[1966], and Van Maanen[1975] on police discretion to argue that since most officers' discretionary judgments are based on non-legal, "socio-psychological" factors that derive from "informal norms of conduct prevalent within the police force itself", they argue that:

"the exercise of discretion springs from attitudinal standards instilled into new recruits during their early stages of socialisation into the police service."[ Tuohy et al 1993 : 168]
In a useful review of the literature on "newcomer socialisation", or on the process by which 'outsiders' become 'insiders', Tuohy et al set out a possible stage model of the transition:

1. This stage relates to the recruits "anticipatory judgments about the norms of the organisation" with regard to their own value system.

2. The "encounter stage" in which the recruit "deals with the realities' of the organisational norms and then reconciles these with stage 1.

3. The stage of 'adjustment" in which the recruit " begins to resolve issues such as motivation, and job satisfaction.

Tuohy et al also contrast the 'stage' model with a "process" model which aligns more closely with Fieldings' findings.

Common to all research findings however is the point that :

"...uncertainty[ is]...therefore a salient characteristic of the recruit experience" that researchers have considered as "deriving from the need to undergo the process of setting aside portions of their old identities in order to integrate a new set of social categories."[Tuohy et al 1993 : 168]

This view converges with recent SIT theory. In a study of 113 Scottish police recruits, Tuohy et al found that when they administered a 'stop a motorist' questionnaire to two groups of recruits[one group of 8 weeks service and the second of 12 months service], they found that significant differences existed between the two groups. The inexperienced recruits showed a marked tendency to prosecute rather than to exercise discretion, whereas the 'advanced' group were more inclined to exercise their discretion. Tuohy et al interpreted this as a move by the recruits to take on what they saw as the 'in group' values of the policing institution, which is primarily one of enforcement. The results from the 'advanced' group support Fielding's[1986] study that showed a move towards a more pragmatic, instrumental view of policing. Tuohy et al also note the "very
rapid convergence of operational styles" that take place in police officers that are relevant to 'in group' membership, and a slower convergence in other contexts during the "initial period of formal adjustment to the perceived demands of the organisation." And, further, that the trainees achieved 'in group' solidarity by "...adopting in-group practices and shedding non-conformable aspects of individual identity."[ibid 179]. Thus, the "working personality or operational style" that the probationers adopt will "inform their dealings with supervisors, colleagues, and citizens..."[ibid 179].

The Role Of Operational Supervisors And Their Impact On The Move From The Primary To The Secondary Interpretive Community.

The Final Report of the Probationer Training Review 1995 was published in March 1996. This comprehensive review undertaken by NPT staff at Harrogate involved seeking the views of over 600 officers from 42 police forces, including officers at PTCs.

This report revealed that 51 per cent of operational supervisors "have received little or no formal training on the probationer training system, including their role and responsibilities with respect to completion of the PDP[probationers' development profile]". Also, of the remainder of officers contacted, "...many reported that the training provided...was not adequate". [NPT 1996 : Para 4.6] This is indeed a clear indication of the low status training, in general, has within the wider policing institution.
The paradoxical element is that this power is confined, almost hermetically sealed, within the world of NPT. Indeed, there is an inversion of power with Harrogate exercising almost Jesuitical control over texts, methods and personnel within the training estate, but only weakly influencing operational values and practices.

The review team recommended that all supervisors involved in the assessment of probationers should be given "specific training on the philosophy of the training system and the use of PDPs as development tools." So far this has not materialised.

Of the probationers themselves who were interviewed many indicated that it was possible to 'play the game' using the current system on the completion of their Action Plans [part of the PDP] and assessments. The Review Team commented that:

"...they [probationers] soon learn not to record real weaknesses in self-assessments, as these could be detrimental to their chances of final appointment into the service."[NPT 1996: Para 4.7]

Problems were also identified by the review team with regard to the present format of the PDP in that the 36 skills and abilities were identified by respondents as being "complex to understand" and not focusing on "operational competencies".[Ibid 4.14]. Many operational supervisors admitted that not only were they untrained in the use of PDPs but that they "...did not understand the underpinning philosophy of the probationer training system". Consequently:
"...the present system can be manipulated by probationers whose use of the PDP is not being closely monitored." [Ibid 4.14]

**Tutors On Divisions**

Again reinforcing earlier findings that Tutors in many forces were used as "operational resources" with little regard for developmental requirements of probationers, the review team found that there was:

1. No time to debrief or reflect after 'live' incidents with "one incident following closely to the last" [Ibid 5.8].
2. That the situation was exacerbated by the practice in many forces of posting probationers to areas where no training support exists: "purely as a resource to fill operational gaps".
3. In addition to the problems of training support identified by the review team, the question of low morale amongst trainers themselves also became apparent. Trainers reported being isolated from their families and their force and that they were a "forgotten army" whose time in training was not valued, but was regarded as "lost years" in terms of careers and promotion prospects.

Recent research commissioned by the Police Federation into training was carried out by researchers from the University of the West of England. Questionnaires were sent to 2000 officers in an effort to assess the quality of training provided by NPT. [Davies et al. 1997] The final report supported many of the findings of the Probationer Training Review and recommended, inter alia, that:

"Action needs to be taken to ensure that all supervisory officers are fully familiar with the Probationer Training Programme..." [Davies et al 1997: 48]

And, with regard to the findings of the Probationer Training Review 1995, also supported the criticism of assessments:

"Findings from the present enquiry seem to ...support this assertion...that a similar tendency to 'play the game' can become characteristic of the
way...officers at all levels of service address the task of...appraisal procedures." [Ibid.].

Restrictions On The Private Lives Of Police Officers And The Discipline Code : How This Provides Occupational Solidarity.

Thus far, in building my theory, I have concentrated in the main on the micro aspects of the process by which probationers become competent decision makers. By 'micro' in this context I am referring to the contextual aspect of semiosis. However, I do not wish to under emphasise the influence some of the macro structures [ 'structures' in the Durkheimian sense of external constraints] that permeate every level of the institution have on newcomer socialisation. There is a complex interpenetration between, on the one hand, historical elements and traditions; legal and institutional rules; implicit and explicit 'rules of the game'; the various structural groupings and rank hierarchies, as well as various discursive structures. All these things influence, to a greater or lesser extent, not only the production and reproduction of social structure, but also the particular sense of police identity that these elements engender.

Although the regime at PTCs has radically altered since Fieldings' study was carried out, students still undergo a process of identity transformation part of which involves shedding personal freedoms and accepting the restrictions and constraints of a rigid disciplinary code that impinges on personal as well as professional life.

With the knowledge that one must be cautious of the fact that 'rules' are distinct from actual behaviour, they nevertheless constitute cognitive frames of reference that support, guide and inform institutional behaviour. As Lull explains:
...rules assert frameworks for ideological continuity that likewise persist in time and space... The constitutive and regulative qualities of rules generate a 'shared understanding' of how people ought to behave in order to produce 'consistency, regularity and continuity' in their social world. [Lull 1995: 46]

In addition, for probationers, their services can be dispensed with at any time if the Chief Officer considers that he or she is "not fitted mentally or physically" to perform police duties, or is unlikely to become an "efficient or well conducted officer".

The restrictions on private and professional lives, together with group activities such as military drill, public order training, the ceremonial "passing out parade" and the visible identity conferred by the need to wear uniform, all work together to produce a collective sense of identity, and a sense of being set apart from wider society, that has been noted by several researchers in this area.

Theorists such as Bourdieu and Giddens have attempted to explain the complex linkage between structure and practice. However, in order to understand agency within the policing institution it is necessary to introduce Foucault's notion of power/knowledge. Without this concept one cannot easily explain the transition from the primary to the secondary, and thence to the tertiary interpretive community. Power/knowledge operates at many levels. Sheptycki has shown how discursive practices within the Metropolitan police constrain and limit the semiotic choice of officers dealing with domestic violence in terms of closing off possible alternative definitions and sense-constructions. By confining semiosis to the textual level NPT produce a 'reality gap' in terms of neglecting contextual and intertextual elements. Probationers soon learn that the meaning of an incident is not immanent within the event itself in the sense of having access to a
singular, clear and unambiguous incident coding; but rather that the social and
cultural world is indeterminate and contingent. Meaning is constructed from a
blend of discursive formations; historical influences, and cultural positionings
that are subsumed within that specific interpretive community and serves to
constrain polysemy to accepted incident codings thus closing off a density of
possible alternative interpretations.
Chapter 8

Interpretive Communities: A Case Example In Policing

The semiosic activity employed by operational police officers as they actually make sense of an on-going incident is well illustrated by the events leading up to the arrest of Rodney King. The circumstances surrounding King's arrest, and the subsequent trial of the police officers involved, allows the researcher to see in great detail the way various signs impacted on the officers at the scene and how the officers interpreted these signs.

For the purpose of this dissertation I have referred to the primary orientation that the probationary police constable receives from the District Training Centre; the secondary orientation that the tutor constable imparts; and the final stage where the officer is able to produce authoritative, competent categorisation of incidents in line with institutional expectations. [Fig 3]

This is an over-simplification since other interpretive communities exist within the institution, especially with regards to specialist departments such as Traffic, and CID. A very good example of an interpretive community at work is revealed by the way the officers who attended the arrest of Rodney King interpreted the event, and is also an illustrative example of the semiosic constraint imposed by
TEXTUAL CODING A ‘FREEZE-FRAME’ snapshot of the incident, isolating it in time and space, and coding it evidentially in terms of ‘POINTS TO PROVE’.

CONTEXTUAL CODING Is limited to consideration of synchronic elements such as the location of the offence and time it occurred.

INTERTEXTUAL CODING (DIACHRONIC ASPECT OF INCIDENT INCLUDING THE IDEOLOGICAL DIMENSION) This relates to the officer’s previous experience of dealing with similar incidents. Includes aspects of cultural coding and stereotyping. The constraints on coding relate to membership of a specific structural grouping or ‘interpretive community’ within the police organisation.
membership of specialist departments. The Los Angeles Police Department officers [LAPD], who described themselves as experienced "street cops", categorised the incident as predominantly criminal in nature, using the paradigmatic frame to categorise the offender as a "PCP dusted felony evader". However, the California Highway Patrol officers [CHPS] construed the incident as being primarily a traffic violation, as will be seen from the statement made by officer Singer, and reported in sergeant Koon's book of the incident and trial:

"Melanie Singer testified that her partner advised the School District Police that the suspects were wanted for speeding only. This was an important point, because it revealed the mind set of CHIPS. They were trained to think only in terms of vehicle code violations, their primary responsibility. Also, she testified that she had planned to issue Rodney King a ticket for not wearing a seat belt..." [Koon 1992: 152]

and:

"White[ assistant District Attorney, prosecuting] wound down his examination of officer Melanie Singer by asking how many drunk drivers she had arrested. She said between three hundred and four hundred. After stopping Rodney King, White asked what charge she planned to lodge against him. She responded DIU [driving under the influence].

[Koon 1992: 155]

The variation in interpretation between officers from the two separate police departments resulted in disciplinary proceedings alleging a deliberate misinterpretation of the incident by the LAPD against sergeant Koon in that the variation of interpretation between the two police forces was assumed to be a deliberate falsification. The
Assistant District Attorney White also made much of this distinction in the trial of the officers for the assault of Rodney King.

The allegation of deliberate falsification resulted from belief in a simple 'correspondence theory' of truth, or a focus on the mimetic plane alone, whilst ignoring the influence of the semiosic plane. Quite simply, the LAPD and CHIPS officers were members of two quite distinct interpretive communities: as is apparent from the discursive practices of the LAPD officers, they conceived of their role as primarily one of crime fighting, and the semiosic activity that took place in the arrest of Rodney King reveals this construction. By contrast, the CHIP officers saw their primary role as traffic enforcement and this coloured their interpretation of the incident.

The events leading up to the arrest of Rodney King illustrate the semiosic processes used by operational police officers as they attempt to make sense of the incidents they deal with. The incident allows the researcher to have access to the thought processes of the officers involved in the most minute detail, since these were scrutinised in the subsequent trial of the officers involved for assault, and the book on the incident written by Sgt. Stacey Koon [Koon: 1992]

Events leading up to the arrest of Rodney King: Time and Place
It was midnight on Saturday the 2nd of March 1991 when King's vehicle was first spotted, and the incident extended into the early hours of Sunday morning. Sgt. Koon states that in the previous two weeks there had been two shootings brought about by what he calls "carelessness in dealing with felony suspects" [Koon 1992 :19]. In the first incident the officers involved had failed to "prone out" the suspect, and the suspect had then pulled out a pistol and seriously wounded the two LAPD officers before being himself shot dead. In the second incident, a probationary LAPD officer was shot dead by a motorist she had stopped because she failed to follow safety procedures. Both these incidents, Koon informs us, were in the minds of his officers when they dealt with the Rodney King pursuit.

**Personnel involved in the incident**

Initially, Rodney King's vehicle was picked up by a California Highway Patrol vehicle[CHPS] when it appeared to be travelling at an excessive speed. The crew of this vehicle were a husband and wife team, Melanie and Tom Singer. Melanie Singer was driving the vehicle. The Singers attempted to get the vehicle they were pursuing to stop by using the vehicles siren and flashing lights. Rodney King did not pull over and stop, and so the pursuit was initiated with King's vehicle driving straight through a 'stop sign'.

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The Singers then called for assistance over the radio. At this point sergeant Koon of the LAPD was approximately two miles away from the pursuit but was monitoring it on the police radio. He responded to the request for assistance and, in addition, two other LAPD vehicles responded together with the LAPD helicopter. A further unit from the Los Angeles Unified School District Police [LAUSD] also responded.

After approximately three miles from the point where King's vehicle had first been sighted King turned off the 118 Freeway Interchange, again failing to stop at the junction and "...turned sharply right across at least three lanes of traffic"[op cit. 27]still ignoring the pursuing police vehicles.[see the LAPD police district map overleaf [ Fig 4] which shows the area in which the police pursuit occurred]

The chase then entered the Foothills Division of the LAPD, which Sgt Koon refers to as "my territory". At the intersection of Osborne and Foothills Boulevard, King's vehicle suddenly came to a halt at the entrance to Hansen Dam Recreation Park.

**The significance of this location to police officers**

Although the actual location in which Rodney King's vehicle finally came to a halt is stated in the police report, the symbolic significance of this location for LAPD officers is not given. In his book sergeant Koon reveals why the location was an important factor:
Map Of The Area In Which The Rodney King Pursuit Took Place. [Figure 4]
"...when he did stop, it was at a place known as a graveyard for corpses who'd lost in drug deals gone bad. That park...had a bad reputation...bodies were found there. When the suspect had been forced to stop in front of that park because of a cable across the entrance, we'd all thought that maybe we were getting lured into something."[op cit. 29]]

At this point the Singers were joined by the LAUSD vehicle which parked immediately behind the Singers' vehicle, and another LAPD vehicle which parked to the left of the CHIP vehicle. The LAPD helicopter was overhead illuminating the area with its high intensity [night sun] searchlight.

At this point the two passengers in King's vehicle [Freddie Helms and Bryant Allen] got out of their vehicle and were made to lie in the "felony prone position" where they were handcuffed and placed in one of the police vehicles.

Rodney King then "slowly" got out of his vehicle. Sgt Koon, who arrived at the scene at this time, describes this as follows:

"Tom Singer again shouted for King to get out of the vehicle. Now, slowly, King complied. But it was obvious that something was wrong. King seemed to be either under the influence of alcohol or a much stronger chemical agent. He had his own agendas. He was making light of a dangerous, potentially lethal, situation. He danced around. He waved at the helicopter. Worse, he reached into his pockets, an exceptionally dangerous action since he hadn't been cuffed and searched and the officers at the scene had no idea whether he was armed. "[op cit. 30]It is important to include what might seem to be excessive background details of the events leading up to the stop in order to appreciate the semiosic processes that influenced the officers at the scene. When the dispassionate, prosaic, 'official' police narrative of the event is examined from the duty statements made by the
arresting officers[ before they went off duty] many of the contextual and intertextual factors of the incident, especially the construction of suspicion, have been omitted.

By the time King's vehicle had finally stopped, Sgt Koon and his colleagues were aware of the following contextual factors which influenced the way they started to make sense of the incident:

1. King's vehicle had come to a halt at a symbolic location: a dumping ground used by drug dealers. Sgt Koon feared that he was "getting lured into something".

2. There were two passengers in the vehicle in addition to King. As Koon states:

"...our suspicion and caution were heightened this night because there were two other suspects in the car that was fleeing the pursuit. It wasn't just the driver, there was this guy sitting shotgun and a third in the back seat."

[The use of the terminology "sitting shotgun" rather than 'front seat passenger' itself signifies the dangerous situation that had been created in the minds of the LAPD officers.]

3. During Sgt Koon's fifteen years as a police officer, "thirteen on the street", his intertextual knowledge of similar night-time pursuits had prepared him for an incident linked to serious crime.

4. The construction of suspicion. Sgt Koon explains his thought processes when he first set eyes on King:

"...I estimated him to be a big man, very big, about six feet, two inches tall and maybe 250 pounds. Even though he wasn't standing up I could tell that he was huge. Not only that, but he was "buffed out". That means he had enormous upper body muscles- his torso had been
pumped up through rigorous, systematic exercise. It's a physical condition often associated with ex-cons, who have a lot of time to spend working out in the exercise yard while their in the slammer." [op cit. 31] 
and:

"So my initial suspicions were that this guy was an ex-con and either drunk or on drugs." [ibid.][9]

5. Koon noticed that King was sweating profusely:

"The lights from the cruisers[police cars] and helicopter revealed that King was sweating. His muscular torso was beaded with perspiration that glistened in the artificial light...that was kind of weird. It was a cold night, yet this guy's sweating." [op cit. 32]

6. King got down on his hands and knees and Koon assumed he was "going into compliance mode" for handcuffing. Instead, Koon explains, King started to "pat the ground", and speak unintelligibly:

"Then he started to talk gibberish...it was made-up language. He was mouthing unintelligible words, repeated over and over...I've seen it many times before. I'm beginning to get a bit concerned that we've got a 'dusted' suspect here, not somebody just spaced out on booze or drugs like marijuana, but on something more dangerous like PCP."[ibid.]

7. Koon explains that King is now crouched into "the cocked position of a runner on the blocks..."Koon looked King in the face and his suspicion that King was under the influence of PCP got stronger.

[9][King was in fact on parole for a robbery committed in 1989 when he robbed a Korean shop with a tyre iron. The drug test carried out on King following his arrest proved inconclusive, although he was over the alcohol limit for driving]
8. King still refused to comply with the order to lie on the ground with his hands behind his back, accordingly Koon collected his TASER gun[ an acronym for Thomas A Swift Electric Rifle], an electronic stun gun which delivers a 50,000 volt charge.

9. Officer Melanie Singer decided that her "command presence" was required, and shouted to King to "show his hands". King then turned his back on the officer and:

"...grabbed his butt with both hands and began to gyrate his hips in a sexually suggestive fashion."[op cit. 33]

10. Koon ordered all the officers to put their guns away in an attempt to "de-escalate" the situation. Sgt Koon decides to initiate a 'swarm' tactic[ in which at least four officers simultaneously rush forward to grab the suspect's arm or leg.] Koon explains:

"The suspect is then slammed face first into the ground, his arms twisted behind his back, and the handcuffs put on."[op cit. 35]

11. The officers then 'swarmed' King. Two of the officers attempted to pull King's arms apart, resulting in King collapsing face down onto the road surface[possibly receiving the injury which fractured his cheek bone]. Two of the officers attempting to handcuff King were then thrown off. King then shook off the remaining two officers who were holding his legs:

"I think to myself, 'Oh shit !, He's turned into the hulk !" [op cit. 37]
12. Koon's next tactical step is to 'tase' King. He explains:

"Now I know that the suspect is under PCP. If I had a suspicion before, now the suspicion is confirmed. It's not just a single piece of evidence but an accumulated body of knowledge, based on thirteen years as a street cop."

and:

"It's not just the chase. That's over. It's not just the sweating on a cold night. I remember that, and how weird it is. It's not just the bizarre behaviour, the dancing around, waving at the helicopter, shaking his butt at officer Melanie Singer. That's all just part of the picture. It's not the glassy eyes, the gibberish he's been spouting. It's everything. Put it all together with the superhuman strength to throw off four cops - they're not small cops either - and bingo, you've got a PCP suspect. Now it's confirmed. He's got this hulk-like strength, and you don't find all of this with somebody who's not on PCP."[ibid]

[The above represents an excellent example of syntagmatic chains of signs combining to form a categorisation, or generic paradigm, of the incident. Note also how the connotative aspect of signs bring in the historical evidence of Koon's previous police experiences or intertextual elements]

13. Koon then ordered King to get into the prone position. King appeared to be trying to get up and so Koon fired his TASER gun into King. King made a "bear like groan" and is described as "groaning like a wounded animal" as he attempted to stand up. The use of animal imagery by Koon, together with the description of King as being like the 'incredible hulk', dramatically underpins the LAPD's construction of the suspect population as the 'Other', a sub-human group based on the crudest stereotypes.[op cit.38]
14. Koon then 'tased' King for the second time, delivering a further 50,000 volts.

15. At this point the event is captured on videotape by a local resident, George Holliday, and the film would eventually be shown worldwide on television and precipitate the Los Angeles riots.

16. King then rolled over towards officer Wind. Koon describes this movement as a "Folsom Roll":

"...King wasn't avoiding blows. He was rolling towards officer Wind - he was doing the 'Folsom Roll'. Any LAPD cop who's dealt with ex-cons is familiar with the Folsom Roll". [op cit. 42] [10]

17. King indicated to the officers that he had had enough, and so Koon ordered a second 'swarm'. Eight officers rushed at King and forced him into the ground, "...his face once again smashed into the asphalt, for the third time." [op cit.113]

21. King is then tied up with nylon rope to his wrists and ankles in what Koon refers to as the "hog tie" position. King was then taken into custody and conveyed to hospital.

[10] Koon explains that prisoners at Folsom Prison have been photographed "teaching it to one another", and that this is a tactic to roll into the officer, knock him or her off balance, and grab the officer's gun.]
The events leading up to the arrest of Rodney King provide the researcher with a rich source of information relating to the interpretative frame used by police officers to make sense of an incident. The enormous revulsion the film of the incident generated and the subsequent trial of the officers involved on charges of assault have resulted in the event being examined in the most minute detail. Cicourel wrote in 1968 that a police officer's "...preconstituted typifications and stock of knowledge at hand leads him to prejudge much of what he encounters."[Cicourel, 1968].

What Sgt. Koon's evidence reveals, inter alia, is that stereotypical cues based on crude 'out group' and class elements formed a large part of the ideological coding of the incident. In this way the social identity of Rodney King is quickly constructed by the officers, through syntagmatic chains of association, as a member of a criminal outgroup. [see Fig 5]

Much of the semiosic process used by Sgt. Koon to categorise the incident was based upon his thirteen years as a "street cop". It is this police experience that Koon draws on to add a symbolic dimension to the incident. We learn that the location of the incident was a site used to dump bodies; that the officers' thought that they were being lured into an ambush. That several LAPD officers had recently been involved in shootings with motorists; and the fact that three black males were travelling together might mean that they had obviously committed a far more serious crime than mere traffic violations. The
This had raised the awareness of officers to the dangers they faced when dealing with motorists, especially if they did not 'prone out' the suspect. In the weeks leading up to the incident one officer had been shot and wounded and another killed. This information would almost certainly have fed into the intertextual frame.

Textual coding relates to the paradigmatic coding of the incident as a 'traffic offender'; creating a 'horizon of expectations' in the minds of the officers when this incident was passed to patrols over the police radio.

Contextual coding relates to the time, place and category of person involved. In this incident, the time was after midnight, the vehicle came to a halt at a symbolic location and contained three black males. This was interpreted as a possible ambush for the police.

Intertextual coding involves the ideological and experiential aspects of incident coding. Sgt Koon draws on his 13 years street experience in which time he had been involved in 50 high speed chases at night, all but 2 of which had resulted in "unrelated felony violations".
very speed of Sgt Koon's categorisation of King as a "buffed out" ex-con reveals the extent of stereotyping by the officer. King is then thought to be "dusted" on PCP. When King writhed on the ground following his beating with PR24 batons this is interpreted as a "Folsom Roll" and served to reinforce and add weight to the original categorisation of King as a criminal.

The discursive framework used to describe King constructs an image of the sub-human and the animal: the 'incredible hulk' who deserves to be 'hog-tied'.

In sum, the Rodney King episode clearly shows how signs are interpreted in terms of what they connote, that is their symbolic or cultural aspect, and how the officer's previous experiences also colours the horizon of expectation. The way the various elements are combined as the incident unfolds also illustrates the concept of the syntagmatic axis. [see Fig 6]

As the report of the Special Advisor to the Board of Police Commissioners on the Civil Disorder in Los Angeles, October 21st, 1992, states:

What is also apparent from the Rodney King episode is that the LAPD officers worked within an interpretive community and an occupational culture that was built on strong 'crime control' values where officers saw themselves as tough, 'street cops':

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Rodney King is a big man with large upper-body muscles. The connotation of this is that King is an "ex-con" who has been exercising with weights whilst in prison.

King appears to be sweating profusely on a cold night. His speech is unintelligible, his movements are slow. The connotation of this is that King is either on drugs or is drunk.

King's non-compliance with the officers' commands confirms Sgt. Koon's suspicion that King is "dusted". [has taken PCP or phencyclidine 'Angel Dust'.]

King exhibits "Hulk-like strength" Connotation in the minds of the officers-'on drugs'.

King rolls on the ground to avoid the baton blows. This was interpreted by the officers at the scene as a 'Folsom Roll': a device used by convicts to over-power a guard. This confirms King as an 'Ex Con'.

Diagram illustrating how the syntagmatic chain of indexical signs combine to move the original paradigmatic frame from 'Traffic Offender' to 'PCP Dusted Felony Evader'.
"When Daryl Gates became Chief of Police, the Department's policing style reverted to ...[a] more military model...the...emphasis on producing arrests..." [Webster et al 1992 :33]

The Webster report also noted that a "more subtle shift" had accompanied these organisational changes: this was a move from the police role as "guardians of public safety" towards a narrower focus on "crime control".[11]

The Rodney King incident illustrates that the meaning of social reality is not immanent in the event or incident; but rather is a construction, or interpretation, based on a process of induction and inference that extends back in time from the immediate incident to incorporate reflexive elements of previous experience and cultural categorisation. In terms of the operationalised constructs of incident coding there are clear examples of the incident being interpreted according to 'contextual' and 'intertextual' elements.

[11] Another element implicit in the semiotic process was, although not specifically mentioned by sergeant Koon, the endemic racism of the LAPD under the control of Police Chief Gates. At the subsequent trial of the officers it was revealed that officers Powell and Wind had previously attended a domestic dispute involving a black couple before attending the Rodney King incident and had radioed back to their control room that the incident was like a scene from the film 'Gorillas in the Mist'.

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Chapter 9

How Police Officers Report 'Official Reality'

The second part of my dissertation is concerned primarily with how police officers construct written evidential accounts of the incidents with which they deal in order to compile files of evidence for the Crown Prosecution Service [CPS].

There is a clear parallel between the narrative frames used to construct written evidence and the use of cognitive frames that patrol officers use to both simplify and impose order on complex social reality.

It will be my intention to show that police narratives of evidence are not the objective, empirically grounded and dispassionate accounts of incidents that, on first sight, they appear to be. Rather, under the scrutiny of narrative theory, what often appears to be an objective and unproblematic account of events can reveal itself to be a partial and ideologically coloured interpretation contained within a generic narrative frame. This is, I maintain, both a consequence of, and is inextricably bound up with, the "impossible" structural position of the police in the criminal justice system. By this I am referring to the dual role of the police who both investigate offences and compile files of evidence for court. The dual role of the police helps to explain the way narratives of evidence are constructed.
A key insight into this process is the realisation that narratives, or accounts of 'what happened', can only be told through discourse within which the story is set out. The story is constructed within a specific discourse and therefore represents one example from a set of virtually limitless alternatives. In order to facilitate institutional requirements and expectations police narratives are often constructed by using pre-formed narrative frames or generic templates. Thus, police officers are able to deal quickly and efficiently with the incidents to which they are sent by using cognitive frames that seek to reduce complex social reality into workable generic codifications. Similarly, with narrative frames, generic forms are used to reduce complexity and enable officers to speedily construct either statements of evidence or summaries of evidence for the CPS.

The Impossible Structural Position Of The Police In The Criminal Justice System.

Within our adversarial system of justice the role of the police has been accurately described as "quasi-judicial" [Lord Devlin 1979] in that they have a duty to make enquiries into cases and to prepare files of evidence for the CPS.

The Code Of Practice issued to the police by the Home Office under the provision of Section 23[1] of the Criminal Procedure and Investigations Act 1996 reiterates the duty of the police to be impartial:

"In conducting an investigation, the investigator should pursue all reasonable lines of enquiry, whether these point towards or away from the suspect..." [Para 3.4]
As Lord Devlin remarks, this means the police have to discharge a "peculiar obligation" inasmuch as it is "unnatural to fight quasi-judicially". [Lord Devlin 1979 : 72]

It is the tendency of the police, once they have made up their minds concerning the alleged guilt of the suspect, to concentrate their efforts in building the strongest possible prosecution case that impacts on the way narratives of evidence are constructed. Indeed, cases are constructed with the intention of presenting a single, unitary 'official' reality, whilst excluding competing versions. As the authors of the 'Case For The Prosecution' state:

"...The police as prosecutors are not required to, and do not, present cases about incidents, but cases against individuals. Doubts and uncertainties, and competing versions of reality, are not accorded legitimate status..." [McConville et al. 1991 : 203]

**An Examination Of The Research Evidence.**

Empirical research carried out by John Baldwin and Adele Mulvaney in 1987 on police prosecution summaries [now known as Form MG5], in which two samples of 100 cases both containing a summary and a full file had been prepared revealed "fundamental flaws" in the summaries where police officers had made a "misguided attempt" to "construct a single reality where none exists" [Baldwin and Mulvaney 1987 : 813]
Baldwin and Mulvaney state in the summary of their findings that since the majority of cases which reach the magistrates' court "...present little ambiguity or complexity" , then the compilation of the summary presents "no real difficulty since the evidence is clear-cut and points in one direction only." I disagree with this finding since the main flaw in the research [apart from the authors not setting out what their criteria for measuring objectivity in police summaries consisted of] , was that the summaries were compared with the evidence contained in the witness statements which had been compiled by police officers, and so were hardly likely to have been recorded in an objective and neutral way.

