Dressing for Disorder: Examining the Effect of Enclothed Cognition and Uniform Type on Police Officers' Self-Perception

Dressing for Disorder: Examining the Effect of Enclothed Cognition and Uniform Type on Police Officers' Self-Perception

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A thesis submitted in partial fulfilment of the requirements of The University of West London for the degree of Doctor of Policing, Crime and Security

August 2024

Acknowledgements

This research would not have been possible without the engagement, reflection and honesty of the Police Officers who took part. To those who agreed to be interviewed, and those who facilitated the research taking place, I am incredibly grateful.

I would like to thank my supervisors Dr Maya Flax and Professor Karim Murji for your support and supervision throughout the process. Thank you for enabling me to remain focused and to see the potential in my work.

To my friends and family who asked questions and listened to my long, excitable answers. Thanks particularly to my parents for helping me through the process by providing dog-sitting, hot meals and printing services whenever I needed them!

I would also like to thank the College of Policing, the National Police Library and the Academic Support Network for all the help provided over the course of this Doctorate. Finally thanks to Russell Hickford for checking in throughout the process and ensuring I was able to balance work, work, and life.

This thesis would not have been brought to existence without all of you.

Abstract

Public order policing in the United Kingdom is a specialist response to events of large crowds, public safety concerns or the risk of disorder. The police officers assigned to public order policing will often be wearing specialist protective uniform, which is likely to be different to that worn in their ordinary, daily role. A range of research has been conducted to examine how the public perceive police officers in different types of uniform, however very little exists to consider how these officers perceive themselves when wearing specialist, or ordinary uniform.

This study uniquely used the theoretical framework of enclothed cognition to examine the way officers perceive themselves whilst wearing their ordinary, and alternatively their public order uniform, and to compare this self-perception across the ordinary and public order roles. Thematic analysis is used to analyse qualitative data from 20 semi structured interviews with police officers in their ordinary, or public order roles. This research fills a clear gap in the existing body of research by utilising authentic police officer participants, on duty, and dressed in the uniform appropriate to their role.

This research makes two contributions. Firstly, it provides academic evidence in the enclothed cognition field examining police officers' self-perception with participants who are authentic, operational police officers. This research found that enclothed cognition does influence officers' self-perception, but significantly, this is a result of the meaning and experience associated with previously wearing it, and not the physical presence of the uniform itself. Secondly this research contributes to professional practice with the development of evidence-based policing and informing decision making regarding public order dress codes. This research concludes by making recommendations relevant to developing police public order training and commander briefing tools.

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List of abbreviations

ABE	Achieving Best Evidence
ACPO	Association of Chief Police Officers
ANPR	Automatic Number Plate Recognition
APA	American Psychological Association
ESRC	Economic and Social Research Council
G20	Group of 20 (forum for international economic cooperation)
HMIC	Her Majesty's Inspectorate of Constabularies
NPCC	National Police Chief's Council
NPIA	National Policing Improvement Agency (now the College of Policing)
POPS	Public Order and Public Safety
PPE	Personal Protective Equipment
PSU	Police Support Unit
SES	Socioeconomic Status
SRP	Strategic Review of Policing
UK	United Kingdom
UWL	University of West London

Chapter one: Introduction

This research examines the self-perception of police officers based in the United Kingdom who are wearing either 'ordinary' or 'public order' uniform. The research seeks to identify whether the type of uniform worn affects the officer's perception of themselves in relation to the purpose of their role and their exposure to risk. Ordinary uniform refers to the police uniform or plain clothes equivalent that an officer would wear for their normal day to day duties. Public Order Uniform refers to the wearing of protective padding, flameproof uniform (undergarments and a 'boiler suit'), and a protective helmet which would be worn when heightened disorder is anticipated. The decision of when to deploy officers in different uniform types is made by a police commander who will consider the threat and risk of the scenario, and how the commander and the public will perceive the style and tone of the police response.

Support for the wearing of 'ordinary' uniform when policing public order stems from Waddington (1991) who suggests that police officers undertaking public order policing who are recognisably 'ordinary coppers', are familiar to the public as being those same officers who fight crime and protect the peace. Waddington (1991) states that associating these officers with their ordinary role minimises the fear the public may feel when compared to officers dressed in protective 'riot gear' who are conversely seen as a different and alien breed of police officer (Waddington 1991). The suggestion that public perception of the police can be influenced by the way officers are dressed has been the focus of much exploration (Bell 1982; Singer and Singer, 1985; Nickels, 2007; Johnson, 2013; Johnson et al, 2015; Simpson, 2018; Monk Gilmore & Jackson, 2019). There is however very little research to evidence how the officers themselves feel, and whether their code of dress affects their self-perception.

The present research contributes to a clear gap in the current body of knowledge around the impact police uniform has upon those wearing it. This is an important area to address as police and public interaction is frequently scrutinised with media articles providing commentary around the public perception of officers dressed in public order uniform (BBC News, 2021; Evening Standard, 2020). This research will advance academic knowledge as well as the application of enclothed cognition theory (Adam and Galinsky, 2012) within policing. In addition it will enable police commanders to make informed decisions when deploying and briefing public order officers by understanding what, if any, inherent impact officer uniform has on the person wearing it. Police training teams will also be able to embed any learning into public order training to ensure officers are aware of any unconscious influence a change in dress may have on themselves as the wearer.

Policing of Public Order and Public Safety (POPS) in the UK holds the prominent responsibility of maintaining public safety while facilitating human rights such as the right to protest. POPS policing encompasses a wide range of events from crowded places, such as a busy high street on New Year's Eve, to the policing of football, industrial action or protest activity (Morrell and Brammer 2016). Each of these different scenarios requires a bespoke, specific, intelligence led response. Guidance for police commanders evolved significantly following the G20 Conference in London in 2009 as protests associated with this event drew widespread criticism of the policing response

to protest. Outbreaks of violence and disorder, the use of 'kettling' tactics and questions around planning and preparation led to Her Majesty's Inspectorate of Constabularies (HMIC) commissioning a report to explore the police response to protest. The publication of 'Adapting to Protest' (HMIC, 2009) and the subsequent 'Adapting to Protest – nurturing the British model of policing' (HMIC, 2009:2) offered a number of recommendations to policing public order operations. One of these recommendations considered the wearing of public order uniform, and suggested that,

> The British model [of policing] can be easily eroded by premature displays of formidable public order protective uniform and equipment which give the perception – inadvertent or otherwise – of a hardening of the character of British policing (2009:12)

The report further suggests that health and safety considerations should not overwhelm the decision-making process of justifying deployment of officers in Public Order dress (HMIC, 2009). This position places POPS commanders in the difficult position of having to balance the safety of the officers they deploy, with the 'character' of the policing operation.

As a Police Officer and a Public Order Commander, I personally have felt a physical and emotional shift in myself when required to change from my operational uniform to a public order uniform when attending an incident. In seeking evidence as to why this might happen, I was met with a noticeable void in the existing body of research. Self-perception appears to be under researched, and a specific understanding of the way clothing and particularly uniform can influence the person wearing it will provide a more wholesome discussion to the debate about dress code in POPS policing. As a practitioner, I have heard from sources throughout the rank and command structure a common anecdote that as soon as an officer dons their Public Order uniform, they adopt a new personality, and stop engaging with members of the public 'forgetting' basic communication skills. The suggestion behind this anecdote being that the friendly, neighbourhood officer becomes a militarised, homogenous instrument as soon as they change their appearance. Whilst this might support the Adapting to Protest observation of 'hardening the character of policing' (HMIC, 2009 p12) there is no evidence to explore whether this transformation actually takes place. This research therefore seeks to identify the self-perception of officers undertaking different types of policing and consider what might influence this.

Within this research, data has been generated through interviews with police officers in both their daily policing role, and their Public Order role. This research seeks to explore what Public Order Officers perceive the purpose of their role to be, and their own perception of risk and danger whilst performing the role. Their responses are then compared with their self-perception of their normal daily role, and with officers who do not hold a Public Order role, to understand any differences or parallels that may be present.

Chapter two: Literature Review

Introduction

This literature review identifies the existing body of research relating to clothing and uniform, and how this can influence the thoughts, feelings and actions of the individual wearing it. Before examining existing research, a summary is provided of the process of searching the literature, and the selection strategy that was utilised to find, include or disregard relevant research. Following this, a basic overview of police uniform is provided to aid the reading of this review, and to explain integral terms which are used throughout this research, such as 'response' and 'PSU'. A brief overview of police culture is provided to assist with understanding the working reality of the types of role this research focuses on. The theoretical framework is introduced and the two key concepts that will shape the review, 'enclothed cognition' and 'symbolic interactionism' are identified. Each concept is then explored in detail drawing from relevant supporting literature and identifying how this relates to the present research. Finally, this chapter makes concluding remarks by contextualising this research within the broader setting of current literature.

Search strategy

This literature review draws primarily on peer reviewed academic journals and books taken from subject areas including psychology, sociology and policing. Due to the limited research available about clothing and behaviour, and specifically uniform and behaviour, literature was sought from worldwide sources and not limited to the UK. Information regarding police uniform and public order uniform however is predominantly related to the United Kingdom, to encompass information from the Police Services of England and Wales, and Police Scotland.

To develop a suitable search strategy, I sought advice from the subject librarian at the University and liaised with the librarians at the National Police Library in order to identify specialist information in relation to UK policing. Searches were predominantly conducted online and encompassed a range of academic databases accessed through the University Library Portal. To provide structure and to be able to replicate electronic searches, I employed a literature search and selection strategy originally focused on the key terms of 'police' 'uniform' and 'behaviour.' Boolean phrases such as 'and' were used initially to identify sources discussing ideas such as 'uniform and behaviour', and 'clothing and mindset', 'uniform and self-perception'. To draw from a wider pool of literature, these search terms were expanded to include alternative terms including 'military' 'authority' and 'nurse' to represent the person, and 'dress' 'clothing' and 'equipment' to represent the uniform, and 'identity' 'self-perception' and 'image' to represent self-perception. Once the theories of enclothed cognition (Adam and Galinsky, 2012) and symbolic interactionism (Blumer, 1969) had been identified, these were also used to create search phrases such as 'enclothed cognition and police'.

In developing this literature review a significant volume of research regarding viewer perception of clothing was digested and evaluated. Some of this literature is included to provide a broader understanding of the influence of clothing. It is recognised that

this is secondary to the primary focus of this research, namely how clothing influences the person wearing it.

Introduction to police uniform

Police officers in the United Kingdom wear different uniform or clothing types depending on the role which they are required to perform. Additionally there may be variance between police force areas as to the exact uniform that officers wear (Bryant & Bryant, 2014). Within the police force areas sampled in this research, different uniform types are worn by officers in different types of role. This uniform might represent a physical need, such as the protective qualities offered by the Public Order uniform, or visibility, such as the wearing of a tall custodian helmet by response officers out on foot patrol. Additionally detectives working in investigation roles will wear business wear in order to be discreet when conducting enquiries.

In the force areas that participated in this research, officers undertaking a variety of uniformed roles wear the same type of uniform, which is referred to in the participant description as 'black shirt'. Officers in neighbourhood policing, community beat managers, and response officers all wear the same composition of black uniform which is described in more detail below.

Figure 1 Response Uniform

The basis of the present research is a comparison between officers wearing one of two uniforms, and it is important that the reader has a clear understanding of what these uniform types are comprised of, and in what circumstances they might be worn. To assist the reading of this thesis, police uniform types are distinguished between that of a 'response' officer and a that of a 'police support unit' (PSU) officer. A response officer is a police officer who routinely wears a uniform and performs active patrols either on foot or in a marked vehicle (Wakefield, 2009). Response officers are dispatched to calls from the public, and their taskings on any given day could vary from attending a community event, searching for a missing person, apprehending a violent offender, or attending a road traffic collision. Response officers will typically wear black trousers and a black shirt, black or fluorescent body armour, a hat, and a kit belt bearing items such as handcuffs and a baton as depicted in figure 1. The precise nature of the uniform, tailoring and material will vary by force area (Bryant & Bryant, 2014).

A PSU officer is an officer specially trained in public order policing tactics, and liable for deployment into incidents of public disorder, or where there is a potential for disorder to occur. As shown in figure 2, PSU officers will carry a shield and wear protective padding and a helmet and are often described as wearing 'riot gear' (Stott & Reicher, 1998). In some metropolitan forces there are dedicated PSU teams, where officers solely undertake public order type duties. However for most forces PSU officers are drawn from the wider force demographic, and officers will adopt a PSU uniform as and when directed for specific events. These officers will hold a core role within their organisation which will be as far ranging as uniformed response, custody, control room, or investigations and will include uniformed and non-uniformed roles.

Figure 2 PSU Uniform

These two specific policing skillsets and their associated uniforms have been selected as a focus for this paper owing to their unique existence in UK policing. Police officers in the UK unlike their counterparts globally, are unusual in that they remain largely unarmed (Council for Science and Society, 1978). Police officers operating as a PSU are therefore one of the most 'militarised looking' iterations of a police officer that the British public are likely to see and represent the greatest visual variation from response officers in terms of the uniform worn by an individual. When initially implementing the British police uniform, Sir Robert Peel was cognisant that police officers should not be mistaken for the military (Coleman & Norris, 2002), and a police uniform of coat tails and a top hat was adopted. Peel was concerned if the police appeared to look like soldiers, they would be expected to behave like them (Coleman & Norris, 2002; Paul and Birzer, 2004), and would behave contrary to the service based objectives of the police. The concept that military-style policing is at odds with a community focused police service is echoed by Jefferson (1990). If true, this assertion would be particularly concerning for UK policing, which is built upon a foundation of Policing by Consent and public support for policing activity (Reiner, 2009). Inclusion of the PSU role in this research will therefore explore whether wearing a more military style uniform has the affect Peel was cautious of, and cause officers to behave less like the police, and more like soldiers.

Culture

Much has been written discussing Police Culture. Cockcroft (2020) identified a number of definitions that could be considered to define Police Culture, with the consistent theme being a combination of formal and informal guidance which is used to shape behaviour. Cockcroft (2012) suggests culture could be considered to reflect the mix of informal prejudices, values, attitudes and working practices that are shared, particularly among lower ranks in policing. Or more succinctly 'the way things are done around here' (Waddington, 2008 p8) The impact of this culture upon officer behaviour is articulated by Skolnick who suggests that officer perceptions of their occupational world cause them to develop a 'working personality' (Skolnick 1994). This premise would therefore suggest that police officers operate at work within a certain culture, and displaying a type of personality that may be different to their civilian life. Skolnick

(1994) further suggests that officers in different units, departments or forces will have differing working personalities, and the collection of these will form ‘distinctive cognitive and behavioural responses’ (Skolnick, 1994, p. 41). This assertion means rather than sharing one homogenous occupational culture, different cultures will exist within different policing departments (O’Neill and Singh, 2007), and colleagues within these teams will share similarities in their ‘working personality’.

It should be considered therefore that the culture of policing within the roles that are the focus of this research, namely response and PSU, will be different, as different types of police role will encounter different stressors, experiences and demands, and officers will have developed unique values, attitudes and practices to manage these. It would not be possible to provide a full insight into theories on police culture and the nuances that are associated with it within this review, although much is written about this area. What is significant to note for the understanding of this research however is the type of operational demand the participants in this study are likely to experience in their daily working role, and how their training and experience may shape the culture of that team.

As highlighted above, the responsibilities of a response officer are many and varied and will range from compassionate tasks such as supporting people in distress to enforcement action such as detain and arresting people. The PSU role is more closely defined and requires officers to provide a tactical response to the risk of public disorder or similar risk to public safety. As will be explored in detail through this literature review, the values, attitudes and practices that Cockroft (2012) suggests are integral to shaping culture, will be different for these policing roles, and will shape the working personality of officers in those roles.

Theoretical framework

In organising the existing research, the theory of enclothed cognition (Adam & Galinsky, 2012) is a recurring cornerstone of research into clothing and its influence on the wearer. The enclothed cognition theory identifies two critical factors which must occur in order for clothing to have an influence on the person wearing it. These factors are that the clothing is actually worn, not simply nearby or hypothetical, and that the clothing must hold a meaning to the person wearing it. Unlike the present research, much of the existing literature relies on studies which have utilised role actors, and not ‘authentic users’ who would genuinely wear and associate meaning to the clothing being assessed. This is likely to impact upon the second condition Adam and Galinsky (2012) identify, that the clothing must hold a meaning to the wearer, as for a role actor that meaning is likely to be merely hypothetical.

To support the application of enclothed cognition to this research, symbolic interactionism (Blumer, 1969) will be used as a framework to explore how ‘meaning’ is created and modified. Symbolic interactionism identifies the link between meaning, social interaction, and interpreting experiences.

Enclothed cognition (Adam & Galinsky, 2012) and symbolic interactionism (Blumer, 1969) are of great significance to this present research, as the interviews explore with authentic users how the uniform that officers are wearing whilst on duty may influence

their self-perception. This influence will be further explored in relation to their previous experience in this uniform. For this reason these two key theoretical frameworks will inform the structure of this research.

Enclothed cognition

Adam & Galinsky (2012) introduce the theory of enclothed cognition to explain the influence clothes have upon the wearer and their psychological processes. Their study considers that in addition to the symbology of wearing particular clothing, the wearer must also associate with the physical experience of wearing it in order for the effects to be felt. In developing the enclothed cognition theory, Adam and Galinsky (2012) conducted a study to test participants' performance in attention related tasks. The study comprised of three iterations, in the first, comparison was drawn between participants either wearing a lab coat, or not wearing a lab coat but having seen one on the table prior to starting the experiment.

In the second experiment, participants completed tasks when either wearing or not wearing, but having seen a lab coat referred to as a 'doctor's coat' or a 'painters coat'. Results showed that physically wearing a lab coat improved participants' performance in the tasks. Performance improved further when wearing a coat described as a doctor's coat. As the coat was the same article of clothing for each of these experiments, the terminology used to describe it would appear to influence the individual's performance, with the implication being that as a doctor, accuracy and attention to detail are important traits that the wearer of a 'doctors coat' embodies. The impact that verbal description of clothing has is useful to consider when police officers are described as wearing 'riot gear' (Stott & Reicher, 1998; Damjanovic et. al, 2006). The phrase 'riot gear', also often used in the media, (BBC News, 2023; The Times, 2023; Sky News, 2023) may create an association to violence, tension and disorder which could influence the wearer.

Finally in the third experiment of Adam and Galinsky (2012), the unworn lab coat was in the room for the duration of the experiment, to assess whether prolonged exposure to, but not wearing the clothing, would have any influence on behaviour. Experiment three was designed to address the question as to whether the effects of wearing a particular form of clothing might be diluted or wear off if this clothing were worn routinely and people become accustomed to wearing it. When considered in conjunction with symbolic interactionism (Blumer, 1969) the dilution effect could predict a difference in the impact of PSU uniform on a response officer who is required to change into protective public order uniform solely for deployment to public order incidents. The dilution effect could also influence an officer belonging to a permanent public order team who would wear this uniform routinely every day. Wearing the uniform daily would expose the wearer to a range of low risk and mundane experiences in comparison to a response officer who is more likely to wear their PSU uniform when there is a risk of public disorder.

Adam and Galinsky (2012) conducted their research with undergraduates, and therefore as the participants were in the process of completing their studies, it is reasonable to assume that they were neither doctors, nor painters. This potentially undermines the second criteria of enclothed cognition theory, in that the meaning the

clothing is likely to have to the participants is hypothetical or socially constructed, rather than authentic. Whilst using non-authentic participants may weaken the evidence for enclothed cognition, the use of students as role actors does seem to be a common theme with existing research in this area, particularly when considering the behaviour of police officers. This use of non-authentic participants is discussed by Adam and Galinsky (2019) when revisiting the findings of their earlier research. Adam and Galinsky (2019) reflect on research that has been conducted following their initial enclothed cognition research (Adam and Galinsky, 2012), and identify that there remains a gap in the body of research concerning enclothed cognition in real life scenarios outside of the research laboratory. Adam and Galinsky (2019) state 'one important avenue for future research would be to test the influence of clothing in the field rather than in the lab, even at the expense of experimental control' (2019, p159).

There has been some limited research into the behaviour of individuals wearing police uniform, however as highlighted above this has largely focused on students and role actors (Civile & Obhi, 2017; Mendoza & Parks-Stamm, 2019) and not the authentic users of the uniform who are serving police officers. Civile and Obhi (2017) considered whether the wearing of a police uniform would cause participants to focus more on one type of image than another, described as a bias in the wearer's social attention. Participants were Canadian college students who were assigned to wear either their own clothing, or a police uniform. The study utilised computer software to assess the extent to which a participant would be distracted by different types of images. The images depicted a person wearing either a business suit or a hoodie and were designed to signify a difference in socioeconomic status (SES), with a business suit representing a high SES and a hoodie a low SES. The results demonstrated that those wearing a police uniform were more distracted by images representing a lower SES, a result described as 'attention bias'.

Civile and Obhi's research (2017) has the potential to suggest that police officers in uniform may exhibit a similar attention bias, for example by focusing on individuals who look or act in a certain way. Whilst the findings are useful, this research like that of Adam and Galinsky (2012), is flawed in its use of students as role actors, who lack the symbolic interactionism to attribute meaning to the clothing. A strength however in the research of both Adam and Galinsky (2012) and Civile and Obhi (2017) is the use of multiple experiments to test their hypothesis. By replicating the experimental condition of a uniform being nearby, rather than worn, Civile and Obhi (2017) support the proposal that the influence of the clothing is not replicated when this uniform is simply nearby. In one version of the study, a uniform is placed on the table in front of the participant but not worn. It was found that this did not significantly impact upon participant bias towards one group or another. This is a useful finding when considering whether officers who are deployed in their ordinary police uniform but with immediate access to specialist protective kit (for example they have their PSU kit readily available in their vehicle), would feel influenced by their PSU uniform in the same way as a colleague who was already wearing this.

There are examples of authentic user research which consider external, viewer perception of the police (Bell 1982; Singer and Singer, 1985; Nickels, 2007; Johnson, 2013; Johnson et al, 2015; Simpson, 2018; Monk Gilmore & Jackson, 2019). There is

also emerging research on enclothed cognition within private sector roles which seeks to consider the impact of clothing and uniform upon employee happiness, productivity and motivation (van der Iann, 2016; Moody, 2023; Kim et. al, 2023; Chang and Cortina, 2023).

Research conducted into the effects of wearing a uniform upon factors such as motivation and performance offers some insight into enclothed cognition in a broad sense. Moody (2023) explores the effects of enclothed cognition and uniform on employee perceptions of happiness and positivity. Moody (2023) provides one of few studies where participants are authentic wearers of the uniforms being researched with job roles including checkout operators, warehouse operators, driving and delivery, engineer, and shop floor staff. Using an online study, 2560 participants from the UK were asked to provide a positivity rating to various statements relating to their work and their uniform. Moody (2023) found that employees felt that wearing a uniform provided them with a sense of professional identity and a sense of being part of a team. Furthermore, Moody (2023) found that participants strongly agreed with the notion that a well designed uniform could enable them to be more productive in their role, which in turn increased their motivation. This research supports that of van der laan (2016) who found that wellbeing at work was directly linked to comfortable and good quality workwear. Through a series of thematic interviews with restaurant workers, van der laan (2016) also found that participants felt that workwear was seen as a tool to separate on-duty and off-duty identity, with the process of change in into a branded uniform denoting a change in the role and identity of the wearer. Van der Iann (2016), whilst focusing on private sector productivity, offers some parallels to enclothed cognition within policing with respect to participant wellbeing and fundamental perceptions of on-duty and off-duty identity.

Within the existing body of research, there is however very little authentic user research regarding enclothed cognition and self-perception of the police officer. Of the limited research available on self-perception within authentic police officers, there are some useful studies to note, (De Camargo, 2017; Andrews, 2023; Simpson and Sargeant, 2023). These studies however are not without their own limitations. Simpson and Sergeant (2023), survey officers from the Queensland Police Service focusing on uniform accoutrements and officer perceptions of personal safety. Although undeniably authentic users of the uniform, the officers in the study were shown images of different uniforms and asked to imagine themselves wearing them, they are not physically wearing the uniform in question. This discrepancy is based on the concept of enclothed cognition, as Adam and Galinsky (2012) assert that the clothing must be worn. Simpson and Sergeant (2023) present some useful findings from their research, particularly with reference to officer safety, noting that participants reported feeling safer when imagining themselves wearing uniform than when wearing civilian clothing. They further theorise from their results that if officers feel unsafe in what they are wearing, they may modify their behaviour to increase their feeling of safety.

