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Policing-networks: reassembling the cultural
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Abstract

This paper sets up and responds to a provocation: what would happen to our theories of policing if we were to dispense altogether with the concept of police culture? Using Latourian actor-network theory (ANT) as an entry point, the paper critically interrogates what *counts* as culture in a policing context to expose the epistemological, methodological and ontological fragilities at the heart of the concept. This prepares the ground for rethinking 'the cultural' as an *effect* of heterogeneous agencies and practices of policing (policing-networks), rather than an informal 'layer' of know-how/knowledge which informs the way policing is done. The paper concludes with a detailed discussion of ANT methodology to signal the difference a Latourian orientation can make to the research and analysis of 'the cultural'.

Keywords: actor-network theory; actor-network methodology; cartography of controversies; cultural purification; Latour; policing-networks; police culture.

Introduction: Forget police culture?

From classic ethnographies of routine policework (Banton, 1964; Cain, 1973; Holdaway, 1983; Manning, 1977; Punch, 1979; Skolnick, 1966), through to contemporary research on the cultural dynamics of networked policing (O'Neill and McCarthy, 2014; Whelan, 2017; Wood, 2004), police culture has been a perennial and enduring focus for police studies in particular, and for sociological, anthropological and criminological research more broadly. In the face of this temporally extensive, empirically rich, interdisciplinary scholarship, I offer a provocation: what would happen to our theories of policing if we were to dispense altogether with the notion of police culture? In posing this question, I am not suggesting that conceptual capital would be lost through such an exercise, so much as speculating that there may be theoretical enrichment to be gained. I begin this conjectural journey of ideational abandonment by asking a rather prosaic question: what *counts* as culture in a policing context?

The vanguard of police cultural research exposed a layer of informal occupational norms and values operating under the apparently rigid hierarchical structure of police organizations (Banton, 1964; Bittner, 1967; Cain, 1973; Holdaway, 1983; Manning, 1977; Punch, 1979; Skolnick, 1966).

Regarded as a constellation of core skills, cognitions, dispositions, informal speech (banter), routines, situationally applied craft rules, beliefs, and generic rationales (Manning, 1977, 1989; Reiner, 2000; Young, 1991), police culture is configured as a 'common sense' guide to action, a tacit, unofficial and unwritten manual which informs how police officers go about their everyday tasks, as well as their interactions and engagements with a myriad of different publics. As Holdaway (1983: 2) notes: 'All the resources of policing – the law, force policy and managerial instructions – are refined and reworked in this crucible'. This formative work is etched from and inspired by an eclectic grouping of interpretive frameworks, with symbolic interactionism, ethnomethodology, phenomenology, dramaturgy, hermeneutics, and Bourdieusian structuration all making an appearance within the literature, though theoretical alignments have not always been made explicit – for exceptions see: Chan, 1997, 2007. We can take from this not so much an inventory of the core features which constitute police culture, so much as identify a series of organising analytics which carve out the ontological space of the cultural, establish the contours of its empirical scope, and set out a template for its analysis. Put another way, what *counts* as culture in a policing context is located within and read through a limited range of interpretive thematics which, I suggest, centre on the (re)production of cultural subjects; the primacy of symbolic and discursive resources; and the purification of culture. In the following three sections, the paper 'disassembles police culture', critically interrogating each thematic in turn, noting their analytical blindspots but also arguing for a re-imagination of the underlying epistemological, methodological and ontological presuppositions which sustain them.

In so doing, the paper opens up a conversation with Latourian actor-network theory (ANT) which some describe as 'an empirical version of poststructuralism' (Law, 2009: 145), and as synonymous with the 'post-cultural turn' (Entwistle and Slater, 2013: 174) in social scientific research. A Latourian sensibility questions the notion of 'culture' as a specific domain which can be distinguished and isolated from, say, economy, politics, law and morality. Rather, 'culture' is regarded 'only as a very peculiar movement of re-association and reassembling' (Latour, 2005: 7). Locating 'the cultural' is, then, a matter of tracing the associations – actor-networks – through which particular relations are formed, stabilised and made durable. Latour's worlds are symmetrical and emerge from a myriad of human and nonhuman agentic actors – people, things, texts, technologies, organisms, materialities – who/which are not 'the source of an action but the moving target of a vast array of entities swarming toward it' (Latour, 2005: 46). In short, ANT configures 'culture' as one outcome, amongst many, of networks of practices which are mobilised generatively and ontologically, rather than epistemologically. Though ANT is primarily identified with science and technology studies (STS) – too prolific a literature to list here – it is well-represented across the arts, humanities and social sciences, making an appearance in studies of tourism (van der Duim *et al.*, 2012), public health (Bilodeau and Potvin, 2018), and security (Schouten, 2014); and in the disciplinary fields of, *inter alia*, environmental, economic, cultural and political sociology (Garforth, 2018; Hornborg, 2014; Bennett and Healy, 2013; Nexon and Pouliot, 2013), human geography (Grove, 2009), and anthropology (Appadurai, 2015). Indeed, for a body of theory which some suggest has achieved 'canonical' status (Rowland *et al.*, 2011: 95), it is surprising that policing studies and criminology have been relatively unreceptive to Latourian frameworks. Even so, there is important embryonic work to be found within the discipline, especially in relation to policing – on discretion and the use of the taser (Dymond, 2019); the gun as a 'boundary object' in Kenyan state-private security partnerships (Diphorn, 2020); and the justice implications of techno-social networks (Brown, 2006). This paper builds on and extends this pivotal, formative work, and makes three key contributions to Latour-inspired criminological scholarship.

