

The multiple faces of police identity in Wales: A case study in public order policing

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ABSTRACT

This article explores how policing identities shape and inform understanding and practice within public order (PO) policing. Of particular focus is how police use and apply their national identity as a means of explaining their PO policing approach. The study was based in South Wales, UK and findings are drawn from a qualitative multi-methodological approach with the regional police force. I identified that officers drew upon a stereotypical version of Welsh identity to explain their approach to PO policing that was largely characterised as friendly and interactive. Officers claimed that it was their reflexive instinct to engage in this way because this was simply a manifestation of their Welsh identity and character. While this was an important characteristic and source of pride for officers, I argue that this identity appeared to mask, or in some cases enable, PO policing that had a more traditional focus of law and order.

INTRODUCTION

In this paper, I contribute to the understudied area of policing identity in Wales which has historically been ‘invisible within debates on policing’ in the UK (see [Jones *et al.*, 2022](#)). It focuses on the identity of Welsh police officers within the context of public order (PO) policing in South Wales Police (SWP). Before discussing the methodology and findings of my research, I provide a brief contextual overview of UK police identity and then I outline literature that has explored national identity. After that, I summarise literature that has explored national identity in policing, before providing a snapshot of PO policing culture. In conclusion, I argue that while SWP claimed that their PO approach was influenced by their ‘friendly’ Welsh identity, their main objective still centred around controlling crowds.

When police identity is explored in the UK reference is often made to the formation of the first modern police force, the Metropolitan Police, and the famous Peelian principles¹ which symbolised the way that they, and eventually all British police, should operate ([Emsley, 2009](#); [Newburn, 2008](#)). This history reveals how police identity came to symbolise a representation of social order that was cultivated by broad notions of ‘community and belonging’ ([Bradford, 2014](#), p. 22). It is within this arrangement that police identity in the UK became synonymous

with the morality of an imagined British community ([Anderson, 1983](#); [Loader and Mulcahy, 2003](#)).

In contrast to the Peelian image, British policing has been characterised as an organisation exerting its unbridled power as a ‘highly visible representation of the state’ ([Bradford, 2014](#), p. 23). This has been reflected in several examples of policing controversy. For example, a current UK independent inquiry into historical covert policing has revealed how some undercover police adopted the identities of deceased children and engaged in sexual relationships with those under investigation (in some cases fathering children) ([Undercover Policing Inquiry, 2023](#)). Questions have also been raised in more routine policing, such as stop and search. In the UK, people of colour have been disproportionately stopped by police for decades ([Ellis, 2010](#)). Recent data suggest that Black Asian and Minority Ethnic males aged 15–34 accounted for 32% of stop and searches despite only comprising 2.6% of the population in England and Wales (hereafter E&W) ([Home Office, 2022](#)).

It is in this context, that police identity could be more closely connected to the subcultural values of a ‘canteen culture’ where bigoted and cynical attitudes are articulated behind closed doors ([Waddington, 1999](#)); and ‘cop culture’ which include characteristics such as an emotional sense of mission and exercising unreasonable levels of suspicion in the course of duty ([Bowling *et al.*, 2019](#)). While [Waddington \(1999\)](#) argued that this culture was not restricted to police, recent reviews of UK policing suggest a toxic culture has persisted ([Casey, 2023](#)).

¹It is a widely held belief that, Robert Peel (1788–1850), in his capacity as Home Secretary was the sole author of these principles, but according to [Reith \(1952\)](#) they were co-authored by Peel and several civil servants.

NATIONAL IDENTITY AND WALES

National identity, in terms of the region, country, or state that an individual has an affiliation with has been described as one of the most powerful representations of one's identity (Gellner, 1983). This is due to it being able to conjure a collective belonging to specific cultural practices, ancestry, and/or language of a nation. It is precisely because of these ancestral connections that national identity or nationalism has been used as an instrument to belittle people, engage in racial prejudice, or wage wars against other territories or states (Hall, 1996; Hutchinson, 2017).

