UNIVERSITY OF BIRMINGHAM

THE JUBILEE CENTRE FOR CHARACTER & VIRTUES

CHARACTER VIRTUES

IN POLICING

RESEARCH REPORT

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Jubilee Centre for Character and Virtues

The Jubilee Centre for Character and Virtues is a unique and leading centre for the examination of how character and virtues impact upon individuals and society. The Centre was founded in 2012 by Professor James Arthur. Based at the University of Birmingham, it has a dedicated team of over 20 academics from a range of disciplines, including: philosophy, psychology, education, theology and sociology.

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University of Birmingham 2021
ISBN: 9780704429741

Character Virtues in Policing

Research Report

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Foreword

Many people think of the police, first and foremost, as law-enforcers and crime-fighters. For them, policing is all about upholding the law; a straightforward – almost mechanical – process that involves police officers responding to criminal offences, investigating them, catching the people responsible, and – in so doing – deterring others from breaking the law. Thinking of the police as the 'long arm of the law', however, is to mischaracterise their role and function, and oversimplify the complexities and ambiguities that officers have to negotiate on a daily basis.

The first scholars to study the police in the 1950s and 60s revealed that the 'law in books' was very different from the 'law in action'. They discovered that – rather than applying the letter of the law in all cases – officers used their discretion to manage the countless situations to which the public expected them to respond, and re-establish a sense of order. These ideas continue to have relevance to policing 60 years on, even if they have become almost taken-for-granted in the field of criminology, and despite the level of political, economic, social, technological and legal change and the widening of police responsibilities (e.g., terrorism, cybercrime, antisocial behaviour, vulnerability and public health emergencies). The very earliest research showed policing to be, fundamentally, a moral enterprise, with officers drawing variously on their personal values, social norms, police culture, organisational rules and sometimes even the law to discern 'right' from 'wrong' in the ethical grey zones in which they operated.

During the intervening years, an impressive and large body of literature built up that mapped the contours of police discretion. Given much of this work was carried out from a criminological perspective, its preoccupation with what used to be described as 'police deviance' was perhaps inevitable. Nevertheless, while this research has helped hold the police to account and informed changes to policing policy and practice, its overriding focus on misconduct and corruption has left significant gaps in our knowledge.

My potted history of policing research hopefully explains why I think this splendid report by Kristján Kristjánsson, Aidan Thompson, Andrew Maile, Sarah Ritzenthaler and Francisco Moller breaks new ground. Rather than adding to what we already know about police wrongdoing, the Jubilee Centre team turn their attention towards what officers say they would do in situations where it is not immediately obvious what the right course of action would be, and – perhaps more importantly – why. Their shift in focus towards what it means to 'do the right thing' is accompanied by the novel perspective they bring to policing research. The approach they take to studying the police is refreshingly grounded in applied ethical philosophy, particularly that of virtue ethics, and I applaud them for opening up this field of research to new ideas. My hope is that their report will stimulate others to engage in conversations and appreciative forms of enquiry about what constitutes 'good' policing, much in the same way as medical ethics has flourished and become a topic for discussion and analysis in its own right.

The timing of this report could not be better for the College of Policing. We have recently announced a wholesale review of the police *Code of Ethics*, which we first introduced in 2014. While the authors of this report kindly describe the Code as a 'formidable' and 'unique' document, we feel we can do more to help police officers and staff to 'do the right thing in the right way'. The review will be carried out by a committee of frontline officers and staff, subject matter experts, and academics, who will look at recent developments in social research, applied ethics and policing, and consult with the wider police service and external stakeholders, with a view to developing an ethical framework that can be more easily applied in practice and which supports autonomous professional decision-making. In breaking new ground, this report will be a key resource for the review committee, and one that will undoubtedly have an impact on the updated *Code of Ethics*.

Dr. Paul Quinton
Evidence and Evaluation Advisor
Uniformed Policing Faculty
College of Policing

'IT HAS RIGHTLY BEEN SAID THAT THE MORAL INFLUENCE OF THE COUNTRY POLICEMAN ON THE COMMUNITY IS NO LESS THAN THAT OF THE PARSON, THE DOCTOR, OR THE TEACHER, AND THE SAME CAN BE SAID WITH EQUAL TRUTH OF ALL POLICEMEN ELSEWHERE.'

Charles Reith

Executive Summary

This report is the latest in a portfolio of studies conducted by the Jubilee Centre for Character and Virtues into the role of character virtues in U.K. professions.[1] As a world-leader in rigorous academic research into applied virtue ethics, the Jubilee Centre operates on the assumption that good moral character is educable and practicable, and that professionals operate better when practising virtuously.

The report describes the results of mixed-method research into police education and police ethics in England and Wales. The project included participants at three career stages: cohort 1 of first-year students and Police Constable Degree Apprentices (PCDAs); cohort 2 of second-year students and PCDAs through to master's students (including the Degree Holder Entry Programme, DHEP); and cohort 3 of experienced police officers. Altogether, 571 participants from those three cohorts completed an online survey, and out of those, 50 completed a subsequent semi-structured interview. In addition, eight police educators were interviewed.

The spotlight on the police is timely due to the current changes in educational requirements, recognising policing as a highly skilled profession; other factors associated with the professionalisation of policing in England and Wales; the recent challenges that police forces have been facing to their legitimacy and socio-moral standing; and lastly extra burdens created by the 2020–2021 pandemic. To what extent have those factors affected the characterological conditions that enable police officers to carry out their job virtuously, effectively and with a sense of purpose?

More specifically, the report explores:

- which virtues are prized and upheld by the participants themselves;
- which virtues they associate with the ideal professional;
- what kind of moral reasoning strategies they avail themselves of;
- what hinders or helps police professionals in exhibiting virtuous practice;
- what recommendations can be given to educators about improving the teaching of professional ethics in this field.

Key findings:

- The most frequently selected 'ideal' character strength across all three cohorts was honesty. Honesty was also the top-ranked self-ascribed personal character strength for cohorts 2 and 3. However, for cohort 1, the moral virtue of fairness was top-ranked.
- The main motivation for the participants to pursue a career in policing was a desire to help and serve within the community.
- The dominant form of moral reasoning in dealing with work-related moral dilemmas was deontological (rule-based), which was further elaborated in interviews where many police officers categorised themselves as 'enforcers of the law'. The second most frequently selected reasoning strategy was virtue ethical. The preponderance of deontological reasoning sets police participants apart from all professionals studied previously by the Jubilee Centre, apart from nurses.
- Police officers felt that the work they do is useful, and that they are able to do the right thing when at work. Officers also indicated that they were mostly able to remain true to their personal values, and to a greater extent than for other professions studied by the Jubilee Centre (2012–2020).
- However, one of the main challenges for the officers was that they felt unable to perform their work to the standard that they would like to, attributed to a lack of resources, which impacted on how much time can be spent on individual cases. This was a factor that was identified as causing stress: a major complaint in this study.
- Various factors related to professional purpose, when taken together from the survey, indicated that police officers (cohort 3) had a lower sense of professional purpose than any other U.K. profession studied so far, apart from lawyers.[2] However, this finding was not borne out in the interviews.

Key recommendations:

- Virtue ethics needs foregrounding more in professional ethics education within police-science and CPD courses. In general, more attention needs to be paid to the moral and characterological grounding of policing and to establishing a clearer sense of the ideal of 'policing by consent'.
- The police *Code of Ethics* [3] needs to be revised to reflect more explicitly virtue ethical considerations, not least the ideal of metacognitive professional *phronesis*.
- Serious efforts must be made to re-establish a sense of professional purpose among established police officers.

> 'IT'S ABOUT BEING THAT PERSON THAT THEY [THE PUBLIC] CAN RELY ON AND THEY CAN TURN TO.'
>
> **Female First Year PCDA, A12**

1 See www.jubileecentre.ac.uk/professions.

2 See Arthur et al. (2019) *Repurposing the Professions: The role of professional character*. Available at: www.jubileecentre.ac.uk/repurposingtheprofessions [Accessed 18 August 2021].

3 https://www.college.police.uk/ethics/code-of-ethics

POLICE

1 Purpose of the Report

The *Virtues in Policing* research project built upon the Jubilee Centre's portfolio of work that has explored the role of character virtues in several professional occupations. The present report is the latest in the 'Virtues in the Professions' series (see Arthur and Earl, 2020; Arthur *et al*., 2021) by focussing on characteristics and conceptions of aspiring and experienced practitioners through both quantitative and qualitative methods.

Studying the virtues of policing in 2021 is particularly timely, given the current changes in educational requirements for policing, the various challenges the police are facing at the moment, as well as other factors associated with the professionalisation of policing in England and Wales.[4] In addition to the foundation of the College of Policing in 2013, the professionalisation of policing also stipulates that new recruits are either required to hold a degree before entry, or are awarded a degree after their first three years of initial training, through the Police Constable Degree Apprenticeship (PCDA).

The project included students pursuing all three current entry routes into professional policing, as well as established officers. Through the use of a mixed-method approach, the project has sought to capture pre-service and in-service police officers'[5] ideas about the character qualities that are most important to them as professionals, those they see as exemplifying the 'ideal' police officer, and how they respond to bespoke policing-specific moral quandaries.[6]

Policing in England and Wales has been through a period of substantial change in recent years and continues to face challenges against a backdrop of profound social transformation, including economic downturn, erratic and sometimes hostile media exposure, widening inequalities and, as the previous year has brought with it, a global pandemic. At the same time, the police are under increasing pressure to deliver better, 'customer-based' services (Neyroud, 2006). Competing demands and varying levels of public confidence in the police – at times shaking the foundations of its perceived legitimacy – add to the challenges for professional policing in the U.K. In light of these challenges and the recent professionalisation agenda, the project reported upon here has sought to explore the nature of policing as a *moral practice*. The role of personal qualities of character and virtues, and how these feature in police officers' professional lives, has been central to this research, as they operate alongside formal codes and policies of day-to-day police work. Ultimately, the project set out to examine what aids or frustrates police professionals in their (presumed) quest for 'good', 'virtuous' policing. The general aim has been to understand the moral character that sits behind the human agency, rather than solely concentrating upon the structure and culture which shapes police practice (cf. Manning, 2019: 8–10).

This project has aimed to explore a variety of questions, including:

- Which virtues are prized and upheld by the police professionals themselves?
- Which virtues do they associate with the ideal professional?
- Does a virtue ethical approach provide a suitable theoretical foundation for police practice and professional policing education; and do police professionals actually avail themselves of virtue ethical reasoning strategies?
- What hinders or helps police professionals in exhibiting virtuous practice?
- What recommendations can be given to educators about improving the teaching of professional ethics in this field?

Additionally, through the exploration of these and other questions, the research team aspired to gain insight into how a *theoretical* virtue ethical approach and a *practical/educational* emphasis on the role of character and virtues in the profession might be cultivated. A second part of the project, beginning in the autumn of 2021, will build upon the Jubilee Centre's work on *phronesis* or practical wisdom (Kristjánsson *et al*., 2020) in ways that apply specifically to the police profession, as well as building bridges to other professions.

This project has been supported with valuable expertise related specifically to policing ethics, education and practice. The following individuals formed an expert panel for this project:

- Dr. Peter Neyroud CBE QPM CCMI, Lecturer, Institute of Criminology, University of Cambridge.
- Professor Allyson MacVean OBE, Professor of Policing and Criminology, Bath Spa University.
- Mr. Ronald Winch, Senior Teaching Fellow in Policing, School of Social Sciences, Birmingham City University.

However, the current research team alone are responsible for the content and presentation of this report.

> 'I ORIGINALLY THOUGHT IT WAS BECAUSE I LIKED *THE BILL*... I NOW UNDERSTAND THAT I REALLY ENJOY PROTECTING VULNERABLE PEOPLE.'
>
> **Detective Chief Inspector, Survey Respondent**

[4] Law enforcement is organised separately in each of the legal systems of the United Kingdom: England and Wales, Northern Ireland and Scotland. To avoid complications, given different educational and practical traditions within those systems, the current study has focussed on policing and police education in England and Wales.

[5] In England and Wales, the term 'police officer' generally refers to an officer of any rank within a police force, from the most junior (police constables), right up to the most senior rank (Chief Constable).

[6] In the present research, these quandaries are typically referred to as 'dilemmas', in line with standard practice in moral psychological research; and the terms 'quandaries' and 'dilemmas' are used interchangeably in what follows. It should be noted, however, that within philosophical virtues ethics, the term 'dilemma' is usually reserved for quandaries of a certain specific sort: namely, intractable quandaries, (often) involving incommensurable values.

2 Background

2.1 CONTEXT

As a prelude to *Virtues in Policing*, the Jubilee Centre commissioned a poll of 406 police officers, conducted by Portland Communications in January 2021 (Kristjánsson, 2021). The poll reflected current demographics of the U.K. police, although the responses were slightly skewed towards female, ethnically diverse, London-based and junior-level officers. The aim of the poll was to offer a snapshot of the moral challenges that police officers in the U.K. face and how well equipped they consider themselves to be to tackle those challenges.

The results of the poll projected a somewhat disharmonious picture of police officers' moral self-concept, perhaps reflecting the ambivalent and dilemmatic nature of contemporary policing itself (Brown, 1988). On the one hand, the officers generally considered themselves to possess the character strengths that they value most in an ideal officer, namely honesty and bravery. They claimed to rely considerably on their own moral compass in dealing with problematic situations, and they considered their education to have prepared them reasonably well for the practicalities of police life. On the other hand, they acknowledged the increasing challenges and stressors of present-day policing and the prevalence of situations in which they have to act against their own moral judgement, to the extent that the majority of respondents had considered quitting their job in the last year (Kristjánsson, 2021).

It must be borne in mind that the poll was conducted during unusual circumstances in the U.K., which are perhaps reflected in its findings, in particular the economic, social and personal shocks caused by COVID-19. Nevertheless, this poll sets the scene for the following review of the background literature, in the sense that much of that literature is focussed on recent challenges to policing and how those impact on the work of police forces and individual police officers, as well as on the perceived relationship between the police and the general public. In short, the aim of this Background section is to offer a roadmap of the professional, practical and academic landscape producing the 'disharmonious' picture that the poll evidently revealed.

This literature review touches, by necessity, upon many themes that may seem to be disparate but are nonetheless connected by family resemblance to the overarching theme of current policing as a challenging *moral* – including characterological – *practice*. Most of the relevant sources agree that there have been a series of enormous changes for the police since the turn of the 21st century (see Neyroud, 2006). What is being referred to there are not so much the internal changes to recruitment strategies and the educational structure of policing, but rather various external threats that are changing the complexion of police work, such as terrorism and ever-more complex immigration/border issues, existing alongside racial tensions and disruptions caused by increased inequalities and economic turmoil. Although cases of scandals and whistleblowing within police forces have been more prominent in the U.S.A. than in the U.K., the discourse on perceived police malpractice has also reached these shores. This has undermined public confidence in the even-handedness and impartiality of police officers, especially insofar as their work affects those from Black, Asian and minority ethnic (BAME) communities as well as other disadvantaged minority groups. This has been exacerbated as these challenges have coincided with cuts to budgets and to neighbourhood public services in England and Wales, and with a decreasing number of 'bobbies on the beat' interacting directly with the public and inspiring confidence in the police as an institution.