Recent research (Andrews, 2023) offers one of the few authentic user studies explicitly evaluating police uniform and enclothed cognition. Andrews (2003) provides a generalised view of the way UK police officers feel when wearing their uniform based

on an online survey of 91 respondents. Andrews (2023) specifically considers the views of police officers in uniform and therefore on duty, compared with their views when wearing civilian attire off duty, and suggests that the wearing of a uniform has a psychologically transformative affect upon the officers surveyed. Andrews (2023) utilised an anonymous digital survey, to solicit the opinions of police officers. To provide confidence in the anonymity of the responses, and to encourage participants to undertake the study, Andrews (2023) chose to sacrifice some participant demographic information such as understanding what Force the respondents worked for. All personal information such as age, ethnicity was omitted. The only personal characteristic that was recorded was gender. This decision may have encouraged extra participants to engage with the survey, but also creates limitations in analysing the responses for patterns within demographic groups. Andrews' (2023) survey was advertised and completed online, and therefore provides no confirmation of the clothing officers were wearing at the time they completed the survey.

Andrews (2023) presents findings which are of relevance to the application of enclothed cognition theory to police uniform. He identifies that officers felt more likely to become involved in a dangerous situation when in uniform than when in their civilian clothing, an influence he calls the 'superhero effect' (Andrews 2023 p1). Andrews credits this to officers feeling more invulnerable while wearing uniform and claims that this is relative to the uniform itself, and not to the inherent security of protective kit and equipment. He considers the deterrent effect that violent assailants might be put off of assaulting a police officer who is wearing protective clothing. It is suggested any deterrent effect of protective equipment is mitigated by comparing the results of officers who carry a taser to those who do not and Andrews (2023) declares the impact of a taser upon an officer's decision to intervene in a violent situation was 'negligible'. This finding is open to criticism, as it considers only one layer of protection, specifically the taser, and does not consider the cumulative effect of other accoutrements such as body armour, incapacitant spray, or a radio. As with previous authentic user research, officers were not necessarily in uniform or on duty at the time of completing the survey, which is likely to undermine the effects of enclothed cognition as demonstrated above.

De Camargo (2017) undertook an ethnographic study within a Police Service in the north of the UK. This study involved spending seventeen days (approximately 140 hours) over a four-month period on patrol with officers to examine the symbolic and practical use of police uniform. Her research sought to identify how police officers 'manage their identity, their image and their work through the lens of the uniform and its accompaniments' (2017 p194). Of particular relevance to the present research, De Camargo (2017) identifies that 'wearing safety' through protective clothing and uniform offers some psychological protection to officers. She suggests that this perception is unrealistic against the inherent nature of policing being both dangerous and unpredictable. De Camargo (2017) also suggests that the officers she observed expressed a challenging contradiction in wearing a 'militarised' style of uniform whilst being expected to undertake friendly, community-based duties. De Camargo (2017) describes her prolonged, embedded presence within the police service as a vehicle to enable her to be privy to in-jokes, attending briefings, experiencing attendance at incidents, and becoming a 'token' police officer, albeit temporarily. She suggests that

this approach highlights the value of ethnographic research in this type of environment. The value De Camargo (2017) describes, and the ability to obtain detailed and personal accounts through being immersed in the team is something that is also achieved through insider research.

Examining more broadly than simply wearing or not wearing a uniform, there are other areas of research into clothing affecting behaviour which support the theory of enclothed cognition. Frank and Gilovich (1988) consider how the colour of the uniform worn by professional sports teams in America might influence the level of aggression shown by the players, with a hypothesis that teams wearing black uniform were the most aggressive and would have the most penalties awarded against them. The data supported this hypothesis, including for teams who changed the colour of their uniform from light to dark during the course of the experiment, and received a comparable increase in the number of penalties awarded against them. In order to assess whether this data actually reflected a more aggressive behavioural mindset form the players, data on penalties was supplemented with an experiment where participants were assigned to teams wearing either dark or light coloured jersey tops, and subsequently asked to choose which sporting tasks they would like to take part in. The list of activities was ranked by their names into 'aggressive' ('gun duel', 'burnout') and 'nonaggressive' ('block stacking', 'putting contest') sports. The results of this study found that those who wore dark coloured tops were more inclined to select aggressive sounding activities in comparison to a control group of individual students.

Evidence that the colour of a uniform influences the wearer's mindset, could be significant when considering the impact of a police uniform on those wearing it, as both PSU and response uniforms are predominantly dark in colour. This hypothesis is tested by Johnson (2013) who combines the impact of clothing colour on the wearer, with the influence this may have on the viewer. Johnson (2013) explores the links between the colour of police uniforms and the level of aggression experienced by officers and civilians in the United States. The study tested the hypothesis that police departments who wear black uniforms behave more aggressively than those who wear lighter colours. The study reviewed data from over 250 police departments from across the United States, and examined figures regarding assaults on officers, citizens killed by police, and complaints of excessive force used. The results of the study did not prove the hypothesis and instead found that there was little to support the assertion of dark clothing contributing to heightened aggression, and there were no statistically significant differences in assaults on officers, killings of citizens by the police, or levels of complaints regarding excessive use of force. Although Johnson's (2013) results do not support the findings of Frank and Gilovich (1998), they do support Nickels (2007) conclusions that dark uniforms do not create a negative viewer perception. These findings seem contradictory as if darker colours create more aggressive wearers, it would appear reasonable that darker uniforms would create an impression of more aggressive police officers, something which is unlikely to be viewed as a favourable trait.

The present research is therefore focused upon the self-perception of authentic users of police uniforms. This research will not expand on public perceptions of the police as this is heavily explored elsewhere. This research will build upon the existing

knowledge of enclothed cognition and will address the limitations of the available research. Conducting research on participants who are authentic users of the uniform and who are actually wearing the uniform of the role for which they are discussing will provide data which is not currently available.

Symbolic Interactionism

The first principle of enclothed cognition 'the clothes must be worn' is straightforward. The replication studies (Adam and Galinsky, 2012; Civile and Obhi, 2017) demonstrate that the effects of enclothed cognition are not felt when clothing is simply in the vicinity of the person. The second principle 'the clothing must hold meaning to the wearer' is significantly more subjective, and for this reason symbolic interactionism will be utilised to provide an understanding of what this meaning might look like, and how it is formed. Mead (1934) was one of the earliest theorists of symbolic interactionism, with what he termed 'social behaviourism' (McPhail and Rexroat, 1979). Social behaviourism suggests that symbols are used as a means for communication and interaction. It was a student of Mead, Harold Blumer who first used the term symbolic interactionism, (McPhail and Rexroat 1979; Aksan et.al, 2009) and defined the three premises that form the theory. Blumer (1969) proposes that symbolic interactionism is based on the following three premises:

- People act towards things based on the meanings that the thing has to the individual. 'Things' in this theory represents both physical objects such as clothes, people, animals, tress, or less tangible subjects such as institutions, ideals and beliefs, commands, requests and attitudes.
- The meaning of things arises from social interaction with others.
- Meanings attached to things are modified and influenced by an ongoing interpretive process where the person is dealing with things they encounter, and is not a fixed, static concept.

Symbolic interactionism therefore offers a framework for how clothing can be interpreted by its wearer and highlights the subjective and individual nature of this interpretation. To derive individual meaning through symbolic interactionism is intrinsically linked to the impact of enclothed cognition, as demonstrated by the fact that participants in Adam and Galinsky's (2012) research were wearing the same item of clothing but primed to associate different meanings (either a doctors coat or a painters coat) to it. If an emotional response is based upon their previous experiences or knowledge of wearing this uniform every PSU officer will have experienced different events, and therefore the emotions and connotations of wearing uniform will differ by individual. Furthermore, officers who are new to PSU and have only worn their uniform in a training situation will only derive meaning from artificial situations and not genuine incidents.

The way in which symbolic interactionism manifests and influences people is an individual process, with the experiences, emotions and interpretations of stimulus being received and processed differently by each person. There are however some social experiences or popular ideologies which to some extent influence many different people in the same way. One such example of this is the historic link between uniform and authority. Studies into the perception of a uniform being linked to authority include

the infamous 1973 Stamford Prison Experiment (Haney, Banks & Zimbardo, 1973) which introduced the concept of obedience to uniformed authority. In a simulated prison environment, participants were assigned to the role of either guard or prisoner and were provided with a uniform appropriate to this identity. The study found that participants who were dressed as guards exhibited domineering and aggressive behaviour towards others, whereas those dressed as prisoners became withdrawn and submissive.

Similar behaviour was observed in participants in an 'Obedience to Authority Experiment', (Milgram, 1974) who followed instructions from a uniformed researcher, even when they believed this was to the physical detriment of another person. Milgram (1974) staged a lab coat wearing 'expert' who encouraged participants to administer electric shocks to a 'learner' who was in another room to the participant. Although the electric shocks were not real, the participant did not know this, and the 'learner' responded with increasingly desperate pleas for the shocks to stop. Participants in this study were found to continue to administer the electric shocks upon the encouragement of the so-called expert, who they deemed to be in a position of authority.

Though these prominent studies have been celebrated and replicated, they have also been challenged (Le Texier, 2019; Kaposi, 2017; Haslam & Reicher, 2012) with research suggesting that obedience to authority is in fact conditional on the basis that the authority is recognised and legitimate, and that the specific circumstances justify the actions (Smeulers, 2020). Legitimacy as a concept can be shaped by symbolic interactionism and would enable participants in both Milgram (1974) and Haney, Banks and Zimbardo's (1973) studies to perceive legitimate authority differently based upon their own experiences, the uniforms and the research environments. This is something particularly relevant to policing public order incidents and could potentially highlight a divide in public perception whereby the 'policed' group may feel that police intention is illegitimate as it places restrictions upon them. In contrast 'unpoliced' observing members of the public may feel that the behaviour of the police is entirely legitimate, and therefore the type of uniform worn by officers is less significant to the public than the police action and intention (Simpson, 2018).

The authenticity of the uniform worn may also impact upon how the wearer attributes meaning to it. In the studies described above, participants were recruited for the studies rather than being authentic users of the uniform. In an authentic wearer study, albeit wearing personal 'civilian clothing' and not a uniform, Hannover and Kuhnen (2002) adopted a 'cover story' to elicit authentic self-description from participants. Their participants were dressed in their own clothing, but were asked to dress either formally, or casually. Upon arrival at the experiment participants were asked to quickly describe themselves by either agreeing or disagreeing to adjectives describing behaviour traits. This experiment found that those wearing casual clothing selected more casual adjectives (easy-going, tolerant) while formally dressed participants used more formal adjectives (cultivated, accurate). It was also found that those dressed more formally responded faster to selecting 'formal' adjectives, and the reverse was true for those dressed casually. Although this was an experimental environment, participants were wearing their own clothing and were asked to describe themselves,

they were not wearing a costume or asked to adopt a role. Not only does this study contribute to an understanding of the participants symbolic interactionism with their own clothing, but additionally may identify how personal traits could be perceived to be enhanced or be more readily available in the mind based upon what the individual is wearing at the time. This could manifest itself in policing by an officer being primed through training and experience to quickly demonstrate certain personality traits in different policing roles.

Johnson, Lennon and Rudd (2014) explore symbolic interactionism in relation to clothing with what they term the 'social psychology of dress' (2014 p1). This term is used to consider how feelings, beliefs and attitudes may be shaped by clothing and an individuals' association with the clothes they wear. Through a review of existing research, Johnson, Lennon and Rudd (2014) assert that the impact of clothing upon the wearer is twofold, having an influence on both behaviour, and attributions to oneself. They explore what they describe as the relationship between dress, the body, and the self, where the dress is the clothing, the body is the physical person, and the self is the mindset. This is a useful framework with which to consider the way certain types of uniform might affect a police officer, and whether a change in uniform would impact upon the body (physical posture, communication style, adrenaline) and the self (feeling stronger, confident, assertive). It is notable that although the concept of clothing is the 'thing' within symbolic interactionism that is being scrutinised in the present research, existing research (Bell, 1982; Johnson Lennon & Rudd, 2014; Simpson 2018) suggests that it is the combination of what is being worn, the physical attributes of the person, and their demeanour, which will influence the perception of a person or team. Considering Blumer's (1969) inclusion of less tangible concepts as 'things' it is reasonable to assume that individual officers will also attribute meaning to their physical appearance (such as height, weight, strength, body type), and their personality (extending to identifiers such as gender, social and political associations, group identity). The combination of all three concepts, dress, body and self are therefore contributory to self-perception with regard to symbolic interactionism.

Summary

This literature review has sought to identify the existing literature in relation to the impact clothing may have on those wearing it. The key theoretical frameworks that are present throughout the body of research are those of enclothed cognition, and symbolic interactionism. It is the basis of these theories that evoke enclothed cognition; the clothing must be worn, and the clothes must hold a meaning to the wearer, which are tested by the present research.

It is apparent that the influence of clothing does not act in isolation to influence its wearer, but rather the clothing acts as a symbolic representation of experience ideas and social convention, which combine to create a meaning to the wearer. This observation does not discredit the concept that uniform may affect the mindset or behaviour of a police officer. Instead, this supports the notion of enclothed cognition whilst acknowledging that the uniform represents various experiences and meanings which collectively create an influence on the wearer. By identifying this, it may be possible to consider the way these symbolic influences are communicated to officers.

This might include what information on dress code is provided during the briefing given by a commander who chooses to deploy officers in full protective kit, or by recognising the influence of the media in the terminology used to identify ‘riot police’.

Existing research into enclothed cognition overwhelmingly relies on role actors, and not people who would authentically wear the uniform or clothing they are provided with for the study. This presents limitations when considering the meaning that participants associate to the clothing, which will be speculative at best. Whilst research specifically into police officers wearing police uniform is limited, there is an array of literature regarding clothing in other forms and the influence of clothing on those wearing it. Parallels can be drawn from such research into the world of policing. Of the existing research that utilises authentic users of the uniform, there are useful findings in relation to uniform and self-perception.

Significant limitations in the existing literature are apparent, and this research will contribute to the gap in this evidence base. When testing for the presence of enclothed cognition existing research relies heavily on role actors, who would not credibly associate meaning to the uniform they are wearing. The participants in this research are all police officers who are wearing their own, authentic uniform appropriate to the role they are performing, and will therefore derive meaning from their uniform. There is limited research in the field of enclothed cognition and policing in which participants are authentic users of the uniform. The research that does exist has not required the participants to be wearing their uniform at the time they are surveyed. The present research will directly address this and therefore provide a thus far overlooked body of evidence. Furthermore, there is presently no research comparing the self-perception of officers when performing a specialist public order role in contrast to their ordinary policing role.

Chapter three: Methodology

This chapter will outline the methodology used within the research. The research questions are identified, and the concept of 'perception' is discussed. The research philosophy is introduced and details around access to participants, and the ethical considerations of the research are explored. The precise research methods are highlighted within this chapter, and it is identified that participants in this research are not only authentic users of the respective uniforms, but also, they are interviewed whilst wearing the uniform in question, a process which is currently absent in existing literature. Thematic Analysis (developed by Braun and Clarke, 2022) of data from these interviews is used to identify the impact of enclothed cognition specifically with respect to the participants perception of their role, and their exposure to risk. This chapter concludes with acknowledgement of the limitations of the methodological approach to the present research.

Research Questions

Two research questions have been developed to address gaps in the current literature, specifically to explore the impact of enclothed cognition on authentic users of police uniform. These questions will provide data to explore the effects of wearing public order uniform on officers' self-perception. The first research question is intended to explore what the participants perceive to be the purpose of their role. This question will build upon the conflict De Camargo (2017) identifies in officers who are required to wear a military style uniform but undertake community-based duties. This research question will further explore the way officers perceive their role in respect of national guidance on the role of policing (College of Policing, 2014; Police Reform Act 2002; NPCC, 2015). The first research question will provide data on officer self-perception in both Public Order and non-Public Order roles.

- Research question 1: What do officers perceive the purpose of their role to be when wearing ordinary, or public order uniform?

The second research question will expand on the self-perception of officers within their roles and will focus on safety and risk. The assertion that officers perceive risk to be linked to their uniform and its protective qualities is highlighted by both Andrews (2023) and De Camargo (2017), with studies determining that officers felt safer when wearing protective kit than when they were in ordinary police uniform. The concept of perception of risk will be further explored in this research through research question 2.

- Research question 2: How do officers perceive their exposure to risk when wearing ordinary, or public order uniform?

These research questions will inform current gaps in the knowledge regarding enclothed cognition and will specifically identify whether officers' self-perception changes when they wear different uniform. The research questions seek to explore personal, subjective perception of the participants role, and their exposure to risk. This

subjectivity is important as it is their personal view that must be sought to understand whether the type of clothing worn affects the way the participants feel about themselves.

The use of perception as a concept does present some challenges as measuring and defining such a personal process is not a simple task. Perception is not the same as experience (Wilding 2017; Pautz, 2021), and therefore it is not possible to answer the research questions simply by revisiting participants experiences of events. In addition, multiple participants in the research may have experienced the same events, but their perception of these is likely to vary.

This research uses the American Psychological Association (APA) definition of perception;

> The process or result of becoming aware of objects, relationships, and events by means of the senses, which includes such activities as recognizing, observing, and discriminating. These activities enable organisms to organize and interpret the stimuli received into meaningful knowledge and to act in a coordinated manner (APA, 2021).

The definition provided by the APA (2021) provides meaning to the term, and allows perception to be considered through the theoretical framework of enclothed cognition and symbolic interaction by recognising that perception is an interpretation of a stimulus incorporating all of the senses.

Perception therefore is the term used throughout this research to encompass the emotional, physical and psychological response participants feel to various types of uniforms. The experiences and perception participants' offer during the research will represent the symbolic interactionism they have with the uniform they are wearing, and their self-perception will be shaped by these experiences.

Research Philosophy

The Strategic Review of Policing (SRP, 2020) suggests that public opinion of the police is at a tipping point, with ratings of local policing declining. However the review also suggests that support for the police increases as the public receive additional information about the demands and challenges placed upon the service. The data from this research will provide testimony to the challenges of policing in the United Kingdom against a backdrop of unprecedented challenges including the Covid-19 pandemic. This research will therefore offer the public an insight into the demands and challenges the SRP highlights, delivered through a pragmatist approach. Pragmatism as a philosophy requires conversation and engagement with participants through a genuine, thoughtful communication rather than a pseudo-participation of a researcher who is not fully invested (Biesta, 2010). This supports the SRP (2020) findings that understanding will develop through communication. As a research paradigm, pragmatism supports the notion of using the most appropriate methodological approach for the research problem at hand (Kaushik and Walsh, 2019) and so to fully understand and address the issues in this field, a pragmatist, genuine interest in the thoughts of all parties is essential.

This research will take an interpretative approach to explore the subjective perceptions of operational police officers wearing either 'ordinary' or 'public order' uniform. The research will be qualitative in nature to allow people to provide a deeper insight into their thoughts and feelings (Silverman, 2010). By exploring personal experiences, it will be possible to identify the influence of symbolic interactionism through participant recollection of events and the meaning they derive from them. Much of the existing research into enclothed cognition has focused on quantitative, task-based outputs (Adam and Galinsky, 2012; Civile and Ohbi, 2017; Mendoza & Parks-Stamm, 2019) or on analysis of survey data (Andrews, 2023; Simpson and Sergeant, 2023). This research will instead allow for participants to provide a wide-ranging narrative, generating quantitative data for analysis. A notable exception within the existing research is De Camargo (2017) who undertook a four-month period of ethnographic fieldwork within a UK police force. De Camargo's (2017) work was observational, and highlights certain challenges faced by being an outsider to the organisation, such as access, logistics, and even researcher dress code. This challenge is mitigated in the present research through the presence of a practitioner insider researcher. The use of a practitioner researcher aims to bridge the gap between identifying qualitative data to analyse and providing a focus to participants responses from a practitioner in their own field.

Research Setting

The research for this Professional Doctorate has utilised my position as a serving police officer, and took place within my own organisation across two collaborated Constabularies. Due to the relatively small nature of the organisations, the participants were all colleagues whom I know to varying degrees, from people I have worked with operationally to people I have never met. Through my role as a public order officer, I have experience of working or training with all of the public order officers who participated in this research. Conversely participants with no public order experience were primarily people who I have never met or worked with. Undertaking the research in this way defines my position as an 'insider researcher' (Brannick and Coghlan 2007).

When considering the impact this may have upon data collection, it is important to note that my precise position within the definition of insider researcher could be considered to fluctuate based on in-group/out-group identity (Taylor, 2011; Toy-Cronin, 2018). Whilst I would broadly be considered to be an insider owing to my role as a police officer, there are a number of defining characteristics which the research participants may or may not share with me. These characteristics are both personal (age, gender, physical stature), and professional (rank, experience, previous history of working together). The way in which research subjects perceive my position will be subjective and may even change throughout the research process. The position of insider researcher has been suggested to be somewhat fluid, and multidimensional (Toy-Cronin 2018), with fluctuations between in-group or out-group. Although these fluctuations are valid, I consider myself to be an insider researcher in this instance as I am an employee of the organisation and an experienced police officer, and not an independent academic (Brannick and Coghlan 2007).

Working as an insider researcher can present both 'assets and liabilities' (Mercer 2007). The process of conducting research as a practitioner within a Professional Doctorate lends itself naturally to an insider researcher approach, and the 'assets' of this setting are not insignificant. My position as a police officer enabled me to identify and readily approach gatekeepers and key individuals to gain permission to conduct the research and to facilitate access to the participants. Permission to undertake the research was granted at National Police Chief's Council (NPCC) level, with support from both Chief Officers within the participant's force areas, and from the national lead for Public Order Policing, Chief Constable BJ Harrington. At a local level, support was given for this research to be conducted on police premises, and where appropriate, during participant's working hours. Logistical issues which would have presented considerable practical and security barriers for an independent researcher such as accessing suitable locations were simple to achieve owing to my insider role. The support and flexibility of senior officers enabled the participants to undertake research interviews with minimal disruption to their personal lives. Those who were unable to take part during their working shift instead undertook their interviews immediately after their duty finished, whilst still in the uniform they had been wearing for the duration of their shift.

There are many benefits to being an insider researcher however there are also liabilities to consider. The liability of which I am most acutely aware is the risk of influencing interviewee reciprocity. Mercer (2007) describes this as the process of the researcher both contributing to the interview with their own anecdotes in an attempt to demonstrate empathy and understanding, and interjecting words or themes by 'putting words in [the respondent's] mouth'. This tendency requires careful management and identification, and I therefore considered Teusner's (2016) attempts to mitigate this by maintaining a research diary. Within this Teusner (2016) highlighted various aspects of each interview, including her previous relationship with the interviewee, the candidness of the interviewee, and whether she had conflicting thoughts regarding the responses given. I used this model for my own post-interview reflexion and as a cautionary measure against overt comments participants made such as 'I can say this to you', or 'you know what it is like'.

The presence of myself as an insider researcher could be viewed both positively and negatively when seeking volunteers as participants may feel more comfortable speaking to someone 'inside' the world of policing, but conversely could feel that there is an obligation to take part, as the researcher is of Police Inspector rank. To take some steps to alleviate this, the contact information provided was that of the university, and although my name was included this was listed as an academic contact and did not include information on my rank or role. Whilst this did not mitigate against the fact that participants might know me or recognise my relatively uncommon name, it did illustrate that the research was being undertaken in an academic context and not as part of an internal project. Additionally when conducting interviews with the participants I ensured I was wearing civilian clothing which did not identify me as an officer or by rank. Although participants were aware that I was a police officer, by not visibly representing myself as such I have afforded some mitigation against influence based

on rank or role, and created a conversational environment that had less resemblance to a professional meeting than it would have done should I be in uniform.

Ethics

This research was approved through the University of West London Ethics committee and adheres to guidance from the ESRC and the UWL Research Ethics Code of Practice (2018). This includes direction around the secure management of research data. In addition, the College of Policing Code of Ethics (2014) outlines the values, beliefs, attitude, and knowledge that underpin the behaviour of anyone working in policing and informed the design of the research. Participants were provided with an information sheet detailing the nature and purpose of the research (Appendix 1). All participants were issued with a consent form (Appendix 2) which reiterated ethical considerations such as the confidentiality and storage of data. Participants provided signed consent to take part in the research activities and had the option to withdraw from the research at any time.

The consent form participants were given informed them that participation is both voluntary and anonymous, with audio recordings being securely stored and all transcripts using codes or pseudonyms. Throughout the research process I was alert to cues that the participant may not be willing to participate or may have changed their mind since agreeing to participate in the research. Behaviours such as providing one-word answers, being distracted, or occupying themselves with other things could indicate such a feeling (Skinns et. al, 2015). Fortunately this was not something that was encountered, and participants seemed overwhelmingly willing to take part. This was demonstrated by their enthusiasm during the interview, the length of answers provided, and their flexibility to facilitate the interview process. On one occasion upon arriving to undertake an interview, the research participant in question was no longer able to take part in the interview owing to an urgent operational matter. They were keen to arrange a new date before they left as they did not want to miss the opportunity to take part in the research.