Subscribing to a national identity can also be understood as a catalyst of political self-determination and this has acted as means for new nation-states to emerge and for former colonised countries to form independent sovereign governments (Dahbour, 2002). It is in this tradition that national identity corresponds with liberal principles (Tamir, 1993), although as Beran (1988, p. 322) points out that despite its somewhat positive emancipatory endeavours, the act of self-determination can exclude some 'ethnically distinctive groups'. However, national self-determination can also be sourced through banal acts of cultural expression, as well as the promotion of inclusivity (Billig, 1995).

There is a dearth of literature that has explored Welsh identity (see Balsom, 1985; Brooks, 2017; Carter, 2010). In north-west and parts of west Wales, identity is connected to the Welsh language (*Cymraeg*), a closer allegiance to cultural events such as the *Eisteddfod*,² and more favourable attitudes towards Welsh independence (Balsom, 1985). Conversely, in north-east, mid, and east Wales a British rather than Welsh identity is more prominent (Balsom, 1985). Identity in south Wales is commonly presented as 'characteristic for the whole of Wales' mainly because popular media has traditionally focussed on this area (Carter, 2010, p. 16). Evans (2019, p. 181–182) describes it as:

A set of embodied behaviours, synonymous with a working-class habitus ... this understanding of Welshness as a class habitus was mediated and reinforced by pop culture representations of Wales such as *Gavin and Stacey*, *Stella* and MTV's *The Valleys*. Positive connotations of this version [of identity include] – warmth, friendliness, openness, collectivism, and community.

Despite Evans' (2019) succinct definition, the author argues that Welsh identity in south Wales is complex as it comprises of areas with more fluid descriptions of national identity. Like other nations in the UK (England, Northern Ireland, and Scotland), and other countries around the world, subnational or state allegiances in south (and all) Wales are primarily based on political decisions. Descriptions of Welsh identity discussed later in this paper do not capture these nuances and

²An Eisteddfod is a festival in Wales that celebrates Welsh music, dancing, and poetry. Eisteddfods are held annually in Wales and are predominately attended by people who speak Welsh although there has been a steady increase in non-Welsh speaking communities attending with the aim of reconnecting to traditional Welsh culture (Knapman, 2018).

instead are reflective of Evans' (2019) definition highlighted earlier.

While there exists regional variations, identity in Wales has developed through myths and concentrated (re)constructions of successes in entertainment and sporting contexts (Edwards, 2007; Hobsbawm, 1990; Johns, 2000). Traditions such as male voice choirs and watching rugby, and iconographic symbols that include love spoons, daffodils, leeks, and the *Draig goch* (red dragon) on Wales' national flag have become representations of Welsh identity throughout most of Wales (Carter, 2010; Murphy, 2017).

NATIONAL POLICE IDENTITY

Expressions of national identity in relation to policing are typically understood as reflecting the key police role as representing the coercive power of a state. During the 1980s UK industrial disputes and inner-city riots, the police were inextricably tied with the British state's analysis that these disturbances were caused by people who, in effect, did not subscribe to supposed British values. Former Prime Minister, Margaret Thatcher infamously claimed that British-born Black communities were a population that had swamped British culture (Thatcher, 1978), and that British-born miners who picketed during industrial action in 1984–85 were 'enemies of the state' (Milne, 2014). Policing during these disputes was particularly repressive and symbolic of conservative British identity (Scruton, 1985).

In contrast to these perspectives, there are examples of the police drawing on national identity to mould positive cultural values as was the case in South Africa shortly after apartheid ended (Faull, 2017); and as a visual representation of a country's so-called established principles of hospitality, such as 'meet-and-greet' policing in Canada (Davies and Dawson, 2018). These positive and welcoming 'national imaginaries' have also been evident in the 'discursive construction of policing' in Scotland (Gorrige and Rosie, 2010, p. 66–67).

