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**Title:**

The 'Scottish' Approach? The discursive construction of a national police force.

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**Abstract:**

*In 2005, the location of the G8 summit meeting in Gleneagles, Scotland, brought the contested boundaries of the state and the nation to the fore. Confronted by the prospect of significant public disorder police forces in Scotland routinely flagged up a 'Scottish approach to policing'. Drawing on research with key police officers and others we explore the processes through which national identities come to be articulated, contested and acted out in the context of one particular institution: the police. We consider the claim that policing of the summit was 'Scottish' and assess the implications of this assertion. Whilst the police have been argued to be integral to the constitution and expression of nation-statehood we highlight the dangers in an uncritical acceptance of police philosophies and also point to the banal ways in which national identity is naturalised.*

**Key Words: Protest Policing, National Identity, Scottishness, Banal nationalism**

**Introduction**

In 2005, the UK hosted the Group of Eight Industrial Countries (G8) summit. The choice of venue - the Gleneagles Hotel near Auchterarder - placed Scotland on the world-stage. Scottish politicians and businesses lost no time in selling 'Scotland plc' to a wider

audience. A special tartan was created<sup>1</sup>, a promotional ‘Scottish village’ for business, enterprise and government was sited next to the Gleneagles media centre (showcasing ‘the best Scotland has to offer’<sup>2</sup>) and there was recurrent reference to Scotland’s global reputation and profile. The Scottish aspects of the Summit were less apparent in the United Kingdom government’s approach. In his welcome note on the G8 website, for instance, Tony Blair claimed that ‘the Summit is a great opportunity to showcase Britain, and Scotland in particular, and demonstrate the UK’s leadership in tackling the world’s most pressing problems’.<sup>3</sup> The easy slippage between UK, Britain and Scotland (and the conflation of two of these terms) encapsulates the ambiguity characterising the question of nationality in a multi-national state. Scotland is a particularly interesting case in this regard, given it is (since 1999) a semi-autonomous part of the UK and given that, within the everyday understanding of people in Scotland, ‘the nation’ may be understood as Scotland, the United Kingdom, or both.

The Gleneagles Summit opened up numerous spaces for the discursive construction of Scottishness in a global context. Here we focus on one institution at the centre of events - the police - to unpack the dynamic processes through which national imaginaries are constructed. The context for our deliberations is the particular political context of the G8 summit and the attendant possibility of public disorder. Clashes between police and protesters at successive summits since Seattle in 1999 had created an insuperable (though often more imagined rather than material) link between such inter-governmental meetings and violence. Our interviewees were acutely aware of the international spotlight and felt that the police operation would, in large part, determine the success or failure of the summit.

The significance of the police operation relates to Loader's (1997: 3) contention that the police are central 'to the production and reproduction of order and security' within national 'structures of feeling'. Ellison & Martin (2000: 681) similarly emphasise the importance 'of policing issues to the dynamics of socio-political conflict in Northern Ireland'. In these studies the police are viewed as 'a convenient "text" by which to elucidate a matrix of social and institutional relations' (Ellison & Martin 2000: 692) and 'as one of the principal ways in which the ... nation and its qualities are represented' (Loader 1997: 15). Ellison & Martin note how policing differs depending on whether state legitimacy is contested or not, but even though their focus is on Northern Ireland there is no discussion of policing in contexts where the boundaries of the state are themselves ambiguous. National perceptions and characterizations are most likely to be shaped where competing conceptualisations collide. Consequently, the Gleneagles Summit offers an example *par excellence* of the conceptual ambiguities surrounding questions of nationality in Scotland. In this context, interviews around the G8 summit afforded an almost unparalleled insight into articulations of Scottishness through the self-definitions of the Scottish police. Indeed, a primary police response to media speculation about protest-related violence was the careful 'packaging' of planned protest policing styles. In this discursive construct media, protesters and public were reassured that the prospects for public disorder would be considerably reduced because of the distinctive 'Scottish approach to policing'.

All too often, as Donnelly & Scott (2005b: 3) note, analysts write about 'British policing' as a unitary entity, neglecting the fact that policing in Scotland (and, indeed, Northern Ireland) is located within its own particular legal and political context. Donnelly & Scott sought to remedy this oversight in part by aiming 'to determine how far Scottish policing is maintaining its own traditions and characteristics or is becoming a localised example of

global trends' (2005b: 2). Their edited volume provides an excellent introduction which highlights the specificities (political, historical, legal and organisational) of Scottish policing. Their focus is on structural aspects of policing and the forms of its organisation. Such aspects are clearly crucial in this context since fears for the safety of summit delegates prompted the mobilisation of police officers from across Britain under the operational command of Scottish Chief Constables. These officers act with considerable discretionary power, though usually in consultation with the Scottish Government's Justice Minister (see below). The devolution of considerable powers to a Scottish parliament in 1999 has had a profound impact on Scotland's society and politics, including that of policing:

Devolution has undoubtedly increased the tendency towards centralisation in Scottish policing. It has enabled the Scottish Executive to routinely seek national solutions to national problems, to introduce new statutory responsibilities on a national level, and to create its own brand of performance management involving setting targets and objectives for policing from the centre, backed up with constant monitoring, auditing and inspection. Like it or not, there is a national flavour to policing in Scotland. (Donnelly & Scott 2005a: 260-61).

