

# CRITICAL SOCIAL RESEARCH

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## PART 2 CLASS

### 2.7 Grimshaw and Jefferson—*Interpreting Policework*

#### 2.7.1 Introduction: a structural perspective

In *Interpreting Policework*, Roger Grimshaw and Tony Jefferson (1987) undertake ethnographic and document analysis of policework and policing policy. Their analysis is concerned with the interrelationship between law, work and democracy that they see as the three core structures within which policing as an ongoing activity is located. They are concerned with the ‘normal’ activities of beat work, looking separately at unit beat policing, with its emphasis on fast response, and at resident beat policing, with its emphasis on community intervention.

They examine a number of existing perspectives on the police and are critical of the empiricism and idealism of ‘sociological liberalism’ (of which they identify three varieties: the ‘machine model’, subcultural studies and environmental studies) and of the economism and voluntarism of crude Marxist class reductionism.<sup>20</sup> This is not only dissatisfaction with the epistemological presuppositions but with the failure of the approaches to provide an adequate framework for understanding organised policework in practice. Empiricist approaches tend to be partial; idealist ones assertive; and reductionist ones trivialise the actual content of police work.<sup>20A</sup>

Grimshaw and Jefferson draw on a broad structuralist tradition in developing a framework for analysing the structural relations within which the police operate.<sup>21</sup> They identified seven aspects of this synthesised view of structuralism. Individual activity becomes social through interactive discourse constituted by signs. Group communication is possible as the elements of discourse are objective. Language is a signifying system that involves different levels of signification. Signifying elements are arbitrary (not intrinsically meaningful) and signification is the result of the relational nature of signs. Applying simple generative rules allows the production of complex expressions and, vice versa, simple key terms can be used to explain elaborate discursive expressions. Significations are not fixed because elements can be re-grouped to create further significations. History is subordinate to structural transformations in structuralist analysis.

Their synthetic analysis of the police suggested that law is a signifying discourse. Such discourses sustaining police activity are objectively intelligible. Policing events have a number of discursive implications. Law can be seen as a systematic structure despite discrepancies within and between its domains as there are socially constructed categories of legal infringements (such as ‘theft’). Policework can be understood through an analysis of the three key structures of law, work and democracy. However, these

should not be seen as fixed. The politics of police accountability may be the basis for a structural transformation.

### **2.7.2 Abstraction—law, work and democracy**

Grimshaw and Jefferson undertake a detailed analysis of the three key concepts, law, work and democracy, that derive from their critique of prevailing theories, mediated by their fieldwork experience. Rather than take these for granted they deconstruct the broad abstractions and develop them through concrete practice. Thus for example, law, as it relates to political activity, is seen, by various commentators, as tripartite, comprising the legal system, procedural law, and types of substantive law.<sup>22</sup> Grimshaw and Jefferson argue that to assess the role of the law as a structural determinant of police behaviour, its formal structure must be investigated, rather than assumed, in order to identify the legal constraints operating in particular situations. This meant acquiring detailed knowledge of the legal structure including the powers and duties of constables and Chief Constables; the relevant Police Acts; common law; statutes and their interpretation in the courts; and the legal powers of citizens and legal authorities and the use made of them (Grimshaw and Jefferson, 1987, p. 18). This led them to analyse procedural law, substantive law and the legal system as concrete entities. For example, in confronting the abstract notion of procedural law, they ask questions like, what are the legal powers of constables and Chief Constables? What discretion do they have in practice in different situations? In this way the idealistic abstract notion of procedural law is replaced by a materially grounded concrete concept. This reflects Marx's approach to abstractions in *Capital* (section 2.3, above). Marx starts with the abstract concept but rather than construe it as a concrete fact sees it as an abstract whole emptied of empirical content which needs to be filled.

In the same kind of way they analyse the notions of work and democracy/community<sup>23</sup> as they effect policework. What is important for an analytic framework, they argue, is the interrelationship between law, work and democracy. Such a framework should allow the empirical testing of the proposed interrelationships without foreclosing on the variety of empirical possibilities. They therefore distinguish between dominant and determinant structure (Althusser & Balibar, 1970) and suggest, for a host of reasons, that law, rather than work or community, is the determinant structure of police activity, in that it determines which of the three is empirically dominant at any moment. The research is thus organised around the exploration of aspects of this thesis.<sup>23A</sup>

### **2.7.3 Procedure—integrated theoretical case-study**

Grimshaw and Jefferson, (1987, p. 27) undertook an integrated case-study approach because, they argued, it is the 'approach, *par excellence*, which enables the adequate tracing of differences and connections' and they needed a method that was capable of 'illuminating in one movement the form of the structures *and their interrelationship*.' The task they intended to undertake was 'equally empirical and analytic' and involved 'making distinctions, marking limits, setting out conditions and reducing processes to their elements'.

