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SOCIAL, ORGANISATIONAL AND CULTURAL CHANGE: CONTEMPORARY CHALLENGES FOR POLICING

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THEMES

- Social Change/Late Modernity
- Contemporary Policing (i) – from Abstraction to Hybridity
- Contemporary Policing (ii) – relational shift
- Contemporary Policing (iii) – new contexts and (de) professionalisation agenda
- Challenges

SOCIAL CHANGE/LATE MODERNITY

- The relationship between social change, policing and police culture is well established (Chan, 1997).
- Reiner (1992) 'Policing a Postmodern Society' represented one of the first academic attempts to explore the relationship between late modernity and policing.
- The transformation of British policing since 1950s due to structural and cultural change (see Kaplan-Lyman, 2012)
- Recruitment, Training and Discipline
- The Rule of Law
- The Strategy of Minimal Force
- Non-partisanship
- The Service Role
- Preventive Policing
- Policing Effectiveness
- Accountability

SOCIAL CHANGE/LATE MODERNITY

- These 'complex and social changes' (p.773) constituted a, "qualitative break in the development of contemporary society" (p.773)
- Processes associated with late modernity impact on individuals in ways that direct them to modify (and usually to intensify) their expectations of policing and security.
- A key element of related reforms has been to re-orient the culture of the police to become engaged with values of quality of service.
- "Ongoing police reforms are invariably mooted in a modernist light, with a firm belief that changes to procedures will yield improvement in services and efficiency. Discourse is overwhelmingly modernist..." (Waters, 2007, p.263).

CONTEMPORARY POLICING (I) – FROM ABSTRACTION TO HYBRIDITY

- The Abstract Police (Terpstra et al, 2019) is a helpful reference point in any discussion of contemporary policing, police culture and change
- Policing has become abstracted, dis-connected and increasingly removed from key contexts which hitherto provided both the focus of police work and the relationships which inform the occupational culture of the police
- Shows the reform agenda impacts upon what is to be conceived of as ‘good’ policing, on how we position and undertake professionalization within police organisations and, ultimately, on the shape and form of police leadership.

CONTEMPORARY POLICING (I) – FROM ABSTRACTION TO HYBRIDITY

- The result has been a growing set of barriers to informal means of engaging the help of fellow practitioners caused by the restructuring of police organisations.
- This growing disconnect for officers in respect of how they relate, engage and interact with both their organization and their public has distinct cultural implications for police officers.
- Abstraction leads to growing detachment from the public
- The moral impetus of policing, in parallel with the police's obligations to the public, have become reduced as police interaction with the public is increasingly mediated through the impersonal filter of electronic communication.
- Likewise, the low-level functions of the police, which provide the most opportunities for positive and constructive engagement with the public, have increasingly been pushed up the hierarchy creating an increasingly de-skilled police frontline (Terpstra et al, 2019).

CONTEMPORARY POLICING (I) – FROM ABSTRACTION TO HYBRIDITY

- Terpstra et al (2019) identify two substantive issues as accounting for these changes; a) organizational changes, and b) the impact of different views on policing.
- The move towards the abstraction and technologization of police processes, partially is a response to the prevalence of 'new' threats of cybercrime, organised crime and terrorism.
- The concept of the 'Abstract' police is helpful in that it allows us to explore, particularly, the impact of these processes on the operational practices of policing and those who undertake them.

CONTEMPORARY POLICING (I) – FROM ABSTRACTION TO HYBRIDITY

- A reduction in scope for police officers to assume responsibility and ownership of the issues for which the public seek support.
- These processes, the authors argue, lead to, “isolation, fatalism and powerlessness” (2019, p.15), issues which parallel the broader concept of risk aversion (see Flanagan, 2008, and Heaton, 2010).
- A helpful model for both exploring and understanding many of the changes which we can identify occurring in contemporary police organisations.
- The model allows a focused analysis that allows us to see policing, and its transformation, in isolation.
- The model works well as a case study on the example of policing and policework, where the drivers of the changes identified remain firmly in the field of policing. By taking such a stance, the authors position the model as one that can apply in a number of different jurisdictions where similar change and reforms can be identified.

CONTEMPORARY POLICING (I) – FROM ABSTRACTION TO HYBRIDITY

- The work of Mirko Noordegraaf (2006, 2011, 2015) allows us to understand more fully the relationship between the increasingly neo-liberal nature of western states (itself, a result of the drift into late modernity) and changes to the ways in which we view and configure public sector agencies.
- Public sector institutions have become incredibly complex
 - Professionals work with vulnerable service users
 - The work context is made up of of converging (and not necessarily compatible) group and individual interests
- New pressures coalesce around changes to
 - public expectation,
 - the nature and extent of risks

CONTEMPORARY POLICING (I) – FROM ABSTRACTION TO HYBRIDITY

- The late modern mood encourages a viewpoint that disparages expertise and complexity
- Organisations position themselves in the most effective manner to maximise their credibility in the eyes of the state, but also, likewise, to maximise the degree of legitimacy with which the public view them.
- However, “managers and markets pull service organisations in different directions” (Noordegraaf, 2006, p.183).

