

Making Sense of Policing Identities: the 'Deserving' and the 'Undeserving' in Policing  
Accounts of Victimization.

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Abstract

*New recruits within policing are involved in a process of negotiating and creating meaning within their newly shaped identities. Within this identity formation, members engage in both categorisation and comparison in an attempt to sustain the group and to enhance the self-image of the group member. The benefits of inclusion and enhanced group identity however must be analysed alongside the inevitable exclusion and 'othering' that also occur. Using the framework of social identity theories, this paper seeks to consider new police recruits in England and their perceptions of, and attitudes towards, victims and potential victims of crime. It does this through an analysis of qualitative data obtained through a piece of longitudinal, ethnographic research which focussed upon new police recruits to an English police force. The research followed the police recruits for four years and attempted to produce a holistic description of their developing cultures. What emerged from the findings was an enthusiasm for assisting victims of crime but within the context of culturally defined notions of what a 'victim' might constitute. By sharply delineating between 'deserving' and 'undeserving' victims of crime, police officers are contributing to the 'diminishing status' of certain potential victims through privileging certain identities over others. Police officers are one of the key definers of victim status and through this process of 'informed neglect' are contributing to the discrimination and alienation of certain parts of the community. This has the potential to add to the exclusion of those who are already socially, educationally and economically ostracised.*

Introduction

In the year ending March 2018, 8,130 police officers joined the police service in England and Wales (Home Office, 2018). The transformation from regular citizen to officer of the law will

potentially challenge and impact upon existing personal and social identities in a myriad of ways which may be difficult to envisage. Longstanding research on the reasons given by police officers as to their motivations for joining the service show a remarkable level of consistency across time and place. Being outdoors, job variety, excitement, teamwork, helping others, community service, being involved in meaningful work that had the potential to help society and job security were all reasons cited (Hopper, 1977; Van Maanen, 1973; Fielding, 1988; Ellis, 1991; Chan, 2003; Foley, Guarneri and Kelly, 2008; Charman, 2017).

This focus upon 'helping people' rather than 'fighting crime' reflects much of the wider debate about the direction of the criminal justice system in England and Wales over the past two decades. Historically, there has been a neglect of the voices and experiences of victims of crime coupled with a criminal justice system firmly oriented towards the offender. The calls from victims' movements for a more victim-oriented approach to the criminal justice system were warmly embraced during the 1990s and 2000s by a political class with whom a more punishment centred focus was key to its policies. The *Justice for All* White Paper released by the Labour Government in 2002 in preparation for its Criminal Justice Act 2003 claimed that victims would be at the 'heart' of the criminal justice system with a view to "rebalancing the criminal justice system" away from offenders and towards victims (Home Office, 2002: p.11). This preoccupation with rebalancing the system through the removal of rights for defendants which would then somehow increase the 'justice' for victims has been widely criticised (Jackson, 2003; Williams, 2005; Hall, 2009). This zero-sum rhetoric that improving justice for victims had to come through removing defendant rights had little evidence to support it. Additionally, the interests of offenders were presented politically as being the antithesis of the interests of the public (Garland, 2001). Victims and offenders were placed in "different citizenship categories" (Drake and Henley, 2014: p.150). However this binary, polarised approach towards victims ('good') and offenders ('bad') also reflects a much wider debate and discussion within policing and within criminology which this paper attempts to explore.

This paper seeks to consider the perceptions and attitudes of police officers in England towards victims and potential victims of crime. It does this through an analysis of

qualitative data obtained through a piece of longitudinal, ethnographic research which focussed upon new police recruits to an English police force. The research closely followed the police recruits for four years and in doing so, attempted to produce a holistic description of their developing identities and cultures. The paper will begin by considering what identity is and how identities develop, in order to not only explore identity formation in relation to the police themselves but also in their decision making about what they might consider to be the 'spoiled identities' or 'discrediting identities' of those with whom they come into contact with. It will then consider how those discrediting identities contribute towards the stigma associated with certain people and certain neighbourhoods and the potential impact upon these people's claims to 'victim credibility' within the theoretical framework of the 'ideal victim'. This discussion will set the scene for a focussed analysis of the qualitative data collected from the four year ethnographic study of recruits to a police force in England which amongst other areas, considered these recruits' perceptions towards the communities which they policed.

### Social Identity/Stigma

Social identity theories are concerned with the relationship between the individual, the self and the group. An individual's social identity is the "knowledge of his membership of a social group (or groups) together with the value and emotional significance attached to that membership" (Tajfel, 1978:63). The interests of social identity theories lie in all aspects of group life and in particular in the notion that collective action can better be explained through the social context of group activity and inter group relations than it can through individual action or interpersonal interaction.

There is enough general agreement from social psychologists to report upon some recognisable stages and consequences of identity formation. The two which will be considered here are firstly *categorisation* and secondly *comparison*. Identity is formed through a process of self- or social- categorisation. People are motivated towards self-categorisation with the group when they adhere to the values of the group, are given a voice within the group, support the group's leaders and identify with the role that has been

assigned to them (Bradford, Murphy and Jackson, 2014: 529). One of the consequences of self- or social- categorisation is that members will emphasise the behaviours, attitudes and beliefs of themselves which are *perceived* to be fundamental to the essence of the group and in tune with the other group members.

Whilst this notion of self- or social- categorisation tells us much about the human capacity to organise and categorise the environment in which we live, it tells us nothing about the impact of that categorisation or how those categorisations are used and understood by those at the centre of them. Therefore, the second stage of identity formation that will be considered here is *comparison*. No group survives in isolation and as has already been seen, much of group formation and self- or social- categorisation emerges as a result of selectively choosing categories or groups based upon the *perceived* similarities of themselves with the group and therefore logically, the *perceived* differences between other groups or categories. This idea of exclusion and of 'otherness' has a long history in both sociology and criminology. Within social identity theory too, 'comparison' appears to be its lifeblood. Humans evaluate their opinions, their successes, their abilities and more through a comparison with others (Festinger, 1954). This is done not only with those individuals and groups who are perceived to be similar but also who are perceived to be different. The purpose of this differentiation is not only to sustain the group itself but also, on a more individual level, to contribute and enhance the self-image of the group member. As Tajfel has stated, "we are what we are because *they* are not what we are" (1981: p. 323, original emphasis). This works to more clearly define the boundaries of the group and to emphasise their shared meanings. The outcome of this categorisation therefore is that the differences between ingroup members become minimised and the differences between outgroup members become more sharply exaggerated (Tajfel, 1982). Through constructing these boundaries, group members are setting the limits on what is 'in' and what is 'out' in a manner that Nietzsche referred to as the "constitution of horizons" (1874). This 'in' or 'out', this 'us' or 'them' system of classification may be considered to be buried in common sense assumptions (Cicourel, 1964) yet that is not to deny that it is also deeply political (Bowker and Star, 1999) as shall now be discussed.