Policing identity in Wales is predominately understood through literature that has explored British identity. With some exceptions (see Machura *et al.*, 2019, 2022), research into Welsh policing is underexplored. Jones *et al.* (2022) argue that a simplistic explanation for this is the size of Wales when compared with England which is much larger.³ This difference reflects the number of police forces in both countries (Wales has four⁴ out of 43 regional police forces in E&W), although according to the Home Office (2022), Wales has more officers per 100,000 people at 232, with England having 230. Policing in Wales is attached to the unitary 'E&W' criminal justice system that is held to account by UK Government bodies. However, since devolution and the establishment of a Welsh Government and the *Senedd* (Welsh Parliament) in 1999, policing has become influenced by Welsh Government though devolved local government, health, and social welfare policies. This has led to a growing divergence of policing between E&W (see Jones *et al.*, 2022). (Jones and Wyn Jones, 2022). Exploring the influence

³According to the most recently available data from the Office for National Statistics (2021), the population of Wales was estimated to be 3,170,000. England's population was estimated to be 56,550,000.

⁴Dyfed-Powys Police, Gwent Police, South Wales Police, and North Wales Police.

Table 1: Events observed

Event	Venue
Cardiff City v Leeds United, English Football League Championship game	Cardiff City Stadium, Cardiff
City of the Unexpected (Roald Dahl Festival)	Cardiff city centre
Elvis Music Festival	Various locations in Porthcawl
Swansea City v Manchester United, Premier League football game	Liberty Stadium, Swansea
Wales v South Africa, Autumn rugby series	Principality Stadium, Cardiff
International Boxing, Liam Williams v Gabor Gorbics	Cardiff International Arena, Cardiff
Reclaim the Power environmental demonstration	Vale of Glamorgan
40 Days of Life Campaign (anti-abortion demonstration)	Cardiff city centre
Cardiff Stop the Arms Fair (demonstration against the Defence Procurement, Research Technology and Exportability conference)	Cardiff city centre
International Women's Day Procession	Cardiff city centre
UN anti-racism day demonstration (organised by multiple protest group)	Cardiff city centre
Stand Up To Racism Wales' demonstration against Donald Trump's election as US President	Cardiff city centre
Protest against 'Trump's Muslim ban' (a demonstration against former US President's policy on banning people from six Muslim-majority countries organised by various local protest groups)	Cardiff city centre

lots of thank you letters saying how good they were treated by us by the fact that we speak with them.

(PO Commander)

I genuinely think [pause] I will say it, I think it's a part of being Welsh. I genuinely think it is within our culture that we speak to people, and you'll always have people that don't want to know and hate the police and whatever, but generally people feel that they can come and speak to us.

(Front-line PO officer)

These descriptions are remarkably like the findings presented by [Gorringer and Rosie \(2010\)](#) where Scottish officers were keen to connect their policing style to their Scottish identity. However, SWPs approach could just be interpreted as policing that is commensurate with the common police mission which strives to be the 'most trusted and engaged' ([National Police Chiefs' Council, 2023](#)). SWPs claim of distinctiveness through their national identity, follows a tradition in UK policing, where individual forces draw upon certain factors to demarcate differences. [Young's \(1993, p. 7\)](#) ethnographic research with West Mercia Police in a predominately rural area of England is an example of this where rural 'cultural identity' influenced 'personal conceptions of self' and policing which was allegedly more personable when compared with policing elsewhere.

Some officers discussed beyond superficial claims about Welsh friendliness and referred to the social geography of south Wales. According to one commander, the many small communities that exist in south Wales engendered cohesive social characteristics that included 'gregariousness' and being 'hospitable'. It was inferred that friendly communal interactions were commonplace in south Walian communities and were thus seamlessly transferable in PO contexts where engagement and communication are key. One officer suggested that the industrial past of

south Wales had meant people were more committed to collectivist and 'traditional' notions of community:

I come from a family that has always worked in public services and I strongly believe in serving the public ... If you think about Wales, and specifically south Wales ... you think about places like the Rhondda valleys, where I was born, you've got coal mining, you've got steel, you've got the docks in Cardiff and Swansea. So, you've got these industrious areas where people are referred to as 'the salt of the earth'. It is a very working-class type orientated country.