Firstly, I use the concepts and tenets of Latourian thinking to prise open the 'old chestnut' of 'police culture'; in this sense, I am deploying ANT not as a supplementary or additional set of analytical tools, but as a framework which challenges and exposes the ontological fragilities of one of criminology's most enduring and sedimented concepts. Secondly, and integral to this critical deconstructive work, is an argument for an alternative ontology of 'culture' which regards it as an *effect* of heterogeneous agencies and practices of policing (policing-networks), rather than an informal, discursive-cognitive 'layer' of know-how which informs and frames the way policing is done. Thirdly, and to demonstrate the difference that a Latourian approach can make to our

conventional frameworks of inquiry, I delineate a methodological route to grappling with 'culture' as the *product* and not the springboard of policing practices. Sometimes referred to as a 'cartography of controversies' (Venturini, 2010), Latourian method is likened to a process of map-making and encompasses a set of orientations and techniques to explore and envision the associational contours of cultural worlds. By critically working through the key tenets of ANT methodology, the paper signals the difference that a Latourian approach can make to the research and analysis of 'the cultural'.

Disassembling police culture: the (re)production of cultural subjects

From Skolnick's (1966) early formulation of a police 'working personality', through to Reiner's (2000: 85-107)¹ keenly observed typology of policing styles, we learn of the kinds of subjectivities and subject positions which inhabit the police cultural domain. From 'crime fighters' (Brown, 1981) to 'care bears' (Wilson and Segrave, 2015), we repeatedly encounter police actors who are not only marked by a range of conservative and reactionary traits (cynicism, pessimism, authoritarianism), but they are also suspicious of non-police Others, keeping a social distance at the same time as building solidarities with colleagues. Motivated by a sense of mission, as forming 'the thin blue line', police subjectivities are described as pragmatic, down-to-earth and anti-theoretical, whilst also harbouring desires for the danger, action and excitement of 'crime-busting' buoyed along by an 'old-fashioned machismo' and an hostility or, at least, a mistrust of difference (Reiner, 2000: 85-107). This familiar and recurring inventory of character attributes and operational dispositions is woven through successive iterations of police cultural identities, even as many commentators recognise this template as an 'oversimplified', 'over-intellectualised' (Cockcroft, 2014; Sklansky and Marks, 2008), 'reductionist', and 'clichéd' (Loftus, 2010; Silvestri, 2017) frame of reference which lacks the analytical nuance to capture the fluidity, complexity and heterogeneity of subjectivities and subject positions which inhere across and within different police settings and arrangements². It is not that such critiques are 'wrong' but that they are partial, and fail to grapple with, and acknowledge the constraints of an epistemology which foregrounds questions of who, rather than *what* can be a meaningful cultural actor.

It is no surprise, given the interpretivist provenance and legacy of police culture research, and especially the dominance of ethnography as the 'crucial methodology for entering and understanding the world of policing' (Bacon, Loftus and Rowe, 2020: 1), that analyses to date have been an entirely human-centric affair. As Latour (1993) points out, since its genesis in 18th century romanticism, the 'cultural turn' has rested on an epistemological claim of human exceptionalism which regards human actors as the exclusive source of meaning-making, and the only entities which are culturally meaningful. However, there is more to the cultural world of policing than a central cast of human characters. Cultural subjects are not isolated from entities which are 'more-than-human' (Pyyhtinen, 2016; Whatmore, 2006), but co-exist within hybrid networks of bodies *and* things. Though many ethnographies have demonstrated how cultural relations are forged in and through police officers' interactive encounters with a variety of different *people* who occupy a plethora of subject positions - including arrestees, offenders, victims, criminal justice practitioners and/or members of the public (Jackson, 2020; Jauregui, 2013; Rowe, 2007; Westmarland, 2001b: see also Special Issues on Ethnography and the Evocative World of Policing, Parts I and II, *Policing*

¹ Reiner's typology is distilled from his own, and numerous other research studies which, at different times and places, and using different terminology, have identified a portfolio of cultural dispositions and police subject positions which are collectively known as 'cop culture'.

² This includes research on cultural differences at the senior management/police leadership level (Cockcroft, 2014; Reiner, 1991; Silvestri, 2003; van Hulst, 2017); in the training school (Fielding, 1988; Sato, 2003); across different specialist units - such as the Criminal Investigation Department [CID] (Hobbs, 1989); the 'murder squad' (Innes, 2003), covert police investigation (Mac Giollabhui, Goold and Loftus, 2016), and police community support units (O'Neill, 2019); in rural force areas (Young, 1993); in the context of networked or pluralised policing (Diphooorn, 2020; Whelan, 2017; Wood, 2004); and in relation to axes of gender (Silvestri, 2017; Westmarland, 2001a), race (Cashmore, 2001; Souhami, 2012), and sexuality (Burke, 1993).

and Society (2020 [1-2]) - there is scant acknowledgement that these relations are always-already mediated, transformed, challenged and enabled by variegated constituencies of nonhuman actors. Rather, analyses subscribe (unquestioningly) to the Kantian distinction between 'knowing subjects' and 'objects to be known' (Reckwitz, 2002a: 204). Yet, a myriad of disparate objects, materialities, technologies, nonhuman species/organisms, and physical nature, intervenes in policing affairs in diverse and complex ways. From horses to helicopters, body-worn cameras to badges, tasers to tape-recorders, drones to dogs, 'things' co-produce the contours and content of a cultural milieu in ongoing, generative processes of cultural formation which can stabilise and endure as much as they can also adapt, evolve and transform (Diphorn, 2020).