While all these new developments have not gone unnoticed in academia, most scholarly writings on the police in the U.K. still employ an outsider's perspective (from sociology, criminology, etc), without engaging with voices from frontline officers themselves (yet see Manning, 2019, for an exception; cf. Bottoms and Tankebe, 2013).[7] In contrast, the assumption undergirding the current project is that, to understand the intricacies of police work, one needs to understand what makes individual police officers flounder or flourish as persons and as professionals; and that the best way to gain such understanding is to survey and interview them. From an academic perspective, this understanding requires the adoption of the research lens of moral character, as character arguably sits deeper within the individual psyche than does either social or professional identity. Becoming and being a police officer are profoundly character-forming experiences (Morrell and Bradford, 2019: 69–70). Yet for reasons related to the scarcity of virtue-ethical perspectives on policing, which become clear later, the adaptation of a characterological research lens requires a shift from standard research paradigms on police work. Fortunately, in the last couple of years, the research tide seems to be turning towards character, marked by one highly relevant PhD thesis (Manning, 2019) and two monographs with a markedly virtue-friendly focus (Morrell and Bradford, 2019; Wood, 2020).

2.2 PROFESSIONAL ETHICS AND THE ETHICAL MISSION OF POLICING

Many publicly important human occupations aspire to professional status (such as teaching, medicine, nursing, law, the army). Professional practices enjoy a unique and privileged place in the public eye. They are relied upon for moral probity, diligence, fairness and resolve (Jubilee Centre, 2016). Each profession has its own set of professional virtues, signifying the excellences of that practice, but professionals are also expected to exhibit personal virtues in their dealings with colleagues and clients. Being a professional thus comes with a strong moral remit. This is perhaps nowhere as obvious as in the case of the police, and a police officer thus counts as the quintessential professional. This can be seen from the general expectations of the public that serving police professionals are persons of sound moral character (Wood, 2020: 1).

[7] However, with the emergence of the evidence-based policing movement, many police forces have formed academic partnerships, therefore bringing scholarship and the frontline closer together over the past ten years.

Although this has at best been hinted at but not elaborated upon previously in the literature, the present researchers believe that policing may be (alongside the clergy) the most essentially *characterological* of all the professions. One way to put it would be to say that the moral mission of policing is *Janus-faced*: facing both inwards and outwards. The public expects police officers to be morally upright persons, more than they demand of some other professionals (cf. Morrell and Bradford, 2019: 18). In addition, the outward-facing calling of the police officer is arguably to instil good character in the public. Someone might object that this misdescribes the latter calling, which is simply about the upholding of the law without any additional moral connotations. However, that would be a simplification at best, a misunderstanding at worst. The overarching duty of the police officer is to uphold the public order. However, the concept of 'public order' is not a legally operationalisable one. For although the 'queen's peace' is a legal concept, referring to 'public order' in the U.K., it is a concept that cannot be codified or operationalised in the sense of a formal rule applied deductively to a case. There is no formalistic royal road to determining what counts as a breach of the public order and what does not. It is a matter for police to use their personal judgement and determine, through the three D's of *phronesis*: discernment, deliberation and discretion.[8]

Good policing involves much more than just enforcing law, apprehending criminals and applying police-force policies (Wood, 2020: 4). A considerable part of modern police work is about preventative measures – known in the current literature as 'proactive policing' (Wood, 2020: 39), but dating back all the way to the historic Peelian Principles (mentioned later) about the understanding of police work in the U.K. as that of pre-empting crime. Proactive policing involves quelling friction and mediating conflict before they escalate. This is not about reacting to violations of the law as such, as no law has been breached – but rather about creating the characterological conditions in members of the public that are conducive to the 'queen's peace'. In the language of ethical theory, this involves making members of the public more virtuous, or at least self-controlled.[9] By way of comparison, the duty of an army officer is also to uphold peace. However, although modern armies serve increasingly as vehicles of peacekeeping and humanitarian aid, the essential duty of the army officer is to contain enemy combatants and, if necessary, to use lethal force. It is not to make the enemy more virtuous.

Historical (19th and 20th century) ideals of 'ethically neutral' policing (see e.g. Uglow, 1988) have largely become obsolete in the 21st century (cf. Wood, 2020: 13). The moralistic view of police ethics developed in this sub-section would, therefore, be likely to garner considerable support among contemporary scholars, although not all would be willing to go as far in that direction as proposed above. To what extent the recent ethical discourse has percolated through to actual police professionals is moot, however. For instance, while police officers seem quite comfortable using the language of moral virtues (Manning, 2019), they arguably still find it more acceptable to understand their work in legal rather than moral terms (Wood, 2020: 13). This may be one of the causes of the above-mentioned disunified picture of police officers' moral self-concept.

2.3 ETHICAL THEORIES AND POLICING: WHY VIRTUE ETHICS?

For readers familiar with contemporary ethical theorising, the preceding sub-section may have indicated that police ethics lends itself particularly well to a *virtue ethical* analysis. However, somewhat surprisingly – with the exception of a few recent sources mentioned at the close of Section 2.1 – the standard approaches to police ethics are still *consequentialist* (e.g. utilitarian) and *deontological*. This stands in sharp contrast to various other areas of professional ethics (such as business ethics, medical ethics and nursing ethics) in which virtue ethics is gradually becoming the theory of choice (see Kristjánsson, 2017a; 2017b; Arthur *et al*., 2015b).

Whereas virtue ethics defines moral rightness in terms of effects on moral agents, namely the extent to which they become more virtuous and more able to lead well-rounded flourishing lives, consequentialism defines moral rightness in terms of the consequences of actions for maximising overall happiness among human beings. Deontology defines it in terms of the adherence of actions to universalisable, rationally grounded principles, and to maxims (discrete rules and codes) derived from such principles. There are certain features of police ethics that make it readily amenable to both a consequentialist and deontological interpretation, which explains the enduring appeal of those two approaches in the police-ethics literature.

There is no denying the intuitive appeal of the idea of 'principled policing' (Alderson, 1998). Insofar as policing involves the enforcement of society's particular laws – and generally the upholding of 'the rule of law' in a more abstract sense – it is about the enactment of principles; and this may seem to take us back into historically famous ethical territory of deontological (e.g. Kantian) theories. Nevertheless, various worries have been raised about understanding professional ethics in general, and police ethics in particular, in terms of mere adherence to principles and rules. First, given the practically grounded complexity of the judgements required of professional practitioners, it is seldom possible to find general rules for all or even most cases – especially, indeed, when general imperatives conflict. Second, the danger of defining professional conduct in terms of rules or protocols is that it can promote an unreflective, or conformist, mindset, discouraging the autonomy and initiative that we should otherwise expect from responsible practitioners, and even disincentivising moral reasoning skills. Third, the typical carrot-and-stick method of ever-stricter rules and codifications of those rules does not seem to work in practice (Schwartz and Sharpe, 2010; Jubilee Centre, 2016; Wood, 2020). All that said, it would be a travesty to try to do away with, or propose to overlook, the deontological features of *some* aspects of police ethics.

Likewise, the common-good element underpinning the ethics of policing does naturally align with consequentialist reasoning. When faced, for example, with an impending public riot, and where actions have to be decided upon quickly, it would be odd if the question of the 'best overall consequences for everyone involved' did not enter into the decision-making process. Although Wood, for one, prefers virtue ethical reasoning to utilitarian reasoning, he sensibly warns against a blanket rejection of consequentialism in police ethics (2020: 100).

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[8] Cf. e.g., the emphasis in Wood's book (2020: 5) on 'the ability of an officer to make sense of competing demands within different contexts, as opposed to following ethical rules of one kind or another'. This 'ability' is typically referred to in the moral theoretical literature as (professional) *phronesis*.

[9] Shiffrin (2014: 198–199) also points out that the police have an important role in informing people prospectively about what counts as legal or illegal. Thus, police officers serve as *epistemic*, as well as *moral*, authorities.

A virtue ethical perspective on police ethics is significantly differently *grounded* from the other two, although the eventual advice about proper actions to be taken may not always diverge from that of deontology or consequentialism (witness the action options in the dilemmas featured in the survey for the present research). A virtue ethically motivated police officer will display, and cultivate further, personal and professional virtues, both civic and moral, and reach *phronetic* (morally tethered, critical, properly deliberated and adjudicated-upon) decisions (Darnell *et al*., 2019) that contribute to virtue and flourishing in the individuals affected by the decisions, within the broad framework of the law. The fundamental moral question becomes: 'what would the virtuous police officer do in these circumstances?' (Morrell and Bradford, 2019: 17).

One advantage of virtue ethics is its sensitivity to professional work (such as nursing, medicine, teaching and, indeed, policing) as 'emotional labour'. Instead of seeing emotional engagement in decision-making as psychologically compromising and morally untoward, virtue ethics considers emotions as necessary ingredients in virtues and encourages virtuous agents to harness proper emotions in the service of moral ends (see e.g. Morrell and Bradford, 2019: 101). Another advantage of virtue ethics is that its definition of moral rightness tallies with a fairly traditional, practice-oriented – if essentially pre-theoretical – understanding of ethics in policing as 'how police officers and police leaders make the right judgements and do the right things, for the right reasons' (Neyroud and Beckley, 2001: 27; cf. Kleinig, 1999). Interestingly, these words mirror almost exactly the characterisation by the father of virtue ethics, Aristotle (1985), of virtuous decision-making. The third advantage of virtue ethics is its focus on the intellectual virtue of *phronesis* as the reflective metacognitive capacity required to mediate between alternatives – a focus that tends to resonate with practitioners (Manning, 2019).

2.4 POLICE LEGITIMACY AND ITS CRISIS

In order to get a fuller sense of the traditional problematics of police ethics, it is instructive to step back momentarily from the competing ethical theories and focus instead on an even more foundational moral question plaguing policing since its historical inception, and recently rearing its head again: the question of the very *legitimacy of policing*. Policing involves the systematic use of state-controlled force against citizens, and such powers have historically required strong justification to establish their legitimacy. Otherwise, we end up with what is called a 'legitimacy deficit' (Beetham, 2013).

The issue of police legitimacy in the U.K. is indelibly linked to the legendary figure of former Home Secretary and Prime Minister, Sir Robert Peel, who established the Metropolitan Police Force – an institution marking the beginning of modern policing in the Anglo-American world – in 1829. Often mentioned as the father of the word 'bobbies' for policemen, Peel is understood by many to be the creator of the 'Peelian Principles', establishing the mission and justification of police work, the basic core of which is a strong claim about the legitimacy of policing being grounded in public consent. The public *are* the police and the police *are* (i.e. represent) the will of the public (see e.g. Morrell and Bradford, 2019: 21). While sometimes overly 'romanticised' (Manning, 2019: 113), these principles are, in theory at least, considered to be alive and well in the U.K., where they are often considered to set police ethics apart from that of various neighbouring countries in Europe, for example with regard to 'intuitive' police reactions to public riots. So, in theory at least, the police in the U.K. are more likely to try to identify with the cause of the rioters (as potentially representing the will of the public) and to treat their disruptive activities with leniency than, for instance, the French police would.

In recent years, however, the idea that the authority of the police is fully contingent upon public approval has come under increased scrutiny and been challenged by various developments and events – hence calling for a re-examination of the mostly historically dormant legitimacy question about police authority. While these developments have been more dramatic in the U.S.A. than the U.K., the discourse surrounding police ethics in England and Wales has also been affected. In short, increased multiculturalism, fragmentation and polarisation in society have created pockets of sub-cultures and activist movements (often comprising racial and ethnic minorities or other disadvantaged groups) who do not consent to various police applications of laws and procedures, such as current stop-and-search methods, the war on recreational drugs and most recently the enforcement of drastic pandemic-related travel restrictions.

While the breakdown of 'moral alignment' (Manning, 2019) – that is, a lack of moral solidarity between the public and the police – has created a lively public discourse in the U.S.A., the issue of police legitimacy has, to a larger degree, been confined to academic circles in the U.K. The general view seems to be that it has not affected policing as severely on this side of the Atlantic and that it is limited to particular methods or strategies, rather than calling into question the very institutional culture, and hence the authority, of the police as a whole – partly perhaps because of the enduring appeal of the Peelian Principles. A recent study by Manning involving deep narrative interviews with 16 U.K. police officers revealed some disconcerting findings, however. It turned out that only three of the officers interviewed had any sense of their legitimacy (as officers of the police force) being grounded in public consent; and their understanding of the whole legitimacy question seemed patchy at best, incoherent at worst. When probed, ten of the officers claimed that the source of their authority derives from the rule of law or the oath sworn to the Queen (Manning, 2019: 125–133, 201). Hence, an abstract principle of jurisprudence and a particular personalised authority figure have replaced the 'great British public' as the ungrounded grounders of police legitimacy.

To build a new bridge between the police and the public, mutual trust is needed and one way to develop such trust is to forge characterological bonds at the personal level, thus, actualising Peel's principle of the police practitioner as a 'citizen in uniform' (College of Policing, 2014: v). Such actualisation – revolving around the common core of virtues that police professionals share with the general public – would, however, require much more direct communication between individual police officers and members of the communities that they serve.

2.5 THE POLICE *CODE OF ETHICS*

Whatever ethical theory one subscribes to as the 'best' one to ground police ethics, the recent ethical turn in policing in England and Wales, encouraged by the College of Policing and coinciding with its professionalisation agenda, must be applauded. One of the most important fruits of that ethical turn is the College of Policing *Code of Ethics*, published in 2014. This is a formidable document, teeming with the language of virtue, more so than typically seen in other professional codes. The *Code* makes it clear that the ethical behaviour of police officers stems from the values that guide the individual. Moreover, all of those values – while couched in the language

> 'YOU'VE GOT TO...BE ASSERTIVE, BUT AT THE SAME TIME YOU'VE GOT TO MAKE SURE THAT YOU'RE EMPATHETIC TOWARDS PEOPLE.'
>
> **Male First Year Student, A23**

of 'principles' – are, bar one (accountability), moral and intellectual *virtues*: fairness, honesty, objectivity, integrity, leadership, selflessness, openness and respect. The *Code* is sensitive to the context-dependency of the virtues and promotes 'doing the right thing in the right way' (2014: 3) – a standard virtue ethical formulation – rather than mindlessly following precepts. In addition to the virtue terms dressed up as 'principles', the *Code* is fairly unique among similar documents in foregrounding throughout the need for additional emotional and behavioural virtues (e.g. showing 'compassion and empathy, as appropriate, to people you come into contact with', 2014: 7). The *Code* also offers a broad 'National Decision Model' for making ethical decisions, involving five steps, but emphasises that police discretion is necessary and must be used 'wisely' (2014: 9) and that the decision procedure is, by necessity, 'inherently flexible' (2014: 17).