This deliberation about the complexities surrounding identity formation and the necessity of cementing occupational boundaries in a bid to enhance the shared meanings and solidarity of the group has highlighted that a necessary counterpoint to those *within* the group boundaries are those on the *outside* of the group boundaries. Where there is an 'us', there must also *de facto* be a 'them'. This organisation and classification of individuals and groups into categories shares much in common with Goffman's work on 'stigma' (1963). Goffman argued that stigma originates within a social context with the recipients of the label being required to manage and conceal that identity. Although rarely discussed as part of Goffman's stigma concept, the classification importantly also has the potential to be used as a tool of social control (Tyler and Slater, 2018). There is a criticism of this tendency to ignore the wider political context in which the operation of stigma can operate. The danger in only considering stigma as part of a micro-level 'sociology from below' is that wider structural conditions of injustice and the use of stigma to control certain populations can be largely ignored (Pescosolido and Martin, 2015). It is argued that the state demonisation of certain sections of the population and the ensuing public attitudes towards them are not simply an *effect* of neo-liberal governments but an active ideology (Tyler, 2013). This is seen most notably in the form of 'poverty stigma' (Shildrick, 2018) which, as we will now see, has a close association with 'place'.

Goffman does not refer to 'place' as being one of the 'discrediting characteristics' which can lead to stigmatisation, instead focusing on individual traits such as the body and the character plus the wider characteristics of race, nation and religion (1963). This omission is greeted by modern scholars in this area with some surprise. Wacquant discusses a range of conditions associated with the rise of marginality, one of which is relevant to discussions here, that of "territorial fixation and stigmatisation" (2008: p.237). It is argued by Wacquant that such stigmatised locations are characterised by a negative perception and disparaging discourse of the area by both outsiders and insiders which lead to a "taint of place" being imposed upon the area (2008: p.238). Once apparent, these "penalized spaces" (Pétonnet, 1982; cited in Wacquant, 2008) can become subject to both a differential level of control and a differential level of support which has the potential to lead to further marginalisation.

The result of such marginalisation and stigmatisation is what Sibley has referred to as a lower ranking in the “hierarchy of being” (1995: p. 14).

In policing terms, the impact of this marginalisation is the ‘under-policing’ or ‘under-protection’ of certain, usually disadvantaged, communities. Most notably in the UK and other Western states this is in relation to Black, Asian and Minority Ethnic (BAME) communities (Kress, 1980; Phillips and Bowling, 2003). However, although sometimes neglected, this under-policing or under-protection can also be associated with what is known as the ‘urban poor’. This ecological approach to deviance reflects some of the principles of the work of the urban sociologists in the Chicago School which emerged in the 1920s and is revisited in Stark’s consideration of the centrality of *place* to our understanding of crime (1987).

Stark argues that the police frequently share in the more common perceptions of the inherent dangers of some areas and neighbourhoods and therefore reduce their levels of interaction, law enforcement and ultimately public protection within those areas (1987). This is not a new phenomenon. Research has consistently shown that the police respond to similar behaviour taking place in different neighbourhoods in different ways (Robison, 1936; Warner, 1997). This hypothesis of “benign neglect” (Liska and Chamlin, 1984: p.395) suggests that areas with high percentages of economically marginalised and/or minority ethnic communities receive *less* policing in the form of visible patrols, neighbourhood visits, recording of crime, investigating of crime and number of arrests. This is enabled by the discretionary nature of much police work. Police officers often rely on their own set of internalised rules or their working rule-book (O’Neill, 2016; Charman, 2017) to guide their actions. These rules are influenced by the norms of the social groups to which they identify. An area or neighbourhood characterised by high levels of crime which become ‘normalised’ and a perception of low levels of ‘deservedness’ (see later in this paper) will often result in police inaction rather than action (Warner, 1997). Using Durkheim’s (1938) notion of an equilibrium in deviance levels over time, Klinger (1997) argues that with a finite level of police resources, inevitably more types of deviance in some areas will be categorised as

normal and therefore not warranting police activity. Police behaviours, it is argued, are location specific and the ecological context of decision making within policework must be taken into account (Klinger, 1997).

### The 'Ideal' Victim and the 'Dangerous' Offender

The boundary setting or demarcation within groups has thus far been discussed in relation to both zero-sum public policy towards victims and offenders plus our tendencies to create in-groups and therefore out-groups or 'us' and 'them'. This has been particularly associated in these discussions with 'place'. There is however another factor of relevance here which relates to our tendency towards categorisation and comparison. It relates to the concept of the 'ideal victim', most notably associated with the work of Nils Christie (1986).

Christie (1986: p.18) defines an ideal victim as "a person or a category of individuals who – when hit by crime – most readily are given the complete and legitimate status of being a victim". Importantly for Christie therefore, no experience of victimisation automatically confers the status of victim. The power to define the status of victim instead lies outside of the control of both the victim and outside of the reality of the act itself. The power to label a person as a victim rests instead with what Christie has suggested are six attributes. The victim will be given the status of victim if they are weak, carrying out a "respectable project" (1986:19), blameless within the context of that offence plus capable enough and convincing enough to make the case known. This is coupled with an offender who is "big and bad" and importantly, unknown to the victim. Christie is most well-known for using the label 'ideal' but also defines these as "innocent" and "deserving" victims (1986) whilst others have used the terms "legitimate" victims (Fattah, 1979) and "credible" victims (Graham, 2006) within the same context.