This paper is less concerned with the particular constellation of power relationships and hierarchies according to which Scottish police operate or the inter-organisational dynamics between English and Scottish police forces that were the subject of media and literary speculation (cf. Rankin 2006). We concentrate, rather, on the discursive construction of policing and the extent to which police philosophies and knowledge are embedded within particular social contexts.

It offers a corrective to the propensity for sociological analysis to focus on ‘neatly bounded societies where economic, political and cultural domains or levels map neatly onto to each other’ (Walby 2003: 530). Sociological habit (if not in explicitly enunciated theory), thus, tends towards ‘methodological nationalism’ and, in effect, ‘equates societies with nation-state societies and sees states and their governments as the primary focus of social-scientific analysis’ (Beck & Sznaider 2006: 3). Social scientists may well *understand* that the nation, the state, the social and the public are not the same thing, but *in practice* we all too often work on models which conflate and confuse these terms. Terms such as ‘British churches’, ‘the British press’, or, in this case, ‘the British police’ are so commonplace as to seem unremarkable, even though the contours of organised Christianity, of print media, and of policing are not straightforwardly analogous to the boundaries of the United Kingdom state.<sup>4</sup>

This paper primarily draws on interviews with police officers to unravel the various, often contradictory, articulations of policing philosophy and national identity. The tartanisation of G8 policing, we contend, was not merely a *discursive* device, since such packaging had implications for how protest policing was conducted, experienced and interpreted. The police are often conceived as embodied manifestations of state authority and cast as ‘carriers’ of national identity (Loader 1997). Since police actions are bound up with questions of legitimacy, state power and social order such analysis is attractive, but it neglects the context within which policing is framed and articulated. Taking our cue from McCrone (1998: 179), therefore, we seek not so much to identify ‘key political carriers’ of national sentiment, as to explore ‘the “space” it occupies’. Engaging with the distinct literatures on policing and nationhood we seek to illustrate the ways in which national

identity is contested, produced and reproduced through interaction. In what follows we briefly review the literature on protest policing and nationhood before drawing on our research to tease out the complex ways in which national, state and international discourses were deployed on the ground and the implications following on from such assertions.

### **Police, State & Nation**

Winter (1998: 207) argues that police are threatened by political protests which critique the state they embody. Demonstrations, from this perspective, are dramas in which the legitimacy of the state may be publicly disputed. During sustained protests, interactions with protesters provide ‘a test-case for the self-image of the police, particularly in situations where the law is violated’ (Winter 1998: 207). In such circumstances, a “police philosophy” mediates between authorities and a (possibly sceptical) public by legitimising and explaining police actions. ‘Police philosophy’, Winter (1998: 189) explains, refers to the police’s self-perception and understanding of their responsibilities towards state and society.

Police philosophies are, effectively, meta-narratives about state-society relations which underpin police operations. The two ideal-typical variants are the *Staatspolizei* (‘King’s Police’ or *gendarmerie*) and the *Bürgerpolizei* (akin to the ‘Community Bobby’). The *Staatspolizei* model describes ‘police serving the interests of the state’ (Winter 1998:189) and is characterised by a narrow, legalistic approach to protecting the existing social order. Such forces are often armed, housed in barracks, less subject to democratic accountability and prone to ‘tough’ (often forceful) policing. The *Bürgerpolizei* are conceived of as ‘Police serving the interests of the citizens’ (Winter 1998:189) and are encapsulated by the modern ‘British approach’ of ‘citizen policing’. This entails decentralised power, minimal

use of force, public accountability and a stress on community relations (Della Porta & Fillieule 2004: 223).

The undifferentiated ‘British’ police discussed earlier is to the fore here, and these caricatures conveniently obscure the fact that the police in Northern Ireland have been both militarised and partisan (Ellison & Smyth 2000). Clearly the various British police *forces* have differing philosophies and worldviews that frame the police’s assessment of (amongst others) protesters and the required response to them. Demonstrations, thus, are more likely to be tolerated or, indeed, facilitated by forces committed to ‘community policing’ (cf. Ellison & Martin 2000: 692). As Della Porta & Reiter (2006) noted in their analysis of the G8 summit in Genoa, a philosophy that cast the police as guardians of the moral order elevated police authority far above protesters’ rights. Police philosophies, thus, justify police actions: ‘Police philosophy functions as a remedy on the part of the police to counteract the complaining power of the sensitized public, both as a means of strengthening police “self-confidence” and as an argumental aid in the face of public criticism’ (Winter 1998: 209).

Della Porta (1998: 229) introduces the related concept of ‘police knowledge’ to refer to the ways in which officers conceive the challenges that they face. Elsewhere (Gorringer & Rosie 2008) we have demonstrated how ‘knowledge’ *of* different protest constituencies helped to shape policing during the 2005 G8. What concerns us here is less the professional culture and preconceptions of the police and more what Della Porta (1998: 229) terms the ‘environmental’ context within which that knowledge is constructed. Waddington (1998: 128) argues that ‘institutionalised power relations ... set the scene within which police act’



and points out how political considerations may compel officers to ‘die in a ditch’ for certain ends (such as protecting foreign dignitaries).