From a Latourian perspective, policing is a crowded, fluid and eclectic field of action in which all entities, human and nonhuman, are lively and agential, forming connections and alliances which can make things happen through acts of enrolment and translation. 'Police culture' is, then, not a property of humans but an association of actors, or actants, where 'actants' denote anybody or anything which is deployed and has an effect in the world (Harman, 2009: 14-19). So to position human subjects as the originary force of police cultural worlds is to deny what Latour (1996, 2005) talks of as *actor-networks* - hybridised, relational, heterogeneous assemblages of interconnected, entangled, co-generative actants (Harman, 2009; Law, 2009).

Disassembling police culture: the primacy of symbolic and discursive resources

If human exceptionalism eclipses the 'more-than-human' constituencies of cultural life and renders invisible our co-generative engagements with multiple nonhuman actors, it equally constricts our grasp of the dynamics of the *making* of cultural worlds, and tethers us inside a cul-de-sac of inter/subjectivism. By this I am referring to the vast portfolio of insights which locates the making of culture in architectures of cognition and symbolic exchange, articulated through modes of language, signification, representation, discourse and/or narrative. Aligned with the social phenomenology of Schutz (1972[1932]) and Husserl (1960[1932]), cultural subjectivism regards the mind as 'a substance, place, or realm that houses a particular range of activities and attributes' (Schatzki, 1996: 22) and as the generative source of meaning-making and socio-cultural vocabulary - see Reckwitz, (2002a, 2002b) for a fuller discussion. Thus, beliefs, rationales, justifications, motives, intentions, values, norms and typifications are 'individualised and somewhat psychologised' (Turner and Rowe, 2017: 55), and are expressed (externalised) through language, ranging from epithets and idioms, to mottos, aphorisms, slang, and turns of phrase which have become the mainstay of a colourful and colloquial police lexicon - see, especially, Van Maanen (1978). The clearest expression of a subjectivist orientation is found in Chan's (1996, 1997, 2007) outline of the Bourdieusian habitus; adapting Sackmann's (1991) cognitive approach³ to organisational culture, she unpacks the habitus as a repository of discursive cultural knowledge comprised of definitions and labels (dictionary knowledge), descriptions of how things are done (directory knowledge), prescriptions for handling specific situations (recipe knowledge), and presuppositions about why things are done (axiomatic knowledge): this four-dimensional knowledge-grid, she argues:

.....presents officers with ready-made schemas and scripts that assist individual officers in particular situations to limit their search for information, organize information in terms of established categories, constitute a sensibility out of which a range of actions can flow, and provide officers with a repertoire of reasonable accounts to legitimate their actions' (1996: 114).

Chan's work, along with numerous other studies (Cockcroft, 2013; Fielding, 1988; Shearing and Ericson, 1991), also recognises the *intersubjectivism* of cultural knowledge, and how through 'sense-making' (Chan, 2007; Innes, 2003), interaction and communicative practice, cultural priorities and received wisdoms are not only circulated and shared, but also negotiated,

³ Sackmann's adherence to subjectivism is spelled out very clearly in her delineation of culture as 'the form of things that people have in their minds; their model for perceiving, integrating, and interpreting them; the ideas or theories that they use collectively to make sense of their social and physical reality' (1991: 21).

challenged, adjusted, reworked and, potentially, transformed. By locating the cultural in a realm of shared propositions, discursive rules and the semantics of language-in-use (Reckwitz, 2002a, 2002b), the focus turns to the symbolic exchange of, for example, stories and myths, jokes and banter, rumour and gossip. Indeed, story-telling, or narrativity, has more recently moved to the centre-ground of police culture studies such that van Hulst suggests that our research labour might be better described as *'police ethnography through narrative'* (2020: 111, *original emphasis*) to reflect this shift in analytical interest – see: Kurtz and Upton (2017); Rantatalo and Karp, (2018); Schaefer and Tewkesbury (2017); Turner and Rowe (2017); Ugelvik (2016); van Hulst (2013, 2017).

Given the predominance of inter/subjectivist analytics, I would not be the first to point out that much of what passes for police culture is, in fact, an *oral* culture distilled from analyses of police talk (Loftus, 2009; Turner and Rowe, 2017; Waddington, 1999). All too readily, these authors argue, police researchers have assumed a seamless correspondence between what policing actors say about their work, and the *actions* they perform on the streets. Jerolmack and Khan refer to this as the *'attitudinal fallacy'* – the error of inferring situated behaviour from verbal accounts' (2014: 179, *original emphasis*).⁴ Indeed, Waddington figures police culture as a *'decidedly rickety'* (1999: 288) conceptual bridge which spans the chasm between what officers say and what they actually do. While I agree with the problematisation of the central place accorded to the orality of police culture, I am not convinced by the bridge metaphor, nor the counter-positioning of talk *versus* action. To develop the point, I want to look more closely at the narrative ethnography of Turner and Rowe (2017).