What Baldwin and Mulvaney neglect to point out is that every narrative, whether the summary or the witness statements, is constructed from a particular viewpoint or perspective. The officer who compiled the witness statement constructed a version of events which fitted the legal categorisation of the offence he or she was trying to prove, whilst excluding or diluting facts that weakened the prosecution case.

Baldwin and Mulvaney go on to state :

"...the summaries are very often inadequate or misleading since the police officer responsible for compiling them attempts to superimpose his own version of reality on the conflicting accounts given in the various statements. The overwhelming temptation seems to be to present a single and coherent narrative and to overlook complexities and ambiguities in the evidence. The consequence is that it is too often the prosecution version of events[sometimes embellished by a certain amount of wishful thinking] that is presented in the summary." [Baldwin and Mulvaney 1987 : 813]

Further research by John Baldwin [1992b] for the Royal Commission into the Criminal Justice system was equally critical of the objectivity of police records of interview. Almost 50% of a sample of 200 such records were found to be either
misleading or lacking in essential details. It was also established that inaccuracies were found to increase in direct proportion to the length of the interview.

Research published by the Home Office Research and Statistics Department on written records of taped summaries prepared for prosecution files once again reveals that narratives prepared by police officers are biased towards the prosecution. This research was commissioned by the Home Office and Andrew Hooke and Jim Knox [both management consultants with Price Waterhouse] organised the project to assess the 'quality and costs' of preparing records of taped interviews when carried out by either police officers or civilian clerks.

Six police forces [Bedfordshire, Greater Manchester, Merseyside, Northamptonshire and South Yorkshire] took part in the study. Quality assessment of records of interviews was carried out in three of the forces in which police officers carried out the task of preparing records, and three forces in which the record was prepared by civilian clerks. The actual research assessment team consisted of an experienced police officer and a Crown Prosecutor. A sample of fifty records was selected from each of the six forces, making a total of three hundred records for evaluation. This sample also included ninety cases which had been 'heard at the Crown Court'.

In assessing the quality of the record of interview the following aspects of the record were assessed:

1. The Actus Reus
3. Aggravating factors- defined as "whether the [record] captured factors which might make the offence more serious".
5. Procedural details—that is whether the record contains the elements required in the CPS Manual Of Guidance on Pre Trail Issues.

Against the criteria listed above the result of the study showed that civilians produced a higher quality record of interview 67% of the time than police officers who scored 46%. Approximately twice as many records produced by police officers were found to be "inadequate". However, in relation to the question of prosecution bias, the researchers found the following:

"The civilian model produced [records of interview] which were more consistently free from bias: 12% more [records of taped interview] prepared by civilians were classified as showing no bias either way. A higher proportion of [records] prepared by police officers contained a strong prosecution bias [12% as compared to 3%]."

The Construction Of Witness Statements

Two experienced trial advocates, Anthony Heaton-Armstrong and David Wolchover, also express concern regarding the lack of safeguards presently established regarding the way witness statements are obtained. They point out that:

"Because the content of statements is controlled by what the investigators who record them choose to include, attempts to use the statements to test consistency often degenerate into farce... Often statements turn out to bear all the hallmarks of being doctored versions of what the witness supposedly 'dictated'."

and, further:

"There is a certain coyness on the part of most officers when asked how they 'took' a statement, in admitting that the narrative was obtained by questioning. The fiction is perpetuated that for the most part statements are the product of straight dictation."

[Heaton-Armstrong and Wolchover 1992: 163]

The authors also point out that compared to the "stringent rules" relating to the obtaining of statements from suspects, the process of compiling a witness statement is "...subject to few, if any, formal safeguards, and minimal training."
A fascinating insight into how police officers transform the information gained from a witness into a [Section 9 Criminal Justice Act 1967] statement has been revealed by a West Yorkshire police Inspector as part of a study for an undergraduate degree.[McLean 1995]. Although the sample size is too small for the study to be representative, its findings reinforce what many actors in the criminal justice system have long suspected, that sometimes officers add information that was not given; lead witnesses, and introduce other influences in the process of recording a statement.

Inspector Maxwell McLean obtained a randomly selected sample of 16 taped interviews of a police officer obtaining a witness statement from a witness. The original tape was then compared with the witness statement that had been written[and signed by the maker to the effect that it represented a true and accurate record] to analyse the content. What this research revealed is set out as follows:

From a total of 16 interviews examined by McLean 46.9% of questions were regarded as 'counter productive' [leading questions]. 34.2% of questions were acceptable and open, and 18.9% were regarded as 'risky'.

In one example quoted in the study McLean states that the witness said, with reference to the serious offence of robbery, and in connecting with the suspect's vehicle, "I saw a sticker in the back of the car", and "I explained what had happened to the person in the office." Both these potentially crucially important evidential items were "...completely omitted from the written statement."[ Ibid.]

When Inspector McLean compared the findings from this study with the results from a similar analysis of 12 'suspect' interviews he found that the witness interviews contained "almost double the amount of 'counter productive' questions as suspect interviewing", and that the "witness is in much greater danger of being led than the
suspect". [Ibid.] Out of a total of 16 ‘real life’ interviews recorded, McLean found that the number of “edited items of information” [i.e. relevant information given by the witness] ranged from 4 to 38 items per interview. The average number of items not included in a statement was 14. On occasions McLean found contrary information included in the statement. All 16 statements were signed by the maker as being a true and accurate record and yet every one of them did not contain all the relevant information that had been given by the witness.

When one considers that items of information enter the criminal justice system as ‘facts’ with the potential to convict innocent defendants then the content of witness statements assumes great significance. Once again we find that the police narrative sets up a dominant reading of an event with the assertive, and possibly authoritarian police officer influencing the content of the narrative by ‘filtering’ events through an institutional lens.

Instructions To Probationers On The Construction Of Narratives

During November 1995 National Police Training [until recently known as CPTU Harrogate] published an amendment to the police probationer training notes [Module 2, Phase 2], concerning the correct way to construct narratives of evidence. The new amendment is an instruction on case file preparation and results from a collaboration between CPS lawyers and police staff at Harrogate.

The introduction of the new notes states that the police and CPS share a "common goal" which is:
"...the successful prosecution of persons who have committed criminal offences where the public interest requires a prosecution." [Police Foundation Probationer Training Pack, Module 2, Phase 2, Chpt 14 :4]

Part 4 of the Probationer Notes explains that every file of evidence submitted to the CPS contains a Summary Of Evidence [Form MG5], and that this summary:

"...is often the only source of information for the prosecutor, who must decide whether your case should be prosecuted." [Ibid.]

In addition, this information on a remand file is the basis for the prosecutor seeking a remand in custody.

The new amendment then explains exactly what CPS lawyers require from a summary of evidence:

"Your summary of Evidence should be objective, comprehensive and accurate and must not mislead. It should be chronological and, like a story, it should have a beginning, a middle and an end. To enhance its clarity, outline what the case is about in the first paragraph and write in the third person [ use 'he', 'she', or 'they' and not 'I', 'we', or 'us']." [Ibid.]

What is fascinating about this instruction is that it confirms a genre of police institutional narrative style that preceded the formation of the CPS by many decades. By 'genre' in this context I am referring to the set of institutional expectations regarding the form in which police written evidence is presented to the other actors in the criminal trial process.

Many officers when dealing with complex cases involving multiple defendants and settings also use a variety of heuristic devices to help structure events and set up links and time lines between the various actors involved.
A vast amount of scholarship has focused on narrative theory or 'narratology', some of it analysing the significance of narratives or stories in a legal setting. For example, Bennett and Feldman explain that a story is:

"...simply a communicational form that provides for the development, climax, and denouement of action in a defined collection of actors, means, motives and scenes. As a result of surrounding an action with various temporal and spatial factors a story not only focuses attention on certain key behaviour [and the actors' relation to it], it also has the capacity to constrain a clear understanding about the significance of that behaviour."


In short, the narrative form or 'story' required by the CPS offers a framework in which to structure, organise and interpret what is often complex social reality. The story form facilitates an account of the central issues in a case by enabling them to be set out in a causally related, linear sequence which is enhanced by the temporal and, according to Propp, grammatical regularities which set up connections in the story.

Although the CPS instruction to probationers is that a story should have a beginning, a middle and an end, this is far from being unproblematic. For example, the interpretative frame police officers apply to incidents, in terms of what constitutes the beginning or end of an incident, is itself a construction, and is based on the traditional,[ often less than 8 hours] narrow time-frame [Kelman 1981: 591-673] of the evidential sequence officers routinely apply to the incidents with which they deal. This is based on such pragmatic considerations as the length of the typical working shift within which the majority of such 'offences' occur; and the need to quickly resolve incidents in order to cope with workload factors, and to be free to assist colleagues.
The relation between narrative discourse and the events represented has also been a
source of problems for historians. Hayden White says this relation:

"...becomes a problem for historical theory with the realisation that narrative is not
merely a neutral discourse form that may or may not be used to represent real
events in their aspect as developmental processes, but rather entails ontological and
epistemic choices with distinct ideological and even specifically political
overtones..."

[White 1987: ix ]

In the light of these points, the CPS instruction on summaries being "objective,
comprehensive and accurate" whilst no doubt setting an admirable standard to which
police officers might aspire, glosses over the fact that the police officer's narrative is
an ex-post facto justification for his or her actions in arresting and charging the
defendant in the first place, and so is hardly likely to be neutral and 'objective'. The
problem of the impossible structural position of the police in an adversarial system has
been noted by various commentators[Lord Devlin 1979, et al] . As Professor
McConville states in relation to the prosecution process and the debate that followed
the recommendations of the Royal Commission on Criminal Justice prior to the setting
up of the CPS under the Prosecution of Offenders Act 1985 :

"...all suffer from the same basic structural weakness - the assumption that it is
possible to graft an inquisitorial decision making model on to a system which
continues at heart to be adversarial."[McConville 1984 :27 ]

The reality of modern policing means that officers have to take statements from
witnesses under the most difficult of conditions, often exacerbated by the constraints
of time and workload. In addition, many of the incidents with which they deal involve
people who are distressed, aggressive and confused ; or perhaps inarticulate or poorly
educated. Very often, because of the nature of the incident they deal with, officers are
given conflicting, misleading and biased information which then throws up confused
lines of causality.

The present system, with all its defects, is set against the factor of institutional
expectations as to the correct form and content that police evidential narratives should
take. These expectations have been built up over many years and countless cases.

Police officers, in terms of these institutional expectations, are expected to simplify,
sift and pre-structure complex social reality into a form in which the information can
be easily processed by the other court users. The universal adoption of narrative
'templates' facilitates this process and, I would suggest, enables the courts to process
the sheer volume of cases that pass through on a daily basis. As Bennett and Feldman
note:

"...constructing an interpretation for a problematic social action that lies at the centre
of most legal disputes requires the use of some communications device that simplifies
the natural event, selects out a set of information about it, and organises it so that
adjudicators can make an unambiguous interpretation and judge its validity."

[Bennett and Feldman 1981: 163]

**The Rules Of Evidence**

Sir Rupert Cross explains that the modern rules of evidence are based to a large
extent on the older decisions of the common-law judges, some dating back several
centuries, and that these consist to a large extent of:

"...exclusionary rules, rules declaring that certain matters which might well be
accepted as evidence of a fact by other responsible enquirers will not be accepted
by the courts, rules declaring, in other words, what is not judicial evidence."

[Cross : 1979 : 1]

And:

"The general rule is that a witness can only give evidence of facts of which he has
personal knowledge, something of which he has perceived with one of his five
senses. [Op cit. : 6]
There are three generic statement categories used in police work. These include so-called 'offence statements' which are the category of statements used to compile a file of evidence for the CPS. 'Occurrence statements' which include non-offence categories such as witness statements for the Coroner in cases of sudden death, industrial injury statements, for use in civil actions: and, finally, so called 'statements after caution' which are the verbatim statements made by an accused person after he or she has been formally interviewed [under the provisions of the Codes Of Practice, Code C, Annex D] This section will confine itself to examination of 'offence statements'.

Offence statements, for all practical purposes, contain two sections:

[1] A factual section setting out the time, day, date and location of the incident, and the identity of the alleged offender.

[2] The so-called 'points to prove' of the specific offence to be prosecuted.

Most police statement taking both at the Probationer Training Centres and on Division is taught by using narrative templates. This is because, although the facts of each individual case will be different, "...The offence detail will remain the same".

[Colman 1989: 16] Many probationers are provided with specimen statements by their tutors, especially of the more commonly occurring offences such as 'theft from store'. In addition to this, several text books targeted specifically at probationers provide examples of specimen statements covering all offences likely to be encountered by operational officers [Colman 1989: Calligan 1995].

Police officers are taught that statements of evidence should not only be based on the evidence of their senses, but should also be confined to what is termed 'relevant' evidence. Cross [1979: 18]
The universal police narrative style that has emerged from considerations of the admissibility of evidence, and the more pragmatic concerns of internal file management, could be termed logico-scientific in that it is presented as being factual, dispassionate, objective, unambiguous, and the only possible interpretation that could be drawn in the particular circumstances of the case. Issues are polarised in that they are presented as 'black and white'; stripped of social context and restricted to the narrowest of time frames.

The use of narrative frames is also problematic in terms of what is known as verisimilitude; that is, issues of what to expect in a text with regard to what is considered appropriate and therefore probable:

"...various systems of plausibility, motivation, justification, and belief. Verisimilitude means 'probable' or 'likely'. It entails notions of propriety, of what is appropriate and therefore probable [or probable and therefore appropriate] [Neale 1990 :46].

If a magistrate has heard fifty cases of drunkenness in which the police officer stated in evidence that the defendant's "...eyes were glazed, his speech was slurred, he was unsteady on his feet, and he was drunk." then this formula might well be expected as evidence of drunkenness in future cases and, what's more, could add a degree of 'realism' to the evidence. Universal narrative frames add a degree of generic verisimilitude to police evidence in terms of evidentially acceptable, 'authentic' accounts of what are held to be conventional, or "normative perceptions of reality" [Hall : 1997 :360]

As Young notes in relation to 'official' police accounts of incidents:
Inevitably, in such circumstances, the details of practice suffers a reduction to enable those charged and emotional situations to be handled more easily and to allow the complexities of social events to be reduced to the simplicities of narrative necessary for a file of evidence. In such circumstances, action becomes more easily defined if it runs along well-known lines, following precepts which have status and acceptability... [Young 1991:16]

The next text I will consider consists of an actual example of a 'model pocket book entry' used at a Police Training Centre by probationary officers in compiling a pocket book entry for a case of Drunk and Disorderly [Figure 7]. This particular example provides a rich source of information concerning, inter alia, the way police officers are taught to produce a dominant or hegemonic version of an incident; the stereotypical construction of the defendant, the way ideology works through the text to suggest that the police and the magistrates [to whom the text is addressed] share a common set of values and class interests, whilst effectively excluding a contrary reading of the event. The term used to describe the way a text constructs a relationship between the 'addressor' and the 'addressee' is called its phatic function. The textual analysis of ideological coding is concerned with discursive practices which turn specific group interests into universals, so that the text seems to speak on behalf of an entire society:

"... At stake here is the phatic authority of a text to command attention and respect of readers, to speak the truth of the world as if it were a matter of common-sense." [Thwaites et al 1994:12-13]
EXAMPLE OF POCKET BOOK ENTRIES

(1) DRUNK AND DISORDERLY

2315 COMMERCIAL STREET, SANDFORD.
DAVID JOHN WILLIAMS, 16, DUKE ST. SANDFORD.
21.6.74. OCCUPATION: LABOURER.
AT 2315 I WAS ON UNIFORMED FOOT PATROL AT COMMERCIAL STREET
WHEN I HAD OCCASION TO SPEAK TO A PERSON I NOW KNOW TO BE THE
DEFENDANT, WILLIAMS. I SAW HIM COME OUT OF THE FRONT ENTRANCE
OF THE BIRD IN HAND PUBLIC HOUSE WHICH IS LOCATED IN COMMERCIAL
STREET.
AT THIS TIME I WAS IMMEDIATELY ACROSS THE ROAD FROM THE PUBLIC
HOUSE A DISTANCE OF APPROX. 35 YARDS. ON SEEING ME THE
DEFENDANT SHOUTED AT ME "FUCK OFF PIG." HE THEN WALKED ACROSS
THE ROAD TOWARDS ME. AS HE DID SO I COULD SEE THAT HE WAS VERY
UNSTEADY ON HIS FEET. HE ALMOST STAGGERING ACROSS THE ROAD.
ONE CAR HAD TO COME TO A STOP IN ORDER TO AVOID WILLIAMS. HE
SHOUTED AT THE DRIVER, "AND YOU CAN FUCK OFF TOO."
I APPROACHED WILLIAMS AND SAID TO HIM, "IT IS AN OFFENCE TO USE
INDECENT LANGUAGE IN A PUBLIC PLACE." I CAUTIONED HIM. HE
REPLIED "YOU CAN FUCK OFF. YOU PIGS ARE MAKING MY LIFE A MISERY."
I SAID TO WILLIAMS, "STOP USING THAT LANGUAGE, THERE ARE OTHER
PEOPLE IN THE AREA." HE REPLIED, "FUCK OFF."
AS HE WAS SPEAKING I NOTICED THAT HE SMELT HEAVILY OF
INTOXICATING LIQUOR AND HIS SPEECH WAS SLURRED.
IN A LOUD VOICE HE SHOUTED, "FUCK OFF" HE THEN STARTED TO POKE
ME IN THE STOMACH WITH HIS RIGHT HAND. I THEN SAID, "IF YOU
CONTINUE WITH THIS BEHAVIOUR I WILL HAVE TO ARREST YOU FOR
BEING DRUNK AND DISORDERLY." HE SAID "YOU FUCKING TRY IT." HE
THEN STARTED TO PUSH ME WITH BOTH OF HIS HANDS. I THEN SAID, "I
HAVE ALREADY WARNED YOU ABOUT YOUR BEHAVIOUR, I AM
ARRESTING YOU FOR BEING DRUNK AND DISORDERLY." I THEN TOOK
HOLD OF HIS RIGHT HAND. HE STARTED TO STRUGGLE VIOLENTLY AND I
HAD TO RESTRAIN HIM BY PLACING HIS RIGHT ARM BEHIND HIS BACK. AT
THIS TIME A POLICE TRANSPORT VAN, WHICH HAD BEEN PARKED
FURTHER UP THE STREET, PULLED UP ALONGSIDE US. WITH THE HELP OF
PC 936 DOWNEY HE WAS PLACED IN THE VAN AND CONVEYED TO THE
SANDFORD POLICE STATION.
DURING THE JOURNEY TO THE STATION HE CONTINUED TO STRUGGLE
AND HAD TO BE RESTRAINED.
AT THE STATION HE WAS HANDED OVER TO THE CUSTODY OFFICER PS
BRAUND.
AT THE TIME OF THE OFFENCE THERE WERE A LARGE NUMBER OF
PERSONS IN THE IMMEDIATE AREA, INCLUDING A NUMBER OF WOMEN.

2330 I COMPLETED MY POCKET BOOK ENTRY IN RELATION TO WILLIAMS AT
THE SANDFORD POLICE STATION. THIS WAS THE FIRST OPPORTUNITY I
HAD TO DO SO BECAUSE OF WILLIAMS' BEHAVIOUR AT THE SCENE.
Various scholars in the field of cultural studies have pointed out that ideology is not only concerned with value systems and ideas, but also includes the relationship between the author of the text and his or her intended audience. In this way it can be seen that the pocket book narrative constructs the social identity of the defendant in terms of negative social traits, foregrounding connotations of the stereotypical working class drunk. Ideology, this context, represents a common set of values and beliefs personified in the portrayal of the police officer who is shown to be tolerant, reasonable, polite and upholding the values of 'decent' society. It is also interesting to note the patriarchal element in the text where the officer states, "...at the time of the offence there were a large number of people in the immediate area, including a number of women."

Narrative closure is brought about by the arrest of the defendant and a resumption of the normal state of public tranquillity.

The narrative represents the defendant as a labourer, and it is interesting to note that this representation reinforces the weight of historical tradition [especially in a training context] of targeting members of the working classes. The fact that this class bias in police prosecutions still exists is well documented in the literature [Sanders 1985b ], and probably results from the mid-nineteenth century when strong social signals were given to the police as to where their collective attention should lie.[Davis 1989 ]

Indeed, the "main criterion" for the exercise of a police officer's discretion was, as Jennifer Davis notes, the "...perceived character or social class of an offender". [Davis 1989 : 422]
The ‘drunk and disorderly’ narrative sets up a single ‘reality’ of the incident in question. It unfolds with a single purpose and excludes any ambiguities or conflicting accounts of the events reported. The story builds a momentum of causal regularity and does not deviate from its primary purpose of proving the offence. The text assumes a single, objective reality that is unproblematic and straightforward. It has to be remembered that the text is the product of, and is shaped by, the officer’s individual perspective, and is one narrative version among many competing versions [and many offence categories] that could be ‘constructed’. In the technical terminology of semiotics, under the collective paradigm of public order offence, the syntagmatic chain of evidential signifiers could have been used to construct several distinct offences.

In this particular instance the raw material of the incident has been configured in accordance with the cultural template for a drunk and disorderly offence with all the conventions, stock phrases and ‘points to prove’ found in numerous examples of this offence. Andrew Sanders states that the use of stereotypes in evidence discourse has the effect of assigning a “legitimate history” to the narrative since “…the offender is then seen as acting normally in the alleged circumstances.” [Sanders 1987: 242] We learn from H Taylor-Buckner’s account of American policing in the 1970s that a similar practice of adding a formulaic, stereotypical description of drunks also occurs:

“...Drunk arrest forms tend to be ‘overwritten’. Far fewer drunks actually urinate in their pants than the forms indicate, but when it comes to court who is to say? The drunk can’t remember and the officer has it down in writing.” [Taylor-Buckner 1970: 322]
Many public order type offences contain within them several different potential
goal categories. For example, from the ‘facts’ revealed in the drunk and disorderly
pocket book entry the officer could have chosen from amongst the following:

1. Breach of the Peace, Contrary to Common Law

2. Using Obscene Language in the Street, Contrary to Section 28 of the Town Police
Clauses Act 1847.

3. Causing Harassment, Alarm or Distress Contrary to Section 5 of the Public Order
Act 1986.

4. Threatening Words or Behaviour, Contrary to Section 4 of the Public Order Act
1986.

clearly shown that police officers construct their cases in order to achieve a specific
outcome. This process is, in essence, selective. As Sanders states:

"A case has to be selected by the police, and a choice of a particular case may
determine the particular facts that are presented...the choice of a particular case may
be influenced by the existence of facts which the police feel they need to justify or
explain..."

And:

[that the cases that are eventually brought are often influenced by] "...a wide range
of factors going far beyond legal-evidential considerations."
[Sanders 1987:239]

It is my assertion that there is a clear parallel between the social construction of
events on the street in which the semiosic process of police officers is constrained by
membership of an interpretive community, and the narrative frames and genre
conventions within which narratives of evidence are constructed. Mainstream
evidence discourse assumes a naive and unproblematic relationship between the
mimetic plane and the language used to reconstruct it. Statements of evidence, and
prosecution summaries, are far from being unproblematic and straightforward: they
clearly reflect the difficult structural position of the police in the criminal justice
system. Narratives provide the perfect structural vehicles with which to disguise the ideological and political factors that inform street policing.
Chapter 10.

How National Police Training Prepares Probationers To Interpret And Report 'Official Reality'.

The ethnography illustrates the progress of probationers as they move from the 'primary interpretive community' that is National Police Training [NPT], to the 'secondary interpretive community' that occurs during their Tutor Constable attachments, finally arriving at the 'tertiary interpretive community' of an experienced patrol officer. As probationers move through this process gradual changes occur to their logonomic systems, [ closure rules] regarding what elements of an incident are filtered either 'in' or 'out' of the semiosic process of event categorisation.

This process allows experienced officers to make rapid categorisations of operational incidents by the application of closure rules that ensures institutionally acceptable and uniform incident categorisations.

This section sets out the process by which probationers are taught to interpret and report the incidents with which they will have to deal in their operational duties.

Three key groups of people are included: Police Trainers; Probationers at 12, 18 and 22 months service, and finally Tutor Constables.

Police Trainers.

This section explores the world of NPT from the Police Trainers' perspective of how they actually train probationers to interpret events. It will also examine the Trainers'
experience of using the student-centred method of training and look at the status of training within the wider policing institution. The results show that one in five Police Trainers had experienced problems with the facilitative style of teaching in that it was seen as lacking a clarity of focus and being too subjective. A further one fifth of the sample commented that this system allowed students[ and Trainers] to ‘play the game’.

When questioned as to how they got the class to ‘see things as a group’ during practical or classroom based exercises, over three quarters [79%] of Trainers responded that they used ‘Trainer Intervention Techniques’. This also points up the problems with the facilitative method since Trainers are forced to bring the group to the desired outcome by telling them what the ‘official’ outcome of the discussion or practical exercise should be. Semiosis is also guided by Trainers through tactical use of group discussions. The overwhelming majority of Trainers [86%] responded that they were aiming to develop an ‘individual perspective’ in probationers rather than a single ‘official’ perspective with regards to police work. However, over one in three Trainers admitted that training lacked credibility within the wider organisation and a recurring phrase throughout the ethnography categorises PTC training as not ‘real world’.

**The Problems of the Harrogate System for Respondents**

Police trainers responded to the question ‘What problems have you encountered with the Harrogate system?’ by identifying two main aspects: firstly, that the Harrogate system lacks a clarity of focus; and, secondly, that the system allows students to “play the game”. Both these answers reflect the key criticisms made by the probationer sample that the student-centred, facilitative style of
teaching is in many ways a frustrating, and often inappropriate method with which to
teach police officers. The remark regarding "playing the game" refers to the fact
that some students take advantage of this style of training with its emphasis on the
'affective domain' by merely pretending to have adopted the 'politically correct'
attitude promulgated within the PTC. Both responses achieved a bi-modal frequency
of 21.%

The student-centred method has its successes but also causes frustration and
resentment among many probationers. Paradoxically, instead of producing more
reflective practitioners who are sensitive to the needs of the public, it is more likely to
cause them to reject the whole Harrogate philosophy and embrace the clear-cut,
unambiguous practical system taught by the Tutor Constables:

**Case Number 084 TRA** [In-Force Trainer trains PFA, PFB, PFC]

"...one of the biggest criticisms most people get from PTC, from students, is that
they ask a question, they want an answer. And they perceive that all trainers
are...willing to tell them, 'Well look it up in a book'. Although we try across the
force to do student centred learning, they actually, have a duty to teach
themselves...A lot of people get very exasperated at the idea that a trainer will
not give them the answer straight away..."[emphasis added]

**Case Number 081 TRA**

"You know, it's very hard and the students always complain and they will say,
'Well, what do you think about it?', and I think they got fed up...with not getting
an answer. That's when they would ask the trainer, 'Well how would you do
that?' and the trainer would reply, 'Well how would you do it?' Sometimes
they just want answers and I think...you've got to give it to them."

As this trainer states, the problem with the student-centred approach is that it
assumes every student will reach a clear understanding of the subject following either
a presentation or group discussion with other class members. This is not always the
case, as the probationer responses show, and this is potentially problematic with regard to the exercise of police powers:

Case Number 075 TRA

"Well I have difficulty with the current methods of training. Primarily because we as an organisation...and as individuals are not necessarily sophisticated enough to deliver what it is they want delivered. By that I'm talking about elements of psychology etc.,...the current methods are very much based on the self-learning model, whereby the student is required to read the pre-read material, and that is then evaluated through the model of the video and a debate and review session. Which sounds all very well. That...is then backed up the following day with a period of what they call reflection, 'How was it for you?'. The danger in all that is that it is arrogant in the assumption it makes that the student has received the proper and correct understanding of the subject material from the outset...the danger is that if the wrongs are not properly corrected that they then take their level of knowledge...onto the streets and into the real world to find at that point that it's not correct."

Another respondent summed up the problems of the student-centred method which by its very nature tends to be unfocused in its approach:

Case Number 073 TRA

"Part of the problem... is that because you've got no clearly defined...aims and objectives...it's very hard to ensure quality...If you don't know what it's supposed to achieve, you just can't assure quality can you, because you've got to define it first."

It is not only the probationers who 'play the game': the student trainers also have a cynical attitude towards the Harrogate philosophy, as the following respondents illustrate:

Case Number 076 TRA

"I think as far as resistance to the Harrogate philosophy I would say...that you get students who 'play the game'. We had students on our course who played the game and [who] openly admitted privately never would be class trainers, they were playing the game that they would talk about empathy and self-development and things like that but that was something they had to do to get through the course. In reality, they weren't going to implement that when they got back. They were quite happy to do what they had to do to get their trainer's ticket."
It is clear from this and the following that problems can occur when students are exposed to operational working practices that openly contradict what they have been taught at PTC:

**Case Number 079 TRA**

"...Whereas the training here...can be very difficult because there is a problem about theory and practice that...it is all very well teaching best practice in a classroom environment when theory works, but when you get out onto the streets it doesn’t work... And I would say that starts to happen when they’ve finished at PTC...that training becomes more difficult and this thing about theory and practice...and what we’re trying to say is that you can’t have one without the other...and if it doesn’t fit within the rules you either don’t do it or you find another way of doing it rather than bending the rules. But I think that causes an awful lot of stress for probationers...that their trying to work within the rules...they see other officers bending the rules and achieving results by bending the rules."

As respondents made clear, trainers play a critical dimension in achieving success, or otherwise, within this model. Whilst this system of training makes enormous demands on the trainer in terms of time and effort, not all trainers have these qualities as the following respondent illustrates:

**Case Number 080 TRA**

"There’s a difference between student centred learning and abdicating your responsibilities. There were occasions when due to the quality of the trainer, instead of developing a student-centred environment in his classroom, he abdicated his responsibilities...Because of that the students, and rightfully so, thought that they haven’t achieved anything. So they’re dismissive of the system, they’re dismissive about the student-centred learning philosophy."
intervention analysis'. This theory has the effect of severely limiting and constraining
the occasions when the trainer can intervene in a group discussion, especially to
impart knowledge:

"...Instructors should refrain from using their authority positions to promote their
own views on the presumption that they have expert knowledge which is not open to
question."

and:

"Instructors should only introduce their own views in a context where the recruits
are able to treat them as potentially problematic." [Mac Donald et al 1996: 126]

In essence, Trainers are taught that rather than use 'authoritative' interventions that
are "prescriptive, informative or confronting", they should adopt the role of
'facilitator', and limit their interventions to those that are mainly "cathartic, catalytic
or supportive"[Police Trainers' Manual 1990].