As this paper has been discussing, the nature of boundary setting and the construction of group identity necessitates that where there is a particular status assigned to one group, there inevitably must be the binary opposite status accorded to another. Although the

literature concerning the 'ideal victim' is extensive, there is far less interest in the 'non-ideal victim' (Cohen, 2018; Fohring, 2018). Given that the requirements to fulfil the 'ideal victim' status appear so narrow and difficult to attain, our interest should turn much more towards those who fail in this endeavour. What are the characteristics of those who are undeserving of victim status and why are some deemed to be culpable in their victimisation?

In addition to the importance of 'place' in an appreciation of perceptions of 'deservedness', writers have also pointed to the influence of race, income, employment, mental health, gender and age (Avakame and Fyfe, 2001; van Oorschot, 2006; Koskela, Pettitt and Drennan, 2016; Newburn and Stanko, 1994). Additionally, drawing upon wider European data outside of the arena of crime and deviance, the five central criteria of 'deservingness' were deemed to be control over neediness, level of need, identity (close to 'us'), attitude (likeability) and reciprocity (those who may have 'earned' our support) (van Oorschot, 2000). There are echoes here with what has been referred to in the UK as the 'attitude test', employed informally by police officers to decide upon whether to take further action against offenders (Cashmore and McLaughlin, 1991). Passing such a test would normally require an acceptable level of respect and deference to be shown to the police during an encounter.

A delineation between the deserving and the undeserving is not a recent phenomenon. In the nineteenth century the deserving poor (worked hard, attended church, accepted middle class norms) were given the benefit of 'assistance' from the Poor Law Board whilst the undeserving poor were consigned to the poor house. Historically, the focus upon the deserving and undeserving, particularly in relation to poverty, has ebbed and flowed but will often resurface strongly at times of economic or political uncertainty (Golding and Middleton, 1982). Likewise this categorisation of deserving and undeserving has also been seen historically with victims of crime. The police in the 1970s, warned that the Yorkshire Ripper's next murder victim could be 'somebody's daughter', largely ignoring the fact that the seven already murdered women (the majority of whom worked as prostitutes) were 'somebody's daughter' (Kitzinger, 2009). The Attorney General declared that the most

unfortunate aspect of the case was that the “last six attacks were on totally respectable women” (Havers, 1981; cited in Kitzinger, 2009).

More specifically, in terms of attitudes towards victims of crime, it is important to consider the concept of ‘deservingness’ in this regard. Victims who are in regular contact with the police, victims whose injuries are not perceived to be serious and victims who are involved in substance abuse are treated differently and their offences more cursorily investigated than other victims (Russell and Light, 2006). What this has the potential to create is a ‘hierarchy of victimisation’ (McEvoy and McConnachie, 2012; Heap, 2018) with those at the margins of ‘respectability’ falling to the bottom of the scale. Informal rules play a significant role in guiding the behaviour and actions (or inactions) of police officers. The process of categorisation, classification and comparison which is part of the sense-making of occupational culture brings with it shared understandings of who are ‘deserving’ and ‘undeserving’ in the arena of victimisation. What shapes and frames that deservedness is firstly the belief that people contribute to their own victimisation. They are culpable in the behaviour against them because they possess social characteristics that enhance that victimisation (Fattah, 1993; Richardson and May, 1999). Secondly, deservedness is associated with a single label of victim. Where the labels of victim and offender are not fixed entities but transitory labels that can be regularly switched, then that deservedness is lost (Klinger, 1997). A single ‘non-ideal’ trait, such as those mentioned above, has the potential to eclipse the status of victim (Heap, 2018). The role of the police, it is suggested, is not to protect those on the margins of ‘respectability’ but instead to protect the “conventional citizenry” (Klinger, 1997: p.291). The danger, as discussed above, is that as crime increases and as certain behaviours become ‘normalised’ so more and more people will be categorised as ‘undeserving’, of both support and action.

The difficulty with the fixed labels of ‘victim’ and ‘offender’ is that they contravene all of the evidence on victimisation and offending behaviour as somehow being mutually exclusive phenomena. What we know is that those who offend are likely to suffer from higher rates of victimisation and that long-term victimisation is associated with an increase in offending

(Smith and Ecob, 2007). Corston's review of women in prison found that over half had been victims of domestic violence and a third had been the victim of sexual abuse (2007). Those who are economically marginalised are also especially prone to swift movement between these permeable categories (Green, 2007; McEvoy and McConnachie, 2012). There is not the space to document this debate in any depth but the 'victim-offender overlap' is one of the most empirically tested within criminology and has been found to exist across time and place (Lauritsen and Laub, 2007). It has not however permeated into public discourse with the politically motivated categories of victim ('good') and offender ('bad') still portrayed in binary opposition as discussed earlier in this paper.

The tendency to classify and categorise and then to compare is fundamentally associated with identity formation and is strongly linked to the occupational socialisation of the police. In seeking to form bonds with the established group, police officers will emphasise the behaviours, attitudes and beliefs of themselves which are *perceived* to be fundamental to the essence of the group and in tune with the other group members. They will additionally highlight and accentuate the differences between themselves and out-group members (Stets and Burke, 2000). This consideration of the literature has also revealed deeply engrained ideas about different categories of victims which, in a highly politically charged arena, has cast a binary opposition between the rights of offenders and justice for victims. It has also built boundaries between what are considered to be 'ideal' and 'non-ideal' victims of crime. Regular contact with the police, substance misuse and neighbourhood all appear to be closely linked with the concept of deservedness and with it the potential for "territorial stigmatisation" (Wacquant, 2008: p.237). It is important to consider now how far these classifying tendencies operate amongst new recruits to the police service, particularly at a stage when they are forming their new occupational identities and socialising into the occupational cultures of the policing organisation.