These authors advocate an approach to talk which disentangles the interlocking particularities of police *'narrative activities'* – which incorporates a range of speech acts from *'requests, suggestions, and observations..... (to) (s)stories nested within stories (and) incomplete story references'* (2017: 59) – to show how officers generate *'plausibility structures'* which *'provide, shape and delimit plausible ways of thinking, talking and acting'* (2017: 65, *my emphasis*). Accompanying uniformed officers in an English police force across 1200 hours of operational duty, Turner and Rowe present three extracts from their fieldnotes to illustrate the narrative dynamics of different settings, actors and events – in the course of a stop and search, patrolling in a marked police van, and booking a suspect in at the police station. This is an analytically insightful, nuanced, and persuasively unpacked account which captures very well how talk creates order for officers caught up in the *'ebb and flow of action, inaction and potential action characterising the typical shift'* (2017: 63). I agree, then, with Turner and Rowe that talk, and action are both forms of *doing*, and are integrally entwined in moments (situations, events) of meaning-making; where I depart from their approach is to question an analysis of talk/action which at no point moves beyond the realm of language, signification, and representation. In short, we can applaud the innovation of Turner's and Rowe's *'narrative activities'* approach and mark its contribution to van Hulst's (2020) call for *'police ethnography through narrative'*, but it ultimately remains trapped within an intersubjectivist silo and *holds constant* the human actor as the wellspring of police actions.

What else can we say of the actors, settings and events which are so carefully drawn through Turner's and Rowe's fieldnotes (2017: 60-62)? I am struck by the presence of the *'more-than-human'* actants of police talk/action. An unmarked police car, a mountain bike, a pavement, a pocket, a car window, a road junction, a housing estate, a hedge of trees, a small patch of potholed tarmac, a motorway, a car driving in reverse, a locked/lockable square room, a door sign, five computers, desks, a printer/copier, the *'system'* (the force's computer database), a drink, a police radio, software, blue light and siren, an ATM, and a marked police van – all make an appearance in the *doing* (talk/action) of everyday operational policing. Through a less anthropocentric gaze, these *'other actors'* are not merely elements which stand by while *the doing* of policing is going on elsewhere, but they create the conditions of possibility for all that is happening, intervene directly and indirectly in how events unfold, transform the mood and charge of the flow of action, offer

⁴ I am grateful to Turner and Rowe (2017) for bringing this methodological paper to my attention.

alternative ways of being, saying and acting, and set the parameters of what *might* be done in any given situation.

For Latour (1993: Chapter 4), the mutual entanglements of the material and the discursive calls for a 'symmetric anthropology' which regards people and things as commensurable actants and equally indispensable to the making of the cultural. From a Latourian standpoint, conventional fault lines across talk/action, subject/object, representation/reality, and human/nonhuman are erased, or 'flattened', with neither side of the binary constituting an appropriate point of departure (Latour, 1993, 2005). Rather, our starting point should focus on *practices*, and *networks of practices*, ontologised as the 'primary generic social thing' (Schatzki, 2001: 1). This resonates with a broader interdisciplinary shift towards practice-centred approaches to cultural theory (Nicolini, 2012; Pickering, 1995; Schatzki, 1996, 1997, 2002, 2005; Schatzki *et al.*, 2001; Spaargaren *et al.*, 2016). What we refer to as 'culture', then, is something which is accomplished, performed, assembled, made and unmade through interwoven and interacting webs of material and symbolic practices which involve human and nonhuman 'bodies-in-action'. Re-imagined as 'a nexus of practices' (Schatzki 2005: 471) which hang together, overlap and enfold as an open-ended, 'spatial-temporal manifold of actions' (Schatzki 1997: 285), 'culture', as currently conceptualised, loses its ontological moorings, and it is to this that I now turn.

Disassembling police culture: the purification of culture

The idea of a police culture which is monolithic and invariant across different settings and specialisms, has long since been discounted (Ingram, Paoline and Terrill, 2018 – see also Footnote 3. Yet, Klockars *et al.* (2004) found that when reputational capital is at stake, a shared 'blue code' persists across and within different police milieus and jurisdictions and serves as a protective cloak against allegations of corruption, brutalities, and unethical conduct – see also Westmarland, 2005; Westmarland and Rowe, 2018. Similarly, despite the marked shift towards what has been variously denoted as 'plural' or 'networked' policing (Brodeur, 2010; Jones and Newburn, 2006), there is little evidence that exposure to the audit-focused, risk-based sensibilities of the private/corporate security sector has fostered (positive) cultural change for public policing (O'Neill and McCarthy, 2014; Terpstra, 2016; Whelan, 2017; Wood, 2004). Indeed, some have argued that the integration of alternative cultural orientations has not only reinforced established public policing culture (Ericson and Haggerty, 1997; Johnston, 2000; Johnston and Shearing, 2003), but has also worked in reverse to inject a 'punitive mentality' into commercial security services (Braithwaite, 2003; Johnston and Shearing, 2003). As Loftus (2010) comments, even in these 'altered times', and despite the advent of a dispersed policing family, the promise of cultural transformation has failed to materialise; she notes: 'Notwithstanding the reordering of the policing landscape ... there still is a police culture whose defining elements are alive and well' (2010: 3, *my emphasis*).