Despite their assertion about the suitability of a case-study analysis, their concern was not with case study as method but case study as a vehicle for analysing the interconnections between structures. The analytic framework organises the methodic enquiry. This differs from the more conventional approach that is characteristic of

subcultural, interactionist, ethnographic case study that, as was noted in Section 1.4, exhaustively experiences a situation in order to inductively generate the implicit meanings of actions. Conventional approaches to ethnographic case-study work (especially those used by subcultural theorists) prioritise structures of *meanings* and thereby inhibit the making of structural connections.

The usual notion of case study had to be developed and they proposed a *theoretical case-study*<sup>24</sup> that is characterised by ‘a sufficient range of empirical differences and interconnections to constitute a starting-point for the task of elucidating theoretical concepts generated through a critique of existing theory’. Further, such a case study is not confined to comprehending subjective meanings of participants but concerned with the ‘systematic articulation or connection of social structures’ (Grimshaw and Jefferson, 1987, p. 32).

In practice this meant investigating a large metropolitan county force with a range of specialist departments and a large centralised command structure, located in an area of ‘ethnic settlement and incipient economic decline’. In addition, the theoretical case study required:

detailed observational work at strategic sites within the organization designed to elucidate the full range of practices: from policy consideration through operational command and supervision, to operational duties of various kinds. It meant detailed attention to the written statements relating to working practices: standing orders, policy files and operational orders.... Finally, it meant special attention to police-public contacts of all kinds: to contacts with complainants, victims, arrestees, letter writers, petitioners and organizational agents, since these provided one important empirical indicator of the presence of the working of democratic elements. (Grimshaw and Jefferson, 1987, p. 33)

The field research included direct observation of police personnel at work on 57 different occasions. One of the researchers accompanied a police officer throughout all (or most) of a working shift. The selection of shifts was such as to cover different days of the week, all three shifts (early, late and night), and a variety of officers. They were present on 28 shifts of unit officers and on 29 shifts of resident beat officers. Details of seven of the former and eight of the latter are included in the book by way of representative ethnographic material.

#### **2.7.4 Structural analysis: a brief example**

As an example, the following is a résumé of Grimshaw and Jefferson’s (1987, pp. 61–65) reporting of the night shift (10 p.m. to 6 a.m.) of a ‘first-response car’ duty. In this example, the officer being shadowed is DL, the driver of the first-response car. This is the vehicle kept in reserve and sent first to more ‘serious’ situations.

DL and his partner (JR) accompanied by the researcher went to a house, at 10.15 p.m., in response to a complaint from a woman that her neighbour’s children had broken her windows. The PCs visited the neighbours who in turn complained about the original complainant, referring to her as a prostitute. The car was then called to a fire arriving at 10.35. The fire may have been started deliberately as part of a domestic dispute or by accident by the drunken husband. Fire officers and a panda car also arrived at the house. DL followed the fire officers upstairs to the scene of the fire. It later emerges that he has

checked serial numbers on some stereo equipment in the son's room. JR chuckles, 'Well, you've got to take your opportunities'. They left the house around 11.00 and DL followed a car containing young black people and asked for a registration plate number check, which proved negative. A man, who was waiting for a late bus, was 'called over for a word'. After a return to the station they were recalled to the neighbour in the earlier incident who was not satisfied by the police action and indicated that a complaint would be made about the lack of action taken. The policemen left, joking between themselves about the potential complaint.

At 11.35 in the town centre they got a call to look out for a driver failing to stop at the scene of an accident. They discovered the car as it was being indicated to stop by a walking beat policeman. DL took over dealing with the situation after the driver admitted to have been drinking and the inexperienced 'walker' clumsily began to administer the breathalyser. The driver was cautioned and arrested after a positive test. The subsequent test, administered by the walker at the station, was negative. The man admitted to driving off but only after he had offered his name and address and had been abused by the complainant. At midnight, after dealing with the drunk driver, they responded to a general alert that intruders had been reported at the local football ground. A young man outside the ground was detained, he was clearly drunk. DL initially intended to arrest him for being drunk and incapable but after the drunk complained that he would have been home by now if he had not been detained, and that he also had an ulcer, DL took his name and address and let him go. In the interim there had been two arrests in the ground and a third person was being sought. Back at the station DL learned that one of the men arrested had the same surname as the drunk he had let go.