### The Research

The study of occupational socialisation, identity formation and organisational culture is focussed upon an appreciation and understanding of the beliefs, values and attitudes of

participants. With any qualitative research of this kind, it is of vital importance to allow a voice to those at the centre of the focus of study. The people and the culture of interest need to be centre stage in the research. Weber argues that sociological inquiry should focus on the meanings that actors place on their social actions (1949). The aim of this research was essentially concerned with the presenting and changing attitudes, values and beliefs of the new recruits to the police service in the early stages of their police career. The focus of the interest lay therefore in the subjective meanings that these police officers placed on their and others' actions. For Weber, the difficult task of assigning motivation to actions was crucial to any sociological analysis (1949). This therefore had to involve in-depth communication with the people at the heart of the research. As Fielding has noted, ethnographic interviews are capable of this:

“What distinguishes [ethnographic interviews] *procedurally* from other in-depth interviews is the centrality of rapport based on relatively long-term contact, the investment of time in each round of interviewing and the kind of openness on the researcher's part that stimulates an evenhanded relationship” (Fielding, 2005: p.99-100).

While traditional ethnographic research tends to focus on long term physical immersion in the field coupled with the use of extensive field-notes, the discipline has expanded to include shorter periods of ethnographic methods in both public and private settings and through the use of e-mail interviews, focus groups and analysis of weblogs for example (O'Reilly, 2012). Ethnography is no longer restricted or constrained by particular methods and is more able to explore new and innovative forms of ethnographic data gathering.

A further tool of ethnographic research that has perhaps more potential than others for fulfilling these aims outlined by Fielding is longitudinal research. Longitudinal research seeks to do rather more than take a snapshot of a particular group of people or a particular moment in time and instead offers a fuller and deeper explanation of change. The subtleties and nuances of a changed identity and changed attitudes, values and beliefs can be assessed over time through an appreciation of the words, stories and emotions which are expressed by the participants. This is particularly important when attempting to appreciate not only the formation but the development of what Bourdieu (1984) describes as the 'habitus' (culture) and its relationship with the 'field' (setting) over a period of time.

The development of the habitus is being constructed within an ever-changing field and longitudinal research has at least the potential to capture that. When the longitudinal research can stretch beyond the more routine one or two year limits, as in the case of the four year research discussed here, that case is even stronger.

Two cohorts of new police recruits (n=24) who joined an English police force in the autumn and spring of consecutive years were chosen as the sample to study. The actual population size of the two cohorts was 28 but three declined to take part and one was unavailable for the first interview. As the population to be researched was a 'total population', there could be no attempt to produce a stratified sample which might be able to focus upon areas such as gender and race. The ethnic diversity of the sample was not sufficient enough to warrant any further analysis. 29% of the sample were female, which fell broadly in line with the national picture at the time of women joining the police service (Home Office, 2014). In terms of educational attainment, 25% of the sample held an undergraduate degree. The recruits were aged between 24 and 44 on joining the police service, but the vast majority of the sample were in their 20s.

The officers were interviewed after the first five weeks in the job, after six months, after one year and after four years. After five weeks, slightly uncomfortable looking, often nervous, police constables came one by one to be interviewed within the confines of a cold and uninviting former asylum building which now constituted a police training school. Comments from some respondents were short and many were keen to answer questions with the answers they had performed at interview and recruitment panels. The research interview is not always considered to be the most natural setting for a conversation. At the first interview at least, it was composed of two strangers in a room. These recruits were very new to the job at this stage, and there would be a naivety in assuming that at no stage did some of these respondents provide what they felt to be socially desirable answers. However, where that was apparent, it was to change.

After six months in the job, the second round of interviews took place within the stations they had been assigned to. The majority were buoyant at 'doing' policing although some were tired and still apprehensive about their role. There were signs from some of

discomfort, of finding the pressure of the job a strain and of the challenge of being part of the team. The respondents seemed in the main, to be pleased to be interviewed again, thankful of a break from the routine, and content to talk at length on this occasion about their new reality. By the one year stage, officers were back in training school and their views on their identities as police officers, their sense of what it meant to be a police officer and how the role differed from their expectations was beginning to take shape. The fourth set of interviews took place during their fourth year as a police officer. I was greeted warmly by the respondents as a familiar face who had been a small part of their changing identity from new recruit to established police officer. Most respondents appreciated the opportunity to be able to provide their views (by now borne from experience) of the difficulties facing the policing organisation and the changing nature of the role. At the four year stage, all of the sample remained at the rank of Constable although some had passed, or were in the process of taking, their Sergeants' exams. The interviews with officers were facilitated by the individual police force.

Over the course of four years, the tone, demeanour and manner of the respondents changed. It would not be easy for these officers to maintain the stance of providing the same socially desirable account of their role, their outlook and their identity. The trust and rapport which was built upon at each interview stage, helped by a growing understanding that there was no detrimental impact to them of being a part of the research, also played its part. A further advantage was that throughout the entire four-year research process, the author was the sole interviewer. Inevitably therefore, interviewer and interviewees became far more familiar to each other. The stories, the humour and the shared anecdotes (in addition to the occasional tears) revealed in the main a seemingly honest account of their views and attitudes to all aspects of the job. This often occurred when the recording device was switched off, when chatting with other respondents in both public and private areas of the police station, when standing in the car park at the end of the interview and when riding in police cars back to stations but it would be difficult to assume that a façade of socially desirable answers was maintained throughout the four-year research process. Many of the respondents shared too much and too deeply for their accounts to be considered ingenuine. The interview questions were very flexible, they evolved as the research progressed and

there was an honest attempt, as Fielding has suggested, to “listen well and respectfully” (2005: p.101).

Over the course of four years, the recruits were asked for their views on the role of the police, how they learned to become a police officer, the influences of others in that learning process, the expectations and realities of being a police officer, what makes a ‘good’ police officer and the challenges facing the police service. The major findings from this research have been published elsewhere (Charman, 2017) and focus on attempts to tell a different story about both the new and enduring cultural characteristics of the police. The research portrays new officers who are keen to learn, not necessarily through more formal learning channels but more notably from their peers and their tutors. It portrays officers who are motivated to make a difference but frustrated by their inability to do so. It portrays officers who have close bonds with one another but who, unlike their predecessors, tend to equate policing with a ‘job for now’ rather than a ‘job for life’. It also portrays officers who place ‘public protection’ and ‘safeguarding’ at the forefront of their role and with that, seek to utilise the tools of communication and empathy rather than physical strength and authority.