What is clear from the ethnography is that this policy is problematic for the Trainer
in terms of keeping group discussions focused and in achieving a clear outcome from
the lesson. It also tends to produce ambiguity and confusion in the minds of students.

**Group Perspectives**

One of the problems with the facilitative, student-centred approach to learning is that
sometimes the discussion moves in a different direction from where the trainer wants
it to go. With offence identification there is only one option open to the trainer and
this is called 'trainer intervention' in the student discussion. Of the sample of trainers
questioned, over three quarters replied that they used trainer intervention techniques
to get the class to see things as a group.
For some Trainers, the aspiration of the programme is to subtly impose the logonomic system of NPT on the students through group discussions. This is illustrated in the following responses:

Case Number 080 TRA
"It is really to get the students to discuss it, ...there are a number of ways of getting into the discussion...you may want to start off with an individual exercise and then an exercise in pairs, an exercise in sixes. You end up with the whole class. So the beauty of that, if you've got sixteen in a class, you've started off with sixteen different points of view, which have then come to eight points of view. And it's developed...so it's a sharing of opinions, it's an opening up of one's own perceptions...so you've got all these views coming from all different directions and they're all being melted down...so it's up to the trainer to use the tools he's been equipped with at Harrogate to encourage that sort of thing." [emphasis added]

As this trainer emphasises, sometimes it is necessary to impose official policy or categorisation:

Case Number 076 TRA
"...I would feed off particular individuals in the group who had different attitudes to that and try to get them to look at the perspective of other people. Ultimately, at the end of the session, if we weren't able to return to the issue...we'd draw a line, say well, you can say what you like, this is what force policy is, this is what we do, this is the helpful attitude and if you do that there are consequences...and you could find yourself under discipline for that." [emphasis added]

The following two cases reinforce the example of trainer intervention:

Case Number 075 TRA
"Certain aspects of the law that is taught to probationers is by its very nature ambiguous and indeed complex and may well not be collected into their minds on the first presentation. And many aspects of street wise legal procedures require specific actions to be carried through at a specific point in time, otherwise there's a question of legality. If there's a misunderstanding or misinterpretation of police officer requirements, and the law that surrounds them...then that is the point where we would have to blow the whistle."[emphasis added]

Case Number 084 TRA
"I think it depends, if you've got a large subject like domestic violence, generally speaking because the training is student-centred, the group conscience attends as well...if you...put them into small groups but set the whole group the same task, then generally speaking they're all going to come back with roughly the same ideas, but one or two may have different approaches...One of the main skills of the trainer is
to actually bring them all in. It's difficult sometimes. We probably train the group rather than the individual.” [emphasis added]

It is clear from the responses of police trainers that the sophisticated and highly theoretical model of training developed by academics from the University of East Anglia [Mac Donald et al 1986] creates problems in terms of delivery, and in the fact that students are invariably confused and irritated by the experience.

Making Sense.

To a large extent question 38 which asked, ‘How do you get students to make sense of the incidents they deal with?’ is an extension of the previous question in terms of controlling group interpretation so that the students arrive at an acceptable interpretation of the training incident. Of the trainers questioned, one fifth stated that they would use group discussions, including trainer intervention techniques, in an attempt to reach agreement regarding categorisation.

Thus the following respondent, who was a member of Harrogate staff, correctly identified that the probationer training process is a form of logonomic system in terms of constraining semiosis from the potential offence constructions actually contained within practical incidents

Case Number 071 TRA [Harrogate staff]

“Very interesting question. I would say that they learn to do that through the curriculum we give them. I haven’t actually thought of that before, but thinking on it now is that we do it for them...the whole thing’s categorised, so I wouldn’t be surprised if the categorisations that the probationers use is exactly the same as the organisation uses...” [emphasis added]

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Trainers try to ensure that semiosis is contained to the specific subject area that they are covering with the probationers, as the following respondent illustrates:

**Case Number 075 TRA**

The advantage with that system, as in any exercise simulation, was that when things started to go horribly wrong you could blow the whistle, because the instructors knew what should be happening...therefore there was a learning curve in there. **Furthermore if you had a student who had difficulty with that particular aspect of the law then you could deliberately engineer the role play...to give them a greater understanding in the practical sense...”** [emphasis added]

Despite the formal emphasis placed upon student-centred learning, together with the constraints placed upon the Trainer, and the need to create a ‘safe learning environment’ in which students are free to express themselves and to question accepted practice; the substantive product invariably achieves a congruence between the categorisations used by probationers and those of the organisation. There is often a tension between the philosophy of the PTC, with its emphasis on developing the probationer as a questioning individual [reflective practitioner]; and the needs of the wider policing institution in terms of inculcating operational practices [offence categorisations] that require the imposition of unambiguous logonomic systems in the minds of probationers. Very often the only way Trainers can achieve this is to ignore the Harrogate philosophy and to use ‘authoritative interventions’ to bring discussions to the desired outcome.

One further point needs to be made here regarding the Harrogate philosophy and the facilitative method of probationer training. Probationer training has its own discourse and this is invariably contained within the world of NPT. Since discourses are ways of referring to, or of constructing knowledge about a subject or practice, it follows that within the PTCs semiosis is embedded within the discursive practices of probationer training, in terms of setting out what is, or what is not, appropriate,
salient or relevant. Also contained within these discursive formations are notions of what knowledge is considered 'true' and what subjects embody these characteristics [Hall 1997]. However, the value systems embodied within the language of training have almost no status within the wider policing institution [Sheptycki 1993: Young 1991]. This fact contributes to the rapid decay in influence of probationer training once probationers have been exposed to the 'real' world of operational street policing. [Fielding 1989: McConville and Shepherd 1992: Hoyle 1998]

The next section will explore the probationers' reaction to the training they received at the PTC, and then will explore the process by which the traditional values and stabilised logic that underpins beat policing is passed on from generation to generation of police officer.
Probationers' Experience Of Training Methods.

In this section I want to deal with the responses of probationers to their training. The sample is divided into three groups:

2. Post Foundation Phase B [PFB] probationers with 18 months service.
3. Post Foundation Stage C [PFC] probationers with 22 months service.

The probationer ethnography shows, inter alia, that many probationers became frustrated and annoyed by the Harrogate style of student-centred, facilitative teaching. There was also a perception that the world of PTC was highly artificial and unrealistic. Many probationers spoke about the Harrogate system as being too 'black and white' and prescriptive in its application, and this added to the 'reality gap' that probationers perceive between the world of the PTC and street policing.

The perception of the majority of probationers before they arrived at the PTC was that they would encounter a disciplined, somewhat militaristic environment where they would have a formal, didactic style of teaching. The actual reality they encountered did not live up to their expectations and, in many cases, served to further alienate them from the Harrogate philosophy taught at PTC.

With respect to question 12, "How important for your operational competence was the Tutor input?" the overwhelming majority [84%] of the probationers stated that it was 'very important'. What runs through the ethnography is the importance of the 'hands on', experiential training the probationers receive from the Tutors and this is...
usually contrasted with comments on the fact that training at the PTC does not train for the reality of the streets.

This can be contrasted with the post-probationer sample, one half of whom responded to the same question by replying that the Tutor influence was of less importance. This can be explained by the fact that the influence of the Tutor Constable diminishes rapidly as officers start independent patrol. At this stage they are far more influenced by their shift colleagues. The difference between the two groups was significant in the logistic regression.

**Probationer expectations of PTC.**

Perhaps not surprisingly, most probationers’ expectations of the PTC were that they would be taught in a strict, regimented and militaristic environment in which they would receive a heavy law input. The reality they encountered was in complete contrast to this and some were clearly shocked at the experience. There is strong evidence that the student-centered teaching techniques used at the PTC are clearly inappropriate for adult learning and that quite a few students felt alienated by the process.

Earlier research by Nigel Fielding[1989 : 83] revealed that the values of probationer training rarely extended beyond the end of the probationary period:

"...As operational service increases, the influence of formal training recedes and the importance of knowing how to proceed behaviourally in public encounters becomes a central preoccupation."

I will contend that the ‘reality gap’ between the training and values of the PTC and the pragmatic values of street policing promulgated by tutor constables hastens the change from the primary to the secondary interpretive community. Earlier research both in Britain and America has pointed out the rapid decay of police training when
exposed to the stronger influence of the operational police culture[s].[Fielding 1988: Van Maanen 1974, 1975]. The ethnography produces clear and compelling evidence that this is fundamentally correct.

Sample of officers with 12 months experience. At the PFA stage they are half way through their two year probationary period.

**Case Number 001 PFA**

"My basic expectations of the training at the PTC [was] a heavy law input..."

**Case Number 002 PFA**

"I thought it [would be] quite regimented really, set lessons, weekly or daily tests. I actually went to [PTC] expecting to learn quite a lot..."[emphasis added]

**Case Number 003 PFA**

"My expectations? I think you just get horror stories really of people you’ve been talking to, that it’s going to be very...militaristic in that you spend most of the day marching about and getting shouted at..."[emphasis added]

**Case Number 004 PFA**

"Before I went to [PTC] I was expecting it to be like school, where you all sit at tables and you listen to the trainer..."[emphasis added]

**Case Number 005 PFA**

"Well, I would say a lot of the things that previous students had told me about PTC, saying that it was like a hell camp..."[emphasis added]

**Case Number 011 PFA**

"...I expected a strong, disciplined environment..."[emphasis added]

Many respondents were critical of the emphasis placed by the PTC trainers on the ‘affective domain’ of learning with the frequent response of, ‘How do you feel about
it? In addition, trainers are expected to introduce creative methods of teaching and the ethnography reveals such practices as throwing a sardine can amongst a group of probationers sitting in a circle, to members of the class holding lighted sparklers. A visiting Superintendent from the Royal Ulster Constabulary was clearly shocked by the latter example in terms of its perceived relevance to operational policing.

Case Number 017 PFA

"I didn't expect there to be so much sitting around discussing how you felt about things, that was a bit over the top."

Sample of officers with 18 months experience [PFB]; they are within 6 months of completing their probationary period.

Case Number 018 PFB

"I expected to have some sort of military style training..

Case Number 020 PFB

"I thought ...PTC was quite an intimidating thought...I'd been told it was military stick you know...I was going to be trained like an army soldier.."

PFC Sample Of Officers With 22 months service:

Case Number 023 PFC

"Well...I thought it would be very regimented.."

Case Number 028 PFC

"...as I'm ex-military, I would have expected it to be more sort of disciplined and...chalk and talk..."

Case Number 030 PFC
"The trainer said we did so and so, it was very strict, you couldn't do this you couldn't do that... if you stepped out of line you'd be brought to book."

**Expectations and Reality.**
The majority of students found that the reality of the training they received at PTC did not live up to their expectations. Many were quite clearly shocked by the experience and others annoyed and frustrated by what they found.

Many students were frustrated by the refusal of trainers to answer questions. Thus:

**Case Number 001 PFA**

"I think a lot of it was very 'cat and mouseish' in the classroom. There was no didactic learning at all, it was all 'What do you think ?', and 'Go and find it yourself'."

**Case Number 002 PFA**

"Sadly, no, I'm afraid... So, Mod 2 didn't really meet up to an awful lot of the expectations."

In addition to student-centred learning being poorly focused, many students complained that the endless discussions, coupled with the fragmented, group-led nature of the presentations, resulted in ambiguity and confusion. This is particularly concerning with regard to legal powers:

**Case Number 007 PFA**

"... There wasn't enough input. It's all very well being told to sit down and find out your own answers... but it did get to the stage where you could waddle around in a subject for an hour and a half because everyone is having their bit and nobody wants to be wrong... and in the end you never get the definitive right answer. It just never seemed to gel together, so you seemed to just wallow, I find that particularly frustrating... a little bit of chalk and talk, that's as near as right."

Q. "So what did your class trainer do when this discussion was going on?"
"Basically, just keep passing, when we asked a question it was basically pass it back to you. You'd say 'I'd do this' and he'd say, 'Why?' So you'd try and justify it. And he'd say, 'Well what powers have you got?' and somebody else would say 'Well, you've got this', 'Are you sure?' and it just went back and to, back and to, and in the end... you came out of it unsure..."

**Case Number 017 PFA**

"I thought it was quite shocking! There was too much 'Go away and read this' and nothing was tested." [emphasis added]

**Case Number 020 PFB**

"It didn't meet... expectations, no. It surprised me because we sat round in a circle."

**Case Number 021 PFB**

"No, not at all, not at all!

All three groups of probationers felt that they were given little or no guidance by this training system. Expecting clear rules and guidance, they experienced a ruleless environment inhabiting a grey world of twilight. This is as true for probationers at the PFA stage as it is for officers approaching the end of their probation.

Sample of officers with 22 months service, approaching the end of the two year probationary period.

**Case Number 023 PFC**

"'No, it didn't. I thought I would be taught how to be a police officer, when I think I was taught how to be a social worker.'" [emphasis added]

**Case Number 024 PFC**

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"...I was quite surprised at the lack of discipline."

Case Number 025 PFC

"...everything was bright and breezy and everything was black and white at PTC, there was no sort of grey areas that you'd come across in the street which I think would be a bit of a shock for a probationer out on independent patrol, when you've got to deal with someone screaming and shouting at you...you wouldn't have that situation at PTC." [emphasis added]

Case Number 026 PFC

"No, no. I have to be totally honest and say after the first 5 weeks...I really considered saying 'I'm sorry but this isn't the job for me', because I couldn't believe I hadn't learnt any of the law. I mean they'd gone through things but we'd be in the middle of a subject and we'd have to talk about somebody's feelings... 'How do you feel about that?' and 'How do you feel about this?'...I don't think there's enough law input I really don't." [emphasis added]

The strength of feeling produced by the student-centred method was sufficient for this officer to consider resigning from the force.

Case Number 028 PFC

"...I was quite shocked really at the way we were treated initially, I thought it was to treat us with... gloves... sort of pampering really. I remember my first day and we had to sit round in a circle and throw a tin of sardines at each other to find out the person's name in the group." [emphasis added]

Probationers were asked, "Do you think the probationary system is successful, and if so, in what way?" Not surprisingly, the majority chose to single out the Tutor Constable attachment for special praise and often contrasted the 'reality' of street policing that they had experienced with the Tutor to the 'sterile environment' of the PTC. One could argue that, by it's very nature, the Tutor Constable attachment will always be more 'realistic' than the training received at the PTC; but the important point is that this dichotomy is exaggerated by a system of training that deliberately rejects reality.
Case Number 004 PFA

"Different parts of it is...the tutor constable side of it, 5 weeks with the tutor constable that’s great...Cos’ at [PTC] I think you could do with a bit more...standing up at the blackboard and showing you...rather than...not even show you that side of it and then just expect you to be trained...Then again on the streets it’s realistic...” [emphasis added]

Case Number 009 PFA

"On the whole yes...It’s like a sterile environment down there[PTC], if you make mistakes it doesn’t matter...” [emphasis added]

Case Number 014 PFA

"Yeah...I’ve seen a big improvement in myself. I think it’s got a lot to do with what my squad, what your Sergeants are like, I’m lucky I’ve got good Sergeants...”[emphasis added]

This respondent points out that the perceived improvement in his operational competence is attributable to his shift supervisors, and not the probationer training system.

PFB Sample: Officers with 18 months service.

Case Number 018 PFB

"No, I think it was crap...PTC is like a Mickey Mouse sort of world, and you’re in this sort of play world and you’re dealing with play offences...and when you say ‘Oh, come along with me you’re under arrest,’ ‘Oh, fair enough officer.’ It’s nothing like that in the real world as we all know...”[ emphasis added]

Sample Of Officers with 22 months service [ PFC]

Case Number 023 PFC

"...again it goes back to not being in touch with what’s going on, more ‘How do you feel about this ? How do you feel about that ‘ What do you think about this ?’, rather than ‘This is the situation, what would you do ?...’ ‘[emphasis added]
Case Number 026 PFC

"Yes I do. The rest of it. I think the actual PTC I can honestly say I didn't learn anything, it was of no benefit."

Case Number 027 PFC

"I think to be honest...it's virtually all down to your tutor constable."

[emphasis added]

Probationers were asked, "Did your training at the PTC and at the Force Training School adequately prepare you for street duties?" The response was quite clear that there is a difference between the often harsh reality of street policing [described by one respondent as a "wild environment"] and the world of PTC. Many probationers commented that it would be virtually impossible to train officers for what they will encounter on patrol duties, and there is an element of truth in this. However, NPT make very little attempt to introduce an element of realism into their training and bridge the 'reality gap'.

The ethnography also supports the earlier findings of Stradling et al [1980] in research that sought to identify how probationers acquired the "skilful use of discretion". Two groups of officers [Inspectors and Traffic Constables] were asked to place in rank order the most important elements in the development of probationary discretion. Both the Inspectors and the traffic officers ranked the Tutor Constable attachment as ranking first in importance. Interestingly, both groups placed the PTC at the lowest level of importance.[see also Stradling and Harper 1988]
This officer is atypical in having experienced a firearms incident on his first day of independent patrol. However, the point remains whether one can train officers for the reality of street policing:

**Case Number 001 PFA**

"No. For the simple reason that there is so much that could happen out there, as it can in a wild environment really. I don’t want to try and hype what’s happening out there...I remember my first day out on shift and somebody pointed a gun at me, and I was never prepared for that, it was quite a frightening experience..."

**Case Number 002 PFA**

"I think that hardly anything could prepare you for street duties..."

One of the problems with the training at PTC is that practical scenarios are deliberately kept simple in terms of dealing with a single offence within the practical incident. The reality of operational policing is that officers have to juggle with many different elements simultaneously:

**Case Number 008 PFA**

"...When you get into reality there’s lots more other things that come into play than just dealing with one particular task. At PTC you deal with a task, it’s finished, it’s over. In reality when you’re dealing with a task there’s lots of other things come into play that you can’t put into a scenario...you can’t get that realism into the training."

[emphasis added]

**Case Number 015 PFA**

"No, only because you can’t, I don’t think anything can really, not until you’ve been out on the street and see how people react to you..."

**Case Number 016 PFA**

"I think it did actually as much as it could, because obviously the practical situations you’ve got at the PTC, you don’t have anything that’s close to reality..." [emphasis added]

**Case Number 017PFA**
"PTC can't prepare you for that really because you start to realise by about week 6 of your 10 weeks that all the situations are really divorced from reality, you've got to have that experience..."

**Case Number 018 PFB (18 months service)**

"...But it's nothing like practical policing, you need to be treated as [a] practical police officer not kids of 5, and you need to be shown what to do...in the real world, not in this wrapped up little society that they try and build down there...Because it's out the window."

**Case Number 026 PFC**

"No, no. I don't think so...I learnt more in my 5 weeks with my tutor than I'd learnt in those 10, 15 weeks, whatever it is."[emphasis added]

**Case Number 027 PFC**

"...No, I don't think PTC did very much at all really. That's down to your tutor, he's the one who...bumps that into your head...don't do this, do this...But it's I say again the tutor constable, he's the one that really does help you out." [emphasis added]

**Case Number 028 PFC**

"...Yes it does prepare you but in a very sort of...namby pamby way...I thought there was a lot of wasted time...I think there's a hell of a lot of wasted time.."[emphasis added]

**The Influence Of The Tutor Constable.**

As the ethnography shows, the role of the Tutor Constable is pivotal for probationers trying to learn the 'craft' element of operational policing. The 'hands on', experiential method of training provides clear guidance to probationers frustrated by the confusion and ambiguity of training they received at PTC. It must also be remembered that probationers are under some considerable pressure to perform during their probation
and are subject to frequent progress reports. These factors ensure that probationers are positioned to take maximum advantage of the Tutor attachment.

It is during the Tutor Constable attachment that probationers are introduced to the weight of historical traditions and practices regarding street policing [McConville 1983; Sacks 1978; Werthman and Piliavin 1967; Brogden 1985; Reiner 1985]. This is also a crucial stage in the development of the probationer’s socio-spatial cognitive frame with the Tutor Constable providing a wealth of detail about local populations and this is set out in the specific objectives for Tutor Constables. These provide, inter alia, that the probationer should:

1. Become familiar with beat and patrol work in general
2. Develop a good police/public relationship-talking to people.
3. Be able to identify vulnerable lock up property.
4. Recognise well-known active criminals.
5. Be aware of the more prevalent offences in the area and how to deal with offenders. [MacDonald et al 1987]

The Tutor Constable attachment is where officers are first introduced to the importance of local knowledge and the development of a socio-spatial cognitive frame:

**Case Number 001PFA**

"Vital. My own individual tutor at the station ... was brilliant in my view. I think he was unprepared with regards to the paperwork side of things, but there was a huge compensation with regards to local knowledge..."

[emphasis added]
Case Number 002 PFA

"Brilliant. His training for those 6 weeks, because it was over Christmas, was superb. Polite, friendly...but I mean he was brilliant, really...a lot of my confidence and my learning skills have come from him, without a shadow of a doubt."

A good example of a probationer developing the socio-spatial cognitive frame directly from the Tutor Constable is described by the following respondent:

Case Number 006 PFA

"Very important...At the end of the day I didn’t know anything about the area and he was able to give me a lot of good input there and show me the problems and actually how to deal with the people there...where I come from and where I’m policing, it’s totally different areas. Where I live people have respect for the police...and I’ve found where I’m policing they don’t. And there’s certain ways that sometimes you have to speak to them...if you speak to them as I expect to be spoken to, they think you’re a bit condescending and taking the mick really. So you have to lower yourself to their level and speak to them on that level...My tutor was good at putting that across..." [emphasis added]

Note the expression “lower yourself to their level...” which encapsulates the differential styles of policing that officers are taught by the Tutor and which relates directly to the social construction of space and the weight of historical practice.

The emphasis at PTC is on enforcement of the law and very little guidance is given regarding the use of discretion. Officers in their first year of service are looking for guidance, contextually speaking, of when and where discretion can be applied as can be seen from the following respondent:

Case Number 012 PFA
"I think it helped me considerably to understand when to use my discretion, I think your tutor teaches you when there is discretion to be used and maybe on a busy shift you can tailor that to your own station...". [emphasis added]

Note the reference to normative values relating to the officer's specific shift and station. This is a clear example of an 'interpretive community' and the probationer has grasped the fact that to be considered a competent decision maker in this setting he must align his decisions to locally accepted policing norms.

Case Number 016 PFA

"Very I think... I think they've got quite a profound effect on you.."

Case Number 017 PFA

"Very, very. I had a good tutor who knew his stuff, knew his law..."

Case Number 018 PFB [18 months service]

The following response sums up the enthusiasm shown by many probationers towards the Tutor Constable attachment:

"I had an excellent tutor... the officer that tutored me was on the ball, he was a street wise lad, very practical... A week with a tutor was equivalent to about four weeks at PTC, if not more. You're out doing it, he's there to guide you, he's there to help you, to show you... I think that the tutor constable role is the most important role that you'll get in probationer training." [emphasis added]

Case Number 024 PFC [22 months service]

"That was the most important part of the training, you have a little knowledge from PTC, from the different Modules you go on, but the most important part is the tutor constable part when you go out there." [emphasis added]

This officer comments on a common fault of the present modular structure of probationer training. Because police training is seen as lacking status in the wider organisation, coupled with the heavily criticised 'student centred learning' at PTCs,
the influence of probationer training diminishes rapidly after the Tutor Constable
attachment:

**Case Number 026 PFC**

" Very, very...my first five weeks, when I went back to PTC I'd got a totally
different attitude then...I thought 'I haven't learnt anything...and I'm not going
to learn anything,' and when I'd been here[ with the tutor] on my five weeks I'd
done so much, I'd learnt so much, that when I went back, as disrespectful as it
sounds I felt that whatever they told me I knew that it didn't have any
relevance..."

The importance of selecting properly motivated and trained Tutor Constables for
what is essentially a critical role for the probationer’s development has been repeated
by many commentators on probationer training[ MacDonald et al 1987 : Stradling and
Harper 1988 ; Probationer Training Review 1995 ]. A decade later the same
sentiments are expressed in the Home Affairs Committee report ‘Police Training and
Recruitment’.[HMSO 1999] :

"...Regarding tutor constables, Mr Whitehouse, speaking on behalf of ACPO, told us
that "I do not believe that enough attention is paid to ensuring, in every force, that
the right people are tutors, that are properly supported..." [ op cit. para 54]

The reality, as revealed by the 1995 Review of Probationer Training, is that forces
pay lip-service to the training and deployment of Tutor Constables who are often seen
as just "another resource" on the streets.

Sometimes, in an effort to attract volunteers to apply for the role of Tutor
Constable, supervisors sell the idea to officers in terms of the role having potential
value on promotion boards :

**Case Number 029 PFC**
"It was very important. And that's another aspect which I feel the system fails in. In your first five or ten weeks with your tutor it really moulds you on how to deal with incidents, and if you're with a poor tutor who's not motivated or who hasn't been dealing with panda duties, which is obviously what you're going to be dealing with, then how on earth can you be expected to do the job if that officer can't do it or hasn't done it for however many years...so I feel that tutors should be more closely looked at and picked for suitability to work for the benefit of the probationer.." [emphasis added]

In sum, it is clear that the PTC element of probationer training lacks credibility in the eyes of many students. Although one must concede that it is very difficult indeed to reproduce the characteristics of the perceived 'wild environment' within a training establishment, the situation is actually aggravated by the chosen method of training that seems to alienate many officers and to widen the 'reality gap'.

Tutor Constables.

Of the ten Tutor Constables interviewed, eight of them had only received a one-week course to equip them for the role. When one considers that the Tutor Constable role is acknowledged to be one of critical importance to the success of the probationer training programme, and that probationers get over ninety days training before they go on the Tutor Constable attachment, then this lack of training is difficult to reconcile within the elaborately structured world of NPT. Since, for many probationers, real learning takes place during the Tutor Constable attachment, it is difficult to avoid the conclusion that the police service has positively chosen a system which will ensure that the 'correct' cultural positioning of operational probationers takes place on the streets, and not at the politically correct PTCs.
Given the pivotal position of Tutor Constables in the probationer training system the amount of training provided for this crucial role is woefully inadequate. Tutors were asked, "What Training Did You Receive For The Role?". The vast majority had only received one week's training and for the majority of respondents this course was taken up with the administration of the probationer training system in terms of the relevant paperwork they had to submit.

The following reply encapsulates the frustration adults can experience through the loosely structured, 'student-centred', facilitative mode of teaching. It also shows the paucity of instruction the Tutors received for their new role:

**Case Number 063 TIC**

"A one week course in the summer of '92...it was the first course I'd been on under the new style. I was used to getting answers. we didn't get that, and by the Wednesday of the first week we basically went on strike, because every time we asked a question we weren't getting any answers... My experience and my service is what I took into the role as tutor and that's basically what carried me through in the role of tutor." [emphasis added]

Tutors on Division are often 'pressed men' who have no interest in the role but because of vacancies are told they will be attending the course. That this situation has continued for so many years after being identified in numerous reports underlines the lack of status accorded to probationer training and also underlines the dominant power of the operational police culture on division, as the following respondent makes clear:

**Case Number 067 TIC**

"[I was] given a week's course at the training school with some people who had been tutor constables who were coming back for reclassification because of changes with Equal Opportunities...The only thing I found was the course was spoiled by the
selection of some people who attended the course, because they did not want to be there...” [emphasis added]

Tutor Constables were asked whether they thought they had been given sufficient training to equip them for their role. When asked “Did This Prepare You For The Role?” The majority were highly critical of the paucity of training they had received. Again we see that there is resistance to the facilitative style of teaching, and this is from the very officers who are being asked to deliver it:

Case Number 061 TIC

“we were given some input into the kind of training that...they[probationers] were undergoing at PTC, which I have to confess, I totally disagreed with, as did virtually everyone else on the course...I don’t agree with this facilitation business where you ask a question and the tutor throws it back, ‘Well, what do you think?’ How do you see that?’ When I went to the training school I wanted to be taught...” [emphasis added]

As this officer states, the one week course prepares Tutor Constables for the administrative side of being a Tutor, but not how to carry out the role:

Case Number 068 TIC

“I think the training as far as the assessments were concerned prepared us for the role...but as far as the other side of it you depend very much on your policing skills and your experience whilst you’ve been out on the beat...so they can’t have...I don’t think they can teach you that.” [emphasis added]

When asked, “‘How do you prepare an officer for independent patrol’?” four out of ten Tutor Constables replied that they prepare probationers for independent patrol by building up their confidence and allowing them to take the lead in dealing with incidents on the street. After the ambiguity and lack of guidance from PTC it is easy...
to see how the ‘hands-on’ guidance the Tutor Constables give the probationers is so influential and formative for them:

**Case Number 062 TC**

“First of all I try to involve the probationer in as many incidents, different incidents, as possible, and in an ideal world I like to chose the jobs that we go to, that’s not always practical as you know. What I do first of all, certainly in the first two weeks, to deal with a specific incident and then we go back and then we debrief i.e. we’ll sit in the car after the incident, we’ll say, ‘Well how do you think I dealt with that?’, ‘How would you have dealt with it?’ ‘Do you think I could have dealt with it in a different way?’...and then slowly we start, certainly after the first week we start off with simple tasks... and finally dealing with persons arrested.”

**Case Number 063 TC**

“I say to the person ‘Right, I’m not a tutor constable for myself, I’m here for you, so you tell me what you’re getting out of this, what you want out of this, and I’ll be guided by that.’ I tell them, ‘There’s no pressure as far as I’m concerned, I’m not judging you in any way, I’m here to help you and guide you. You follow me.’ ”

**Case Number 065 TC**

“...What I say to them at the beginning is that there are a few ground rules. I won’t let them drop themselves in the mire, I won’t let them lose anything, but I’ll give them their head. In other words I won’t let them lose a prisoner, I wouldn’t let them lose a bit of evidence, perhaps you know they’ve missed something when obviously I’d seen it...perhaps at the scene of a burglary, but I let them get on with it...I’ll look at it and say ‘Just let me go through it’, and talk about it afterwards, say what they did right and wrong.”