Amicelle et. al, (2020) note that when conducting research within security and secrecy-based environments, of which the police would be included, some of the emerging ethical issues a researcher might face remain unchartered by university guidelines due to the highly sensitive and specific nature of the research context. Amicelle, et. al, (2020) suggest that unforeseen ethical dilemmas may emerge in the ‘messiness’ of fieldwork. Therefore an ethical practice was adopted throughout the research process that was not limited to the ethical guidelines described above. Throughout the process, participants were assured of anonymity. Participants were also assured that reference to operational matters including criminal cases, personal details or opinions regarding individuals would not be included and were unlikely to be of core relevance to the research project. To adhere to legal, as well as ethical and moral obligations participants were informed that there may be rare circumstances in which I would be compelled to disclose their comments, such as if I felt there was a danger to themselves or others. This caveat could be considered within the parameters of insider researcher as both an asset and a liability. Being familiar with organisational practice and understanding ‘red flags’ regarding welfare makes identifying and

reporting any such instances a straightforward process that would not require any additional third party to become involved. Conversely, being an internal part of the organisation could cause the participants to be cautious of their comments and to censor comments they may have made to an outsider.

Research Method

This research collected data from 20 semi-structured interviews conducted with serving police officers in three sample groups. Wengraf (2001) suggests that semi-structured interviews can be problematic if the interviewer does not understand the context of the answers, and that interpretation can benefit from assumptions and contextual knowledge of the field. Morse (2012) also suggests that to utilise semi-structured interviews, the researcher must know a 'reasonable amount' about the subject matter to understand the domain of the answer, but not to anticipate the participant's response. This supports the use of this style of interview as part of a Professional Doctorate where the interviewer is both academic and professional, as the interviewer will generally understand the wider context of issues being discussed including use of specialist terminology or reference to local events.

The use of semi-structured interviews also enabled the introduction of specific topic areas, whilst allowing the participant to direct the focus of their response to the topics most pertinent to them. Supplementary questions were used to elicit further detail or to provide clarity on the question being asked. An interview schedule was used to provide continuity of focus across all the interviews however the schedule was used as a prompt or guide, rather than a fixed question set (see Appendix 4). Semi-structured interviewing was selected as the most appropriate research method in order to provide a depth of detail to participants answers.

An initial pilot study undertaken as part of this research utilised an electronic questionnaire, and this showed limitations in the extent to which the data could be interrogated. This limited data set was similar to that in Andrews (2023) enclothed cognition research, where there was no opportunity to explore participants answers further, or to provide clarity to ambiguous or brief answers. Therefore the present research provides a more detailed dataset than that currently available through research such as Andrews (2023) and the open nature of the interviews allows this.

Sampling

This research focuses on the experiences and self-perception of serving police officers in various roles across the spectrum of policing. The sample group includes officers from roles as diverse as response policing, roads policing, criminal investigation and community teams. The research as described previously will seek to specifically compare officers in their 'ordinary daily roles' and in public order 'PSU' roles. To address the research questions effectively, and to explore symbolic interactionism concerning 'real' versus 'training' experiences, three sample groups were identified.

1. **Non-PSU officers**

Non-PSU officers are officers who do not have any PSU training. This group comprised of operational officers who have experienced varying levels of violence and/or public disorder in their roles, however their tactical response options are limited to that of their ordinary training, uniform, and protective equipment. This participant group provide an insight into the perceptions of police officers who have no experience of utilising enhanced protective uniform and equipment in training or live incidents. This participant group were interviewed in their daily working uniform, or business wear, depending on the role they currently hold.

2. **Novice PSU Officers**

This participant group comprised of officers who have been given PSU uniform and undertaken initial training but have not yet deployed to a public order incident in this role. The novice group provided their perceptions of being a PSU officer based entirely on their assumptions and the limited training they have received. The novice group do not have any operational experience of PSU, however they have experience wearing their PSU kit, and have been exposed to controlled and simulated incidents. The novice group have been part of enhanced training scenarios and have been exposed to the highest levels of violence and disorder, including being engulfed in flaming petrol, attacked with blunt force instruments such as baseball bats, and having objects thrown at them. Whilst training scenarios replicate some of the patterns of disorder and the physical risks PSU officers might experience, the emotional experience of a training, scenario in comparison to a real-life deployment cannot be replicated (Morrell and Brammer, 2016). This group provided their perceptions of PSU based entirely on enclothed cognition and training environments, without any supplementary meaning from real-life situations.

3. **Experienced PSU officers**

Experienced PSU officers are those who have received enhanced ‘Level 2 Public Order’ training. These officers have attended a minimum of three PSU deployments allowing them to have a range of operational experiences for comparison. These deployments varied between participants and incorporated differing levels of violence and disorder. In addition to their operational PSU experience, this group of officers have experienced significant simulated disorder in a training environment. This group therefore provide an operational narrative comprising of both enclothed cognition and symbolic interactionism.

Participants were drawn from volunteers sourced from across the two organisations taking part in the research. Access to the participants as an insider researcher was enabled through convenience sampling and voluntary participation. Participants were invited to volunteer to take part in the research through an internal email and communication through the organisation’s weekly news bulletin which is available to all police officers and staff within the organisations. The request for participants included a project information sheet identifying the nature of the research and the practical requirements of volunteering, including identifying whether volunteers had any PSU experience. This bulletin encouraged participants to volunteer to participate

in the research without identifying the three sample groups that would be used. The only criteria for application therefore being that the volunteer was a serving police officer. The bulletin identified that unfortunately this was not an opportunity for police staff.

In addition to the open appeal for volunteers, which garnered applications from both PSU and non-PSU officers, all officers registered to take part in an upcoming 'PSU initial training course' were sent an email directly, to address the fact that the novice group was a very small and specific target group of just 36 people. This email repeated the request for volunteers that was published on the bulletin and identified that novie PSU officers would offer a key insight into this research. The novice group had already been allocated their place on the training, and in order to ensure that officers did not feel under undue pressure to participate, the advertisement made it clear that participating in the research would not have any impact, either positive or negative on their training opportunity.

Research participants were selected on a 'first come first served' basis, to allow the research process to begin in a timely manner and in consideration of the spontaneous nature of policing. Volunteers to the research were identified as being either PSU, novice, or non-PSU volunteers, and once their expression of interest was received, they were approached to set a date for an interview. This enabled interviews to be set for volunteer participants within the non-PSU and novice sampling groups and for the interview process to begin. The exception to this was the experienced PSU group, for which there were few initial volunteers. A follow-up email was sent to all suitably qualified PSU officers which attracted sufficient volunteers to select the remaining participants on a 'first available' basis. Volunteers into this research serendipitously comprised of three male and one female participant for the non-PSU and experienced PSU group, and also one Police Inspector per group. There were no female volunteers from the novice PSU group, and it was decided to forgo the gender demographic in favour of utilising voluntary participants. This decision was made to avoid placing any undue pressure on female officers to participate in the research alongside undertaking the PSU training. Future research, especially that considering gendered perspectives may seek to introduce a greater number of female participants.

The use of two predominantly rural forces to undertake this research could invite criticism with regard to the exposure of the officers to significant or mass disorder, and this is something that is addressed within the interviews. It is noted however that a model of 'mutual aid' exists across the United Kingdom which allows host forces to draft in officers from elsewhere in order to meet specific demands. In practice this means that officers with specialist skills, such as PSU will have the opportunity to work outside their force areas to support large scale operations.

Interviews

20 interviews were conducted with 12 different participants. Participants with no public order training were interviewed once, and participants with public order training were interviewed twice, once in their 'ordinary' uniform, and once in public order uniform.

Table 1 Interview breakdown

	Total
1. Non-PSU Officer	4
2. Experienced PSU officer – ordinary uniform	4
3. Experienced PSU officer – PSU uniform	4
4. Novice PSU Officer – ordinary uniform	4
5. Novice PSU Officer – PSU uniform	4

Throughout the research the participants are referred to with the identification label described in table 2, whereby the number denotes the participant, and the suffix ‘a’ or ‘b’ identifies the interview type for those participants interviewed more than once.

Table 2 Participant Identification

Label	**Candidate Type**	**Role**	**Uniform**	**Gender**
1	Non-PSU officer	Response	White Shirt	Male
2	Non-PSU officer	Response	Business wear	Female
3	Non-PSU officer	Response	Business wear	Male
4	Non-PSU officer	Response	Black Shirt	Male
5a	Experienced PSU Officer	Response	Business wear	Male
5b	Experienced PSU Officer	PSU	PSU	Male
6a	Experienced PSU Officer	Response	Black Shirt	Male
6b	Experienced PSU Officer	PSU	PSU	Male
7a	Experienced PSU Officer	Response	Black Shirt	Female
7b	Experienced PSU Officer	PSU	PSU	Female
8a	Experienced PSU Officer	Response	Black Shirt	Male
8b	Experienced PSU Officer	PSU	PSU	Male
9a	Novice PSU Officer	Response	Black Shirt	Male
9b	Novice PSU Officer	PSU	PSU	Male
10a	Novice PSU Officer	Response	Black Shirt	Male
10b	Novice PSU Officer	PSU	PSU	Male
11a	Novice PSU Officer	Response	Black Shirt	Male
11b	Novice PSU Officer	PSU	PSU	Male
12a	Novice PSU Officer	Response	Black Shirt	Male
12b	Novice PSU Officer	PSU	PSU	Male

The first four interviews were undertaken as standalone semi-structured interviews. These interviews were then transcribed and studied in order to identify particular words which featured prominently or were noticeably absent from the responses and would be suitable for the flashcard exercise which would feature in the remining sixteen interviews. The flashcard exercise required participants to sort words as to whether they felt they did or did not apply to their role, and this sorting provoked additional discussion. The flashcard exercise provided a ‘spontaneous response’ from each participant based upon Hannover and Kühnen’s (2002) ‘me/not me’ sorting of personality traits, and Frank and Gilovich’s (1998) ‘aggressive’ and ‘nonaggressive’ identities. The flashcard exercise served both to provide ‘me/not me’ association from

the participants, but also to stimulate further discussion. Most of the participants required little encouragement to provide a detailed narrative of their experience and perception during their interviews, however for the few that answered more directly, the flashcard exercise generated further relevant data. The flashcard exercise also provided a level of quantitative data that was used to identify the frequency of particular themes that emerged from the qualitative data, and to provide a backdrop from which to make comparison between PSU and non-PSU officers.

Participants were asked to identify whether each of a selection of 15 words applied to them. There were two sets of flashcards with one word per card, one set comprised of words relating to the participants role, and one featured words relating to feelings and emotions. The inclusion of 'feeling' words not only addressed practical issues of wearing uniform which might be heavy or uncomfortable, but also ensured that the participants focused on their own perception of wearing their uniform and not simply the physical process of this (Wilding 2017; Pautz, 2021). By sorting these words into me/not me categories, participants further elaborated on information they had already discussed, and often introduced new examples and narrative that had not emerged through the open questioning. Participants were finally asked to consider a 'top three' from the selection of words that they felt applied to them. The instance of each word being selected within a top three was analysed and used to assist coding and inform the identification of the initial themes.

Table 3 Flashcard Words

Role Words		**Feeling Words**	
Authority	Justice	Alone	Relaxed
Challenging	Pro-active	Anxious	Safe
Communicate	Protect	Comfortable	Scared
Dangerous	Reactive	Confident	A target
Discipline	Respected	Excited	Team
Enforcement	Safeguard	Frustrated	Uncomfortable
Hands-on	Scrutiny	Low-Key	Vulnerable
Investigate		Para-Military	

Data collection

The interview schedule (Appendix 4) and the flashcard prompts were each used as a means to stimulate discussion. Candidates were invited to talk about themselves and their career to date as an opening question. This was intended to allow the participant to begin to speak to a depth of detail unspecified by the interviewer (McCracken, 1988) which would set the framework for the rest of the interview (Wengraf, 2001). For some participants, a prompt question was met with a succinct or sparse answer which addressed the question asked without furnishing additional detail. For other participants, a prompt question stimulated a lengthy response covering the question asked and introducing a number of other topics within the narrative.

With the nature of the research exploring self-perception, participants were allowed to speak freely with little interruption from myself in order that they could express the things that were important to them. Long anecdotes of operational situations often reached highly relevant climaxes which would not have been uncovered had their answers been cut short in an attempt to maintain focus. To ensure that themes were discussed pertinent to the research questions, I employed 'floating prompts' (McCracken, 1998 p35), such as repeating back key words, or repeating the prompt question in its entirety. This type of prompting was equally as useful to keep an animated participant focused on the question area as it was to encourage a less forthcoming participant to share their thoughts.

To address the research objectives, with specific consideration to enclothed cognition (Adam & Galinsky, 2012), the experienced and novice PSU officers were interviewed on two separate occasions. One occasion was during, or after, a shift performing their 'normal daily role', and the other was during, or after, a PSU training session. Although it can be considered beneficial to complete interviews in a 'neutral' environment where there is no danger of interruption (Wengraf, 2001), this ideal was superseded by the operational availability of the participants. The willingness of the organisation to allow interviews to take place within police buildings meant that rooms could be sourced in convenient locations to the participant, and at no financial cost. All of the interviews took place in a private room, affording the interviewee a degree of comfort and privacy. Some of the interviews were interrupted, either by well-meaning colleagues knocking on the door to confirm if the room was occupied, or by calls to the officer's personal radio to ask operational questions. In the case of these interruptions, the audio recording was paused. Due to the unpredictable nature of PSU deployments, and the need to capture novice officers before they had the opportunity to deploy to a genuine incident, all the PSU interviews were completed during a period of training, and not a 'live' incident. PSU training is practical and physical and therefore the participants in these interviews were wearing their full public order uniform and were either on a break from, or had just finished, participating in physical training.

Interviewing participants whilst they were on duty and in uniform served two key purposes. Firstly, this approach ensured that participants were primed to be in the mindset of the role they were discussing (Hannover and Kuhnen, 2002). In having performed, or being part way through and operational shift, participants were attuned to the role they were performing, and this enabled a swift association between the clothing they were wearing and the role. Hannover and Kuhnen (2002) identify that '*people categorize and interpret ambiguous stimuli in terms of mental categories that are most accessible from memory at the time the judgment is made'* (2002 p2514). This assertion has particular relevance to the flashcard exercise where participants were asked to make yes or no determinations on whether words were applicable to their role.

Secondly, being clothed in the uniform which forms the subject of the discussion addressed the limitations of previous research which did not stipulate that participants must be wearing their uniform at the time of discussing it (Andrews, 2023; Simpson and Sargeant, 2023). It also allowed explicit exploration of the under researched enclothed cognition 'in the field (Adam and Galinsky, 2019). Additionally wearing their

uniform allowed participants to point to, demonstrate and contemplate the clothing they were wearing throughout the interview process. This interaction with their clothing facilitated discussion by providing a visual supplement to their narrative.

The interviews were conducted to provide the following insight;

Table 4 Interview types and intention

 Non – PSU officer	 Novice PSU officer (trained but never having deployed to a real incident)		 Experienced PSU officer (deployed to more than three PSU incidents)	
Interviewed once	Interviewed twice		Interviewed twice	
Normal working clothing	Normal working clothing	PSU Uniform	Normal working clothing	PSU Uniform
To determine a benchmark perception of a police officer with no experience of operating in a PSU setting. The officer is either wearing operational police uniform, or civilian business wear dependent on their role.	To determine that officer's self-perception in a non-PSU role.	With no operational PSU experience this will determine the officer's self-perception based only on the change of uniform. They will not associate the uniform with a lived experience as they have yet to deploy as a PSU officer.	To determine that officer's self-perception in a non-PSU role	As an experienced PSU officer this will determine the officer's self-perception based on enclothed cognition principles. Associating the PSU uniform with their past experiences while wearing it.

Analysis

The interviews were audio recorded and transcribed to provide auditable records which were then analysed. Thematic analysis (Braun and Clarke, 2022) provided the basis for the analysis of the data with the two research questions of 'role' and 'risk' as the umbrella under which the themes would be grouped. Due to the interpretive nature of this process, there are no absolute guidelines in respect of coding and analysis, and

this presents some difficulties in demonstrating rigour in thematic analysis of qualitative data (Roberts, Dowell & Nie, 2019). Despite potential challenges in the replication of coding, thematic analysis offers a range of tools and techniques to interpret the qualitative data generated from the interviews in a flexible and reflexive manner (Braun and Clarke, 2022). This reflexive process enabled critical reflection of my own role in the research process whilst using principles of thematic analysis to make 'in-situ' decisions around themes and coding. Analysis initially took the form of an open coding process, assigning a code or word to particular themes and generating a record of where these themes appeared across the interviews. The rating of the flashcard words also enabled further analysis by placing these themes onto a spectrum, for example from never to always (Gomm, 2009). Once these themes were identified, an axial coding process enabled any relationships between the dataset to be identified and explored. Within each of the research questions, several subthemes were identified, and these were considered individually and within the wider context of the main theme to offer answers to the research questions.

Throughout the coding process, regular discussion with the research supervisors was a key process to ensure that any bias in the interpretation of the data could be identified. As a practitioner and an insider researcher, I was conscious of the risk that I may 'read between the lines' and identify something that was not actually said, or that I might project my own feelings and perceptions onto the analysis. Whilst practitioner knowledge is an asset to encouraging conversation and understanding the data generated through interviews, I am acutely aware of the risk of bias in the coding and analysis process being a potential liability that would not be experienced by an outsider researcher owing to my own experience of the themes discussed. The inclusion of a neutral perspective on the links and assumptions that were drawn was required to ensure that the interpretation of the results remained objective. My supervision team provided this objective guidance through regular discussion and review of my results. Thematic analysis does however celebrate researcher subjectivity, and Braun and Clarke (2022) suggest that this subjectivity is not a 'problem' to be solved, but instead is a useful tool in the process of analysis. The usefulness of subjectivity is also identified by Saldana (2013) who highlights that the interpretation of participant narrative through coding is my contribution to the process of drawing meaning from data. It was crucial therefore not to disregard my interpretation of the data, but to understand and utilise this.

Limitations

Although designed to address significant gaps in the existing body of research, this study is not without its limitations. As identified, perception is a challenging concept to identify, and although the methodology used has been designed to elicit the most useful and comprehensive interpretations of participant's perception, the organic nature of perception means that the information provided is a snapshot in time. Furthermore, this research is taking place at a time when policing in the United Kingdom is under significant scrutiny and review. High profile instances of police misconduct and criminal behaviour have led to watershed reviews (Casey, 2023) and calls for police reform and scrutiny of officer behaviour. The focus of much of this rhetoric is on police culture, and how 'The Police' function as an institution. It would

be naïve to suggest that the political focus on policing at the time of this research would have no bearing on the self-perception of officers. This research considers how the organisational demand of holding a certain role, and wearing a certain type of uniform might influence an individual's perception of themselves, the role they hold, and their exposure to risk and danger. Should this research be replicated in future, the political landscape, and organisational memory is likely to have evolved. Future research in this area may benefit from expanding the participant range to allow for wider representation of demographics such as gender, or additional comparative factors such as length of service.

Summary

The research questions have been developed for this research to provide an insight into how police officers perceive their role, and their exposure to risk while wearing different types of police uniform. Conducting interviews with authentic users of police uniform, who are primed in their role by being on duty, and who are wearing the uniform which they are discussing will allow the results of this research to fill a current gap in the existing research into enclothed cognition and police officers. The use of open questions and a flashcard sorting exercise ensures that participants are able to discuss the subjects which are important to them in the level of detail which they feel comfortable providing. The interview data, although predominantly qualitative includes quantitative, comparable results of the flashcard sorting exercise. This data assists in the coding and prioritising of the themes which emerged through the interview, and provided a complementary framework to support the thematic analysis of the interview transcripts.

The ethical implications of conducting this research have been identified and assessed within both an academic and professional context. The presence of an insider researcher is identified as providing both assets and limitations to the research process. Where limitations are possible, such as the potential for bias when analysing the data, have been mitigated by the inclusion of the scrutiny of independent academic supervisors who have reviewed the data collection and analysis throughout the process.

Chapter four: Officer perception of the purpose of their role

This chapter will address research question 1: ‘What do officers perceive the purpose of their role to be when wearing ordinary, or public order uniform?’

This chapter will provide an introduction to the role of the police, and the evolution of this role into modern British Policing. This chapter will examine the data pertinent to officer self-perception of the purpose of their role and will identify two key themes for further discussion. The chapter will conclude with a summary of officer self-perception and the similarities and differences expressed by those in different roles.

Introduction

The role of a police officer is complex and has evolved from its original scope within the first of the Peelian principles which states, ‘The basic mission for which the police exist is to prevent crime and disorder’ (College of Policing, 2014). Police officers in the UK swear an oath at attestation which expands on this principle by promising that in addition to their duty to ‘cause the peace to be kept and preserved and prevent all offences against people and property’, officers also swear to ‘upholding fundamental human rights’ (Police Reform Act 2002). The move away from a sole purpose of preventing crime and disorder to the preservation of human rights is further confirmed in the National Police Chiefs Council ‘Policing Vision 2025’ where the overarching aim of keeping communities safe is described with five priorities;

> To make communities safer by upholding the law fairly and firmly; preventing crime and antisocial behaviour; keeping the peace; protecting and reassuring communities; investigating crime and bringing offenders to justice (NPCC, 2015).

This strategic definition demonstrates the vast scope of the role of a police officer, and Hunt (2021) suggests that ‘the many competing conceptions of the police role — heroes, warriors, guardians, and beyond — have given rise to a police identity crisis’ (Hunt, 2021 p2). The present research explores the broad scope of the police officer role and the purpose of the role each of the participants holds. This research explores the officer’s subjective perception of the role they are in and the core purpose of this role. To address the first research question, ‘what do officers perceive their role to be when wearing ordinary, or public order uniform’ participants were asked to describe the role they were in, and through supplementary questioning they were asked to discuss the primary purpose of the role, and the type and frequency of their interaction with the public. For those participants who also hold the role of PSU officer, responses are compared from their normal role and PSU role interviews to identify where there are similarities or differences in the participants’ perception of the purpose of their role.

The responses participants provided when asked to describe their role clearly fell into the areas described in the mission statement above, with examples of all five objectives being provided during the interviews. When discussing their roles in more

detail, two prominent themes emerged and it was clear that participants felt that their purpose fell into one, or most commonly both themes of protection and prevention. Through thematic analysis, these two themes further comprise of four subthemes. It was evident from the participants description of their role however that the themes occupy many overlapping features which both contribute to and enhance one another. There were clearly elements of protection that would contribute to the prevention of crime, and equally activities undertaken to prevent crime and disorder would have a positive effect on the protection of people. At times, participants felt that their purpose was distinctly focused on just one of these themes, and for others, the nature of protection and prevention were entwined.

Some participants are part of specialist teams such as roads policing, and adult abuse investigation, as well as those interviewed in their PSU role. Others identified themselves not as specialists, but as more generalist response officers who attend to calls from the public in whatever guise that might be. The prominent difference between the way participants described their role was that those in specialist teams, including those in their PSU role articulated a very clear description of their purpose. Participants in response roles acknowledged the variety of their work and the need to be adaptable to a wide variety of situations, picking up *'whatever the world throws at us'* (3. Non-PSU officer, male, business wear). Participants in their normal daily roles described a combination of responsibilities across the spectrum of both protection and prevention, however those describing their PSU roles almost exclusively focused on their role as preventative.

An assortment of task-based requirements of the participants' roles such as dealing with public complaints, or completing administrative tasks were discussed. These tasks do not form part of this analysis as they were identified as being secondary, administrative processes, rather than a primary purpose of any of the participants' roles. This type of task is relevant particularly to those in management positions (Sergeants and Inspectors) who identified that a large portion of their time is spent on the management of people and the management of risk. Whilst participants felt that these tasks were worthy of inclusion when discussing their role as they could be time consuming, they were not identified as being a key purpose of their role.

This chapter will address the two prominent themes of protection and prevention, and the subthemes that were identified within these. The structure of this chapter is illustrated in figure 3.