Whilst these accounts provide valuable insights into policing they do not adequately address the socio-political *contexts* that police forces are embedded in. Waddington (1998: 129) demonstrates how ‘democratic institutions make the policing of protest intrinsically morally ambiguous’ in a detailed historical account of the development of policing patterns, but his focus remains on police/protester interactions and the political priorities of particular governments. Della Porta & Reiter (2006: 37), by contrast, insist that ‘national styles of policing’ are discernible, and show how organisational structures may ‘predetermine certain types of action and preclude others’ (ibid. 28). In a similar vein, we seek to elucidate the broader, more pervasive, discursive resources available to politicians, protesters and the police.

To comprehend the recurrent invocation of distinctively ‘Scottish’ policing it is useful to turn to both the wider insights of nationalism studies as well as to the sociology of Scotland itself. That a study of policing should tap these resources reflects the interconnections between policing, nations and states. Loader & Walker (2001), for instance, highlight the centrality of the police to cultural imaginings of the nation. Policing, they assert, ‘has come to be viewed as both a constituent and expression of collective national identity’ (ibid. 20). In particular they note that since police are ‘intimately concerned’ with issues of security and safety and ‘deeply entangled with some profound hopes, fears, fantasies and anxieties’ they

... remain closely tied to people's sense of ontological security and collective identity, and capable of generating high, emotionally charged levels of identification among citizens. Through their presence, performance and voice, the police are able to evoke, affirm, reinforce or (even) undermine many of the prevailing cultural characteristics of particular political communities, thereby serving as a vehicle through which such communities are 'imagined' (Loader & Walker 2001: 20)

Loader & Walker note that accounts which claim that models of 'state sovereignty' are increasingly problematic, and point to both stateless nations and multinational states. Ultimately, however, they choose to emphasise (following Smith 1991) that 'national identity ... is inconceivable and unsustainable in the absence of some sense of political community, of which the state remains the paradigmatic instance' (2001: 21). They continue:

And if the demonstrated link between nation and state is so complex, variegated and sometimes fragile, this surely underscores rather than diminishes the role of the police as a bridge between the authority of the state and the symbolism of national/cultural community. (2001: 21)

This argument pays lip-service to the multiplicity of 'the national' within some nation-states whilst proceeding to describe 'national identity' and 'the national/cultural community' in the *singular*. Although conceding that the 'coincidence of state, nation, and police ... is attacked on a number of fronts' Loader & Walker caution us 'not to overstate these tendencies'. Yet the only explanation for this proves to be the 'relative "thinness" of

supranational forms of identification that lack a common pool of memories, traditions and ways of thinking ...' (2001: 22). We broadly agree that *supra-state* forms of identification are indeed 'thin', but that *cannot* be said of sub-state forms. Europol may well play 'but a marginal role in the symbolic construction of the EU community' (2001:23), but can the same be said of sub-state institutions? What, for example, does the Metropolitan Police offer to the 'common pool of memories, traditions and ways of thinking' of Londoners? And what sense might there be of police forces in Wales as *Welsh* institutions feeding off and into Welsh identification?

That Loader & Walker do not address this is exemplified by their description of the Royal Ulster Constabulary (RUC - the force which policed Northern Ireland until 2001 with great controversy) as (quote) 'the state police' (2001: 24). Ellison & Martin (2000: 691) likewise argue that 'in divided societies such as Northern Ireland ... the relationship between the police and the state tends to be much more deeply institutionalized'. It is not at all clear whether they mean here that Northern Ireland or the United Kingdom constitutes 'the state'. Indeed, Ellison & Martin (2000: 694) cite Ruane and Todd's finding that 'many in the RUC ... were defenders of the Protestant community first, defenders of the Protestant state second, and normal policeman third'. In explaining continuing polarisation of attitudes towards the RUC, Ellison & Smyth (2000: 151) underscore the importance of understanding what the police *represent* to different sections of the community. Since 1970 the attempt to build a 'normal' police force – one that is 'publicly acceptable, accountable, politically neutral, ethnically representative, impartial, demilitarized' (Weitzer 1985: 41) – has brought the relationship between police, public(s) and state(s) to the fore in Northern Ireland. Policing in Scotland is significantly less politicised but, as Loader (1997: 5) argues, the police still 'have to be able to take advantage of the affinities that exist between

police and nation'. It is precisely the relative 'banality' of the Scottish experience that enables us to probe into the processes by which Scottish policing is imagined and represented.