It is clear that Tutors experience problems in trying to carry out their role in an operational environment that does not value probationer training. Because of the emphasis on ‘performance indicators’ such as ‘response times’ to incidents, tutor constables and their probationers are simply seen as another resource to be deployed to incidents. Instead of having sufficient time to debrief incidents and critically reflect on their performance, tutors are invariably trying to cope with a heavy operational
workload that severely limits their teaching ability. This is illustrated in the following comments:

Case Number 069 TC

"... an unfortunate aside was whether there was enough time to do things properly or the way they should have been done....Certainly the old ethos...was they saw two collar numbers, two names and a double-crewed car, it was almost like receiving two workloads, it was very difficult to get through. In a way I should have been working at...two thirds speed to make sure that what I'm saying is getting across to the slowest member of the team, whereas...because of the two collar numbers, two names, two people on shift strength, you were working slightly faster than one person would be working. I certainly felt that way and I know other tutors felt that way.." [emphasis added]

Teaching The Handling Of 'Domestics'.

The Tutor Constables were asked "How do you teach probationers to make sense of Domestic Disputes?" One third of the group replied that they separated the parties, listened to both sides, and then decided on an outcome. Another third responded that they let the probationer "get on with it" and then analysed his or her actions afterwards.

The policing of domestic disputes conforms to what Manning [1992: 259] refers to as the use of an "organisational frame", which he defines as "...a structure of knowledge, experience, values and meanings" that "organisationally located" police officers bring with them to a decision. This 'frame' then "patterns but does not determine" the elements of an incident that are seen as salient or significant.

Within this frame officers can have considerable latitude over the way the incident is to be resolved. However, as Manning notes, the influence of the "external world" is never "fully excluded" in the decision making, and that the officer's values and ideological beliefs provide the "background" against which the particular incident is evaluated. The present findings support this argument and there are many examples
of Tutors developing the probationer’s socio-spatial cognitive frame by considerations of such factors as location and perceived social class.

The following officer, perhaps cynically, talks about the importance of the socio-spatial cognitive frame. That is, tailoring ones’ approach to the class of person, and the perceived intelligence of the person one is dealing with. He also refers to the ‘art of bullshit’ in terms of being able to informally resolve disputes by giving ‘suitable advice’ to protagonists ‘on their own level’.

Case Number 062 TIC

‘... It’s developing the art of bullshit really, and you know I’ve said the job is 80% bullshit, and that’s what I try to impart to probationers...you know that there’s a procedure and there’s a set way of doing things it’s all about the ‘gift of the gab’ if you like. And if you can talk, if you can talk sensibly and on the level of the person that you’re dealing with then you can’t go too far wrong. I think that’s important that they’ve got to realise what sort of person they’re dealing with and how to speak to them, because you’re not going to talk to somebody who is probably middle class than you are to somebody who is a well known villain..’” [emphasis added]

The emphasis on social class reinforces the historical traditions of street policing in which the main responsibility of the patrol officer was the control of marginal groups in society [Brogden and Brogden 1982: Brogden 1985: Dixon et al 1989: Reiner 1985]. Tutors seek to emphasise ‘social divisions’ on their beats thus continuing the tradition extending back across many decades.

Here we see the emphasis placed by the Tutor on mature semiosis, in the sense of looking beyond the immediate situation[ synchronic assessment], and exploring potential developments within the incident[diachronic assessment] whilst considering various options:
Case Number 0664 TIC

"...then the most important thing is to go through it with them, not just what happened but the potential that was there for other things to happen and to see if they're aware of all the other issues that might have been raised during it...”
[emphasis added]

Case Number 066 TIC

This is an example where the Tutor’s previous operational experience clearly informs his approach to domestic violence situations and this policy will be passed on to the probationer:

"...I've had one incident since I've been here where a woman was assaulted in a domestic violence situation probably fifteen times and ended up getting killed. And I think that if the police had arrested the offender several times during those fifteen domestic disputes he perhaps wouldn't have ended up killing her, so my policy tends to be intervention rather than resolving domestic disputes.”
[emphasis added]

Teaching Public Order.

Six of the ten Tutors agreed that they would adopt the pragmatic approach and teach probationers to deal with the immediate incident, that is the public order offences, and then make sense of what happened by collectively 'debriefing' the incident with all the officers that attended. This is an acknowledgement that semiosis at such incidents is virtually impossible whilst the incident is on-going, and that the final picture that emerges is often a 'reconstruction' based on the pooled recollections of officers that attended. Apart from the problematical issue of witness contamination bound-up with group debriefing sessions, these occasions are often important for probationers in terms of absorbing group norms, tacit understandings, and the institutional dynamic of the police role in the prosecution process.

Case Number 061 TIC
"Quite often that point comes after the event is finished...we sit around and everyone puts together their version of events, and it's only when we've heard everyone's version that we can then begin to assemble the picture and once you get the picture you can...discuss you can consider prosecuting for if that is required. So the end product there is that it's usually quite some time after the event when things have calmed down and you've sat around, over a cup of coffee and thinking."

**Case Number 063 TIC**

"Yeah, I would say probably the pat answer would be that you're supposed to assess the situation, but reality, form my experience, is that nobody has very much of an idea what the hell is going on and it's very much a case of suck it and see..."

**Case Number 065 TIC**

"I would be looking at the incident as a whole as opposed to an isolated incident. Giving it some kind of background. So, to make sense, usually talking about the incident afterwards..."

**Case Number 066 TIC**

"It would be very difficult to try and make any sense of it during it...whilst it's happening it's virtually impossible. If a fight, an affray, violent disorder or a riot is underway somebody has just got to get in and deal with it, and then afterwards, it's best to sit down and discuss what's go on. Obviously pocket books have got to be made up straight away. There's nothing wrong with having a collective memory providing it's an honest memory, and so what we would normally do is return back to the police station and start to make our pocket books up and start to remember exactly what we saw..

**Case Number 067 TIC**

"...The only way these situations can be sorted out properly is in time afterwards whereby you can stand back from the situation and re-picture what was happening, who was there..

There is strong evidence to suggest that police officers have great difficulty in seeking to make sense of complex public order incidents. The group debriefing sessions provide an opportunity to both simplify the process, in terms of constructing a chronological order, and to assign purpose to observed actions, all of which will be presented in terms of 'points to prove' for the selected charges. The 'reconstruction'
of the past with regard to the prosecution process is well documented in McConville et al [1991]

**A Single Reality?**

When asked "Is There A Right Way And A Wrong Way To Deal With An Incident?" six of the ten Tutors replied that there is no single 'right' way to deal with an incident, only 'wrong' ways. This subject is bound-up with notions of personal 'style' that officers adopt and this, in turn, is linked with issues of personality. Officers agree that there is a 'wrong way', and this can involve a breach of PACE or some other aspect of the law, but there are numerous 'right' ways. Reiner has argued [1992] that the substantive criminal law does not determine practical policing because of the inability of legal rules to cover every possible contingency and permutation officers are likely to encounter. The 'gaps' in the law are filled by police occupational culture that provides flexibility and freedom of choice in the way officers can choose to deal with incidents. [Manning 1988,1992: Hawkins 1992]. The substantive criminal law also gives officers a wide choice of offence categories with regard to public order offences. [McBarnet 1981]

**Case Number 066 TIC**

"There's definitely a wrong way to deal with an incident. A wrong way would be one that would further aggravate the situation or one that breaks the law or is contrary to force policy. But there can be several right ways to deal with an incident and each person, each individual officer has got to find his or her right way." [emphasis added]

**Case Number 064 TIC**

"Almost never. There are good ways, there are better ways, there are worse ways, but there is rarely a right way and a wrong way, I don’t think situations are often that black and white." [emphasis added]
Case Number 061 TIC

"Oh yeah, there are most definitely right and wrong ways, but there is no single right or wrong way to deal with an incident. There may be just a few wrong ways that you can deal with an incident. It's easy to go into an incident and inflame it, make it worse than it is. But there may be a significant number of right ways to deal with it...because it depends on perception, personality and circumstances." [emphasis added]

There was general agreement that the element that defined 'good police work' was

"all parties are satisfied with your action", the following replies are typical of the sample:

Case Number 061 TIC

"...If public satisfaction has resulted from the way that you've dealt with an incident, arguably the work has been good."

Case Number 064 TIC

"I think that's a really tough question, and I think good police work is when it leaves members of the public who have been involved feeling satisfied with the outcome.."

Case Number 063 TIC

"If the public that you're dealing with...if their satisfied with the outcome then fine, that's a gauge..."

Teaching Traditions

When asked "Do You Pass On To The Probationer Anything You Were Taught By Your Tutor?" seven of the ten Tutors stated that they passed on to their probationers something that was taught to them by their Tutor Constable, underlining the strength of tradition in passing on the 'craft' elements of street policing.

This section is also important in terms of defining the importance of the instruction passed on from Tutor to probationer by underlining the point that the success of the process is not only attributable to the personal approach adopted by the Tutor; but
that the impact of the Tutor Constable contributes to the formation of a tradition of which he or she becomes the carrier.

**Case Number 067 TIC**

"Yeah I think you do because you would hope you had a good tutor and he taught you in the correct way...And I certainly know that that was the type of thing that was taught to me...I suppose it goes back to the things passing from generation to generation, tutors being...older than the people they're tutoring." [emphasis added]

**Case Number 064 TIC**

"I almost certainly do, but I'm not sure which ones..."

[emphasis added]

**Case Number 062 TIC**

"Well obviously I've developed a style of policing which is my own style...but some of it is based on...I picked out the good bits if you like of what my tutor taught me...So do I pass on to probationers skills and knowledge that were taught to me...yes I do..."

[emphasis added]

**Statement Writing**

Training by Tutor Constables is not confined to dealing with incidents on the street: it also involves the important element of statement construction and the adoption of an 'official' police style.

Probationers get very little instruction in statement writing whilst at PTC even though it constitutes one of the most important skills that an operational officer can possess.

This very important element of probationer training is left for the Tutor Constable to develop. When asked how they achieved this, one half replied that they used the trial and error method: that is, the probationer would make an initial try at writing the statement and this would be scrutinised and perhaps amended by the tutor. Another practice is to use 'model' statements as a kind of blueprint for the probationer.
Case Number 069 TIC

"... They tend to be little mirror images of my statement... Certainly the better tutors I have noted will give their people example statements, or even example files... If they have got a stock of statements from the past, that is an excellent idea, certainly for statements, or a statement [that] really does cover all the 'points to prove' in a good order... they are useful as aide memoirs because they often have some ideas in their heads of what needs to go into a statement but they haven't got I think it's called police speak, but that would be naughty and leads to the idea of jargon, but there are certain ways of saying things that efficiently and quickly cover the 'points to prove'..." [emphasis added]

Case Number 065 TIC

This Tutor clearly states the formulistic nature of statement writing:

"I have a set sequence that I teach them and there are set phrases, words, sentences that I use which they put into the back of their little red book..." [emphasis added]

An Official Police Style?

Eight of the ten Tutor constables questioned agreed that there was an 'official police style' to written statements and reports, and this is also quite apparent from the replies given to other questions where probationers are given a specific format to adopt when writing witness statements.

Case Number 066 TIC

"I think, obviously I have been through different style of police training, and I think there is to a certain extent. You have to start off time, date, place... but yes, there is a style..." [emphasis added]

Case Number 069 TIC

"Yes... there's a style of writing... like any prose, the third party rule and various things like that... There was a way of putting points over in a clear and concise manner which is the same. I would imagine for most police statements..." [emphasis added]

Case Number 064 TIC

"I think there is a particular style and I think very often we don't do ourselves any favours by using that particular style because we use jargon, as many professionals do... of course there are rules, and we have to stick by rules of
evidence...So I think there definitely is a police style and I think we all learn it to some extent... [emphasis added]

Reproducing Policing Style.

The ethnography shows that initially the Tutor Constable exerts an enormous influence over the probationer’s operational style. Part of this must be attributable to the fact that the Tutor Constable frequently reports on the progress and operational competence of the probationer and thus the probationer will pragmatically align his or her operational style to that of the Tutor. By the time the probationer commences independent patrol, he or she will have had the opportunity to observe their shift colleagues demonstrate a variety of policing styles, often aligned to the officer’s personality. At this stage, the influence of the Tutor Constable rapidly diminishes.

Eight of the sample agreed that the Tutor Constable does initially influence the style of policing that the probationer adopts, but that this decays over time until the officer eventually develops his or her own style of policing.

Case Number 061 TIC
"Yeah, most definitely. Your tutor is, to a certain degree...your role model...Because your tutor, to a person out on the street for the first time is your lifeline..."

Case Number 062 TIC
"I don’t think that there is any way you can get away from influencing the style of policing your probationer develops."

The following cases confirm the temporary nature of the tutor influence, which, as we have seen, tends to diminish rapidly when the probationer experiences independent patrol. From this point they are far more influenced by their more experienced shift colleagues.
Case Number 065 TIC

"I hope so, otherwise I wouldn’t have done the job!...I think initially it’s perhaps quite apparent that...you’re making a clone. But...as time goes on they develop their own skills and own way of doing things, which is only...right, and I always tell them anyway, don’t necessarily copy, draw out from other things, bound to be better.” [emphasis added]

Case Number 068 TIC

"Short term I’d say yes...but later on as they go on to...8 months, nine months, ten months, they adopt their own styles then." [emphasis added]

Case Number 067 TIC

"I would like to think that they don't but I'm sure that in some ways they do...Having said that I would encourage them to develop their own style of dealing with incidents."

Through their efforts to implement the changes to police training following the recommendations arising from Lord Scarman’s report on the Brixton disorder [Scarman 1981 79-84], the Stage 11 Review Team [MacDonald et al 1987] designed a probationer training programme that emphasised the attitudinal development of the ‘reflective practitioner’.

The experience of probationer training at the PTC left the majority of students confused and frustrated. Instead of clarity they experienced ambiguity, fragmentation and a lack of clear direction and focus in what might be termed a ‘decentring of the police role’. In the ideological struggle for cultural domination of probationer training, operational street culture gains hegemony. By contrast, the Tutor Constable attachments provide the probationer with a clear, unambiguous focus and a ‘hands-on’ experience of policing embedded within the operational ‘reality’ of street policing.
We have seen how police culture serves to stabilises ambiguous meanings within semiosis by means of group debriefings following public order incidents, by the ‘hands on’ training given by Tutors when the stabilised logics of traditional policing practices are transferred, and through trainer interventions whilst at the PTC.

Paradoxically, the very system designed to address the attitudinal problems associated with probationers’ experience of the operational police culture succeeds in driving probationers into the arms of the culture it purportedly strives to overthrow.
Chapter 11

SOCIO-SPATIAL COGNITIVE MAPPING AND ITS EFFECT ON OPERATIONAL DECISION MAKING

Socio-spatial cognitive mapping, defined as the significance that socially constructed space has for patrol officers in terms of semiosis, constitutes one of the most important elements of operational police decision-making to emerge from my findings. In order to understand the significance of this concept on police signifying practices one must first look at the historical background that led to the creation of defined policing areas that have survived virtually unchanged since Victorian times.

The juridical significance of location within policing is one of the most misunderstood and neglected areas of police studies. Although the social construction of space is deeply rooted within the Victorian legacy of street patrol, it still exerts a powerful influence on contemporary policing practices. [Moran and McGhee 1998: Herbert 1997: McGahan 1984]

The 43 police forces in England and Wales continue to utilise a system of dividing territorial police areas into spatial boundaries developed by the creators of the Metropolitan Police in 1829. The Metropolitan Police District was divided up into hierarchical geographical areas known as Divisions. Divisions were further subdivided into Sections; and then Sections were subdivided into Beats. These territorial units exert a powerful symbolic, disciplinary and conceptual structure on the individual police officers who work within them. Indeed, the Police Discipline Code enshrined in the Police Act of 1964, still sets out the individual
responsibility that police officers have to work their beat in accordance with instructions [see Brogden 1991].

Spatial boundaries assume special significance within policing since local intelligence structures, training, magistrates' courts petty sessional areas, establishment levels, rank hierarchies, HMIC performance indicators and a host of other features all work towards imbuing locations with a special significance, not least of which is the probationers' time patrolling the beat with his or her Tutor Constable. Operational police work, with the special significance given to social surveillance, and the symbolic weight accorded to 'crime scenes' and 'hot spots', all work towards the social construction of space. Police officers develop detailed cognitive maps of their beats which then provide a horizon of expectations when officers are deployed to incidents.


When one examines the present findings, the significance of socio-spatial mapping becomes apparent in the replies of the more experienced, post-probationer sample, and is only mentioned in a rather undeveloped way by two probationers. As one would expect, the weight of previous operational experience develops the 'intertextual' or experiential mode of decision making.

What is also apparent is that the initial message the patrol officer receives sets up a temporary 'horizon of expectations' about what the officer is likely to encounter. The horizon of expectation differs as officers move through their probationary period. During their training probationers are taught to treat incidents primarily as 'texts', that is incidents to
be categorised in terms of offences and evidential ‘points to prove’. Semiosis is largely confined to the synchronic plane. When we examine the thought processes of probationers as they are en route to incidents there is an emphasis on legal powers and definitions. When officers become more experienced ‘contextual factors’ become important as they consider such variables as the time and location of the incident, and the gender and age of the offender[s]. Similarly, experienced patrol officers are able to draw on previous operational experiences and then feed these elements into their semiosic activity.

In the latter sense semiosis tends to be a mixture of diachronic and synchronic elements combined with ideological factors absorbed from the occupational culture[s]. Thus, locations for experienced officers assume a greater significance in terms of shaping their individual style of response to both complainants and offenders, and in their semiosic activity whilst en route to incidents. These points are clearly illustrated in the ethnography.

This section illustrates why the pre-incident phase is crucial to understanding police decision making, in terms of what the individual police officer brings with him or her to the incident. Socio-spatial mapping is not apparent to researchers working within the interactionist tradition of participant observation and will not be apparent in any subsequent narratives of evidence. Socio-spatial mapping is of great relevance in understanding police street-level decision making.

This section is structured into several main themes as shown below but there is often an overlap between sections since often more than one theme is given in a reply. Sub-themes are also developed but are subsumed under the main headings. These are, inter alia:

1. The importance of location for patrol officers and the socio-spatial cognitive frame.
2. What officers think about en route to incidents: the pre-categorisation of the incident by communications room staff and the temporary 'horizon of expectations' that results.

3. The importance of maintaining objectivity or an 'open mind'.

4. The importance of Non-Verbal Communication in assessing the veracity of competing accounts.

The Importance Of Location For Operational Police Officers

The ethnography will show a change that occurs in the information needs of patrol officers as they gain operational experience. Because probationers are taught at PTC to see incidents as essentially legal 'texts', in terms of offence categories and related 'points to prove', their information needs tend to be confined to a rehearsal of their legal powers.

As officers become more experienced, especially as they approach the end of their probationary period and beyond, their informational demands increase as new information is added to previous experiences, to augment and update their socio-spatial cognitive maps.

For example, post-probationers are more demanding in the type and range of information they require from the communications room whilst en route to jobs; often requesting, inter alia, details of previous convictions, details of previous calls to the police station, a knowledge of possible associates, any criminal intelligence known; and all these elements will feed into the officer's 'horizon of expectations'.

**Probationer Sample.**

**Case Number 005PFA [12 months service]**

"I think about it first. If I'm driving along, or I'm walking, and they shout my number [call sign] over the radio, then I start thinking 'What have I done previously? Experiences that I've had, how have I dealt with those previous experiences. And once they've
given me the address where I have to go... I'm then thinking, 'Right then, when was the last time I attended one of these, what did I do on that one, have I been here before, or attended something like this, or been to this address before?...’ [emphasis added]

Many officers in my sample of post-probationary officers like those in the research carried out by Hoyle [1998], were critical of both the accuracy and the quality of information passed to them by the communications room staff. The reason for this is well illustrated in the following example which details several of the themes that emerged: the need to plan tactics; the sort of person they are likely to encounter, the need for 'back up', and the importance of a professional response to incidents:

Case Number 034 PP

"It's my practice...that I always double check and cross-check everything that they tell me. And I ask them for as much possible information including first names, surnames, background history...as I'm progressing towards it. The main help that I find is when I'm a short distance away from the incident, and then I have a chance to mentally prepare myself to strategically think... and the actions that I may take and formulate alternative actions based on past experiences as well... So I use every available bit of time on the way to prepare for it... an incident is never as simple as it appears. Usually... the worst incidents are the ones that the Comms Room operator has been telling you 'Won't take a minute, just a quickie'... So you strategically plan, you work out in your mind who is available to help you, do you know the area, what might be at that area, what kind of problems, whether there are weapons? You strategically think around different... actions. 'Do I go straight in? Do I listen and see if there's anything happening? Do I speak to neighbours? But I would certainly explore as many different avenues before I got there.' [emphasis added]

The following officer draws on his considerable operational experience to illustrate the interplay of the socio-cognitive frame and intertextual, experiential elements that are featured in the semiosic process:

Case Number 035 PP
"Well it obviously starts at the beginning...when you're sent to a particular incident...it's those first words,...the instructions your given by the controller...you want to know as much information as you can so that you can make an informed decision as to how you're going to deal with it...even before you get there. So...you may have to decide how you're going to deal with it before you get there. but you've got to be prepared to change. We've got things like intelligence computers, PNC [Police National Computer], local knowledge, your own experience, because it might be something you've already dealt with, a problem family in the area that everybody in the station has had some dealings with...you want to question the people who are sending you there to give you more information, 'Is this person known ? Has he got previous convictions ? Associates, the layout of the area. It might be that I've just started working in a different station so I don't know the area, 'Where am I going ? What sort of area is it ?...More often than not from experience you can virtually tell what's going to happen when you get to an incident..." [emphasis added]

Officers use the initial information provided by the dispatcher to construct a provisional 'horizon of expectations' in order to cue their style of response to the type of people they expect to encounter at the incident.

The horizon of expectations is provisional in the sense that it will be modified by what the officer encounters on arrival but may, of course, influence what is encountered on arrival.

The importance of keeping an 'open mind' was stressed by officers at all stages of service as in the following example :

Case Number 036 PP

" Difficult one because they vary so much. I think you've got to be conscious that when you get sent to a domestic dispute you obviously consider the area where you're going, it may be a house that you've been to before so you're aware of the previous history. One thing I always ask for is a local intelligence check on the individuals I'm going to, just in case there is anything known, and quite often if there is a local officer on they'll usually shout up, 'Oh by the way you know, watch him or watch her' so you ...take in as much information as you can on the way there....So I take my time to get there and sort of keep an open mind really, think about my powers, prevent a breach of the peace, assault and any of the public order offences. Also, get the information in to check that there are no injunctions against anybody out at the time so that...when I'm at the front door I'm in receipt of all the information and intelligence that I ought to be in receipt of to enable me to do a better job there.[emphasis added]
"I'd just be thinking of the ones I've done in the past of a similar nature. You know what area you're being sent to generally...it's all done on experience basically, although you are thinking of the law. So there's quite a lot goes through your mind really." [emphasis added]

Case Number 041 PP

"...time, time of day, location, who's involved because domestics are not only husband and wife it can be any family, is the family known ?, or are the people known to us to start with, have I dealt with them before ? And what is the actual complaint ? Try to consider the situation before you get there and what you're going to be faced with, so you try to look at all the possibilities, see if you've got any knowledge of the situation you're going into."

[Type of area.] "Well if it's a straightforward pub fight, then Is it football matches, in location of football matches...is that the cause of it, is it a public order event in a coloured area, or is it near a gypsy site or that type of thing, you've got to take the geographical location as well as the... location, who lives there, type of people living there, is it a council estate, is it a private estate, everything changes...the reasons for it. And outside influences as well."

Detailed 'local knowledge' of the specific location allows officers to modify their style of approach in line with perceptions of what will be acceptable to people living in the area.

Generally speaking, people living in housing provided by the local authority will be perceived to be more tolerant towards noise and nuisance levels than people living in private housing.

Patrol officers will often tailor their response accordingly, and this is also linked to the development of the contextual frame, in terms of assessing behaviour against criteria based on time and place as the following respondent makes clear:

Case Number 042 PP

"Have we had problems with them before ? Do I know this person ? Things like that because you're a local[police] station you might know these people...so you might know how
to deal with that person because everyone will accept something, if you know them personally then it makes a difference...a big difference. The immediate demeanour, drink related, drug related, if he's a druggie...all those aspects have to be taken in mind before you go in...You know what... the locals would take as a reasonable time of day, because you might be able to accept certain amounts of noise during the day as opposed to night. [emphasis added]

The following examples illustrate the typical thought processes of experienced officers and the complexity of analysis that precedes arrival at the scene, even to the extent of noting the tone of voice of the dispatcher:

Case Number 043 PP

"What is it ?...'Do I know where I'm going , or do I need to ask for directions ? From personal experience it's 'Have I been to that place before ? Have I been to that job before ? If it's a burglary in progress 'Have I been there ?' and , if it's been broken into before, 'Is it going to be the same point of entry ? or 'Is there any intelligence we've had about the incident , the area we're going to ?' If it be a domestic Is the family known on [computer] ?, Are there any warning signs ? Is he a shotgun holder ? What time of day it is, is it...half past eleven, twelve o'clock at night if it's a domestic, maybe one of the parties would have had too much to drink...'Are there children involved, is it a school holiday ?""

Case Number 044 PP

" . So you look at the information you've been given, also if you're responding to the radio the tone of the voice....so you're assimilating all of that... 'Am I the only one going ?' is usually the first, followed by 'What back-up is nearby ? Who else can I draw on ?, and also 'What am I likely to get when I get there ?' 'How many am I going to be dealing with ?' If it was something of that nature then fear does enter into the mind, but that's usually in my personal case overrun by 'This is my duty'. Fear is a natural response, duty is a command over that. And then you start to drive down the road...to go to it. Now even if it's something like a minor thing...still...you're thinking 'What people am I going to meet ?' and...'What am I going to get at the other end ?'...so you start to build up in your mind a picture of the person you're going to get there, whether it be compliant or belligerent or whatever. And numbers...of persons. So you start to get towards the scene and everything is racing through your mind, as it does...15 years experience, so you've got every possible permutation running through your mind, but then you also appraise that against, 'What is the likely outcome of this ?""

Case Number 046 PP

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"...the area that you're going to, you can to formulate an idea of...what the job is...you tend to immediately start to formulate an idea about...what the people you may be coming up to deal with. If it's an area well known for trouble makers...you start to think, 'Well, am I going to be faced with a lot of people who are aggressive, am I going to need back-up for that, am I capable of dealing with it for the moment, have I got my casco [ baton] if it's going to be public order...?' These are all things that go through your mind on the way to a job... I think it's the experience of the area, of the people who live in that area...."

The accuracy of the initial assessment or categorisation made by the control room staff assumes great importance for patrol officers who base their initial approach on the information provided. Several studies have pointed out the friction that can result from either inaccurate or inadequate information being provided. [McConville et al 1991: Hoyle 1998 and many others]

Case Number PFA 010 Female officer

"I try to keep an open mind really 'cos. when I first joined this job you tend to go to an incident with a state of mind and you just keep that fixed, you go there expecting a certain thing, but now I go with an open mind because, from experience, I've gone there and the situation has been totally different from what I've expected it to be, so I always go with an open mind..." [emphasis added]

Case Number 051 PP.

"Well it's just an art, it's with the information you've got and you...look at the quality of the information you've got. The location is always going to be relevant. It may well be that you've got some knowledge of the circumstances already if it's a repeat call.." [emphasis added]

Case Number 052 PP

"Basically you know something of the offence you're going to from what you get over the radio, and it gives everyone a preconception of what they could be walking into. So that while you're driving there you're sort of mulling it over in your head, what offences you
might be looking at... You're trying... to sort of pre-empt what they're going to be actually faced with when they get out of the car at the incident... and you will react to what faces you when you actually arrive. But... if you're with a colleague you're talking through with them, you're trying to establish the amount of local knowledge, you might [know] the people involved, you might know the area, you might have a suspect or, if there are similar offences in the area you may have information that someone has committed that type of offence, all those things you consider."

The next two cases are examples of why officers require accurate information on the protagonists involved before they arrive at the scene. The theme of personal safety is frequently mentioned with regard to domestic disputes. The second case is also an excellent example of how experienced officers can start the semiosic process at a considerable distance from the scene under certain circumstances [i.e. at night]:

**Case Number 055 PP**

*En Route to a domestic* "Right, firstly the level of violence. A domestic dispute can be one of the most dangerous and violent situations you're likely to go to. And so I'd want to know who is involved, whether that person has been checked on the computer, whether he's got previous violence against police officers, whether they're registered with a firearm at home, shotgun, whether we've got previous incidents on our computer log, so as much information as possible, which can all be done in a matter of a minute probably... a good controller should do it automatically..."

**Case Number 055PP cont.** [at what distance do police officers start to make sense of the incident?]

"...on a night shift within a couple of miles from the incident, especially a burglary. I would be thinking about anybody on foot or cycling could well be a possible suspect because they can move so quickly on bikes that within minutes they could be a good couple of miles from the scene, so within a mile or two I would be far more conscious about the effect I might have... say switch off the sirens for example and start looking a car number plates as they go past, so you're starting to think more about evidence as coming away from the scene."

**Case Number 056 Post Probationer.**

*En Route* [burglary in progress]

"Layout of the area basically, whether or not there's been similar incidents in the area, whether or not there are any suspects that are doing the jobs in the area, where's the house, how do you approach it, which is the best way to approach it, where to leave the car to approach it, and whether or not you can get some back up coming in, and control, control where the officers are going so you box the area in rather than everybody going in gung-ho... and finding he's gone out the back door and over the back fence, as is often the
Patrol officers often align their personal ‘style’ of policing to notions of social class based on the type of housing, and the levels of criminality associated with a specific location. This technique is taught to probationers during their Tutor Constable attachment and is part of the historical legacy of street policing when the primary purpose of patrol officers was the control of marginal groups in society [Brogden and Brogden 1982: 1984: Dixon et al 1989]. The following respondent makes this clear:

Case Number 059 PP.

"...try and work out what their response is going to be to you, such as different areas geographically in [a town] such as Y comparing it to Z, their response is going to be completely different because you've got a different class of people there and how...they react to you as well."