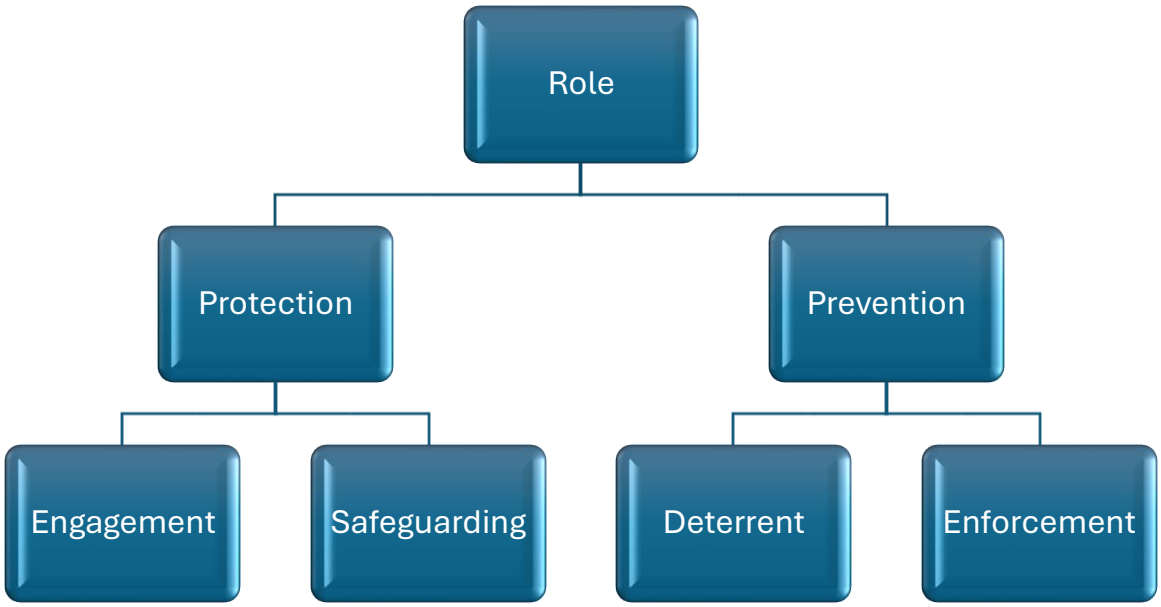

Figure 3 Role perception themes

Protection

The theme of protection was the most prominent of the themes which emerged from the data. All of the interviews contained clear understanding of how the participant perceived their role to contribute to protecting others. The theme of protection encompasses elements of the NPCC (2015) mission statement in relation to protecting and reassuring communities, investigating crime and bringing offenders to justice. The theme of protection was evident across all of the normal role interviews and featured within the interviews with PSU officers. Participants spoke of features of their roles which supported this goal in relation to two distinct subthemes, engagement and safeguarding.

Engagement

The first prominent subtheme that emerged from the data was that participants perceived their role to include elements of community policing and engagement. Community policing is widely considered to be rooted in building partnerships and trust between the police and local communities (Fleming, 2009). Community engagement is a broad term which encompasses several types of public participation and involvement with the police (Myhill, 2009). This can range from passive activity such as police officers being visibly present and identifiable within the community, to more interactive processes such as consultation and working together to identify and address local problems.

Participants were asked to describe their role, and additionally to discuss what sort of relationship they had with the public. Three participants identified that their role had a specific focus on community engagement and articulated that this represented a 'traditional' approach to policing. Two of the participants in this research specifically

identified themselves as a ‘beat manger’ and one participant identified as being part of a ‘neighbourhood’ team. These participants felt that they were in a unique position to build relationships with key stakeholders within the community, such as schools, shops and community or religious groups. Participant 10 describes how relationship building is integral to what he does, *‘in my role as a beat manager you should have [good communication skills] because that is the key part of your job being able to talk to people being able to build networks and being able to speak to the community’* (10a. Novice PSU officer, male, black uniform). The importance of engagement with the community was not only reserved for those in dedicated community roles. Five participants discussed engaging with the community within their role despite this not being their specific, primary purpose. One of the non-PSU officers described talking and engaging with the community as being a valuable tool in showing his own personality, and building trust in the police.

> I like being out on the street talking to people, meeting people. I've always enjoyed building that sort of rapport with people like on [a street popular in the night time economy] I'm always the first one to hand out my hat for people to wear, or just have a photo with people when they ask because I think that just builds a bit of trust and respect for the police just being able to show a more human side of it (3. Non-PSU officer, male, business wear).

A close and effective relationship with the public is essential to delivering a successful police service, (Davies and Thomas, 2008) and to achieve this engagement and interaction with the public in circumstances other than crime is essential. Participant 2, a detective who wears business clothes describes how she perceives that her appearance can influence the way she engages with the public, and provided the example of undertaking an Achieving Best Evidence (ABE) interview with a young child,

> If I knew I was going to be going to ABE-ing a kid and I was going to be sitting on the floor playing lego blocks kind of thing then I would think about what I was wearing a little bit more, but we are meant to be in professional dress and I used to struggle with that sometimes because I think suited and booted with a three year old is not going to aid communication. But that would then mean me wearing a pair of work trousers with a jazzy top or, something a bit more colourful (2. Non-PSU officer, female, business wear).

Engaging with the public through effective communication was evidently important to the research participants and this was reflected by the prominence of the term ‘communicate’ being selected during the flashcard exercise. Every one of the 16 interviews that utilised the flashcards saw ‘communicate’ being selected as a relevant word, and 10 of these rated communicate as being a top three word. Participant 3, a non-PSU officer suggests that *‘communication [is] huge, yes I think the mouth is the most powerful weapon a police officer has’* (3. Non-PSU officer, male, business wear).

Participant 4, a beat manager, explains the value of having a role dedicated to this type of community relationship building. He identifies that for members of the public

to have the continuity of a familiar face aids communication between the police and the public. This not only instils a confidence in the police, but building those relationships enables him to understand where people might be vulnerable and require support. He describes his role as the 'old school bobby on the beat' and when asked to consider his favourite part of his role, he suggests that simply being 'left alone' to undertake his community role, is his favourite part. *'It sounds corny but it is that just helping people isn't it? That's why I joined up to be able to help people'* (4. Non-PSU officer, male, black uniform).

Participant 10 also holds the role of beat manager, and concurs that the best part of his role is seeing the benefit of his engagement work *'building a sense of community and you can see that you have made that bit of a difference and if people really need to reach out then they have got someone that they can'* (10a. Novice PSU officer, male, black uniform). Participant 8, a PSU officer whose daily role is part of a safer neighbourhood team also views his primary purpose as engaging with the public and looking at long-term issues such as addressing anti-social behaviour. He highlights that there is pressure on community officers to be seen in the community *'they certainly want us out there, you need we need to be seen wherever we can because otherwise people forget'* (8a. PSU officer, male, black uniform).

The sense of fulfilment felt by the participants in community focused roles echoes the findings of Davies and Thomas (2008) who conducted an ethnographic study within a UK police force and identified that '*community officers present a highly positive self-identity that is focused on the 'big' issues of societal change and social regeneration'* (Davies and Thomas, 2008). The community officers who took part in the present research broadly felt that the purpose of their role was to help the community, identify ongoing issues and foster relationships built on trust. Participant 10 describes this problem solving approach as being one of the positives of his role *'I think the great thing about it is there is an onus on you to be a police officer and to go out and find what the problems are, to find where the problems aren't, and to really kind of get that sorted'* (10a. Novice PSU officer, male, black uniform). The reference made here to *'an onus on you to be a police officer'* suggests that this is the aspect of his role that participant 10 perceives to be the most closely aligned to his purpose as a police officer.

Participant 4 expressed frustration with some of the demands of policing, including repetitive training activity that was perceived as irrelevant to the role, and being used to cover emergency calls at the expense of his community work. He suggested that these additional demands took him away from his core role and stated that the worst part of his role was not being able to actually do it. When discussing the beat manager role his sense of purpose shone through in his body language as he sat up straighter and taller, and smiled, and it was evident that he felt this was where he was able to 'help people' the most.

Collectively, community based officers felt that the most frustrating part of their role was not being able to engage with the community, and instead being tasked with acting as an emergency response, at times at the expense of pre-planned appointments. Participant 4 illustrates how being deployed to an emergency at the expense of a pre-

planned appointment can be detrimental to the relationships he has worked hard to build.

> There is nothing worse than arranging to see someone like for example a vulnerable person […] and then don't make the appointment you can easily lose whatever good contact you've made with someone by just not turning up (4. Non-PSU officer, male, black uniform).

Participants discussed opportunities for engagement being facilitated by being highly visible to the public, and that the wearing of uniform made them identifiable as police officers. This was widely seen as a positive thing, and an initiator to engagement, but it was also acknowledged to be problematic on occasions such as when buying lunch, or when the person identifying them is hostile towards officers. There was a difference in the way those who identified as response officers and those who identified as community officers perceived the results of being highly visible. Participant 7 who works in both uniform and in plain clothes, states that she feels that she is being '*watched more*' in uniform (7a. PSU officer, female, black uniform). Participant 3, a uniformed officer, also described feeling watched '*when you're out in the uniform in a marked car everybody knows you immediately, they see you people look at you, people watch you, people see what you are doing'* (3. Non-PSU officer, male, business wear). The perception of being observed was distinctly different from the view of the community officers who felt that whilst they were visible to the public, they attracted positive attention through engagement. Participant 4 describes how the effect of public attention does not faze him in the same way that it used to. He states that when he is out in uniform *'I've got all these people they just want to talk to you. I would always notice people look at you and people point like this. But now it doesn't really bother me at all'* (4. Non-PSU officer, male, black uniform). His view on the public approaching him has changed since he became a beat manager, as his interaction with the public is most frequently one of positive engagement and interaction, and not the more antagonistic pointing and staring experience described above.

In contrast to the possibility of enhanced engagement while wearing ordinary uniform, PSU officers identified that when wearing PSU uniform in public they did not necessarily present the same community engagement persona that they did in their uniformed daily roles. Participant 5 explains *'It's not a community look and feel when you are out wearing your [PSU] kit, you know you are basically ready for war'* (5b. PSU Officer, male, PSU uniform). Participant 6 also describes how he imagines the public would see officers in PSU uniform as being a bold visible presence '*we are in code 2 because the idea is that you are out there and we are making a statement you're loud, you're proud'* (6b. PSU Officer, male, PSU uniform). Other PSU officers articulated that they felt the public would perceive them differently when wearing PSU kit, with comments such as *'my perception would be that it can feel quite oppressive when you march in dressed like that'* (6b. PSU Officer, male, PSU uniform). Participant 7 reiterated this by describing *'you look different to a normal police officer when you are dressed like this so when you walk up to someone in pads you look quite intimidating*' (7b. PSU Officer, female, PSU uniform). Participant 10 expressed that *'we are definitely not low key especially in all our get up if you saw us on the street you would think something was really amiss'* (10b. Novice PSU Officer, male, PSU uniform). This

assumed public perception of PSU officers represents a clear shift from the image of a community police officer seeking to engage with the public.

Participants recognised this seemingly powerful and oppressive image, and attempted to identify the way in which they would overcome this to demonstrate their softer side. Participant 10, a novice PSU officer explained that he felt the notion of a line of PSU officers refusing to engage with someone was an outdated perspective. While he anticipated he would be deployed to incidents where members of the public are more aggrieved than usual, he would still try to talk to people suggesting *'they're only human beings if they don't want to talk to you back then so be it'* (10b. Novice PSU Officer, male, PSU uniform). This hypothetical attempt to engage with the public highlights that some officers wearing PSU uniform would extend themselves to interact with someone to compensate for the perception that their dress is somewhat intimidating.

The way participants perceive their visibility in public appears to be linked to their role. Participants acting in an engagement role are likely to see their uniform as a vehicle for positive engagement and interaction. Those who do not work in community-based roles or who regard their primary function to be something of a specialist nature seem less likely to regard their high visibility as instigating a positive interaction, but more likely to lead to scrutiny of their actions by the public. All participants noted that they would respond to a situation appropriately, whether that be confrontational, or non-confrontational. Participants in both PSU and non-PSU roles acknowledged that the way they are dressed may have an impact on the perception the public have on them which could in turn change the way that person responds to them. This echoes the concept of the Betari's Box theory which is taught to officers as part of their conflict management module. This model states 'people can get locked into a vicious or virtuous circle of communication, based on how their attitudes and behaviour respond to each other' (College of Policing, 2020 p12). This theory teaches officers they cycle of 'my behaviour impacts your attitude, which in turn impacts your behaviour'. By understanding the cyclic nature of this process, it is possible for an officer to take control of this cycle, in the way participant 10 describes above.

Within the theme of engagement, participants broadly identified that building relationships with the public is key to successfully engaging with them. Participants who were in dedicated community roles spoke more widely of this type of engagement activity. However those in other roles also acknowledged the importance of building relationships and engaging with people. Participants in dedicated community roles shared a sense of satisfaction and found their role to be rewarding when they were able to undertake it properly and see the results of longer-term problem solving. Participants in PSU roles were alert to the fact that they look visibly different from a traditional image of a police officer, and acknowledged that this might appear to be intimidating. With this knowledge, participants deployed in PSU uniform describe that they make a concerted effort to engage with the public and demonstrate their 'human side' even if they anticipated that the public would not receive them well. Whether deployed in a normal daily role, a specialist team, or as part of a PSU, the basic principles of community engagement would still apply to all participants.

Safeguarding

The second subtheme under protection, is that of safeguarding. Safeguarding emerged as a key responsibility of the police officer role early in the data collection process and therefore was consequently used as a word in the flashcard exercise to stimulate further discussion. The term safeguarding is broad, and is defined by the Association of Chief Police Officers (ACPO) as a means to a desired outcome, rather than a specific set of actions;

> The term safeguarding covers a range of activities which is aimed at supporting adults to exercise their basic right to live a life free from the fear or reality of abuse, regardless of where they live or the situation they are in. When people feel unsafe, this adversely affects the relationship that the police have with the communities they serve and is a key factor in undermining public confidence (ACPO NPIA, 2012).

There are a number of statutory responsibilities on the police to undertake safeguarding measures (Human Rights Act 1998, Mental Capacity Act 2005, Equality Act, 2010, Care Act, 2014). The responsibility of safeguarding was something that participants evidently carried in the forefront of their minds when reflecting on their role or purpose. One participant interviewed at the end of his shift as a frontline uniformed officer stated that he felt that his primary purpose is to *'safeguard because that gets drummed into us'* (8a. PSU officer, male, black uniform). During his interview participant 8 listed functional responsibilities of his role including attending an array of emergency calls, patrolling the nighttime economy, attending domestic violence incidents and sudden deaths. Despite the variety of incidents he is expected to manage within his role, he still considers safeguarding to be the prominent purpose of his role. For officers to be continually primed about the importance of safeguarding, highlights that there is an organisational focus on safeguarding activity and ensures that this is a paramount focus of any public encounter.

Safeguarding as a term was mentioned without prompting by participants in 16 of the 20 interviews. Safeguarding was further discussed within the flashcard exercise where prominent words taken from the first four interviews were utilised to stimulate discussion. Key words were ranked yes/no as being applicable to the role, and to be considered for a 'top three' words relevant to their role. The word safeguard was selected as relevant by participants in 15 of the 16 interviews that contained the flashcard exercise, with 7 participants selecting it as a top three word.

Participants generally felt that safeguarding was an integral part of their role as a police officer, whatever their specific skillset. This is highlighted by comments such as *'We are primarily safeguarders as far as I'm concerned'* (3. Non-PSU officer, male, business wear), *'Safeguard is massive. Prior to this I was in public protection and that was all about safeguarding safeguarding safeguarding'* (9a. Novice PSU officer, male, white shirt uniform). Participants referring to safeguarding as 'massive' or 'drummed into us' suggests that through training and professional experience, the responsibility of safeguarding is something which is taught and reiterated as a key component of every role within policing.

This sentiment is echoed by both participants 3 and 4, who describe the purpose of their role as attending to a variety of core policing duties including violent crime, searching for missing people, apprehending shoplifters and attending road traffic collisions. Despite the varied portfolio of responsibility, both participants place safeguarding at the heart of what they are doing. '*[My priority] is to safeguard people it is to protect people'* (3. Non-PSU officer, male, business wear), *'We use safeguarding in the role to look after vulnerable people'* (4. Non-PSU officer, male, black uniform). As evidenced here, participants identify a variety of practical responsibilities within their role, however their perception of the primary purpose of what they are doing centres around safeguarding. Participant 2, a detective within the Adult Abuse Investigation Unit acknowledged that although investigation is the core function of her role, the primary focus is on safeguarding '*I would definitely say we are more on the safeguarding, even though we are an investigations department we are more on the safeguarding side'* (2. Non-PSU officer, female, business wear). She goes on to identify some of the safeguarding measures she is involved in, such as using specialist interview techniques to interview a victim of rape, or implementing measures to move an adult vulnerable to abuse out of a dangerous environment.

The only participant who did not select safeguarding within the flashcard exercise belonged to the experienced PSU group. This participant was indecisive about the term stating *'Safeguard, I just don't know. Maybe? I'm not sure about that one*' (5b. PSU Officer, male, PSU uniform). The uncertainty shown by participant 5 suggests that he was reluctant to outrightly state that safeguarding was not a part of his role. In deciding whether to categorise safeguarding as being relevant, or not, to their PSU role participant 5 was evidently conflicted. This would support the assertion of safeguarding being 'drummed into' officers through training and being always a point of consideration. Participant 5 did not outrightly state that safeguarding was not part of PSU, despite sorting it onto the 'no' pile of cards, but that he was not sure how safeguarding fit into the role. This is demonstrably problematic when a participant perceives a role such as PSU to not overtly link to the responsibility of safeguarding people, but perceives safeguarding to be an intrinsic part of policing.

When reflecting on this indecision within the framework of enclothed cognition it is apparent that participant 5 did not associate the PSU clothing they were wearing with a role that centres around safeguarding. It is evident however that the prominent responsibility of safeguarding is not forgotten simply because he was wearing PSU uniform, and this is the source of his indecision within the flashcard exercise. In contrast participant 5 was able to quickly categorise the words investigate, proactive, respected and dangerous as being a 'no' and confidently articulated his reasons why. This demonstrates that participant 5 did not have an overall reluctance to categorise words as 'no', but that safeguarding specifically presented a challenge. Participant 5 is an experienced PSU officer, and through a history of deployments in PSU the meaning he associates with his uniform, which has developed over a number of years, is not aligned with the ingrained nature of safeguarding within policing.

Participant 9, an experienced police officer but a novice PSU officer also demonstrated a similar confliction around the role of safeguarding within PSU. When interviewed during his initial PSU training he indicated that he assumed safeguarding would

become a feature of the role later on. When asked during the flashcard exercise to rate safeguard as yes or no for PSU participant 9 paused before stating that it would be a 'loose yes'. When probed further he explained;

> Well just because it hasn't been a key theme. And I know that's because we're very much focused on the hostiles […] You are going to have to do the safeguarding but we haven't particularly focused on that but I think we will, so it hasn't been clear at the moment because we are very much focused on that hostile and aggressive side of things but yeah that aspect of that safeguarding side of things, I think that will come through but it certainly hasn't been a focus (9b. Novice PSU Officer, male, PSU uniform).

Despite the fact that safeguarding had not featured within the PSU training, participant 9 ranked safeguarding as a yes to being applicable to PSU.

Within the novice PSU group, safeguarding was considered to be a feature of the role as *'we have all got a duty of care to everyone that we're dealing with'* (10b. Novice PSU Officer, male, PSU uniform). Novice participants acknowledged that it was not as simple to practice as safeguarding is in their daily role *'it's not something I suppose that go hand-in-hand when you think of daily operations'* (12b. Novice PSU Officer, male, PSU uniform).The fact that this assumption was evident in the novice group, and not the experienced PSU group would suggest that the link between safeguarding and PSU is eroded over time as a result of the experiences of training and deployment. This would mean that if PSU officers were identified as having a gap in their skill base, which in this case would be a focus on safeguarding, this could be addressed by enhancing the PSU specific training in this area. This will be discussed further in the recommendations from this research.

Except for the participants described above, the other participants sorted the term safeguard very quickly into their 'yes' pile. This fast association participants made between the role of a police officer and safeguarding demonstrates a similarity with the findings of Hannover and Kuhnen (2002) in their me/not me exercise. When participants in Hannover and Kuhnen's (2002) research were asked to sort words as to whether they were applicable to their personality, it was found that people responded most quickly to words that were related to their style of dress, either casual, or formal.

Safeguarding as a subtheme was evident in all of the interviews and was still mentioned when it was not rated as a key priority of the role. Participants across the groups felt that the responsibility of safeguarding was something that they are trained and primed to be alert to and therefore forms a prominent feature of their role. Some participants referred to the repeated focus of safeguarding being raised within training, and attributed this to the reason safeguarding was always at the forefront of their mind. The participants who indicated that they felt safeguarding was not part of their role identified some internal conflict in making this decision, and even expressed an anticipation that safeguarding would be addressed as a feature in future training. This would suggest that training inputs, especially those that are repeated, have the effect

of ensuring that the subject of safeguarding is, even subconsciously in the officer's mind.

Prevention

The theme of prevention addresses the elements of the NPCC (2015) mission statement that identify police officers as being responsible for 'upholding the law fairly and firmly; preventing crime and antisocial behaviour; keeping the peace' (NPCC, 2015). The concept of preventing crime has evolved significantly from a localised, neighbourhood level, to something much more complex, and with national and international influences (Evans, 2011). As a consequence, the Police Service of the twenty-first century is responsible for a more sophisticated approach to crime prevention than simply apprehending those responsible for criminality. There are very clear overlaps between the theme of prevention and the theme of protection, and initiatives that focus on community engagement and safeguarding compliment the processes in place within the formal criminal justice system to reduce crime (Lab, 2023). This part of the chapter will focus on the more overtly preventative measures identified by the NPCC (2015).

Participants demonstrated how they felt prevention was relevant to their role in relation to two key subthemes, keeping the peace by deterring crime from occurring, and enforcing law and order. Bjørgo (2016) suggests that the concepts of deterrence and enforcement are *'two sides of the same coin: preventing criminal acts occurring or preventing them from occurring again'* (Bjørgo, 2016). It was evident within the data that these subthemes are intertwined, and difficult to measure. This challenge is evident in the existing literature and was noted by Joyce and Laverick (2021), who reflect on the visible presence of a community police officer historically being associated with a reduction of crime, but this being something that was not easily quantifiable. This observation can be translated to any policing presence or intervention, as it is impossible to measure what 'might' have happened had the police not been present. Despite the challenges in quantifying the success of prevention, this section will seek to address the way participants perceive their contribution to this agenda through the role they perform.

Deterring

The first subtheme of prevention was around deterring crime and disorder from occurring. During the interviews, participants described the purpose of their role and used terms which are associated with deterrent activity. Words such as 'deny' which illustrates removing the opportunity for crime and disorder to occur and 'de-escalate' to describe the way in which they would impact the behaviour of an individual and cause the peace to be kept where it otherwise might not have been. Boivin and De Melo (2023) describe policing as a deterrent being *'the idea that the threat of punishment affects the behaviour of potential offenders by deterring them from crime, eventually reducing the level of criminality in society'* (Boivin and De Melo, 2023). Whilst there is some ambiguity and academic discussion surrounding whether policing truly offers a deterrent to criminality, (Joyce and Laverick, 2021, Boivin and De Melo, 2023, Keiser et, al 2023) it is the participants' perception of their role in deterring crime and disorder and not whether this is successful which is explored within this section.

Some participants described their general impact upon deterring crime and disorder, whereas others had very specific perceptions of how their role contributed to this aim. Participants who held roles in specialist departments articulated how their purpose was linked to a specific aim, such as participant 1 who is part of the Roads and Armed Policing team. He describes the purpose of his role as '*Denying criminals use of the road network, driving down killed and serious injury collisions and obviously responding to armed incidents and such like'* (1. Non-PSU officer, male, white shirt uniform). Participant 1 uses the word deny, articulating the way in which his role deters criminals. In his specific role, denying the use of the road network involves tackling traffic offences and robust use of Automatic Number Plate Recognition (ANPR) to identify vehicles linked to crime. These measures are credited with reducing the opportunity to commit crimes such as the movement of drugs, weapons and stolen property. This clarity of purpose was also expressed by participant 7, an officer in a team which specifically seeks to address knife and drug related crimes. She describes her purpose as *'[focusing] on serious youth violence which is a mixture of plain clothes and uniform. So we predominantly work with children trying to hurt other children'* (7a. PSU officer, female, black uniform). Within her role she discusses the difficult task of working with young people who may be the subject of an investigation, but who are also young and vulnerable and require protection. She describes one of the most rewarding parts of her role being when a young person reaches out to her and says that they have 'seen the light' and been rehoused finding a new life away from crime. Whilst participant 7 is pleased with this outcome, she admits that sadly this is a rare occurrence. Despite the rarity of this type of success she attributes the work she and her team do as being the catalyst for this behavioural change.