In the specific context of Scotland the 'methodological nationalism' adopted by Loader & Walker is exceptionally problematic. In terms of locating 'the nation' it is not at all clear whether this should be interpreted as Scotland, as the United Kingdom, or – indeed – as both. Likewise whilst it is clear that Scotland does not constitute a state in the conventional 'sovereign' sense, it clearly possesses many 'state-like' features. In the absence of a police force organised at the centre and directed by the central organs of the sovereign state, is the phrase 'state police' at all meaningful in a UK context? Police forces in England, Wales and Northern Ireland are overseen by Her Majesty's Inspectorate of Constabulary, in turn overseen by the Home Secretary and thus, ultimately, responsible to the House of Commons. In Scotland, by contrast, the eight police forces are responsible to Her Majesty's Inspectorate of Constabulary in Scotland, through Scotland's Justice Minister, to the Scottish Parliament. Within post-devolution *realpolitik* Westminster may remain the supreme and sovereign body of the United Kingdom in a juristic sense but *legitimacy* in Scotland, Wales and Northern Ireland, or at least a considerable portion of it, rests with the devolved institutions. Whilst Loader & Walker note 'the continuing *subservience* of new forms of supranational, sub-state national and local policing to the state as a regulatory centre' (2001: 23, our emphasis) we would argue for a more nuanced understanding of the relationships between 'devolved' and 'central' elements of the state.

We also have reservations with Loader & Walker's broader argument that police are one 'vehicle through which communities are "imagined"' (2001: 20). Whilst we do not dispute

this, we have difficulty with their conclusion. The *privileged* position of police in articulating nationhood stems, according to them, from the fact that police ‘remain closely tied to people’s sense of ontological security and collective identity’ (2001: 20). They further assert that ‘policing is – in a thick, sociological sense – a public good’ (2001: 25), since ‘our sense of safety and security is ... like conviviality, *irreducibly social*’ (2001: 26, original emphasis). On the premise that police underpin ‘our sense of safety’, Loader & Walker insist that policing is and *must* be tied to the state so as to direct its coercive power towards the ‘common good’. We are uncomfortable with such analysis on at least two counts. Firstly, this seems to offer *carte blanche* to the police (and indeed to ‘the state’) in circumscribing both ‘the common good’ and national imaginaries. We have already questioned the implicit coupling of state and nation and, further, we would stress that police do not operate (or imagine) in a vacuum. The identity claims that *police officers* and *police forces* might choose to ‘make, let alone those which will be accepted, are socially structured and bounded’ (Bechhofer *et al* 1999: 521). The connections between police and ‘nation’, and police and ‘state’, are not unilinear. The naturalised narratives of ‘national identity’ often frame understandings of any given situation, demarcating the limits of probable action. The police, in other words, are as influenced by the boundaries of the imagined community (or communities) as they are influential in their imagining.

Here we follow Billig’s (1995) account of how nationalism provides a constant backdrop to social action. Billig details the subtle ways in which ‘notions of nationhood are deeply embedded in contemporary ways of thinking’ (1995:11). Assumptions about, and references to, just who and where ‘we’ are, become so routinised as to become unnoticed: ‘Beyond conscious awareness, like the hum of distant traffic ...’ (1995:94). Billig’s account, however, is (somewhat ironically) open to the charge that it all too easily slips

between the concept of ‘state’ and ‘nation’, and largely ignores Anderson’s (1996:8) ‘crisis of the hyphen’. Billig’s account is, nevertheless, crucially insightful. Our interview respondents recurrently invoked notions of national identity and ‘nationalised’ ways of doing things, alerting us to the social settings and discourses that mediate power relations. ‘The salience of symbolic resources, in this case national identities’, as Hearn (2007: 670) puts it, ‘depends on how they appear to illuminate struggles for control over one’s more immediate environment’. In the context of the G8 - and confronted by the countervailing demands of protesters, local communities, politicians and world leaders – our police interviewees sought refuge in the symbolic resources and discursive possibilities of national identity to justify their actions and counteract ‘legitimacy and identity crises’ (Winter 1998: 202). Whilst this may seem an uncontroversial finding, we should note that the national identity in question was *not* that of the centralised state (Britishness) but *Scottishness*.

Nationalism, as McCrone (1998: 191) declares, mobilises cultural issues for socio-political ends. Our interviewee’s emphasis on *Scottish* policing, from this perspective, was at least as much a means of tapping into widespread and accepted beliefs as an assertion that there is anything inherently distinct about policing in Scotland. The articulation of such claims, by key social institutions like the police, however, has several consequences:

They set apart the space within which rules are set and interactions take place. Their success in so doing helps to naturalise social processes, so that we take for granted that there is a ‘Scottish’ way of practising law, religion, education, politics and so on (McCrone 1998: 180).

These taken-for-granted assumptions may be held even though there is, in everyday practice, little difference between a 'Scottish' and, say, 'English' mode of operation. McCrone noted an emerging 'Scottish frame of reference', a prism through which understandings were mediated, concluding that this Scottish frame was 'gaining more explanatory power and purchase than a British one'. Scotland, McCrone argues 'is sustained as a nation because people in Scotland treat it as a more appropriate social and cultural framework for making sense of their lives' (2001: 52). Similarly, Hearn (2007: 658) illustrates how 'large organisations frame and shape the ways that national identity is construed' even as they assume aspects of that identity. We might reasonably expect to find, therefore, that the discursive construction of 'national policing styles' has material consequences for protest policing, or at least for how such policing is presented and legitimated.