As he rushes from the station, the station sergeant says, 'As long as you're *sure*' DL drives to the address the man gave him. The door is opened by the man we know. 'Can we come in?' asks DL. The man is silent, and DL quickly walks through the gap in the doorway. As I follow, the man recognizes me and protests. DL tells him the reason for our visit. The man protests loudly again, but DL grabs him by the hair and tells him to be quiet. It is about 12.40 a.m. He is taken to the car, and DL drives to the station. There is no caution.

DL says to the man, 'You hopped over the wall. I saw you come over the wall.' 'I didn't,' says the man.

You did', said DL; 'you've taught me a lesson.'

The man was put in custody at the station, around 1.00 a.m., and a discussion ensued as to a suitable charge, given the peculiar, roofless, nature of the premises in which those arrested were found. The Vagrancy Act of 1824 was favoured by the officers in the station as it allows a charge of 'being found on enclosed premises' and this was confirmed by a telephone conversation with the senior officer on duty. On more than one occasion both JR and DL said that they saw the man arrested by DL come over the wall of the stadium. 'When they are asked about this point by the sergeant, there is laughter'. The men arrested finally admit to the offence. The sergeant talked about the Judges Rules to the researcher while all this was going on. No other significant events took place and the officers spent the rest of the shift involved in paper work.

This, and the other, extensively reported field observation are critically analysed in order to develop an introductory sketch of the main structural features. Having collected the data the researcher's analytic strategy consisted of:

perusing the data relevant to particular practices, proposing a concrete idea structured around the question of the relationship of the original theoretical concepts, then 'testing' the idea by searching for aberrant cases, reformulating the notion, if necessary, until a thesis about the relationship between the determinants of a particular practice had been achieved. (Grimshaw and Jefferson, 1987, p. 33)<sup>25</sup>

Grimshaw and Jefferson initially address the formal elements of the structure of police work. They note the rhythm of activity during the shifts, the diversity and fragmentary nature of the beat police officer's work and bouts of desultoriness and triviality. In the example quoted, the activity takes place at the beginning of the night shift; there are a number of different activities, and some are fragmentary (the number plate check, the man at the bus stop). Grimshaw and Jefferson (1987, p. 71) argue, for example, that the need to be ready for a call is greatly responsible for the fragmentary, diverse, and desultory aspects of the job as the 'call system takes command over the individual's dispositions and instantly imposes its own priorities'. Performing trivial tasks (noted when shadowing other officers) far from being an evasion of responsibility is a response 'to the functioning and requirements of the call system'.

There is continuity, however, in some aspects of the work that have more legal substance, as, for example, in the seeking of intruders, subsequent arrests, interrogation and paperwork. Such work is concerned with interpreting and applying definitions of law. In the case of the arrest made by DL, for example, the minor routine contacts were suspended and a concerted set of actions from arrest to interrogation was undertaken with a view to explicitly catching a 'criminal'. Legal relevance, which characterises elements of continuity, is the common feature that 'unifies the otherwise disparate subjects to which significant police attention is given; unit work becomes more clearly visible as the ongoing practice of distributing and rationing scarce legal resources in response to prima-facie demands' (Grimshaw and Jefferson, 1987, p. 74).

Public contact is similarly fragmentary but falls into two broad camps: elective and non-elective. The woman visited by DL following a phone call is an example of the former, while the man at the bus stop, and the one outside the stadium are examples of the latter. Although the public may initiate encounters, they do not organize or direct them. The police, guided by organisational and legal structures, follow up those contacts that are or appear to be legally relevant.

In this way (although in far more detail than represented in this summary), Grimshaw and Jefferson move from the initial 'impressions and suggestions' to the identification of significant structural features of police work. This they elaborate with the aid of additional depth interviews with personnel of different ranks (in the case of the unit policing with four supervisors and seven PCs).

For example, the unit beat system can be seen to be structured around different grades of work. The existence of structured differences in competence and seniority in the unit was revealed in various ways. DL, for example, in one case took over the breathalyser procedure when the foot patroller seemed to go about it clumsily. The

expectations placed upon a first-response car officer are perhaps indicated by the former's confident decision later to make an arrest despite the lack of a credible independent witness but rather to rely in effect on plausible circumstantial evidence (Grimshaw and Jefferson, 1987, p. 78).