Q "So how would you tailor your response then, for those different areas?"

"I think it's down to how...you don't want to stereotype people for certain areas such as everyone tends to stereotype everybody in 'X' as being predominately social housing as that standard, but there are a fair few people who have bought their own houses there amongst...there's high unemployment...you have to think...in certain situations...people think...because you're going there you're automatically going to meet somebody of a lower social standard and you have to...ignore that, push that in the back of your mind....a lot of it depends on the job and where you're going to, the areas differ so much in [the town] it's difficult not to...put people in the same bracket and that is mainly having an open mind and looking at what your partner is trying to understand, what they want to do..."
"...Experience has taught me to be a little more level headed about it now, I mean with intelligence led policing and targeted policing now we have generally got quite a good idea of areas to look at anyway." [emphasis added]

The significance of socially-constructed space for patrol officers is made clear by the ethnography, and this is undoubtedly linked to the Victorian legacy of street policing[Moran and McGhee 1998 : Herbert 1997 : McGahan 1984]. What is also apparent is that the informational needs of patrol officers increases with policing experience and is directly linked to the growth of the individual officer's socio-spatial cognitive map.

**What Police Officers Think About En Route To Incidents.**

This selection of responses overlaps to a certain extent some of the other categories; but is useful to illustrate the transition between probationers and non-probationers, in terms of the movement away from a tendency to think of incidents in legalistic ways [powers, procedures, 'points to prove'], towards a more socio-spatial and experiential analysis that develops in more experienced officers.

Probationers, whilst *en route* to incidents, are primarily concerned with a rehearsal of their legal powers such as powers of arrest, powers of entry into premises, and the 'points to prove' for specific offence categories. There is also a concern to appear 'professional' in their dealings with the public and to their supervisors. This is partly because probationers are anxious not to attract complaints from the public.

**Case Number 004PFA, [Female Officer]**

"Obviously you've got to pre-plan when going to an incident...you've got to have some knowledge on what sort of offences are going to be committed, who is...going to
be involved and also a knowledge of the law. ... You've got to have your facts right so you don't look unprofessional." [emphasis added]

The theme of personal danger is a very real concern for probationers but notice the emphasis on the "really good arrest" [burglary] which, as a 'crime arrest'[ Young 1991] has powerful symbolic overtones:

**Case Number 009PFA [Female Officer]**

"... I'd be thinking of the danger... if there was someone inside the building I'd be thinking if I had all the relevant kit with me, cuffs, casco, CS gas, because I always think about personal safety... whether it's being female but if I'm on my own and it's dark and I'm going to something like a burglary in progress I always think about my personal safety first and foremost... so I do find it daunting to go into places where I know there's people still on the premises but it's also exhilarating, the adrenaline rush is great, especially if you get them on the job and arrest them, it's a really good arrest." [emphasis added]

The next two cases are illustrative of the transitional stage that probationers move through as they develop socio-spatial cognitive frames based on previous information and experiences. We also find references to the themes of personal danger and the need to appear 'professional' at all times:

**Case Number PFA 011 [12 months service]**

"... What sort of reception am I likely to encounter when I get there, is there any known information about who it is I'm going to see..." [emphasis added]

**Case Number 014PFA [12 months service]**

"I suppose you're always concerned about getting assaulted yourself, so it depends on the call I like to know if there's back-up close by... any previous [on] PNC[police national computer]. Any other officers with knowledge, as much information as possible... you need to gain before you attend. Most incidents I get sent to I more or less know what's going to occur once I get there. If it's a theft I try and go over in my mind the definition of theft, same with assaults, criminal damage, I try to go over my powers in my head before I actually arrive so I know what I'm talking about and don't make a prat of myself." [emphasis added]

The following cases show probationers still thinking in the 'textual' or legalistic mode:

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"...Well once you get sent to a job with the... information...from the radio, I try to think about what offences I should be considering...So whilst en route I try and consider what points I need to think about and how to deal with it, ...

Case Number 024 PFC.

En Route

"Most of them I would know if there was an offence or there isn't an offence, so when you go into these things, shoplifter, criminal damage, road traffic accident, obvious offences that we've gone to then your going through in your mind what to expect when you get there, what powers you have, what your options are to deal with that and perhaps what the outcome is. " [emphasis added]

Sample Of Experienced, Post-Probationary Officer

The content of the message patrol officers receive via their personal radios is embedded within their experiential store of previous related incidents. Officers use this cognitive 'horizon of expectations' to mentally prepare themselves for what they are likely to encounter, and this provisional frame of reference is also linked to scripted knowledge since the vast majority of the incidents they attend are 'variations on a theme':

Case Number 032 PP

"I think you try and obtain as much information as possible from the initial transmission...I think it's a natural progression then,...certainly for me, you tend to stereotype things before you get there, based on experiences. That can prejudice you a little bit, but in a way it's nice, it's a sort of comfort thing that you create, these pockets of incidents, these filed incidents if you like,..."

Case Number 033 PP

"I think when you're en route to an incident, especially when there's a couple of you, you tend to get an idea in your head between you of what the incident is likely to be. That's based usually on experience more than anything else. Obviously the radio message is going to give you...most clues, but you can sort of decide which way the options are likely to go, whatever you're looking at...so you can have one or two ideas before you get there, then you just play it by ear...once you arrive. But I think you
The following is a good example of the use of the socio-spatial cognitive frame with the officer referring to what Sacks [1978] called ‘incongruity factors’ in terms of what is regarded as ‘normal’ for the specific area:

**Case Number 036 Post Probationer.**

"...It depends a lot on the incident obviously but if I got a call to attend a burglary in progress, what I'd do is get there as quickly as I could, no...audible warning instruments to get there whatever, and then I should turn them [lights] off when you get to the vicinity when you get close to the address. I'd then ...drive much slower, looking for offenders' vehicles, looking for people that looked out of character in the vicinity of the neighbourhood...But...it's a mixture of experience, you going through your mind, 'What am I looking for ?', odd vehicles, odd people coming away from the area, people who don't look quite right, local villains that you know you might see..."

In sum, we have seen how the ‘horizon of expectations’ officers develop whilst *en route* to incidents changes as officers become more operationally experienced. Probationers tend to be concerned with their legal powers and the need to appear ‘professional’ at all times.

As officers move towards the end of their probationary period and beyond they develop detailed cognitive maps of their policing area enabling them to assess what is to be regarded as ‘normal’ for a specific location at a specific time. Officers are introduced to notions of socially constructed space and incongruity factors during their Tutor Constable attachment and this will often form the basis of semiosic activity for experienced officers.
Chapter 12

What Police Officers' Categorise As Personally Acceptable Or Unacceptable Behaviour.

This section provides an important insight into the operational ideologies of uniformed patrol officers in terms of setting out their normative and evaluative conceptual frameworks, common-sense understandings, and frames of reference that they apply to commonly occurring street offences. What is of particular importance is the fact that these operational ideologies lie largely outside the conventional 'legal paradigm' of evidential rules and procedures, and are therefore absent from any subsequent written evidential accounts.

As many of the respondents point out, the substantive criminal law offers very little guidance regarding evaluation and it is therefore not surprising to find officers falling back on their personal values as a kind of benchmark or moral calculus with which to evaluate concrete social events [Wilson 1968 : Banton 1964 : Reiner 1992] However, since police officers are drawn from a fairly narrow cultural background this in itself is problematic especially in culturally and racially diverse areas. As officers become more experienced and operationally competent, one can discern a change in their operational ideologies or logonomic systems as institutional values become stabilised and reinforced by both discursive regularities, and the contextual and intertextual frames of reference built up by dealing with scores of similar incidents.

Acceptable Or Unacceptable Behaviour

Several themes emerge when the responses of officers with 12 months service are examined. Firstly, there is clear evidence of the development of the socio-spatial cognitive map with regard to notions of acceptability linked in with perceptions of what is, or is not, acceptable within that specific location. Secondly, notions of acceptability are grounded in the officer’s perception of what the ‘average’ person would find acceptable or unacceptable within that area or district. Very often the contextual features of an incident such as the time and place where the incident took place become an important element of operational decision-making. This element of semiosis is taught during the Tutor Constable attachments when detailed cognitive maps of specific locations are built up and local knowledge is passed on.

In addition, some officers use their personal life experiences as a kind of moral benchmark with which to assess behaviour, often asking themselves, “Have I been there?” What is clear is that officers are developing their normative and evaluative conceptual frameworks by seeking to align notions of acceptability to what they perceive as acceptable behaviour within a specific community. [Banton 1964]. This, in turn, lends a certain legitimacy to their decisions, and is further stabilised by the craft element of street policing passed from generation to generation of police officer [Manning 1977; Fielding 1984; Dixon et al 1989; McConville et al 1991]

In the following example, this officer with 12 months service is drawing on socio-spatial aspects of decision making in relation to his acceptance of differential value systems within policing areas. There is also an acknowledgement of contextual aspects of decision making relating to time and place, and an operational ideology informed by public expectations.
"...I'd be lying if I said that my moral, not my moral standards, but what I consider to be not normal behaviour, I don't consider swearing in public normal. Except boisterous behaviour coming out of a night club is normal within a certain group because it's a young group, they're out having a good time, it's probably not that unacceptable...But in the main I'm looking for what I've been taught on offences and following those guidelines. Perhaps leaning a bit towards what the public accept as social and what the public don't accept. ...you've got to follow the letter of the law but you've got to take into it the district or the sort of local rules and what they accept as acceptable. That make sense ?" [emphasis added]

Similarly, in the next case, normative and evaluative operational concepts are informed by perceptions of what the 'average person' would consider unacceptable :

Case Number 003 PFA

"... So what I think the test you try and give it is 'Would the average person in the street think that the behaviour is acceptable, would they be offended by that ?... 'Is the average person going to offended or feel threatened by that?' and that's the yardstick I use."

In the following example, we note the reference to 'normal members of society' and the officer's perception of what the public would find acceptable. This element is apparent in many of the following cases :

Case Number 007 PFA

" Out on the street I would say that what I would find offensive or my colleagues or other normal members of the public would find offensive. .." [emphasis added]

Note the officer draws on his own life experiences as a bench mark of acceptability.

Case Number 008 PFA
"...one of the first things that I always do is think to myself, 'Have I been there? Have I been there in the past? Domestics, yeah, I'm married. Do I have arguments? Yeah, I do have arguments'. Likewise public order, I think 'Hang on, I've been there as well.' And I try and fit it, and stand back from it and not rush in...try and stand back and think 'I've been there'..."

Case Number 010 PFA

"In disorderly conduct... what behaviour would be acceptable is what I would feel was normal, if I was a member of the public..." [emphasis added]

Case Number 011 PFA

Note the development of the contextual mode of decision making.

"I think it depends [on] the time of day and which... vicinity. I mean I work in a small town, a rural patch, 2 o'clock in the morning night club kicks out and I always get people mouthing off...in the street. It's not a residential area...so I'm probably prepared to let it go than say during the day time when there's people about, women, children whatever..."

[emphasis added]

Case Number 015 PFA

"I think really how I would perceive it if I was just out as a normal member of the public... but it's all down to how a normal person would perceive it." [emphasis added]

The PFB sample[ officers with 18 months service] show a growth in the officer's operational confidence to the extent that the normative and evaluative conceptual framework now tend to be based on what the individual officer deems to be either acceptable or unacceptable behaviour. In addition, we see that for many officers violence provides them with a clear and unambiguous guide to unacceptable behaviour.

Case Number 019 PFB

"Acceptable behaviour- it's just generally what I perceive to be unacceptable behaviour.. So more personal opinion that anything else." [emphasis added]

Case Number 020 PFB

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"It's easy to say...you'd say the average person...we try to put ourselves in the place of the average person's position but I think it comes from myself really, what I think is acceptable." [emphasis added]

Here we have an acknowledgement of the fact that the substantive criminal law is not a clear guide in assessing disorderly conduct and the officer is obliged to apply his own normative standards of acceptability.

**Case Number 021 PFB**

"Yeah,...you can't decide from the law books because they just, you know, they just use words like harassment, distress and alarm, which is open to individual interpretation. So I guess...it's open to my interpretation and the complainant's interpretation of those key points [emphasis added]

Violence provides officers with a clear benchmark for unacceptable behaviour, as is illustrated in the following example:

**Case Number 022 PFB**

"I think if there's violence used it's unacceptable, regardless of whether she's saying 'I don't want to make a complaint.' You've got to act on it immediately. I would never be able to live with myself if I left a situation and...submitted an incident report, and the next day she was dead..." [emphasis added]

As officers move towards the end of their probationary period [PFC 22 months service] we see that the symbolic dimension of the police role starts to gain prominence; especially over perceived threats to the dignity and authority of the office of constable. However, affronts to dignity or authority are often perceived by experienced patrol officers as a signal for 'positive action'[the need to arrest] to 'nip' potential problems 'in the bud'.
What also becomes apparent at this stage is the growth of paternalism in operational decision-making, and this element continues to be an important factor in the value systems of experienced, post-probationary officers.

**Case Number 023 PFC**

"...I suppose it's, for my own behaviour as well, what I would class as acceptable...So it's drawing on experiences really." [emphasis added]

The following case is the only example where the officer introduces a specific element of moral blameworthiness in assessing the behaviour of the female party in a domestic dispute. I would suggest that this aspect of semiosis is much less prevalent than some feminist critics have suggested and supports the recent research carried out with the Thames Valley Police by Caroline Hoyle[1988]:

**Case Number 024 PFC**

"If it's a domestic I think well it's usually the man against the woman, that's all I've come up against at the moment...does that person, that lady, deserve what he's done to her, and if not have they broken the law, is there an actual offence there...that's how I would decide that's unacceptable" [emphasis added]

A perceived affront to personal dignity, or to the symbolic dimension of the 'office of constable' can be a trigger to legal sanction, an assessment that was identified more frequently in the post-probationer sample. The following officer, with 22 months service, is approaching that stage:

**Case Number 025 PFC**

"Well...I mean it's unacceptable for people, although you are in people's homes, I feel it's unacceptable for people to swear at me for a kick off." [emphasis added]
At this stage of their service officers often combine normative elements from their personal and family value system with a contextual evaluation based on their socio-spatial cognitive map. The theme of paternalism is very evident in the following replies:

**Case Number 027 PFC**

"...if one of my family was...coming out of here they wouldn't have to put up with it......again I suppose you think, well how would I feel if this was my parents, if there's a child involved, if it was me and my wife or whatever..."

**Case Number 028 PFC**

"Well I suppose that again is how you were brought up in life...'cos you're moulded aren't you between your parents and you know what is right and wrong within your, what you think yourself, not what anybody else thinks, but you think. And that's the way, I go on my own views, 'Is that right or wrong?' obviously the law comes into it..."

**Case Number 029 PFC [Female officer]**

"Well I mean the way in which I suppose we all do, which is the way we're not supposed to, but on your own standards, on your own levels, you know, what you think is acceptable and what you think is unacceptable and go by...what's instilled in you...

Q "Yes, so when you say, you sort of relate it to "what's instilled in you", what are you thinking about when you say that ?"

"Well, your upbringing, what your parents have taught you is acceptable and unacceptable, you then relate that to how the couple that you're dealing with, 'Well, my dad wouldn't say that to my mum', or 'Crickey, my husband would never punch me in the eye', so then you think 'Well, that's unacceptable behaviour.'"

Post Probationer sample.

What is quite striking with a great deal of these responses of post-probationers is the clear paternalistic theme that runs through questions of acceptability of behaviour. This is, as Walker [1996] notes, a much "warmer" and "personal" side of police culture:
"...I always think that if your mother or grandmother was walking down the High Street...would you really want to subject her to that... " [emphasis added]

An important difference between probationary and post-probationary decision making is that very often experienced officers think of the situation in terms of possible developments based on past experiences [the intertextual mode], and the need prevent possible escalations by acting positively to 'nip it in the bud' as the following respondent explains:

Case Number 033 PP

"... I think on the one hand we see so much grossly unacceptable behaviour that our tolerance level is perhaps greater or perhaps there's a tendency to nip it in the bud rather than let it get to that stage. Often I think the question is not necessarily whether it's acceptable or unacceptable, but whether or not you're going...if you ignore a situation whether it's going to escalate into a situation that you are going to have to do something about or whether by leaving it it's going to disappear. It isn't anything personal, it's just the uniform and authority,"

A perceived affront to police authority or dignity will result in positive action, as the following officer makes clear:

Case Number 036 PP

"Well you have your own personal standards and the way I, as an individual, interpret the law. I've always policed firmly, I'd like to think I have certainly policed fairly but if somebody is clearly drunk, or they're aggressive, and they're warned and they don't heed the warning, then there's only one option and that is you either take them into custody or deal with them accordingly...

Q "When you say your own personal standards, can you tell me more about that ?"

"Yeah...I think everybody joins the police for varying reasons but I personally feel, when I wear my uniform,...I've got to uphold the office and I never get upset particularly that they're having a go at me as an individual, but I do get quite upset that they're having a go at authority and the powers I've got..."[emphasis added]
"...it's really what I think is acceptable in my life. ...What I suppose it depends on...what backgrounds police officers have been brought up in as to what they accept as reasonable.."

Violence provides a clear benchmark for deciding what is unacceptable behaviour and this is true for officers at all periods of service. This is one clear and unambiguous benchmark that officers can rely on:

"Whoo, difficult. Hitting somebody is totally unacceptable, acts of violence are unacceptable."

Action seen as affecting the dignity of the office of constable is rarely tolerated by more experienced officers as the following respondent makes clear:

"Certain behaviour, that's, if people start shouting abuse at me or my colleagues, I don't find that acceptable, and I've arrested quite a lot of people for disorderly conduct, for shouting their mouths of at us as an organisation."

Experienced officers frequently use their socio-spatial cognitive maps during operational decision-making and this officer explains the differential standards that can flow from it:

"Probably the location, the time of day, probably the expectations of the local community and people that are about. There may be situations where...an area where police officers get things wrong and don't meet the genuine requirements of different communities because we are very ready...as an organisation to identify areas of...scummy areas...and I think the perception is that people that live in those areas are lower than people who live in 'X' in £300,000 houses. And I think it's probably true that different standards would apply. If you'd got people wandering about, screaming and shouting... if it was in a poor area where it's perceived that expectations and
standards are acceptable, normal behaviour is a lower standard. So it's probably in
the context of the officer's perception of what is acceptable to the local
community...which is probably unjust, but I think that's the way it is."

An experienced officer is able to draw on a knowledge of what
CPS and the courts would find unacceptable in terms of evidential criteria, as the
following officer illustrates:

**Case Number 052 PP**

'Would I have been offended by that behaviour? Would I have been upset if my wife
was walking down the street and [a] drunken idiot started calling her whatever? And
if I think that it's yeah, it's very subjective, if I think that that is unacceptable
behaviour then I would put that into the category of abusive or insulting...and you are
also steered by what perhaps you know is a standard of evidence or standard of
abusiveness that the courts will require before CPS will put it before them.

These findings provide strong evidence to support Banton's [1964] observation that patrol
officers base their decisions more on popular morality than the law; and that the law offers
little by way of guidance so that the gap tends to be filled by cultural influences [ Reiner
1992]. However, what is also apparent from my findings is the large degree of paternalism
that underpins patrol officer decision-making. Certainly the arguments put forward by
Walker [1996], Loader[1997], and others that the symbolic power and moral categories that
shape routine operational policing practices go some way towards explaining the strength of
popular sentiment in which the police are held.

However the same police culture has been identified as reinforcing negative feelings towards
the black community [ McConville and Shepherd 1992 : Smith and Gray 1983]. This, I feel,
is attributable to the fact that police culture[s] is bound up with notions of 'Britishness' in
terms of traditions and values, and contains an aversion to elements that are identified as
alien or 'other'[see Watson 1994 for a deeper analysis of this point].
This factor is exacerbated by the fact that police officers are still predominantly male and drawn from white, middle-class backgrounds, with all the shared cultural understandings that this brings. This is not to argue that police culture[s] is monolithic and unchanging [Chan 1996: Fielding 1989: Hoyle 1998] The socio-demographic profile of the British police service has changed considerably since Banton’s fieldwork was undertaken. My ethnography, however, still supports Banton’s perceptive observation regarding the importance of popular morality for the police as a benchmark with which to assess behaviour [ Chatterton 1975 ].

Finally, the differential approaches towards the public that officers adopt, in terms of policing 'styles'; and the modality of acceptability that is bound up with notions of location [ see Stinchcombe 1963], is undoubtedly linked to class and socio-economic groupings[ Brogden and Brogden 1984; Reiner 1992a;McConville et al 1991; Watson 1994].

One is drawn to the conclusion that, in the final analysis, notions of acceptability are linked in with the "..core mandate and organisation of the police within the social order."[Reiner 1994 :740]
The Speed With Which Police Officers Categorise Incidents.

The speed with which police officer categorise the incidents they attend is an important aspect of my findings and, as one would expect, this processing speed increases with operational experience. In response to question 15, 'Generally speaking, how quickly are you able to assess a situation?' 36 per cent of the probationer sample replied that it depended on the complexity of the incident. However, a statistically significant 90 per cent of the post-probationer group replied that they were able to categorise incidents "very quickly”.

This certainly raises questions about the so called 'open-texture' of the law [Hart 1961], but is made even more problematic by the epistemological and ontological questions raised by the response to question 8 where it was apparent that police officers were using normative and evaluative frameworks more closely aligned to personal and family values than purely legalistic guidelines [see Banton 1964].

The question, "Generally speaking, how quickly are you able to assess a situation?" revealed that officers draw on the temporary 'horizon of expectations' developed en route to an incident, and constructed from the dispatchers message, as an aid to incident categorisation. We see that probationers mentally rehearse their legal powers and review similar incidents they have dealt with in order to prepare themselves for what they may encounter. This is because probationers have been taught whilst at the PTC to treat incidents as legal 'texts' to be categorised in terms of 'points to prove'. The more
experienced officers have a vast store of scripted knowledge on which to draw as an aid to incident categorisation and are able to achieve rapid categorisations.

PFA Sample, Probationers with 12 months service.

Case Number 001 PFA

" Depending on the type of situation that you’re looking at, I think I can assess it very quickly. But sometimes I don’t assess it 100% [correctly]… [ emphasis added]

Case Number 002 PFA

" Personally I think I can assess it quite quickly... But I certainly think you go in with a preconceived idea of what your going into, and then just take the facts that you’ve got with previous…experiences, because that’s where you learn from ...and then just try and make the best decision on the night..” [emphasis added]

This officer, with 12 months service, is referring to the temporary ‘horizon of expectation’ that patrol officers develop en route to incidents. Officers of this service tend to think of incidents as ‘texts’ along the lines taught by PTC, hence the emphasis on legal powers and ‘points to prove’:

Case Number 003 PFA

" Well there’s a difference between assessing it quickly and assessing it correctly...so you make an initial assessment which may then be confirmed or amended by information that you get later on. But it’s impossible to avoid making certain quick judgments...to a certain extent because you’ve got to decide on what power you’re going to act, you know, what offence you’ve got and how you’re going to act with it. It might be later on that you get more information and have to amend it, but you’ve got to make some sort of initial assessment just to make some sort of decisive action.” [emphasis added]

Case Number 004 PFA [female]

" Oh, it depends on what I go to...But if I go to one which is a little bit more out of the ordinary I find it difficult at the moment to assess my priorities, and quite often I’ll be told that I’ve missed something out so I think you assess the situation ‘cos. of experience really..” [emphasis added]
Because probationers must perform to an acceptable standard in order to receive suitable scores on their assessments they feel under very real pressure to perform and impress their shift supervisors. Since they can be dismissed for unacceptable performance at any time during their probationary period, there is great emphasis put on taking 'positive action' [i.e. arresting people] at the incidents they attend as the following cases illustrate:

**Case Number 006 PFA**
"...Public order, I think you’ve got to assess quite quickly there, otherwise you can have real problems...You’ve got to be seen positively to make a decision as in the offences that have occurred..." [emphasis added]

Q "Is that the message that you got from your probationer training? That they expected you to take positive action?"

R "Throughout the majority of it I’d say yes. No matter what really, traffic, public order, domestics and that, I think yeah, the majority of it has been that you know, you take positive action." [emphasis added]

**Case Number 009 PFA**
"It depends on the severity of the situation.. If you’ve got time to assess the situation then I’m quite happy to sit down with the IP [injured party] and...sit and talk about it...Whereas if you’ve got an immediate situation, usually it’s a split second decision, what you’re going to do."

Q "Do you feel under any pressure to perform?"

"Oh yeah, all the time, all the time...So I feel there is a hell of a lot of pressure on us." [emphasis added]

**Case Number 012 PFA**
"I think I’m becoming quicker the more I see because there are trends. You don’t go on your preconceptions but with little tools, your tool bag that you have...as you go through, you gather experience and you see an incident...so I think the speed of your decision making increases as your toolbox increases, with experience." [emphasis added]
One of the reasons experienced officers rely on non-verbal communication is as an indicator of truthfulness, especially where parties to a dispute give conflicting stories.

Despite criticisms by psychologists of the claimed accuracy of this method [Milne and Bull 1999], its practice is widespread amongst patrol officers:

**Case Number 014 PFA**

"Again it depends on the circumstances really, it's very difficult because you can't really believe anybody in this job, people are very good liars...I don't favour any one side because you don't know who's telling the truth really." [emphasis added]

**Case Number 015 PFA**

"... obviously my reaction times are a little bit slow, well quite a bit slower than officers who I'm working with who've been in the job for 6,7, you know 15 years sometimes. But ...I'm getting a lot better, especially when we have been to something before, even if it's not the same you've got the basics that you work from so it's, yeah, within a few seconds really." [emphasis added]

**Case Number 016 PFA**

"It's getting better all the time, generally I would say I'm not too bad...certainly I would say personally I do assess situations fairly quickly so it doesn't bother me to have that slight pause to stand back because I'm confident enough about myself to sort of assessing the situation."[emphasis added]

**PFB Sample Probationer with 18 months service**

**Case Number 020 PFB**

"Professionally it takes a lot longer, you can personally make up your own mind on a situation which is not always accurate but we all do it...Your personal opinion is formed but obviously in your professional capacity it takes a lot longer, I couldn't really say on a time limit, but certainly not within a couple of minutes of being there."
This officer, with 22 months service, has already developed a sophisticated system of semiosis based on, inter alia, incongruity factors, non-verbal communication, and criminal intelligence:

**Case Number 028 PFC**

"I think you’ve got that sense, that sixth sense...I like to think that I’m a fairly good judge of character and you can tell by NVCs straight away, what peoples’ NVCs are and what’s happening...So generally I would say you know, not straight away, instantly, but within reason...working by yourself you’ve got to be able to do that.” [emphasis added]

The following respondent illustrates the fluid semiosic process of street encounters and the way police evaluations often “imbue facts with special qualities” [McConville et al 1991:89]:

**Case Number 031 PFC**

"Fairly quickly. I mean you can always tell when something is going to flare up I think...you can tell by peoples’ body language or the tone of their voice or their actual physical bearing can quite often tell you that, ‘Right, he’s going to hit her now’. There are other times it takes a little bit of time actually talking to people and trying, you know it’s like ‘OK why is this person being evasive?...Why am I having trouble speaking with this person, why are they giving me...odd answers or very reluctant to talk to me, are they hiding something? and then it’s taking a little bit longer to assess...what’s going on and especially you might be looking...at somebody that’s circulated as wanted and you stop three lads at 11 o’clock at night and it looks like they’ve either been out for a drink or they might have drugs on them and they won’t give any details or they can’t remember where they were born...so you think ‘There’s something’s not quite right here’...that can take a bit more time but then there’s things that are a bit more subtle and take a bit more time.” [emphasis added]
The sample of experienced police officers, all of whom had in excess of 2 years experience, were confident in their ability to make decisions quickly, to ‘sum up’ situations quickly and to ‘understand’ complete events with speed.

Case Number 033 PP

“Usually pretty quickly...Again that’s just based on experience rather than anything else, I suppose...I was going to say hunches but I think the hunches are brought about by experience. But usually pretty soon, it doesn’t usually take very long.”

Case Number 049 PP

“Normally very quickly, seconds...You pick up a lot...instantly, what people are saying and their body language...”

Case Number 059 PP

“I would say within a couple of minutes that you can actually...perceive what’s happened, I think you can actually tell when someone’s not telling the truth to you, I think that comes, dare I say it, with experience...”

Case Number 040 PP

“I’d say more or less immediately...you can assess what’s gone on and what you need to do.”

Case Number 042 PP

“It doesn’t take me too long. Jobs in general...that would include burglaries, thefts and things like that. Again I apply the same type...I’ve got to go there, stand back...assess the situation, what’s happening and then just do it by stages basically...again it’s just assessing the situation and it doesn’t take that long...”

Case Number 058 PP

“Now, the majority, second after arriving, just seconds, but I think that’s built on experience.”

What is apparent from these responses is that officers draw heavily on their scripted knowledge of incidents that has been developed over time and, as officers approach the
end of their probationary period, they are able to consistently produce rapid incident
categorisations. They are aided in this process by an understanding of the logonomic
system or closure rules extant within their specific interpretive community and this will
also ensure institutionally acceptable incident categorisations.

What the present findings support is that incident categorisation is not always based on
purely legal considerations[ McConville et al 1991 : Sanders 1987] but rather is
congruent with police institutional categorisations which are reinforced by discursive
regularities within operational groups of officers[ Sheptycki 1993].
Chapter 13

The Importance Of Keeping An ‘Open Mind’ In Semiosis And The Relevance Of Non Verbal Communication’.

The importance of maintaining an objective or critical distance from the incident whilst trying to make sense of what has gone on was greatly emphasised by all sections of the sample. Indeed, the same phrases are repeated by officers at all stages of their service. Thus, the importance of keeping an 'open mind', of not 'jumping in' or 'standing back' in order to assess assumes the quality of a litany throughout the ethnography.

What is apparent is that officers assume a temporary cognitive frame of the type of incident they are likely to encounter. This is activated as soon as they are given the message over the radio to attend an incident. This temporary frame is concerned with scripted knowledge of how similar incidents were dealt with, police powers and administrative instructions, normative elements such as time of day, location [the contextual frame], and intertextual elements such as likely offenders, symbolic locations, and crime 'hot spots'. Indeed, with regard to elements that change the officer’s initial categorisation after their arrival at the scene of the incident, 65 per cent of the probationers questioned replied that ‘further information coming to light’ was the main cause of change, whilst for the more experienced group this amounted to 72 per cent of the sample.