The 'Scottish police' as an institution must therefore be situated within Scottish understandings. During the G8 Scottish policing served as an 'official' and institutional metonym for 'Scotland' under the critical international scrutiny of the global media. Within Scotland there was some debate on whether 'Scottish policing is maintaining its own traditions and characteristics or is becoming a localised example of global trends' (Donnelly & Scott 2005b: 2). According to Walker: 'the policing of Scotland, like the policing of any territory with its own political and cultural identity, consists of a distinctive but broadly familiar set of social practices' (1999: 94).

One further issue is the emergence of transnational policing forms (Della Porta & Reiter 1998, Della Porta et al 2006). Analysis of the *national* articulation of policing in the context of the G8 Summit must pay due cognisance to the different styles and requirements

of international policing. This distinction, it is suggested, is particularly acute with regard to protest policing and several authors argue that the rise of the anti-capitalist movement has promoted ‘command and control’ at the expense of protester’s rights (Sheptycki 2005, Della Porta et al. 2006). Within these broader parameters, however, Della Porta et al (2006: 12) emphasise the continuing significance of ‘internal (police organisations and police culture/philosophy)’ factors. In our account of protests surrounding the G8 (Gorringe & Rosie 2006: 11.3), we argued that *transnational protest* retained a national emphasis. The question here is whether *protest policing* also retains national characteristics.

### **Our Research**

This paper emerges from a wider research project on the interplay between police and protesters conducted before, during and immediately after the Gleneagles G8 summit in 2005. Interviews and participant observation at key sites provided insights into the policing of protest (see Gorringe & Rosie 2006, 2008). Significantly, it was not our prior intention to study the interplay between national identities and institutional cultures or to analyse the police as an exemplar of a national institution. Like Donnelly & Scott (2005b), however, we encountered a recurrent insistence on Scottish distinctiveness that prompted us to probe further. Our argument here rests on a detailed analysis of interviews with one front-line and three senior police officers, one protest leader, and documents and media coverage relating to policing in Scotland. Police sociology has recently turned its attention to how police forces are *represented* as well as what they do (Ellison & Martin 2000: 682, Ellison & Smyth 2000: 151) but we still know ‘relatively little about how representations of the police and policing are produced’ (Loader 1997: 5). Against the backdrop of a global summit and under the spotlight of the global media our interviews with strategically important and centrally involved police officers were incredibly reflexive and revealing



about the processes by which policing at the event was legitimised and represented. It is to these complex, sometimes contradictory, accounts that we now turn.

### **Scottish Policing**

In considering the interplay between national identity and policing we should begin with the observation that the police in Scotland routinely ‘flag up’ Scottishness. From thistle uniform badge, through pipe bands<sup>5</sup>, cabinets in Headquarters buildings displaying historical artefacts of ‘Scottish’ policing and the launch of initiatives such as ‘Bikesafe Scotland’<sup>6</sup>, to the recurrent reference to ‘national’ services (restricted, of course, to Scotland)<sup>7</sup> the police contribute to the routinisation of Scottishness. Unsurprisingly, therefore, several interviewees felt the police evinced distinctively Scottish values.

Ross<sup>8</sup> spoke of a ‘Scottish tradition of policing’, by which he meant: “‘Police by consent’ and ‘Nicey, nicey: let’s not react ...’” (Ross, Interview). Going further, he suggested that the police in Scotland was a ‘radical organisation itself’ and shared the wider traditions of openness, egalitarianism, democracy, allowing for dissent and so on that, as McCrone (1998: 174) shows, have become basic expressions of Scottish identity even though ‘there is nothing innately distinctive about them’. That this is not simply the expression of a localised police mythology was clear from Justice Minister Cathy Jamieson’s assessment of G8 preparations:

I believe we have police officers - indeed a policing culture - that can deal effectively with all the challenges ahead. A police service that is drawn from - and reflective of -

the best small country in the world. Modern and professional. Fair-minded and tolerant (Scottish Executive News 2005).

The way in which such attitudes have been appropriated was emphasised in Ross' intimation that non-Scots officers drafted in for the G8 were being clued up on 'the Scottish approach' (Ross, Interview). White alluded to similar characteristics: 'Aye, I think I would say that there was a Scottish approach. There is a difference. It's much more about dialogue and community interaction and that as well as the more legal things like the difference in laws between the two places' (Interview). Interestingly both these accounts define Scottishness against an implicit other – England and/or the English. National identities, as McCrone (1998: 29-36) notes, are deployed strategically in different contexts and it was apparent that the impending influx of 'outside' officers shaped and informed our interviewee's responses. There is, however, evidence to suggest that this was not only a situational articulation of identity as these sentiments have a wider currency.