(PO Commander)

This officer's explanation resonates with [Evans' \(2019, p. 181\)](#) description of Welsh identity that is 'synonymous with working-class habitus'. Reference to symbols and locations of Wales' industrial past, provides this officer with a way of making sense of their identity. The semiotic landscape of south Wales creates a sense of place that generates a positive emotional connection, especially through the fond description of the Welsh working class as 'the salt of the earth' ([Bole et al., 2022](#)). Interestingly, the officer did not refer to the policing of the industrial disputes in the 1980s that has been condemned as an example of partisan policing and as a process that arguably facilitated deindustrialisation ([Scraton, 1985](#)). Instead, the narrative that this officer presents is resonant with the ways in which Scottish police discursively constructed their Scottish identity as a deliberate attempt to appeal to the 'popular attitudes and values' about national identity ([Gorringer and Rosie, 2010, p. 76](#)).

References to working-class communities and traditions could be applied to similar industrial communities and is not just a reflection of Welsh identity. For example, in former industrial areas of northern England, it is feasible that police there could draw on this identity to distinguish themselves from the policing in areas of southern England that do not have

an industrial heritage and where there is less of a community-orientated tradition (Mann and Fenton, 2017). However, SWP participants continued to suggest that their policing was influenced by their Welshness. This impression was further strengthened when they compared their style of PO policing with forces in England with whom they had worked with when they provided mutual aid.⁵ This comparison against the ‘implicit other’ was also evident in Gorrington and Rosie’s (2010, p. 74) study and can be considered a normative mechanism in which Celtic nations of the UK compare themselves (see McDonald, 1986).

Some SWP participants suggested that many forces in England were unnecessarily aggressive. One commander struggled to comprehend why English officers would not ‘talk to people’ when it seemed to be ‘common sense’. This viewpoint was expressed by another commander when discussing the policing of a protest:

SWP and the Welsh are renowned for being approachable. We went to a [far-right] march in [city in England], you’ve got mutual aid cops from all over the country. You’ve got [one English police force] battering people, line cops doing this [gesticulating baton use], [another English police force] battering people, and SWP talking.

(PO Commander)

A common story relayed from officers was an occasion where SWP provided mutual aid during a sustained period of unrest in an English city. According to SWP, local police were apprehensive about any form of engagement with community members such as their reputation. However, SWP supposedly engaged in their friendly style which calmed tensions:

The boys on the van had their helmets out on the green playing football with the kids. The [English police] spotter [intelligence officer] came along and said, “What are you doing?” “We’ve never had that level of non-hostility towards the police”. We were then referred to as the ‘engagement officers’; and it was just for the fact that we talked to people.

(Front-line PO officer)

This account of policing reinforced the characterisation of a ‘Welsh’ policing approach, although this description, as well as the weight placed on Welsh identity in general, could be understood as an ‘exaggeration’ which ‘has long been identified as a defining feature of police’ (Loftus, 2010, p. 4).

Dancing and diffusing tensions

My observations of policing in some instances appeared to confirm SWPs loquacious approach, although due to the fast-moving nature of PO operations it was not always possible to confirm whether these interactions were reflexive expressions of Welsh character, an organisational policing response (e.g. a decision based on protocol from the National Decision Model⁶ or operational matters) or an amalgamation of these. When I did get

the opportunity to speak with officers, they mostly referred to organisational policing responses as the key influence. This was in stark contrast to the prevalence that Welsh identity-led approaches were discussed in interviews and focus groups. Nevertheless, some of my observations closely resembled SWP officers’ verbal accounts of an approach potentially influenced by Welsh character. At festivals and sports events, it was characteristic for officers to engage in a friendly manner with patrons. This engagement included posing for photos with rugby fans, and dancing with festival attendees.