They conclude that in assessing the relationships between various determinants of unit work, the organisational features lead towards legally oriented work in which both public and management play only a relatively minor role in routine activity. The call system with its inherent frustrations is designed to deal expeditiously with public interventions. However, the critical function of the public in call initiation, is mediated by the organisational deployment of resources which prioritises legal process work. Leadership and supervision are thus influential if they conform to legally oriented competence in practical application rather than to abstract rational-technical norms.

The authors undertake a similar analysis of the residential beat system. Overall, they conclude the analysis of practical policework by suggesting that the structure of law manifests itself indirectly in beat-work as, on the one hand, 'a reflex in the unit' and, on the other 'as a resource in resident beat-work measured against the search for consent'. They follow up the structural analysis of their observational material with a further analysis of policing policy.

### **2.7.5 Policy**

In the analysis of beat work, Grimshaw and Jefferson proceeded from a critique of prevailing theories to an empirical examination guided by a structuralist view that posited the interrelationship between three structures, law, work and democracy (or community). These abstract concepts were made concrete in respect of police activity through particular attention to the practices of police officers. On the basis of their framework they proposed a set of alternative hypotheses to those implied by the machine, subcultural and environmental models. One of their major critiques of other perspectives was a lack of concern with policing policy and thus consequent lack of attempts to relate activity to policy. Rather than assume the nature of the relationship between policy and action Grimshaw and Jefferson again developed an empirically grounded materialist analysis. This involved an initial definition of policy as 'an authoritative statement signifying a settled practice on any matter relevant to the duties of the Chief Constable'.<sup>25A</sup> The authoritative source of policy is highlighted in this definition, as is the distinction between a descriptive statement of policy and practice. An example of such a policy would be a statement made by the Chief Constable or one of his senior officers that 'Resident beat officers will not be taken off their beats except in exceptional circumstances.' This 'authoritative statement' clearly 'signifies a settled practice' since it has direct implications for the deployment practices of the Superintendents (that they must not use RBOs as reserve manpower), implications which are intended to be more than temporary. (Grimshaw and Jefferson, 1987, p. 204)

By analysing managerial practices other than policy concerns, such as advice, supervision and command, and taking into account moments of policy consideration, as well as policy inauguration, they concretised the definition of policy and located it specifically in meetings, conferences and policy files. Their analysis of the formal

structure suggested that policy would be characterised by competing discourses mediated by law. 'Rational-scientific' management approaches derive directly from statutory requirements placed on Chief Constables to ensure adequacy and efficiency of provision, while 'common sense' discourse reflects the constitutional discretion vested in the constable.

Grimshaw and Jefferson's (1987, pp. 198–199) structural analysis suggested the hypothesis that 'apparent discrepancies between policy and practice are best explained by a specific examination of how the three structures (law, work and the democratic) relate to the particular policy in question, explaining the role of the legal structure in organising the relations between the structures'. Specifically, they hypothesise that occupational 'common-sense' will characterise operational tasks and that administrative tasks will be characterised by the values of rational-scientific management. Further, that the impact of policy will be more unpredictable in respect of tasks guided by occupational common sense than those where rational-scientific values are uppermost.

They developed their analysis empirically by attending 23 policy meetings at Force, Division and Subdivisional level ranging from The Chief Constables' Management Team, through the Joint Advisory Committee, to the Subdivisional Superintendent's Senior Officers' Meeting;<sup>25B</sup> and through an analysis of policy files, which contained records of correspondence and meetings. Faced with around seven hundred such files to analyse they indicated a list of 342 files of interest based on titles of which 62 were identified as those they preferred to analyse. In the event they were given access to 28 (45%) of their preferred list plus another 34 files mostly drawn from their initial list of 342. The analysis of the files took three to four months.<sup>26</sup>

A quantitative analysis of the external agencies referred to in the files, supported by an interview with the chief constable clearly shows the importance of the Home Office, which is consistent with 'expectations derivable from a study of statutory systems of accountability'. However, other statutory agencies, notably the Police Authority and the Police Complaints Board are far less significant. On the other hand, the references to various occupational and community representatives (e.g. councillors and M.P.s) reflect the perceived importance of a range of democratic and work-related audiences, 'buttressed by statutory obligations in some cases but not in others'. The actual influence of the various structures is illustrated by two operational issues, analysed in depth: unit car speeds and racial attacks. Both demonstrate the centrality of the legal structure in determining the relationship between the law democracy and work. The organisational and occupational concerns of efficiency and welfare are overridden by the legal structure in the case of a policy on car speeds. Similarly, the democratic structure with a clear and pressing public concern was overridden by the legal structure in the case of a policy on racial attacks.<sup>26A</sup>

