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Continuum of Police Crime: An Empirical Study of Court Cases

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Abstract

The great majority of police officers is committed to honorable and competent public service and consistently demonstrates integrity and accountability in carrying out the often difficult, complex and sometimes dangerous, activities involved in policing by consent. However, in every police agency there exists an element of dishonesty, lack of professionalism and criminal behavior. This article is based on archival research of criminal behavior in the Norwegian police force. A total of 60 police employees were prosecuted in court because of misconduct and crime from 2005 to 2010. Court cases were coded as two potential predictors of court sentence in terms of imprisonment days, i.e. type of deviance and level of deviance. Categories of police crime and levels were organized according to a conceptual framework developed for assessing and managing police deviance (Dean, Bell and Lauchs, 2010). Empirical findings support the hypothesis that as the seriousness of police crime increases in breadth and depth so also does the severity of the court sentence as measured by time in prison.

Keywords: police misconduct, police corruption, police deviance, content analysis, crime motive, criminal court.

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INTRODUCTION

Policing has at its heart the notion of 'service' to the community in which it operates, even if at times 'force' may be a legally allowed option to take to carry out such 'service'. It's a difficult tightrope to walk for police (Alderson, 1975, 1979; Brodgen, 1981, 1982; Reiner, 1985; Shapland and Vagg, 1988). Sometimes the idealism of joining the police to do something worthwhile for the community can become diluted by too many negative experiences with the public, too little job satisfaction, and too much bureaucracy. Under such circumstances, idealism can be fatally ruptured and police deviance takes up residence in the space where idealism used to live.

This article seeks to empirically apply a conceptual framework developed Dean, Bell and Lauchs (2010) for assessing and managing police deviance. The conceptual framework proposed by Dean et al. (2010) sought to address the lack of an adequately formulated framework in the literature to capture the breath and depth of police misconduct and crime and its complexity at various levels to do with, not only individual deviance, but also group and systemic deviance.

Dean et al. (2010) adopted a Knowledge Management approach to develop a 'sliding scale' of police deviance that employs an matrix structure to show how police deviance increases in seriousness as its progresses along a continuum from misconduct to corruption to predatory policing.

Hence, the purpose of this article is to explore the extent to which this conceptually-derived continuum of police crime is an empirically useful instrument for police oversight agencies to employ in their fight against police deviance. In order to examine this question in an empirical context a sample of Norwegian police officers charged with various types of police crime were used as the data set for this study. Thus, this study involved a retrospective analysis of archival research of a sample of prosecuted police officers in the Norwegian Police Force over a five year period. From 2005 to 2010, a total of 60 police employees in

Norway were prosecuted in court because of alleged criminal behavior. Furthermore, in order to examine more precisely the ‘seriousness’ assumption underlying the continuum this study sought to test the hypothesis that *‘as the seriousness of police crime increases in breadth and depth so also should the severity of the court sentences increase in terms of days in prison.’*

POLICE CRIME

Police integrity and accountability has been a concern in most regions and countries, for example in Australia (OPI, 2007; Prenzler and Lewis, 2005) and in Norway, as presented in this article. According to the United Nations (UNODC, 2006), the great majority of individuals involved in policing are committed to honorable and competent public service and consistently demonstrate high standards of personal and procedural integrity in performing their duties. However, in every policing agency there probably exists an element of dishonesty, lack of professionalism and criminal behavior, in spite of the best practice training methods.

The prevalence of police deviance is a much-debated statistic and one that is often rife with problems, according to Porter and Warrender (2009). Some researchers suggest corruption is endemic to police culture across the globe, others argue that incidents are rare. Despite such statistical problems, incidents of police deviance do surface from time to time all over the world. There are several clear examples in the UK and Australia in recent years that involve suppression of evidence, beating of suspects, tampering with confidential evidence and perjury (MacPherson, 1999; Yeadon, 2006).