It is this notion of an obdurate, self-perpetuating culture which underpins its strategic relevance to programmes of police reform and ensures a continuing rationale for its study (Chan, 2007; Loftus, 2010; Sklansky and Marks, 2008; Turner and Rowe, 2017). Consider, for example, how research spanning a multiplicity of national jurisdictions, including Australia, South Africa, Ireland, the United Kingdom, the United States, the Netherlands, Uganda, Rwanda and Sierra Leone (Baker, 2007; Chan, 1997, 2007; Charman and Corcoran, 2015; Herbert, 1997; Marks, 2004; Loftus, 2009; Terpstra and Schaap, 2013), has figured police culture as policing's 'recalcitrant other' (Turner and Rowe, 2017: 53) and the pivotal dynamic which undermines, stymies, inhibits, resists and obstructs the implementation and impact of progressive organizational, legislative, technological and policy change. Though some have questioned the explanatory power of the culture/reform dyad (Turner and Rowe, 2017), it seems to be a thesis which we cannot do without or, at least, are reluctant to abandon. Sklansky (2007) talks of our weddedness to the concept of police culture as 'cognitive burn-in'. For me, this is not a question of cognition, but a matter of ontological purification.

'Cultures – different or universal – do not exist, any more than Nature does. There are only natures-cultures' (Latour, 1993: 104). In this short passage, Latour articulates his hostility to binaries and dualisms, and makes clear his rejection of the modernist separation of culture from nature. There is not a sphere of 'culture', filled with norms, values, identities, discourse,

inter/subjectivities and meanings, on the one hand, and a world of 'nature', comprised of facts, objects, causal forces, measurements and materialities, on the other. These opposing dynamics set in motion an ontological process of *purification* which not only disentangles 'culture' from 'nature', but also from society, the economy, science, technology, morality, law and politics – differentiations, moreover, which sustain macro/micro, or structure/agency distinctions in the intellectualisation and rationalisation of epistemological logics.⁵ For Latour, the modernist settlement – the Constitution (1993: Chapter 2) – is a smokescreen which masks the lively relationalities which make up the messy worlds we inhabit and dislocates 'culture' from the 'oxygen of its networks' (Nimmo, 2011: 114). By 'purifying' culture and setting it apart, the co-articulation of facts and values, the objective and the subjective, meaning and matter, the embodied and the machinic, the virtual and the actual, is lost from view.

From a Latourian standpoint, the cultural is not 'a special domain, a special realm, or a particular sort of thing' (Latour, 2005: 7); it is a space of networks, performative alliances and hybrid associations – 'a provisional assembly of all kinds of "bits and pieces"' (Bennett, 2007: 612). In an early article, Latour (1986) talked of a 'strategy of deflation', of bringing 'culture' down a peg or two into the tall weeds of its most mundane, material and mechanical doings. Entwistle and Slater sum this up well:

'(T)o deflate 'culture' is not to refute or refuse it: Latour has a place for 'culture' but it is one that – like 'the social' – must be assembled through the hard graft of tracing associations and not by lazy acts of analytical legerdemain. The cultural must be laboriously reassembled by the analyst in precisely the same way that it is assembled by actors in the first place (2014: 164).

Across this and the previous two sections, I have disassembled, or deflated, current conceptualisations of police culture and made the case for a relational approach informed by Latourian ideas on actor-networks, hybrid associations, practices, actants, and the co-articulation of natures-cultures. At its (very) simplest, I am calling for the (re-)materialisation of police culture, but this understates the ontological innovation of an approach which insists on the generative symmetry of human and nonhuman worlds and provides an entry point for grappling with the vitality and complexity of contemporary policing. So, rather than pirouette in the purified space of human-centric discourse and inter/subjectivism, Latour invites us to explore other possibilities, and to embrace the entanglements of open-ended, performative 'dances of agency' (Pickering, 2010). It is an invitation, moreover, which comes with a choreography of methodological steps.

Policing-networks: reassembling the cultural

In contrast to Latour's ambitious ontological claims, his methodological approach is regarded as far more modest and prosaic (Garforth, 2015). In *Reassembling the Social* (2005) we find the 'how to' of actor-network theory (ANT) presented as more of a 'travel guide' (*ibid.*: 17) than a prescriptive framework of methodological protocols. Research practice is reconfigured as a kind of map-making, with the researcher reimagined as a meandering (insect-like) cartographer, 'a blind, myopic, workaholic, trail-sniffing, and collective traveller (a)n ant writing for other ants' (*ibid.*: 9). The travel metaphor aligns Latour's approach with the inductive, immersive and embedded orientation of ethnographic methods and, indeed, many see commonalities in their shared emphasis on non-linearity, 'thick description' (Geertz, 1973), everyday practices, and 'an openness to the multiple and overlapping phenomenological worlds of their subjects' (Nimmo,

⁵ An exemplar of structure/agency differentiation is found in accounts of 'police culture' which foreground the Bourdieusian notion of *habitus* (Chan, 1996, 1997, 2007). Conceptualised as distinct from, but also interacting with *the field of policing* (comprised of structures such as law, organisation, democracy), *habitus* captures the dispositions, skills and cognitive templates of cultural life. However, and much as the thesis seeks to overcome the micro/macro dualism of agency/structure, it ultimately slips back into an objectivist view of culture, bracketed off (purified) from its structuring conditions of possibility. Indeed, Evens (1999) complains that despite his antagonism toward dualistic thinking, Bourdieu persistently reverts to a sophisticated form of objectivism.

2011: 113). Yet, this comparison is relatively short-lived. Austrin and Farnsworth (2005), for example, have been swift to point out that ANT prioritises method and inquiry over theory-generation; translation and engagement over inference and interpretation; connectivity and relationality over the 'purely social'; tracking and tracing over the production of new knowledge. It may be the case that ethnographers observe people *in situ*, gain knowledge through experience, and/or acquire tacit knowledge of a way of life, but 'travelling ants' follow the actors (human and non-human), accumulate detail, and 'have never been interested in giving a social explanation of anything' (Callon and Latour, 1992: 348).