During my observation period, SWP encountered very little disorder. On the occasions that they did, it was low level and was typically resolved through dialogue. While dialogue is an option for the police and recommended in guidelines (College of Policing, 2023), SWPs management on these occasions appeared to resemble the Welsh identity narrative that was put forward by participants. At an observation at a football game, I watched an incident where two inebriated male fans approached a group of three male officers in a provocative fashion where they continuously chanted about their team’s victory. One of these fans was swinging his sweat-soaked t-shirt above his head and when he got within a close enough distance, he rubbed his shirt into the face of one of the officers. This officer’s response to this was to grab it off him and playfully rub it in the fan’s face. The reaction to this was one of laughter followed by a conversation about the game. The officer that had the shirt rubbed in his face explained to me, that while the incident could warrant intervention such as a warning or arrest, he understood the emotionally driven behaviour of the fan because he experienced similar behaviour at his local rugby club. While most of the officers during my observations referred to police protocol in terms of explaining decision-making, it was noteworthy that this officer referred to masculine cultural norms at a rugby club, a venue that holds symbolic cultural significance in Wales (Andrews, 1991; Johns, 2000; Whitehead, 2002).

‘Legitimate value’

Waddington (1994, p. 69) identified that an effective approach in PO policing for London’s Metropolitan Police was to strategically ‘win over’ crowds. This was managed through ‘police guile’ where friendliness and tolerant forms of policing could engineer compliance (Waddington, 1994, p. 84). While SWP suggested that their PO approach reflected their Welshness, it enabled a more traditional policing purpose where officers could:

[g]et an overall feel of the crowd that [they are] dealing with. [We] just go over have a chat and mingle with them, do a bit of engagement. [We] just get a general feel if they’re pro-police, what they’re there for and just take it from there really.

(Frontline PO officer)

SWPs approach thus had utility in terms of it likely to generate perceptions of legitimacy from the crowds policed. This purposeful act could ‘increase cooperation’ as ‘it draws on people’s feelings, responsibility, and obligations’ (Tyler, 2004, p. 88). It

⁵On occasions a host police force will request mutual aid support to assist the policing of events that are typically high risk. When SWP compared their approach with other forces, they would usually be reflecting on policing mutual aid events.

⁶The National Decision Model is a decision-making tool used by police officers to make either instant or slow-time decisions (College of Policing, 2013).

was engagement with a purpose as securing legitimacy would make for easier policing:

If the crowd see what we're doing as legitimate value the public will be like, 'fine boys take them away'. If we step in to lock someone up and they don't understand, then the crowd will get antsy.

(PO Commander)

At PO police briefings, where rationales behind policing approaches are typically communicated (Harrison and Adlard 2018), this 'winning over' strategy was evident. Policing was described as friendly, accommodative, and unique to SWP, although with clear emphasis placed on how it could help operations:

We do things differently [referring to a Welsh policing approach]. We have meet and greet and we like to talk to people, gain compliance through cooperation rather than sheer numbers.

(PO Commander, demonstration, pre-event briefing)

Talk to them; ask them how they are doing? Ultimately, that is your job ... tell them you are here to police peaceful assembly or procession and ensure public safety. Chances are, tell them that, and they'll walk away. If you don't say anything, then they'll stay.

(PO Commander, demonstration, pre-event briefing)

These commanders suggest that basic levels of engagement with crowds' help generate 'compliance', and if officers do not engage, it would likely lead to issues. Ironically, and according to one commander, the purpose of police engagement in demonstrations is to ensure that it does not last for too long and that 'they'll [demonstrators] walk away'. When policing protests, there is more of a tradition that demonstrators will question police actions (Smith, 2018), and therefore familiarity with the key strategic objective of 'polic[ing] peaceful assembly or procession' is a method to 'win over' and secure perceptions of legitimacy. Communication in this context is far removed from the way that SWP said they naturally drew their Welsh identity to engage with people. Indeed, the commander explicitly instructs SWP 'that it is [their] job' to 'talk to them'. Cronin and Reicher (2006) have suggested that PO commanding officers are likely to be more concerned about accountability issues when compared with frontline officers and therefore the tone of communication from this commander appears to be a reflection of these concerns.