The Scottishness of the police is also formalised through less politicised official pronouncements. For instance, the 2004 report from Her Majesty's Inspectorate of Constabulary for Scotland (HMICS) states that: 'The realisation of *local connections in policing with the community* is a reassertion of the traditional principle "that the police are the public and the public are the police"'. This has long been rooted in the ethos of policing in Scotland' (HMICS 2004: 103, original emphasis). That document's introduction explicitly asserts Scottish distinctiveness with implicit reference to un-named others: 'Arguably, the Scottish approach is based upon a more traditional community policing model, less driven by top down enforcement targets' (HMIC for Scotland 2004: 7). As Donnelly & Scott (2005b: 1) found, the details are often vague, but what is remarkable in

the above accounts is how invocations of Scottishness are accepted at face value and seldom subjected to scrutiny. Nationalism, in this sense, 'is the endemic condition' (Billig 1995: 6), but these national narratives were not without ruptures.

### **Policing in Scotland**

Vine's immediate response to whether there was a distinctive approach to Scottish Policing, was laughter. As with elite figures in Bechhofer et al's (1999: 525) study, the two most senior officers in our sample (both were born in Northern England and spent their formative police career years there) seemed relatively 'sensitive to the nuances of national identity claims'. Furthermore, Vine appeared to conceive of himself in the role of a cultural *producer* who was more aware of the contingent circumstances in which certain claims are made:

The idea of a distinctively Scottish approach to policing was more for public consumption [it has] no basis in reality ... a fiction – for opposition politicians who were raising the issue. It was presented as community based, low key; the friendly face of the police, with officers only resorting to protective equipment *in extremis* (Interview).

When pressed further on this point Vine went further in scotching the idea of a distinctive Scottish mode of policing: 'It's like a fiction to create a distinct identity. It's the same job, no difference. The only difference in the way the job is done is slight variations in legislation – the common law caution and so on' (Interview). Indeed, as head of Tayside Police, Vine insisted that the prevalent ethos did not so much reflect a Scottish model as 'my way of doing things'. Vine's analysis was mirrored by another respondent:

The truth is no, no there's not [a distinctively Scottish approach]. There's good policing and not so good policing. Good policing of public disorder has always followed those principles, of de-escalating, keeping things calm, building trust, and finding ways to achieve compromise. That's always been good policing ... and so good policing across the UK has always used those. I don't think there's anything in [policing in] Scotland which is uniquely Scottish, personally (Dickinson, Interview).

Given both these senior officers had backgrounds outside Scotland such accounts raise the possibility that the claimed and assumed 'Scottishness' of the Scottish police is no more than an institutional myth (or philosophy) designed to inculcate loyalty amongst officers and enhance their self-image and perception. To Dickinson this was self-evident; 'there isn't a Scottish police force, and there isn't a Scottish way of doing things' he insisted. Effectively, this endorses Vine's characterisation of Tayside Police as modelled in his image, and presents the eight forces in Scotland as independent entities.

A critical assessment of Scottishness in this respect also came from one key protest activist involved in G8-related demonstrations. As convenor of the Scottish Socialist Party (SSP) Fox thought claims to a specifically 'Scottish' policing was an ideological fiction and rejected both the concept of a Scottish *national* force and that of a *Scottish* approach:

Nah. I think that [the notion of Scottish policing] is frankly nothing other than PR bullshit. I mean this idea that Scottish officers are like, you know, shepherds in disguise and help you across the road and that - that's bullshit. I mean the fact is that Strathclyde police has as bad a reputation in Scotland as I'm sure the Met have in

London ... I don't buy into this idea that South Yorkshire police or anyone else are not capable of a softly, softly approach, or that Tayside, Lothian and Border's aren't capable of brutalising the community if that's what they decide (Interview).

Fox's critical position, and the rather instrumental acceptance by Vine and Dickinson that Scottishness may be a useful 'fiction' highlight the dangers in uncritically defining policing as a public good. We might ask 'which public?' They also contest easy assumptions that social actors are necessarily embedded within, and conceptually confined to, national spaces and imaginaries. For these interviewees the processes of framing the Scottish police were neither unnoticed nor banal; they are *conscious* attempts to signify an attachment to popular attitudes and values. Furthermore, in each of the above quotes, the bounds of the 'nation' are challenged as is the question of who speaks on its behalf.

### **Policing Scotland**

McCrone (1998: 17) downplays the prevalent tendency to identify the distinguishing characteristics of a nation: 'it is not what is in the box that matters', he concludes, 'so much as the box itself'. The accuracy of the competing evaluations of the Scottish police above, from this perspective, is secondary. What is noteworthy is the fact that *all* our interviewees raised (and returned to) the notion of a 'Scottish police' – even after they had been expressly critical of the term. Like it or not, the term has purchase and is routinely (though sometimes reluctantly) reproduced. Even those respondents who rejected the 'fiction' of a distinctive force were obliged to confront it. Dickinson, for instance, for all his stress on 'good or bad' policing could not utterly dismiss the concept:

I don't think there's anything in [policing in] Scotland which is uniquely Scottish, personally. But that's just the factual part of the business. The other part of it is the media, and public reassurance. If we were able to use that phrase; that this is a "Scottish approach to policing" based on our history of non-confrontation, not using overwhelming force and being flexible and developmental in our approach to crowd management, that's much better, because it gives the media a handle to hang something on, it enables us to say to the public that we are non-confrontational (Interview).