In concluding the analysis of policy, Grimshaw and Jefferson argue that none of the ideas of policy as super-relevant ('machine'), irrelevant ('subculture'), shaped by the environment ('environmental'), or by class ('class-functionalist') captures the bi-polar nature of policy that our detailed observations have revealed. The notion of policy as a universal, homogeneous entity (instructions, guidelines or principles to inform practice) cannot therefore withstand a critical, concrete examination. Such an investigation produces, as has been shown, a conception of policy embracing two distinct forms (administrative versus operational), each possessing a distinctive discourse (rational-

scientific versus common sense) and each producing a distinctive kind of practical outcome (predictable, calculable effects versus unpredictable, incalculable effects) (Grimshaw and Jefferson, 1987, p. 262).

In reviewing structural interrelationships it is clear that the priority of common sense in operational matters reflects the discretion allowed constables in law and thus occupational common sense dominates other considerations including the concerns of the community, that is, the democratic structure.

### ***2.7.6 Structure, history and praxis—the ‘police debate’***

The study does not come to an end following the outline of the interrelationship between the key structures. Grimshaw and Jefferson go on to relate structure to history in order to provide a context for examining the debate about forms of policing. This they do by reference to Gramsci and to Foucault. Gramsci’s hegemonic analysis, focusing on the centrality of consent and Foucault’s (1979) genealogical analyses of techniques of power which posits an historical shift from the notion of sovereignty-law-repression to more subtle and economical forms of power are central to Grimshaw and Jefferson’s development of an historical context. Having shown the interrelationship between the structures of law, work and democracy, using Gramsci and Foucault’s historical conceptions of social control offered the possibility of indicating just how, for example, ‘community policing’ emerges from a scene dominated by a unit beat policing system.

Grimshaw and Jefferson argue that modern society, rather than being directly repressive, relies on consent (Gramsci, 1971) and normalises power through the more localised imposition of discipline outside, or supplementary to, the formal juridical apparatus (Foucault, 1979).<sup>26B</sup> Unit beat policing reflects the view of the police as representative of the law while resident beat policing appears ‘less as a representative of the law than a guardian of the norm, as a community worker rather than a gendarme’ (Grimshaw and Jefferson, 1987, p. 277).

Although unit policing and residential ‘community’ policing co-exist, the emergence of the latter from a situation dominated by the rationalist unit policing system can be understood by focusing on the ‘structural combinations of elements that constitutes policework and notice the way in which elements of the ‘old’ system are re-grouped in the ‘new’’. The unit system based on the organizational concerns with responsiveness, speed and mobility, failed to establish consent because, it simultaneously increased police-public contact whilst reducing the intensity of such contacts. This led to contradictions in the ‘message’ transmitted to the public. This led to pressure for more intensive public contact to produce a ‘new and more consistent message’. As a result the ‘democratic structure is highlighted while the work structure and the legal structure are selectively reshaped for the task of ‘normalization’—an occupational reflection of the democratic structure (Grimshaw and Jefferson, 1987, p. 281).

In this way Grimshaw and Jefferson show how policework selectively calls upon different structures at particular historical conjunctures. As such, a historical understanding of conjunctures in policework complements the structural analysis and informs the praxiological concern with the political debate on policing.

Although the field research took place in 1978–80, prior to the ‘convulsions’ of 1981, brought about by Thatcherism, they ‘could not overlook’ the issues that came to prominence in the following years during which the book was written. However, the



book focuses on the 'normal' activities of uniformed police beat work rather than the 'explosive' events, and thus provides an 'essential background' for understanding the setting within which such events were located.

Nonetheless, Grimshaw and Jefferson have a clear praxiological concern with the politics of policing. They argue that previous contributions to the 'police debate'<sup>27</sup> failed to appreciate that the demographic or legal structure cannot be changed in isolation. Grimshaw and Jefferson offer alternative proposals based on an appreciation of this structural interrelationship, and the determining role of law. The fundamental general feature of the office of constable is the idea of independence in judging infringements of law. This independence makes effective operational policy redundant and in operational matters other instruments of managerial control come into effect: deployment, supervision, training and so on.