While ethical codes tend to be grounded in deontological principles, there is a positive way to interpret the police *Code of Ethics* from a virtue ethical perspective. First, the purpose of police ethical codes has historically been to replace, or offer an antidote to, a more covert set of police norms, often referred to disparagingly as the 'blue code' (Westmarland and Rowe, 2018). A written code at least gives officers an opportunity to rethink the norms by which they abide, rather than simply becoming saturated in prevailing 'police culture'. Second, while the *Code* under discussion here is not explicitly grounded in any ethical theory, be it deontological, consequentialist or virtue ethical (although the language of 'principles' indicates a deontological heritage), this *Code* is unusual among similar codes for other professions in the U.K. in employing a language of virtue rather than a language of compliance. Third, there is no indication in the *Code* of its decision-making model being presented as an alternative to reflective, discretionary thinking. The model simply takes the police practitioner through (some of) the steps necessary for reaching as sound a decision as possible in the given circumstances. In that sense, the model resembles in many ways an Aristotelian model of the components of *phronesis*, leading up to a well-grounded moral decision (Darnell *et al*., 2019).

2.6 THE PRACTICALITIES OF POLICE ETHICS IN ENGLAND AND WALES: COMMON CHALLENGES AND QUANDARIES

Policing has been through substantial changes and a process of professionalisation in recent years in England and Wales. As Morrell and Bradford note, 'the scale and scope of contemporary change in policing' are significant to the point that, for them, they have rendered traditional and historical techniques and practises of policing almost outdated (2019: xiii). The changes have been comprehensive; from changes to the leadership and governance of modern policing, to the realities of the impacts to budget cuts and enduring austerity, and on to responding to and keeping up with new, different and the otherwise changing nature of crime. The increasing domination of and reliance on the digital world has impacted policing, from using new technologies to better respond to community needs, to needing to understand the digital world and navigate the world of cyber-crime. Such developments in technology and the place of crime have tested police capacities as they are required to 'keep up' not just with developments to technology, but also with how those are deployed (see Levi *et al*., 2015).

COVID-19 and its impact on all facets of public life has drawn the majority of public focus in 2020 and 2021. It has been the single largest oppressor on society in Britain since World War II and should be considered as such. Yet, there have been a series of other significant events and issues requiring police interventions over the past year that have also helped shape the perception and view of the modern police officer, and of policing as a profession. Many of these have been sensitive in nature, and the result of a perception that police have overstepped or abused the privileged powers afforded to them. When combined, the notion of character in policing, and the particulars of the quandaries faced by officers and how they navigate them, have been brought into sharper focus than ever before. For those who have written on the place of character in policing, such as Morell and Bradford (2019), Wood (2020) and Delattre (2011), much of what they theorised has been tested in action over the past year (2020–2021).

In addition to policing and controlling public adherence with COVID-19 restrictions, the police in England and Wales has also had to respond to other events. These have included the visible police responses to mass public gatherings and demonstrations such as the Black Lives Matters (BLM) protests of Summer 2020, the vigil for Sarah Everard in London in March 2021, and the #killthebill demonstrations that have taken place nationwide, but most notably in Bristol in March 2021. The BLM protests were born, in 2020, in response to the killing of George Floyd by a serving police officer in the U.S.A. The movement had existed pre-2020, but tensions between police and the public were seen around the world as many protested publicly for racial equality, and against a perceived abuse of police powers. Indeed, such protests have been championed by some as examples of the demonstration of civic virtue and civic engagement. This highlights the tension between police and the public at times on matters of character and virtue. There have also been many less visible police actions to particular incidents over the past year, including responses to increased cyber-fraud and crime created by a nation under lockdown, as well as the impact of separate cases of serving officers being arrested on murder and manslaughter charges. In addition, there are proposed government changes to give police new and wider powers to act on a series of matters, including public protests, violence against women and sentencing.

Section 1 of the present research contextualised the policing profession as being under increasing pressure to deliver better, 'customer-based' services (see Neyroud, 2006). There are, globally, very differing levels of public confidence in the police, with the past year at times witnessing questions in regard to its perceived sincerity and legality, as well as its proposed longevity as a profession. Many of such calls have come in the face of a perceived absence of moral practice displayed by officers of good character and failures to act in line with the perceived 'public good'. The last year has foregrounded that quandaries are not only faced by officers themselves, and those in charge of leading policing as a profession, but also faced by the public, and those who place their trust in a service intended to protect and serve, but that at times has fallen short of its ethical remit.

> 'IN THE POLICE YOU'RE ALWAYS ACCOUNTABLE FOR THE DECISION YOU MAKE...EVERY INCIDENT YOU GO TO, YOU ARE PROBLEM-SOLVING.'
>
> **Female First Year PCDA, A12**

2.7 CULTIVATING THE REFLECTIVE POLICE PROFESSIONAL

The discussion in preceding sub-sections, on the ethical theories underpinning police ethics, the *Code* for policing, and the common challenges and quandaries facing police officers, has brought us to the point of concluding that the educational aim of policing can be nothing short of cultivating reflective practitioners. Officers should be able to apply *phronetic* thinking to the often uncodifiable and deeply context-sensitive situations that they meet with on a daily basis (cf. Wood, 2020: 10, 19, 118). Whether that requires the rebalancing of energies within police education towards moral philosophy, as Wood contends (2020: 7), is another matter. Virtue ethicists – at least those steeped in the neo-Aristotelian tradition – tend to be fairly sceptical of a theoretical orientation towards professional ethics and see it rather as a highly practice-oriented discipline. This does not mean that police ethics is best learned exclusively 'on the job'. Sherman's (1982) old insights about the need to teach such ethics 'away from the heat of the battle' – to prevent the internalisations of norms and hence the development of a 'moral career' to be wholly dependent on prevailing 'blue-code' and 'canteen-culture' norms – are still as valid as ever.

The educational ideal of cultivating reflective *phronetic* practitioners is premised upon the assumption that there are better and worse ways of responding to the quandaries that police officers regularly meet with. Another, bleaker, view (discussed in Morrell and Bradford, 2019: 120–127) would be that policing is an 'impossible job' in the sense of involving adjudications in circumstances of intractable conflicts between stakeholders and often in the context of weak or non-existent perceived police legitimacy. Interviews with police officers in Manning's (2019) thesis do not seem to support the bleak 'impossible-job' interpretation; despite the cynicism that colours some of their responses, they seem to be confident that police virtues and discretion can normally be applied to identify better and worse solutions to the issues at hand.

The interim conclusion to be drawn from the background literature seems to be that the fundamental challenge for the future of police ethics is an *educational* – as much or more than a *philosophical* – one. Even for those who agree on some sort of virtue ethical grounding of police ethics, encapsulated in the ideal of the reflective practitioner with an abundance of *phronesis*, the daunting task awaits of proposing the educational means that serviceably promote this ideal (Morrell and Bradford, 2019: chap 6).

2.8 HISTORY OF POLICING IN THE U.K.

This section considers some necessary factual premises upon which the present research has been built. First, some words are in order about the history of policing in the U.K. (specifically in England and Wales) and how that sets the scene for the issues covered in what follows. Then, in Section 2.9, some explanations follow about how police education is arranged in England and Wales. These are both complex topics that can only be addressed skeletally in this report; however, the research team have compiled a detailed overview of those topics elsewhere (Maile, 2021).[10]

The police force occupies a unique position in British society; it was the first of its kind to be established by a representative government, and, for a large portion of its history, was 'regarded as an exemplar of civility' (Reiner, 1992: 435), successfully role modelling the ideals of investigation, fighting crime and keeping peace. Policing in the U.K., going by various names and statutes, is one of the oldest professions, dating back to 1285. The Metropolitan Police was established in 1829, making it the first full-time formal organisation for policing in London. It was this establishment of the Metropolitan Police by Sir Robert Peel which marks the introduction of 'modern' policing in the Western World.

The training and education of police officers in England and Wales has been described as fragmented and complicated (Bolton, 2005). As already indicated, space does not allow the tracing of the history of policing and police education here prior to the era of the current professionalisation agenda. In order to appropriately deal with contemporary challenges, and following the cumulative evidence and recommendations that achievement of recognised qualifications be a requirement for recruitment into policing (see Flanagan, 2008), a watershed review by Neyroud (2011) led to the establishment of a new professional qualification framework for policing (Brown *et al*., 2018; Hunter *et al*., 2019). This new educational focus of police training aligns with the need for policing to provide a more effective and knowledge-based response to contemporary issues (Hallenberg *et al*., 2017). Holdaway (2017) argues that the professionalisation agenda of policing mirrors contemporary ambitions of social and political importance that seek to enhance public confidence in the police and tackle corruption. The rhetoric of professionalisation in policing highlights how rigorous education is a core characteristic of a profession, and is necessary for work that requires significant responsibility, high levels of complexity and guarantees competence (Hallenberg *et al*., 2017). As such, the professionalisation agenda of policing in England and Wales has been a driving force for the overhaul of policing educational requirements and, most notably, a replacement of vocational training programmes with higher-level degree offerings.

2.9 HOW POLICE EDUCATION IS ORGANISED IN ENGLAND AND WALES

Substantial transformations in the educational requirements for professional police officers in England and Wales officially came into effect from the start of the 2020–21 U.K. academic year. All new entrants into the policing profession must gain acceptance into the police force through one of three available professional routes, two of which are for university graduates (Brown, 2018; CoP, 2016). The university entrance routes are either through the completion of an undergraduate pre-join professional policing degree, or a two-year graduate conversion programme for candidates whose undergraduate degree was not in professional policing (Ramshaw *et al*., 2018). The third entrance route is through a Police Constable Degree Apprenticeship (PCDA), which is run collaboratively between specific police forces and academic institutions (see further in Maile, 2021).[11] The standardised national framework embedded within the Police Education Qualification Framework (PEQF) outlines the minimum qualification level acceptable for different rank and level of practice, for both officers and staff within the police force (CoP, 2018; Ramshaw *et al*., 2018).

These changes fundamentally stem from two sources, the foundation of the College of Policing (CoP) in 2013, the professional body for England and Wales responsible for policing standards, and a mandate given by the Coalition Government to the CoP for the radical transformation of how police education, training and development is organised in England and Wales (Hough and Stanko, 2019; Wood, 2018). This transformation of policing in England and Wales aligns with developments in other countries, such as Australia and the U.S.A. (Rogers and Frevel, 2018).

[10] https://www.jubileecentre.ac.uk/policing

[11] It is worth noting that there are other additional non-standard routes into the police, such as the direct entry schemes at inspector and superintendent level. However, these may not currently be open, nor under the jurisdiction of the PEQF.

Since receiving the mandate, the professionalisation agenda of policing in England and Wales has been driven forwards through implementation of the PEQF by the CoP (Williams, Norman and Rowe, 2019). The PEQF was produced in 2016, and while it accounts for the wide-ranging educational needs across the service, a key element is the requirement to have a degree level qualification prior to joining the police or after initial training (Hough and Stanko, 2019). This requirement means that new recruits without a degree can join via the PCDA programme and be awarded a Level 6 entry point qualification after three years, while those who already have a degree can join via one of the other entry routes.

The proposed benefits of police professionalisation appear to be numerous and of both intrinsic and extrinsic value. Organisational culture within the police force is a topic that has received much negative press attention, and academic research in this area foregrounds the negative influence that such culture has on the individuals within the force and how they fulfil their occupational duties/roles (Constable and Smith, 2015). Orchestrating cultural change and the eradication of improper practices appears necessary, with enhanced ethical awareness and greater respect for adherence to rules and regulations recommended as tools to remedy inefficient and corrupt practices. Education, it is suggested, may play an important role in mitigating some of these negative influences, particularly the widespread concern regarding policing's discretionary nature (Heslop, 2011).

2.10 THE ROLE OF REFLECTION AND PROFESSIONAL ETHICS IN POLICE EDUCATION IN ENGLAND AND WALES

The National Police Curriculum (NPC) is set out by the CoP for the three new entrance routes in order to become a police constable, and is briefly outlined in the PEQF (CoP, 2020). Through collaboration and consultation exercises, police forces and accredited universities are required to develop their degree programme and modules in accordance with the NPC requirements for the pre-join degree, PCDA and DHEP (Shohel *et al*., 2020). The NPC and PEQF were designed to enhance police officers' adaptability throughout their service, and thus sought to develop individuals' skills in critical thinking and analysis, problem solving, reflection, implementation of evidence-based practice, and independent decision-making (CoP, 2020).

The PEQF emphasises the importance of policing as an informed and learned profession. One avenue in which to achieve this is through the inclusion of conscious critical reflection, which is essential for police officers to respond to and better understand the contextual nuances of their local environment and community needs. The curriculum also emphasises the *Code of Ethics* and the importance of diversity and inclusion. Other topics, aimed to equip officers with the ability to tackle the challenges of contemporary policing, include criminology, crime-prevention, counter-terrorism, vulnerability and digital policing. Practical support and development is provided to promote leadership potential among new recruits and support the wellbeing and resilience of newly recruited police constables (CoP, 2020).

While there is a standardised curriculum, there are no standardised learning materials, and the modules that the universities develop may have different names and formats. Rather, the overall programme offering and modules must fulfil the requirements outlined by the NPC (Shohel *et al*., 2020). Williams, Norman and Rowe argued that there is 'a risk of limiting opportunities provided by the PEQF to deliver a real change to current police training unless the curriculum includes wider forms of knowledge, from the historical research on policing to the evaluative research tantamount to the 'what works' agenda' (Williams, Norman and Rowe, 2019: 260).

Within the PEQF (CoP, 2020), apart from the explicit indication that the *Code of Ethics* for policing is a core to the curriculum for all three entrance routes, there is no mention of the role that general professional ethics or virtue ethics, in particular, plays in the curriculum, and no references are made to *phronesis* (practical wisdom). Other elements in which ethics and virtue ethics feature in the CoP have to do with the National Decision Model (NDM) and Competency Values Framework (CVF). While these are not mentioned explicitly in the PEQF, there is little doubt that they would ideally be an important feature in each of the three entrance routes.

2.11 OVERALL EVALUATIVE GOALS

The specific research questions animating this research were set out in Section 1 and will be expanded upon in Section 3. However, in addition to those specific questions, other more general evaluative goals have motivated the present research, like previous work on professional ethics within the Jubilee Centre (Arthur *et al*., 2021).

> 'I WANT TO BE ABLE TO HELP AND SUPPORT INDIVIDUALS WITHIN MY COMMUNITY.'
>
> **First Year Student, Survey Respondent**

Firstly, the Jubilee Centre is interested in the adequacy of a virtue ethical framework to make sense of professional life. What are its advantages over deontological and consequentialist frameworks, and to what extent do professionals already draw upon virtue ethical considerations and reasoning strategies? Secondly, the Jubilee Centre is interested in comparisons and contrasts between different professions. To what extent is police work similar to the work of the army, for example, and to what extent is it more like teaching or medicine? An empirical investigation into moral self-concepts and characterological and work-related issues among police officers can help us answer those questions. Thirdly, the Jubilee Centre is focussed on the education of good character. In the case of adults (including aspiring and existing professionals) such education is primarily geared towards the development of *phronesis* or practical wisdom. The second part of the present project, beginning in the autumn of 2021, intends to include the creation of teaching resources to further develop *phronesis* among police officers and other professionals. How might the findings of the present project facilitate the development of such educational resources?