A prominent theory regarding police deviance is the notion of a ‘slippery slope’ (O’Connor, 2005), in that, once a police officer engages in even relatively small and minor violations of departmental rules like accepting a free meal or discounts, then they have taken the first steps towards other more serious forms of misconduct, which can eventually lead them into a downward slide into major crime practices. However, like most theoretical notions to do

with policing the ‘slippery slope’ idea is contested by some researchers¹. What is of interest here is not the notion of a ‘slippery slope’ per se but rather how police deviance can be viewed as a continuum in terms of seriousness with low-level misconduct and unethical behaviours at one end with police brutality and corruption in the middle and finally serious predatory behaviours to do with avaricious greed, collusion, and criminal networking at the other end.² How and by what path(s) deviant police officers end up involved in misconduct and/or corrupt practices via a slippery slope, or simply a character flaw or the corrupting influence of other police is beyond the scope of this paper.

CONCEPTUAL FRAMEWORK

There are various classification schemes and theoretical notions in the literature and all have their merits and taken together create a mosaic of police deviance as perceived from different vantage points. The purpose of this paper is to empirically apply one such classification scheme proposed by Dean et al. (2010) which was developed as a conceptually relevant framework to appropriately capture from a knowledge management perspective the salient dimensions of police deviance in terms of its breadth and depth. To achieve breadth and depth dimensions Dean et al (2010) employed a matrix-type structure for their conceptualization of police deviance. A slightly modified version of their conceptual framework is presented below in Figure 1.

¹ See Kleinig (1996) and Newburn (2005) for a fuller discussion of the relative utility of ‘slippery slope’ notion.

² For a detailed discussion of the conceptual framework under consideration, see Dean, G., Bell, P. and Lauchs, M. (2010). Conceptual framework for managing knowledge of police deviance, *Policing & Society*, 20 (2), 204-222.