What is needed, they argue, is a reformed legal structure, with democratic control of police policy making, is necessary for the establishment of agreed principles of public justice. Only from this base can effective operational policies be formulated. From the point of view of such a reformed legal structure the work and democratic structures can be reformed.<sup>28</sup>

In the mid-1980s, in the wake of Brixton, Handsworth and Broadwater Farm, some changes are sorely needed, in order to address issues of public justice in law enforcement, and to open up these questions to democratic debate and direction. In the hope of providing useful background material for that important debate, we end this book. (Grimshaw and Jefferson, 1987, p. 296)

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<sup>20</sup> The machine model of the organisation sees actors as executing directives of superiors, thus a knowledge of the formal organisation and structure, its rules, policies and procedures is assumed to be sufficient to understand the 'normal' functioning. Such an approach is 'clearly idealistic in its failure to examine concretely the relation between individual behaviour and organizational dictates' (Grimshaw and Jefferson, 1987, p. 7). In short, it fails to contextualise the machine or examine its workings.

The subcultural model is, in effect, the opposite liberal interpretation, which presumes the actual practices in the organisation do not reflect its formal organisation. The concern is to define and explain the occupational subculture of a particular occupational group. Interactionist and ethnomethodological studies of this type place considerable emphasis on ethnography as the means to reveal meanings and dynamics of situational encounters. This approach, however, tends to ignore the law, the formal organisation, the policies and the spheres of higher authority. The relationship between the subcultural group and these other elements are taken-for-granted rather than examined.

The environmental model sees the behaviour of the organisation (its structure, policies and working practices) as the product of a series of negotiations with its 'enviroming system' (Reiss & Bordua, 1967, p. 25). This approach, particularly in the work of Wilson (1968), attempts to 'link police behaviour to organisational and legal constraints, and to the composition of the community and its prevailing style of political administration' (Grimshaw and Jefferson, 1987, p. 10). Unfortunately, in practice, it

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provides neither the ethnographic detail of practices of agents nor the organisational analysis that the subcultural and machine model approaches do. All three liberal approaches define the police in a partial empiricist or pragmatic way and link them to the law only through idealistic normative assumptions.

In crude 'class functionalist' versions of this approach (sometimes referred to as 'conflict theories' in the United States) the analysis of historical and material determinations become a prescription that the police act in the interests of the ruling class. The result is a 'reductionist functionalism', a sort of 'mechanical materialism' that reduces the structured reality of empirical reality to the simple 'underlying economic class determinations'. The police is seen as part of the state and as such must therefore act as a mechanism to reproduce economic class domination and consequent exploitation. Where there is an acknowledgement that not all laws reflect the economic advantage of the bourgeoisie, the approach reverts to voluntarism to indicate that the police choose to selectively enforce laws in accord with class domination. Grimshaw and Jefferson have no time for such class reductionist approaches that ignore the complexity of the empirical evidence.

Sociological liberalism is empiricist in its 'drawing of inferences from the self-evident appearance of an arrangement of given facts' and is idealist in its choice of 'a starting point in the realm of ideas rather than material reality'. Class functionalist approaches are economistic in reducing 'all political and cultural activities to mere epiphenomena' and are voluntarist in the 'reduction of activity to the chosen 'will' of a social class' (Grimshaw and Jefferson, 1987, p. 4).

<sup>20A</sup> Their evidence, they argue, does not fully support liberal sociological machine or subcultural models, although at one level there is a degree of endorsement for the former. The form of unit policing owes 'much to this mechanical conception, emphasizing speed, efficiency and service' and failures in the model and in unit policing practice are blamed on failures of communication. Indeed, they found that where there is no message, 'the contacts between the centre and the operating edge of the system do break down, as the 'machine' model would have suggested'. Critical analysis of the evidence, however, points to the inherent problem of the model, its fragmentary and desultory aspects that lead to the 'officer's search for coherence through a practical legal orientation involving the deployment of independent judgement'. This outcome, manifest in the observations made by the researchers, the machine model is unable to cope with. Indeed, it is closer to the kind of analysis to be found in subcultural models. However, the projected conflict between rank and file subculture and management directives in the subcultural model 'fails to come to terms with the evidence'. On the contrary, Grimshaw and Jefferson suggest that their evidence points to an integral police culture, in which senior officers are role models for junior officers, 'indicating the acceptable norms of practical policework'. In the end, law 'remains a focus of the officer's attention, even in a practical form, rather than disappearing beneath subcultural norms'. The more fruitful environmental model, which suggests an 'all-embracing conception of unit policework' emphasising relations with legal systems, publics and senior management, does not however, take account of the 'significant subordination of the public to the structure of relevance adopted by the police' that Grimshaw and Jefferson observed in practice. The 'class functional' approach would imply clear discriminatory practices in police activity

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in respect of class and race. The empirical evidence was far from unambiguous on this point. Given the inadequacies of prevailing models, Grimshaw and Jefferson (1987, p. 111) address their own model which drew on structuralism.