Not all these general questions can be answered within the confines of the present research. However, it is hoped that subsequent sections will offer various relevant pointers and suggestions. Morrell and Bradford correctly note that good policing 'is not so much an outcome as it an ongoing activity' (2019: 24). In that sense it is similar to flourishing (*eudaimonia*), which Aristotelian virtue ethicists define as an activity or a practice rather than a state that an agent can actualise once and for all. The most general evaluative goal of the present project is to illuminate the nature of good policing as an ongoing moral practice.

3 Methods

The present research utilised a mixed-method approach to explore the role of character and virtues in the professional practice and education of policing in England and Wales. The design of the project allowed for a comparison of cohorts at three career stages: (i) first year university students and Police Constable Degree Apprentices (PCDAs), (ii) second year students and PCDAs through to master's students (including the Degree Holder Entry Programme, DHEP), and (iii) experienced police officers. This section explains the rationale, design and methods utilised in the project.

3.1 RATIONALE

The cross-sectional design of the study enabled the research team to capture the views of pre- and in-service police officers at different stages of their careers, supporting the goal of understanding the role and centrality of character and virtues. The project also sought to utilise a mixed-method approach in order to capture the intricacies of the role and the individual's perceptions and moral reasoning strategies, moving beyond the limitations of mere self-reports (Arthur *et al*., 2014; Wright, Warren and Snow, 2021). The research included:

- A literature review of the existent policing literature, both U.K. and international, including documentation from the College of Policing;
- An online survey that included co-designed ethical dilemmas, as well as ranking of the VIA character strengths and some workplace and demographic questions;
- Semi-structured interviews undertaken with participants across all three cohorts;
- A comparison with previous Jubilee Centre research on 'virtues in the professions'.

Details pertaining to the survey and interview instruments, participants, methods of analysis and the ethical considerations and limitations of the study are reported below.

3.2 THE SURVEY

Section 1 of this report detailed the key questions the research sought to answer, which informed the design of the survey. The survey[12] consisted of the following five sections:

1. **Six ethical dilemmas.** These dilemmas were designed collaboratively with the project's expert panel, the members of which have vast and varied experience in both academic and practical policing. Each dilemma was reviewed by the expert panel and project team, as well as the wider Jubilee Centre research team. All of the dilemmas represented realistic scenarios of ethical dilemmas in policing, with one of the dilemmas being based loosely on a well-known, real-life case. Each dilemma presented a narrative explaining the scenario and offered two alternative options of responding to the situation. Participants were asked to choose which course of action they would take, and were then presented with a list of six possible justifications for taking that course of action. The two available courses of action were chosen such that both would be amenable to a possible moral justification. In other words, the aim was not to test the participants' general allegiance to a moral outlook but rather their specific moral reasoning strategies. Participants were then asked to rank the top three justifications that most closely aligned with their reasoning for the selected response. The use of hypothetical ethical dilemmas to indicate moral awareness stems from a substantial, neo-Kohlbergian tradition (Rest *et al*., 1999). While it is generally agreed that moral dilemmas go some way beyond mere self-reports in gauging potential moral performance, their use has been subjected to criticism (Wright *et al*., 2021). Some theorists maintain that ethical dilemmas can at best measure detached moral reasoning instead of overall moral functioning, including actual moral behaviour. Other, more optimistic, theorists maintain that such tools are capable of tapping into implicit 'moral schemas', and can therefore measure more than moral reasoning skills and processes (Kristjánsson, 2015a, chap. 3). Owing to the multi-faceted research design, where dilemmas only form one part of the whole, the close involvement of the experienced expert panel and the fairly large sample size, the research team remain confident that the limitations of dilemma research will have been significantly reduced.
2. **Self-identification of personal character strengths.** Participants were provided with the list of 24 character strengths identified in the Values in Action Inventory of Strengths (VIA-IS). From the list of 24 character strengths, participants were asked to select and rank the top six strengths that they felt best described themselves. The use of the VIA-IS stem from a survey designed by Peterson and Seligman (2004) to measure 'character strengths' – the 'psychological ingredients, processes or mechanisms, that define the virtues' (p. 13). The character strengths of the VIA reflect components of multiple and diverse religious and philosophical traditions, and are considered to be universally identified across cultures, contexts and time (McGrath, 2015).
3. **Identification of the character strengths that best described the 'ideal' police officer.** The list of 24 character strengths from the VIA-IS was again presented to the participants. For this section of the survey, participants were asked to select and rank the top six strengths that they felt best represented the ideal police professional.

[12] A copy of the survey can be found at www.jubileecentre.ac.uk/policing

4. **Participants' views about their workplace environments.** This section of the survey asked participants questions pertaining to psycho-moral issues in their workplace environments, and questions relating to conditions at work, adapted from a pan-European workplace survey (Eurofound, 2012). Participants were also asked to describe their reason for pursuing a career in policing.
5. **Demographic information.** The final section of the survey included questions related to the participants' demographic information.

3.3 SEMI-STRUCTURED INTERVIEWS

Participants were asked via the survey to participate in a follow-up interview. Those who responded positively were then contacted by a member of the research team to finalise the arrangements for the interview. All interviews (n=58) took place via online video conferencing, including Zoom and Teams. Table 1 provides details on the number of survey respondents and interviews for each cohort, including a sample of eight interviews with educators (university lecturers) of the pre-join professional policing degree. The interviews took place between February and May 2021.

An interview schedule was devised by the research team in order to tap into the main research questions, based largely on previous research into professional virtue by the Jubilee Centre and issues that stood out from the current policing literature, and was adapted to suit the particular career stage for each of the three cohorts.

Table 1: Total Number of Participants by Cohort

Career Stage	Completed Survey Responses (100% completed)		Interviews
	Number	Overall Percentage	Number
Cohort 1	110	19.2%	10
Cohort 2	126	22.1%	10
Cohort 3	335	58.7%	30
Policing Educators	n/a	n/a	8
Total	571	100.0%	58

Cohort 1: Comprised of first year pre-join university students and PCDAs.

Cohort 2: Comprised of second and third year pre-join and Masters students, PCDAs and DHEP students.

Cohort 3: Comprised of police officers.

Policing Educators: Educators were interviewed from seven different institutions offering pre-join policing degrees.

The interviews included questions based on the following themes:

- Participants' reason for pursuing a career in policing and the process they went/were going through in order to become a police officer;
- The characteristics and qualities they aspire to show in their work;
- The role of ethics in the policing profession and their familiarity with, and use of, the police *Code of Ethics*;
- Organisational culture and workplace factors that might support or prevent virtuous policing practice;
- Their personal thoughts about the professionalisation of policing and the recent graduate entrance requirements.

The interviews with policing educators required a different interview schedule, which focussed on questions around the following themes:

- How participants came to be involved in policing education;
- Their personal thoughts on the professionalisation of policing;
- How their curriculum was designed and what they chose to prioritise in their teaching;
- The place of ethics in their curriculum, including the police *Code of Ethics*;
- What they thought the most valuable aspects of higher education were and how this would be of benefit for the future of policing.

3.4 PARTICIPANTS

To ensure good geographical and contextual representation, the survey was widely distributed throughout police forces across England and Wales, including both rural and urban localities. The endeavour to reach as wide a policing audience as possible was achieved through the helpful collaboration of various forces, and particularly through distribution of the survey to the Ethics Lead at each of the 43 forces across the four national regions, who were asked to share this within the force to students and police officers. The project team originally aimed for a minimum of 100 survey responses from each of the three cohorts. That aim was achieved without much difficulty and, indeed, exceeded substantially in the case of experienced police officers.

Student participants were drawn from universities across England and Wales, including: Anglia Ruskin, Birmingham City, Cardiff Metropolitan, Chester, Cumbria, Derby, Gloucestershire, South Wales, Staffordshire, West England, Wolverhampton, and Wrexham Glyndŵr. A description and the link to the survey was posted on student communication platforms of the respective universities, and students were encouraged to complete the survey by their course and module leads. For PCDA and DHEP students, the survey link and project description were circulated by their respective police forces. The notably smaller student samples (cohorts 1 and 2) reflect the fact that the accredited pre-join police degrees and PCDAs remain relatively new, with most universities having small numbers of students enrolled on the programmes.

3.5 DATA ANALYSIS

3.5.1 Survey

Depending on the career stage of the participants, the survey consisted of either four or five sections (with only cohort 3 responding to the fourth section of the survey regarding workplace environments). The survey data were cleaned, with only complete responses included for analysis, and then transferred to SPSS. When character strengths were ranked, a score was given to each virtue selected depending on its order, so the first selection had a score of 6, the second selection a score of 5, and so on, until the last selection was given a score of 1. Then, a total score was calculated. Finally, a percentage was calculated for each virtue as a proportion of the previously summed overall score. So, higher scores are a reflection of higher rankings. The analyses also included descriptive analysis and cross-tabulations.

3.5.2 Semi-Structured Interviews

The semi-structured interviews were transcribed and then analysed by the research team using a thematic analysis approach. The transcripts were analysed ideographically (as a stand-alone narrative), and codes were generated inductively. The interviews were then compared and contrasted as a group, and developed into broader themes. The process of coding each interview and generating themes across the interviews was performed with the use of NVIVO software. For reasons of space, findings from the interview data are presented in Section 4 only insofar as they illustrate quantitative findings. A full qualitative analysis of the data awaits another outlet. Moreover, material from the interviews with the eight educators will not be produced until Section 5.

3.5.3 Comparative Analyses

Police officers' professional purpose was compared against five different professions (doctors, lawyers, teachers, nurses, and business professionals) using six positively worded items, adapted from the Europe-wide workplace survey. For the comparison, the mean scores of the six items were added, standardised and then compared by profession type.

3.6 ETHICAL CONSIDERATIONS, AND SOME LIMITATIONS

Full ethical approval for the project was granted by the University of Birmingham's Ethical Approval Committee, with updates and notes to file being approved and amendments made as the design of the project progressed. Individuals were asked to opt into the study, and informed consent was asked of each respondent before the survey could be completed and before the commencement of each interview. Any potential identification of participants has been avoided through the anonymisation of interview transcripts and survey responses. Each participant was sent a copy of their interview transcript, and asked to comment on or amend it within two weeks, before it was analysed. Survey respondents were fully informed of the purpose and scope of the research, and were able to withdraw their involvement by discontinuing completion of the survey. Interview participants were able to withdraw from the study within four weeks from the date of their interview.

It is important to acknowledge some limitations of this study:

- Sampling of participants was reliant on the willingness of individuals to participate, the use of gatekeepers (in the form of module leads, programme directors, leads for ethics and compliance in regional police forces), and the voluntary nature of participation. Due to the self-selection nature of participating in this study, it is also possible that participants would be particularly interested in the subject. Self-selection bias cannot be avoided in a study like this.
- The ongoing challenges regarding online teaching provision for university students during the U.K. government's response to the COVID-19 pandemic limited the capacity and/or willingness of universities to support the project by distributing the survey link to students.
- As geographically representative as the research sought to be, it is noticeable that no officers from the Metropolitan Police (Met) participated in the interviews. The survey and interviews were conducted at the same time as a number of high-profile stories were in the news which drew policing ethics into question (as detailed in Section 2). This may have increased (personal and institutional) reluctance to participate.
- Due to the self-report nature of large parts of the research, it is possible that responses may be subject to the inherent problem of (i) social-desirability bias, whereby participants respond in a way they believe will result in themselves being viewed favourably; (ii) self-confirmation bias, whereby participants respond in ways that uphold their prior beliefs and discard anything that contradicts those beliefs; and (iii) self-deception bias, whereby the way one sees oneself is different to how that individual is in practice.

> 'I WANTED TO CATCH ROBBERS AND BADDIES, BECAUSE IT WAS EXCITING AND IT FELT LIKE A GOOD THING TO DO.'
>
> **Male Retired Police Officer, A1**

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MP
POLICE

4 Findings

The project sought to answer the research questions that are listed in Section 1. This section reports on some of the main findings in relation to those research questions.

4.1 REPORTED PERSONAL AND IDEAL CHARACTER STRENGTHS

Findings from the survey that relate to self-ascribed personal character strengths, as well as those considered to be held by the ideal police officer, are presented in this first sub-section. In the survey, respondents were asked to identify and rank the top six character strengths that most accurately describe the type of person they are, from the list of 24 VIA-IS character strengths (Peterson and Seligman, 2004). Respondents were then presented with the same list of 24 character strengths, and this time they were asked to identify and rank the six character strengths they felt most accurately represented the 'ideal' police officer. The findings are discussed below, and some are elaborated with quotes from the semi-structured interviews.

4.1.1 Personal Character Strengths

The three cohorts of pre- and in-service police officers displayed strong cohesion overall with regards to their self-ascribed character strengths. There were five character strengths that predominated across the three cohorts: honesty, fairness, teamwork, kindness and leadership. Of these top five strengths, two were held in particularly high regard by police officers: honesty (20%) and fairness (18%). Teamwork was more highly self-ascribed by the first two cohorts (i.e. students and apprentices between first year and master's level) than by the cohort of police officers. Six strengths across the three cohorts were the least self-ascribed: appreciation of beauty, hope, love, prudence, spirituality and zest. These findings are illustrated in Table 2, with the most frequently self-ascribed personal strengths in light yellow and the least frequently self-ascribed personal strengths in dark yellow.

However, some of the character strengths that feature in Table 2 were not mentioned during the semi-structured interviews across the three cohorts. During the interviews, participants were asked: 'What do you think your most important character strengths are?' and 'How do you think those character strengths influence your work?'. While many of the interviews emphasised the importance of honesty, kindness and fairness, there were other character strengths that participants considered to be important. These included humour, understanding, adaptability, patience and empathy. However, there was also mention of traits that are better described as skills, including an ability to adapt one's approach to the situation at hand; being able to de-escalate a situation so as to prevent aggressive or counter-productive interactions; and one that was frequently referenced: the need for good communication skills. A prominent theme that emerged from interviews with students was the desire to build their confidence as they prepare for their future roles as police officers. This is illustrated by the following quotes:

I would say confidence, to be honest. I think the last six months have given me a lot more confidence… – Male Third Year Student, A11

You have to be confident as well, because you're going to be facing criminals, like I could be arresting someone six foot, I'm five foot six, they're going to tower over me. So, I've got to be like, 'You're not legging it, I'm putting you in handcuffs, don't even try.' – Female First Year Student, A20

Table 2: Respondents' Most Frequently and Least Frequently Self-Ascribed Personal Character Strengths

Most and least reported personal character strengths	Cohort 1 (%)	Cohort 2 (%)	Cohort 3 (%)
Honesty	13.0%	16.0%	20.0%
Fairness	14.0%	13.0%	18.0%
Teamwork	12.0%	11.0%	7.0%
Kindness	9.0%	10.0%	7.0%
Leadership	7.0%	7.0%	7.0%
Appreciation of beauty	0.3%	0.4%	0.1%
Hope	0.5%	1.5%	0.7%
Love	0.4%	1.2%	1.7%
Prudence[13]	0.3%	0.3%	0.4%
Spirituality	0.1%	0.1%	0.3%
Zest	0.3%	0.4%	0.3%

Most self-ascribed character strengths Least self-ascribed character strengths

> 'THAT CONSTANT NEED TO CHECK, AM I DOING THE RIGHT THING? AM I REALLY ACTING HONESTLY?'
>
> Female Detective Constable, A7

[13] 'Prudence' is not a word that appears in modern vernacular particularly frequently, and its perceived 'old-fashioned' connotations might mean that it was misunderstood in this research by respondents. It is important to note that definitions of the character strengths were not provided; thus it is unlikely that the theoretical association between wisdom and prudence (assumed by academics) would have been known or assumed by respondents.