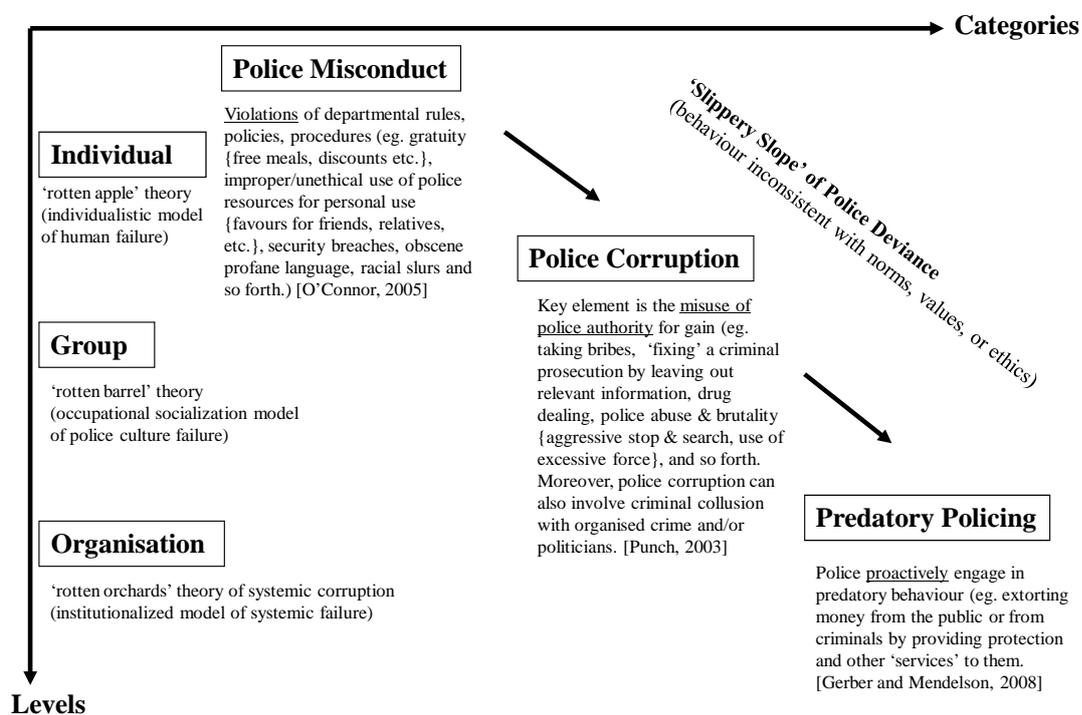


Figure 1: Conceptual Framework for a Continuum of Police Crime

As can be seen the 'depth' dimension of police deviance involves three levels – that of, the individual, the group, and the organization respectively. Furthermore, as is evident on figure 1 each level can be 'metaphorically' related through extension of the 'rotten apple' theory of police deviance, which is a favoured analogy used by police and academics. Punch (2003:172) makes the point that "The police themselves often employ the 'rotten apple' metaphor – the deviant cop who slips into bad ways and contaminates the other essentially good officers – which is an individualistic, human failure model of deviance." One explanation for favoring this individualistic model of police deviance is provided by O'Connor (2005:2) when he states, "Police departments tend to use the rotten apple theory... to minimize the public backlash against policing after every exposed act of corruption." Hence, it follows according to this individualistic view of police criminality that anti-corruption strategies should be targeted at finding the 'rotten apples' through measures like 'integrity testing' (Commission on Police Integrity, 1999), and putting policies and procedures in place reduce the opportunity for engaging in misconduct and/or corrupt practices.

However, in regard to the 'rotten apple' thesis this level of explanation for police deviance is as Perry (2001: 1) notes "...most major inquiries into police corruption reject the 'bad-apple' theory: 'the rotten-apple theory won't work any longer. Corrupt police officers are not natural-born criminals, nor morally wicked men, constitutionally different from their honest colleagues. The task of corruption control is to examine the barrel, not just the apples, the organization, not just the individual in it, because corrupt police are made, not born.'"

Therefore, Dean et al's conceptual framework has extended the 'rotten apple' metaphor to include the group level view of police cultural deviance with a 'rotten barrel' metaphor (O'Connor, 2005). Furthermore, Punch (2003) has pushed the notion of 'rotten orchards' to highlight police deviance at the systemic level. Punch (2003:172) notes, "the metaphor of 'rotten orchards' indicate(s) that it is sometimes not the apple, or even the barrel, that is rotten but the *system* (or significant parts of the system)". That is, deviance that has become *systemic* is:

... in some way encouraged, and perhaps even protected, by certain elements in the system. "Systems" refers both to the formal system – the police organization, the criminal justice system and the broader socio-political context – and to the informal system of deals, inducements, collusion and understandings among deviant officers as to how the corruption is to be organized, conducted and rationalized." (Punch, 2003:172).

These metaphorical extensions represent increasing deeper-level meanings associated with police crime and by implication suggest degrees of seriousness for individuals engaging in criminal behaviour either alone or in concert with a group and/or at the systemic level of a police organization.

CONTEXT OF RESEARCH

The Norwegian Bureau prosecutes police officers in court. The Norwegian Bureau is similar to police oversight agencies found in other countries, such as the Independent Police Complaints Commission in the UK, the Crime and Misconduct Commission in the State of Queensland and other similar bodies in other States of Australia, the Police Department for Internal Investigations in Germany, the Inspectorate General of the Internal Administration in Portugal, the Standing Police Monitoring Committee in Belgium, the Garda Síochána

Ombudsman Commission in Ireland, Federal Bureau for Internal Affairs in Austria, and the Ministry of the Interior, Police and Security Directorate in Slovenia.

Since 1988, Norway has a separate system to handle allegations against police officers for misconduct. The system was frequently accused of not being independent of regular police organizations (Thomassen, 2002). In 2003, the Norwegian Parliament decided to establish a separate body to investigate and prosecute cases where employees in the police service or the prosecuting authority are suspected of having committed criminal acts in the police service.

The Norwegian Bureau for the Investigation of Police Affairs has been effective since January 2005. The Bureau is mandated to investigate and prosecute cases where employees in the police service or the prosecuting authority are accused of having committed criminal acts in the service. The Norwegian Bureau has both investigating and prosecuting powers and in that way it differs from some comparable European bodies. The Norwegian Bureau does not handle complaints from the public concerning allegations of rude or bad behavior that does not amount to a criminal offence (Prethus, 2009).

Since the operations started at the Norwegian Bureau in January 2005 and until February 2010, a total of 60 police officers were on trial in Norwegian courts. This was the sample for our study. There were 3 prosecuted officers in 2005, 14 in 2006, 16 in 2007, 20 in 2008, and 5 in 2009, and 2 so far in 2010.

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

Archival research of court decisions is predominately qualitative. This study involved the analysis of various types of court documentation relating to the sample of 60 prosecuted police officers who went on trial in Norway from 2005 to 2010.