SWP did engage in other tactics to 'win over' crowds. When I observed a protest at a local coking plant, SWP decided that the best way to police protestors was to facilitate the protest on the plant's private land. This involved negotiation with the proprietors with whom the police had to convince that plant production would not be disrupted by the protestors.⁷ At a pre-event

⁷This had happened at a previous protest at the same plant. Protestors handcuffed and glued themselves to plant machinery and unravelled a large flag at the top of one of the main colliery towers.

meeting, SWP discussed that a procession on plant grounds would produce a positive response as protestors would be able to 'shout at machinery' and it would give them 'great photo opportunities' (PO Commander). This strategy was presented as a gesture from SWP who had negotiated access where grievances were centred. It was a 'win over' approach, and an example of how PO policing centred on control (as demonstrators could be more closely supervised within the confines of the plant) could be disguised within SWP's friendly Welsh policing approach. Waddington (1994, p. 127) argued that 'police ... employ structures instituted for their own purposes'. Policing at the plant appears to represent this for the definitive 'objective [of] control' (Waddington, 1994, p. 127).

'You and other people may not agree with them'

SWP narratives of crowds varied and were contingent on the event. In events that SWP were more familiar with, such as the policing of sports, there was a degree of understanding and relatability in terms of ritualistic behaviour. These representations were predominately observed at rugby games, where the Wales rugby union team are heralded as cultural icons and attendance at games is symbolic of national identity (Johnes, 2000). A cultural activity for many Welsh fans attending an international rugby game, is to drink excessive amounts of alcohol where a 'symbiotic relationship' has remained as central to 'rugby today as it ever did' (Jones, 2011). While rugby was not specifically referred to as a symbol of officers' Welsh identity in my research this relatable representation was inferred in briefings:

There may be a few issues with fans being drunk. It's a late kick off, so you can understand that, but the stewarding at the stadium is pretty good, so we won't have any problems.

(PO commander, rugby briefing, emphasis added)

Despite understanding and relating to the behaviour of rugby fans, it would be misleading to suggest that SWP were not concerned with alcohol consumption because it had led to disorder before (Clark, 2016; Hitt, 2021).

In contrast to rugby fans, demonstrators were described as exceptional and unrelatable which follows a familiar narrative of how the police view protestors (see Jackson *et al.*, 2019). In briefings, PO commanders described demonstrators as committed individuals who could pose a risk due to disruptive activist tactics. This sentiment was summed up by a commander at a briefing:

They are [demonstrators] professional and passionate ... you and other people may not agree with them, but it is not your job to pass judgement – it is democracy.

(PO commander, protest briefing, emphasis added)

While the commander makes clear that officers must remain impartial, this was preceded by a comment that suggests that demonstrator actions are questionable in terms of officers 'not agree[ing] with them'. These views were expressed elsewhere in my research. At another protest, a PO commander said to me that 'protestors were wasting their time' and that

grievances should be resolved through discussion with politicians. Furthermore, this commander questioned the personality of demonstrators by suggesting that they were ‘the type of people that were likely to have been bullied in school’ inferring that such experiences had influenced their behaviour. This attitude towards protestors could be understood as ‘othering’ (Jackson *et al.*, 2019). At another meeting before a demonstration, SWP constructed a narrative surrounding a protest that appeared contrary to the event’s low-risk classification. This was articulated by commanding officers placing weight on historical activism rather than police-gathered intelligence that suggested, a ‘family orientated’ event. At this meeting, officers described a ‘red herring’ incident that happened a few days before the protest. It involved a ‘suspicious’ vehicle that was parked close to the protest venue and one which police thought could be used for malicious intent. Despite a police investigation that revealed that this was not the case, SWP used this story to propagate a certain narrative. These attitudes towards demonstrators illustrate an unusual level of suspicion which is a traditional characteristic of ‘cop culture’ (Bowling *et al.*, 2019). While SWPs understanding of demonstrators did not manifest into restrictive policing it was a perspective which was removed from the genial Welsh identity approach, and one which appeared to be motivated by traditional law and order policing.

DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSION

In this paper, I have drawn attention to policing identity within the context of PO policing in Wales. Officers explained that their friendly PO policing approach could largely be explained by their Welsh identity. This comprised of a stereotypical description of Welsh identity which included characteristics such as being talkative, welcoming, and communal (Evans, 2019). According to many officers, these personal qualities would be instinctively used to manage crowds. Beyond superficial descriptions, Welsh identity was connected to working-class heritage and the community-orientated social geography of south Wales. My research also identified that SWP believed that their PO policing approach was different from police in England who would supposedly be more aggressive.

