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Police Culture - *"Still live and kicking"*

Introduction

All organizations and professions have their own culture. So does the police. Studies of the police occupational cultures, cop cultures started late 1950´s early 1960´s in USA and United Kingdom. Laws and other official norms guide action of the police, but there is wide discretion, how to exercise their jurisdiction on the streets, how to enforce laws and use of force. Thus it is interesting to study attitudes and values of the police officers. In ethnographic , participant observation research focus is: How police officers learn their craft, how their deal with different people - study how police act on the streets.

This article is based on my articles written in Finish (Korander 2004; 2019a; 2019b). Content of the paper is following: First a short introduction to theme. Next I will solve three disagreements among police culture studies. Disagreement 1: Police Culture – is it negative or positive phenomenon? Disagreement 2: Does police culture studies have relevance anymore? Disagreement 3: Is there any link between talk and action; discussions and behavior?

There are ”Classics” in research of policing and research of police culture - most of them ethnographies. I just list names and years of the classics here:

> **Decade 1960´:** Banton 1964, Bittner 1967, Skolnick 1966, Wilson 1968;
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> **Decade 1970´:** Cain 1973, 1977, Chan 1975, Chatterton 1976, Hall et al. 1979, Manning 1977; 1979, Muir 1977, Punch 1979, Reiss 1971, Rubinstein 1973, Westley 1970;
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> **Decades 1980´-1990´:** Goldsmith 1990, Holdaway 1983, 1991, Morgan & Smith 1989, Punch 1985, Reiner 1994, Scarman 1981, Shearing 1981 Smith & Gray 1985, Waddington 1999 and Young 1991.

If you would like to find references of these classics, you can use for example Robert Reiner's (2010) Politics of the Police -book. It is the most well-known analysis and summary of classics of cop culture research (the latest version, just published, the fifth edition of the book is Bowling et al. 2019). From these classics studies we can find key characteristics of the police culture, which builds the ethos of policing. Building on Skolnick's (1966) 'working personality' and summarising what is known, Reiner (2010, 115-138) lists the core characteristics of cop culture: *'Mission-Action-Cynicism-Pessimism'; 'Suspicion'-'Prejudice'; 'Isolation-Solidarity'; 'Conservatism'; 'Machismo'* and

'Pragmatism'. If you are interested of these, you can read the classical Cop Culture-chapter: Reiner (2010, 115-138) or Bowling et al. (2019, 164-184). Furthermore I have found three other dimensions in Finland: "Hierarchical ethos", "Legalism" and "Commitment" (see: Korander 2004, 2019).

Cop Culture, is it negative or positive phenomenon?

Robert Reiner (2010) and many other classics states, that cop culture is linked with many negative dimensions: machismo, sexism, stereotypical views, racism and resistance against changes. Opposite opinion is, that cop culture is a positive institution. For example P.A.J. Waddington (1999) analyse cop culture and says, that to the police officers it brings self-esteem, self-understanding, solidarity and sense to "dirty work". Cop culture brings decompression to stress and pressures. In backstage, in canteen problems are discussed, handled and processed.

My solution to the disagreement is: Police culture may be both negative and positive (Korander 2004; 2019b). All the core characteristics contains potential to negative and positive outcome. If there is not enough of dimension or there is too much of it, both end up to negative outcome. For example feeling of *mission* creates motivation to work: making better world and the advocating of the justice. Without it, there would be less motivation to sometimes boring or risky work. But when feelings of mission is overemphasized, the purpose might sanctifies the means (so called Dirty Harry dilemma), for example excess use of force. Another example is constant *suspiciousness*. Suitable amount of suspiciousness is significant characteristic of cop culture. Healthy suspiciousness is important in police work, without it you can be cheated. Police cannot be credulous. But too heavy suspiciousness might be end up to build stereotypical attitudes towards minorities, resulting to racial prejudice and ethnic profiling.

Third example could be *masculinity*, gender identity. As neutral or positive feature, it means, that officers have healthy gender identity, like honest working man or woman. We could say: "police ladies and gentlemen". But if it develops to extreme position, it becomes toxic masculinity, it ends up "machoism", which might mean sexism and heterosexual boasting. Furthermore it might mean overreactions in use of force (both male/female officers). In this way we can see, that cop culture characteristics might be positive, "neutral", if there is suitable amount of dimension, but there is potential to negative features also, when there is too much or not at all of dimensions.

Does police culture studies have any relevance?