4.1.2 Character Strengths of the 'Ideal' Police Officer

As illustrated in Table 3, there was again a significant level of agreement across the three cohorts regarding the character strengths that the 'ideal' police officer is considered to possess. The most frequently selected character strengths across the three cohorts were: honesty, fairness, teamwork and bravery, followed by judgement and leadership (shown in light yellow). Of these most frequently selected character strengths, honesty, fairness and teamwork were the top three character strengths for both the 'ideal' police officer, as well as for the respondents' self-ascribed character strengths. The congruency between these findings indicates that many of the respondents who are either pre- or in-service police officers take themselves to possess many of the character strengths that they would deem to be held by the 'ideal' police officer. As with the personal character strengths, the top two 'ideal' character strengths reported by police officers, honesty (23%) and fairness (18%), evidenced a significantly higher frequency of selection. Leadership also featured among the top five self-ascribed personal character strengths; however, bravery and judgement did not score as highly for self-ascribed character strengths as they did when respondents were considering the character strengths of the 'ideal' police officer. The four least-selected character strengths for the 'ideal' police officer were: prudence, love, spirituality and zest.

Teamwork and leadership were more frequently selected among the students (cohorts 1 and 2) than they were by police officers. These findings reveal that differences in the selection of character strengths for the 'ideal' police officer may be based on differing levels of experience in the field. However, teamwork and leadership were both important features in the interviews with pre- and in-service officers, and were especially mentioned by police officers with supervisory responsibilities (e.g. Police Sergeants), as can be seen in the following quotations:

> *You've got to have teamwork, that's probably one of the top, definitely. Because you are going to be working as a team, you've got to be able to work with each other, not just on your own.* – Male First Year Student, A19

> *Being an efficient sergeant is an incredibly tricky thing to do well, I think. And if you want to get it right, you have to have a really good team who are willing to help you learn as you go along. Because we don't all come with natural leadership skills, do we?* – Female Police Sergeant, A24

> *And there is a strong sort of sense of team within the force. A bit like being in the forces, you know, when you're in battle and you need the help of people around you. It's the same in policing. You can't do it on your own, you need the help of people around you.* – Male Detective Inspector, A6

Table 3: Character Strengths of the 'Ideal' Police Officer that Were Most and Least Frequently Selected by Participants

Most and least reported 'ideal' police officer character strengths	Cohort 1 (%)	Cohort 2 (%)	Cohort 3 (%)
Honesty	16.0%	18.0%	23.0%
Fairness	15.0%	18.0%	18.0%
Teamwork	13.0%	12.0%	10.0%
Bravery	10.0%	10.0%	9.0%
Leadership	9.0%	9.0%	6.0%
Judgement	7.0%	7.0%	7.0%
Prudence[14]	0.0%	0.4%	0.3%
Love	0.0%	0.2%	0.1%
Spirituality	0.2%	0.0%	0.0%
Zest	0.0%	0.2%	0.0%

Most frequently selected 'ideal' police officer character strengths

Least frequently selected 'ideal' police officer character strengths

[14] See Table 2.

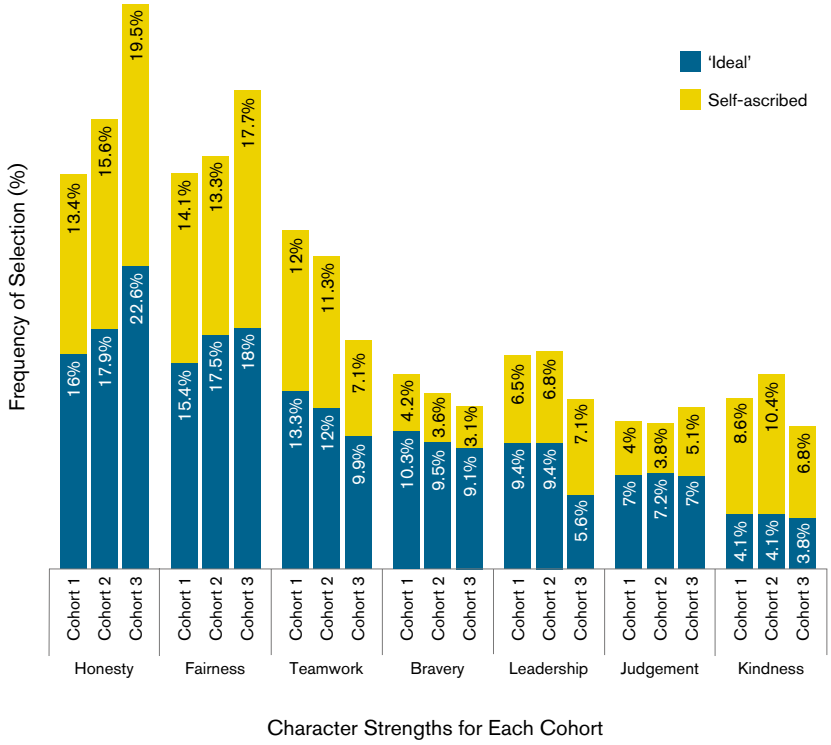
4.1.3 Comparison between Self-Ascribed Character Strengths and the 'Ideal' Police Officer

As already alluded to, a comparison of the 'ideal' and self-ascribed personal character strengths reveals areas of strong congruency as well as some notable differences. These comparisons are illustrated in Chart 1.

Chart 1 reveals a high level of congruency with the character strengths of honesty (-2.6%), fairness (-1.3%) and teamwork (-1.3%), when comparing the self-ascribed character strengths to the 'ideal' police officer for cohort 1. Bravery, leadership and judgement, on the other hand, are notably different when comparing the first cohort's self-ascribed and 'ideal' character strengths. The difference between the 'ideal' and the self-ascribed for bravery (-6.1%), leadership (-3.0%) and judgement (-3.0%) indicate a significant gap. These differences align well with the qualitative findings, where participants in cohort 1 indicated that they would like to become more confident in their ability to police as they progress through their training and education programmes. It is quite possible that increased confidence might bolster one's ability to exercise judgement, leadership and bravery. Lastly, an interesting finding was that kindness, although scoring fairly low for the 'ideal' police officer, scored notably higher for cohort 1 (+4.5%) and 2s (+6.3%) self-ascribed character strengths. This finding is interesting when considered alongside the interview data, which highlighted the importance of empathy and understanding when dealing with both victims and criminals, as well as the nature of policing being about helping others and serving one's community, as illustrated by the following quotes:

> *I think the most important quality I've picked up through life that I think is absolutely paramount to have in every single profession is empathy. To go into a job without empathy, whether you work in a call centre, whether you're a police officer, or you're a nurse… To be completely stuck in your own head and not be able to empathise, sympathise, put yourself in their shoes, I think it's a real shame if you can't do that and I think it's a disservice almost…* – Female Second Year Student, A16

Chart 1: Comparison Between Self-Ascribed and 'Ideal' for All Three Cohorts



> *If you can say to somebody, actually I do know how it feels, it can be really useful. And even not saying it explicitly, but just having that implicit understanding, I think a lot of people can sense it in you, 'most coppers might be bastards, but this one is all right' type of thing.* – Female Detective Constable, A7

> *I've always had a strong sense of right and wrong and wanted to help people.* – Male Detective Sergeant, A8

In Chart 1, there is a clear congruency in the top three character strengths of the 'ideal' police officer, and an indication that respondents will strive to display these qualities in their work. There is also an indication that none of the three cohorts overall are able to uphold the level of bravery they believe the 'ideal' police officer ought to possess.

4.1.4 Comparison Between Self-Ascribed Character Strengths and the 'Ideal' Professional across Professions

Lastly, a comparison between the self-ascribed character strengths and those of the 'ideal' professional from findings across the 'virtues in the professions' research by the Jubilee Centre (Arthur *et al*., 2014; 2015a; 2015b; 2020; Kristjánsson *et al*., 2017a; 2017b) reveals that honesty and fairness feature in the top three personal character strengths across all the professions. Most notably in this comparison, policing is the only profession in which the top three personal character strengths correspond fully with the top three character strengths of the 'ideal' professional.

4.2 MOTIVATIONS FOR PURSUING A CAREER IN POLICING

4.2.1 Findings from the Survey and Interviews

The survey included an optional, open-ended question that asked respondents to describe their reasons for pursuing a career in policing. In total, 305 respondents across the three cohorts responded to this question. Qualitative analysis of this data revealed four major themes:

- A desire to help and serve;
- Be the change you want to see;
- The appeal of the unique nature of the role;
- Childhood ambition.

Table 4: Top Three Personal and 'Ideal' Character Strengths, Combining All Cohorts, Across Six Different Professions

	Policing	Nursing	Teaching	Medicine	Law	Business and Finance
Top 3 Personal character strengths	Honesty Fairness Teamwork	Kindness Honesty Fairness	Fairness Honesty Humour	Fairness Honesty Kindness	Fairness Honesty Humour	Honesty Fairness Teamwork
Top 3 'Ideal' character strengths	Honesty Fairness Teamwork	Kindness Honesty Teamwork	Fairness Humour Love of learning	Fairness Honesty Judgement	Judgement Honesty Perseverance	Leadership Judgement Teamwork

4.2.1.1 A Desire to Help and Serve

The decision to pursue a career in policing was, for more than half of the respondents (N=174), driven by a desire to help and serve in their communities in order to make a positive impact. This sentiment was also captured by comments that included being able to 'serve', 'give back', 'do good' and 'make a difference' within the community. The desire to help and serve the community was also identified by participants in interviews. The following quotes have been selected to illustrate this theme:

> *I enjoy helping people and have always wanted to be a police officer since my earliest memories.* – First Year Student, Survey Respondent

> *It has always been a dream of mine. Helping people and creating safe communities is very important to me.* – Third Year Student, Survey Respondent

> *To serve and give back to the public.* – Senior Police Officer, Survey Respondent

> *Perform a public service. Help vulnerable people.* – Second Year PCDA, Survey Respondent

4.2.1.2 Be the Change You Want to See

Among the responses to this question, there were a small number (N=9) who indicated that they had either personally experienced negative interactions with, or had previously held negative perceptions of, the police. These respondents stated that they wanted to display behaviours aligned with kindness and care, and contribute to changing the image of policing within their communities. This theme also featured in interviews, as seen in the following quotes:

> *My family didn't have the best of experiences with the police in my local area growing up and I was brought up believing that you have to be the change you want to see in the world and, having been on the receiving end of poor policing, I believe that I can provide that better service to communities.* – DHEP, Survey Respondent

> *As a young boy I wanted to join the police, however as I got older I had several bad encounters with police officers, which made me dislike the police for some time. As I got a little older I decided that I wanted to be a police officer so that I could treat people how I would like to have been treated and to challenge the police to be better and provide better service.* – Police Constable, Survey Respondent

4.2.1.3 The Appeal of the Unique Nature of the Role

There was much about the unique nature of the role of a police officer that appealed to respondents in their pursuit of a policing career (N=67). Included in this theme were both the notion of 'delivering justice' and 'locking up criminals', as well as the physicality, diversity of roles and problem-solving nature of the profession. Interview participants also referred to the exciting nature of the role, and how different roles within policing can be well paired with individuals' skills and interests. Alongside these characteristics of the profession, there was also recognition that it was a well-paid and stable career, a sentiment which was mentioned in both the survey responses and interviews. To avoid overlap with the first theme, on a desire to help and serve, the quotes singled out for consideration under this theme focussed more externally on the nature of the profession than inwardly on the participant's moral compass. The following quotes help to illustrate this theme:

> 'I THOUGHT IT WOULD BE SO GREAT IF I COULD SEE SOMEONE WHO LOOKED LIKE MYSELF IN THE POLICE, AND ALSO INITIATED CHANGE IN THAT WAY.'
>
> **Female First Year PCDA, A12**

> *Seemed to be a well-respected career with good pay and prospects, with a chance to do something 'real' as opposed to many other jobs which I considered inconsequential in real life.* – Neighbourhood Sergeant, Survey Respondent

> *I am a problem-solver and relish being challenged to find solutions. Every day is different, and I enjoy being outside within the community.* – Mental Health Triage Officer, Survey Respondent

> *I have a love for major crimes and seeing how they work. Unpicking them and then piecing them together like a puzzle fascinates me…* – First Year Student, Survey Respondent

Of those for whom the action and physicality of the role, and the ability to 'drive fast cars', most appealed, there was a sense that 'doing good' and 'serving' was secondary, and for some, not a feature at all. This came across quite strongly in some interviews:

> *I just thought it looked like an exciting job. Anytime I saw something on the news that involved the police, I thought, wow, that looks really interesting, I'd love to be involved in that. So, I suppose it was the attraction, I just like chasing people, driving fast cars, being involved in investigating crime, that kind of thing.* – Male Police Sergeant, S1

> 'THERE'S SO MUCH OPPORTUNITY [WITHIN THE POLICE] TO DIVERSIFY INTO WHAT SUITS YOU AS A PERSON.'
>
> **Female Police Sergeant, A24**

4.2.1.4 Childhood Ambition

Lastly, a small but consistent number of respondents (N=34) indicated that becoming a police officer was something that had appealed to them as a vocation since childhood. This notion, for many, stemmed from one of three sources; namely, (i) having a family member who had been a police officer, public- or civil servant, (ii) a calling for the vocation and admiration for the profession from an early age, and (iii) through watching numerous television shows that portrayed the police force positively. This theme is captured in the following quotes:

> *I first wanted to be a police officer when I was at secondary school. My brother is 10 years older than me; he joined the police when he was 18. So, I always wanted to join the police.* – Police Officer, A3

> *I have always wanted a career in policing and I believe that it is a career well suited to me.* – First Year Student, Survey Respondent

> *It has always been a dream of mine and I was a police cadet for a few years and found a massive passion for policing.* – Second Year Student, Survey Respondent

4.2.2 Summary of Motivations

The quotes presented above depict the motivations of many pre- and in-service police officers across all three cohorts for wanting to join the police service. The quotes show that there were often overlaps between themes, and many respondents identified with more than one of the themes as motivation for pursuing a career in policing. However, there were a small number of individuals whose responses did not align with any of the above themes (N=21); these individuals tended to indicate that they went into policing for mere instrumental reasons, because they 'needed a job' or 'wanted a career'. Regarding the four themes above, there was strong congruency between the responses in the survey and the answers provided in the interviews, across all three cohorts. The most notable differences between pre- and in-service police officers were associated with themes two and three. For theme two, many of the female in-service police officers reported that they had actively been involved in changing the image of policing from a male-dominated profession, to one that now reflects greater gender diversity, whereas for the pre-service police officers this motivation was centred much more on increasing racial diversity of officers and being more inclusive of younger officers. For theme three, in-service police officers were more likely to appreciate the diversity of roles available within the police force than junior and pre-service officers, and how they had been able to pursue avenues within their policing careers that aligned with their interests and skills.