It would be fair to say that in policing studies, and criminology more generally, 'police culture' looms large as a 'matter of concern' (Latour, 2003), and it serves as a ready-made explanans for deficits and hiatuses in the policy, organisational, technological, legal and democratic reform of policing. For Latour, this is not so much 'wrong', as it is premature, glosses over the messiness of the world, and 'limit(s) in advance the shape, size, heterogeneity, and combination of associations' (2005: 11) which characterise cultural and collective life. It recycles a circular conceit which invokes the cultural (economic, political, legal, ethical, technological) as an explanatory domain without adequately unpacking precisely what that domain entails. So, rather than impose *a priori* definitions of a situation, ANT proposes an openness to the uncertainties of a world in continual flux; the task is to follow a myriad of actors – networks of human and nonhuman entities - in their 'world-making activities' (Latour, 2005: 57), and to embrace the agential potential of multiple actants, tracing their lines of association and the actions which make such connections possible. It is only through a rigorous empirical exploration of how different actors assemble around a controversial state of affairs that their capacity to speak/write, enact, redefine and represent the world can be established. By tracing the associations and alliances among a multiplicity of elements, the cartographer of controversies identifies 'a type of connection between things that are not themselves social' (Latour, 2005: 5, *original emphasis*), and is better able to grasp how hierarchies and order emerge, how relations may stabilise and endure, and how specific agendas are pursued.

The question, then, is how does this help us to research 'police culture'? In the first instance, we can ditch any pretence that a purified realm of 'culture' is 'out there' awaiting our discovery and analysis. Rather, our attention turns to a cartography of *policing-networks* where both terms are invoked as verbs rather than nouns to capture the actancy of the world, and denote 'a doing' which binds people and things in time and space, and names a process of assembling and enrolling - of gathering, composing, aligning a *culturo-sociality* through a myriad of relational practices. In Latour's words, *policing-networks* do not:

..... designate a domain of reality or some particular item, but rather is the name of a movement, a displacement, a transformation, a translation, an enrolment. It is an association between entities which are in no way recognizable as being social in the ordinary manner, *except* during the brief moments when they are reshuffled together (2005: 64-65, *original emphasis*).

Latour proposes three moves which collectively help us to map the terrain of *policing-networks*, to follow the actors, and to trace their connections and associations. I address each move in turn.

Localizing the global

The first move is what Latour refers to as 'localizing the global' (2005: 173-190). The global is not understood here as 'world-wide' in scale but is Latour's term for the kinds of hasty abstractions, such as 'police culture', which are unreflexively presented as durable, stable, generic entities. Localizing the global looks for local actors across multiple sites, seeking out the performative, generative relations of chance encounters and specific interactions. Indeed, police ethnographies are replete with a myriad of idiosyncratic events, observations, practices, actions and interactions which weave a rich and complex tapestry of localised sites of encounter. So, for example, we engage with detectives on boozy nights out in an East End pub (Hobbs, 1989), on patrol (Loftus, 2009; Rowe, 2007; Westmarland, 2001a), at training colleges (Sato, 2003), in specialist units (Innes, 2003), in police—private partnerships (O'Neill and McCarthy, 2014; Whelan,

2017), in the countryside (Young, 1993), and in the senior management suites (Cockcoft, 2014; van Hulst, 2017). There is nothing, then, about 'localizing the global' which is anathema to existing ways of navigating the strange maps of policing worlds. But Latour's innovation is to acknowledge that these sites are also populated by more-than-human actors which make possible and, potentially, transform the dynamics of each encounter. We can think here of Westmarland's (2017) analysis of the gendered physicalities of custody work in conditions of continual CCTV monitoring. Commenting on how male custody officers manage the embodied sensitivities of overseeing female suspects' removal of clothing for body searches, and their personal ablutions, she notes:

(T)his causes special difficulties for the people monitoring the screens (and)... includes finding areas she can undress, use the lavatory, and shower in corners that are not covered by the cameras, or by switching them off, or by trusting male custody staff not to watch the screens, all of which causes security problems for the remainder of the building (Westmarland, 2017: 307).

Westmarland's keen observation of the transformative power of closed-circuit surveillance cameras is, however, an exception to the erstwhile human-centric rule of police ethnographic research. Yet, as Latour and Venn (2002: 252) note: 'Technologies bombard human beings with a ceaseless offer of previously unheard of positions – engagements, suggestions, allowances, interdictions, habits, positions, alienations, prescriptions, calculations, memories'. In our efforts, then, to 'localize the global', the full range of heterogeneous entities which inhabit a site need to be acknowledged and detailed. Far from being passive, inert, background elements, 'things' organise, mediate and intervene in the formation and practices of policing-networks, and co-produce a symmetrical, flattened reservoir of meaning-making.