Bethan Loftus (2009, x-xi) analyzes, that critics of the police occupational culture research claim, that societies, organisations, people and everything have changed so much, that (negative) cop cultures do not exist anymore. Since previously listed classic ethnographies, many kinds of developments has happened: Societies are more ethnically, linguistically, religiously and culturally

diverse and more liberal. Political sensitivity around policing is more important. Minority groups are politically more active and seeking more recognition for their social differences. Public is more demanding and less compliant. Customer orientation and accountability are more important with New Public Management and management by results orientation. Human rights perspectives and adherence to legal rules are required among officers. Service of public is more important, police are required to be better embedded in communities. There has been increase in the numbers of minority ethnic, female and gay and lesbian officers. In the police (UK) there has been workforce modernization agenda and ongoing civilianization processes. Recruits are high school educated and more mature, furthermore officers are better educated. (see Loftus 2009, x-xi.)

Critics use these alterations as evidence, that police cultures are not any more present as these were in earlier decades. But, those developments might be seen also in other way: Officers have to deal with more demanding customers, from totally insignificant matters to deadly dangerous cases. Officers are between more demanding superiors (& politicians) and customers. More demanding strategies, new public management and intelligent led policing means, that officers have to show value for the money. The image politics is more and more important, constables have to protect reputation of the police and still keep up public order. Masculine officers (real men, craftsmen) feel more and more challenged by increasingly female, better educated and young liberal officers. Officers feel they are more and more under control (NPM and customers with mobile phones and cameras). (see Loftus 2009.)

Furthermore, there has been many negative alterations in societies: General more and more punitive criminal politics give signals to police culture, which has always been punitive (UK & US). Increasing inequality (e.g. economy, education, unemployment, social, welfare, culture) in societies means more the "police property", people police have to control, because other institutions do not support marginal and deprived people. Alongside liberal progress, there has happened opposite development: extreme right wing, neo-liberal, neo-conservative thinking and ethos has taken over more and more, even new young recruits might also be "not so liberal". Also xenophobia, racism, homophobia, extremisms and machoism are more and more present e.g. in social media. Inequality (also in Finland) is increasing, because most of immigrants and refugees are young, poor and socially and culturally deprived. (see Loftus 2009.)

So, is the police culture still essential? In criminology we have well-known theory: The sub-culture theory of criminality. A sub-culture is a resource, it's a mean: How to survive in (extremely) demanding environments? It helps, if you build "a solidary, isolated and like-minded" sub-culture with your close ones, with your associates, with your colleagues. In the backstages, canteen, there happens most of sub-cultural discussions, but might happened in somewhere else, too. And so own sub-culture is more and more important for police officers in increasingly divided, polarized, unequal and demanding environments and societies. To conclude, with lenses of sub-culture research, we can see the consequence of many alterations: the backstage, canteen and the police sub-culture is increasingly more important to (many) officers. Loftus (2007; 2008; 2009; 2010) has

analyzed current cop cultures in UK. In fact Loftus and Reiner (2010, 137) are the ones, who have noted that police culture is "*Still live and kicking".*

Is there any link between talk and action; discussions and behavior?

If officers talk in racist and sexist ways, do they also act in racist and sexist ways? Reiner, Loftus and many classics argue: Yes, talk is an act, too. Critics, specially P.A.J. Waddington (1999) says: No, there exist racist and sexist talk, but it is only on the backstage, cars and canteen and in interviews by researchers. In this view police officers are just "canteen-racists". Police sub-culture is a "canteen culture".

Waddington argues, there is no evidence of racist acts in police culture studies, only verbal canteen culture is racist. Waddington(1999, 295) justifies his arguments, that in backstage officers engage displays before their colleagues. *"Here officers retail versions of events that affirm their worldview: the canteen is the "repair shop" of policing and jokes, banter and anecdotes the tools."* Sub-culture functions as a coping strategy. Waddington's major point is, that in cop culture research, ethnographies, in participant observation, there is no evidence of racist police action, just talk. All classical studies in USA and UK show just racist and other degrading ways to talk, not act.

Conclusions, what kind of studies we need?

It is true, there is not much evidence of racist action in ethnographical studies (in USA and UK). In fact, there seems to be one quite new ethnography from France, which has testified racist action and police violence in western countries - Didier Fassin (2013): *Enforcing order: An Ethnography of Urban Policing*. But it seems to be an exception. If ethnography does not work, it means that police studies need different ways to research police action. For example, research on targets of policing, what kind of experiences of the police ethnic minorities in general and female victims of violence have or any member of the "police property" (homeless, addicts, sub-culture youngsters, prostitutes, alcoholics, etc.) have? Furthermore, we must study what kind of experiences *in the police* female, ethnic and sexual minorities have? We need triangulation in police (culture) research.

For example in Finland there is quite new research of ethnic profiling: *The Stopped - Ethnic Profiling in Finland* (Keskinen et al. 2018). Quite many members of ethnic minority had experiences of ethnic profiling by police, customs officers, border guards, private guards and doormen. The study is very important, when we analyze the acts of the police with ethnic minorities in Finland. In conclusion, *Ceterum censeo Carthaginem esse delendam...,* furthermore, I am of the opinion, anyway, that we should have new ethnographies inside the police in Finland and maybe additionally in Nordic countries.

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