Officers with 12 months police service

Several of the main themes to emerge from the findings include the importance of maintaining an ‘open mind’; the use of non verbal communication [NVCs], or body
language, as an aid to interpreting the veracity of a witness, or 'trying to read between the lines' of the often conflicting stories given to officers are apparent. 242

However, many probationers emphasise the difficulty young, single officers experience when giving advice regarding marital problems to older, more mature couples, since this advice is often given from within what might be called a 'deep well of ignorance':

Case Number 001 PFA

"Basically, you've got to try and not be blinkered in any situation. By using the general investigative skills of your own eyes and ears you can identify what's happening around you. Reading body language, trying to read between the lines a little bit... You've just got to go in with an open mind, and try and follow the Force guidelines and just try and calm things down and see how it goes from there...very conscious of making use of the Domestic Violence Unit cos, at the end of the day I'm 27 and I'm not sure I can"

Case Number 002 PFA

"You've just got to go in with an open mind, and try and follow the Force Guidelines.."

[emphasis added]

Case Number 003 PFA

"I think the most important thing is really, I found out quite quickly, it's too easy...just to jump to a conclusion and say 'All right, I know what's going on here', but you very seldom know what's going on until you ask...

This officer has already learnt that the incident category given by the dispatcher is often inaccurate and this is also mentioned in case number 007PFA that follows. As with many probationers with this length of service there is a preoccupation with legal powers and procedures:

Case Number 007PFA

"I'm sure in my mind, I mean your thinking...say you go to a domestic, think 'Oh, another domestic.' And you just try and pigeon hole it or categorise it, or you know, Criminal Damage, and you just try and pigeon hole it... But in reality you can get there and it's
completely different. You've got to find the whole picture or as near as the whole picture, otherwise you go in with a blinkered approach, you might deal with the minor...incident...and miss the whole picture. So basically, keep your eyes and ears open, and listen, and be...open to somebody else giving you and idea...the more sides of a story you hear, the more chance you've got of dealing with it." [emphasis added]

Once again, probationers rehearse their legal powers before arrival, and this is also in part because of the attempt to look 'professional' in their dealings with the public, something that is emphasised during their training and forms an element of their performance appraisal.

The emphasis on 'standing back' to assess an incident reinforces the assertion that semiosis is a process of interpretation and construction. Officers do not respond to an unproblematic objective 'reality' or mimetic plane, but actively engage in a process of decoding that includes the symbolic or connotative levels of semiosis:

Case Number 013 PFA

"Different powers, what am I going to be dealing with, what offences...I tend to go in very, very low key...and try and take it from there..."As I say, I go out, I don't go in first, I stand back and I think, 'Hold on, what am I dealing with ?"" [emphasis added]

The respondent's answer illustrates the importance of the Tutor Constable in enabling the probationer to make the transition from 'textual' to 'contextual' and finally 'intertextual' codings of incidents:

Case Number 006 PFA.

"I like to approach with an open mind...my tutor...was very good showing me what to expect but always keep an open mind, and not to go in with tunnel vision as such. To look at every aspect, it's something you have to develop... [emphasis added]

Post Probationer Sample
As police officers gain operational experience their reliance on non verbal communication, or body language, increases. This is partly a function of the narrow time frame within which officers are expected to deal with incidents, and also related to their need to assess the veracity of invariably conflicting and competing accounts.

The need to maintain an ‘open mind’ relates to officers having to remain ‘objective’ and impartial at incidents and not to be seen as ‘taking sides’. Although non verbal communication plays a central role in semiosis it will be absent from any later written account.

**Case Number 035PP**

"...The only thing is to stand back and watch , perhaps before you get there because your perception of an incident might not be the same as my perception..." [emphasis added]

**Case Number 038 Post Probationer.**

"I equate this a lot to people who do channel-hopping on the telly. You can flick into the programme, you're halfway through a film, you've got to make sense of what's going on...and that's what it's like when you arrive at an incident. Something has happened for you to be called to that incident...you have to make sense of all the clues you can to establish what that was...and from then on you can build your appropriate action. That will depend a lot on what you're told by the control room that sent you to the incident, you can glean information from what they've managed to ask the caller. You may have some little knowledge of the area....maybe you've been to the address before if it's a regular problem there. Once you arrive on scene with these you gain very quickly from things like body language of the people you're there with...You have to use all your senses to pull in all the information you can about the situation, and once you've built up the picture of what's gone on only then can you really plan what you're going to do." [emphasis added]

Q. "Right, and what sort , when you say you look at various clues in the incident itself, what sort of things would you be looking for ?""  

"First and foremost what they are telling you...they'll all be keen to give you their version of events. You've got to keep an open mind when you're doing that because you may be getting a one-sided view of the situation...." [emphasis added]
"...When you receive the message you start to think about it before you get there don't you. And just imagine what it's going to be like before you get there, and I think you've got a predetermined set of ideas of how you're going to deal with things, mainly through your experience of dealing with them in the past. I know everyone is different when it actually comes to the crunch..."

Case Number 041 Post Probationer.

"But I stand back first of all, stand off and have a look, and just take in the scene, the location, the type of people involved, the type of incident it is...you've got a wide range of incidents and everyone is different, I still think you stand off for a second and just appraise what you've got in front of you...then you can decide which way to attack it."

This respondent encapsulates the semiotic process from the initial 'horizon of expectations' formed after the dispatcher's categorisation to the active sense-making that occurs at the scene:

Case Number 054 Post Probationer.

"I have a visual categorisation from the information that's given to me over the radio. And I usually categorise it into previously known incidents, so when I arrive at the incident I start looking for patterns that normally arise, because various incidents are similar...And that's what I'm looking for. If something out of the ordinary turns up when I'm at the incident then I have to re-assess the situation." [emphasis added]

The importance of 'body-language'or non-verbal communications [NVCs] in the semiotic process.

Although the use of non-verbal communication techniques by police officers has received criticism from commentators [Garrido and Masip 1999:14], it nevertheless is still an important element in semiosis, especially regarding disputes where very often the only guidance open to police officers regarding competing accounts is to assess the 'body language' of the protagonists. Research in this area has shown that both experienced and
probationary officers are "...as poor lie and truth detectors as lay people" and that they frequently over estimate their ability."[ibid]. In addition, research has shown that:

[1] experienced officers are no more accurate than recruits.

[2] Police officers are no more accurate than lay persons.

[3] Officers' accuracy levels rarely exceed "chance levels".

[4] Experienced police officers frequently overestimate their ability to detect lies.

[Garrido and Masip 1999: 18]

Non verbal communication is still taught at PTCs and also figures in Officer Protection Training under '"Tactical Communication".

Case Number 054 Post Probationer.

"Basically you've got to listen a lot. Don't just look at what you think you can see. Nothing is normally as...simple as it looks. And have a good look round at what is going on. When you get there, before you open your mouth, you know you've got...other senses you can use to see when people don't want to talk to you or do want to talk to you, and you've just go to...look at the...body language, the way they are towards you, the situation that they're in. " [emphasis added]

Case Number 058 Post Probationer

" When I'm first sent to an incident , probably the first thing would be the tone in the controller's voice...You can sometimes hear...or judge the severity of the job you've been sent to by the tone of the voice, urgency, stress, you can hear stress in peoples' voices...But the biggest thing for me about making sense of the incident, is after you turn up, actually this might sound a bit funny, but just looking in people's eyes. I think you can tell a lot from people's eyes..." [emphasis added]

Case Number 034 PP

"...you use the visual signals before you get there. Which would be aural signals of noise, screams. Visual signals of people running away, visual signals of smoke, fire. Visual signals of vehicles accelerating, I mean the lists are endless but the visual signals are the clearest thing. Even if it's completely dark you've always got something...one of
your five senses will tell you what's going on...visual signals are the first thing that usually hit you. Aural signals are quite often the second." [emphasis added]

Case Number 044PP At the scene...

"Immediately you're looking for your NVCs, non-verbal communication, and you're looking at who is aggressive, who's not, and you're looking for all those, sort of weighing up the situation. It's not just the situation, it's who, weighing up who. And when you weigh up who it's a much bigger issue. You're looking at exactly what they're doing, 'Can you hear anything? What words are they using? And what you do is actually weigh up the class of person. Although we say we live in a totally classless society that is not totally correct, you are weighing up the character of that person in every sense. You're also weighing up beyond just the target...you're looking a bit beyond that to see who else is around, 'Is this affecting anyone else? Is this a scene here? Is it developing into anything bigger?" [emphasis added]

Case Number 037 PP

"...the environment you're going into is going to send off signals that are going to say 'Yeah, this is a good one.' For example, I remember going to a report of a fight in a pub and it was quite clear when we arrived towards this pub that people were going in the opposite direction and from their body language and the look on their faces they weren't just travelling in the opposite direction, they were leaving the area a bit rapid, and that...affects you...so I think it's very much...the environment and the demeanour of people you go to can give you an awful lot of information about the gravity or otherwise of what you're dealing with." [emphasis added]

Here we have an experienced officer describing the emphasis placed on non-verbal communication in semiosis. Experienced officers tend to be very suspicious and sceptical about the accounts they are given by parties to disputes; this is hardly surprising since the protagonists often have their own 'agendas' and are anxious to portray themselves in the best possible light. Body language enables officers to compare verbal accounts with what the individuals' gestures, tone of voice, stance etc., is telling them. This is a theme that is common in the replies of the more experienced officers:

Case Number 038 Post Probationer.
"I think that... you're given some information, usually by radio, that there's an incident that you're asked to attend and... initially what you tend to do is base your following judgments on the initial information you're given, but what I've found was after a period of time with experience that... you... not disclaim the information you're given, but you have to put that to one side and... look at the quality of what I was being told by the people there, particularly their demeanour and in effect picking up almost body language from them which gave you a very much an idea of how to assess what they felt about what had gone on... and you could gauge from that..." emphasis added]

In sum, it can be seen that non-verbal communication assumes a growing importance as officers become operationally experienced. Since patrol officers working in urban environments are often under considerable time pressures to resolve incidents quickly, and then move on to the next call. ‘NVCs’, although intensively subjective in nature, provide officers with additional information with which to assess the veracity of competing accounts.

Perhaps the most problematic element of NVCs, apart from their inaccurate interpretation by officers, is that the rules of evidence mean that their subjective nature will preclude inclusion in any eventual evidential account.
Chapter 14

HOW POLICE OFFICERS MAKE SENSE OF DOMESTIC DISPUTES AND PUBLIC ORDER INCIDENTS.

Event schemas or 'scripts' probably come closest to the concept of 'recipe rules' developed by socio-legal scholars. An example of scripted knowledge would be a patrol officer's response to a 'typical' domestic where, often under severe time pressures and workload, scripted knowledge or 'recipe rules' allow an officer to rapidly process the incident and move on to the next call. I have constructed a hypothetical script of a generic domestic dispute schema of a type that would be recognisable to all operational police officers. In schema theory the trigger words 'domestic dispute' would activate the following script:

En Route To Scene.

[i] check with control room staff via personal radio to ascertain whether any injunctions are in force; any history of previous disputes at the address, any children listed on the 'at risk' register; are occupants firearms or shotgun holders?

At Scene.

[ii] separate parties to the dispute.

[iii] give 'suitable advice' to both parties.

[iv] give warning re: future conduct or recurrence of a breach of the peace.

[v] ascertain likelihood of a recurrence. If likely then consider arrest.

[vi] if no likelihood resume patrol.

[vii] pass result to the control room.
What is apparent from the ethnography however is that officers do invest a considerable part of their time in trying to negotiate a solution to these incidents, even in cases where young, single officers are in attendance and they have little experience of married life. There is considerable agreement amongst the officers interviewed that domestics constitute a very difficult and dangerous area for patrol officers. Very often they are unable to actually make sense of the incident or to converse rationally with the protagonists.

What is also apparent is that the moral contours of these disputes are evaluated according to normative structures derived from the officer’s own personal value system and family background.

In response to question 10, “How do you make sense of domestics?” there was a degree of consistency between the two groups with 48 per cent of probationers, and 31 per cent of the post-probationers stating that they separate the parties involved, and then consult each party separately.

These incidents present particular difficulties for young officers who have little or no personal experience to fall back on. Several of the more experienced, post-probationer respondents stated that their attitude to domestic violence had changed since they got married and had families of their own:

**Case Number 001PFA**

"I saw one side of the story as a teenager, thinking, yeah, I know it all, I'm 18, 19!...getting a job like this I've learnt I know nothing. I'm going to judge everything individually. There is a lot left to learn and I've come to the conclusion of looking through other peoples' eyes because I've found that works for me." [emphasis added]
Some officers, as in the following example, cannot make sense of domestics because they feel they are too young, and being single lack the knowledge. In addition, the officer might consider the possible long-term effects that an arrest would have for that family:

**Case Number 002PFA**

"I'm only 27 I'm not married...I still find it a constant source of amazement how...a couple of say 30 years marriage can expect a 27 year-old to sort their married life out for them."

and:

"At the end of the day I'm 27 and I'm not sure that I can deal with some of the things I'm being asked to comprehend because I haven't gone through it... I'm not sure I make sense of it really."

Probationers are initially heavily dependent on their Tutor Constables to give them guidance in practical policing situations, and tend to adopt the attitude, style and value system of their individual Tutor:

**Case Number 008PFA.**

"I think to start with ...you don't have the experience. And you're really relying on the experience of your tutor to start with. It's only once you've started dealing with a few things where your own experience starts coming in. To a certain extent life experiences as well. I think you can bring those into play, you're going into a situation and you can only sympathise with people if you've had similar life experiences..." [emphasis added]

Another example of the difficulty young, single officers experience in dealing with domestics:

**Case Number 007PFA**

"Listen to both sides, before you make your actions. Obviously you've got to look at the state of the people. I mean...if there's an offence you've got to deal with it...but...you're not a marriage guidance counsellor, somebody who's...middle 40s...married for 18 years might take offence to a 25 year-old single male telling them about married life. So you've got to be careful you don't impose on them or belittle them..." [emphasis added]

The following are typical examples of ‘scripted’ knowledge used by
probationers:

Case Number 011PFA

"The first thing I do is try to separate, if there's two parties arguing and going full-swing at it, the first thing I do is obviously separate them. And then it's a question of deciding 'Right. I'll speak to one party, get their side of the story, speak to the other...putting the information together and...make a decision based on it all."

[emphasis added]

Officers need to quickly assess the veracity of competing accounts given to them by the protagonists at domestic violence incidents and this can often lead to officers developing a defeatist, even cynical, attitude towards the public as the following respondents illustrate:

Case Number 014PFA

"Always separate both parties, that's the first thing I do...it's difficult because you can't really believe anybody in this job, people are very good liars. So I...don't take anybody's side, I don't favour any side because you don't know who's telling the truth really".

[emphasis added]

Case Number 012 PFA

"Domestics disputes are difficult, I always go in with an open mind. ...If there's someone badly injured obviously they need medical attention. If not...I need to separate them and speak to both parties so that you get both points of view, it's no point in taking one person's point of view because the one that's got the [mark or injury] may have got that as...self defence...trying to protect themselves...if I establish an injured party, discuss with them what action they'd like to take, because if the are ...adamant that they will never make a statement I am going to be in difficulty proceeding if there are no independent witnesses, but certainly if there are children about and there is somebody who is drunk and likely to create further injuries I will always arrest ...I wouldn't leave a violent aggressor in an environment with a victim and children about." [emphasis added]

Case Number 022PFA

"...common sense would say whoever rings us is the injured party, but I've known that to be incorrect. You have to find out who the injured part is, in the event it might be the offender who rings us and says 'If you don't hurry up I'm about to kill her'...I try and get one side from one person away from the other one...so I separate them, get one side, get the other side, and have a look around, use my common sense...and find out if one person is telling a pack of lies..." [emphasis added]
Case Number 023PFC

"Domestics! Favourite word! ...Domestics are very difficult because they could be fighting like cat and dog, husband and wife...You turn up and suddenly they're best mates and you get a kicking...you're in the middle and you're the common enemy. 'You're taking his side!' No, I'm not, I'm trying to be impartial.' [emphasis added]

Case Number 031PFC

"...I mean you can certainly tell when something is going to flare up...you can tell by people's body language or tone of...voice or their actual physical bearing can tell you, 'Right, he's going to hit her now'. " [emphasis added]

Probationary officers are under pressure to perform but at the same time they are anxious not to attract complaints from members of the public, hence the desire to be seen to be impartial in their dealings with the public. This element diminishes with increased experience and the end of the probationary period.

Case Number 003PFA

"...you're more likely to be seen as dealing with it fairly and in an impartial manner if you speak to everybody...otherwise you're going to leave yourself open to accusations that your taking sides." [emphasis added]

Post Probationer, experienced officer sample.

Even experienced patrol officers, many of whom have attended hundreds of domestic disputes, emphasise the difficulty involved in this category of incident.

Case Number 033 PP

Domestic Dispute.

"Personally...I work with a partner anyway...so I try to get into the habit of splitting the parties up and taking out of the line of sight, usually...into different rooms...and we try and get two sides of the story...if you're talking to someone who's nursing a cut lip or whatever and she's obviously very upset, you will be tending to realise that she's been assaulted then there's evidence that she's telling the truth, if somebody who isn't injured or hasn't got visible
signs of injury...you're less likely to take what they're saying at face value, whereas...somebody who is nursing some sort of injury and is obviously very, very upset, then there's a tendency to go along with that and that will form the basis of...your decisions. ..What we'd normally do is still keep them apart...get our heads together and decide where the inconsistencies are and take it from there."

[emphasis added]

Case Number 034 PP

"Domestic disputes are very, very difficult. You've got to take each one as they come, and you've heard the saying these days, Oh, it's just a domestic,' well I've certainly been to some very, very nasty domestics which have gone to be more and more violent and sometimes have caused a lot of injuries. To say , 'It's just a domestic' isn't really on. You've got to treat everything differently and be flexible... 'This is what we're going to do', get your act together before you go in. And go into the situation with an open mind and listen to both parties, split them up....'Take the lady to one side and I'll speak to the chap', and then I would go and swop...Then I'll make the judgment as to what I think is wrong and how they best sort it out,..."[ emphasis added]

This response sums up the feelings of many officers that they need to draw on life experiences in order to fully understand marital disputes :

Case Number 037 PP

" I would start off by saying that when I was young in service I would have looked at them as being nothing but a total and utter pain in the butt, they were a nuisance for us when we had other things to do and they were because imperfect people were unable to control their lives...However, having gone through a bit more life myself and understanding that you can have arguments in your own life...you can have an affinity with what's going on...I can understand, whilst I'm horrified by it...how mothers lose their tempers and children get hurt, particularly if they're on their own with no support, I can understand that having had children myself, I would never have been able to understand that before I had a family. I think you draw on your own experience with domestic disputes... that's when you can say to people...'I know how you feel, I mean I felt that way myself.'.... " [ emphasis added]

The importance of the socio-spatial cognitive frame for experienced officers is summed up in the following response :

Case Number 041 PP Domestics.
"Domestics, it's the same thing again. You have a look what's going on, where is it? Do you know the family? Do you know the people? Do you know the participants, is it long running? Have you got previous history? So you can look at all of that. You should know the area if you've been on the beat for a while you get to know the problem areas anyway..." [emphasis added]

What emerges strikingly in the responses is that officers see in 'domestics' a highly complex social situation which requires interpretation and a reading that can include such elements as audio and visual clues, body language, pre- and post-arrival information and various other related elements as the following respondents make clear:

**Case Number 044 PP**

"Oh! Domestics become...a very difficult area. Making sense of domestics depends first of all on the background. What knowledge do you have of this particular person, this particular road, this particular area? And you do weigh up...where you're going to, the house, the scene around before you enter and deal with what is actually the confrontation, so before you get to the people you're looking at the whole atmosphere. When you get into the house, 'Where are they? Are they together? Are they still arguing? Are they outside? Is one upstairs, screaming, locked in the toilet or whatever? Is somebody screaming? Are there children there?; all of that, and you try to weigh up. Usually children are quite a good indicator of who's been the aggressor, they tend to go to the one who's not been, if they're there. If they're not then you can't use them..."*

' [emphasis added]

**Case Number 049PP.**

"...and then what you see when you arrive, what's going on, what people tell you and also your interpretation of what their not telling you- body language, sometimes people are very evasive." [emphasis added]

Because of the complexities of 'domestics', as officers see them, attempts to provide the police with general guidance in dealing with such situations is viewed negatively as simplistic
or unrealistic. Thus Home Office Guidelines on domestic violence can be seen by some officers as being prescriptive as the following respondent illustrates:

**Case Number 048 PP**

"Well...a lot of domestics we go to time and time again, so in those situations you know the set-up before you get there, you know the parties involved and how they behave...If it's one you've never been to before it's just speaking to the people involved and trying to get the background, find out what's gone on on that particular occasion...you've got a duty to protect females.....I'm always wary in domestics not to be playing God as such....I appreciate the need to be positive and I'm always wary of doing that, and I think certain policies that are written down as to how we should deal with domestics...they're sort of asking us to go in there and act like God... but there's probably 10 addresses in this town that we, well it seems like we're there every week, so you...know the set up before you get there, and a lot of times it's the same problem. But ...in those situations you've got to be careful to make sure you've got the situation right.." [emphasis added]

**Case Number 052PP**

"Golden rule, split 'em up!...basically you're using your interpersonal skills. You have to accept that the truth is usually somewhere in between what both parties are telling you, 'cos everybody has their own special slant on what set of circumstances have developed. And personally I think you're using the step back...the way I've always done is...if you're double crewed, one person speaks to one party, the other speaks to the other and then there's the rendezvous in the hall, 'He says this', 'She says this', and then depending on the evidence...if one party has got injuries to substantiate an allegation then you deal with it...there are other witnesses as well but, you deal with it based on the evidence you're confronted with and the account that you're given, so once again it's your interpersonal skills..."

[emphasis added]

These findings support Hoyle's [1998: 83] point that there has been a significant change in police culture and that much feminist criticism of police action at domestic violence incidents is based on studies of police culture carried out over thirty years ago.

The present study highlights the critical difference between police attitudes and actions [Worden 1995 : Mastrofski, Ritti and Snipes, 1993], with many respondents mindful of the
need to remain impartial and to adopt the best course of action to achieve an effective resolution.

It is also clear that officers adopt a pragmatic 'scripted' approach to domestic incidents in terms of immediate operational tactics, but that this is often a means to an end in terms of separating violent or aggressive parties. It also emerges that officers often engage in a much more sophisticated response to domestic violence than is acknowledged in Home Office Circular 60/1990.

Finally, all officers acknowledge the difficulty of dealing with often irrational and emotionally charged disputants. This difficulty is especially acute in young, single officers who frequently lack the life experiences necessary to fully understand domestic disputes.

HOW POLICE OFFICERS MAKE SENSE OF PUBLIC ORDER INCIDENTS

Police officers attending large scale public order incidents are placed in an almost impossible position with regard to semiosis. Very often the only way of constructing what happened occurs after the event when all officers who had been at the scene 'pool' their recollections of what occurred and 'reconstruct' the event.

With regard to question 9 "How do you make sense of complex public order incidents ?" one in five of the probationers replied by maintaining objectivity, whilst almost one in three of the post-probationers also gave this reply. This is reflected in the ethnography by statements relating to "not rushing in", not "diving in", of maintaining an 'open mind' and taking a "step back" to assess.

Case Number 003PFA [ 12 months service]
"It's really difficult if there's big public order, a big fight outside a pub or something...and I think to a certain extent your wasting your time trying to take on board the whole thing...Sometimes those sort of things come down to information gathering exercises...you won't be making an arrest until a few days afterwards when you've had a chance...to get all the evidence together." [emphasis added]

Probationers are under a very real pressure to perform and produce results in terms of arrest figures and reports for summons. They feel that this emanates from their immediate supervisors and from the public. Whilst attending public order incidents they feel under pressure to be seen to take 'positive action'. This has been exacerbated to some extent now that policing has become 'results orientated':

**Case Number 004 PFA**

"...and I think it's best to get two different views and then...take both views together and make your own decision, you've got to be seen to make a positive decision at the time...

It's always positive decisions that's how ...for most of the time you seem to be taught by different trainers at Cwmbran and in headquarters and also , I suppose, the public. You feel sometimes you've got pressure from them, as in public order situations...

"You've got to be seen positively to make a good decision as in the offences that have occurred"

**007PFA Public Order**

"Public order, that's something I get a problem with...That again really is...I stand back,... You stand slightly further back, again so that you can see what's going on. You can pick out the aggressor. If there's a group of twenty people there's normally...only two that are doing the winding up and the name calling and the shouting. [emphasis added]

**Case Number 009 PFA**

"...it's very difficult it's very difficult...not to...just wade in there and arrest everybody, then deal with the consequences. It's good to stand back and take charge of the situation...see if you can spot the people causing the trouble." [emphasis added]

Since the law provides several[ overlapping] powers of arrest for public order offences, protagonists can be arrested first and then the actual event 'reconstructed' back at the police
station [McConville et al 1991 : McBarnet 1981 : Sanders 1987]. The following respondent makes this clear:

**Case Number 010 PFA [Female officer]**

"Usually the situation, whether it be right or wrong, is that you will nick everybody who you see fighting or causing harassment... so... I just arrest... everybody involved and then sort it out down at the station..."

The often chaotic nature of large-scale, public order offences means that officers cannot make sense of what is happening at the time:

**Case Number 011 PFA**

"Well I'll probably go up to a passer by... say... 'Can you tell me what's going on?' Try to gain any information that way from witnesses at the scene."

Probationers typically think of public order incidents as 'texts' in terms of offence definitions and evidential 'points to prove'. They are also often acutely aware of being in the public eye and of the need to be seen to take positive action as the following respondents makes clear:

**Case Number 015PFA**

"You've just got to stop and think, just for a couple of seconds, you've just got to... as I say remain bystanders and think to yourself, 'O.K. here we are, I'm in sight of the public, but what is going on here? And that is where your training comes in into the foremost, and you've got your definitions to start off, which... you have got to know them to know what your dealing with, so I think... you've got to stop and think about what you're actually witnessing yourself." [emphasis added]

**Case Number 017PFA**

"...Again your thinking... definitions really when I'm going to an incident... they don't pump that into you enough that you really do need to know your definitions... until you know it off pat..." [emphasis added]

Several officers have developed a pragmatic approach which involves arresting the ring leader, or the 'mouth piece', to defuse the situation:
"Public order offences, well I try to look at the mouth piece, try to see who is causing the most grief. Riot, affray, all the rest of it, there's normally one big mouth piece and the non-ringleader. So what I try and do is...aim at that person, as opposed to trying getting all of them to...go with me, I'll go for the mouthpiece, direct anything I can at him and once you've knocked him down...the Indians tend to flee don't they?"

The following officer accurately states the impossibility of making sense of large fights at the time and sets out the pragmatic approach widely adopted by officers of pooling their recollections in an attempt to reconstruct the incident:

"Well, I've only ever done one really big public order...and at the time I thought it was an absolute nightmare...There were people punching people all over the place and us just grabbing people and bunging them into cars and people trying to get them out of cars...it was a nightmare. I had an arrest at the end of it but it was terrible. It was really bad. The only consolation was the debrief afterwards where we all said, 'OK who had the tall one with the stripy T-shirt and the ear ring? Oh yeah that was my one.' Because it's trying to identify the offenders after the event, we'd got them all locked up but you can't remember what they did and how they did it. Ideally you should have someone with a video [camera] taping everything that's going on, for our benefit more than evidential value or whatever." [emphasis added]

It is important to point out that group discussions or debriefings following public order incidents have several interlocking functions. Firstly, individual officers cannot possibly reconstruct complex incidents in isolation since, as one respondent commented, you need "eyes in the back of your head". Secondly, group debriefings allow the construction of chronological, structured and coherent narratives of evidence required by the law. Thirdly, this method removes the danger of possible conflicting evidential accounts and so increases the chance of a conviction at court. Fourthly, a legitimacy of method is achieved with the group setting, common sense of purpose, and traditional elements all working towards the institutional imperative of prosecution of offenders:
"Varies from situation to situation. Basically, you've got to try and gather as much information from as many people in as short a time as possible....

Q "How did you put all the pieces together with that one?

"We all debriefed in the CID room...and anyone who'd had an involvement sat down... before we wrote our statements saying who we'd arrested and why. We said 'OK, now what happened first?', and someone would say, 'Ah, well, I saw so and so punch so and so', and I said, 'Yeah, but before that didn't the ambulance turn up?'...We all got it clear in our minds what happened because you...haven't got eyes in the back of your head to know what someone else was doing at the point you were effecting an arrest...It wasn't easy to debrief but we got there in the end."

"It's hard to make sense of it at the time. But later on, when all the mayhem has died down, and all the officers that were involved would perhaps sort out exactly what happened, what did go wrong? where were people? what was 'A' doing and what was 'B' doing? and who arrested 'B'? for example. But at the time it's very hard to comprehend what's going on, especially if it's a big public order incident."

"...I think it's difficult, because when everyone is screaming and shouting and trying to kick the crap out of each other, it's a bit difficult really to try and understand what's going on at all, all you want to do is try and stop it...sometimes there isn't time to talk to people, unfortunately you've just got to throw them in the van and that's it 'cos they're not going to listen to whatever you've got to say."

"Well, they're probably the most difficult because unfortunately you've got lots of different people milling about...90% of the people there [are] nothing more than innocent bystanders who...think it's a bit of fun. And it's difficult because you're also going to go along to a major brawl...with I don't know how many different officers and each of those officers have different ways of doing things. So you've got to work within that as well and everyone really is going to try and come...to a base line, all the officers there...with...these big public order incidents, it's not until after it's all finished and the bodies are in the van that people start talking and saying, 'Yeah, did you see so and so? oh, yeah, well he did that', and 'So and So done this', and you're sort of putting it together and you can make more sense of it to be honest when it's over than when it's actually happening..." [emphasis added]

"...you've got to gain information from other officers to see what's going on, I don't think it's necessarily adequate to get information just from one officer. People
see things differently and because you're there on the scene you need to know what's going on. So you just get snippets of information, so you need all the information you can get really." [emphasis added]

Post Probationer sample of Public Order Incident Sense-Making

It is clear that for the experienced post-probationer group of officers that the sense-making for public order incidents occurs after the event and that semiosis at the scene is mainly confined to identification of main offenders.