Court transcripts were obtained from the Norwegian Bureau for the Investigation of Police Affairs, which has an archive of all court rulings in electronic format. A court transcript ranges from two to twenty pages of text where the act is explained and legal issues are discussed. The act is best explained in rulings from district courts. When cases are appealed to courts of appeal or even to Supreme Court, then court transcripts are more about law and less about actions carried out. Therefore, transcripts from district courts were the most useful

ones sought for analysis, while transcripts from higher courts were needed to find the final court sentence in terms of prison days if they were appealed.

The unit of analysis applied in this study is the individual prosecuted, rather than the court case. This is because an organization is never prosecuted in a criminal court for jail sentence. However, an individual police officer may appeal his or her case to a higher court. Therefore, there were more court cases than individuals on trial. There were a total of 80 court cases for the 60 prosecuted individuals.

Whilst, individuals are the unit of analysis since they are the ones prosecuted for police crime not groups or organizations per se, this does not discount the reality that misconduct and corruption occurs in work teams, groups and indeed can lead to systemic or organizational pockets of police crime where solidarity and the code of silence is the glue that holds such individuals together to commit various types of police crime (Perry, 2001; Punch, 2003). Indeed, one of the significant features of the Dean et al. (2010) framework under examination in this article is the conceptual richness of the police crime continuum in terms of its depth that goes beyond just an individualistic understanding of police crime to incorporate group and organizational level concepts and explanations of potential criminal behaviour by police officers as shown in Figure 1.

OPERATIONALIZATION OF CATEGORIES

In order to retrospectively apply the 'police crime' continuum to the above sample of prosecuted Norwegian police officers it was first necessary to operationalize the breath and depth of 'police crime' in terms of seriousness and complexity as displayed on the continuum in Figure 1 into meaningful categories. As can be seen from Figure 1 this continuum forms a matrix-type framework whereby a 3 X 3 cell structure is derived. This Matrix cell framework is shown in figure 2 below. It includes a label in each cell that defines the appropriate 'motive' for the category of police crime involved.

	Police misconduct <small>Violation of rules, policies, procedures</small>	Police corruption <small>Misuse of police authority for personal satisfaction/gain</small>	Predatory policing <small>Proactively engage in predatory behaviours</small>
Individual <small>'human failure' (rotten apple)</small>	1 Overzealous	4 Opportunism	7 Greed
Group <small>'socialisation failure' within police culture (rotten barrel)</small>	2 Misguided	5 Condoning	8 Collusion
Organisation <small>'systemic failure' of integrity systems (rotten orchard)</small>	3 Unethical	6 Obstructionism	9 Connected

Figure 2: Matrix 3x 3 cell structure of categories and levels for police crime

As is evident, there are, theoretically, nine ‘motives’ for engaging in police deviance represented in this matrix structure. These motives stretch across the three top-level categories of misconduct, corruption and predatory policing and down through the level of the deviant individual (rotten apple), or to a group of corrupt officers (rotten barrel) and may at times systemically effect parts of the police organisation (rotten orchard) as a whole.

As can be seen, each of the ‘numbered cells’ is labeled by a descriptive word that best encapsulates the nature and essence of the presumed ‘motive’ that drives the type of police crime represented in each cell. Such categorical labels are relatively common terminology in policing circles when there is talk about ‘why’ fellow officers engage in misconduct and/or corrupt practices. Furthermore, the literature on corruption research also alludes to similar motivational drivers behind police deviance. Hence, the nine ‘motives’ as shown on Figure 2 were conceptually derived from police experience and the extant literature and represent an distilled refinement of the complexities inherent in policing police deviance.