4.3 THE USE OF MORAL REASONING STRATEGIES BY PRE- AND IN-SERVICE POLICE OFFICERS

The survey included six bespoke ethical dilemmas that were drawn from the experiences and knowledge of the expert panel. This section provides both an overall analysis of the dilemmas, as well as a detailed analysis of three particular dilemmas that evoked insightful responses, both in terms of the results of these dilemmas as well as the moral reasoning justification for the action responses presented to respondents.

4.3.1 Overall Results of the Six Ethical Dilemmas

The overall results for the six ethical dilemmas presented in Table 5 provide an overview of respondents' chosen action when presented with two opposing options for each dilemma.

These results indicated that there is a strong cohesion in the selection of response options, with the lowest overall cohesion being 61.4% of respondents selecting to 'have a private word and challenge what your colleague said' for the dilemma concerning racism at work. Differences between the three cohorts can also be seen, and this is especially noticeable when comparing cohort 3 to the first two cohorts

Table 5: General Overview of Respondents' Responses to the Ethical Dilemmas

Ethical Dilemmas (ED)	Response Options (RO)	Cohort 1 (Average %)	Cohort 2 (Average %)	Cohort 3 (Average %)	Overall (Average %)
ED1 A murder investigation	You consider it right to have violated the requirement.	20.0%	22.2%	14.9%	17.5%
	You consider it wrong to have violated the requirement.	80.0%	77.8%	85.1%	82.5%
ED2 A potential suicide	Leave the female in order to support your colleagues.	22.7%	22.2%	27.5%	25.5%
	Stay and support the female.	77.3%	77.8%	72.5%	74.5%
ED3 Racism at work	Have a private word and challenge what your colleague said.	60.9%	57.1%	62.7%	61.4%
	Speak to your supervisor.	39.1%	42.9%	37.3%	38.6%
ED4 Work and personal life conflict	Agree to attend for duty and miss the party.	86.4%	85.7%	80.6%	83.0%
	Refuse the request to return to duty.	13.6%	14.3%	19.4%	17.0%
ED5 Community 'Stop and Search'	Undertake the stop and search.	69.1%	69.0%	84.2%	78.2%
	Not undertake the stop and search.	30.9%	31.0%	15.8%	21.8%
ED6 Potential domestic violence	You oppose your colleague.	73.6%	78.6%	93.7%	86.1%
	You decide not to oppose your colleague.	26.4%	21.4%	6.3%	13.9%

across all of the ethical dilemmas, with the exception of the third ethical dilemma. For example, as seen in Table 5, for ethical dilemma 5, 69.1% of cohort 1 and 69% of cohort 2 selected the first response option, whereas 84.2% of cohort 3 chose to respond in this way. Likewise, for ethical dilemma 6, 73.6% and 78.6% of cohorts 1 and 2 chose response Option 1, whereas 93.7% of cohort 3 chose to respond in this way. This pattern of a relatively small difference between cohort 1 and 2 and a larger difference between these two cohorts and cohort 3 is seen across all ethical dilemmas, except for the third ethical dilemma, indicating a certain judgement gap between new and experienced professionals.

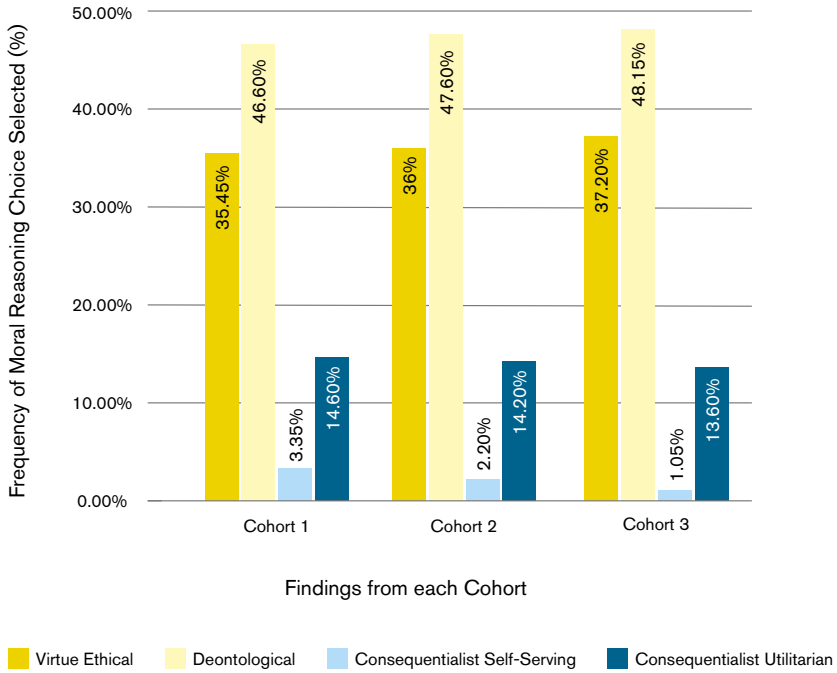
To recall, however, the main aim of the dilemmas was to identify the moral reasoning strategies favoured by respondents, rather than simply seeing which of the two options was more popular (as both options were constructed such as having some potential moral reasons to recommend them). As explained in Section 3, respondents were presented with six different moral reasoning justifications for each response option and were asked to select and rank the top three justifications that most closely resonated with their reasons for selecting that particular course of action. Of the six possible justifications, two represented virtue-ethical reasoning, two deontological (or rule-based) reasoning, and two consequentialist reasoning.

The two consequentialist justifications included one with a utilitarian focus (i.e. best outcome for the majority of people), and one with a self-serving focus (i.e. the primary benefit being to the individual). Chart 2 reveals the overall moral reasoning across the three cohorts, indicating which moral response was more frequently selected among respondents, and revealing that deontological responses dominated overall at 47.9%.

It is worth noting that a number of the interviewed police officers indicated that part of their role involved interpretation and enforcement of the rules designated by the government, and thus in many ways it is perhaps not surprising that the majority of response options would have been justified by reasons that supported adherence to rules and a sense of duty. However, deontological reasoning has dominated historically across various professions, and thus the legal enforcement role of police officers may not be the sole reason for this preference (see Arthur and Earl, 2020). The moral reasoning choices of each cohort reveals strong congruency, with the exception that consequentialist self-serving reasons appear to decrease with age and experience (see Chart 2).

Although it is difficult to compare these findings to those from the Jubilee Centre's research into other U.K. professions because of slightly different methods used, what stands out is that such preponderance of deontological reasoning strategies as witnessed here has only been seen in one other profession before, namely nursing (Kristjánsson *et al*., 2017b). However, in the 2017 research report, those findings were interpreted as being symptomatic of the disenfranchisement of the nursing profession in the U.K. and nurses' inability to actualise their own moral character in the workplace. In contrast, in professions such as medicine and teaching, virtue ethical strategies were preferred slightly more than deontological ones in similar work-related dilemmas (Arthur *et al*., 2015a; 2015b).

Chart 2: Moral Reasoning Across All Three Cohorts



An overview of the course of action that was most frequently selected as well as the moral reasoning for the selected actions across the three cohorts presents an overall indication of the dominance of deontological reasoning and particular action responses. However, it is insightful to explore two of the dilemmas in greater detail. They were chosen because they revealed the strongest preferences for virtue ethical and deontological strategies, respectively.[15]

4.3.2 A Virtue Ethical Response to Domestic Violence

One of the ethical dilemmas presented to respondents described a scenario that involved domestic violence, and was set out as follows:

'You and another officer are sent to a 999 call from a female caller, who states that her partner is acting aggressively. On arrival, it is apparent that the woman is uninjured, but the woman's partner has a black eye. The partner says that 'he deserved it' because he was acting like a fool. The Force policy is that 'positive action' must be taken in all domestic violence cases. Your colleague says to you that because there had been no prior calls, the victim did not want to press charges and the woman had been the complainant to 999, then this call is best resolved by giving an informal resolution. You express the alternative opinion as you consider that, strictly speaking, the woman should be arrested for assault. Your colleague is older and more experienced, and appears to dismiss your opinion. What would you do?'

[15] A full analysis of all six dilemmas is available at: www.jubileecentre.ac.uk/policing

Table 6: Moral Reasoning Response Justifications for Ethical Dilemma 6: Potential Domestic Violence

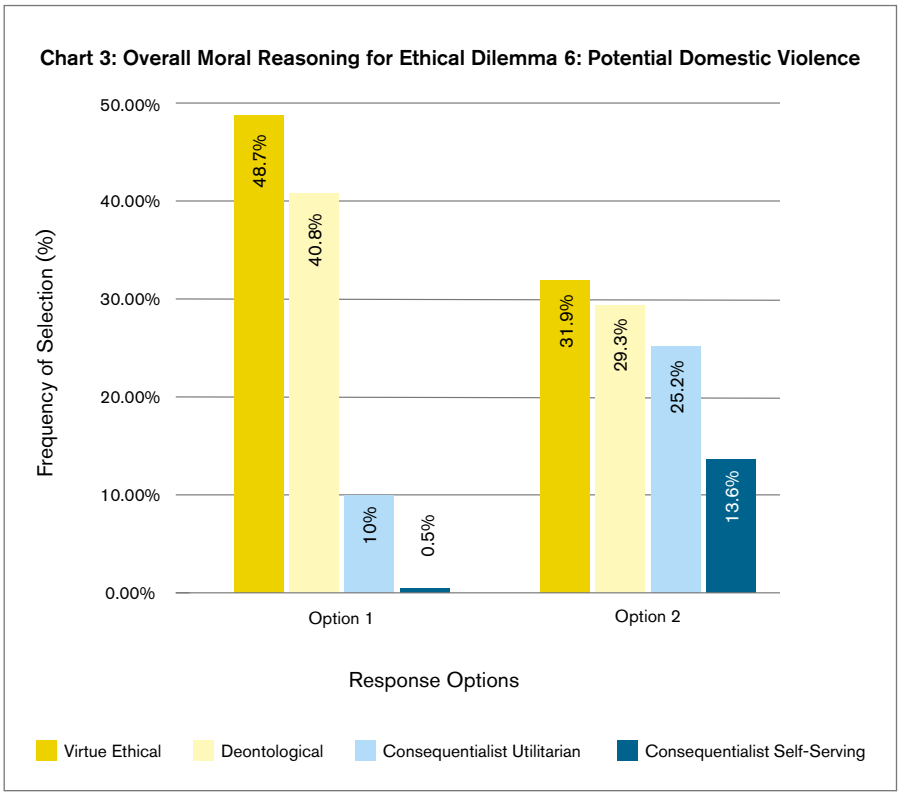
Response Justification	Option 1: You decide to oppose your colleague and insist on 'positive action' in terms of arrest.	Option 2: You decide not to oppose your colleague and agree on an informal resolution of the case.	Ethical Key
1	You believe it is right to follow the rules of positive action for the police.	You agree that rules must be followed, but this one about 'positive action' is a bit vague and open to interpretation.	Deontological
2	It is important to uphold justice and search for the truth in all situations and accepting an informal resolution would violate this.	You believe you are able to show equal empathy to both parties by not insisting on further action.	Virtue Ethical
3	You believe that you will be considered weak if you do not stand up to your colleague and insist on your own point of view on events.	Your colleague is more experienced in these matters than you are; and you do not want to disrespect them as it may make them resent you.	Consequentialist, Self-Serving
4	Walking away from the case would show lack of empathy and concern for the victim, as well as to other domestic abuse victims.	Police officers sometimes need to follow their own moral intuitions, based on their own values and experiences, rather than only adhering to codes of practice.	Virtue Ethical
5	It will benefit the whole community if they know that the police are consistent and principled in their actions.	It does not really benefit the parties involved, or their neighbourhood overall, to make an unnecessary arrest.	Consequentialist, Utilitarian
6	The *Code of Ethics* talks about respect and fairness – rules which are not upheld in this case by just walking away.	Not all rules are written down; some rules just develop as a result of standard practice, and this one about 'informal resolution' is one of them.	Deontological

Respondents were then asked to select one of the following options:

1. You decide to oppose your colleague and insist on 'positive action' in terms of arrest.
2. You decide not to oppose your colleague and agree on an informal resolution of the case.

Depending on the option selected by respondents, they were presented with six reasons to justify their selection for the chosen course of action, and were asked to rank their top three reasons in order of appropriateness. These options are presented in Table 6 along with the code for moral reasoning (which, importantly, was not displayed in the survey and has only been utilised for analysis purposes).

This dilemma presents both interesting findings in that it elicited the highest virtue ethical reasoning overall, especially for the first response option, and also because concerns regarding domestic violence have, according to news media, increased during the COVID-19 pandemic. As Table 5 illustrates, 93.7% of police officers selected the second response option, which was to oppose their colleague and insist on positive action, with only 6.3% of police officers choosing not to oppose their colleague. However, when participants referred to this dilemma in the interviews, there was a more nuanced understanding in terms of what 'informal resolution' could mean, and this was also facilitated by an understanding of the challenges and resourcing issues in the legal system. Police officers' awareness of their ability to use their personal judgement in finding an informal resolution for scenarios such as this one is illustrated by the following quote:



…to approach a criminal, a suspect, with a style that is specifically suited to them, that's the only way you're ever going to get cooperation, information, anything. This is with every profession as well; you can't approach every situation in the same way. You have to be able to assess a person and adapt the style. That's what I'd hoped to bring, being able to be quite adaptive and versatile based on the specific needs.
– Female Second Year Student, A16

The frequency of selection for virtue ethical, deontological, and consequentialist reasoning for each course of action is displayed in Chart 3. Option 1, which was selected by 86.1% of respondents across the three cohorts (see Table 5), elicited the highest virtue ethical moral reasoning. Option 2 on the other hand, while only selected by 15.9% of respondents overall, evoked a higher consequentialist moral reasoning.