CONTEMPORARY POLICING (I) – FROM ABSTRACTION TO HYBRIDITY

- Autonomy sits uncomfortably with two of the key ideological tenets applied to public services under neo-liberalism – ‘cost control’ and ‘transparency and accountability’ (Noordegraaf, 2006, p.184).
- Noordegraaf (2006), “new types of control attempt to de-professionalise, ‘proletarianise’, bureaucratised, or ‘corporatise’ professionals” (p. 184) to allow organisations to protect the ‘service ethics’ that are central to the new measures of organizational effectiveness.

CONTEMPORARY POLICING (I) – FROM ABSTRACTION TO HYBRIDITY

- “We show how professionals like medical doctors no longer merely treat patients within health care organizations. Instead, they are forced to organize sound patient treatment—to arrange inter-professional and cross-disciplinary collaboration, to set-up and implement innovation projects, to deal with (scarce) capacity, to align decision processes against the background of financial constraints, and to work with multiple stakeholders” (2015, p.2).
- Decline in “presumptions of trust” (Clarke & Newman, 1997, p.123) leads to the increasing absorption of managerial sensibilities into the world view of the public sector professional.
- Isomorphic nature of public sector agencies.

CONTEMPORARY POLICING (II) – RELATIONAL SHIFT

- Changing relationship with the public
- Changing relationship with the state
- Neo-liberalism shifts structural inequality into the realm of the public sector. This causes challenges for legitimacy.
- Increasing challenge for the public sector to remain credible in the eyes of the state.

CONTEMPORARY POLICING (II) –
RELATIONAL SHIFT

CONTEMPORARY POLICING (III) – NEW CONTEXTS AND (DE) PROFESSIONALISATION AGENDA

- The juggling of two competing masters – the public and the state.
- One of the strategies by which this is achieved is through professionalisation or
- “Professionalisation”
- A term for which there are many definitions – and the devil is in the detail .

CONTEMPORARY POLICING (III) – NEW CONTEXTS AND (DE) PROFESSIONALISATION AGENDA

- Multiple definitions of professionalism (Sklansky, 2014)
- Most include:
- Code of Conduct/Ethics
- Commitment to the use of expert knowledge
- An element of self-regulation
- In the England and Wales context:
- The Code of Ethics
- The PEQF
- Evidence-base to inform knowledge and practice

CONTEMPORARY POLICING (III) – NEW CONTEXTS AND (DE) PROFESSIONALISATION AGENDA

- Policing as knowledge work (see Ericson and Haggerty, 1997)
- Eraut (2000) – the binary distinction between ‘cultural’ and ‘codified’ knowledge
 - ‘Cultural’ knowledge is informal (links to discretion, the focus on experiential learning) (see Van Maanen, 1978)
 - “I want them to tell me what police work is all about. I could care less about the outside speakers or the guys they bring out here from upstairs who haven’t been on the street for the last twenty years. What I want is for somebody who’s gonna level with us and really give the lowdown on how we’re supposed to survive out there” (Officer interviewed by Van Maanen, p. 297)

CONTEMPORARY POLICING (III) – NEW CONTEXTS AND (DE) PROFESSIONALISATION AGENDA

- Increasingly, however, policing becomes viewed less an art and more as a science. As a result, note Evetts (2013) and Fournier (1999) we see professionalization as something that controls rather than liberates public sector organisations that go through the process.
- Thus, we see a shift toward ‘codified’ knowledge (2000) which refers to that knowledge which has been derived by formal means and which, “...includes propositions about skilled behaviour, but not skills or ‘knowing’ (p.114)

CONTEMPORARY POLICING (III) – NEW CONTEXTS AND (DE) PROFESSIONALISATION AGENDA

- During austerity, we have seen a predominant focus on ‘what works’
- Pease and Roach (2017) – evaluations rarely derive from police experience and the choices that police officers have to make.
- The exclusionary power of scientific language creates elite knowledge with its own power dynamic.
- Knowledge often ignores context and therefore creates the illusion of generalisability.
- Experiential knowledge often provides deeper and critical insight than evidential (Van de Ven and Schomaker, 2002)
- Knowledge with no experiential context is often considered illegitimate.
- Participatory learning (Cockcroft et al 2018)



CHALLENGES

- What kind of police do we want?
- The call for increased legitimacy/credibility
- How does the police reinvent itself for a world where funding for public service is a politicised issue and therefore prone to erratic fiscal conditions.
- Institutional Hybridity – can we differentiate between core and ancillary (managerial functions). If not, it will be hard to make a case for professional autonomy.
- Cultural effects of the two masters syndrome. Rabbit in headlights/risk aversion – how do we create a confident police organisation.

CONTEMPORARY POLICING (III) – NEW CONTEXTS AND (DE) PROFESSIONALISATION AGENDA

- epistemological assumptions and a police science discourse favouring scientifically tested informed policy directives” (Wood et al, 2017)
- “Would such a knowledge base as proposed under EBP reduce the need for officers to utilise discretion or would it merely mean that discretionary decision-making was informed by a different form of knowledge.” (Williams and Cockcroft, 2018)
- A view that quantitative research has greater inherent value than qualitative (Hesketh and Williams, 2017)
- ‘What works’ versus ‘what matters’ (Punch, 2015)
- Whilst the College of Policing has tried to portray EBP as methodologically inclusive, Greene (2014) still highlights challenges around critical context and social change.
- Can research undermine professionalism? (Thacher, 2008)