There is a tradition in UK policing of individual forces proclaiming that their respective approach is more effective than others (Gorringer and Rosie, 2010; Young, 1993). SWP fall into that tradition. SWPs claim that their Welsh approach reflected cohesive communities that originated during industrial times could also explain policing approaches in many locations that share these same characteristics. In contrast to SWPs explanation of a Welsh policing style, my observations revealed that policing was influenced by rudimentary police protocol or operational decisions. Moreover, and most importantly, SWPs main priority in PO policing was to exert control. In this paper, I have argued that SWPs friendly Welsh identity explanation masked this control element that is essential in PO policing. I suggest that this approach represents a version of ‘policing guile’ where officers purposefully aimed to ‘win over’ crowds (Waddington, 1994). SWPs

friendly Welsh policing reputation could also be further questioned on the grounds of recent events in south Wales that include the use of controversial Automated Facial Recognition cameras at PO events, prejudiced policing that has resulted in the deaths of black men after they have been in contact with the police (Harrison, 2021),⁸ and rioting in Cardiff that was allegedly instigated by unlawful policing by SWP (Owen, 2023).⁹ These examples present a more universal version of police identity in Wales and one which cannot be dissociated from an organisation that exerts its monopoly of power over citizens (Waddington, 2000).

For these reasons there are clear fallibilities in concluding that SWPs policing approach is truly distinctive in its friendliness, although my research does contribute to the small corpus of literature that has explored national identity within policing. Like Gorringer and Rosie’s (2010) analysis of Scottish policing identity, SWP were keen to express that their approach was reflective of their national identity. This is noteworthy, especially within the context of policing governance. Policing in Wales is a reserved UK policy area. This means that police in E&W have the same organisational and accountability structures. When compared with Northern Ireland and Scotland where policing is devolved, and where there might be an expectation of policing reflecting the values of those respective nations, it is interesting that expressions of Welsh identity was so pronounced in my research. However, there has been a growing divergence of policing in E&W due to the influence of devolved Welsh Government policy (see Jones *et al.*, 2022). The influence of devolution (or decentralisation) and policing are not just restricted to Wales though. Political influence and agenda setting in policing has become more of a focal point since the introduction of Police and Crime Commissioners (PCC) in E&W in 2012 (see Raine, 2016) and, in recent years, subsequent handover of PCC responsibilities to elected Majors in some of England’s ‘city regions’¹⁰ (London, Greater Manchester, and West Yorkshire) (Jones *et al.*, 2022).

Future research should consider the influence that devolution is having on police identity, and in Wales this needs to be explored beyond the south. In a PO policing context, further research needs to analyse the role of conventional police identity in terms of how this influences approaches. While SWP believed that their Welsh identity had a positive influence on their policing, analysis in my research showed that their approach was still underpinned by control. It is in this respect that future research considers, the value of differing policing identities in terms of influence it has in PO policing.

⁸This is referring to two separate incidents. The first of these was the death of Mohamad Hassan in Cardiff in 2021 (BBC, 2021a), and the second was the death of Moyied Bashir in Newport, south Wales also in 2021 which is within the geographical boundaries of Gwent police and not SWP (BBC, 2021b).

⁹At the time of writing (August 2023), SWP are currently being investigated by the Independent Office for Police Conduct (IOPC) for their role before rioting in the Cardiff suburb of Ely (IOPC, 2023). Prior to the outbreak of these disturbances, two police officers appeared to chase Kyrees Sullivan, 16 and Harvey Evans, 15 in a police van. Sullivan and Evans died during this chase in what SWP labelled a traffic incident (South Wales Police, 2023). The two officers who chased Sullivan and Evans have been served with gross misconduct notices (IOPC, 2023).

¹⁰With the primary of economic regeneration, the UK Government has assisted with the development of ‘city regions’ by providing devolved budgets to several regions in England. In 2021, there were 11 devolution deals in England (Jones *et al.*, 2022).

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