Table 7: Moral Reasoning Response Justifications for Ethical Dilemma 1: A Murder Investigation

Response Justification	Option 1: You consider it right to have violated the requirement	Option 2: You consider it wrong to have violated the requirement	Ethical Key
1	You maintain that your duty to the victims and to the victims' families is stronger than any specific legal requirement.	No police officer is above the law.	Deontological
2	You believe that the role models you look up to within the police force would have done the same as you.	My decision went against my own sense of integrity and trustworthiness.	Virtue Ethical
3	You want to be known as a senior investigative officer who has a mind of your own.	Your colleague is more experienced in these matters than you are; and you do not want to disrespect them as it may make them resent you.	Consequentialist, Self-Serving
4	In a murder case, it is important that investigative officers are conscientious in following the evidence, wherever it leads them, rather than relying on rules.	I acted out of character in this case; I should have thought more about preserving my overall moral identity and the moral standards I usually hold myself to.	Virtue Ethical
5	Irrespective of rules and laws, your decision brought closure to the families of the victims, so had good overall consequences.	The murderer would probably have confessed to the other murders anyway, sooner or later. My decision was rash and will create negative and unintended consequences for the families of the victims.	Consequentialist, Utilitarian
6	You believe that there is support for your decision in the police *Code of Ethics*.	If there is an apparent conflict between professional or personal moral codes and the law of the land, the law must prevail.	Deontological

4.3.3 Deontology and the Law

Another ethical dilemma presented to respondents described a scenario that involved a murder investigation and the legal requirements of the Police and Criminal Evidence Act (PACE). The scenario was set out as follows:

'You are the senior investigating officer in a murder case and you strongly believe that the suspect you have in custody has committed more than one murder and that he knows where the other bodies are buried. You decide that your duty to the victims' families outweighs the legal requirements under the Police and Criminal Evidence Act (PACE) 1984 and tell your officers to take the suspect to the location where you think the suspect may have taken the victims. PACE would require you, however, to take the suspect to the police station to be interviewed. At the location, the suspect admits to you to committing the other murders, but you worry that the confession could later be ruled as inadmissible in court as it was not given under caution or in the presence of anyone else. You wonder, in retrospect, whether it was right to have violated the PACE requirement.'

Respondents were then asked to select one of the following options:

1. You consider it right to have violated the requirement.
2. You consider it wrong to have violated the requirement.

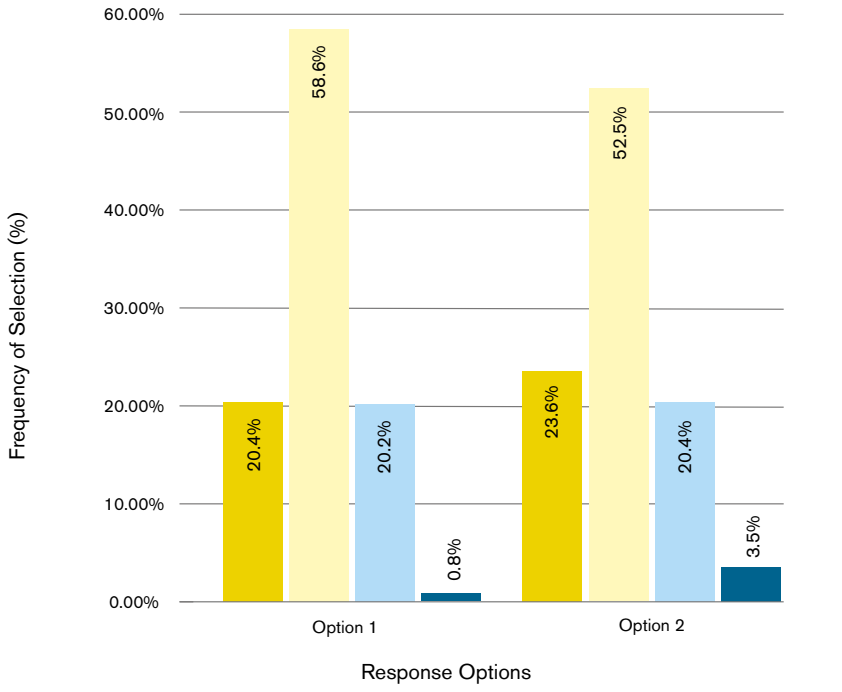
For each option, six reasons were provided, and these are illustrated in Table 7.

Of the police officer respondents, 85.1% (and an average of 82.5% across the three cohorts) selected the second response option, indicating that they considered it wrong to violate PACE, as illustrated in Table 5. This reveals that the police are strongly inclined to adhere to important legal requirements and policies for policing. For the second response option, 52.5% of respondents across the three cohorts selected a deontological moral reason as justification (see Chart 4). The deontological options included (i) 'No police officer is above the law', and (ii) 'the law prevails when there is a clash between professional/personal moral codes and the law', thus revealing that a majority of respondents identify with the need to follow the rules. However, comments from the interview participants indicated why this is not always the case, and that there are times that call for personal judgements to be made, especially when areas of the law are not simply black and white, as illustrated in the following quote:

> *Policing sometimes involves you having to take action because you're forced to. But actually as you grow into the job and as you gain experience, you realise that as much as you may have to take action, actually you don't necessarily have to arrest people. That may not be the best outcome. The law and policing, as it is, actually gives you the power to decide how you want to deal with it.* – Male Mental Health Triage Officer, A25

Of the 17.5% of respondents who selected Option 1 in response to this dilemma (see Table 5), over half of all respondents (58.6%) gave a deontological reason for doing so. The deontological justifications for Option 1, as seen in Table 7, referred to one's duty to the victim's family and the ethical code, and as such were not as bound to the law, but rather to a sense of duty and adherence to the policing *Code of Ethics*. For both Option 1 and 2, virtue ethical reasoning was slightly lower than the combined consequentialist reasoning (21% for Option 1 and 23.9% for Option 2). It is also worth noting that this dilemma was loosely based on a real case, which many of the interview participants recognised. The message sent from how the real-life case was dealt with was clear: legal acts and policies should always be adhered to. The police officer from the real-life case was dismissed from duty for violating the code, and it is possible that knowledge of this case and the outcome may have influenced the response option and reasons selected by respondents.

Chart 4: Overall Moral Reasoning for Ethical Dilemma 1: A Murder Investigation



4.4 CHARACTER AND VIRTUES IN THE WORKPLACE

Respondents in cohort 3 were presented with an additional section in the survey that included questions addressing their workplace environment. This section considers the influence that conditions in the workplace have on respondent's abilities to exercise the virtues at work.

In this section of the survey, respondents were asked to indicate to what extent the statements presented in Tables 8–12 applied to their experiences in the work environment. Police officers (N=335) responded to 14 self-report statements concerning their perceptions of the workplace and the impact it has on their conduct. Following an analysis conducted on previous research by Arthur and Earl (2020), 12 of the 14 items were grouped into two factors, 'professional purpose' and 'work-related constraints'.

> 'I'VE UNDERSTOOD THE IMPORTANCE OF PUBLIC SERVICE. THAT'S WHAT GETS ME OUT OF BED.'
>
> **Detective Superintendent, A2**

Participants were asked questions at interview intended to explore the influence of the workplace on virtuous practice, such as how their workplace has shaped their ability to live up to their ideal conception of a 'good' police officer, and whether there have been any barriers that have hampered their ability to live up to that ideal. The findings from the interviews indicated that there was a strong sense that team dynamics and leadership were influential in terms of experiencing a supportive workplace environment. Additionally, due to the various routes and opportunities within policing, there was a sense among respondents that one was able to find the right role and environment to suit the skills and qualities they were able to bring to the workplace. These findings are illustrated by the following quotes:

> *It has so many paths you can take and so many options.* – Female Police Sergeant, A3

> *Throughout my service I've done various roles. I've been a response officer. I've been a detective. I've worked on murder inquiries, I've been promoted to Sergeant, I'm qualified to inspector as a Sergeant. I'm currently working on an IT project…I've worked in neighbourhood policing and response work. I've had a good varied viewpoint of policing.* – Male Police Sergeant, A25

4.4.1 Professional Purpose

Six out of the 14 items were categorised as indicators of professional purpose. These items were taken from the statements as presented in Table 8. The findings from the survey indicate that respondents felt a strong sense of motivation towards their work as police officers, with 91% feeling 'mostly' or 'always' motivated to work to the best of their ability. This finding correlates with the original motivations that respondents provided in section 4.2.1 and suggests that experienced police officers are professionally driven and motivated in their roles. Regarding feeling supported in their workplace (when 'mostly' and 'always' responses are combined), respondents were less certain. Indeed, when compared to other professions, such as business and finance, these findings are relatively low; although not as low as previously found with doctors (see Arthur *et al*., 2015; Kristjánsson *et al*., 2017a). Most notably, findings indicate that respondents did not feel able to perform their work to their preferred standard due to resource or time limitations, with only 18.3% of respondents indicating that they 'mostly' or 'always' had sufficient time to perform their work to desired standards.

4.4.2 Work-Related Constraints

Six of the eight remaining items were labelled as 'work-related constraints': stress; unfair treatment; emotional inhibition at work; conflict of interest; lack of time; and inability to do the right thing. Respondents' perception of each item is presented in Table 9. When presented with the statement 'I experience stress' in the workplace, 10.4% of respondents indicated that this happens 'always', 22.9% indicated that it happens 'mostly', and more than half of respondents indicated that it happens 'sometimes' (57.8%).

In response to statements concerning emotional expression at work and feeling emotionally involved in their work, 25.5% of respondents indicated that they 'mostly' (20%) or 'always' (5.5%) had to hide their feelings. These findings indicate that feelings of emotional inhibition or repression were not experienced to the same extent as stress.

Responses to the statement 'My work involves tasks that are in conflict with my personal values' indicates that 32.7% of respondents perceived this 'sometimes' (30.6%) or 'mostly' (2.1%), but none 'always'. These overall findings are presented in Table 9, with more detailed breakdowns for each item in Table 10 and 11. The positive lesson from this finding is that the number of participants who have experienced frequent tensions between personal and professional values is lower than for other U.K. professions studied (Arthur *et al*., 2019); yet the number of 'sometimes' responses remains disconcerting, as conflict between personal and professional identities is known to be a common elicitor of burn-out.

Table 8: Items Regarding Professional Purpose in the Workplace

Statements	Combined Percentage for 'Mostly' and 'Always'
I am motivated to work to the best of my ability	91.0%
I am able to apply my own ideas in my work	57.7%
I have the feeling of doing useful work	77.6%
I am able to influence decisions that are important for my work	56.4%
I feel 'at home' in my workplace	67.5%
I'm emotionally involved in my work	54.6%

Table 9: Items Regarding Work-Related Constraints

Statements	Combined Percentage for 'Mostly' and 'Always'
I experience stress	33.3%
I am not treated fairly	13.7%
My work involves tasks that are in conflict with my personal values	2.1%
My work requires that I hide my feelings	25.5%
I do not have time to do my work to a standard I believe is right	18.3%
It is difficult to do the right thing at work	5.2%

Table 10: Police Officers' Experience of Stress in the Workplace

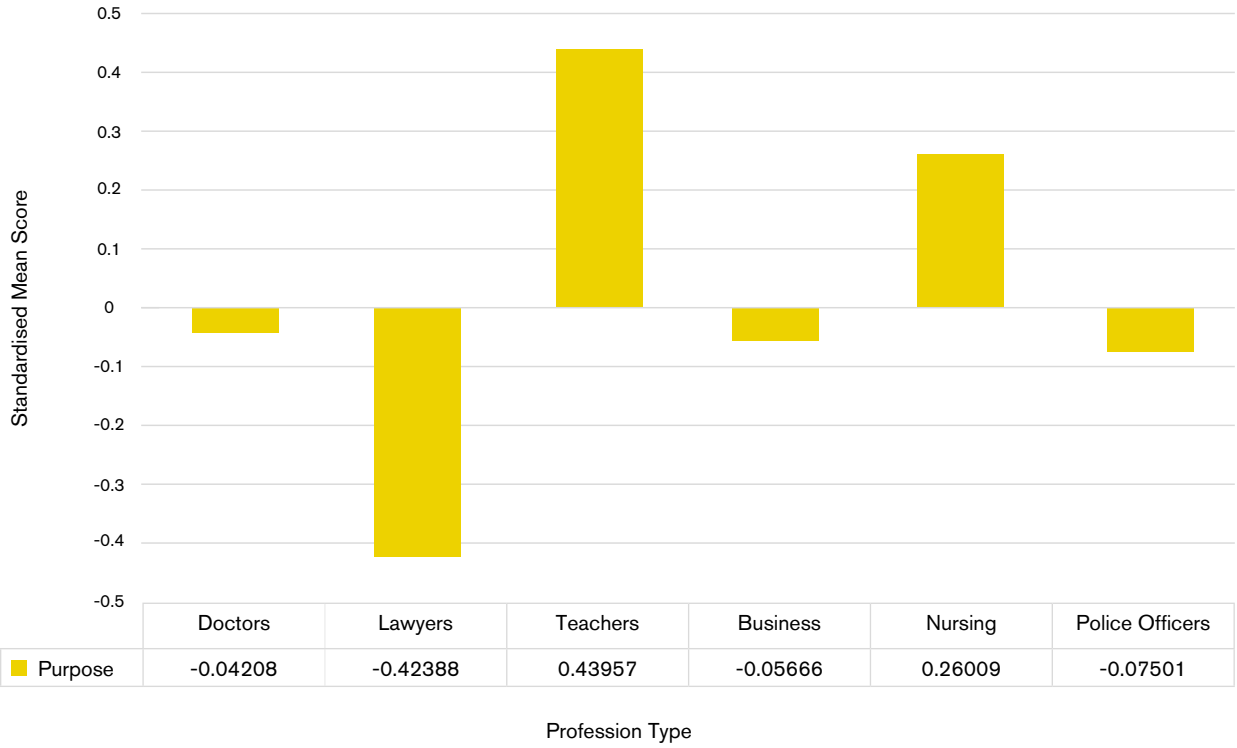
Stress					
Response	Never	Rarely	Sometimes	Mostly	Always
Percentage	0.3%	8.6%	57.8%	22.9%	10.4%
I experience stress					

Table 11: Police Officers' Perception of Conflict of Interest in the Workplace

Conflict of Interest					
N=335	Never	Rarely	Sometimes	Mostly	Always
%	13.0%	54.3%	30.6%	2.1%	0.0%
My work involves tasks that are in conflict with my personal values					

> 'I'VE KIND OF CROSSED INTO AN AREA WHICH TRIGGERS A TRIPWIRE OF EMOTIONAL RISK.'
>
> Male Detective Constable for Online Child Abuse, A4.

Chart 5: Standardised Mean Differences in Professional Purpose Across the Six Different Professions



	Doctors	Lawyers	Teachers	Business	Nursing	Police Officers
Purpose	-0.04208	-0.42388	0.43957	-0.05666	0.26009	-0.07501

In order to examine the differences in perceived professional purpose for policing from that seen in previous 'virtues in the professions' research (see Arthur *et al*., 2019), a univariate analysis of variance (ANOVA) was conducted. The results from the ANOVA indicated significant differences ($p < .05$) in professional purpose among police officers versus nurses, teachers and lawyers. The standardised mean scores for each professions perception of professional purpose can be seen in Chart 5.