A further, more unexpected part of all of the conversations with recruits over the course of four years, focussed upon their views of the population that they were policing. This was related to conversations about what they considered to be the role of the police. Within these discussions, there was a regularity with which the expression ‘genuine victims’ was used. It was used with such consistency and such little cognisance that it was clear that this was part of the lexicon of policing vocabulary that was widely understood and acknowledged within their occupational group. As can happen with systems of classification, they become embedded within the working infrastructure of an organisation, and are therefore almost invisible to its members, whilst still retaining all of their power (Bowker and Star, 1999). The power in this respect was to offer a potent delineation between ‘genuine victims’ and their obvious counterpoint, (although never referred to in this way) ‘ingenuine victims’.

The views of the police officers about this aspect of their role can be divided into three sections: job satisfaction and the deserving victim, blurred boundaries and the undeserving

victim and finally the differential treatment that each group receives based upon their classification into 'genuine' or 'ingenuine'. Aspects of the quotes have been highlighted in italics for emphasis. In the quotes from respondents, an identifier of A, B, C or D after the quote represents the four interviews with the first cohort and W, X, Y and Z represents the four interviews with recruits from the second cohort. Therefore, as an example: A7, B7, C7 and D7 are the same police officer.

### Job Satisfaction and the Deserving Victim

As discussed earlier in this paper, one of the primary reasons for wanting to join the police service was the community service principles associated with police work. "Making a difference" (A11 and W8) and to "help people" (W3 and W7) were all aspects of the work that they were most looking forward to. This related to the very high expectations held by a number of recruits about the potential impact of their work in terms of reducing vulnerability, public protection and improved living environments. Working with, and protecting, victims of crime was part of the symbolism and narrative of policing work that these recruits adhered to. The symbolic power of the police comes from its 'defender of the peace' dominant culture, irrespective of whether this is borne out by the day-to-day activities of its members. This adherence to the symbolism of public protection was evident in the recruit's attitudes towards who they considered as the primary target of their defence - the 'ideal' victim:

"If you've got *an elderly lady whose husband's died* and has just been the victim of a burglary and had all her husband's possessions stolen. You know, you just think the amount you can do for that person to help them, to safeguard them, to solve their crime, put somebody behind bars for committing that offence" (A3)

"I see a *90 year old lady*, if someone's broken into her home, as a real, vulnerable victim" (Z7)

"your genuine victims of crime are burglary victims and...this is going to sound a bit awful, but *they've worked all their lives*, they've worked really hard for everything they have and somebody's come in and taken it all from them. And that, dealing with them, really nice people who really just want to have their stuff back" (B3)

Not only did the police officers view this work with 'genuine' victims as one of their primary functions (regardless of the infrequency of the occurrence), they also viewed it very favourably in terms of high levels of job satisfaction:

*"I like the nice jobs that you go to where you've got a genuine victim. For example, I had a really nasty domestic the other day where the female had been ... choked and strangled ... But we had a real impact on her ... and it was quite a nice job like that because I did genuinely think, quite satisfied that I had done the best that I could and her partner was arrested and she was safeguarded"* (B3)

*"The good work is the people that are genuine, the genuine victims, I would class them as. They're the good jobs, whereas 90 per cent of our work are people who can't live a normal life because they can't cope, they can't cope with normality"* (D6)

*"you crave a job where there's a genuine victim and you're doing proper policing. I love the day when I go to something like burglary in progress because that, to me, is policing and I don't do a lot of that"* (D8)

*"I like going to burglaries and dealing with genuine victims of crime"* (Z9)

*"genuine victims, we always say that it's really nice when you come across a genuine one, which is a bit bad to say really, isn't it? They phone the police because it's their right, but sometimes you can't help but go and think, I'm here again"* (Y1)

Fieldnotes from a number of these respondent interviews commented upon the palpable pleasure that these recruits to the police service displayed in their comments about dealing with members of the public in this way. However they also displayed a frustration that this work was rare and that much more frequently, they found themselves in encounters with people whom they classified as being in a different category than these aforementioned 'genuine' victims. These were people that the police officers viewed in diametrical opposition to 'genuine' victims – the 'undeserving' or the 'ingenuine'.

### Blurred Boundaries and the 'Undeserving' Victim

The requirements to fulfil the criteria of 'ideal' victim according to these police recruits appeared, as we have just seen illustrated by the above quotations, to centre around age, gender, the particular crime suffered and the apparent level of vulnerability. This was in addition to economic factors such as legitimate employment or retirement. With those

members of the public whose claim to the status of victim was rejected, it was done so on a number of different grounds. Sometimes, officers made this decision based upon the lifestyles of members of the public that did not fit with the standardised societal norms of 'respectability'. This would include teenage parenthood, chaotic lifestyles and drug taking as is illustrated by the quotes below.

"you can tell a genuine victim from one that's not. *The 17 year old lad that's already got two kids*, and you're thinking, are they really a subject of CSE [child sexual exploitation]?" (D5)

"there's quite a view on crimes where *both parties are, like, bad people*, so a lot of drug related and stuff like that" (X9)

"Obviously there are real victims, but there's some that do just use the police service because *they can't look after their own lives*" (Z7)

However, it was also the case that police officers held views about certain locations and neighbourhoods that would fit very closely with Wacquant's concept of "territorial stigmatisation" (2008: p.237). Views are held that certain areas and certain places are more likely to produce certain kinds of people and behaviours and are therefore less deserving of legitimate public protection and attention.

"Generally *the clientele of X is quite bad anyway, it's normally never an angel involved in an incident, there's two bad people* and two stories are always different" (Z9)

"with experience when you're getting sent to a job and they're selling it to you on the radio and you're thinking, no, this is just a load of rubbish, and you know and you get there and you go, uhh, yeah, you just know full well when you walk through the door and the fact that *you've been there 100 times before. Because there's certain addresses* – and probably everybody would say the same – you've been there so many times for one thing or another" (D5).