To ensure consistent and reliable coding of the court documents for the sample of 60 police officers studied, each of the nine 'motive' cells were operationalised by the researchers with descriptive statements into a coding sheet as illustrated below in Figure 3:

<p>'Police Misconduct' Categories</p> <p>1. 'Overzealous' motive - involves an individual who projects a 'police persona' as a tough, no-nonsense, hard talking, image of efficiency which at times can spill over into behaviours which violate established rules, policies and/or procedures for lawful policing and hence lead to police misconduct.</p> <p>2. 'Misguided' motive - involves an individual who has acquired through inappropriate socialization within the police culture a set of unprofessional ideas about police work like being cynical, mistrusting, and having out-of-sync priorities with the mission of policing which leads them to ignore and/or disobey what they see as 'hindering' rules, policies and procedures.</p> <p>3. 'Unethical' motive - involves an individual who feels secure and/or protected enough in their role of a police officer within the organization to 'knowingly' violate established ethical standards and/or engage in illegal risk-taking behaviours to achieve their goals.</p> <p>'Police Corruption' Categories</p> <p>4. 'Opportunism' motive - involves an individual who has developed an 'us and them' mentality towards the public and cynicism about the value of the job which is manifested in a desire to look after one's self by taking opportunities, as they present themselves, to misuse police powers for personal satisfaction.</p> <p>5. 'Condoning' motive - involves an individual who either by commission 'knowingly' engages in the misuse of police power or by omission 'turn a blind eye' to other police who engage in the misuse police authority because of the unwritten 'code of silence' that implicitly guarantees protection for deviant police by relying on other officers to join in and/or, at least, keep quiet about incidents of corrupt practices.</p> <p>6 'Obstructionism' motive - involves an individual who not only indirectly 'condones' at a group level unethical and/or corrupt practices but who also 'actively' obstructs such practices coming to light by cover them up through omission (i.e. police don't prosecute police) or commission (i.e. failure to investigate incidents properly by internal audits/ethical standards unit, etc.) and as such represent integrity failures within the organization.</p> <p>'Predatory Policing' Categories</p> <p>7. 'Greed' motive - involves an individual who has perverted the role of policing as upholders of the law and justice to one of self-seeking exploitation of opportunities to prey on others for financial and personal gain.</p> <p>8. 'Collusion' motive - involves an individual who colludes with others by banding together to maximize benefits through exploiting opportunities for profit.</p> <p>9. 'Connected' motive - involves an individual who 'actively networks' within policing and/or outside the organization to forge links with the criminal underworld in order to maximize profit-sharing through exploitation on others.</p>

Figure 3: Coding Sheet for Analysis of Court Cases Documentation

The operationalization into police crime categories of the court documents was performed by all three researchers independently in a two-stage process. All researchers have extensive experience and knowledge of police misconduct and crime. Initially, a 'blind' coding exercise was undertaken by two of the researchers. The researchers have access to the complete case files of more than three hundred pages. Both researchers classified independently each case according to the seriousness scale (misconduct, corruption, predatory) and the level scale (individual, group, organization). Because of the qualitative nature of the analysis it was deemed appropriate to engage in a second stage of 'inter-rater comparison' by the third researcher in order to clarify and refine where necessary any areas of uncertainty in relation to the appropriateness of cases being assigned to a particular category rather than opting for an 'interrater reliability' score. By this process of 'iterative

analysis' mutual agreement was arrived at for all case data coding into the various police crime categories by all three researchers.

RESEARCH FINDINGS

The demographic case data drawn from court documents for the sample studied is listed in Table 1 below.

Court Outcome	Year	Descriptive Example for each prosecuted police employee case for years 2005 to 2010 in Norway (60 cases in total)	Age	Cell Code
(A) No jail sentence (19 cases)	2006	Killing of dogs without permission	44	1
	2006	Killing of dogs without permission	40	1
	2006	Dangerous driving of unmarked police car	46	1
	2007	Dangerous driving of police car	32	1
	2008	Dangerous driving of police boat	56	1
	2008	Dangerous driving of private car on duty	32	1
	2009	Excessive use of force in refugee institution	53	1
	2009	Daughter age 13 put in handcuffs at house search warrant	36	1
	2009	Dangerous driving while chasing motorcycle	47	1
	2007	Excessive violence during arrest	27	2
	2007	Excessive violence during arrest	28	2
	2007	Excessive violence during arrest	30	2
	2007	Excessive violence during arrest	34	2
	2008	Excessive violence during arrest	35	2
	2008	Derogatory, racist remarks to colored inmate	37	3
	2005	Sexual contact with woman who had filed crime case	46	4
	2007	Changing urine test result for drug addict	30	4
	2008	Permission to wife's sister based on false data	50	4
	2009	Leaking confidential information to outsider	40	4
(B) Less than 2 weeks (13 cases)	2006	Dangerous driving of police car - person injured	29	1
	2006	Dangerous driving of private car - person injured	61	1
	2007	Dangerous driving of police car - serious car damage	25	1
	2007	Dangerous driving of police car - without reason	38	1
	2008	Dangerous driving of private car - passing on right hand side	35	1
	2008	Physical injury caused when confiscating mobile phone	37	1
	2008	Dangerous driving of police car - person injured	39	1
	2009	Dangerous driving of police car - person injured	33	1
	2008	Leaking confidential information to his father	39	4
	2010	Leaking confidential information to relative	64	4
	2007	Leaking confidential information to criminal	47	7
	2008	Leaking confidential information from system	26	7
	2009	Doing private marketing business while on police duty	55	7
	2006	Driving police car while intoxicated	57	3
	2008	Driving unmarked police car while intoxicated	55	3
	2008	Driving private car while intoxicated	56	3