<sup>21</sup> Including Levi-Strauss (1963, 1970), Leach (1967), Althusser and Balibar (1970), Barthes (1974), Jameson (1974), Coward & Ellis (1977). They draw particularly on Althusserian concepts of dominant and determinant structure, and utilise his critical frame to review other analysts of policework. However, they are not totally committed to an Althusserian view, but rather situate him within a more general structuralist tradition in developing a framework for analysing the structural relations within which the police operate. Althusser's (1969, 1971) Marxist structuralism argues that, rather than simply reflect economic structure, the forms of the state are relatively autonomous, although decisively affected by the economic base. Althusser distinguishes between ideological and repressive state apparatuses. The latter, operating by violence, include the police. However, Althusser does not relate the police to the law, which he regards as both repressive and ideological. For Grimshaw and Jefferson (1987, p. 271), Althusser is too reductionist, despite his avowed intention to avoid this. Their concern throughout, in line with Althusser's own epistemological critique which considers theoretical starting points as potentially pre-defining available evidence, was not to foreclose analytic avenues. They critique a number of perspectives and, through the analysis of existing theorising, filter out the key analytic abstract concepts. They then deconstruct these concepts through an analysis of their practical relevance, a shuttling between the notion and its application, and reconstruct a set of organising concepts.

<sup>22</sup> Procedural law represents the constraints on police activity; substantive law is that which deals with criminal activity, maintenance of order etc.; the legal system refers to the courts, the prosecutor and the political organisation of the criminal justice system.

<sup>23</sup> They tend to use the terms democracy and community interchangeably. They are concerned with the way the 'public' effects policework. In a democratic system, the public are formally supreme. Without analysing the nature of British 'democracy' they suggest that policework practices are affected by a democratic as well as work and legal structure.

<sup>23A</sup> Rather than reduce law to some form of essence, as 'capitalist law' they investigated law as a contemporary process. They emphasised a composite and differentiated conception of law to which classes have a range of relationships depending on 'the type of legal discourse and the sector of law concerned'. 'Since law provides a central discursive framework for police activity; it defines the principal elements of the police task, distinguishes the police from other state institutions and produces the forms of police accountability. This is not to say that law may not 'represent' other social structures by means of signification; indeed our rendering of structuralism provides for this. Rather we mean that the discourse of law is the starting point for making sense of *policework*' (Grimshaw and Jefferson, 1987, p. 271).

<sup>24</sup> Grimshaw and Jefferson (1987, p. 29) argue that 'these case-study approaches, because of certain theoretical presuppositions, make connections solely on the basis of members' perceptions, which effectively exclude other structures, except in so far as these were indicated in the particular discourses of empirical individuals. Or they make connections between a closely-observed group reality and an unobserved and essentially assumed set

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of ‘external’ structures. In either case, the methodological predilections significantly skewed the resulting theoretical accounts.’ This theoretical case-study is similar to Goldthorpe and Lockwood’s (1969) critical case-study (Section 2.5).

<sup>25</sup> This appears, superficially, to reflect the kind of model building advocated by interactionists such as Becker (1958) and Geer (1964). While Becker’s and Geer’s approach is to build up an understanding of the structure of meanings through modifications to working hypotheses following the discovery of negative cases; they are not concerned with the structural interconnectedness, and thus the totalistic perspective that fundamentally informs the work of Grimshaw and Jefferson.

<sup>25A</sup> As before, Grimshaw and Jefferson’s definition of policy is a specific, empirical definition that enables a concrete, empirical examination of their hypotheses. The definition is initially empty of content because, despite conventional notions that police policy is enshrined in authoritative guides to action, their analysis of sites of policy development (meetings, conferences, policy files) showed that such guides were unusual. More often ‘policy’ was a general ‘umbrella term for discussion and statement’ (Grimshaw and Jefferson, 1987, p. 204).