Scottish policing, thus, *does* exist if only as a reassuring shorthand. We doubt however that a wide public would 'read' a reference to 'Scottish policing' in the expert professional terms suggested by Dickinson ('non confrontation ... flexible and developmental'). It seems more likely that it would be decoded in a less technical but comforting way as that which is 'ours' and 'familiar'. Invoking the 'Scottish way of doing things' served to render potentially 'extraordinary policing' (of the G8 Summit and its associated protests) as 'ordinary' and 'unthreatening'. Dickinson undermines his scepticism through his reference to a 'history', slipping into an unconscious 'deixis of little words' (Billig 1995: 106). The assimilation of 'I' into 'we' suggests a viewpoint that extends beyond the individual. As Dickinson continued, the shift was completed:

We didn't publicise it, we didn't push that [the iron fist in the velvet glove]. We made it clear it was there, and the public and the press knew it was there, so it wasn't foolhardy, too complacent policing, but we didn't push it, we didn't make it prominent. We don't do it that way. And that was all part of the Scottish package if you like (Interview).

Dickinson, in others words, is all too aware of the recognition accorded to national tags and is happy to dress ‘good policing’ up as Scottish policing if that works. He insisted that: ‘It would be no different if you did that in Cumbria or you did it Cornwall’, but acknowledged that ‘you probably wouldn’t wrap it up as a *Cumbrian* tradition of policing’. At first sight, Vine’s rationalisation parallel’s Dickinson’s: ‘each force has their own folklore, it’s the folklore and culture of the police service; people try to make their piece of it unique and to try and present their force as distinct’ (Interview). Scottishness, again, is portrayed as an organisational mytho-history that fosters a sense of community within the force and outwards to its public. The question remains, however, why *Scottish* identity should be the basis for institutional cohesion or the most convenient means of packaging it. The answer in large part, as these interviewees note, is that such claims carry more immediate weight and meaning than more universal policing terms (or indeed, Britishness). Describing G8 policing as ‘negotiated management’ or ‘consensus-based policing’ may mean the same thing as ‘the Scottish way of doing things’, but it fails to resonate. Indeed, pointing to the significance of the concept to Vine’s colleagues elicited a more nuanced account:

HG: Is there not some sense in which the police reflect the broader public culture?

JV: OK, well it’s not a fiction, I suppose that’s being a bit hard on ourselves, it’s what we deliver anyway. Police here tend to be more independent. There is a firewall between them and other institutions such as the judiciary and government. There is a blurring of lines south of the border, where a centralising government tend to be more interfering. Scotland and Scottish policing tends to be less codified – relies more on discretion. We saw it at Gleneagles (Interview).

Scottish policing, here, emerges as a distinct entity by virtue of organisational and institutional arrangements that influence the sort of policing that can be carried out. Probing further we enquired whether ‘Northern English forces would claim some common tradition or distinctive identity’:

No. Well for one thing [Scotland’s] a much smaller place. There are only eight police forces in Scotland, so it is much easier to have a regional identity - or a country-wide identity. One thing that has happened since I’ve been here is that the eight Chief Constables in Scotland have met together for dinners – we meet up, do a bit of blue skies thinking and have dinner. That sort of get together wouldn’t happen in England and Wales (or didn’t when I was working there). In that sense there is much more of an identity. Devolution has helped: Devolution has been a great thing for policing here, we’re much closer to the government ministers responsible ... The level of contact that I have with the Justice Minister and so on would be envied by any of my counterparts down south. A devolved administration helps enormously in that dialogue and understanding are facilitated (Vine, Interview).

This response is instructive on several counts not least that Vine’s description of a ‘regional identity’ was quickly corrected to a ‘country-wide’ one, reflecting terminological sensitivities in Scotland. Note too the emphasis placed on devolved government. Thomson notes the significance of legal disparities between England and Scotland in ‘keeping alive our Scottish national identity’ (in McCrone 1998: 180), and procedural differences were recurrently identified and emphasised. White, thus, indicated the need to train officers coming up for the G8:



So they have to be briefed on simple things like the Common Law caution. And we're making sure that they are comfortable with our laws. Another thing is; the forces up from down south won't ever be on their own - there'll always be a Scottish cop deputed to the unit to be on hand for queries of that nature (Interview).

Relatively minor legal variation is thus magnified into an assertion of institutional divergence. The Scottishness of the police, from this perspective, derives from the discursive space opened up by geographical as well as political considerations. Significantly, though, it extends beyond an organisational categorisation. This space opens up the possibility of *doing* things differently too. As Frances Curran, an SSP representative, observed: 'It's about the style of policing as well as the legal differences' (cited by Cowan 2005).