(C) Less than 2 months (15 cases)	2005	Document forgery of exam from Police Academy	25	4
	2006	Document forgery of medical statement	31	4
	2006	Sexual approach without consent	46	4
	2007	Changed address of personal enemy in computer system	28	4
	2008	Threat of revenge towards police colleague	43	4
	2008	Sending sexual messages to woman using mobile phone	37	4
	2007	Theft from crime scene and police station	31	7
	2008	Theft of rifle handed in to police station	51	7
	2006	Leaking information about planned police actions	26	8
	2006	Leaking confidential information to criminals	35	8
	2007	Leaking information about informant to criminals	19	8
	2008	Leaking confidential list to TV journalist	55	8
	(D) Less than 2 years (9 cases)	2006	Manipulated speed control result for colleague	36
2006		Manipulated speed control result for colleague	32	5
2005		Stealing from colleagues and office at the police station	36	7
2007		Stealing from colleagues and office at police station	42	7
2007		Stealing money from fine payments	34	7
2009		Stealing confiscated drugs at police station	41	7
2010		Stealing money from police accounts	37	7
2009		Paid by prison inmate to arrange frequent home trips	54	8
2009		Leaking information about investigations to TV journalist	56	8
(E) More than 2 years (4 cases)	2006	Theft of money confiscated for illegal gambling	51	7
	2007	Theft of drugs for personal consumption	46	7
	2010	Sexual harassment and rape of many intoxicated women	51	7
	2009	Paid by prison inmate to arrange frequent home trips	59	8

Table 1: Case Data for Court Outcome in relation to length of Jail Sentence

As can be seen on Table 1 the demographic case data covers the court outcome, year, age, as well as providing descriptive examples of the type of criminal offence committed for all of the 60 court cases. Moreover, the cases are grouped according to severity in terms of the length of the jail sentence given as shown where (A) no jail sentence (19 police officers), (B) less than two weeks (13 police officers), (C) less than two months (15 police officers), (D) less than two years (9 police officers), and (E) more than two years of imprisonment (4 police officers).

In regard to court outcome (A) 19 out of the 60 prosecuted police officers received no jail sentence. This finding implies these officers' court cases were dismissed with or without a fine. The reasons for dismissal varied from not enough evidence to convict to the standard of proof required for a criminal offence through to the reliability of the evidence. Given the type of archival material available it was not possible to identify with precision the exact reasons for dismissal of these non-imprisonment cases. In relation to days of imprisonment,

the average sentence was 99 days in jail and the standard deviation was 269 days (Hair et al., 2010). The longest jail sentence was 1642 days.

The final column on Table 1 is the inter-rated ‘cell code’ category assigned to each case by the researchers. When these ‘cell’ code categories of police crime are cross-tabulated with the length of jail sentences the following Table is obtained.