Data from the PSU officer interviews suggests a self-perception of PSU being a tactical response option to an event that was already underway, such as a protest, or a football match. This deployment style was identified as being something which could prevent disorder or other criminality by making a 'statement' that the police were available to deal with whatever might happen. Participant 11 explains that although PSU officers tend to be deployed to an operation because 'something' might happen, their very presence can actually prevent it, *'preferably something isn't going to happen but that's why we're there. Primarily to prevent things from happening in the first place and keeping everything safe'* (11b. Novice PSU Officer, male, PSU uniform). PSU officers discussed their role in a tactical sense, describing themselves as 'a PSU' or referring to the role as 'it' rather than describing themselves as individuals. This use of a third person concept descriptor was not seen in their daily role interviews, when the terms 'I' and 'me' were more routinely used. This depersonalisation was further demonstrated by participant 11 who perceived that officers in PSU kit were indistinguishable as individuals *'you are a little bit more homogeneous. You have got all this kit on including a helmet, your face is a bit obscured, people can't necessarily even see it is you. You are just a nameless faceless police officer.'* (11b. Novice PSU Officer, male, PSU uniform). PSU officers demonstrate a deterrent effect to a potential offender by being visibly capable of managing any unfolding incident. By perceiving themselves to be a homogeneous tactic available to be used by a commander, rather than as an individual required to make their own decisions their influence in deterring crime is passive and is achieved by their mere presence at a scene.

Drawing similarities with other specialist units was common among the PSU interviews with comments such as *'it is a tactic for people above me to use to deal with the situation, just like a dog or a firearms officer'* (10b. Novice PSU Officer, male, PSU uniform), and *'it is an option to draw on from the inspector's point of view or a higher level to go for, like dogs, PSU, normal officers, firearms it's just a contingency I suppose'* (12b. Novice PSU Officer, male, PSU uniform). When describing the PSU role, both novice and experienced officers highlighted the fact that they have received additional training and wore protective clothing. '*It is a tactic ready and available if things escalate. Or if widespread public order and different tactics are needed you get more training than your average response PC'* (7b. PSU Officer, female, PSU uniform). Participant 5 states, *'you have got trained and equipped officers to deal with higher levels of violence, higher levels of disorder'* (5b. PSU Officer, male, PSU uniform). Participant 10 describes: *'It is just a skill, or a set of skills, where you can try and accomplish getting whatever that situation is resolved and it is just a protected unarmed officer that can resolve the situation'* (10b. Novice PSU Officer, male, PSU uniform).

It was acknowledged that PSU officers had additional training to work with crowds and were able to identify and respond to tension indicators more confidently than non-PSU colleagues. Participant 5 explains that *'[PSU] is having people with a better mindset when it comes to crowd dynamics, dealing with crowds, dealing with large public events, dealing with protest'* (5b. PSU Officer, male, PSU uniform). Being trained and experienced in policing crowds supports the work of Damjanovic, et al. (2014) who found that experienced police officers were better equipped to identify hostile 'faces in the crowd'. The experienced officers in Damjanovic et. al's (2014) study, in comparison to the trainee and non-police control groups, showed enhanced detection for threatening faces along with a greater degree of inhibitory control over angry face distractors. This supports the assertion of the PSU officers in the present research who not only felt that they were better able to identify individuals who present a risk but were also better able to restrain their own responses to heightened tension and disorder. The perception of the PSU officers being better trained to identify people who may cause a risk replicates the findings of Civile and Ohbi (2017) in their work around clothing affecting participants ability to identify higher or lower SES images. This finding supports the second principle of enclothed cognition relying on clothes 'holding a meaning' to the wearer, whereby experienced officers are able to draw upon their previous experience of working with crowds to reflect upon indicators of hostility.

The additional training and experience that PSU officers bring was regarded as beneficial, even when they are deployed wearing the same uniform as non-PSU colleagues,

> It is not always about wearing that uniform, the PSU code 2, code 1, it's about being with a group of likeminded, confident officers, robust officers, who aren't going to get talked down as easily, they are going to be able to stand and hold the line, and just being confident in those around you (6b. PSU Officer, male, PSU uniform).

PSU officers gave examples of deployments they had experienced where they were wearing 'normal' patrol uniform but had their PSU kit available should it be required. The awareness that a seemingly pleasant event could turn combative was expressed by Participant 7 who said: '*Commonwealth Games that was good there was a lot of public facing contact which was really nice but again I was just in normal uniform with a tabard on, obviously pads and things ready to go if you need to'* (7b. PSU Officer, female, PSU uniform). This example from participant 7 and her view that her role in this case was 'public facing contact' demonstrates the principle of enclothed cognition that the clothes must be worn, and not simply nearby. Participant 7, although deployed to support the Commonwealth Games in a PSU capacity, was not wearing PSU uniform, and therefore she identified her role as being a friendly, public facing deployment. The examples above provided by PSU participants who were performing a PSU role but in ordinary uniform were the only elements of the data that appeared to contradict the principles of enclothed cognition. The participants above felt that they were able to utilise their skills in being confident, robust and ready to go, despite not wearing their PSU kit. Adam and Galinsky (2012) suggest that the clothing must be worn to have an impact upon the individual. This concept is discussed further in the next chapter in relation to the risk that participants 6 and 7 feel that they are exposed to when wearing or not wearing their PSU kit.

These examples demonstrate how PSU officers perceived their role to offer a deterrent through being overtly well prepared to deal with whatever situation might arise, and particularly their ability to prevent an escalation in disorder.

An alternative view some of the PSU officers contributed during their interviews was that although their presence may be intended to deter crime and disorder, there were occasions when it could actually do the opposite and encourage violence against the police.

Observations on this theme include;

> You do get stuff where if they know you are wearing pads they might be more willing to chuck something at you, because they think 'I'm less likely to hurt you' […] the public reaction is seeing I've got a line of cops ready to fight so I am going to give it to them (5b. PSU Officer, male, PSU uniform).
>
> As soon as somebody sees us in all the kit there are certain individuals out there who would probably want a pop or be like 'well if they're going to get into that kit then we can do something (10b. Novice PSU Officer, male, PSU uniform).
>
> They're just having a fight or just throwing some things at police officers and then if everyone turns up in riot gear it's almost just like a challenge (12b. Novice PSU Officer, male, PSU uniform).

This intimidating view of PSU officers that may be felt by the public is reflected in the existing literature. The suggestion that when officers are wearing their full protective PSU uniform, they are more likely to attract violence from the public is something which has been explained in the literature as officers no longer being recognised as 'ordinary

coppers' (Waddington, 1991). Waddington (1991) suggests that in crowds of diverse members of the public, a positive association of police officers is achieved when they are recognisably the same officers seen out patrolling the community. This recognition will help to minimise public concern. He further explains that the 'paraphernalia of riot control' causes the police to be seen as an alien breed of policing, less associated with fighting crime, and more with suppressing the rights of the public. This perception albeit one potentially held by the public, would reposition the role of a PSU officer from one of a visible deterrent to a vehicle for enforcement.

Prevention is a challenging concept to quantify, and it is difficult to produce statistical analysis on incidents that have been prevented by policing initiatives. The concept of prevention however is still something which is considered by participants to be part of the role of a police officer. This is especially true of those within specialist roles, who articulated specific functions of their role that contribute to a deterrent agenda. PSU officers considered themselves to be something of a tactic, and an option for more senior decision makers to decide whether to deploy to an incident. It was identified that the specialist training PSU officers have undertaken enables them to prevent the escalation of disorder through both physical tactics, and a greater understanding of crowd and tension indicators than their non-PSU colleagues. It is however identified that there may be instances where the presence of PSU officers can actually have an escalating effect on disorder with members of the public not viewing them as individuals, but rather as a representation of an oppressive force.

Enforcement

The second subtheme of prevention is that of enforcement and sanction. Participants described what they perceived to be the key purpose of their role without prompting, and within this narrative the arrest or detention of people was not identified as being the first or most prominent function for any of the participants. Despite this, participants in 15 of the interviews referred to the arrest, detention or charging of people as being a part of their role, and thus the enforcement theme emerged. Of the PSU officers, half of those interviewed discussed arrest and detention within the PSU role, while the other half did not make reference to this. In contrast, all of the non-PSU officers and all but one of the PSU officers in their daily role made mention of this in some way. This reflects the perception that whilst making an arrest might not be the primary function of a role, it is an inevitable feature of being a police officer. Participant 8 suggests that detaining someone against their will is something that all police officers have experienced *'you go to a job you're cuffing someone they don't want to be arrested, you get in a fight. That happens we've all been there'* (8a. PSU officer, male, black uniform). Participant 6 expands on this by suggesting that making an arrest is not a desirable outcome for him as he ruminated, *'I don't enjoy locking people up'* (6a. PSU officer, male, black uniform).

The participants in this research identified elements of their role that are integral to enforcing law and order through arrest and intervention, and the criminal justice process. The term enforcement was included in the flashcard exercise and was ranked as 'yes' by 14 of the 16 interviews that contained the exercise. The two participants

that ranked enforcement as 'no', were participant 6, an experienced PSU officer, and participant 4, a community beat manager with no PSU experience.

Participant 6, an experienced PSU officer suggested that he made the choice because he is rarely called upon and feels that he is more frequently held in reserve than actually being deployed. The flashcard exercise did not form part of the daily role interview for participant 6, so a direct comparison of his perception on enforcement is not possible. There were however comments during his daily role interview which suggest a similar perspective around a limited opportunity to actually undertake enforcement outside of PSU. When discussing the consequences of criminality, he suggested *'you don't tend to send many people to prison anymore!'* (6a. PSU officer, male, black uniform). This implies that whilst the capability to detain and charge people is still there, it is either used less frequently, or the criminal justice system does not lead to custodial detention as frequently as it previously has done.

Participant 4, the second participant to select 'no' offered very similar reasons in that he felt that he did not get the opportunity to enforce sanctions on people, and in the event that he did, this would be upon people who had no regard for retribution. He discusses his frustration with enforcing the law through arrest and states *'I think the people we deal with they probably don't give a shit about being nicked and spending time in jail'* (4. Non-PSU officer, male, black uniform). These two participants have been employed as police officers for twelve and fifteen years respectively, and both expressed a sense of change in their experience over time, with an overall reduction in the number of people who are 'locked up' and a public ambivalence to police intervention. This perception of not being 'enforcers' of the law is likely to have been influenced by the changes they have seen in the criminal justice system since the earlier part of their career.

There was a distinction between enforcing the law and a confidence in the sanctions awarded to offenders on conviction, and this was clearly evident in the flashcard exercise whereupon 10 of the participants indicated that they did not feel the word 'justice' was applicable to their role. This was explained by participants as being a reflection of the wider criminal justice process and the final outcome of a criminal investigation. Participants felt that irrespective of the investigation the police have conducted, the decision to convict, and the resulting sentence awarded to an offender is something that is often considered to be lenient. Participant 8 rhetorically asks *'are we really getting justice for our victims when you know if something happens they have got to wait three years to go to court? No we are not.'* (8a. PSU officer, male, black uniform). Participant 7 expressed significant frustration at the outcomes she had seen in court, suggesting that although the police had done their best to enforce a prosecution and provide justice to the victim, the sanctions that were issued upon conviction did nothing to prevent reoffending;

> We deal with quite serious crimes, and I think the team do as much as we can, and we are just let down by things that are out of our control. For example a knifepoint robbery two weeks ago, he's done it three times before, he's got a referral order from the court. And he's just been in custody again for the same thing. So it's just, you're banging your head

> against the wall, thinking why am I putting all this work in for very little. Or a £20 fine. Or he's chased someone with a machete and he's openly said 'I will kill them if I find them' and he's given a £30 fine. What does that do for the victims that I have encouraged to give a statement. What's the point? (7a. PSU officer, female, black uniform).

This sentiment from participant 7 demonstrates the perception of the officer fulfilling their role as enforcer, but ultimately feeling let down by the court system.

When identifying key elements of their role, PSU officers used the terminology 'deal with' to describe their role at an incident. Participant 5 describes that PSU trained officers are considered for deployment by commanders because they are *'equipped officers to deal with higher levels of violence, higher levels of disorder'* (5b. PSU Officer, male, PSU uniform). Participant 6 also views PSU officers as being well equipped to enforce law and order as they are *'a group of officers who are confident, competent, experienced and robust in how they deal with things'* (6b. PSU Officer, male, PSU uniform). Participant 8 uses similar terminology to identify how he perceives his own ability, *'You've got more training in terms of how to deal with people how to deal with large groups of people'* (8b. PSU Officer, male, PSU uniform). This assertion develops upon on the self-perception of PSU officers as a deterrent tactic discussed in the previous section and considers the ability of PSU officers to enforce the law when the attempted deterrent is unsuccessful. PSU officers perceived their role to offer a scalable response to an incident from passive deterrent through to robust enforcement, and were confident in their ability to perform this role.

Two of the PSU officers discussed their awareness that PSU officers might be considered by others to be 'riot police'. This echo's Waddington's (1991) suggestion that officers are not immediately recognisable by the public as the same community officers the public see out in public in their day-to-day roles. Participant 12, a novice PSU officer, suggests that when trying to explain the PSU role, *'it is easy to explain to somebody like it being riot police I suppose members of the public would understand that a bit quicker'* (12b. Novice PSU Officer, male, PSU uniform). He goes on to identify that he would then elaborate on the additional training and tactical options a PSU can bring, but that 'riot police' is a suitable external descriptor. Participant 6 also suggests that when explaining PSU to someone outside of policing he would use the term riot police;

> So if I am explaining it to a non-police friend, whenever I say PSU, and even quantify that with police support unit, I then have to say 'riot policing' and people understand the image of you stood there with your big helmet and your baton and your shield (6b. PSU Officer, male, PSU uniform).

Participant 8 who is an experienced PSU officer considers that prior to his own experience, he also conjured the image of riot policing whenever he heard PSU being discussed *'whenever I thought of it originally before I got into it, I just thought riots. Everyone just thinks riot police. You're there with all the padding you're there to stop a massive riot'* (8b. PSU Officer, male, PSU uniform). Participant 8 reflects that he now knows the PSU role includes a more sophisticated range of responses to a vast spectrum of incidents, and that the theoretical 'massive riot' is a rare demand.

The interview data demonstrates that participants clearly engage in enforcement activities such as arresting those suspected of criminal activity. Enforcement in this sense is a frequent and accepted, albeit unpleasant element of the policing role. The absence of the explicit term enforcement from the initial description of the role purpose of all the participants supports the changing scope of the police officer role. The historical Peelian authority figure keeping the peace, has evolved to something more reminiscent of the desired NPCC (2015) vision of a guardian keeping the community safe.

Enforcement was a theme that all participants identified within their interviews but did not consider to be a primary function of their role. Interventions such as the use of force, arrest and detention were discussed and were broadly accepted to be an undesirable, but inevitable, element of policing. PSU officers recognised that they might be viewed by the public to be 'riot police', and utilised as a tactic for employing higher levels of force and specialist equipment. Wherever possible this was something participants were cognisant of, and they would make conscious attempts to engage with people and demonstrate individual, human characteristics. It was recognised that the deployment of a PSU is that of a group, and not of an individual, and therefore tactical decision making is done at a command level, rather than an individual level. All the PSU participants in this study hold a normal daily role, and they do not belong to a full time PSU team. Where these teams exist in other force areas, there may be some disparity in the personality and engagement style of officers, and this is an area for future research.

Conclusions

The role of a police officer is complex and something which has evolved from a historical position of preventing crime, to providing a more holistic approach to ensuring community safety. This chapter has addressed the first research question by exploring what participants perceive to be the purpose of their role when wearing either their normal daily uniform, or PSU uniform. Despite holding a breadth of different responsibilities, the participants within this study considered that the purpose of their role fell within one or both themes, protection and prevention.

Protecting the public was the most prominent theme to emerge from the data with all participants discussing the way in which their role contributed to protection the public, enhancing community safety through the subthemes of safeguarding people and engaging with the community. The participants perceived that regardless of their specific role, safeguarding people within the community was a priority to them in their normal daily role as a police officer. Conversely, although participants acknowledged the demand for safeguarding within PSU, it was not the most prominent theme for those in a PSU role. Participants in their PSU interview exhibited some conflict as to the extent to which they are able to safeguard people, suggesting that it was still their duty as a police officer to safeguard, but that they were not necessarily clear how they would achieve this. Novice PSU officers demonstrated a perception that the safeguarding aspect of PSU would feature later in their initial training and they would demonstrate this while performing the PSU role.

Community engagement was regarded as a central element to policing, and some participants saw their role as specifically aligned to delivering community engagement outcomes. The experience of the participants echoed the literature (Davies and Thomas, 2008) which suggests that this type of police work can be the most fulfilling and elicit the most positive emotion from those undertaking it. Those in a PSU role identified that they did not believe the visible appearance of a PSU officer naturally lent itself to being a vehicle to community engagement, however participants reflected that they would make a conscious effort to engage with people even within their PSU role in order to compensate for their perceived hostile appearance. For both PSU and non-PSU officers, it was felt that community engagement provided the public with a 'human side' to the police and this was regarded as important to build trust between the community and the police.

The subtheme of prevention garnered discussion around the public perception of the police, and participants identified ways in which they perceive their role to contribute to deterring crime and disorder. This included enforcing legal sanctions when a crime is committed. Participants holding specialist roles were more readily able to clearly articulate their role in relation to the deterring of crime and disorder. This included participants on specialist teams such as roads and armed policing, and those in their PSU interviews. It was felt that the additional role-specific training that participants had in these roles enabled them to operate in a preventative way, either through being afforded the time to do this, or through elevated levels of skill. Participants in their PSU roles described themselves in a tactical sense, and considered their deployment to offer a scalable approach to disorder and criminality which ranges from passive deterrence to physical enforcement.

The concept of enforcement was considered by the participants within the flashcard exercise, and as a topic relating to arrest intervention and criminal justice. Arrest and detention were referenced as being part of the daily policing role and regarded as a normal and inevitable part of policing. This 'business as usual' inclusion of enforcement activity led to participants not explicitly highlighting that they perceive enforcement activity to be a core purpose of their role, despite the frequency with which it is apparently undertaken.

There is evidence of a shift in self-perception when officers undertake either their daily or PSU role. The extent of this was dependent on the type of daily role the participant holds, however commonly saw PSU officers hold a clearer perception of their purpose when undertaking the PSU role than their daily role. Novice PSU officers anticipated safeguarding to hold a more prominent place in the PSU role than the experienced officers did. All PSU officers however felt that safeguarding was an underpinning feature of the policing role, and they would demonstrate safeguarding principles when deployed as a PSU officer. PSU officers collectively demonstrated a perception of depersonalisation in the PSU role, and this was reflected in the reference to PSU as a tactic and not the presence of individual police officers.

This chapter has identified the way participants perceive their role, and what their priorities are. It has been demonstrated that officer self-perception aligns to the NPCC policing vision (2015) and supports the notion that maintaining community safety is the

ultimate purpose of the modern police. The participants in this research perceive their purpose to vary and be aligned to the role they are in, and PSU officers perceive their role to hold a more preventative purpose than their daily role, which is broadly one of protection. Across all of the generalist and specialist roles, including PSU, participants highlight communication, engagement and community focus as core aspects of their role.

Chapter five: Officer perception of risk

This Chapter addresses research question 2; ‘How do officers perceive their exposure to risk when wearing ordinary, or public order uniform?’

This chapter introduces the semantics of risk and danger and explores how this is interpreted within the data. This chapter reviews the data from the interviews pertinent to the participants perception of risk and identifies three key themes which are discussed in detail. The chapter explores what participants perceive to be the greatest risks while undertaking their role and compares the data of PSU and non-PSU officers, identifying similarities and differences and drawing links to enclothed cognition.

Introduction

This chapter explores participants self-perception of their exposure to risk in their role. The interview question prompts discussion in the field of ‘risk and danger’ and the terms are used interchangeably by participants throughout their narrative. Boholm (2012) provides a linguistic analysis into the sematic framework that identifies the meaning of each term. Boholm (2012) acknowledges the many similarities between the two terms and introduces a key distinction which is relevant to the data presented within this chapter. Primarily Boholm (2012) distinguishes the relationship between the terminology and the person, stating that ‘risk’ suggests an action undertaken by the person, while ‘danger’ represents a third-party or independent event. Within this chapter the terms are used interchangeably to reflect the participants’ perception of the situation they are describing whether that be a risk they have proactively taken, or are obliged to take, or a danger that presents itself.

In addressing the research question, participants were asked directly what they felt their exposure to risk and danger was in their role. They were also asked whether they had ever been injured whilst performing their role, which stimulated discussion around physical injury and assault. Throughout the interview participants were asked supplementary questions as appropriate to develop and build upon their answers. There were also terms within the flashcard exercise that were designed to illicit discussion in the area of risk, with overt terms such as ‘dangerous’ and ‘safe’, and more subtle synonyms such as ‘anxious’ and ‘confident’.

There were several prominent themes that emerged when analysing the data about perception of risk, including participants perception of risk to themselves through violence, attack, or injury. To explore the themes identified by the participants, this chapter has been divided into the following three subthemes; officer injuries; potential risk; feelings of safety. These themes and the structure of this chapter are illustrated in figure 4.

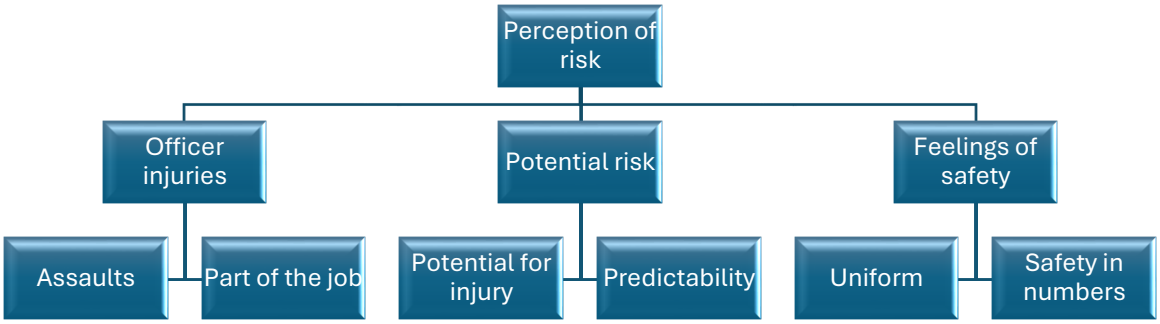

Figure 4 Perception of risk

Policing is a role which comes with an inherent level of danger, with officers frequently exposed to distressing and dangerous situations (De Camargo, 2017; Cartwright and Roach, 2021, Steel et, al. 2021). The themes identified in figure 4 combine participants' experiences of direct exposure to such situations, and their perception of the potential to become involved in such incidents.

Officer Injuries

Assaults

The prominent subtheme that emerged while discussing risk was that of being assaulted and sustaining an injury. All of the officers interviewed described at least one incident of having been assaulted in their normal daily role. In contrast, none of the officers experienced instances of assault whilst undertaking their PSU role. The examples of injury through assault concerned occasions where officers were directly and deliberately assaulted. Participant 1 was bitten causing *'teeth marks in my calf'* (1. Non-PSU officer, male, white shirt uniform), and on another occasion was pushed down some stairs. Participant 7 a PSU officer also discussed being directly assaulted in her daily role when she was kicked in the hip after detaining a subject for the purpose of a search.

Two of the participants described being spat at by people, including participant 10 who experienced this on two different occasions while performing his daily role, with one example being at the start of the Covid-19 pandemic. He describes the incident as something that he just accepted, however he identified that due to the nature of the assault and it occurring at a time when Covid-19 was in its infancy, intentional spitting was viewed by the court system to be a serious assault due to the potential to spread infection. Consequently the offender received a 12 week prison sentence. Participant 10 makes reference to the fact that he accepts that there are risks in the role, and he didn't take the assault personally. However when discussing the sentencing he

seemed visibly pleased, if a little surprised that a custodial sentence was given. Indeed it has been suggested that the fluctuating health advice and legislation during the pandemic resulted in a 'perceived deficit of organisational justice for frontline officers during the pandemic' (Martin, Leslie & Graham 2023:31). Further on during his interview when discussing justice, he demonstrated some doubt in the robustness of the criminal justice system and stated *'I don't think we get much [justice] but in terms of what happens at court I don't think we get the right outcomes most of the time'* (10a. Novice PSU officer, male, black uniform). This data appears to support the perception that a custodial sentence for assaulting an emergency worker is an unusual outcome, and that most offenders get off lightly. There is also some contradiction of emotions evident in the narrative of participant 10; on the one hand he seemed to accept that being assaulted is very much the norm within the role, but on the other hand he was visibly pleased when the perpetrator received an unexpected prison term.

Officers in all groups down-played the types of injury they had sustained, with the following example being a typical response; *'I broke my finger on public order, and I think that was it really, I've not had anything major, touch wood, thankfully'* (7a. PSU officer, female, black uniform). Participant 8 described injuries in both his daily role interview and his PSU interview, and down-played these by stating that he has never broken any bones. He states simply in his daily role interview *'I've not broken a bone'* (8a. PSU officer, male, black uniform), and expands on this in his PSU interview by commenting *'I have not had any nasty cuts or lacerations or anything like that or broken bones'* (8b. PSU Officer, male, PSU uniform). The concept of not considering an injury to be serious replicates the findings of Bannan (1999) who explores officers perception of having been 'battered'. She compares reported officer assaults in Chicago, and the former Grampian Police, Scotland, and identifies that 35% of the Chicago officers who report never having been 'battered' have reported being shot at. Clearly the consequences of being shot at could be serious or even fatal, however the fact that officers did not consider this to amount to battery supports the notion that it is the seriousness of the injury sustained, rather than potential for it, which is most prominent in officers mindset when reflecting on their experiences of assault.