Ross lent credence to this claim. Pointing to the relative absence of violent protest in contemporary Scotland he noted that the few 'physical' confrontations on picket lines ('Bilston Glen, Perth Docks') 'were good fun [and] nobody got hurt'. He suggested that this was mainly because 'both sides of the fence were so alike' since both striking workers and police were drawn, broadly, from the same socio-economic and attitudinal backgrounds. More subtle intimations of 'embedded nationalism' (Hearn 2007) reinforced the perception that institutions are shaped by their social environments and public culture. Having questioned the validity of the Scottish label, for example, Vine later fulminated about the lack of adequately 'Scottish' press coverage:

One thing that I have been very surprised about is that the media have been so anti-Scottish, particularly with regards to what benefits might occur. ... The Scottish

papers, the mainstream broadsheets in particular and the *Scotsman* especially. I mean it has the headline, but apart from that there is very little [that was] Scottish about its coverage of the G8. ... Coverage in the Scottish media just faded away immediately after the summit had ended. After the successful completion of the event by anybody's measure, by anybody's measure, we might have expected more (Interview).

Any caution about describing the police as Scottish evaporates here. Vine also illustrated how personal identities may assume social (in this case national) overtones. In an entertaining exchange he initially met our probings about a 'Scottish approach' with the mischievous question (posed in an identifiably Northern English accent): 'Am I Scottish?', subsequently answering his own question in the affirmative. Inverting any trite view that 'English' officers represent an 'Anglicisation' of Scotland's police, Vine thus captures the subtle processes that underpin national identity. The Scottishness (or otherwise) of the G8 policing in 2005 rests on neither the *methods* adopted (see Della Porta & Reiter 1998, on the convergence of policing styles), or on *who* was doing the policing (Scottish, Welsh or English officers). Rather, the intersection between global, state and national interests provided a context in which institutional differences were framed in terms of national distinctiveness.

### **Conclusion: National Policing & the Public Good?**

In concluding we consider what these competing conceptualisations of Scottishness connote. Were this paper confined to the dissonances that routinely rupture national identities our contribution would be limited, if not redundant, but the data offer further insights. The respondents demonstrate how identities – be they personal or institutional –

may well be flexible but are also, crucially, forged within particular socio-historical contexts and discursive forms that become naturalised. We use the ambiguous term ‘forged’ here deliberately, following the subtleties of Colley (1992). Thus, while Donnelly & Scott (2005c: 86) debate the benefits of establishing a ‘national force’ in Scotland, our interviews reveal the discursive sense in which one *already exists*. Even conceding that *Scottish* policing is ‘a convenient fiction’, it is convenient precisely because it reflects implicit, taken-for-granted assumptions. Indeed, it is difficult to conceive of an alternative ‘fiction’ that could fulfil the same function in a Scottish setting.

To paraphrase Anderson (1991), a convenient fiction need not be *fictional*. Indeed, the discursive construction of Scottishness has ramifications for how policing is conceived and conducted. Police officers, protesters, politicians and the press, thus, routinely hold the police to account by reference to the ideal of ‘Scottish policing’. The cumulative effect is a process in which rhetorical articulations of Scottishness (the ‘fiction’) may be realised. From this perspective, the absence of the anticipated violence and disorder during the 2005 G8 may reflect an assimilation to the ‘nicey, nicey’ rhetoric that accompanied preparations for the event.

We echo Loader & Walker’s (2001) concerns about the creeping privatisation of policing and the concomitant loss of accountability, but we would question their unequivocal endorsement of the police as the bedrock of ‘communities of affiliation’. Such a perspective, we contend, takes the banality of police philosophies at face value. The ‘Scottish package’, however, like most national rhetoric, hinges on the contentious question of legitimacy. Underlying the velvet glove of consensual policing, is the iron fist of coercion that is directed at those who deviate from accepted parameters (cf. Gorringe &

Rosie 2008). ‘While policing can promote feelings of belonging and security for some’, as Ellison & Smyth (2000: 152) argue by reference to Northern Ireland, ‘it can also deny recognition to others’. Indeed, during the G8 in 2005, Make Poverty History were facilitated, whilst ‘anarchist’ others were incapacitated. If policing is a ‘public good’, in this light, so too is political protest. In probing the limits of ‘legitimacy’, protesters help to reveal the unwritten, banal, and naturalised social categories within which we act and subject them to critical scrutiny.

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<sup>1</sup><http://www.g8.gov.uk/servlet/Front?pagename=OpenMarket/Xcelerate/ShowPage&c=Page&cid=1078995903270&aid=1109172257172> (Accessed 24/07/2007)

<sup>2</sup> <http://www.scotland.gov.uk/News/Releases/2005/07/03223349> (Accessed 24/07/2007)

<sup>3</sup><http://www.g8.gov.uk/servlet/Front?pagename=OpenMarket/Xcelerate/ShowPage&c=Page&cid=1078995903270&a=KArticle&aid=1101393695827> (Accessed 24/07/2007)

<sup>4</sup> For a problematisation of ‘the’ British press see MacInnes et al (2007).

<sup>5</sup> <http://www.lbp.police.uk/freedom-of-information/publications/publicperf07.pdf> (Accessed 24/07/2007)

<sup>6</sup> <http://www.scottish.police.uk/mainframe.htm> (Accessed 24/07/2007)

<sup>7</sup> <http://www.spsa.police.uk/services> (Accessed 24/07/2007)

<sup>8</sup> Details of respondents appear in the reference section.

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