Police Crime ‘Cell Code’ Categories	Length of Jail Sentence					Totals	
	No Jail Sentence	Less than 2 weeks	Less than 2 mths	Less than 2 years	More than 2 years		
Misconduct (ind level)-cell 1: Overzealous	9 cases	8 cases				17	26
(gr level)-cell 2: Misguided	5 cases					5	
(org level)-cell 3: Unethical	1 case		3 cases			4	
Corruption (ind level)-cell 4: Opportunism	4 cases	2 cases	6 cases			12	14
(gr level)-cell 5: Condoning				2 cases		2	
(org level)-cell 6: Obstructionism						0	
Predatory (ind level)-cell 7: Greed		3 cases	2 cases	5 cases	3 cases	13	20
(gr level)-cell 8: Collusion			4 cases	2 cases	1 case	7	
(org level)-cell 9: Connected						0	
Totals	19	13	15	9	4	60	

Table 2: Cross-Tabulation of Police Crime Categories by the Length of Jail Sentence

As can be seen on Table 2, the majority of cases involved the police misconduct category (26 cases) across all levels (individual, group and organisation) with ‘overzealous’ policing by individual officers being the most prevalent category (17 out of 26 cases). Most of these cases

of ‘overzealous’ policing involved officers committing various forms of *dangerous driving* offences as is evident from Table 1 in the descriptive examples column. The 5 cases of ‘misguided’ policing while committed by individuals occurred in a group context and involved the use of *excessive violence* to affect an arrest. The court documentation on these group-level cases of police misconduct makes it clear that the arresting officer used excessive force in concert with others who were present and they did nothing to restrain the offending officer from using excessive violence. As for the 4 cases of organisational-level ‘unethical’ policing it is clear from the examples given (Figure 1) that 3 out of the 4 cases involved *drink driving* offences and as such each attracted a court sentence of around 2 months in prison. These cases were coded as organisational-level examples of ‘unethical’ policing because these officers ‘knowingly’ violated a ‘don’t drink and drive’ organisational rule where there are no grounds for classifying their behaviour as being either overzealous or misguided in its intentions. Therefore, the findings for this police misconduct category, in general it is clear that as the seriousness of the misconduct deepens from overzealousness to misguided to unethical behaviours so does the court sentence generally increase in seriousness with respect to the more serious forms of misconduct attracting longer jail sentences.

In relation to the police corruption category, there were 14 cases overall, with the majority (12 cases) involving ‘opportunistic’ individuals taking advantage of their position as a police officer to *leak confidential information* to relatives and friends, or trying to gain *sexual favours*, and in 2 cases *forge documents* (see Table 1). At the group level, there were 2 cases that involved ‘condoning’ the corrupt practice of *manipulating speed camera results* for police colleagues. The seriousness of such ‘condoning’ corruption is evident by the court sentence of up to 2 years in prison for each case. There were no organisational-level ‘obstructive’ cases of policing found in the sample. Hence, with regard to the police corruption category, the findings again show the same general pattern as for the misconduct category in that as the seriousness of corruption deepens from individuals acting alone to group involvement so does the court sentence seriously increase in terms of longer prison time.

With regard to the predatory policing category, there were 20 cases in all and this represents the second largest police crime category for this sample of 60 police officers in relation to the previous two categories (misconduct – 26 cases, and corruption – 14 cases respectively). As to be expected with this type of predatory police crime ‘greed’ was the predominate motive

(13 out of 20 cases). However, interestingly at the group-level of predatory policing there were 7 cases of criminal collusion that involved *leaking of confidential information* about police operations to criminals and the media and in one case passing on information about an informant to criminals. Clearly, such serious predatory behaviours attracted the most severe jail sentences by the courts (Table 2). As for organisational-level predatory policing there were no recorded cases of criminal ‘connectedness’ to the underworld in the sample studied. Thus, the findings for this predatory policing category follow a similar pattern as the other two police crime categories (misconduct and corruption) in that as the seriousness of predatory policing crimes deepen so also does the length of imprisonment increase.

In sum, what these cross-tabulated findings clearly indicate for the sample of 60 prosecuted police officers studied is that as the severity of the sentence increases in terms of days in prison so does the seriousness of the police crime categories increase as they fan out with regard to their breadth and depth.

LIMITATIONS OF STUDY

The obvious limitation of this study is that the sample size of 60 cases is too small to use parametric tests of significance and hence draw statistically significant findings. Moreover, the sample size is in fact the entire population of prosecuted police officers for this relatively new police oversight agency that has only been established in 2005. Also, given the exploratory nature of the study and the fact that the main source of data is court documents then a qualitative methodology was mandated. Nonetheless, future research with a larger sample size is needed to test the validity of this continuum and its matrix framework comprehensively.