Not considering assault injuries to be of significance was also evident within the data from participant 1, who described being spat at by a person who had HIV. Participant 1 recounted this event in a very matter-of-fact manner, conceding that it *'wasn't very pleasant'* (1. Non-PSU officer, male, white shirt uniform). He made only passing reference to the fact that he had to undertake ongoing tests following this incident to ensure he had not contracted the virus, and suggested he considered this to be a 'low-end' assault.

All of the assault injuries that were disclosed in interview had a temporary impact on the officer's welfare, with only participants 7 and 8, both PSU officers, describing injuries with lasting effects on them. In both cases these officers sustained back injuries which they continue to feel the effects of 'on and off'. Participant 8 describes how *'I threw my back out in the process [of restraining someone]'* (8a. PSU officer, male, black uniform) and this is something that causes him recurring discomfort. In much the same way as other participants not regarding the injury with due importance, he is quick to add *'It's fine, it's just one of those things'.* Participant 7 provides a similar

account of her hip injury which has developed to cause sciatica, and *'just causes me grief'.* Whilst she seems frustrated recounting the injury and the ongoing 'grief' this causes, she also closely follows this with a dismissive *'I've not had anything major, touch wood, thankfully'* (7a. PSU officer, female, black uniform).

These quotes highlight that the parameters of what amounts to 'serious assault' were not clearly defined by the participants. Some made reference to the fact that they had not broken a bone, which suggests a broken bone is an injury that might be deemed to be serious. Other participants who sustained lasting back injuries, seemed to trivialise this and not consider it to be serious. The Police Reform Act (2002) considers a serious injury to be 'a fracture, deep cut, deep laceration or injury causing damage to an internal organ or the impairment of any bodily function' (Police Reform Act 2002, Section 29). This standard is also referenced in the College of Policing Approved Professional Practice (APP) for Death and Serious Injury (DSI) incidents. Although none of the participants specifically made reference to the above guidance, these definitions form the basis of legislation which the participants use in their roles to identify and investigate crimes of assault. It is therefore not unreasonable to think that officers would consider this same standard to be relevant to themselves and any injuries they may receive. Consequently it appears that any injury which falls below the level of a broken bone will be considered by the recipient as not serious, and therefore regarded as trivial.

Just part of the job

In continuing to trivialise the extent of the injuries, when asked if they had ever been injured at work, all the participants initially provided generalised responses rather than speaking about specific incidents of assault. Participants largely referred to 'bumps and bruises' usually obtained as a result of making an arrest or detaining a person, rather than being directly attacked. They seemed to suggest that being injured was an indirect consequence of their own actions (such as detaining or restraining someone), rather than the result of a targeted attack, which also demonstrates a trivialisation the severity of the incident. Participant 8 outlines the fact that physical interaction is an inevitable outcome when seeking to detain someone against their will *'you go to a job you're arresting someone they don't want to be arrested, you get in a fight'* (8a. PSU officer, male, black uniform). Waddington, (2007) suggests that resistance to being arrested is in most cases the catalyst for violence against the police. Bannon (1976) suggests that assaults on police officers in the majority of cases should not be viewed in the same way as assaults between members of the public. From a study of police officer assaults in the city of Detroit over a one year period, he suggests that what is defined as an assault in legal terms, often lacks the necessary intent to cause injury. The majority of assaults in his study were less attributable to a subculture of violence, and more to what he terms 'contempt of cop'. This supports the opinion of the participants in this research in that by physically detaining someone who does not wish to be detained, minor injuries are likely to occur.

This prevalent subtheme of the normalisation among participants that some form of injury is inevitable and forms part of the job highlighted that the 'bumps and bruises' type of injury was seen as something of a byproduct and an inevitable consequence

of the nature of the role. Comments around this type of injury tended to be generalised rather than being recalled in reference to a specific incident. In the same way as a direct assault, this byproduct injury was also widely regarded as not being 'serious'. A common perspective to these type of injuries can be summarised in the following comment;

> Not [injured] seriously I've had a couple of knocks and things. You just get quite used to it really but if you're going to roll around on the floor with someone you're going to turn around and get bumps and bruises aren't you? […] I've never been seriously hurt. I'm careful like that (12a. Novice PSU officer, male, black uniform).

Participants in all of the groups acknowledged that the role of police officer carries inherent risks, and injuries are something which are broadly accepted as 'part of the job'. Participant 9 reflected upon the various roles he has held throughout his career and commented;

> I think police officers are going to be assaulted and I know it's unacceptable, but, when you work football, when you work public order, you're probably going to get assaulted and it doesn't bother me too much as long as it's not a serious assault. So being kicked, being punched, you know, being pushed for me, it's part of the job (9a. Novice PSU officer, male, white shirt uniform).

Participant 3 agrees *'that is part of the role, a bit of a roll around now and then.'* (3. Non-PSU officer, male, business wear). He suggests that this is more of an occasional event than an everyday occurrence but is something that comes with the job. This sentiment is echoed by participant 10, a novice PSU officer, who reflects on his upcoming role as a PSU officer and the likelihood of incurring *injury 'it's just something that you accept you're going to be put in harm's way more by doing this. It's part and parcel of it'* (10b. Novice PSU Officer, male, PSU uniform).

Participant 12 who could not recall ever being injured beyond ambiguous 'bumps and bruises' articulates the impression that policing has inherent dangers with the statement;

> We work in a dangerous environment day in day out don't you so you've got to accept that does just sort of come with risk as well doesn't it? So there is no point in being naive about it you can go to work any day and get hurt couldn't you? (12a. Novice PSU officer, male, black uniform).

In considering the circumstances which have led to injuries being sustained, participants in all groups seemed to consider that injury was a predictable byproduct of their role. Participants offered generalised examples of 'bumps and bruises' injuries, suggesting that these numerous incidents were not particularly distinguishable from one another and that they did not leave a lasting impression either physically or mentally. Participants shared the view that injuries of this type were inevitable and a risk that they were willing to be exposed to.

The data revealed that officers experience physical assaults more frequently in their daily roles than in their PSU role. This is likely to be due to a combination of factors. Firstly, the frequency at which officers are being deployed in each role is substantially different. Officers who are attending hundreds of 'normal' deployments per year, may only deploy to three or four PSU deployments, and therefore the rate of exposure to risk is significantly lower in PSU. Additionally, PSU offers wear uniform which offers enhanced protection through padding and flame retardant properties. The specialist kit worn on PSU deployments may mean that a PSU officer is protected from something that would otherwise have injured them – for example by wearing their helmet, a coin thrown at their head may not even have been noticed, whereas without the helmet a significant injury could have been caused.

Unlike the interviews that took place in the officer's normal daily role, none of the PSU officers described experiences of being assaulted during PSU deployments. The PSU officers did however discuss being 'attacked' in training scenarios. In contrast to the sombre mood when recounting personal injuries or injuries to colleagues through operational activities, discussion around being attacked during training was always delivered in an upbeat way. Officers smiled and laughed giving examples of incidents of carefully aimed missiles breeching the protection of their armour. Participant 5 said with a chuckle *'Well, I have got hit in the testicles by a very well-aimed, thrown round, that put me on the floor for about five minutes. In training'* (5b. PSU Officer, male, PSU uniform). Participant 8 also laughed when recalling a training scenario where he was hit with a baseball bat, and that the bat-wielding assailant was his line manager*, 'it's always quite fun to be shouted at and hit with a bat by your boss always fun'* (8b. PSU Officer, male, PSU uniform).

Bumps and bruises were referenced as being an accepted result of PSU training. In addition to being a similar level of injury to the bumps and bruises sustained when making an arrest or being assaulted in their normal daily role, this was also similarly viewed very much as an inevitable side effect of taking part in PSU training. The fact that officers described training scenarios where they have been attacked with wooden blocks, or encountered attack by petrol bomb, but did not sustain any serious injuries was something officers credited with reinforcing their confidence in the kit which they are provided with. *'Taking blocks and other things to your dome whilst you are running round exercising, and actually you get hit and you are like 'oh' but actually it's ok, it fills you with a little bit of confidence'* (6b. PSU Officer, male, PSU uniform). Confidence in the protective qualities of their uniform appears to have enhanced the participants perception that any injuries received when wearing PSU uniform were unlucky rather than avoidable. This finding supports the work of Morrell and Brammer (2016) who observed police public order training in the UK, and suggest that the experience of being hit by blocks during training, and the resulting feeling of safety has a direct impact upon officers confidence under attack in real life settings, 'the resistance or imperviousness to a brick might not be courageous — if it is unthinking — rather than the expression of will, but one can imagine it could still support wiser judgement' (Morrell and Brammer, 2016 p394).

Unlike officers in their normal daily role, PSU officers were not assaulted by members of the public. The experience of not being assaulted during an operational PSU

deployment supports the narrative around perceived safety in PSU that officers provided in their interviews. Despite the potential for mass disorder or significant violence, experienced PSU officers felt comparably safer in their PSU roles than in their daily role and did not feel a sense of fear or being scared undertaking PSU. Although three of the four experienced officers said during the flashcard exercise that they felt like a target in the role, none of them said that they felt scared in PSU, even those who reflected feeling scared in their daily role. In his initial interview discussing his daily role, participant 6 discussed feeling fear when working as part of a proactive drugs team and wearing 'plain clothes', often without protective equipment. He further confirmed in his PSU interview '*I have not ever felt as scared in PSU as I have when I was on the proactive team for example'* (6b. PSU Officer, male, PSU uniform). Participant 5 also summarised some of his rationale around feelings of fear by explaining *'I think it's because it is scarier to be in a car by yourself working a night shift than it is to be surrounded by three vans of cops, [a PSU is comprised of three vans] you shouldn't be scared like that'* (5b. PSU Officer, male, PSU uniform). He goes on to explain that although he has experienced a range of public order incidents, he has not faced *'significant, significant disorder like we have seen in the London riots', and having never been involved in such an incident he identifies 'I have been scared at work, but not as a PSU officer'* (5b. PSU Officer, male, PSU uniform).

Participant 6 discussed feelings of safety on PSU deployments, crediting both the kit, and the presence of colleagues *'knowing the kit protects you, and you feel safe and actually if you do go down there's going to be someone sliding in, and we know how to deal with that'* (6b. PSU Officer, male, PSU uniform). In parallel to participant 5 who did not feel he had been exposed to significant disorder, participant 6 also suggests that he does not feel he has experienced *'the sort of situations you see colleagues in the Met, real active, violent resistance'* (6b. PSU Officer, male, PSU uniform). This dismissive interpretation of the hostile situations PSU officers have deployed to is reminiscent of the comments made in daily role interviews and is identified by Bannan (1999) whereby officers felt that minor injuries are not considered to be injuries. The PSU officers have faced incidents of disorder, but they are aware that there have been examples where colleagues have faced much worse, and therefore they feel that the disorder they have policed is trivial in comparison.

Novice PSU officers, in contrast to their experienced colleagues described feeling anxious of the operational deployments they had yet to experience. Although none of the novice group said that they felt scared, they echoed their experienced colleagues in feeling that as a PSU officer they would be a target. Within the flashcard exercise, three of the four novice officers stated that they felt that the word 'target' applied to their PSU role, with one ranking it as a top three word. The presence of anxiety among the novice group may support Adam and Galinsky's (2012) enclothed cognition theory, as the novice officers have no lived experience within their PSU uniform of real life operations. Their association with the kit and uniform is that of high-end violence and being directly attacked, as this is what they have experienced in training. The experienced officers however are cognisant of the fact that the only time they have experienced that level of aggression has been within a training environment, and therefore their association with the PSU uniform in real situations is of a much lower-

level public order scenario. Indeed PSU is often less hostile than the incidents participants have faced in their normal daily role. Participants 5 and 7 both referenced the fact that they rarely require their full protective kit on real-life deployments, with participant 5, an officer with over 15 years' PSU experience stating *'In my whole career I've put my helmet on three times and carried a shield twice on a job. The rest of the time it's all been about public safety and crowd control and I think that's the stuff we should concentrate on'* (5b. PSU Officer, male, PSU uniform). It is clear from this statement that participant 5 regards public safety as his paramount concern, rather than focusing on his own safety or exposure to risk.

When reflecting on exposure to risk in their roles, the risk of injury as a result of assault appears to be at the forefront of officers' minds. This was evident of all the participant groups, regardless of whether they consider themselves to have been the victim such an assault or not. Officers from all groups describe receiving some level of injury during their normal daily role, and this was generally regarded as something trivial, or just part of the job. PSU officers did not describe receiving operational injuries during PSU deployments, but also highlighted that they felt they had not been exposed to the type of 'serious level' disorder that might incur such injuries. It would appear that officers believe and expect that they are likely to be exposed to risk of injury as part of their role as a police officer, however they do not expect that to extend to serious injuries. Officers accept that the level of violence they will encounter in PSU (even during training) is elevated, however they expect to be protected against the risk of serious injury through both their kit and their training. Participants who were interviewed in both PSU and non-PSU roles demonstrated a consistency of dismissing the severity of incidents they have attended. These participants highlighted what they perceived to be other more serious incidents faced by colleagues locally or nationally, and used these as a comparison to downplay their own experiences.

Potential risk

Awareness of potential injury

While discussing risk, one theme which emerged was officer awareness of the potential for serious injury. In recounting instances of assault and injury, although examples were down-played in terms of severity, officers were quick to balance the occurrence of a perceived trivial injury with the fact that things could have been far more serious. Participant 6, an officer who has extensive experience in uniformed and plain clothes roles suggests *'I don't take that lightly that I've never been severely injured. Long may it continue'* (6a. PSU officer, male, black uniform).

Participant 3 also demonstrated an awareness of the potential for being seriously injured as he expressed concern for the fact that he is not trained to carry a taser. He describes his experience as a response officer and identifies the evolving nature of the environment. Although an incident may not appear to be dangerous on initial attendance, it could become so without warning; *'I could be sent as an unarmed probationer with no Taser to a job where somebody could pull out a knife just like that'* (3. Non-PSU officer, male, business wear). Of note, participant 3 who was the youngest in service participant having been a police officers for just 16 months, was the only officer to suggest that he did not think police officers were provided with

adequate protective equipment, and advocated for all officers to have the opportunity to carry firearms.

> It is getting to the point where criminality is getting that much more emboldened to carry weapons themselves and I just think if we are expected to respond to that then we should be equipped to deal with it. I don't really want to get stabbed, I don't currently think I have the equipment to deal with somebody with a knife, I wouldn't feel comfortable going into a job where somebody's got a lethal weapon with just a baton and pava [incapacitant spray] I don't think it's good enough (3. Non-PSU officer, male, business wear).

The fact that none of the participants disclosed incidents where they perceived themselves to receive serious injury does not mean they have not been exposed to situations where serious injury could have occurred. Of the four officers that described incidents involving knives, three were resolved without injury, and the fourth was casually referenced by the officer as having been *'cut with an ad-hoc knife'* (11a. Novice PSU officer, male, black uniform). Participant 7 also provided an example of knife crime and highlighted an instance of finding a 'zombie knife' whilst undertaking a plain-clothes operation. She was clearly aware of the potential for serious injury and like participant 3, voiced her concerns about not having all of her personal protective equipment available. In particular when not wearing her body armour, but instead having a discreet tactical 'rig' which is used to hold equipment such as handcuffs and radio but does not in itself offer any protection to the wearer; *'I wasn't in uniform I was in plain clothes, just had a rig on […] We've had pava, but that's not going to protect you from a stabbing is it, pava?'* (7b. PSU officer, female, black uniform).

All four of the disclosed incidents involving knives happened to experienced PSU officers, however they occurred during their daily role. The knife related examples caused the officers to later reflect that they had been lucky not to be injured. Indeed several participants attributed the fact that they had sustained no, or only minor injuries to luck; *'I have come away with bruises and scratches and very low level injuries, I have never been properly kicked or punched or anything I have been quite lucky so far'* (3. Non-PSU officer, male, business wear), *'I'm quite lucky during my career that I've not had much injuries'* (4. Non-PSU officer, male, black uniform), *'Bumps and bruises I have been very lucky. Yeah, I don't take that lightly that I've never been severely injured'* (6a. PSU officer, male, black uniform). This reference to being 'lucky' by not having been seriously hurt suggests that officers believe that they could have been more seriously injured, and that the risk of serious injury is still present in their mind.

One of the reasons for the awareness of the risk of serious injury is the widespread knowledge that police officers can be killed or seriously injured in the line of duty. A colleague being killed or seriously injured, even in a different department, or a different city is something Miller (2006) suggests reverberates within policing because of the understanding 'it could happen to any of us' (2006:133).

The awareness of potential danger manifested in taking actions to protect oneself such as participant 4 a non-PSU officer, who discussed the fact that he would not go out on

uniformed duty without his protective kit on. This extended to the point that he does not tend to remove his body armour and belt kit even within the police station, just in case he is called out to an emergency call. Participant 1 also describes various measures that he has taken in the past to minimise risk to himself, such as delaying a vehicle stop until additional officers are nearby to offer support. He describes that as a Sergeant, he would also encourage the officers on his team to exercise the same level of caution, advising them,

> If you're looking to stop a car late at night on your own and its 3 or 4 up and you can't quite tell and you're in the back end of nowhere, don't do it. Wait. You know, do the checks, get another unit rolling your way and then stop it. Reduce that vulnerability (1. Non-PSU officer, male, white shirt uniform).

The behaviour of employing precautionary strategies to minimise risk has been identified in studies of victims of crime (Lee, 2007; Cordner, 2010), and supports Smith's (1988) proposal that it is these precautionary measures which reduce instances of violence against vulnerable targets. In evaluating women's fear of being a victim of violent crime in comparison to the likelihood of them becoming a victim, he suggests;

> It is fear that is the independent, not the dependent variable; that is, that women's fear of violent crime may lead to precautionary strategies, such as not going out alone at night, which accounts for women's lower probability of being victimised compared to men (Smith, 1988 p31).

Applying this theory to the behaviour described by the participants above, it could be suggested that taking precautions, such as wearing protective kit and awaiting additional officers prior to interacting with someone, directly impacts upon the likelihood of an officer being assaulted. By officers taking steps to remove opportunities for danger to arise, or by reinforcing their own safety, they are deterring a danger that would otherwise be present.

Although some of the relevant literature discusses fear of crime, it is important to note that fear of crime, and the perception of becoming a victim of such crime are not the same thing (Cordner, 2010). Fear is identified as a functional emotional response to environmental factors (Winkel & Kunst, 2015), which manifests in external presentation such as stress or anxiety. This distinction is relevant as the officers surveyed genuinely perceive they could be the victim of serious physical harm, but do not describe being afraid of this. Of the participants that completed the flashcard exercise, no PSU officers described feeling scared in either their daily role, nor as a PSU. Of the officers interviewed in their daily role, and the experienced PSU participants, one quarter reported feeling anxious in their role, and three quarters did not. Interestingly the novice PSU participants gave an inverse response whereby three quarters reported feelings of anxiety and only one quarter did not. There may be a variety of reasons for this, however when considering the interviews in the context of enclothed cognition, the novice PSU group are the only participant group with no contextual reference to real life incidents, and would be the only group whose anxiety is based entirely on what they imagine they will be exposed to in the role.

Smith (1988) evaluates the results of a number of national crime-victimisation surveys, and suggests that many women fear violence as they 'frequently receive reminders of their vulnerability to sexual assault, through media accounts of attacks on other women and hearing about friends and acquaintances who have been victimised' (Smith, 1998 p31). The concept of the media as a vehicle to increasing fear of crime by reporting on crime is also addressed by Winkel and Kunst (2015) who suggest a strong correlation between exposure to news stories about crime, and the fear of crime. Participant 1 embodies this viewpoint when discussing perception of violence towards police officers based on media coverage, and through the course of his narrative he evolves from speculation to certainty by stating;

> I don't know if it's because we are more vocal now about how we tell the public how many times police officers are assaulted. Or whether it just is just genuinely police officer assaults are on the rise. I think it's the latter, I know it's the latter (1. Non-PSU officer, male, white shirt uniform).

If police officers are frequently reminded of the dangers of their role through media reports of colleagues' injuries, or friend-of-a-friend storytelling causing the reverberation Miller (2006) identified, it is not unreasonable that this would contribute to a belief that they are at risk of the same level of violence and injury up to and including death. Although it has been suggested (Bannan, 1999), that increasing media coverage of attacks on police officers could actually lead to a reduction in such assaults through rallying social and political change, this hypothesis is largely untested. Bannan (1999) herself reports only anecdotal media interest in her research. Whilst Bannan posits that media coverage could lead to actual reduction in assault, it has been demonstrated that even when crime rate numbers fall, people perceive that crime is getting worse (Gadd & Jefferson, 2009). In parallel to this, research Brain (2010) has shown officers perceive the likelihood of being assaulted as something which is increasing even when statistics have demonstrated this is not the case. Brain (2010) discusses the short-lived introduction of the 'long baton' to UK policing in the mid-1990s in response to officers feeling inadequately able to defend themselves against attack. He suggests the increased focus on officer safety following recent fatal attacks was more concerned with severity of assault than frequency. 'Possibly it was not the numbers of assaults but the seriousness of some of the most high-profile examples' (2010 p195). Brain's research (2010) highlights that the instances of assault had not actually risen, but that additional protective measures were introduced in response to the severity of the injuries officers were suffering.

The data identifies a consistent theme of participant's awareness of the potential for injury in the role they perform. Although none of the participants considered themselves to have been seriously injured, this was generally attributed to luck. Uniform and protective equipment contributed to the participant's perception of safety when discussing hypothetical high-risk incidents. Two of the participants discussing their normal daily roles felt that their protective equipment would not be sufficient to defend themselves against a determined attacker. Other participants reported taking precautionary measures, including the carriage of protective equipment, to enhance their perception of safety. The wearing of protective uniform may have the impact of deterring an assault by demonstrating to a would-be assailant that the officer is

equipped to defend themselves, and therefore protective uniform may not only reduce the officer's perception of danger, but could also tangibly improve their safety. Novice PSU officers who have access to the highest levels of protective clothing were the only participants who reported feeling anxious when considering their exposure to danger, however the basis for this was formed entirely from experience during training and anecdotal accounts from colleagues and the media.

Understanding the predictability of an incident

A subtheme which influenced how participants perceived their exposure to risk in their normal daily roles was the unpredictable nature of the incidents that officers could attend. This unpredictability was acknowledged by participants when discussing the potential for serious injury as they identified they do not know what to expect when attending an incident in their normal role. This perception was reflected in direct comments such as participant 4 who surmised *'I think the role of a police officer is dangerous because you never kind of know what situation you're getting into, going into, coming around the corner and situations can change'* (4. Non-PSU officer, male, black uniform). Participant 12 also identifies the potential for risk in a situation where the danger was unforeseen, and suggests that complacent behaviour can put officers in danger. He elaborates by providing this example;

> Every situation is just fluid isn't it? Everything can change in so many different ways. You know you can go to the biggest baddest person they end up crying and wanting a hug or you can go to some little old lady who's been lovely and they just go off and try and start hitting everyone (12a. Novice PSU officer, male, black uniform).

This inference to the risk of the unknown could also be drawn from a number of comments describing the fact that officers wear their protective kit 'just in case'. Protective kit such as body armour and incapacitant spray, collectively known as Personal Protective Equipment (PPE) form part of the participant's daily uniform. Participant 10 for example, who wears a uniform in his daily role, is a beat manager, an officer who predominantly attends pre-planned events and works with local communities rather than responding to emergency calls. He states *'I think we need PPE, I think even most of the stuff we go to doesn't involve this but you know that any minute especially as a taser officer any minute you could get dragged into a knife job just like that'* (10a. Novice PSU officer, male, black uniform). Equipping oneself with PPE not only prepares the officer for any eventuality, but also acknowledges the previously discussed potential for an unpredictable incident to carry significant danger.

There was a consensus that when able to completely define the parameters of a situation, such as in a custody cell, or taking a statement in a police station, officers felt comfortable removing their PPE. This is an approach demonstrated by participant 6 who describes removing his body armour while working in custody *'I guess the difference being that you know your support is there is right behind you. You know that people are secure in cells so you don't have to go in and have a fight with him if you don't want to'* (6a. PSU officer, male, black uniform). Participant 2, a detective who predominantly wears business wear also identifies environmental factors as an influence on her perception of personal risk, and gives the example of attending an

elderly person's care home as part of an investigation into a death, and choosing to look as discreet as possible, reflecting that if she were in full uniform, *'what are the little residents going to think?'* (2. Non-PSU officer, female, business wear). In conducting her own threat assessment she felt that the environment was a predictable one, and the potential danger posed to her in this environment was minimal and certainly not as significant as the impact her appearance in full protective police uniform would have on the elderly and vulnerable audience.