<sup>25B</sup> Their field observations at the different meetings and conferences, presented in their study as composite ‘analytic portraits’ indicates a clear distinction between administrative and operational issues, the former being characterised by a rational-scientific discourse and the latter by a common-sense one. The 23 meetings had a total of 572 agenda items (56% new business) of which operational items made up 31% of the total and administrative ones 58%. They provide detailed examples of the processing and discussion of three policy issues, raised and discussed in various meetings. The first, on replacement traffic cars, is a ‘scientific rational discourse’; the second on deployment and divisional policy which is a ‘common-sense discourse’; and the third on controlling petrol consumption is a mixture of the two discourses. The latter is characterised by a constant tension between common-sense and scientific management which:

produces some bizarre images, and endless prevarication, postponement and irresolution. As the ACC said, he talked as an administrator, but that was different from the ‘operationally desirable’. In so far as the public enters, through the question of ‘waste’, its influence is constantly mediated by (and ultimately subordinated to) the occupational common sense of the ‘operationally desirable’.  
(Grimshaw and Jefferson, 1987, p. 243)

Generally, where operational matters are concerned, common sense takes priority over the rational-scientific and, while the legal structure is determinant, the internal issues of police work tend to be far more dominant influences on policy consideration than external legal or democratic ones.

<sup>26</sup> They divided them into three categories, ‘operational’, ‘non-operational’ and ‘mixed’. An example of the first is a file entitled ‘Race and Community Relations—Incidents Arising From Racism’ which contained summaries of the procedural activities of the police in responding to four incidents brought to their attention by the public in the late 1970s. An example of the second is a file entitled ‘Orders—Policy on Police Divisional Orders’ which contained material solely on the administrative system of communication and control. An example of the mixed file category was one on ‘Arrests—Stop and Search’. This file contained Home Office requests, in response to Parliamentary

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Questions, for statistics, plus circulars about desirable procedures. The file dealt with adequacy of procedures as well as operational matters. On this classificatory basis, the sample consisted of 13 operational, 20 non-operational and 29 mixed files. There is a paucity of operational files despite a selection procedure that was biased towards them and this reflects the qualitative and quantitative analysis of the meetings. 'The unpredictable exigencies of the operational appear to escape the grasp of policy consideration' (Grimshaw and Jefferson, 1987, p. 248).

<sup>26A</sup> While this quantitative analysis, presented in more detail in the study, is not in total harmony with the qualitative assessment the general common sense-operational and rational-administrative dichotomy is confirmed.

<sup>26B</sup> They depart from Foucault's analysis, however, in retaining law as the determinant structure in the role of police in occupying 'the 'legal-repressive' space in modern society that was characteristic in general of the older state whose obsolescence Foucault seems to proclaim'. Not that Grimshaw and Jefferson argue that repression is the only activity of the police but rather that 'upholding the law' assumes a greater importance precisely because of the public policy constraints on disciplinary power. The distinction between discipline (imposed via 'hierarchical observation', 'examination', 'normalized judgements' and intended to compare individuals by norms of conformity) and legality (a corpus of texts and structures forbidding some actions and permitting others) is crucial to the distinction between unit and resident beat work.

<sup>27</sup> The 'police debate' covers police powers, accountability, training, styles of policing and relations with the public, especially relations with ethnic minorities. They distinguish three positions in the debate: the political right embodied in sections of the Police Act (1984); the classic liberal position exemplified by the Scarman Report (Scarman, 1982); and that of the left, exemplified in Jack Straw M.P.'s private members bills (November 1979 and March 1980), the Greater London Council (1983) initiative and the Labour Party (1983) proposals. The Police Act fails to balance increased police powers with new controls, as the liberal Scarman Report had argued for. The Straw Bills aimed for increase democratic control without altering constabulary accountability to law. Grimshaw and Jefferson see all these positions as failing to resolve the respective responsibilities of legal and democratic authorities because they are all based on 'an inadequate sociological understanding'. There is a failure to appreciate that the democratic or legal structure cannot be changed in isolation. The interaction between structures is ignored in all these proposals.

<sup>28</sup> Given that the political climate is not conducive to such changes, Grimshaw and Jefferson undertake to offer 'open-minded police chiefs' a pragmatic route to change which could be developed through their managerial instruments. The changes relate to law, work and democracy. For example, using public complaint as the selection criteria for 'absolute offences'; adopting non-partial approaches to public complaints; avoiding over- or under-attention to particular sections of community; develop conceptions of rational effectiveness in operational areas and monitor them; aiming to increase public acceptability; and so on. All this tends to point towards a shift from the organisational imperatives of immediate reactive response, epitomised by unit beat policing, towards the more flexible approach of residential beat policing.