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INTRODUCTION

Introduction for special issue policing across organisational boundaries: developments in theory and practice

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The call for papers for this special issue argued that global influences are now at work in modern research and both policy and practice are being shaped by the possibility of exploring intra- and inter-organisational processes as well as the boundaries that frame them. The term *boundary* is used here to refer to organisational units (intra-organisational policing) and organisations (inter-organisational policing). *Intra*-organisationally, it means understanding how specialist units form and function and, more particularly, interact with other units within police organisations. *Inter*-organisational policing has been subject of important research and scholarship in recent years, particularly in the context of international police cooperation. However, much of this work has adopted a higher -level perspective to examine legal and policy questions rather than the dynamics and challenges of police cooperation at the *organisational* level, which is pursued through direct or indirect organisational ties and/or structures such as multi-agency networks. Policing is now unquestionably shaped and differentiated by processes and forces that are both national and international; local and global. As such, these changes cry out for new perspectives on organisation, theory and practice. The papers presented here meet the challenge of developing new ideas and illuminating them with rich and nuanced data.

Implicit in the call for papers were several ideas that are reflected in this special issue. They raise questions about organisations, about what holds them together, aspects of change and the role of police organisations in larger social networks. Organisations are at once material, symbolic and interactional arenas (Manning 1992). They occupy space, have technologies and employees, establish boundaries and carry out transactions with many other organisations in a larger network. These networks provide opportunities for, and impose constraints on, organisations and are shaped by varying degrees of cooperation and competition (Kilduff and Tsai 2003). A boundary can be symbolic, or physical but in both occasions, they can generate significant constraints for cooperation (Giacomantonio 2014). In police organisations, there are several internal barriers to communication, including rank, specialisation of units and ecological limits on interaction created by physical distance (local settings and ecology). These barriers are only exacerbated when the focus shifts to external barriers, which may include legal, cultural and technical considerations.

The papers here are concerned with symbolic or tacit boundaries to cooperation. In the papers, questions are asked about the nature of 'organisation' and 'organisations' and how they operate within and in concert with other organisations. Defining an organisation in both material and symbolic aspects means, as the papers by Giacomantonio and Litmanovitz, and Lippert and Walby dramatically show, requires an understanding of what an organisation is and how it constructs its boundaries. Where do specific boundaries lie when police training in several organisations is shaped by governmental policy? If police organisations are differentiated internally, as Sheptycki

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shows in striking detail, what 'holds them together?' He suggests it is a cluster of assumed ideas about 'police work', abstractly described as the 'police métier' (Manning 2010, p. 217). Sheptycki convincingly argues that the loose coupling (Weick 1995) within and among units within the organisation requires tacit assumptions about what is processed and why. These features of the 'organisational culture' (Whelan 2016) are reflected in the papers by Crawford and L'Hoiry, and Giacomantonio and Litmanovitz, as police at times pursue and other times resist cooperation and collaboration. What holds police together, it seems, also creates or at least reinforces boundaries against information sharing. The paper by Crawford and L'Hoiry suggests that tacit knowledge and assumptions drive interactions and lead to misunderstandings. 'Why do you not see what I assume' might be a question to pose about inter-organisational cooperation. What is described is a dance of misunderstanding about what is the issue and what is being examined. In their paper, the police and the social workers accounted for why they differed, but continued their traditional practices.

Assuming organisations are a coherent idea requires that members have a sense of their role in the organisation and a sense of what the organisation means in general. Lippert and Walby's analysis of Crime Stoppers and police foundations raises two major questions: what is an organisation when it is penetrated by external forces it cannot co-opt (Selznick 1949) yet claims to be free and devoted to the collective will? The authors raise the spectre of 'privatisation' from an entirely new perspective – the embedding of non-public forces and interests within 'public organisations'. It is TVA and the Grassroots (Selznick 1949) yet again. To gain strength of a mandate, the police organisations are attempting to co-opt private organisations that in fact undermine their mandate. Lippert and Walby's work suggests that Crime Stoppers and police foundations are now deeply embedded in police organisations and use boundary-spanning strategies to obfuscate growing interdependencies.

Giacomantonio and Litmanovitz's review of attempts to revise police training as guided by the UK's Police College, shows, as have many studies, that behavioural change does not occur; that the role and character of training is not agreed upon and remains dominated by traditional views about 'the job'; and that change is unlikely. It is also suggested that the occupational culture was not the barrier in the attempt to change training, but that this was instead caused by a failure of implementation. This may be true, but the power of the traditional uniformed segment of policing clearly dominates and is a significant source of the resistance among officers who delivered and received the training. It may be that the métier, the assumptions of the job and what it means, and the idea rooted in the claim that the constable's authority is 'original' indicates that efforts to constrain and guide stops and searches (in this research) strike a dagger at the heart of the police role in Anglo-American societies as it is understood.

Fischer Bjelland and Vestby's study of multi-agency action in Norway provides a refreshing insight into collaboration and information sharing, but also raises questions about the reach of the state and its use of diverse powers to investigate and prosecute certain offences. The paper shows that organisational boundaries are negotiable and can be bridged pragmatically, as mutual benefits can be identified and leveraged across the 'full sanction catalogue', even though it seems these negotiations may lean more in certain directions than others. In their case study, as has been found elsewhere, informal pockets of information sharing developed to connect intelligence systems that were not designed to communicate with each other. In their very perceptive closing remarks, the authors note how this 'ad hoc instrumentalism' challenges existing accountability mechanisms and remind us that boundaries have often been designed and implemented on purpose, to prevent governmental overreach.

Finally, Whelan and Dupont's article seeks to explore the value of the idea of networks and moves away from the idea of police as exceptional and insulated from organisational analysis. In a similar manner to organisational theorists (Salancik 1995), they emphasise the benefits of network research lies in correcting a tendency in police research to focus on the trees rather than the forest and on the activities of individual organisations rather than on the organisation of their activities. On the basis of a comprehensive literature review, Whelan and Dupont assess the current state of the security network literature and argue strongly for the more rigorous use of the network concept. They

seek to update an earlier typology designed by one of them (Dupont 2004), arguing that it may be more productive to consider security networks across four functional dimensions: information exchange, knowledge-generating, problem-solving and coordination. This formulation provides a basis for a future research agenda on security networks that, they argue, would benefit from engaging more systematically with the methodological and theoretical advances found in the broader organisational and public administration literature.

Although police organisations are at the centre of this special issue, these six articles situate them as an organisation, not necessarily a unique organisation, but one element in an institutional and social web of actors, working to cooperate with other organisations in ways such as seeking to change training, practices and the delivery of services generally associated with security provision. In addition, the shape and boundaries of police organisations are being changed, reshaped and restructured in North America, the United Kingdom and many other jurisdictions beyond. The sources of change are market-based, technological, political as well as those internal to police organisations. It is these changes, shaped by global shifts in modern politics as well as routine operations, that the papers bring to our attention.

Disclosure statement

No potential conflict of interest was reported by the authors.

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