A key theme among PSU officers is that there is a level of predictability in PSU deployments, and decisions are generally made by a commanding officer rather than the individual. This differs from an ordinary policing role where an officer is likely to attend an incident alone and make spontaneous decisions based on their own knowledge and risk assessment. Experienced PSU officers made reference to the command structure of public order and that PSU deployments would be risk assessed by a commander. This means that when they have been deployed as PSU officers, they were aware of the nature of the incident (such as a rave, a riot or a distressed person), and also that the known dangers of the incident such as weapons, or numbers of people had been risk assessed. This definition and understanding of what an incident was likely to involve, made officers on PSU deployments feel safer than they would in their daily role as they felt that the threat was known, and their level of skill and protection was appropriate to the situation.

Participant 5 is a public order Bronze Commander and has received additional training in how to assess situations and make decisions on how and where to deploy or withdraw, PSU officers. He suggests that PSU should not be dangerous;

> Even when you're in a high-risk dangerous situation [..], well you are going to be put in some level of danger, it shouldn't be that dangerous because, you should be withdrawn before it gets that bad (5b. PSU Officer, male, PSU uniform).

The other PSU officers all recognised that their deployment into an incident had already been risk assessed by a suitably trained commander who would make the decisions on tactics and dress code for the deployment. In some of the incidents PSU officers described the uniform they were wearing as 'code 3', which is normal operational policing uniform. Participant 6 an experienced PSU officer talks about feeling disappointed in the early stages of his PSU career when he would be called out to a PSU incident but be told to wear code 3, as he 'wants to put my big hat on', but now recognises that PSU is a graduated response, and the decision of how to dress is also reflective of the commander's awareness of the situation the officers are going into. Wearing code 3 uniform to a PSU deployment is reflective of the risk to officers at that time, but as participant 6 elaborates, the benefit of PSU officers in code 3 rather than non-PSU colleagues is their ability to 'gauge the crowd'. He suggests that PSU officers are more experienced in crowd dynamics and can identify *'Does it feel normal or does it feel as if something's going to go south? And if that is the case we can quickly feed that back'* (6b. PSU Officer, male, PSU uniform). For PSU officers working with commanders in constantly assessing the incident for threat and risk

appears to contribute to the feeling of gauging predictability around the incident and of being able to safely deal with whatever is presented to them.

Whilst it is not impossible for a PSU deployment to change from peaceful to hostile, or for risk factors such as the size of a crowd to alter significantly from the point of a risk assessment, the presence of a dedicated commander means that operational and safety-based decisions can be made to respond to any changing threat. A PSU officer is able to amend their dress code as required (at the direction of their commander), and although participant 5 identifies that this is not a quick process, taking perhaps ten minutes, it then enables the officers to safely face an increased threat level. The example of a threat level increasing, such as a peaceful protest becoming violent, is the PSU equivalent of unpredictability in normal daily deployments. This change of threat did not appear to be as concerning for officers when deployed in PSU as it was when they are attending an incident in their normal role, as officers felt that within PSU they had the appropriate training and kit to be able to deal with it safely. One of the novice officers articulated his thoughts around safety on a PSU deployment as;

> Sometimes you're more protected in a specific role like this because you've got such set parameters of what you're going to where I could go to a job on response and just turn up and anything could happen or go very wrong (12b. Novice PSU Officer, male, PSU uniform).

Both the PSU and non PSU officers identified an awareness of potential for risk or danger within their roles even if they felt that they had not experienced this themselves. Within normal daily roles officers discussed incidents that clearly had the potential to lead to serious injuries, however through mitigating actions, protective kit, and operational planning this is something that participants felt they were protected from. Non PSU officers, and officers in their normal daily role felt that the risk of the unknown and the potential for everyday circumstances to escalate quickly was something that was concerning, but was an intrinsic part of the role they have signed up for. PSU and novice PSU officers expressed an awareness of the extreme and serious level of public disorder that they could potentially face. The acknowledgement of a public order command, and enhanced tactical and uniform options however provided some mitigation to the risk and minimised the likelihood of PSU officers being caught by surprise. This means that PSU and novice PSU officers universally felt prepared to safely face the risk of serious disorder should the need arise.

Feelings of Safety

To help understand participants' perception of risk and danger, in addition to being directly asked to consider risk, they were also asked the opposing question, 'what makes you feel safe/safer?' Two prominent themes were identified through this question set, those being uniform, including the presence of protective kit, and having a felling of 'safety in numbers' when colleagues are present to support them.

Uniform

All of the participants have served at least part of their policing career in uniform. Officers in the county forces that took part in this research are required to spend a minimum of two years as a 'front-line' uniformed officer before they are able to change

roles or move to a specialist team. Only two of the participants have moved laterally to a detective career, meaning that they no longer routinely wear their uniform. Those officers that continue to hold uniformed roles have largely had some experience in non-uniformed positions, either on attachments to learn about other departments, or as part of specialist or covert teams. As such, all participants were able to give perspectives on experiences of working both in uniform and in civilian clothing. As the effects of enclothed cognition were being specifically tested in relation to the role they were currently performing, three of the interviews took place while participants were wearing business wear (two detectives and an officer temporarily seconded to an investigation team), while all of the other participants were wearing uniform.

Participants were asked to describe what they were wearing, and their answers covered two key areas; clothing, and protective equipment. Participants generally regarded their uniform as something which enhanced their safety, for example participant 7 described *'I am in uniform so I feel better, because I have got body armour, I've got pava I can whip out. Physically I feel safer in uniform'* (7a. PSU officer, female, black uniform). This association between protective uniform and increased feelings of safety replicates the 'wearing safety' concept described by De Camargo (2017). Wearing uniform is also credited as something which would enhance feelings of safety when intervening in incidents. Four participants specifically discussed how they feel when intervening in an incident and that they felt duty-bound to intervene regardless of what they were wearing. Participant 5 explained the rationale that was instilled in him from his early days at training school; *'there is a hierarchy of who gets looked after, and you are more expendable than the public. You always put yourself in harm's way, rather than having the public in harm's way'* (5a. PSU officer, male, business wear).

Participant 7 also feels duty bound to put herself in harm's way to protect another person even when not in uniform, but further clarifies that wearing a uniform gives her more confidence in doing so *'obviously priorities are to save life and limb, I can't just stand there. Well, I could, but I wouldn't want to'* (7a. PSU officer, female, black uniform). Participant 3 expands on this principle but is less confident in his intervention out of uniform suggesting*, 'I would be more likely to just dive out of the car and get involved in something with my beat uniform on then I would in a rig with my covert harness on if that makes sense'* (3. Non-PSU officer, male, business wear). The perceptions of participant 7 and 3 support Andrews (2023) proposition that officers feel more invulnerable when wearing uniform. The examples do however highlight that the participants are crediting the protective qualities of their uniform for their increased confidence, which contrasts with Andrews (2023) suggestion that this confidence is a product of the identity of the uniform, and not it's protective qualities.

PSU and novice PSU officers discussed the level of protection that their uniform affords them often at the cost of comfort, a compromise which seems acceptable. Comments on this topic were such as *'I would rather be safe than comfortable if that makes sense'* (11b. Novice PSU Officer, male, PSU uniform), and *'it's that trade off of having something that is comfortable and something that still protects'* (12b. Novice PSU Officer, male, PSU uniform). PSU officers cited their padding and protective clothing as offering all over protection *'you do feel protected by it because it kind of*

covers everywhere' (10b. Novice PSU Officer, male, PSU uniform), and in addition to the pads and helmet that can be donned and doffed as required, the PSU 'boiler suit' uniform itself was highlighted by participants for its flameproof properties. Participant 8 confidently said *'This stuff is great I have been set on fire a few times, it works'* (8b. PSU Officer, male, PSU uniform), and participant 7 who also explained her confidence in the flameproof properties of the uniform, *'but I do feel really confident in [the uniform] I feel safe […] like walking through petrol I've never had a fear of doing it so it is fit for purpose'* (7b. PSU Officer, female, PSU uniform).

As previously highlighted when discussing their role, PSU officers demonstrated an awareness of the way in which their uniform might be perceived by a member of the public and how this in turn might influence that person's behaviour. This potential influence on the behaviour of the public is what shaped their perception of risk. Opinion was divided as to whether a person observing a PSU officer in full protective kit would be anxious or would feel inspired to attack an officer. Participant 5 summarised this duality of thought;

> They see you in this and some of them think well you've got to be wearing that for a reason, there's going to be bother, I am going to leave. Or equally you do get stuff where if they know you are wearing pads they might be more willing to chuck something at you, because they think 'I'm less likely to hurt you (5b. PSU Officer, male, PSU uniform).

Participant 7 also felt that the appearance of a PSU officer in full protective kit could cause a member of the public to become more aggressive towards the police than they might do towards an officer in normal uniform. She describes;

> You look different to a normal police officer when you are dressed like this so when you walk up to someone in pads you look quite intimidating so they might automatically assume that you are going to start getting hands on so then their level is going to go up (7b. PSU Officer, female, PSU uniform).

Despite the recognition that the presence of officers in PSU kit could cause hostility from some members of society, PSU officers felt confident in the protection afforded to them by their specialist kit. They did not consider the risk of violence to be something that caused them an enhanced perception of risk to their safety.

The only participant who did not link their uniform, and by extension their protective equipment, to feeling safe was participant 2. As a Detective Sergeant, participant 2 does not routinely wear a uniform and does not attend emergency calls, but instead works to investigate crimes which have already been committed. In considering safety in her normal daily role and going about her work in business wear, participant 2 reflected, *'I feel very low risk actually'* (2. Non-PSU officer, female, business wear). In relation to risk specifically she noted that she does not feel at risk in her role due to the nature of her interactions with the public. Rather than safety, participant 2 regards the benefit of wearing a uniform as being one of practicality. Having begun her career as a uniformed officer, participant 2 compared the practicalities of wearing a uniform to wearing business wear and mentioned the benefits of having a number of pockets

and storage systems in uniform which she did not have in a business suit adding *'It sounds silly I miss more the PPE for the pockets to put my stuff in'* (2. Non-PSU officer, female, business wear).

Participant 5, another detective participant who has a daily role in civilian clothing, is an experienced PSU officer and commander, and when considering uniform and risk he spoke predominantly about previous uniformed roles and PSU experience. He did however offer similar thoughts to participant 2 regarding his feelings of safety when wearing civilian clothing, suggesting that he would not utilise any protective kit to enhance his feeling of safety in his detective role as *'I don't usually get too much confrontation at the desk!'* (5a. PSU officer, male, business wear). Both of these detective participants base their perception of fear, and their need for protective equipment on their lived experiences in their roles, and arguably are influenced by enclothed cognition as they are not exposed to a high level of risk, and therefore do not feel the need to equip themselves with offensive or defensive accoutrements.

Some examples were given of ways in which participants perceived that their uniform acted as a deterrent to prevent a risk emerging. This was particularly true of the presence of taser. Participant 4 gives an example of attending an incident with a member of the public who was highly agitated but calmed down quickly upon sight of the taser that participant 4 was carrying *'he saw [the taser] and he instantly was like 'yes sir alright sir' don't get me wrong he was still pissed off but you could see that made a huge difference to what happened'* (4. Non-PSU officer, male, black uniform). Participant 10, another taser officer gives a similar example of having been called to somebody being violently assaulted. Participant 10 did not discharge the taser, but he removed it from the holster and pointed it towards the subject, shining a 'red dot' onto him; *'We get there and luckily I had a taser, I went into the room I pointed at him and he stopped and did what I asked him to do'* He expands on using taser as a form of deterrent when asked about facing risk and danger by explaining *'I have red dotted a few people but that is about it'* (10a. Novice PSU officer, male, black uniform)

These examples support the 'precautionary measures' theory Smith (1998) presented and could suggest that without the highly visible presence of the taser, these situations could have led to significant harm to the officer or member of the public.

Participant 12 offers a cautionary perception of the carriage of taser;

> I think sometimes tasers give people a false sense of security they pulled the taser out and they think they can deal with anyone but then you watch people sort of pull that taser and then realise they've still got to go in their hands on the people haven't they and that sort of confidence the taser gives is taken away (12a. Novice PSU officer, male, black uniform).

Overall, uniformed participants linked the wearing of their uniform to an increased feeling of safety. Comments from participants who felt uniform and protective equipment would enhance their safety when intervening in incidents supports the previously identified 'precautionary behaviour' of ensuring uniform is worn. Both PSU and plain clothed participants were attuned to the influence their appearance might have on members of the public, and were aware of the way this could impact the

outcomes of the scenario they were in. The theme of uniform as a vehicle to safety was most evident in officers who felt that they were exposed to the most risk. PSU officers spoke fondly of the protection they had experienced through their PSU uniform and credited it for protecting them from high-risk situations, whether simulated in training, or experienced in real life deployments. Uniformed participants in their normal daily roles also identified aspects of their uniform which enhanced feelings of safety, and offered views of protective equipment, especially the taser, as having a deterrent and de-escalating effect on conflict.

Safety in numbers

Across all of the participant groups, the theme of being alone versus being in the company of others was repeatedly identified as a factor when considering safety. The geographic location of the rural counties in which the participants are based mean that officers in their normal daily role working on their own, or 'single crewed' are often some distance away from their nearest colleague. The significance of this was illustrated by participant 1 who described feeling less vulnerable 'in an urban environment where you know that backup is nearby, a lot harder […] going into the back end of beyond and it kicks off and your backup is twenty minutes on a blue light run away' (1. Non-PSU officer, male, white shirt uniform). Participant 6 also made reference to the potential and not insignificant time delay of receiving support '*if you aren't double crewed, your backup is a long way off. In our district, it took just over 45 minutes to drive from one corner to the other one on a blue light run'* (6a. PSU officer, male, black uniform). The geographical challenges of working in a county force were predominantly identified by officers who felt they were at risk by the limited availability of support when working in the rural areas of their districts. The opposite was identified by participants based in the urban towns and cities who acknowledged the benefit of having colleagues in close vicinity. Participants who had nearby support from colleagues recognised this as contributing to reducing their perception of risk with acknowledgements such as participant 3, a city centre officer who spoke of the reassurance of having other officers close by '*I always know there is somebody at the end of that radio if I press The Avengers Assemble button everybody will come running'* (3. Non-PSU officer, male, business wear).

Participants did not suggest that they were seeking a large number of people to be with them, simply that they felt safer when they were not alone. Participant 10 suggested *'being double crewed is always quite nice just because it just takes a little bit of the stress and the worry away'* (10a. Novice PSU officer, male, black uniform). Participant 1 felt the same way 'I think having a second officer with you, particularly in a rural county as we are, is key to officer safety' (1. Non-PSU officer, male, white shirt uniform).

Unlike the single crewed deployment described in the various daily roles that the participants hold, PSU officers do not work in isolation. A full PSU deployment consists of 25 officers, and although there may be scenarios where a partial PSU is used, the deployment will still require a 'serial' of officers, which will under normal circumstances be 6 officers. All of the experienced PSU officers made reference to this in their interviews, *'as a PSU officer you are part of a group'* (5b. PSU Officer, male, PSU

uniform), *'you are going to work as a unit'* (6b. PSU Officer, male, PSU uniform), *'I think it's better to be in a team'* (7b. PSU Officer, female, PSU uniform), *'I am part of a unit'* (8b. PSU Officer, male, PSU uniform). Participant 8 cheerfully attributed the presence of colleagues to an overall feeling of safety by suggesting;

> The chances are you're going to be okay because there's a whole bunch of you. You feel like you're a small army so to speak. Whereas on response for example it might just be you. […] So I think that probably changes people's mentality, it certainly changes mine a little bit. I think you feel more confident I think that's fair, as a PSU because you are working as one unit, one team. I can deal with whatever is coming because I know I've got 24 mates to back me up essentially (8b. PSU Officer, male, PSU uniform).

The novice PSU officers who were interviewed during their training appeared to have already formed an opinion on the benefit of having additional colleagues present on PSU. All four of the novice officers described a feeling of *'team mentality and looking after each other'* (9b. Novice PSU Officer, male, PSU uniform). Participant 10 also mirrored the comments of the experienced participant 8 above when discussing whether he would feel vulnerable during a PSU deployment to a violent individual, *'I wouldn't say vulnerable because at the end of the day I've got six more cops in the room'* (10b. Novice PSU Officer, male, PSU uniform).

There were conditions identified which influenced the extend to which additional colleagues improved feelings of safety. This was particularly with regard to the competency and capability of the colleague, and whether participants perceived them to be an asset or a liability. Whilst the prominent benefit of working with others rather than working alone was one of increased feelings of safety, some participants included additional information with regard to who those colleagues might be. Participants 4 and 10 both spoke of the importance of having faith in their colleague's ability, describing incidents they had experienced whereby having a colleague with them did not contribute to a feeling of safety, but instead raised additional concerns. Discussing ineffective colleagues, participant 10 reflected *'I've been to jobs recently and you are carrying people, or there are people there where you think well you don't make me feel any safer'* (10a. Novice PSU officer, male, black uniform).

While this was not something that was directly contradicted by PSU officers, participants did make reference to a sense of confidence that all of their PSU colleagues, even those that are unknown to them, have received the same training, and by extension should have the same skills. Participant 6 stated that he would describe PSU as *'being part of a unit and part of a group of officers who are confident, competent, experienced and robust in how they deal with things'* (6b. PSU Officer, male, PSU uniform). Participant 6 also discussed some occasions where PSU officers have been required to provide spontaneous assistance to an incident, and the desirable 6 officers has not been achievable. Speaking of the two other PSU colleagues on his team, he explained his confidence in working with them;

> Even when we aren't mustering a sergeant and six, because I have been on the same shift now for, it will be four years in June, I have got to know

> the PSU officers on the team, so […] we are always deploying as a three and we are always working closely together and we are confident in each other (6b. PSU Officer, male, PSU uniform).

PSU officers made reference to the fact that they are specially trained, and this appeared to be reflected in the confidence they placed in PSU colleagues, not only did they feel less at risk due to the number of PSU colleagues present at an incident, but because they understood that they had all received the same level of training and this is what makes them competent, efficient officers. Novice PSU officer, participant 11 summarised this feeling of confidence in others;

> I know their skills are up to scratch and I know mine are as well, so I know I've got that trust in that person. I may not know them in any other way, but I know that they're going to be on my shoulder and supporting me protecting me when I need it and vice versa (11b. Novice PSU Officer, male, PSU uniform).

The theme of safety in numbers was consistent across all the participant groups, with a consensus being that feelings of safety increase when the participant was not alone. An absence of the protection of safety in numbers was felt most acutely by officers who in their daily roles work in rural areas of their counties and are routinely single crewed. Responding to incidents alone and knowing that back-up could be 20 or more minutes away if required was something that officers attributed to heightened feelings of risk and danger. This theme was less prominent in officers that worked in city locations, as they knew that even if they were working alone, there were officers nearby who could come to their aid. Participants who felt more vulnerable working in isolation did not necessarily seek a large number of colleagues to be with them, simply to have an 'extra pair of hands'. When undertaking a PSU role, officers would never be alone, and for PSU officers, knowing that they were part of a skilled, specialist team contributed to a perception of safety. As the PSU role is always one of a team deployment they are never alone and whatever they might face, they would be facing it with a team of colleagues who will support them. Both PSU and non-PSU officers made reference to the skills and abilities of their colleagues, however for non-PSU scenarios there was potential ambiguity of the capability of the officers that participants might be working with. For the PSU officers, there was a confidence in the continuity and rigour of the PSU training, and therefore the ability of fellow PSU officers, and participants felt that they would depend on their PSU colleagues more readily than those in their daily role.

Conclusions

This chapter has considered participants' perception of their exposure to risk in their role. Themes of injury, the potential for risk and feelings of safety were universally identified across all of the participant groups, however there were some notable differences between PSU and non-PSU roles. This included different perceptions being held by the same participant when in each different role.

The risk of physical injury was acutely felt and expressed by participants in all research groups, although it was broadly accepted to be an inherent risk of the role of a police

officer. Although few participants reported being badly hurt, those who wore a uniform in their daily roles were more inclined to consider injury to be a significant risk than either those who did not wear a uniform, or officers in PSU roles. This is likely to be due to learned, lived experience, as the uniformed response role is where officers are most likely to have faced violence in the past. The perception of uniformed policing presenting the greatest risk, and the perception of safety of those not in uniformed roles shows evidence of enclothed cognition. This feeling of safety in business wear did not extend to intervening in a dangerous situation, where participants expressed the opposite perception, that they would feel safer wearing their uniform as it offers a level of physical protection that business wear does not.

Whilst PSU presents an opportunity for participants to encounter significant levels of violence and disorder, both novice and experienced groups felt that their protective kit and the tactics they are trained in afforded them a degree of protection from the most serious violence. Experienced PSU officers were also able to draw upon their previous PSU deployments and the perception that these had been relatively 'low key' when informing their perception of risk in the PSU role. The difference in the perception of risk identified by the novice and experienced groups suggests the influence of enclothed cognition. The experienced officers, drawing on their involvement in real life public order incidents regarding the risk of danger in PSU to be less than their novice colleagues who were only able to draw meaning from high threat training scenarios.

All participants acknowledged the possibility of being seriously injured while undertaking their role, and this could be attributed to the knowledge of other officers being hurt or killed. Participants felt that the unpredictable nature of policing contributes to the risk of injury, as incidents can evolve quickly, and new risks can appear without warning. This was seen as less of a concern within PSU where participants felt that PSU deployments offer a degree of prior knowledge. Generally the type of incident and the risk factors are reasonably well known prior to arrival, and decisions around safety and tactics will have been made by experienced commanders in order to afford officers maximum safety.

Whilst participants accepted the risk of injury they are exposed to when undertaking their role, participants identified the support of colleagues to be a key element in enhancing feelings of safety. This correlated to the PSU officers generally reporting feeling safer on a PSU deployment where colleagues are always present, than they would do whilst 'single crewed', even if the incident they were attending was reported to be something innocuous. PSU officers reported levels of confidence in the skills and ability of their PSU colleagues knowing that they have all been through the same training programme, and during this they have been exposed to the highest levels of violence and disorder. Additionally, uniform and protective clothing were highlighted as increasing participants perception of safety, and the carriage of PPE enhanced individual feelings of safety. This perception was further amplified within the PSU role where officers wear additional protective clothing and have experienced the effectiveness of this being tested through high-end training tactics.

There were clear differences in the responses of participant groups, and those participants interviewed twice demonstrated an adaptability to the role they were

currently performing. Concerns, experiences and perceptions seem to be more closely connected to the role being held rather than the personality of the individual officer. This supports enclothed cognition theory as the same individual adapts their self-perception depending on the uniform they are wearing. Whilst the responses, particularly with respect of knife crime and serious injury, may demonstrate that PSU officers in general have a higher tolerance of threat, this hypothesis would require further exploration of similar incidents from non-PSU officers, which was not apparent in this sample group.

Chapter six: Conclusion

Personal reflections

This research was borne out of a professional curiosity to better understand what effect, if any, the wearing of an enhanced protective uniform has on police officers. My own personal emotions and 'gut feeling' suggested that changing one's uniform changes one's self-perception of the role they are required to perform, and the risk that may be faced. I found myself anticipating an enhanced level of threat when deploying to an incident such as a rave whereby I am required to wear all the protective uniform provided to a PSU officer. As I moved into a command role within public order, I was able to step back and observe the way officers on the 'front line' of public disorder behaved in preparation for, and deployment to, public order incidents. I witnessed officer behaviour that supported the anecdote that public order officers 'don't know how to talk to people' and did not engage with members of the public in the way they would have done in any other scenario.

In conducting the literature review, I have been able to apply an academic framework to this question in the form of enclothed cognition and use this to identify what factors influence self-perception and in turn, behaviour. By uniquely focusing on authentic users of the uniform who are police officers on duty, primed and wearing the uniform which they are discussing, I have contributed to a significant gap in the field of research.

The research process has enabled me to explore the presence of enclothed cognition in officer self-perception and to understand what officers perceive the purpose of their role to be. Understanding officer self-perception of their purpose and exposure to risk based upon the clothing they wear provides an evidence base which has previously not existed and offers an academic view of an often-quoted assumption, that officers wearing full PSU kit 'forget' how to engage with the public. The research does identify a shift in mindset when changing uniform similar to that which I have felt myself. Furthermore, the research provides an explanation of the reason this happens, and that the change of clothing, although a catalyst to a change in self-perception, is a physical representation of the meaning, history and emotion each individual officer associates with their uniform and their role.