Redistributing the local

Latour's second move is to 'redistribute the local'. It is a focus which insists that local interactions, practices and encounters do not conclude in one location, but are both inherited from, and redeployed across multiple sites beyond the local. As I have discussed at length above, there is no shortage of nuanced analyses which map the inter/subjective dialectics (*via* story-telling, jokes, anecdotes, and gossip, for example) of these redistributive logics. However, Latour insists that localised interactions necessarily involve *inter/objectivities* as well as, if not more than inter/subjectivities; as he notes: 'The meandering path through which most of the ingredients of action reach any given interaction is traced by the multiplication, enrolment, implication, and folding of non-human actors' (2005: 193). It is not that the non-human elements of policing interactions have been completely ignored, but that research has rarely pressed the matter and pushed beyond the analytic boundaries of intersubjectivism. For example, Loftus writes of a localised event on her travels with the Southville Police – specifically, patrol officers pulling over to check out the incongruence of a 24-hour garage clothed in complete darkness (Loftus, 2010: 14-15). Loftus refers to officers as having developed 'an extensive dictionary of indicators' of (potentially) nefarious activities and claims that certain 'cues in the working environment prompted a reflex of suspicion and predetermined what the police interaction would be' (2010: 15, *my emphasis* – more about this emphasis below). Loftus, here, identifies the importance of the materialities of interactive encounters, and draws attention to the visual and embodied aesthetics of policing spaces, but she does not expand on the provenance of this 'extensive dictionary of indicators'. An interobjectivist orientation might speculate that this 'dictionary' is etched from and traceable through a policing-network of material-textual practices and not exclusively generated by 'a reflex of suspicion'. The inscriptive work of, for example, contemporaneous notes, police summary statements, evidential dossiers, surveillance footage, and the 'case file'; and the performative work of, say, background checks, dispatch notifications and radio calls, redistribute the interobjectivities of localised interactions and translate them into a compendium of indices (Loftus's 'extensive dictionary of indicators') which can be categorised, correlated, cross-tabulated, mapped and rendered as retrievable data. Whether these translations are mobilised through pens and pencils, 'old-school' punch-cards, the proforma of risk-

assessment tools, Excel spreadsheets, or the algorithms of big data, techno-digital actants relocate and disperse inter/actions such that 'someone else, from some other place and some other time, is still acting in it through indirect but fully traceable connections' (Latour, 2005: 196).

Connecting sites

Localising the global, and redistributing the local lifts the curtain on who and what circulates within and across localised policing-networks; but in a third move, Latour enjoins us to identify the ways in which a multiplicity of policing-networks *connect* and *take form* as an assemblage of interlinked practices which are recognisable as something resembling 'the cultural'. Latour (2005: 221) suggests three types of connectors - these are standards, collecting statements, and mediators. To elaborate: standards make possible the transportation of agencies over time and space, facilitate comparability and commensurability across a myriad of policing-networks, and foster the formatting and stabilisation of cultural life. We are certainly accustomed to the notion of shared norms, values, beliefs, skills, assumptions, cognitions, reflexes, and so on, as connective standards which bring into alignment the multiplicity of sites which assemble (and are assembled by) policing-networks. We can also recognise that mission statements, decision-making criteria, commercial contracts, key performance indicators, force statistics, and so on, establish a textual-discursive series of standards which connect policing-networks in legal-administrative ways. What is missing from this inventory are the range of standards which govern the nonhuman elements of policing-networks - we can think, for example, of the strict codes of uniform; the issue of standard equipment (such as handcuffs, truncheons, guns, radios); prescribed operating instructions regarding vehicles, weapons, computers, machinery and cameras; guidelines for the appropriate handling and deployment of horses and dogs; and/or protocols for the storage/disposal of confidential documents, confiscations, artefactual and forensic evidence.

Nonetheless, Latour argues against analytics which regard such standards as transcendent, as 'pre-determining' interaction (see above: Loftus, 2010: 15), or as stockpiled in a reservoir of 'cultural resources' (Campeau, 2015). Connectors are not, as he puts it, 'immutable mobiles' (Latour, 2005: 223) but are also transformed (and take form) through processes and practices of making connections. This is more than emphasising situational variance in how standards are applied, but about the displacements, delegations, animations, and transformations which connectors can initiate. So, for example, consider how the standard operational protocols for custody surveillance cameras, observed by Westmarland (2017), displaced a culture of gendered sensitivities, at least in relation to body searches and female suspects' need for privacy; how a 'reflex of suspicion' (Loftus, 2010: 15) is delegated to sniffer dogs, trained to precise standards; how the patrol dog is not solely a skilful crime-fighter but 'animalizes the force of law' (Wall, 2014: 2); and how the issue of guns, as standard equipment, enabled Diphorn's (2020) Kenyan state police to assert their status and authority *vis-à-vis* private policing actors, transforming the cultural expectation of a collaborative and equitable partnership.

So, what is meant by Latour's notion of collecting statements? These can be regarded as analogous to a portfolio of researchers' fieldnotes, interview transcripts, and observations, alongside the collection of discourse, scripts, and representations generated through organisational paperwork, policy documents, and manuals, for example (Campbell, 2004; Manning, 1988). However, Latour adopts an explicitly Foucauldian orientation (Levi and Valverde, 2008) which acknowledges that collecting statements not only format and assemble cultural realities, but that they also constitute an *apparatus*, a heterogeneous ensemble of human and nonhuman entities consisting of discourses, materialities, architectures, bodies, and technologies. This broader conceptualisation of collecting statements is certainly found in the work of Manning (1992), and Ericson and Haggerty (1997) who recognise how communicative technologies - such as CCTV surveillance, computer-assisted dispatch systems, data-inputting, information-retrieval systems, and voice-entry occurrence report systems - encode and encrypt the messiness of policing practices and co-articulate the discursive and material dynamics of policing-networks. Moreover, for cartographer ants moving across a 21st century landscape, such collecting statements might also include footage from body-worn cameras, aerial images generated by drones, digitally-enhanced simulations, satellite-aided visualisations, and the live streaming of automated facial recognition technologies.