Case Number 033 PP

"I find these astonishingly easy... I find the simplest thing is to approach as slowly as possible... to try and assess what is actually going on... I find they're the simplest things to deal with inasmuch as it is presenting itself as a scenario in front of you, it's a group of players and you can identify from those the key roles. You can identify the crowd and you can hopefully identify the protagonists..."

This answer offers an insight into the importance of non-verbal communication for an experience officer who had achieved a large number of successful arrests and had a reputation amongst his colleagues as a good 'thief taker':

Case Number 037 PP

"It's very difficult to make sense at the time... our priority is culling what's going on at the time... and again it's very much down to body language. You can tell if somebody is talking to you if their trying to hide something or not... body language for me is one of the major things that a police officer needs to get a feeling for... but if you're not sent to incidents and your on routine patrol and you're obviously looking for things, body language becomes a major tool, that's where [we] succeeded... it was the body language that led to most of our successes." [emphasis added]

Case Number 038 PP

"... Our whole police system is built around pigeonholing events into certain categories. The whole command and control system... is having to hang a label on whatever you're going to, and that will often tell you more about the incident than anything else. .." [emphasis added]

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This officer is the only one to mention preserving the scene for forensic examination:

Case Number 035 PP

"My first priority is to preserve as much evidentially as possible. Not only blood stains or whatever you might think of as being physical evidence, but getting hold of peoples' names and addresses that were there, making sure I get as much information as I can...pick up the rest of the pieces. ...the priority is making sure you get as much information long term." [emphasis added]

Case Number 043 PP

"Sometimes they don't actually make sense until everything is settled down. You tend to arrive there and there's a great big melee going on, it's very difficult, if you're the first officer there and it's all going on, initially to make some form of sense. First you speak to people, if you're able to speak to people or people approach you and tell you something, but if there's a big fight going on when you get there the first thing you do is call up and ask for back-up...If somebody needs arresting there and then you may end up arresting your prisoner, taking them away...and then making enquiries to see what did actually happen...in some instances you don't actually know until after everything has settled down."

"[emphasis added]"

Case Number 054PP

"Again that is categorising- everything gets put into a sort of pigeon hole, so you quickly work out who the goodies are and who the baddies are, and whether the goodies really do have right on their side or whether they're just bleating a lot. Usually the noisiest people are the ones that are in the wrong."

What is clear from the ethnography is that police officers generally experience large-scale public order incidents as complex, difficult, and often chaotic events.

What emerges from the findings is that, very often, police officers can only make sense of these incidents after the actual incident has been resolved or has ended.

The actual sense-making takes place at a group session when all the officers who were at the scene recount their experiences. A nominated officer then reconstructs the event from the
various accounts, attempting to develop a chronological sequence, or time-line, in which to embed the evidence to prove the offence[s].

Several problematic areas arise in connection with this method of event reconstruction[ see McConville et al 1991 : Jackson 1988 : Heaton-Armstrong et al 1999]. The following is not an exhaustive account, but lists the main problem areas:

[1] The chronology of the constructed event can be confused. Added to this, the police construct offences within the narrowest of time frames, and the actual starting point of the incident is often itself a ‘construction’[ Kelman 1981].

[2] Because narratives of evidence are themselves teleological constructions, in that they impute purpose to actions, elements are included to prove the offence and present the strongest possible case.

[3] When the officers meet to discuss what they have seen they are a distinct semiotic group [Jackson 1988] in that they interpret the event within a specific institutional discourse in which certain semantic areas can be effectively ‘blocked off’[ see Sheptycki 1991]. In addition, membership of an interpretive community often allows officers to filter elements ‘in’ or ‘out’ of their semiosic activity.

[4] Police narratives of evidence often employ rhetorical devices to give the appearance of a detached objectivity, or facticity, that is presented as a single, unproblematic and linear ‘reality’. In fact, all narratives are written from a particular viewpoint. By presenting the events as factual, ‘objective’ reality, the police version of events is presented as the only possible interpretation, or as a description of an unproblematic, ‘mimetic’ reality.

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In sum, the ethnography supports earlier research that suggests that semiosis is often a process of construction:

"...Once chosen, the charge itself becomes the organising matrix round which the case is built, and which governs the creation, selection, interpretation and presentation of the evidence."

[McConville et al 1991 :116]
Chapter 15

The Influence Of The Substantive Criminal Law On Operational Decision-Making.

This section will consider the response to questions 18 'Is practical experience a better guide to resolving a situation than the law?'; and 19, 'Does the law force a course of action or does it leave you with a choice?'

When the findings relating to what police officers personally defined as unacceptable behaviour from members of the public were considered it was shown that officers invariably drew on normative and evaluative guidelines embedded within their personal and family value systems. These findings support Michael Banton's perceptive observation that in operational situations police officers are "governed much more by popular morality" than law [Banton 1964: 146]

The influence of the substantive criminal law in operational policing is a problematic and complex area. Indeed, much of the scholarship in this area has chosen not to address the ontological and epistemological issues bound up within this debate [see Dixon [1997] for useful review of this literature]. I would argue that for many members of the public the presence of uniformed officers constitutes a 'juridic field' in that they are the very embodiment of the law; especially if we think of 'law', following Foucault, as a discourse of power/knowledge. This is often reinforced by the unequal distribution of power in the encounter between the police and public, and
in terms of how the incident is to be categorised, and the weight given by officers to competing accounts.

Some of the early observational studies of the police [Skolnick 1966] identified the patrol officer as 'craftsman' using social skills to achieve a desired outcome rather than as an official enforcing the criminal law.[ Bittner 1967 ; Reiss 1970 : Wilson 1968].

Other studies revealed that an operational patrol officer’s performance could be more accurately be defined as one of 'order maintenance' than law enforcement [Ericson 1982 ; Reiner 1992 ; McConville et al 1991 ; McConville and Shepherd 1992]

Wilson’s point that patrol officers use the law as a 'resource' with which to draw on to "handle a situation"[ Wilson 1968 : 31] is still widely cited in the literature but in many ways can be criticised as being an overly simplistic and reductionist account of the role of law in operational policing.[ Dixon 1997 ; Kemp et al 1992 ; Holdaway 1989] This is because it underestimates the complexity of semiosis that takes place at the scene of incidents but which will not be immediately apparent to observers. Jefferson and Grimshaw’s [1987] structuralist study of operational police work argues that law "...provides the central discursive framework for police activity" and my findings certainly add weight to this position.

McConville et al [1991] argue that police culture is the dominant element in decision-making to the extent that it takes precedence over legal rules in situations where cultural norms and legal rules conflict[ McConville et al 1991 : 200 ] This
position is also supported by Manning [1977: 142]. However, my findings show that the influence of the substantive criminal law increases in direct proportion to the perceived seriousness of the incident or crime that the officers are attending. Again, the question of modality arises in relation to the use of law in operational situations. However, it is important to bear in mind that a patrol officer’s perception of what constitutes ‘seriousness’ may itself be a constructed category.

What many commentators have missed is that certain categories of incident impose obligations and duties on the first officer[s] at the scene; and that failure to carry out these duties and obligations can have serious disciplinary consequences for the officers involved. Perhaps the best example of this is the criticism of Metropolitan Police officers who attended a murder scene by Sir William Macpherson in his report on the Stephen Lawrence murder [The Report Of The Stephen Lawrence Enquiry 1999]. Officers attending serious incidents, inter alia, homicides, serious assaults and woundings, rape, fatal accidents and similar incidents have a duty to ensure certain procedures are carried out to ensure the successful investigation of the incident. This can include the need to ‘preserve’ the scene in terms of preserving forensic evidence [blood stains, finger prints, footprints, DNA material, glass fragments etc.]; the need to create a chronological log of persons entering or leaving the scene; the need to call out scenes of crime officers; supervisory and senior investigating officers, search teams, dog handlers and numerous other resources, both human and technological, with which to commence the investigation. Failure to instigate the correct procedure can have serious implications for patrol officers attending crime scenes; especially in terms of possible career development.
This explains the response to question 19, ‘Does the law force a course of action or
does it leave you with a choice?’ Both the probationer sample and the post
probationer sample responded that it “depends on the seriousness of the offence”
giving a frequency of 48 percent and 65 per cent respectively. With regard to
question 18; ‘Is practical experience a better guide to resolving a situation than the
law?’ the probationers responded bi-modally by replying either ‘Yes’, or ‘You
needed one to implement the other’ [32 per cent]. The post-probationers, however,
responded ‘Yes’ [55 per cent] Again, the perceived seriousness of the offence
category would tend to impact on the amount of discretionary freedom allowed
patrol officers. The more ‘serious’ the offence the smaller the amount of discretion
allowed regarding alternative courses of action.

There is a general agreement between all three groups of probationers that both
practical experience and the substantive law are needed to resolve policing situations.
The experienced, post-probationer group were also in agreement with this point.
Officers tend to arrive at what Hoyle [1988] refers to as ‘working assumptions’
regarding the desired outcome of a dispute, and will try to negotiate or persuade the
protagonists to move towards this position. If persuasion fails then the officer can
fall back on his or her legal powers to resolve the situation, by arrest if necessary.

McConville et al [1991] argue convincingly that police officers evaluate an incident,
in terms of an assessment of the veracity of initial accounts given by the protagonists,
and that this process is often a fluid and dynamic evaluation that is an

“...ongoing task of classification and re-classification so that the shape and direction
of the case may always be susceptible to change. Evaluation imbues facts with
special qualities which takes the case into or out of categories with legal
consequences...” [McConville et al 1991: 88-89]
The present research supports the findings of McConville et al [1991] that the semiosic process is fluid and dynamic with the proviso that the amount of discretionary freedom diminishes with the perceived seriousness of the situation or offence category.

Even with 12 months experience officers show an understanding of law as a resource to be called on if other means fail, thereby confirming a theme well known in Anglo-American socio-legal studies. However, many of these officers utilise law as a guide to action and it remains in the background to the decision field but, nevertheless, remains an important element. The following are officers’ responses to the question, “Is practical experience a better guide to resolving a situation than the law?”

**Case Number 002 PFA**

“Yes, but without the law you couldn’t apply the practical. You need both....”

**Case Number 004 PFA**

“..I think the law is important, I think a hell of a lot more of it is how you are thinking practically..”

**Case Number 011 PFA**

“I think you’ve got to blend them both together really, yes practical experience is a great advantage but you’ve got to have the knowledge of the law as well.”

PFB Sample, officers with 18 months experience.

**Case Number 020 PFB**

“Yes. we need to know the law, but I feel hands on experience, practical experience benefits you more.”
Case Number 022 PFB
"No, I don't think so. You've got to have the knowledge of the law. If you haven't got the knowledge of the law then you can really come unstuck..." [emphasis added]

Sample of officers with 22 months service PFC

Case Number 023 PFC
"Practical experience is putting the law into practice...so you do need practical experiences but you also need the law to deal with those, and so they're interlinked really." [emphasis added]

Post-probationary officers express the familiar theme of law as a 'resource' or 'tool' to achieve a desired end, a view echoed by many of the respondents:

Case Number 033 PP
"...when you first start the law is all you've got to fall back on...but with experience you can decide what elements of the law assist you in dealing with it in a practical way rather than following a rigid pattern...the law is a tool really to help you deal with something practically." [emphasis added]

Case Number 041 PP
"Yes, a mixture, you need practical experience because the law isn't black and white the way it's written...you need your knowledge to fall back on to solve a situation..."

Case Number 042 PP
"I would say a good percentage does, practical experience does not achieve everything. You've got to have that core of the law which you have to apply sometimes, but I think...practical experience...you can achieve the law without applying it, and things are dealt with more smoothly in that respect...practical experience is...90% of a policeman really..." [emphasis added]

Case Number 043 PP
"The law is always right, you can't be criticised for upholding the law, but experience shows you...you can deal with it another way...there's another method that will have the desired results without using the tools of the law you've got available." [emphasis added]

The question, 'Does the law force a course of action or does it leave you with a choice?' probes the area of operational discretion. Discretion is directly linked with
the perceived seriousness of the offence and the duties and obligations that flow from
this. Undoubtedly, patrol officers enjoy very wide discretionary powers when dealing
with what they perceive to be petty offences. Many officers used the example of
traffic offences when talking about typical examples of the use of discretionary
powers. However, there is also the issue of officer modality with probationary officers
often being discouraged by PTC trainers from exercising discretionary powers whilst
they are still in their probationary period. Many probationers operate with a policy of
full enforcement of the law since arrest figures can be used as evidence of their
operational competence.

The police definition of a 'crime'still has powerful symbolic connotations for patrol
officers [Young 1991] and this can be contrasted with their perception of 'traffic
offences':

**Case Number 002 PFA**

"It does force action sometimes...and obviously we've got discretion. But I think
there are some offences...the more serious offences...assault, theft, burglaries. I
can't see why discretion would come into that if they've committed the offence...they
need to be arrested...Whereas, perhaps traffic matters, you've got a lot more
discretion there." [emphasis added]

This probationer is referring to the pressure to perform and produce results within
the first two years of service:

**Case Number 005 PFA**

"I think you've always got a choice...I'm told that you should very rarely use
your discretion as a probationer." [emphasis added]
PFB Sample, officers with 18 months experience.

Previous research by Sanders[1987]; McBarnet[1981] and McConville et al [1991] points out the open-textured nature of the criminal law which provides many examples of overlapping offence categories enabling patrol officers to fit legal categories to decisions arrived at through their informal working rules, as the following respondent makes clear:

**Case Number 019 PFB**

"You're left with a choice in certain areas... more often than not you're trying to manufacture the law around the incident than you are trying to put the incident into the law. If you go into certain situations you think, 'I want to make an arrest here', you're looking at, 'How can I get an arrest out of this, you know that's the piece of the law I want', and I would say certain parts of the law, or the ones that we use more and more regularly are a little bit more flexible. "[emphasis added]

The above example supports the findings of McConville et al [1991: 175] that officers often decide on the need to arrest and then find an offence category to justify their action.

**Case Number 021 PFB**

"I think as far as police work goes it leaves you with a choice. Unless you're dealing with very serious incidents like murder and rape... but for the lesser offences like theft, and domestics, you're free to use your discretion."

**Sample of officers with 22 months service [PFC]**

**Case Number 024 PFC**

"No, in certain things it forces... depends on the offence... you don't have a choice at certain things, definitely not, I mean in shoplifting you don't have a choice, if someone has murdered someone else you don't have a choice... but there are still choices within the law. So yes it does give you a choice... depending on the offence and the type of offence."

**Case Number 025 PFC**

"In some cases it forces a course of action doesn't it... you can't not arrest people who are drunk in charge of a motor vehicle, you don't have a choice as far as I'm concerned... You can't not arrest people who have taken large amounts of property... so in some cases you have no choice, if it's a point of law."
Sample of experienced, post-probationary officers

Case Number 032 PP
"I think you're always left with a choice. And at times it's nice to have the law there in the background all the time. You've always got it there as a last resort, whether it be a power of arrest or whatever...you can persuade as much as you like, and some people will not stop doing whatever it is that is wrong..." [emphasis added]

Case Number 034 PP
"...I would say every time it does leave you with a choice, if only because some offences are arrestable, certain offences are recordable, certain offences are reportable. Reporting [offenders for] crime...is an under used and quite valuable tool. There are a number of incidents where you could report somebody...I think to use the law to the letter is just as dangerous, hindering, as to ignore it entirely..

Case Number 035 PP
"Yes, I mean yes you have a choice. It depends on the severity of the circumstances and where you are, the area, the possible consequences. Sometimes it does force your actions."

The Discipline Code [or Code of Conduct as it is now known] is a very real part of an operational officer's life and is there as a background to the decision field as is apparent in the next two cases:

Case Number 037 PP
"By and large it leaves with a lot of choice...We have a duty to uphold the law, and obviously protection of life and property...we can't neglect our duty..." [emphasis added]

Case Number 036 PP
"No it leaves you with a choice in the main...obviously it's serious if it's theft or something dishonest...you eventually have to deal with the individual or you're neglecting your duty..."

This officer is referring to the symbolic dimension of street policing and the need to uphold the dignity of the office of constable. It is interesting to note that the importance of perceived threats to dignity or authority are far more prevalent amongst the responses of more experienced officers as the following case illustrates:
Case Number 039 PP
“\* A choice, as I’ve said you don’t necessarily...have to go straight in with the law...you’ve got that ultimatum to give to them.\*” [emphasis added]

Case Number 040 PP
“\* It can do either, depending on the severity of the incident really. If someone is being injured then...your hand is forced in a way. We turn up there in uniform as representatives of the law, of the country, and it’s our job to uphold it...you feel morally obliged to do so I think. But it depends really on the severity...∗”

Case Number 042 PP
“\* Leaves you with a choice. As I’ve said, you can achieve a goal without applying it. It gives you that choice and very important[ly] you’ve got that choice at the end of the day. If you don’t achieve your initial aim well then the law, with our professional judgment, must be applied...∗” [emphasis added]

In sum, the present findings support earlier research [Ericson 1982: Sanders 1987: McConville et al 1991] that the substantive criminal law is fluid and open-textured allowing patrol officers great latitude with their operational decision making. What is also apparent is that discretionary power diminishes with the perceived offence seriousness.

There is a discretionary modality at work amongst patrol officers with probationers being more reluctant to exercise discretion and preferring full enforcement. This is because they lack the depth of experience to aid pragmatic decision-making and also because they want to be seen as ‘efficient’ officers by supervisors and the public.

What is also clear is that the decision making process consists primarily of a process of informal practices and working rules to which the relevant legal categories are then added in order to achieve the desired outcome.[McConville et al 1991: Kemp et al 1992 : Ericson 1982 : Lustgarten 1986; Hoyle 1998].
Chapter 16.


This section examines the findings relating to the construction of narratives of evidence. All the officers in this group were post-probationary and some of the sample were very experienced detectives.

As was shown in Chapter 9, police narratives of evidence are abstractions, or constructs, of the original event. Police officers use a variety of narrative techniques with which to construct a version of events and these techniques effectively disguise the ‘constructedness’ of the text. [Fiske 1997 : Nash 1990 : Sarbin and Kitsuse 1994 : Kermode 1979]

A sense of transparent realism is created, inter alia, through an empirico-scientific prose style that presents the police version of events as impartial and objective. In this way, by presenting events as factual, unproblematic and lacking in internal contradictions, the police version of events produces a dominant, ‘common-sense’ interpretation that purports to capture a mimetic reality. [Baldwin and Mulvaney 1987; Heaton-Armstrong and Wolchover 1992; Ericson 1981 : Sanders 1987: Bennet and Feldman 1981]

These conventions of realism produce a veridical potency buttressed by the use of narrative frames, templates and genre conventions that build upon and satisfy institutional expectations by producing a sense of verisimilitude.

Despite the efforts of the CPS in their attempt to inform the way probationers are taught to produce narratives of evidence at the PTC, the ethnographic evidence
shows that the ‘craft’ of narrative construction is invariably passed on by the Tutor Constable to the probationer, and is learned ‘on the job’.

In response to question 44, “When being taught how to write statements what guidance did you receive over what to include and what to leave out?” 50 per cent of the sample replied that they were taught only to include factual details. With regard to question 45 “Who taught you this method?”, 44 per cent replied that they had developed the method themselves over time. Question 46 probes the extent of the Tutor Constable’s influence in teaching statement construction: 44 per cent replied that the Tutor had a large influence over their personal style. With regard to question 47, “Does the police force teach officers to develop an ‘official’, standard style of writing or to develop an individual style?”, 94 per cent replied that the police taught them to use an ‘official’ style.

When probed whether it is possible to produce objective and balanced narratives of evidence [question 48], 50 per cent replied that they thought it was possible. With regard to question 49, “Is it difficult to produce an objective report when you have been involved in the incident?”, 56 per cent thought that it was “very difficult”.

Officers were then asked how they emphasised points that they felt were important for court. 31 per cent replied that they put the important points in capitals.

When asked what elements of a statement they thought a court would find persuasive [question 51], 25 per cent replied that the story must “ring true/ be believable”. Finally, when asked how they reconstruct events when several officers had been involved in an incident [question 52], 50 per cent replied that they took part in a group discussion with all officers involved before they actually wrote their statements.
There was overwhelming agreement [94 per cent] from all the officers that police narratives of evidence are written or produced to conform with an ‘official’ police style. Thus narrative accounts gain from their ability to satisfy the institutional expectations of other key players in the criminal justice process [magistrates, CPS prosecutors] by complying with accepted social knowledge associated with certain types of cases, as the following respondents make clear:

**Case Number 093 NA**

"I think it’s got to be an official standard style, because the report...[has] got to tell a story and it’s got to include facts so there is only one style for a statement really." [emphasis added]

**Case Number 087 NA**

"I believe that there is a style which is taught to police officers, a basic setting of the scene, covering all the offence that the person has seen...going chronologically through all of the offence..." [emphasis added]

The question "How do you reconstruct events when several officers have been involved?" addresses an area of law now covered by the Criminal Procedure and Investigations Act 1996. There is now a responsibility on each police officer involved in a criminal investigation to ensure the Code of Practice, introduced by the Act, is complied with in relation to recording, retaining and revealing relevant information. An important point regarding this is that memory, especially for complex events, is largely constructive [Milne and Bull 1999: Yarmey 1986], and that events can be reconstructed from what the individual remembers and from knowledge of the world in general. What a person encodes is not recorded in memory like a "video recorder" and a person can "fill in gaps" with new information or information from typical ‘scripts’ in their memory.
What the ethnography reveals is that complex, public order events tend to be reported following group debriefing sessions. What is problematic within these group sessions is the issue of rehearsal of evidence, in terms of a form of coaching, since this has been specifically disapproved of by the Court of Appeal in a number of cases[ R v Dye and Others [1992] Crim LR 449 ; R v Arif TLR 17.6.93 and R v Skinner ILR 6.12.93]. The following respondent describes how these changes have been put into practice but the problem of ‘reconstruction’ remains:

Case Number 093 NA

“Well traditionally it used to be the Sergeant or Inspector used to get everybody together in one room to write up pocket books together or write statements together, and virtually, in those days, it was dictated. That is discouraged now. What we are told now is that if you go to an incident, OK you can have a common discussion about it but then you’re sent away to write up your statement or your pocket book or both...on your own....you can consult but it’s not dictated anymore, because the view is now that people perceive things differently..”

This respondent is clearly aware of the provisions of paragraphs 3.3 and 3.5 of the Code which states, inter alia, in the context of a debriefing, that officers should be alert to any changes in evidence or fresh information arising following a debriefing, but note the fact that the witness statement is constructed following the group discussion.

Case Number 092 NA

“’There is clearly a format for that. It is not a difficult issue, I’ve done it many times...we should talk that situation through, everybody understands what they did or didn’t see, what they can or cannot reasonably be expected to comment on and that way you get a nice dovetail of the available evidence that’s there...it’s all about debriefing...’”
[emphasis added]
The next case, and the one that follows, sets out the operational reality and time pressures that form part of the working officer’s life on a busy division. As we can see the ‘final version’ of the event is often an amalgam of several viewpoints and, as the officer so succinctly states, the ‘majority rules at the end of the day’:

**Case Number 085 NA**

“Well it’s very important that police officers don’t contradict one another. There’s no point in proceeding further if you cannot agree on what happened...A particular time when it happens...is when you’ve got an overnight remand, you’ve caught somebody during the night shift for a particular offence, everything is buzzing around in your head, there’s two or three of you who want to go at 6 o’clock in the morning, one of you, usually me, gets lumbered with writing out the statements...So...everyone has got[ ‘seized’] property to book in, and statements to write, and you’re going, ‘So this happened didn’t it?’ and everyone says ‘well, yes’, or ‘No’, and if they say ‘No’, you stop and say ‘well how did this happen’, ‘Did this lot happen?’ ‘I saw this, I saw that, right?’ And the majority rules at the end of the day...” [emphasis added]

In order to produce the most compelling evidential accounts, chronological ‘time lines’ are drawn up, and a simplified version of events created in which officers set out the salient ‘points to prove’ whilst excluding extraneous or ‘problematic’ elements, as the following respondent explains:

**Case Number 089 NA**

“...The first thing I would do is to get everyone to say their own piece as to what they saw, what happened from their perspective, and try and fit them together in a jigsaw fashion in my own mind, what the sequence of events was. The next thing I’ll do is...get them to do a statement format and make sure the verbal version tallies with the written version...and from that I will...pick out the bones of it, what I consider to be the salient features and then construct a chronological narrative of events...” [emphasis added]

Question 50 “How do you emphasise points that you think are important for a court?” explores the area of how officers enhance written accounts, in terms of...
prosecution summaries[MG5], and witness statements, in order to make them more
impactive. This technique is often successful, as the ethnography reveals:

Case Number 090 NA

"You can put them in capitals or underline them, even to the point of
highlighting if I think it's important..."[emphasis added]

Case Number 085 NA

"...In the same way that a headline was picked out, we would want to bring
particular facts to the attention of the prosecutor, hoping that they would shout
them forth to the magistrate who would sit up when he would say...'It
happened in which road? I live there'. You know we tend to know where the
magistrates live and what areas they were in so we bring that home. a series of
daytime burglaries you know, and a magistrate who felt...a little unsafe that
perhaps his home is being burgled while he's sitting here...But these were little
tricks and methods which I'Ve used to this day, and I find them ...lovely to
look at, underline if you can, big capital letters, speech marks, anything like
that. It was something we tended to use in statements of facts..I've heard
prosecutors use it in the same way. They are speaking the exact capital letters
in that way and you can hear them rattling around the court room, they're
quite nice."

Another respondent informed me that his wife, whilst reading an account in a local
paper of a case in magistrates' court remarked: "This sounds like you speaking". It
transpired that the Crown Prosecutor had read out verbatim the prosecution summary
prepared by the officer.

Question 48 "'Is it difficult to produce an objective report when you have been involved in
the incident?'" seeks to probe the impossible structural position of the police in the
criminal justice process [McConville 1984]:

Case Number 092 NA

"...There is always a danger that your point of view will be coloured of course...I
think depending how much you were hurt or aggrieved or insulted, will
possibly influence what you put on paper. And with hand on heart can any of us
who’ve have these experiences of operational difficulties not look back to something
and think, “Well I was slightly less objective there than I might have been...”
[emphasis added]

This forthright and honest response sums up the essence of my argument regarding
the construction of narratives of evidence and supports the findings of McConville et
all [1991]; and a point made in several linked papers by Andrew Sanders

Case Number 085 NA

"I’d love to say yes, I think I’d have to say no. Again it’s an effort to go to
make a written statement, why make a statement unless there’s a purpose to it
? If there’s a purpose to something therefore it rules out a lot of waffling
objectivity. It is far easier to leave out , or leave blank, or leave vague
something which may or may not be questioned by a court, by a defence, by a
prosecution, whoever it is. You put sufficient detail in to cover an aspect, but
at the end of the day, it’s been put for ‘points to prove’ and there is a criminal
that needs proving against. I’m not saying that it’s made in a dishonest
manner, but it is subjective to [the] result, yes."

Case Number 089 NA

"I think it’s possible, and I would say that we are heading more in that
direction...certainly in my early years...you tended to be selective as to what you
included. And perhaps if there were elements in a statement which may...favour
a defendant then perhaps those might be edited out at an early stage, wouldn’t
even get to the statement stage. I think in recent years with the adoption of the
PEACE style of [cognitive] interviewing, you tend to include a more balanced
view and adopt a more neutral stance...and even if there are things which may not
necessarily favour the prosecution...they are included. I think there’s a drift towards
that, although I don’t think it’s reached the neutral stage yet.”[emphasis added]

What these findings support is my assertion that that there is a clear parallel between
the semiotic construction of events on the street [ in terms of the logonomic systems
that constrain semiosis]; and the narrative frames and genre conventions within which
narratives of evidence are constructed.[Baldwin and Mulvaney 1987 :
Heaton-Armstrong, Shepherd and Wolchover 1999 : Ericson 1981].

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We have seen [in Chapter 9] that the CPS and NPT have collaborated to provide officers with guidance regarding the regularity of narrative ‘accounts’ since the problematic nature of the narrative form is seen as a failure of method [situational complexity; lack of training or a lack of expertise.] What is apparent from my findings is that ‘distorted accounts’ are the product of, inter alia, the role of the police in the adversarial process[ McConville 1984 : McConville et al 1991], and that this ‘impossible structural position’ produces an institutional dynamic, and a prosecution bias, resulting in a dominant[ hegemonic] police account of the incident.

Mainstream evidence discourse assumes an unproblematic relationship between the mimetic plane[ an ‘objective’ reality] and the language used to construct it. My findings reveal that this relationship is far from unproblematic and constitutes an area where further research should be undertaken.
Chapter 17

Summary Of Findings

The aim of the present research was to examine the ways in which police officers interpret and report 'official' reality and this was approached via the probationer training programme. The research also explores the question of whether the way officers interpret and report 'official reality' is a direct product of the probationer training programme or whether it is an indirect effect of this system.

Probationer Training

The present findings establish that the changes to probationer training introduced following the Stage 11 Review [MacDonald et al 1987] have signally failed to achieve their stated aims and objectives and, further, that they are actually counterproductive to the extent that they influence probationers to adopt the values enshrined within police occupational culture[s].

It is clear that the facilitative 'student-centred' method is an inappropriate approach with which to teach probationers; both in terms of the unrealistic demands and constraints placed on trainers, and the lack of objectivity and ambiguity frequently created by this method in the minds of students. However, the perceived 'reality gap' between the world of PTCs and operational policing appears to be the most damning criticism frequently voiced by students.
This failure of method is exacerbated by the lack of status attributed to NPT by the wider policing institution; and to the fact that the discourse of probationer training is entirely confined within NPT and has no currency ‘on the street’.

Probationers’ expectations of PTC were that it would be a disciplined, militaristic environment where they would received a thorough grounding in criminal law and police powers. The actual reality of what they encountered left many probationers confused and annoyed. Training was invariably seen as poorly focused and ambiguous, but above all as unrealistic.