Summary of findings

This research has utilised thematic analysis of original interviews to identify the ways in which enclothed cognition is present in policing. The effects of enclothed cognition can be seen in both normal daily roles, and specialist Public Order policing. From an academic perspective, this research contributes robust and original evidence in the field of enclothed cognition and introduces avenues for future research. At a professional level this research offers insight to public order officers and commanders as to the way dress code can influence self-perception.

This research was able to provide answers and offer a professional and operational context to the research questions.

Research question 1; ‘What do officers perceive the purpose of their role to be when wearing ordinary, or public order uniform?’

The participants in this research perceive the primary purpose of their role to be protecting the public from harm. This objective was more clearly attainable to officers working in dedicated community roles; however the concept of protection was a universal theme across all roles. Participants experienced a shift in their self-perception when performing a PSU role in comparison to their normal daily role. Although participants acknowledged protecting the public as a priority, PSU officers also indicated that they perceive themselves to be a tactical option to respond to significant violence or disorder. This self-perception of PSU as a tactical option also demonstrated a degree of depersonalisation in the PSU group which was not seen in their ordinary daily role.

Research question 2; ‘How do officers perceive their exposure to risk when wearing ordinary, or public order uniform?’

Officers perceive risk to be a part of policing and accept low level injury to be an unfortunate byproduct of their role. They regard their uniform as an enhancement to their safety and feel more confident engaging in dangerous situations when wearing protective kit. This confidence is built up through experience in training whereby serious violence or disorder is not feared by PSU officers as they have full confidence in their protective uniform. Participants felt most at risk when performing their ordinary daily role and attributed this perception to the unpredictability of the role, more limited protection form their uniform, and the likelihood of being the only officer attending an incident. PSU officers conversely felt relatively safe when undertaking their role owing to their protective clothing, the presence of additional colleagues, and there being a degree of predictability at an incident.

This research contributes to a gap in the existing knowledge of enclothed cognition, and uniquely addresses the practical, in the field, research Adam and Galinsky (2019) note to be absent from this subject area. This research considers the fundamental characteristics of enclothed cognition, that the clothing must be worn, and that it must hold meaning to the wearer. The chosen research method of conducting interviews with on-duty police officers in the uniform they are required to wear for their role ensures that the clothing is worn, and that the participants are primed to the role they are discussing. The meaning which can be derived from the clothing is explored through the participants’ personal experiences. The inclusion of a novice PSU group ensures that the effects of training and anticipation are considered in comparison to historical, lived experiences. Observing meaning through a framework of symbolic interactionism enhances the understanding of how meaning is formed and how this meaning evolves through experience. This authentic insight into the uniform worn by officers and the associated meaning they derive from it provides a distinctive contribution to academic study in both the theoretical framework of enclothed cognition, and in professional practice within policing.

The research identified four prominent findings. In summary, the first finding is that regardless of the role they are performing, participants felt that their primary purpose was to protect the community. The second point is that participants retained most

readily the things that they are repeatedly taught. Overwhelmingly this related to safeguarding but was also demonstrated by PSU officers' association of the PSU role with high levels of violence. The third finding is that PSU officers did not feel that their specialist skills were used appropriately, and they were not utilised as well as they should be. Finally, participants demonstrated that they felt most at risk when performing their normal daily role.

Firstly participants have identified that they perceive their role as police officers first and foremost to be focused on the safety and welfare of the public. In whatever role they are performing they consider that protecting the public from harm is their primary purpose. Participants whose roles were explicitly identified as being community-focused described a passion for their role and identified the perceived benefits of building and nurturing community relations. Participants identified that wearing a police uniform was useful in enabling the public to identify them as an officer, and this was often a catalyst for engagement. Participants who held community-based roles also expressed a frustration at being prevented from undertaking this role when frequently called upon to provide support to answering emergency calls. PSU and novice PSU officers acknowledged their role as providing security to the public but did not consider PSU to be a dedicated community relations role. Both novice and experienced PSU groups perceived the full public order uniform to have the potential to create a barrier between the police and the community. Enclothed cognition was evident in the self-perception of PSU officers, who found it could be problematic to present a community facing persona when wearing uniform that is not visibly associated with community policing. This perception created a conflict for PSU officers when recounting examples of their PSU experiences, the majority of which had not involved instances of violence and disorder, but instead required them to be available as a contingency, whilst engaging with members of the public in the same way as their PSU colleagues.

Second, the research data identified that participants retain from training the things that they are taught the most frequently. Concepts such as safeguarding are reiterated to them throughout their professional training and experience and are therefore in the forefront of their mind. Officers in their ordinary daily roles spoke of the theme of public protection being drummed into them through their training, and the subsequent association between their uniform and the purpose of their role in protecting the public. PSU officers conversely identified that their training comprises of high stress and significant disorder scenarios which expose them to violence and danger. The effect of this type of training was most apparent upon the novice PSU officers who anticipated parallel levels of aggression in real life deployments. This reinforced the perception of PSU officers that their enhanced skillset is reserved only for the most dangerous and disorderly scenarios. The use of lower hostility scenarios in PSU training would therefore address this and develop the perception that PSU is a tactic for peaceful and lower-level incidents. More experienced PSU officers demonstrated enclothed cognition influences as they were able to reflect on their experiences in PSU being a balance of demanding deployments and those which remained entirely peaceful. This experience is what the experienced PSU groups reflect upon in order to shape their expectations of the incidents they attend.

Third, PSU officers perceived themselves to be highly skilled at working in the high-stress environment of public disorder. They considered themselves to be better placed than their non-PSU colleagues to judge the tension of a crowd, and to anticipate when a peaceful event may become hostile. Additionally PSU officers felt that their enhanced training was not utilised as frequently as they would wish it to be. This was attributed to a combination of few incidents occurring that required PSU assistance, and those incidents for which PSU could be utilised often failing to call for PSU assistance. PSU officers felt that there were a limited number of incidents occurring which required their skill set, and this was partly attributed to the relative calm in the rural counties in which they are based. Participants identified attending 'mutual aid' and providing support to other forces as being a core opportunity to experience high tension incidents. PSU trained participants also felt that when incidents appropriate to PSU did occur, they were not always utilised to support these incidents where they could provide a tactical option to the commander. Incidents such as distressed individuals barricaded into a room or property, for which PSU officers receive regular training, were identified as being deemed to be 'firearms incidents' or were resolved without consideration for the tactic of PSU. Additionally the use of PSU officers to support lower-level public order incidents such as peaceful protest were also perceived to be rarely exploited. Through high level training, the enclothed cognition demonstrated by PSU officers defines their perception of the role whereby PSU is a perceived to be a skill utilised for high level scenarios.

Fourth and finally, the participants in this research felt that they were most at risk while performing their ordinary daily role. This was attributed to the unpredictable nature of the role, often working in isolation, and having either limited access to protective equipment, or protective equipment that they perceived to be insufficient. PSU officers identified that in their PSU role they could be sent into a more hostile environment than they might encounter during their daily role but did not consider this to present a heightened risk to them. In contrast to their ordinary roles, PSU officers felt that despite the heightened level of hostility, the environment was more predictable. They also credited the public order commander with having completed a risk assessment of the environment and the risks, and trusted that this had been done accurately. Additionally, PSU officers felt that the protective kit they wear will protect them from most violence or threat. They felt confident in the protective ability of the kit, having tested it at this high-level during training. Finally PSU officers identified that being a part of a PSU is to be part of a team. Unlike in their daily roles when officers are most often deployed on their own, PSU officers acknowledged that they have the support of their serial, and their unit, therefore should they find themselves in a dangerous situation they are not alone.

Novice PSU officers expressed a similar sentiment to their experienced colleagues in relation to the heightened risk that they anticipated being exposed to, and also identified similar comforting themes. The primary difference between experienced and novice PSU officers appears to be the anticipation of the frequency at which they would be exposed to a heightened risk. Novice PSU officers displayed an expectation that they would frequently experience a heightened level of threat on a PSU deployment, whereas the more experienced officers reflected that the majority of their PSU

experience required them to remain ‘out of sight’, or to deploy as a pre-emptive tactic, not requiring their helmet or shield.

Key recommendations:

The findings of this research will contribute to the policing of public order incidents in three distinct ways; the development of public order training, informing commander decision making, and influencing the way public order officers are briefed prior to deployment.

Development of Public Order Training: This research has demonstrated that police officers retain the messages which are most frequently reiterated to them through training. When wearing ordinary uniform officers are acutely aware that their responsibility is to safeguard the community, as this is what they are taught and reminded throughout their career. When undertaking public order training officers are taught and retaught how to respond to high levels of violence and disorder, even though this does not represent the only type of deployment they will experience as a PSU officer. The messages that are delivered to officers from the onset of their training have a long-term impact. Therefore if PSU officers were to undertake more community-based training, such as engaging with protesters at a non-confrontational level, or negotiating with crowds to disperse from an area rather than forcibly removing them, officers will cultivate their experience of wearing full public order uniform to include repeated instances of community engagement. This will shape the meaning that officers associate with their public order clothing and alter their enclothed cognition. Additionally, by reiterating the value of community engagement within a public order setting, PSU officers will understand that their enhanced skillset extends beyond that required to combat significant violence and disorder. They will recognise that PSU includes community relations and officers will feel that when deployed in this way they are being valued and utilised in a way which acknowledges their skillset.

Public order training at strategic and tactical level for commanders, as well as practical, operational training for all officers will benefit from an enhanced understanding of enclothed cognition. Classroom based strategic training will enable commanders to understand the theory and reality of enclothed cognition and relay the importance of the awareness of officers’ experience described above. At an operational level, the College of Policing have the opportunity to revise and update the manual of mandated tactics to include emphasis on community-focused deployments. This will include the policing of protest where crowds are largely peaceful and compliant with instruction. Tactical recommendations should also consider policing the movement of people and crowds through the use of escort cordons and restricting access to areas. A renewed and repeated focus of specialist training at a lower tension level will cause officers to associate this style of policing with the uniform they are wearing, and a reduced threat level. Practicing this style of policing whilst wearing PSU uniform will ensure that officers acknowledge their adaptability to an environment which could evolve from peaceful to hostile, and understand that their policing style can also evolve quickly to suit the environment.

The value of meaningful training cannot be understated. As has been demonstrated through this research, Police Officers remember the things they are taught, and

consequently put these lessons into practice. Public order training must continue to deliver high end tactical training, and no recommendations are made to remove this, however by providing a balance to training delivery that is more representative of the type of deployment PSU officers continue to experience, officers, particularly those who experience only a small number of real life deployments, will find their enclothed cognition is enhanced to include low level and less confrontational incidents. This will not only combat the anecdote of PSU officers not being able to engage well with the public but will also improve officer self-perception of their skill set being utilised and valued when deployed to community engagement incidents.

Command decision making: Public Order commanders are provided with an insight into how their decision making around the dress code of officers will affect the mindset of those officers. Presently commanders will make the decision based upon risk and the style and tone they are hoping to achieve. The intelligence available to commanders detailing the risk of the event, such as whether there are likely to be hostile individuals or weapons and missiles, will influence the decision as to whether PSU officers should be deployed, and whether officers require additional protective uniform. The style and tone that the commander seeks to achieve will consider public perception of how the event is policed. This will include the way the commander thinks the public will perceive the presence of PSU officers. The guidance from adapting to Protest (HMIC, 2009) which cautions against premature deployment of officers in public order uniform has historically been the predominant factor in this decision making process. There is currently little to shape the commanders understanding of how their dress code decision will influence the perception of the officers themselves. This research will inform commanders of some fundamental officer mindset concepts, including the fact that officers are naturally inclined to want to safeguard the public, but do not always understand how to do this as a PSU officer. Dress code decisions which are based upon risk will ensure officers are appropriately protected from danger, and will demonstrate that PSU uniform and a community policing mindset are not mutually exclusive.

Public order commanders at a tactical and operational level should endeavour to understand the demographic of their officers and consider their previous experience at events and operations. The nature of policing will not always facilitate the preparation or planning of how to distribute officers across a PSU, however this should not prevent operational officers from understanding who they are working with. Irrespective of the planning time available, Sergeants responsible for serials of officers and Inspectors responsible for multiple serials should have an oversight of the level of experience and previous deployments of their officers. The value of informed command decision making ensures commanders are able to consider the most appropriate dress code and embrace the range of tactical options available beyond the compulsory safety-based tactics that are currently mandated. This will result in officers feeling utilised, motivated and safe while on public order duty.

Briefings for officers: This research has identified that officer self-perception is influenced by the uniform they are wearing, but that this influence is drawn from the meaning the uniform has to the officer wearing it, not simply the physical properties of the uniform. This is particularly evident within the novice PSU officers who have no

practical experience of PSU deployment. Understanding that the uniform does not have a universal influential effect on every officer is important when considering how to brief officers regarding the event they are going to attend. Commanders and officers at every level should consider the range of experience within their team and ensure that briefing and management tactics adequately manage the expectations of those officers. This includes the identification of risk and/or the need for a community focused approach. The Inspector and Sergeants on a PSU deployment should know whether they have any officers that have never been deployed to a 'live' incident and understand that these officers will have a self-perception that is based entirely on their experiences during PSU training which are invariably of violent conflict. Additionally if officers have previously sustained an injury or traumatic incident during PSU, this is likely to affect their perception of the risk they are going into. By taking ownership of this information, commanders can ensure that the briefing they provide officers will recognise the influence of enclothed cognition. A simple acknowledgement such as 'this operation will differ from how we police football', or 'remember how we manage escort cordons in training' will serve as a catalyst to the officer tapping into their own self awareness and shaping their expectations of the job at hand. Careful briefing of officers can overcome experiential variances by outlining exactly what the expectation is of the event, the planned policing approach, and the contingencies for a changing environment.

Within Public Order Policing, the style and tone of an operation is set from the onset by the POPS command. The way they brief officers will influence the manner in which those officers operate. This includes the use of linguistic cues. If commanders routinely consider the demographic of the officers on their teams, they will be aware of those officers who may be anticipating violent disorder, by virtue of having only experienced training. They will also be aware of those with more experience who may be inclined to reflect on their last experience of a similar operation.

Implementation plan

The implementation of these recommendations will vary between force areas, however it is endorsed by the College of Policing, and encouraging dialogue has taken place within a number of regions for further implementation. Some of the recommendations are already being realised at local and national level, and many of them require no formal direction, just a small change in behaviour. More formal recommendations, such as amending the training manual are ongoing but anticipated to be implemented within a year.

The recommendations do not come with a cost per se, however the ease in which they are embedded would rely upon the willingness of commanders to adopt amended approaches, and any expectation to undertake additional training would in real terms mean an abstraction from duty.

These recommendations can be realised in the following ways:

	Method
Public Order Training	Inclusion of low level and community tactics within the mandatory core modules of public order training. The current training manual is discretionary and allows interpretation as to the extent this is delivered.
Command decision making	Inclusion of enclothed cognition theory within Gold, Silver and Bronze commander courses and tactical advisor (POPSA) training. An input within the Commander C5 annual training day detailing the findings of this research, and significantly the need to balance community perspective with officer self-perception. Explicit inclusion of dress code decision making within command public order plans and APP Public Order.
Briefings	Dress code decisions to be succinctly explained to officers, along with any supplementary information about the tone of the operation. Officer experience level to be identified prior to deployment A template briefing model including acknowledgement of enclothed cognition, style and tone, and officer level of experience to be circulated by the College and included for use in command training.

Evaluation of the success of these recommendations will initially be realised by the formal adoption of recommendations into practice by the College of Policing. Further evaluation will be achieved both informally, through conversation and feedback with commanders and officers, and formally through satisfaction surveys. Within the participant forces, annual surveys are conducted across the entire workforce, and additionally a public order officer survey is in the process of being implemented. This will provide the opportunity for officers and commanders to reflect on the recommendations above and their perspectives on these.

Limitations

While this research presents findings and recommendations in the field of enclothed cognition and officer self-perception, there are limitations within the research that must be acknowledged.

Firstly, the participants within this research were taken from two county police forces in England. Participants held a range of public order experience both in length of service and the type and frequency of deployments they had encountered. The PSU officers that took part in this research perceived themselves to have limited experience of serious disorder such as rioting, and therefore their perception of exposure to risk was drawn from the incidents they had experienced. This included incidents such as protests, violent individuals, unlicenced music events and football disorder. Increasing the participant sample to include PSU officers from urban force areas, or selecting those who have experienced PSU deployments to significant disorder may identify a different perception of the role purpose and exposure to risk of a PSU officer.

Second, the sample size for this research provides an insight into the self-perception of three groups of participants, non-PSU, novice and experienced PSU officers. A potential fourth participant group, officers who are full time PSU officers could be studied to explore the dilution effect (Adam and Galinsky, 2012) discussed within the literature review. Adding a fourth dimension to the effect of enclothed cognition that considers the self-perception of participants who are full time PSU officers could enhance this research, but would require an additional police force to participate as this type of team does not exist within the organisations that took part.

The value of my position as an insider researcher contributed to the realisation of this research project, specifically in terms of obtaining permission to undertake the project and the logistics of access to participants. As reflected within the methodology chapter however, it should be recognised that my proximity to the research participants may lead to limitations particularly around organisational critique. While some participants spoke freely of their frustrations with organisational procedures or even individual people, it is conceivable that others were more restrained with their narrative. Participants were assured anonymity through the collection and production of the research data, however my position within the public order team, or my rank as an Inspector may have adversely impacted upon their inclination to provide criticism. An external researcher, either from another police force area, or an academic without policing experience may have elicited different responses from the participants.

Opportunities for further research

Throughout this research process, many avenues for further and more specific research have appeared. It has not been possible to explore all of the various avenues within the present research and would have been wrong to attempt to explore such vast topics within the scope of one doctoral thesis.

Of particular note, and addressing limitations of this research, future research should consider public order officers who identified themselves as having policed significant public order operations as this may present different findings in the self-perception of exposure to risk. The participants in this research broadly identified that they did not feel they had been exposed to significant disorder, despite some of them having reported policing incidents of violence and high tension. Research specifically undertaken with officers who have been involved in operations such as rioting, targeted attacks against police, or similar significant disorder could further develop the understanding of enclothed cognition within public order.

Further research ought to be conducted on the self-perception of officers who work full time on dedicated public order teams. The participants within this research all operate as PSU officers on an ‘as required’ basis. They work routinely either in a response officer uniform, or in business wear. This change of uniform and role has made them ideal candidates to explore the effect of enclothed cognition, however this research does not consider the dilution effect of wearing specialist clothing on a daily basis. Further research into the self-perception of officers who only operate as public order officers would provide additional insight into officer perception of role and risk.

Finally, there is scope for more detailed research into specific participant demographics. This would allow for comparison between personal and physical attributes such as age, gender, and physical stature. This research identified that officers in public order uniform perceive their appearance to be somewhat homogeneous, and projected this anonymity onto how they feel the public perceive them. This is in direct contrast to the ordinary daily uniform officers wear, which not only allows for the officer's physical appearance to be identified, but also denotes an officers' gender by the style of hat they wear. Within this research, there was limited opportunity to consider how the participants' physical characteristics influenced their own perception of their role and exposure to risk which could be explored in more depth in future research.

Closing remarks

This research project has brought together the theoretical perspectives of academia with the practical application of Public Order Policing. The research has afforded participants the opportunity to discuss their role and reflect upon their purpose as a police officer. This was appreciated by participants and acknowledged as something that there was rarely an opportunity or a motivation for them to do. The research findings have been presented at the National Public Order Conference, and discussion is underway with the College of Policing with regard to the practical applications of the findings detailed herein. It is my hope that this research will act as a catalyst for further work in the field of uniform and policing and will inspire professional curiosity among police colleagues to seek an informed understanding of how what they wear influences their self-perception.

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Appendices

Appendix one: Information Sheet

INFORMATION SHEET

Title: Exploring the relationship between Police Officer Uniform type and Officer self-perception

We would like to invite you to participate in an investigation being conducted as part of as Professional Doctorate with the University of West London. In order to help you to understand what the investigation is about, we are providing you with the following information. **Be sure you understand it before you formally agree to participate**. If you would like any clarifications before you start, please contact us using the details below.

What is the purpose of this study?

This study is designed to understand police officer's self-perception regarding themselves and their role.

Why have I been asked to take part?

You have been asked to take part as a serving police officer. You may be taking part to discuss your 'ordinary' policing role and/or a specialist role that you hold.

Do I have to take part?

It is up to you to decide. If you would like to take part, we will then ask you to sign a consent form before participating. You are free to withdraw at any time, without giving a reason.

What will happen if I take part?

If you decide to take part, you will be invited to take part in either one, or two interviews with a researcher. This interview will discuss your role and will not require any prior preparation. Your responses will be treated anonymously.

Possible benefits include:

- The opportunity to inform Police training and development.

- A mechanism to identify successes or challenges around your role and the expectations of you.

Possible risks include:

- The interview will include questions around past deployments, including details of assault or trauma, which could cause distress. Please be aware that support services including Trauma Risk Management (TRiM) and confidential counselling are available through the Wellbeing Team.

The entire procedure will take approximately one hour.

The data resulting from your participation may be used for purposes of publications and/or presentations, but no personal identifying information will be used for these purposes.

What do I get for taking part?

You will be helping to improve the understanding of police officer perceptions in different situations. This will assist with ongoing training and learning in policing, and will help to inform commanders when planning and briefing for deployments. The outcomes of this research will be made available to you.

What will happen if I begin the study but then no longer wish to take part for any reason?

If you withdraw from the study, all data and information collected from you will be destroyed. Please note that you are free to withdraw for any reason at any time.

Will my taking part in this study be kept confidential?

All information which is collected about you during the course of the research will be kept strictly confidential. Data will only be made available to the research team directly involved in this study. All identifying documents will be destroyed in accordance with the UWL Research Data Management Statement.

Who has reviewed the study?

Our research has been looked at by an independent group of people, the School Research Ethics Panel to protect your safety, rights, wellbeing and dignity.

Further information and contact details

For general information about this research and/or further information about this study, please contact:

Researcher: Vicky Hebborn 21475450@student.uwl.ac.uk

Supervisors: Professor Alberto Testa alberto.testa@uwl.ac.uk / Professor Simon Harding simon.harding@uwl.ac.uk

Thank you.

Appendix two: Consent Form

CONSENT FORM

Project Title: Exploring the relationship between Police Officer Uniform type and Officer self-perception

• I have fully read the previous page which contained information about the study and have had the opportunity to ask any questions that I may have had.

• I understand what is being proposed.

• I understand that my personal involvement and my particular data from this study will remain strictly confidential. Only researchers involved in the investigation will have access.

• I have been informed about what the data collected in this investigation will be used for, to whom it may be disclosed, and how long it will be retained.

• I understand that the data resulting from my participation may be used for purposes of publications and/or presentations, and that no personal identifying information will be used for these purposes.

• I hereby fully and freely consent to participate in the study which has been fully explained to me.

• I understand that I am free to withdraw from the study at any time until the researcher's dissertation is submitted, without giving a reason for withdrawing.

• I agree to take part in the study.

Signed_____
Date_____

Appendix three: Debrief Sheet

DEBRIEF SHEET

Title of Project: Exploring the relationship between Police Officer Uniform type and Officer self-perception

Name of Researcher: Victoria Hebborn

Thank you for taking part in my study to investigate how police officers perceive themselves in relation to their role, their ability, and their exposure to risk.

The data will be analysed to help understand the way officers think about themselves. This will help to develop training, briefing and support for police officers.

Please do ask if you have any questions relating to this study or why it is being conducted.

If you feel like you would like to speak further about any of the topics covered in the questionnaire, please contact Vicky Hebborn 21475450@student.uwl.ac.uk

Supervisors: Professor Alberto Testa alberto.testa@uwl.ac.uk

Professor Simon Harding simon.harding@uwl.ac.uk

For trauma risk support please contact (REDACTED)

Appendix four: Interview template

Interview Template

This template is intended as a guide if the participant is unsure of what to say or requires a prompt.

This will also allow the interview to ensure that pertinent topics are covered.

Housekeeping

Interviewer will welcome participant and ensure they are comfortable. Basic Housekeeping will be covered including providing bottled water and explaining the interview is being recorded. Participants will be asked if they have any questions before the interview proceeds.

Recording begins

Introduction

- Tell me about yourself and your career

Role

- What is your current role

- What is this role responsible for / the main priority

- What if any relationship does this role have with the public

- What is your normal uniform (the participant will be wearing their uniform and this may be a catalyst to specific questions – comfort, practicality, kit and equipment)

- Do you enjoy your role (best/worst part)

Ability

- Do you find your role easy? Challenging?

- What training have you received for the role

- Is there other training you feel you need

- What is the most difficult part of the role (most difficult/ easiest)

Risk

- What are the dangers involved in this role

- Have you ever been injured in this role

- What makes you feel safer

- What makes you feel more at risk

- Any areas for further exploration

Flashcard exercise

- Which most describes you in this role – discussion
- Me/Not me – quick sort.

Summary

- Any questions
- Thank you for your time