This aspect of policework appeared to challenge some of the misconceptions that the police officers had about victims and offenders of crime that they held before joining the service. Despite strong evidence to the contrary about 'victim' and 'offender' classifications being mutually exclusive as has been discussed previously in this article, police officers expressed

confusion that the boundaries between these two supposedly distinct categories of people were so blurred:

“And that’s what you don’t expect. I don’t think a lot of people that know nothing about the police would expect that ... I don’t think anyone would think ... that *you’re dealing with victims that will be your suspects next week* or ... and it’s the same people or the same families calling again and again and again. And I don’t think you think anything like that will happen when you join the police. I think you think of just victims of crime and criminals” (D12)

These misconceptions about the distinction between victims and offenders appeared to remain unchallenged in initial police training. All of these new recruits took part in the same training regime and a number of them mentioned the scenarios and role plays that they were asked to contribute to. Rather than highlight the messiness and unpredictability that is so often associated with routine policework, these scenarios instead played out fictional events with clearly defined roles assigned to ‘victim’ and ‘offender’.

“in my mind from [name of training school] it was like, right, one person’s been assaulted, the other person’s entirely not to blame and they’re a victim, they’re clearly the offender, they’re getting arrested in a textbook way, whereas *the reality is they’ve both been as bad as each other*, they both want to make a complaint against each other, it’s almost like, well, therefore we take no complaint and we deal with it out of the police and you deal with it in your own way, as opposed to us getting involved” (Z9)

It is only after serving for four years as a police officer as the two quotes below illustrate, that the blurred boundaries between victims and offenders become more apparent to them.

“I get a bit disillusioned sometimes because *a lot of the victims we deal with, one minute they’re the suspect as well*, so I don’t always see them as real victims” (Z7)

“So *it’s a lot less of your nice victim of crime ... there’s a lot more of your victim of crime that phones the police every week but is also the suspect of crime every week as well*” (D12)

However, by this stage in their careers, the frustration that their motivations for joining and their ability to 'make a difference' was in all likelihood thwarted, resulted in high levels of disappointment. Although there are many characteristics associated with the early socialisation of the new police recruit, what is most often described is "reality shock" (Hughes, 1958; cited in Van Maanen, 1976). This shock stems from the disconnect between the expectations of the jobs and the reality of the job. It manifests itself in a variety of ways, such as cynicism, lack of empathy, disappointment, suspicion and alienation and relates in part, to the misguided or misinformed impression of the role of policing (Charman, 2017).

The research which this paper has been based upon has focussed upon the expressed attitudes, values and beliefs of a group of new recruits to the police service through ethnographic interviewing over the first four years of their police careers. The intention of this sociological inquiry was to assess, as suggested by Weber (1949), the meanings that are attached to actions through in-depth inquiry with the actors themselves. This therefore relies upon self-reported actions rather than observable behaviour. Observations that did take place were all contained within the organisational setting of the police station or training school. Waddington (1999) was firmly of the view that there was a clear distinction between what officers said in the confines of their police stations and what they did in terms of their activities on the streets. Police 'talk' was expressive and not an illustration of future 'action'. However, this stance has been challenged by Shiner (2010) where he argues that our sense of self and identity is shaped by our social interactions with others and that these narratives therefore will inevitably have an impact upon future actions.

In their discussions about the blurred boundaries between victims and offenders, the police recruits also shared stories of how they responded to the challenges associated with the victim-offender overlap and their perceptions of the 'genuine' and by definition the 'ingenuine' victim of crime. This offers us the opportunity to assess from these self-reported behaviours, the relationship between 'talk' and 'action'. These conversations

related to the differential treatment that they appeared to suggest they offered to different members of the public.

### Differential Treatment

The comments from the police officers about the treatment that they offered to victims and potential victims of crime centred around the currency of time. As response officers, their role would not be to investigate the alleged offence but instead to be the gatekeepers to further investigation and from then, potentially charging and prosecution. Their decisions about how much time to invest in any case was therefore paramount. There was a clear distinction made between those cases that were deemed worthy of time and those that were not. Those people where time was not to be awarded, were marked out by their being part of the victim-offender overlap discussed earlier in this paper:

“if you get one where it’s a genuine victim, that’s a phrase that we hear a lot, a genuine victim, because although they’re all victims, the victim might be a drug user or a common thief, and you think, well, *I don’t really want to give all my time to somebody that I know tomorrow will be committing these offences*. Whereas a burglary ... it’s nice to spend half a day there and a bit more time going through the report and actually giving a bit of time back to people who need it” (Z9)

“some of the jobs that we go to ... you know, play it down a little bit and not spend as long there as we possibly could or should ... people are quite cynical ... I think *they’re more inclined to give more attention to people who are genuinely victims of crime*, where there’s a bad offender, whereas, when it’s, like, bad person on bad person, I think people get quite annoyed with that” (X9)

“I’m more inclined to get involved outside of work if I see someone who’s a genuine victim, like if I saw an old lady getting mugged or something then I would definitely go and help. But *a bunch of guys fighting in a bar or fighting out in the street I’d just leave them to get on with it, I think*” (Y7)

Where a potential victim has passed the ‘genuine’ victim test, then officers, as in this case, would not only spend a sufficient amount of time with the member of the public but would spend more time than was necessary. This appeared to be due to both an empathy with the victim and a sense of job satisfaction:

“The genuine victims of crime, I like dealing with those jobs ... I stayed on for an extra two and a half hours that day, and I was absolutely shattered ... I could’ve left some of that for the next day or *I could’ve done a real botched job on it ... But I didn’t. I stayed and we did it properly. So those are the good moments*” (B3)

Conversely, where it appeared to officers that the victim may not fit their criteria of ‘genuine’ victim (despite what could be construed below as a threat to life), the officers display a sense of urgency in dismissing the complaints and not considering further action:

“you turn up to a job and you...people go, **‘oh he’s coming, he said he’s going to come and kill me’**. **‘Right, what did he actually say?’** So, you’re already thinking this is rubbish; I need to get rid of this job ... Every job you go to you’re thinking, right, where’s my way out of this offence and out of this job. And so you lead them down to the garden path as if you’re selling them a product. **‘So, are you really that bothered? Has he ever hurt anybody before?’** **‘Well, no but he could’**. **‘So could I right now but it doesn’t mean I’m going to’**. **‘Oh yeah, I see what you’re saying’**. **‘So, you know, do you really think he’s going to kill you?’** **‘Well, when you word it like that probably, no’**. **‘So how about you just ignore him for a week and if you do get any more you give us a call’** and then you leave ... Whereas if you turn up and you go, **‘oh my god, really. Oh my god he’s going to kill you’**, you’re going to back do threat to life reports, you’re going to take statements and it will go because after a week they’re going to go, **‘oh yeah, I went for tea with him yesterday. Oh yeah, they come round for dinner, they bought my baby a new t-shirt. Oh yeah, it’s fine. No, no, can I retract my statement’**. And you’re like [sighs]. So you sell them out of a job when you turn up. *And you do that 90 per cent of the jobs you go to because you get an instinct for what is a real job and what isn’t ...* If you haven’t figured the way out the other person has and between you, you’ve wormed your way out of it and go. That’s just, sometimes you know you’re not going to be able to and you just resign yourself to it and get rid of it a week later when they call you up saying they’re not bothered anymore. The better salesman you are the better you are of getting rid of it” (D10)

“you’ve got to know how to play the game a little bit as well and understand where jobs are going and who is going to be looking at things, and stuff like that, not so much as to give the quality of what you do with the time, but just to know, sort of, have a bit of a long term awareness and to think, you know, *this job is not going go anywhere, so you deal with that accordingly*” (Y2)

“My attitude towards the police has definitely changed. I can understand more why the public are more frustrated with us, because we do a rubbish job, especially in CID. *Get rid of it, is what you're told, get rid of the job, get rid of it, sort it out so it's no longer there. Rather than investigating*” (Z1)

## Discussion

One interesting framework which has been invoked to better understand the occupational ideologies of police officers is that of 'dirty work'. Dirty work was a phrase first used by Everett Hughes in 1951 and referred to occupations which might be perceived by others to be degrading, disgusting or requiring regular contact with 'undesirable' people. He later defined this more clearly as occupations (or indeed tasks) which involve either a moral, social or physical taint (1958). Subsequent work has focused upon policing as being a part of the 'dirty work' arena due to the 'social taint' of coming into regular contact with events and people who are viewed to be 'undesirable' and who themselves are stigmatised (Dick, 2005). It is not dissimilar to Waddington's description of officers viewing much of their work as "rubbish" (1999: p. 289). The interest from a social identity perspective is upon how police officers, given this stigma, manage to portray their identities in a positive light given that occupational identities form a major part of the overall sum of identity making material.

Ashforth and Kreiner (1999) argue that in order to convey a positive social identity and to therefore enhance self-esteem, 'dirty workers' will use a variety of techniques to neutralise the more negative aspects of the job and to promote the more positive ones. The three techniques which Ashforth and Kreiner (1999) outline are reframing, recalibrating and refocusing. Reframing seeks to provide an alternative meaning to the stigmatised work. Rather than investing limited time and resources in dealing with all potential victims of crime, police officers are categorising and labelling individuals and neighbourhoods as 'undeserving' with the result being that no further action is necessary. As police budgets continue to be stretched, so only the more 'ideal' victims can be catered for. Incidents are 'dealt with' ("got rid of", D10, Z1) and 'handled' but nowhere in these cases, is it assessed *how* they are dealt with or how *well* they are dealt with. Recalibrating involves accentuating those elements of the job which are conducive with the self-identified image of the work. In policing terms, this might involve additional time spent on the protection of the vulnerable

and dealing with 'genuine' victims of crime. This recalibration of the everyday policing activities which they are involved with help to secure a positive image of their activities whilst at the same time chiming with the initial motivations for joining the service. Finally, refocusing involves an entire movement of focus away from the more stigmatised elements of the job and onto the positive features. Although not a focus from this paper, a large majority of the recruits strongly argued that safeguarding the vulnerable was the focus of their work. This involved officers invoking the narratives of the 'thin blue line' and 'protection of victims' for example rather than alternative versions of coercive control. All of these techniques are important to the new recruit. A newcomer to an organisation is engaged in the challenging role of sense making and identity formation. An important element of our sense of self relates to how we believe other people perceive us. These techniques therefore not only contribute to the social identity of the individual within the group but also work to enhance the occupational identity of the group.

The results from this 'dirty work' research are very interesting from a social identity perspective. Rather than the stigma of dirty work *threatening* the identity of occupational groups, research in this area has indicated that the nature of the work actually serves to *enhance* the occupational identity of 'dirty workers' (Ashforth and Kreiner, 1999; Dick, 2005). The predicted threat to the occupational identity is manipulated and reversed so that rather than the threat be internalised, it is instead turned outwards and the threat attributed to others, in this case to the 'undeserving' or 'ingenuine' victims of crime or those on the margins of 'respectability'. The strategies to counter what are then considered to be potential threats from the outside are not only to differentiate your occupational group from those outsiders but also to enact "downward social comparisons" (Gibbons and Gerrard, 1991). The outcome of that threat is an enhanced interpretation of 'us' versus 'them' and the construction of sharp psychological boundaries around themselves as a group (Ashforth and Kreiner, 1999). The threat in this regard can be related to 'place'.

As the research data in this paper has evidenced, officers linked certain neighbourhoods and certain people with these categories of 'undeserving' and 'ingenuine'. Although not mentioned by Goffman (1963: p.12) as one of the "discrediting characteristics" associated

with stigma, it is apparent that 'place' is a significant factor in this regard. If we take an ecological approach to this discussion, we could argue that those at the economic margins, what might be considered to be the 'urban poor', are treated as communities of the 'undeserving' and therefore 'ingenuine' victims. Their credibility as 'victims' is called into question. Whole communities can come to be characterised as the 'types of people' who are a legitimate target for crime and therefore suffer the "benign neglect" (Liska and Chamlin, 1984: p.395) or even the deliberate neglect of policing institutions. This neglect extends further than this. Green appears to have correctly identified that "very few people are interested in talking about economic status and vulnerability" (2007: p.103) despite strong statistical evidence linking the two.