DISCUSSION

The underlying ‘scale of seriousness’ of the continuum implies a movement from one category to another in a fanning out type of manner in terms of breath and depth dimensions. This in turn lead to the theoretical development of at least nine categories of potential police crime being exposed for investigation by internal police ethical standards units and by external police oversight and watchdog agencies. In other words, as the nature of the

motivation gets progressively more serious or worse it both deepens and spreads across the various types of police crime from left to right on the continuum (Figure 2). The key point here is the progressive nature of how serious each category and level of police crime can become over time if left unchecked. Hence, there is a level of complexity to police deviance that is inherent in the matrix cell framework of Figure 2. A glimpse of such complexity is evident in the cross-tabulation findings for Table 2. For instance, this complexity is expressed at the level of group dynamics where the literature clearly indicates that individuals can become 'misguided' (cell 2) through exposure to corrupting influences of others where negative socialization practices of the police culture operate in work teams. Under such 'police culture' socialization failure individuals are more prone to succumb to misconduct when aided and abetted by a group context. Once started on the *misconduct* road it is a small step to more serious forms of *corruption* supported by group solidarity that 'condones' (cell 5) or, at the very least tolerates such deviance, and by extension into possible further *predatory policing* behaviors through greed (cell 7) individually or groups as in 'collusion' (cell 8) with other corrupt police or even in 'connected' (cell 9) coalition with criminals. Furthermore, at the organization level, there is ample evidence in the extant literature to indicate when an officer behaves 'unethically' (cell 3) other police often tolerate and hence indirectly 'condone' (cell 5) such deviant behaviour because of the code of silence in the police culture. This can lead to 'obstructive' (cell 6) and non-cooperative behaviors in the group towards organizational attempts to look into, via internal or external investigations, allegations and rumors of misdemeanors or corrupt practices.

Whilst no such cases of 'organisational-level' other than 'unethical' (cell 3) behaviours of individual police officers were found in the Norway sample used to compare the empirical usefulness of this matrix framework, it is nonetheless a strong 'theoretically' possibility in so far as the wider corruption literature contains instances of criminal 'obstruction' (cell 6) and criminal 'connectedness' (cell 9) by pockets of police in organisational units (Fitzgerald, 1989); Wood, 1997).

The implication for police oversight agencies is one of getting wiser and smarter in finding ways to deal with detecting the complexities of police crime in order to successfully prosecute such criminal elements with policing organisations. Clearly, much more in the way of systems-wide integrity testing is required to deal with the most serious forms of 'organisational' deviance.

In summary, the findings in general provide empirical support for the aim of this study to explore the extent to which this conceptually-derived continuum of police crime is an empirically useful instrument for police oversight agencies. The study did this by testing the hypothesis that as the seriousness of police crime increases so does the severity of court sentences as measured by imprisonment time. In other words, the conceptually-derived continuum by Dean et al, (2010) and its theoretical development for this study into a matrix framework is consistent with how Courts, at least in Norway, appear to actually apply an implicit 'seriousness' scale in terms of the severity of the sentence given to deviant police officers. Hence, this matrix framework used to operationalise the nine categories of this police crime continuum has relevance not only for use by police oversight agencies but also by Courts as a sentencing guide.

CONCLUSION

This study sought to address a research question about the empirically usefulness of the police crime continuum devised by Dean et al (2010) for police oversight/watchdog agencies. This study undertook a retrospective analysis of court documents of police officers convicted in Norway for a range of criminal behaviours and then comparing the seriousness of the conviction in terms of length of jail sentence with the conceptual-derived categories drawn from the extant literature as represented in a 3x 3 matrix cell framework. The significance of this archival research is that while the findings provide support for the rotten-apple thesis of police crime it also pushes the boundary beyond this simplistic view of 'individual' police deviance to expose the more serious nature of group level police deviance. Empirical data of the severity of prison sentences delivered by Norwegian courts affirms the utility of the underlying seriousness scale of this police crime continuum and attests to the complexity of the nature of criminal police deviance and watchdog attempts to expose and root the most serious forms of organisational-level police crime.

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