These findings on reported professional purpose were, however, in tension with the qualitative findings from the interviews, where participants articulated a strong sense of professional purpose, as illustrated by the following quotes:

And I was looking for something that I actually thought the job was worth doing, rather than doing something that was just doing a job for the money. The values that I'd placed on work were always that you can do a job for the money, you can do a job because you think it's going to help you develop and get somewhere else; you can do a job because it's interesting or you can do a job because you think it's worthwhile. And my goal had always been to get at least three of them. – Male Detective Constable, A4

I've always wanted to meet the needs of trying to help people, because I felt like that was going to fulfil something in me. That it would help validate me if I felt I was helping people. – Female Sergeant, A24

One explanation for this discrepancy could be that the police officers who agreed to being interviewed had a proportionally higher sense of professional purpose than those who did not.

5 Discussion and Recommendations

Typically, discussion sections compare and contrast study findings with those from the existing literature, in order to elicit confirmations of what has already been found and to highlight novel results that complement or contradict the 'received wisdom'. In the present case, very few previous U.K. studies exist that consider virtue in the police service in a similar way to the current study. Therefore, this section is more exploratory as a result.

5.1 SOME PREVIOUS WORK IN THIS FIELD

As previously mentioned, in January 2021, the Jubilee Centre commissioned a poll to provide an insight into the moral challenges faced by the police in the U.K. and how prepared they perceive themselves to be in facing these challenges. Among the self-ascribed and 'ideal' character strengths identified by police officers in that poll, honesty and bravery featured most prominently. The fact that honesty was the most highly self-ascribed character strength aligns with the findings presented in Section 4.1; however, the prominence of bravery, which featured as the top 'ideal' character strength, was unexpected (Kristjánsson, 2021). This is the first time that bravery has featured so prominently in the professional ethics research conducted by the Jubilee Centre. Noticeably, it did not even feature among the top five character strengths identified by U.K. army officers. In the current study, however, bravery featured as the fourth highest character virtue of the 'ideal' police officer across all three cohorts (see Chart 1).

The reasoning for the difference between the findings in this report and the poll is not immediately obvious, nor was it uncovered in the interviews. We propose the following possible explanations. First, the police officers who responded to the poll were primarily from the London Metropolitan Police, whereas respondents in the current study were from throughout the U.K. Second, the poll was skewed towards junior officers, which was distinct from the current study in which only 5.9% of in-service police officers had five years or less policing work experience. Third, the poll was undertaken during the peak of the second wave of the COVID-19 pandemic, which may have impacted substantially upon the stressors and pressures that respondents were facing. Fourth, participation in the current study was entirely voluntary whereas, upon completion of the poll, respondents received financial compensation. It may be that paid-for participation elicits participants with slightly different personality and character profiles. It is also plausible that being less experienced, and working for the Met, might involve heightened sensitivity regarding bravery being considered so prominently as a self-ascribed and 'ideal' character strength. Furthermore, bravery might be a prominent strength valued by junior officers, as they are still gaining knowledge and skills in the application of their role as they learn through experience, whereas established police officers with six years' experience and more (94.1% of respondents) may more easily be able to draw upon their experiences in such a way that they would not consider bravery (or courage) as important as their less experienced counterparts do.

Findings from the poll also indicated a greater sense of pessimism among respondents than seen in the present study. This featured both in the finding that a majority of poll respondents (54%) had considered resigning from their roles in the past year, and with 50% of poll respondents having 'always' or 'mostly' experienced stress at work (Kristjánsson, 2021). While findings from the current research also indicated that stress is prevalent among respondents, it did not feature as heavily, with only 33.3% indicating that they experience stress 'always' (10.4%) or 'mostly' (22.9%), although it is worth noting that more than half reported experiencing stress 'sometimes' (57.8%). Thus, while stress might not be as prominent in this study, one must bear in mind that different forces may face different pressures, and it is plausible that officers in the Met experience greater levels of stress, proportionate to population size and density, given the political and cultural pressures typical of a global capital (Westmarland and Rowe, 2018).

Research by Manning (2019) found that there was some scepticism among police officers in their sense of moral alignment with the communities in which they serve and of the presumed legitimacy of the police as based on public consent. This presented a fairly negative perspective on how police officers might go about their roles within different communities. It contrasts with the findings from the present study, which indicated both a strong sense of desire to serve and help the community (Jackson *et al.*, 2013), as well as a desire to help elicit positive change within policing so that it is representative of contemporary community needs and reflects greater diversity. There was also frequent mention of virtues and qualities such as kindness, patience, empathy, perspective and understanding by interview participants in reference to the qualities

necessary to undertake their pre- and in-service police officer roles. Regarding the way in which they go about undertaking their roles, many interview participants felt that they often held themselves to a higher standard *qua* police officers in terms of their behaviour, revealing that officers understood their valuable professional role as exemplars of virtue and professionalism in the public eye (Norman and Williams, 2017). Indeed, the invaluable contribution of tutor constables, who fulfil the fundamental role of both moral and skilled exemplars, in the training and development of current police officers was clearly articulated, with many able to draw solid examples that still impact them today.

The importance of leading by example, especially by leaders in the police force, as a means of promoting ethical behaviour, has been found to promote inclusion and openness, alongside a raft of professional virtues and technical skills (McDowall *et al.*, 2015; Porter *et al*, 2015). Yet, while formal leadership such as that advocated for by Porter and colleagues (2015) aligns with findings from the present study, interview participants – both pre- and in-service officers – also reflected on the lifelong impact that the tutor constable has. In this regard, in-service officers raised concerns that less emphasis was being placed on this fundamental mentoring role in the training of new officers. Indeed, some participants stated that those currently being selected to perform the tutor constable role lacked the requisite experience to impart the type of wisdom and knowledge most valued in this moral exemplar role.

Throughout both the quantitative and qualitative findings, there was a strong indication of the important role moral character plays for pre- and in-service police officers. While deontological moral reasoning was the dominant justification selected in response to the various dilemmas posed in the survey (47.9% overall), it is possible to infer that, because police officers are instillers of the law, many of their actions and reactions will be guided by the law and a sense of duty to uphold it. However, virtue ethics also featured prominently in the moral reasons provided by respondents (36.6% overall), and this finding was positively aligned with responses in interviews regarding the use of personal ethical judgement and discretion in deciding how to handle dilemmatic situations, with experienced police officers especially (although not exclusively) recognising that different circumstances called for different responses. In many cases, explicit reference to 'doing what is right' for the particular situation was mentioned, as well as the need to have an understanding of personal circumstances and context before deciding how to act. This aligns with recent work on the role of virtue ethics in policing (Manning, 2019; Morrell and Bradford, 2019; Wood, 2020).

5.2 PROFESSIONAL ETHICS EDUCATION

In response to the question of personal approaches to handling challenging issues or dealing with ethical dilemmas, there was a strong indication among participants that they would invariably refer to or rely upon the police *Code of Ethics* and the NDM. This was especially true of students, whereas more experienced professionals indicated that the *Code* was second nature for them, and implicitly underpinned all their actions. Although there was an indication among more experienced police officers that they were uncertain as to when the *Code* was introduced, the vast majority stated that it was the underlying foundation in all their work. The preponderance of references to the *Code* among pre- and in-service police officers must count as a positive finding in this study, particularly considering the extent to which virtues are referred to in the *Code*, and the emphasis that is placed on 'doing the right thing in the right way'. This finding also highlighted a positive connection between the educational preparation of pre-service officers, which, according to the PEQF, necessarily includes the teaching and use of the *Code* from the first year of the pre-join and PCDA programmes. The *Code's* practical application among existing officers of varying experience and seniority levels in this study aligns with findings from Millie and Hirschler (2018).

Research in this area suggests that organisational values closely aligned with those in the *Code* positively impacts upon attitudes and behaviours within the force, and is especially evident when ethical behaviours are role-modelled by senior leaders (Brown, 2014; Porter *et al*., 2015; Quinton, 2015; Quinton *et al*., 2015). Once again, the findings regarding the use and relevance of the *Code* were more positive in the present study than in Manning's (2019). However, concerningly, the PEQF devised by the College of Policing requires teaching of the *Code* and the NDM as only two of the hundreds of learning outcomes, and there is no requirement to discuss the subject more broadly in a moral theoretical context.

In interviews with police educators, there were mixed reactions regarding their perceptions of the PEQF, with some feeling that it was positive as it offered standardised outcomes across England and Wales, a feature lacking in previous police training. Yet there was also a sense it might be better for more 'idiosyncrasies' to remain in the education provision, so that it could better be adapted to local policing needs. Overall, there was a strong indication that guidance on best practice and 'what works', as well as how to scaffold the outcomes across the three-year programmes, would be helpful.

In all educator interviews, there was strong support for the professionalisation of policing and the degree requirement, as illustrated here:

> *I think it's really important that the police service is seen on a more professional footing and therefore a degree education is important. So often, when we have multi-agency investigations, which the police sit as part of, often the police become the lead agency and yet often they're the people with the lower standard of education.* – Police Educator and Retired Police Officer, A30

5.3 SOME RECOMMENDATIONS

In light of the findings discussed above, the report makes the following recommendations:

- Virtue ethics needs to be foregrounded more in professional ethics education within police-science and CPD courses. In general, more attention needs to be paid to the moral and characterological grounding of policing and to establishing a clearer sense of the ideal of 'policing by consent'.
- The police *Code of Ethics* needs to be revised to reflect more explicitly virtue ethical considerations, not least the ideal of metacognitive professional *phronesis*.
- The *Code* should be embedded more explicitly throughout practical and theoretical courses in police education, and practical guidance should be offered by the College of Policing to universities along the lines of an axiological framework that emphasises the moral nature of policing.
- Greater attention should be paid to the appointment of senior police officers to the role of tutor constables, ensuring that they understand their role as moral exemplars, as much as it is to share their knowledge, skills and experience.
- Recruitment and selection of police leaders should be based on evidence of their possession and practice of the desired character traits for the role and be representative of those promoted in the *Code*.
- Serious efforts must be made to re-establish a sense of professional purpose among established police officers. This could be centred around the notion of virtuous practice.

5.4 CONCLUDING REMARKS

Overall, findings from the present research found a fairly robust, well-motivated and focussed profession that has taken various recent challenges to its practice in its stride. From the virtue ethical perspective that underpins work in the Jubilee Centre, the two main negatives would be, on the one hand, the prevalence of deontological, rather than virtue ethical, reasoning and, on the other hand, the lack of moral purpose among police officers.

However, even those two negatives may have some mitigating conditions. When a similar finding regarding the prioritisation of deontological moral reasoning emerged of U.K. nurses, this was seen as emblematic of a deeper demoralisation syndrome in U.K. nursing (Kristjánsson *et al*., 2017b). That is because care and compassion, which are character virtues, have historically informed the mission of nursing as a profession, rather than rules and codes. In contrast, policing is historically grounded in the ideal of a rule of law and, therefore, something might be seen to have gone amiss in the profession if its deliberation strategies did not show some partiality to deontological reasoning. That said, as indicated in Section 2.3, disillusionment with rule-based approaches to moral quandaries has grown in recent times in professional ethics circles, as the focus has moved towards reflection, discretion and situationally mediated professional *phronesis*. Hopefully, this shift of emphasis will also find its presence felt in police education in England and Wales in the coming future.

The low sense of professional purpose was identified only in the cohort of experienced police professionals and, more specifically still, mostly in the sub-cohort of police officers who did not volunteer to be interviewed post-survey. It must be borne in mind here that this research was conducted during very challenging times, at the height of the pandemic, and it would have been remarkable if the exhaustion felt by many police officers during those times had not been reflected in the findings of this research. It could be advisable, therefore, to replicate this part of the research during more 'normal times' – although recent history seems to teach us that quiet and peaceful periods in the lives of U.K. police officers are few and far between. In that sense, contemporary policing reflects the turbulence and effervescence of the modern age.

POLICE

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Acknowledgements

The authors of this report would like to extend generous thanks to the many individuals and organisations that supported this research project, from the early days of scoping and becoming familiar with the policing landscape, through to reaching out to and requesting participation from pre- and in-service police officers throughout the U.K. The research team are particularly grateful to the following individuals who directly supported this work.

Members of the expert panel: Dr. Peter Neyroud CBE QPM CCMI, Lecturer, Institute of Criminology, University of Cambridge; Professor Allyson MacVean OBE, Professor of Policing and Criminology, Bath Spa University; Ronald Winch, Senior Teaching Fellow in Policing, School of Social Sciences, Birmingham City University;

Dr. Paul Quinton, Evidence and Evaluation Advisor, College of Policing;

Richard Bennett, Former Faculty Lead, Uniformed Policing, College of Policing;

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Dr. Jonathan Jackson, Senior Teaching Fellow, School of Social Sciences, Birmingham City University;

Professor Peter Joyce, Visiting Professor in Criminology, Wrexham Glyndŵr University;

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Chloe Tedds, Lecturer in Policing Apprenticeships, University of Cumbria;

Andy Hill, Lecturer in Police Science, School of Humanities and Social Sciences, University of Akureyi;

John De-Hayes, Lecturer in Policing, College of Business, Law and Social Sciences, University of Derby;

Andrew Crawford, Lecturer in Professional Policing, Faculty of Social Sciences, Wrexham Glyndŵr University;

Dr. Dean Wilkinson, Leading Research Fellow and Director of the Crime, Harm and Justice Research Group, Institute of Policing, University of Chester;

Geoff Elvey, Head of the Institute of Policing, University of Chester;

Karen Duckworth, Operations Manager, The London Policing College;

Rod Jarman QPM, Lead for Police Education and Research, School of Human and Social Sciences, University of West London;

Chris Todd, Temporary Assistant Chief Constable, Operations, West Midlands Police;

Inspector Jenny Richards, Strategy and Research Team, Strategy and Direction, West Midlands Police;

Superintendent Yvonne Bruton, Deputy Head of Professional Standards Department, West Midlands Police;

Nadyia Hussain, Strategic Education Manager, Thematic Faith Lead, West Midlands Violence Reduction Unit

Chief Constable Richard Lewis, Cleveland Police;

Chief Inspector John Wrintmore, Staff Officer to Chief Constable Richard Lewis, Cleveland Police;

Sergeant John Dodsworth, Service Improvement, Operational Ethics Lead, Staff Officer, Cleveland Police;

Detective Superintendent Colin Mattinson, Head of Professional Standards Department, Staffordshire Police;

Detective Chief Inspector Victoria Downing, Professional Standards Department, Staffordshire Police;

Chris Hutchison, Executive Assistant to Bernie O'Reilly, Interim CEO, Office of the CEO, College of Policing.

In addition the research team would like to thank colleagues within the Jubilee Centre for their continued support throughout the project, from ethics applications and proof-reading, to transcribing and the arrangements that went into producing this finished report.

Lastly, we extend our grateful thanks to all those who completed the surveys and participated in the interviews, as well as those who helped to spread the word about the project, in particular:

- Anglia Ruskin University
- Birmingham City University
- Cardiff Metropolitan
- Glyndŵr Wrexham University
- London Policing College
- University of Chester
- University of Cumbria
- University of Derby
- University of Gloucestershire
- University of Staffordshire
- University of West England
- University of Wolverhampton

JOHN TEMPLETON
FOUNDATION

This project was made possible through the support of a grant from the John Templeton Foundation.

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ISBN: 9780704429741

Designed and printed by
UNIVERSITY OF BIRMINGHAM | creativemedia

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