This wider political neglect however may be more than benign. The political drive towards a rebalancing of the criminal justice system, away from offenders and towards victims and then by further categorising between deserving and undeserving victims, can conveniently create a scapegoat for any political shortcomings in addressing social discrimination and inequality. According to Gans (1994), this is one of only a number of positive functions that the 'undeserving' perform to the benefit of the 'better-off'. Simon (2006) has discussed the political tool of 'governing through crime' which describes the increasingly punitive rhetoric around crime and punishment seen in both the UK and the USA in the 1980s and 1990s, in part designed to justify increasingly punitive criminal justice policy. What we can witness in this regard with attitudes towards 'deserving' and 'undeserving' victims is 'governing through stigma'.

The data from this ethnographic, longitudinal research also revealed that in addition to the labelling of certain neighbourhoods, there was also the potential for police officers to link certain *people* with these categories of 'undeserving' and 'ingenuine'. Lifestyle choices, substance misuse, a perception of not being vulnerable, employment status and the blurred boundaries of the victim-offender overlap all contributed towards the *diminishing status of victim* accorded by the police. The result of such marginalisation and stigmatisation is what Sibley has referred to as a lower ranking in the "hierarchy of being" or being part of a "landscape of exclusion" (1995: p. 14; p.xi).

This discussion of social identity has however yet to acknowledge that people have multiple and not single identities. We have already established that occupying the status of victim or offender is a fluid activity and there is much movement between categories. In reality then it is hard to imagine that many people would ever permanently fulfil the criteria associated with 'ideal victim' or even 'ideal offender'. Matza's classic description of offenders engaging intermittently in crime, or 'drift', exemplifies this point of multiple identities (1990).

However, people's marginalised status appears to take precedence and prominence over their other identities. A single 'non-ideal' trait has the potential to eclipse the status of victim (Heap, 2018). The police recruits whose words were reproduced earlier in this paper, were unable to countenance that people with the lifestyles that have been described could even *potentially* be ascribed the status of victim of crime. The 17 year old boy with two children referred to in the example earlier was not permitted to be even considered as a potential victim of exploitation. The police seem to be privileging certain identities over other identities.

A further related concern however is that not only are the police in the position of being the gatekeepers of the criminal justice system and the negotiators of order, they also hold the power to be one of the key definers of *victim status*. The 'ideal victim', according to Christie, must be powerful enough to make their case known and of being able to be convincing of their status as a victim (1986). However, Christie is ambiguous about who is in a position to grant this status (van Wijk, 2013). The difficulty in this regard is that the 'undeserving' victim has no power over this labelling process and victim status is not always intrinsic to the act. An identity as a victim is prescribed and controlled by, amongst others, the police. Previous research has begun from the position of considering 'deserving' and 'undeserving' victims of crime in relation to the *treatment* by the police towards these victims. However, what has been analysed in this paper is whether the police will even assign the status of victim to those in certain neighbourhoods and leading certain lifestyles. Loftus has argued that a "contempt towards the poor" is "an integral feature of the culture" of the police (2009, p. 197). There appears to be a reduced recognition and worth accorded to certain sections of the population and the degree to which they are considered to have as Proctor has said "lives worth living" (1995: p. 170). The inability to be granted the label of victim will invoke no recognition of victimisation and no police action. Importantly, this

analysis is not just focussed upon police 'talk', as Waddington (1999) might suggest, but also on police 'action' or in this case, police 'inaction'.

This inaction is potentially devastating for those who are unable to be assigned the status of victim. 'Genuine' victims of crime will not be acknowledged as such and will not have their voices heard. They suffer the 'informed neglect' of policing services through their 'diminishing status of victim' and the impact of police officers privileging certain 'non-ideal' identities over other identities. This is not only an ideological decision but, with significant budgetary pressures on the organisation, also a pragmatic one. This is not simply an issue for the police but for all public facing services with a responsibility for vulnerable individuals. One only has to consider the institutional neglect of the victims of child grooming gangs in the UK in Oxford, Telford, Rotherham and more to see what the potential impact of such neglect can be.

One of the main reasons for joining the police service as cited by the new recruits was to 'make a difference' (Charman, 2017). However, the changing nature of the job itself, the changing perceptions from officers as to the role of the police (Charman, 2018) and the sense of frustration at not being able to achieve those objectives left some officers feeling a strong sense of disappointment. Their views of 'genuine' and 'ingenuine' victims, the shared nature of the associated language and the "learning from watching" nature of police learning (Charman, 2017: p.227) appears to indicate that policing cultures can potentially play an influential role in the development of these attitudes.

Classifications are by their nature influenced by political, moral and social judgements. They are also deeply ambiguous. As discussed earlier in this paper, systems of classification become embedded within the working infrastructure of an organisation, and are therefore almost invisible to its members, whilst still retaining all of their power. And it is this power which must be more readily acknowledged in what is often assumed to be a neutral system of classification and categorisation within identity formation. Discussions and debates about identity formation must therefore take into account those who have the power to define that identity.

In times of limited police resources, certain communities will remain even further under-protected, with decisions about their protection largely being taken by junior response and patrol officers who, with high levels of police discretion, become the primary negotiators of police work. This 'territorial stereotyping' places many individuals at risk. The potential impact of this in the future is that as more and more prioritisation is required due to shrinking budgets, so more and more 'victims' may potentially be categorised as 'undeserving'. If jobs are "got rid of" (D10, Z1), as discussed earlier, none of this will be evident from crime or policing statistics, and will remain largely unnoticeable from the public gaze.

What we have witnessed is a bifurcation of attitudes towards, and treatment of, victims and potential victims of crime. Where the voices of the victims fit the established and seemingly well understood criteria of what is deserving, worthwhile and genuine, then those voices are heard loud and clear by a police service which exhibits compassion and empathy in their support for *this* public (Charman, 2017). Conversely, where the voices of the victim are deemed to be undeserving or ingenuine, then those voices are lost. Their status as victims is withheld. This exacerbates what has been described as the 'hierarchy of victimisation' (McEvoy and McConnachie, 2012). The legitimacy of the police is not only influenced by the *outcomes* of police actions but crucially in the *processes* that lead to those outcomes. That is a key feature of procedural justice. However we should also consider that the legitimacy of the police is also fundamentally influenced by the *absence* of such processes which could potentially lead to action and then to justice. This artificial delineation between 'deserving' and 'undeserving' victims points to such a lack of justice for what could potentially become a forgotten part of the population.

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