Collecting statements require collectors, which/who Latour refers to as mediators. Mediators, he argues, 'transform, translate, distort, and modify the meaning of the elements they are supposed to carry' (2005: 39). This is easily grasped in relation to the many technological and digital mediators which convert an imbroglio of policing practices into a myriad of representational forms - graphs, stills, signals, print-outs, statistics - each of which co-produces 'the cultural' by distilling complexity through fixed and shareable frameworks of meaning. In my own research, for example, on the performative power of digital 'things' (mobile phones, dash-cams, sensors, satellites, digital cameras), I have argued that code is more than the language of machines; rather, by virtue of the density of mediations which it performs, it is a 'culture-object' (Mackenzie, 2005: 74) which enacts 'new configurations of socio-cultural categories, values, and norms, recalibrates what can be known and is know-able, and reinvents modes of semiotic exchange' (Campbell, 2019: 24 - see also: *Theory, Culture and Society*, Special Issue on Codes and Codings in Crisis, (2011: 28[6])). Perhaps more tellingly, the widespread availability of mobile camera devices, and the circulations of filmic and photographic footage via social media platforms by activists and everyday actors, mediates and intervenes to unsettle the 'aesthetic order' (Wall and Linnemann, 2014: 144) of policing visibilities, and configures a visual-cultural economy of countersurveillance, exposure and scrutiny of policing-networks *in action*.

Yet, of all mediators, it is the criminological researcher who is most likely to not only connect with the emerging cultural dynamics of policing-networks, but also to co-assemble their contours through practices of research. Souhami's (2020) eloquent reflections of her fieldwork practice make the point. In an engaging and very frank account, Souhami (2020: 212-220) writes of a number of 'tests' which confirmed her place within numerous cultural sites, and her existential acceptance of the dominant norms of the setting; she outlines the dilemmas of taking a joke, the challenges of physical endurance 'on the job', and the complexities of managing emotions in stressful and shocking situations. As she notes of her research experience, the will to conform to the cultural conventions of the field embroiled her into the cultural milieu of operational policing, with the effect of 'reproducing a narrative of research as dangerous, difficult and exciting' (2020: 220), prioritising certain cultural values and attributes (such as machismo), and occluding practices which signal the tedium and mundanity of policework - see also: Diphoorn, 2012; Jauregui, 2013; Rowe, 2007; Westmarland, 2001. As Waddington pointed out some time ago: 'There is the distinct possibility that the literature on police sub-culture tells us more about the peculiarities of academic life than it does about the distinctiveness of the police' (1999: 292 - see also: Heslop, 2011).

One conclusion among many

This paper has used Latourian ANT to question the epistemological and ontological underpinnings of the concept of 'police culture', and has opened up a theoretical and methodological prospectus which pays attention to the ways in which what counts as culture is assembled through a nexus of relational practices involving a multiplicity of human and nonhuman actors. So, rather than invoke 'police culture' as an informal layer of discursive-cognitive know-how which informs how policing gets done, or as a stable, pre-existing domain of reality, a Latourian sensibility regards cultural life as an *effect* of a heterogeneity of discursive and material practices mobilised and enacted through the dynamics of policing-networks, each a site of active, generative and creative agencies which, through acts of enrolment and translation, form connections and alliances in the making of cultural worlds.

The 'easy' route to the study of 'police culture' is to embrace what is already bundled together under the rubric of the cultural - values, norms, practical skills, attributes, beliefs, identities, meanings, representations; the more difficult task is to map the contours of that which emerges only through a dense and rhizomatic web of practices, regarded as ongoing attempts to settle 'matters of concern' over policing arrangements. ANT invites us to explore imbroglios of policing practices as uncharted territory, akin to a cartographer - a 'cartographer of controversies' (Venturini, 2010) - who has 'to deal not only with multiple reports coming from many travellers but also with multiple projection grids, where each point is requesting its own ad hoc coordinates' (Latour, 2005: 25). It is in the time-spaces of these co-ordinates that the

cultural is assembled from the lively, hybridised relationalities of a myriad of agentic material/discursive, organic/machinic, human/nonhuman entities.

For some, ANT has a fashionable allure; it has its own attractive language and terminology; it is often ironic, always clever, and sometimes very “French” (Baiocchi *et al.*, 2013: 324), and for these reasons may not appeal to the ‘hard-boiled end’ of policing scholarship where research training and theoretical interests are anchored to the *terra firma* of pre-stated problematics and the explanations they invite. Perhaps, though, there is some common ground to be found in Latour’s insistence that controversies are the springboard of all of our analytical and research endeavours. Controversies remind us that policing is never stable, but is always being remade and re-oriented to adapt to, for example, technological innovations, legislative reform, and new strategic priorities; they also engage us in a politics of research and a commitment to public debate on the nature of policing, governance and security. The question, then, is the difference that a Latourian contribution can make, especially when ANT explicitly eschews any attempt to steer controversies to closure, and is hesitant in adopting a political position. Such concerns, however, largely miss the point that by embracing a cartographic imagination, analysis is not tethered to a fixed frame of reference, but instead follows lines of connection, and traces modes of association *across, through* and *within* policing-networks. Situated in the ‘thick of it’, amidst the complexities, contradictions and contingencies of intersecting and interwoven cultural (political, economic, ethical, legal, technological) interpretations, interests, alliances and standpoints, there is no easy shortcut to be taken. Therein lie the merits of Latourian cartography; as Venturini notes: ‘(Cultural) cartography is not meant to close controversies, but to show that they may be closed in many different ways’ (2010: 268).

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