**Tutor Constable Attachment**

By contrast, the Tutor Constable attachment was seen by probationers as being extremely valuable in terms of learning the practical skills of street policing. The findings make clear that the close personal support given by the Tutor Constable, together with the ‘hands on ’ experiential teaching, provided the guidance that was lacking at the PTC. It is also apparent that the traditional ‘craft’ element of street policing is passed on from generation to generation of police officer during the Tutor Constable attachment.

**Socio-Spatial Cognitive Maps**

It is on the Tutor Constable attachment that officers develop their socio-spatial cognitive maps with detailed ‘local knowledge’ being passed on from Tutor to probationer. The ethnography revealed that officers often adapted their policing ‘style’ to conform to the perceived social characteristics of the area they policed, thus continuing a tradition rooted in the Victorian legacy of street policing.
Horizon Of Expectations.

Spatial boundaries were shown to have a special significance for policework. Indeed, officers socially construct the areas they police, often imbuing space with a special significance and symbolic weight according to previous operational experiences, designated crime ‘hot spots’, and many other elements.

When officers receive a message via their personal radios deploying them to an incident, they construct a temporary ‘horizon of expectations’ in their minds about what they are likely to encounter. The present findings identified that the horizon of expectations changes as officers became more experienced and that there was a marked change between probationers and post-probationers.

This is related to the fact that whilst at PTC officers are taught to treat incidents as legal ‘texts’ with semiosis being confined to evidential ‘points to prove’. Thus probationers are concerned with rehearsing their legal powers whilst en route to incidents and with scripted knowledge of similar incidents they have attended. As officers become more experienced ‘contextual factors’ assume greater significance as such factors as time, location, and local characteristics enter the semiosic process. Post-probationers are able to draw on an extensive experiential store of policing knowledge, comprising of both synchronic and diachronic elements, and this is often fed into the semiosic process as was shown in the illustrative example of the Rodney King incident.[Koon 1992]

The present findings show that the pre-incident phase can be crucial to an understanding of police decision-making in terms of what the individual officer brings with him or her to the incident. Socio-spatial cognitive mapping is not always apparent to researchers working within the interactionist tradition and will not appear in subsequent evidential accounts submitted by patrol officers.
The Importance Of Maintaining An ‘Open Mind’ During Semiosis.


The present findings confirm earlier studies that have pointed out the friction that can occur when inaccurate or incomplete information is provided [Hoyle 1998]. What the present study adds to this debate is to show that the informational needs of patrol officers change as they move through their probationary period with more experienced officers demanding detailed background information about both the location and the parties involved. This is directly linked to the growth of the officer’s socio-spatial cognitive map and explains the way intertextual elements combine with the specific characteristics of the present incident during semiosis.

Both probationers and experienced officers maintained the importance of keeping an ‘open mind’ at incidents and maintaining a critical distance or objectivity. Thus officers repeated the need to ‘stand back’ and assess, confirming that officers do not merely respond to a mimetic reality but engage in a semiosic process of event ‘construction’ [McConville et al 1991: Manning 1992].

Unacceptable Behaviour

The present findings provide an important insight into the operational ideologies of patrol officers in terms of setting out their normative and evaluative conceptual frameworks and common-sense understandings.
What is of particular importance is that these operational ideologies lie largely outside the conventional ‘legal paradigm’. Previous researchers have identified that the substantive criminal law offers provides little guidance in terms of evaluating concrete social events [Banton 1964 : Wilson 1968 : Reiner 1992].

What the present findings reveal is that probationers’ notions of acceptability are often grounded in personal and family values and by a perception of what the ‘average’ member of the public would find acceptable. Probationers with 12 months service are already able to embed decisions regarding acceptability with contextual factors based on detailed local knowledge promulgated during their Tutor Constable attachment. As officers become more experienced and operationally confident one can discern a change in their operational ideologies or logonomic systems as institutional values become stabilised by discursive regularities and intertextual elements built up by attending scores of similar incidents.

Also noteworthy is the tendency for more experienced officers to respond to perceived threats to their dignity; and to a marked growth of paternalism evident during this stage[Banton 1964 : Watson 1994 : Walker 1996 : Loader 1997].

The Relevance Of Non Verbal Communication During Semiosis.

As officers move through their probationary period the importance of non-verbal communication or ‘body language’ assumes a greater importance. ‘NVCs’ form part of a probationer’s assessment, both in terms of monitoring signs of aggression in others, and of assuming an appropriate posture when dealing with the public. Since the fieldwork was carried out officers are now taught a system of ‘tactical communication’ which is based on interpreting body language in violent or potentially violent situations.
The present findings reinforce the importance of body language as a resource that operational officers can call upon to aid their decision making. Officers pointed out that parties to a dispute will often give misleading or inaccurate accounts of what occurred and that ‘NVCs’ provide an additional aid to semiosis for officers under pressure to quickly resolve incidents and move on to the next job.

**How Officers Deal With Domestic Disputes**

Event schemas or scripts probably come closest to the concept of ‘recipe rules’ developed by socio-legal scholars. The present findings reveal that officers frequently draw on such scripted knowledge when dealing with domestic disputes. However, the scripted knowledge is confined, in the main, to such pragmatic considerations as the need to separate the protagonists before attempting to identify the source of the dispute.

What is apparent is that officers invest considerable time and effort in seeking a resolution in a genuine attempt to help the participants and often engaging in sophisticated problem-solving techniques. These findings support recent research carried out by Hoyle [1998] into domestic violence in the Thames Valley Police area. What is also clear is that young, single officers find such disputes problematic because they have no life experiences to draw on. Several of the more experienced officers related how their attitude to domestic violence had changed since bringing up their own children.

**How Police Officers Make Sense Of Public Order Incidents.**

The present findings reveal that officers are very often only able to ‘make sense’ of public order incidents after the event. Officers engage in collective debriefings in
which they ‘pool’ their recollections of what occurred and try to ‘reconstruct’ the event.

The findings show that this process is important for probationers in that it reinforces group norms and the collective aims of the institution by providing a framework with which to develop a clear, chronological time frame for the event. It also allows officers to construct a single, unproblematic evidential reality from an often chaotic and confused experience of the actual event.

This process is embedded within the wider field of evidential narrative construction and allows officers to impute purpose to actions in terms of ensuring ‘points to prove’, reduces the chance of conflicting evidential accounts, thereby constructing the strongest possible prosecution case.[McConville et al 1991 : Sanders 1987]

**The Influence Of The Substantive Criminal Law On Operational Decision Making.**

The present findings support earlier research [Ericson 1982 : Sanders 1987: McConville et al 1981] that the substantive criminal law is open textured and allows officers great latitude in dealing with less serious offence categories. The findings also show that discretionary power diminishes in direct proportion to the perceived seriousness of the incident.

There is also a discretionary modality at work amongst patrol officers with probationers being reluctant to exercise their discretionary powers and preferring full enforcement. This was because they lacked the depth of operational experience needed to aid pragmatic decision-making, but also because they wanted to be seen as ‘efficient’ and ‘professional’ officers by their immediate supervisors.

In terms of practical decision-making, experienced officers drew on a process of informal practices and working rules to decide on an acceptable outcome, and then

The Speed With Which Officers Categorise Incidents

The speed with which officers are able to categorise incidents is one of the most important findings to emerge from the present study. What is apparent is that officers categorise incidents in accordance with police institutional rather than legal criteria. Officers are aided in this process by an understanding of the closure rules or logonomic systems existing within their specific interpretive community.

This not only allows rapid event processing, but ensures institutionally acceptable categorisations, supported by the stabilised logic, narrative frames and discursive regularities with which events are described and reported [Sheptycki 1991 ]

The difference between the probationer and post-probationer group with regard to the speed with which they categorised incidents was found to be statistically significant in the logistic regression.

How Police Officers Report 'Official' Reality

Although CPS and NPT have collaborated in an effort to provide probationers with guidance regarding the construction of narrative accounts, it is apparent from the present findings that it is not, as assumed by the CPS, a failure of method or lack of expertise that produces 'distorted accounts', but rather this is directly attributable to the problematic role of the police in the adversarial process [ McConville 1984: McConville et al 1991]. The 'impossible' structural position of the police produces an institutional dynamic, and a prosecution bias, that works towards producing the dominant police account of 'official' reality.
The present research shows how the semiosic development of probationers is often a function of group debriefings; personal 'hands on' guidance on statement construction from Tutor Constables, and encouragement in the use of narrative templates and rhetorical techniques in order to provide the most compelling prosecution evidence.

**Discussion Of Findings**

The most important empirical study of police decision-making remains 'The Case For The Prosecution' [McConville et al 1991]. The present research supports the main finding that police prosecution cases are 'constructed' against individuals rather than being "about incidents" [op cit 203], and that the process is about building a "single, unitary view of reality" and thus the most compelling prosecution case.

The present findings augment this research by revealing how the system of probationer training designed to develop individual 'reflective practitioners' actually facilitates a process that serves to ensure that probationers absorb historical, class-biased working practices that have their origins in Victorian street policing.

What is difficult to understand, given the enormous time, effort and resources invested in probationer training [a probationary constable will have received in excess of 90 days training before he or she commences patrol with a Tutor Constable], is the paucity of training and resources invested in the Tutor Constable role. Over the years, numerous internal police research reports and HMIC documents have clearly documented the marginalisation of the Tutor role which is often seen on division as being merely another operational 'resource' to be deployed to calls.

This ambivalence on the part of the wider policing institution to properly resource and value the Tutor Constable element of probationer training is a tacit
acknowledgement that ‘real’ policing is learnt by actually doing the job and that the Harrogate philosophy is merely ‘window dressing’ to disguise the traditional crime-control values enshrined in operational police culture. The institution knows that the most valuable training a Tutor Constable possesses is his or her operational experience that is grounded in the ideology and values of traditional beat policing.

**Modality**

The importance of officer modality, both in terms of semiosis, and with respect to the use of discretion, has been highlighted by the present study.

Distinct stages of semiosic modality have been identified as police officers move through their probationary period and beyond.

Whilst in the early stages of their probation, officers are taught to interpret incidents as essentially self-contained legal ‘texts’, with officers trained to identify evidential ‘points to prove’ and confining semiosis essentially to synchronic elements. During the Tutor Constable attachment officers are taught to include normative contextual elements into their decision-making, and to align assessments of acceptability of actions with perceptions of local standards of behaviour and toleration.

The Tutor Constable is instrumental in developing a probationer’s socio-spatial cognitive frame in terms of developing a highly detailed knowledge of local criminals, potentially troublesome neighbourhoods, symbolic locations and crime ‘hot spots’, thus enabling beat officers to use ‘incongruity factors’ of the type identified by Sacks [1978], Werthman and Piliavin[1967] and others to identify the abnormal from the normal[Dixon et al 1989]
As officers become operationally experienced they are able to draw on their experiential store of previous incidents they have been involved in and these [diachronic] elements are then fed into the semiotic process to influence the way incidents are interpreted [Koon 1992]. Officers who have completed their probationary period often utilise 'intertextual' elements into their operational decision-making.

The present findings also identify a discretionary modality at work with regard to the way officers resolve incidents. Probationers are reluctant to use discretionary powers to resolve incidents and invariably choose full enforcement of the law or prosecution. This is because of the fact that probationers are subject to frequent progress reports during their probationary period and so need to evidence their operational competence by providing 'arrest figures'.

Experienced, post-probationary officers frequently use discretion especially with regard to 'traffic' offences which are seen as being less serious than 'crime' categories. However, an officer's discretionary power diminishes in accordance with the perceived seriousness of the incident and this issue is bound up with the serious disciplinary consequences that can flow from any identified failure to act on the part of the officers involved.

Very often socio-legal scholars assume a homogeneous class of police officer and do not discriminate between stages of experience, or indeed of differences resulting from membership of various structural groupings or 'interpretive communities'.

The ethnography identified the difficulties young, single officers often experience in dealing with domestic disputes. This is attributable to lack of relevant life experiences but nevertheless underlines the way experience can impact on semiosis.
No doubt, many other identifiable groupings exist within the general category of ‘police officer’.

**Narrative templates.**

The present study has shown how police officers are taught during their probationary period to adopt accepted narrative templates and rhetorical devices when preparing evidential accounts.

Although the ethnographic evidence shows that patrol officers very often are unable to make sense of public order incidents when they are occurring, the adversarial position of the police in the prosecution process demands clear, linear, unambiguous accounts that unfold chronologically with a teleological purpose assigned to the actions of various protagonists. This is achieved through group discussions when probationers become enculturated into the group norms and prosecutorial aims of the wider policing institution. This is an area that has been relatively neglected by researchers and needs further research.

**How The Present Findings Extend Understanding Of Police Decision-Making.**

The present level of knowledge of police decision-making, both at the point of arrest, and subsequent at the police station is now quite detailed [McConville et al 1991 : Hoyle 1998 ; Dixon et al 1989 ; Sanders 1987] and well documented.

Comparatively little is known of the process by which police officers actually learn to make sense of the incidents with which they deal. What the present research adds to this debate is to further highlight the ‘impossible’ structural position of the police in the criminal justice system [McConville 1984].
The present research establishes that police officers experience difficulties in conforming to the style of policing taught at the PTC. Such training is seen as unrealistic by probationers and is difficult to sustain given the inevitable heavy workload and narrow time frames that typify the working conditions of patrol officers in busy urban environments.

The Harrogate philosophy which underpins the training probationers receive at the PTC is premised on the understanding that patrol officers will become reflective practitioners who will carefully weigh-up the various options open to them in their operational decision-making, whilst being sensitive to the needs of the various parties involved. Probationers are taught to deal with incidents as self-contained legal 'texts', confining their decisions to the availability of evidential 'points to prove'.

When probationers experience operational police work for the first time they quickly realise that the Harrogate system is unworkable in practice. Officers also find that the substantive criminal law offers them very little guidance regarding operational decision-making and so they invariably fall back on their personal or family value systems.

The role of the Tutor Constable has been shown to be pivotal with regard to training the probationer to cope with the demands of street policing. Probationers quickly move away from the primary interpretive community of the PTC to adopt the pragmatic, 'tried and tested' methods promulgated by the Tutor Constable.

Not only do probationers learn coping strategies from their Tutor Constable, they also absorb historical practices, discursive regularities and stabilised logic that underpins beat policing. A clear example of this is to be found in the way officers deal with complex public order incidents. The findings show that officers often experience
these incidents as chaotic, fragmented and complex so that they are unable to make sense of them at the time.

Officers respond to the evidential demands of their role by literally reconstructing incidents during group debriefing sessions. It is through such group sessions that probationers experience the singularity of purpose and the real institutional dynamic of the police prosecutorial role. Probationers learn that successful prosecutions depend on compelling evidential accounts that simplifies chaotic social reality by presenting a chronological, unambiguous and clear ‘objective’ account of events in which every action described is functionally linked to proving an element of the charge.

Although the collaborative testimony of police officers has been countenanced since the Court of Appeal ruling in R v Bass [1953] 1 ER 1064, and more recently in R v Owen [1986] 83 Cr App R 100, the dangers of ‘reconstructive’ and ‘implicational’ errors are clear [Heaton-Armstrong et al 1999].

The present findings also reveal that evidential accounts are made even more problematical by the adoption of narrative templates and related rhetorical devices taught to probationers by more experienced officers. The present findings also point to the significance of the patrol officer’s socio-spatial cognitive map that is developed during the Tutor Constable attachment. What the findings make clear is that officers use their cognitive maps to adapt their policing style to a specific location. Few officers realise the significance of this in terms of how they as individuals respond to the public, and the effect this may have on how others respond to them.

The criminal justice system assumes an unproblematic relationship between the police officer as witness, and the events with which he or she records in narratives of
evidence. What is clear from the present findings is that police officers do not respond as passive spectators having access to a mimetic ‘reality’. Police officers instead ‘create’ meanings by actively decoding incidents along institutionally acceptable lines using the logonomic systems or closure rules acceptable within their specific interpretive community.

In this way, as the findings reveal, police officers are able to make rapid, consistent and institutionally acceptable incident categorisations. These decisions are shaped by, and are embedded within, police operational culture[s]. The substantive criminal law provides the background for the decision field enabling officers to legitimise and justify actions that were actually based on informal, pragmatic and cultural elements.
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Appendix 1.

Interview Instruments
Schedule for probationers at PFA, PFB and PFC stages of Probationary Period.

[Note: Probe on all responses]

1. What were your expectations of the training at the PTC before you went on the course?
2. Did the training you received at the PTC meet with your expectations?
3. Do you think the probationer system is successful? [if so, in what ways?]
4. Did your training at the PTC and at the Force Training School adequately prepare you for street duties?
5. In terms of your operational competence, how important was the training you received from your Tutor Constable?
6. Before police officers can deal with an incident they have to make sense of the situation they are dealing with. How do you approach this with the incidents you are sent to?
7. How do you make sense of complex incidents such as public order?
8. How do you make sense of a domestic dispute?
9. How quickly are you able to assess a situation?
10. How do you come to this conclusion?
11. Who taught you this method?
12. When dealing with an incident such as a domestic or disorderly conduct, how do you decide whether behaviour is acceptable or unacceptable?
13. Does your understanding of an incident ever change from your initial assessment?
14. Do you feel under any pressure to perform?
15. Is practical experience a better guide to resolving a situation than the law?
16. Does the law force a course of action or does it leave you with a choice?
19. Has the way you deal with incidents changed at all from when you first started independent patrol?
20. Did what your Tutor Constable taught you duplicate what you were taught at PTC or did it differ in any way?
Interview schedule for narrative section.

1. Were you taught to write statements of evidence at the PTC?

2. How were you taught to do this?

3. Were you given any guidelines regarding what to include and what to leave out?

4. Is there, in your opinion, a particular style to be adopted in producing written work?

5. What do you think a model statement should contain?

6. How long did it take you to produce a satisfactory result?

7. What factors do you consider when deciding what to include and what to leave out?

8. Has your style of producing written work changed at all as you became more experienced? (If so, in what ways?)

9. What role did your Tutor Constable play in influencing the style and content of your written work?

10. Does the police force teach officers to develop an individual style of writing or does it teach officers to produce an official style?

11. Do you think it is possible to produce narratives which achieve an objective and balanced viewpoint?

12. Is it difficult to produce an objective report when you have been involved in the original incident?

13. How do you reconstruct an event when several officers have been involved in an incident?

14. Does your initial understanding of an incident change at all following a discussion of the incident with other officers prior to putting your thoughts on paper?

15. How do you emphasise points you feel are particularly important when writing up files for court?

16. What elements of a statement do you think a court would find persuasive?
Schedule for Post-Probationer, experienced officers.

[Note: Probe on all responses]

1. Before police officers can deal with an incident they have to make sense of the situation they are dealing with. How do you approach this with the incidents you are sent to?

2. How do you make sense of complex incidents such as public order?

3. How do you make sense of a domestic dispute?

4. How quickly are you able to assess a situation?

5. How do you come to this conclusion?

6. Who taught you this method?

7. When dealing with an incident such as a domestic or disorderly conduct, how do you decide whether behaviour is acceptable or unacceptable?

8. Does your understanding of an incident ever change from your initial assessment?

9. Is practical experience a better guide to resolving a situation than the law?

10. Does the law force a course of action or does it leave you with a choice?

11. Has the way you deal with incidents changed at all from when you first started independent patrol?
Interview Schedule for Tutor Constables.

Probe on replies:

1. What training did you receive to prepare you for the role of Tutor Constable?
2. Did this training adequately prepare you for the role?
3. How do you approach the task of preparing a probationer for independent patrol?
4. How do you teach a probationer to make sense of a domestic dispute?
5. How do you teach a probationer to make sense of public order incidents?
6. In your opinion, is there a right and a wrong way to deal with an incident?
7. How do you personally define good police work?
8. How does the traditional core of police work get passed on from generation to generation?
9. Do you pass on to your probationers any skills or knowledge that your Tutor passed to you?
10. How do you teach probationers to write statements?
11. Is there a particular style of report and statement writing that a probationer has to learn?
12. How do you teach them to do this?
13. Does the Tutor Constable influence the style of policing that a probationer eventually develops?
14. How important for the development of a competent police officer is the role of the Tutor?
Schedule for In Force Trainers and Trainers at PTC.

1. What were your expectations of the Trainers' Course before you went to Harrogate?
2. Did the course meet with your expectations?
3. What do you see as the main message that Harrogate is trying to put across?
4. How does in-force training compare with the training probationers receive at PTC?
5. Do you use any materials developed in-force in your teaching?
6. How does this material differ from that developed by Harrogate?
7. How do you get probationers to make sense of the incidents they will have to deal with?
8. How do you get the class to see things as a group?
9. Is there a right and a wrong way to deal with an incident?
10. Is there a particular formula you teach probationers to aid or assist them in making sense of complicated incidents? [If yes, probe for examples]
11. Do you encourage probationers to develop their own individual style of dealing with incidents or do you teach them a single method?
12. What, in your view, constitutes good police work?
13. How is the traditional core of police work passed on from generation to generation?
14. Is the training Tutor Constables are given adequate and appropriate for their role?
15. How is training rated by operational officers on division?
16. Have you experienced any difficulties with the Harrogate package?
Appendix 2.

Statistical Printouts and tables
Analyses

Logistic Regression 1

This analysis had responses to items 1-5 as the predictor variables, and the three groups, PFA, PFB, and PFC (representing different stages of probationary training) as the outcome variable. The variables that maximally separated the three groups were responses to question 3 and question 4, but neither of the two variables in this final model achieved significance.

Logistic Regression 2

This analysis had responses to items 6 to 20 as the predictor variables, and the outcome variable was simply whether the respondent was a probationer or post-probationer. 60 cases were appropriate to this analysis after exclusion for missing data.

The first variable to enter the model in the forward stepwise procedure was Question 15, which asked, “Generally speaking, how quickly are you able to assess a situation?”. From the no predictor model before any entry of variables, the probability of ‘guessing’ whether a case was a probationer or post-probationer was obviously 50%. With the inclusion of Q.15 as a predictor, this increased quite reasonably to 75% as the classification table below reports.

Table 1 - Classification Table for Group with one predictor (Q.15)
(correct classifications highlighted in bold)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Predicted</th>
<th>Probationer</th>
<th>Post-probationer</th>
<th>Percent Correct</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Observed/Actual</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Probationer</td>
<td>18</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>58.06%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Post-probationer</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>27</td>
<td>93.10%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Overall</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>75.00%</td>
</tr>
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</table>

The next variable to enter into the model was Question 12, which asked, “How important for your operational competence was the tutor input?”. With the inclusion of this second predictor, the regression procedure was able to match the predicted group membership correctly with the observed or actual group 90% of the time. This is shown in the second classification table over the page.
Table 2 - Classification Table for Group with two predictors (Q.15 & Q.12)
(Correct classifications are highlighted in bold)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Observed/Actual</th>
<th>Predicted</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Probationer</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Probationer</td>
<td>29</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Post-probationer</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Overall 90.00%

No other variables entered into the model, as no other addition would increase the predictive capability of the model to a significant degree. The final model therefore included Q.15 and Q.12. From a successful classification of cases into their appropriate group of 50% by chance alone, the inclusion of these two variables into a predictive model raised the percentage of successful classifications to 90% overall.

A test of this final model with two predictors against a constant-only model was statistically reliable, $X^2(2, N = 60) = 57.518$, $p<.001$, indicating that the two predictors, as a set, reliably distinguished between probationers and post-probationers.

The manner in which the probationers and post-probationers differed in their responses to items 12 and 15 of the questionnaire are shown graphically in Figures 1 and 2.
From this chart, it is clear that post-probationers more often responded outside of the three coded categories, as their frequencies total only 50%. However, there was a substantial and significant trend in the probationer group to indicate that tutor input was very important, while the modal response of the post probationers suggested that they regarded tutor input as only quite important. This differentiation, as revealed through logistic regression, was significant.
Figure 2 - A Clustered Bar Chart showing the percentage frequencies of each response type to Question 15

"Generally speaking, how quickly are you able to assess a situation?"
(cases responding 'other' omitted)

This graph shows a clear difference between probationers and post-probationers, a difference found to be statistically significant in the logistic regression procedure. The vast majority of post-probationers indicated that they were able to assess a situation quickly, whereas the majority of probationers indicated that assessment speed depended upon the complexity of the incident. This suggests either a higher level of general confidence in the post-probationer group, or that their greater experience means that they have more contextual resources available in terms of heuristics or cognitive schemata to allow faster assessments.
The other items of the questionnaire, although not significantly discriminating between probationers and post-probationers, are still of interest to consider. Table 3 shows the modal responses for each of the items 6 to 20 for each group (excluding items 13 and 17 which were not responded to by both groups), and provides the percentage that the modal response was given by that group.

Table 3 - Modal Responses and their Frequencies to items 6-20, allowing comparison of probationer and post-probationer groups
(for ease of viewing, the post-probationer groups are displayed in bold)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Question</th>
<th>Group</th>
<th>Modal Response</th>
<th>% Frequency</th>
</tr>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>6</td>
<td>prob</td>
<td>4-reflect on powers of arrest</td>
<td>35.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>post</td>
<td>2-ascertain whether visited location/person before</td>
<td>31.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7</td>
<td>prob</td>
<td>3-keep an open mind</td>
<td>38.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>post</td>
<td>6-assess body language/NVCs</td>
<td>24.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8</td>
<td>prob</td>
<td>3-family values/personal code of conduct</td>
<td>38.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>post</td>
<td>6-contextual factors such as time and place</td>
<td>31.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9</td>
<td>prob</td>
<td>2-maintain objectivity</td>
<td>22.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>post</td>
<td>2-maintain objectivity</td>
<td>31.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10</td>
<td>prob</td>
<td>1-separate parties involved, consult independently</td>
<td>48.4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>post</td>
<td>1-separate parties involved, consult independently</td>
<td>31.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>11</td>
<td>prob</td>
<td>2-further information comes to light</td>
<td>64.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>post</td>
<td>2-further information comes to light</td>
<td>72.4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>12</td>
<td>prob</td>
<td>1-very important</td>
<td>83.9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>post</td>
<td>9-other response</td>
<td>51.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>14</td>
<td>prob</td>
<td>3-more personal interpretation</td>
<td>48.4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>post</td>
<td>9-other response</td>
<td>48.3</td>
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<tr>
<td>15</td>
<td>prob</td>
<td>6-depends upon complexity of incident</td>
<td>35.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>post</td>
<td>1-quickly</td>
<td>89.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>16</td>
<td>prob</td>
<td>1-tutor constable/3-developed it myself (bimodal)</td>
<td>29.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>post</td>
<td>3-developed it myself</td>
<td>44.8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>18</td>
<td>prob</td>
<td>1-yes/4-you need one to implement other(bimodal)</td>
<td>32.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>post</td>
<td>1-yes</td>
<td>55.2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>19</td>
<td>prob</td>
<td>2-depends on seriousness of offense</td>
<td>48.4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>post</td>
<td>2-depends on seriousness of offense</td>
<td>65.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>20</td>
<td>prob</td>
<td>1-yes, now more confident</td>
<td>38.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>post</td>
<td>4-more streetwise</td>
<td>37.9</td>
</tr>
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While most of the differences in modal responses for each item between probationers and post-probationers failed to reach significance in the regression (other than Q.12 and Q.15), there are still some informative differences shown on this table, and these form part of the qualitative discussion.
Table 4 - MODAL RESPONSES TO ITEMS 22-35 AND FREQUENCIES

**Questions 22-35: Tutor Constables only**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Question</th>
<th>Modal Response</th>
<th>% Frequency</th>
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<tr>
<td>22</td>
<td>2-one week new style</td>
<td>80</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>23</td>
<td>2-partially</td>
<td>50</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>24</td>
<td>1-didn’t tell how to carry out tutor role/2-only focused on modular system</td>
<td>30</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>(bimodal)</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>25</td>
<td>1-build up confidence by allowing them to take the lead</td>
<td>40</td>
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<tr>
<td>26</td>
<td>1-separate both parties, listen to each, decide outcome/4-Let them get on</td>
<td>30</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>with it and analyse actions afterwards (bimodal)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>27</td>
<td>3-deal with ongoing incident and collectively debrief after</td>
<td>60</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>28</td>
<td>1-no single right way, only wrong ways</td>
<td>60</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>29</td>
<td>1-all parties are satisfied with your action</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>30</td>
<td>2-yes</td>
<td>70</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>31</td>
<td>1-trial and error method</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>32</td>
<td>2-yes</td>
<td>80</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>33</td>
<td>2-partially-influence decays over time as personal style develops</td>
<td>80</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>34</td>
<td>1-teaching them to watch for incongruity factors in the environment</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>35</td>
<td>1-very important/vital</td>
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Table 5 - MODAL RESPONSES TO ITEMS 36-43 AND FREQUENCIES

**Questions 36-43: Police Trainers only**

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<td>3-lacks clarity of focus/6-allows students to ‘play the game’ (bimodal)</td>
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<td>37</td>
<td>1-by trainer intervention techniques</td>
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<tr>
<td>38</td>
<td>6-group discussions</td>
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<tr>
<td>39</td>
<td>2-individual outlook</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>40</td>
<td>1-lacking in credibility</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>41</td>
<td>1-no</td>
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<tr>
<td>42</td>
<td>1-yes</td>
<td>71.4</td>
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<tr>
<td>43</td>
<td>1-establish superiority of student-centred learning over traditional method</td>
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Table 6 - MODAL RESPONSES TO ITEMS 44-52 AND FREQUENCIES

**Questions 44-52: Narrative Group**

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<td>4-only include factual details</td>
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<tr>
<td>45</td>
<td>4-developed over time</td>
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<tr>
<td>46</td>
<td>1-a large influence</td>
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<tr>
<td>47</td>
<td>1-an official style</td>
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<td>48</td>
<td>1-yes</td>
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<tr>
<td>49</td>
<td>1-yes, very difficult</td>
<td>56.3</td>
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<tr>
<td>50</td>
<td>3-put important points in capitals</td>
<td>31.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>51</td>
<td>5-story must ring true, be believable</td>
<td>25.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>52</td>
<td>1-group discussion with all officers involved before making statements</td>
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**Value Label:**
- 3:4
- 3:5
- 3:6
- 3:7
- 3:8
- 3:9
- 4:0

**Group:**
2 Post-probationers

**Valid Cases:**
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**Missing Cases:**
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**Value** (valid cases) 31

**Count** (valid cases) 1,000

**Missing cases** 0

Mode: 1,000

The table shows the distribution of values with their corresponding frequency and percent for valid cases.
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**Frequency Table**

Group: 1 Probandons