Off Beat: Police as Protestors and use of Twitter as a Tactical Online Public Space

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Submitted in partial fulfilment of
PhD in Communication Studies

Awarded by

Bournemouth University

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Abstract

This research examines the use of social media by British police officers to protest, often anonymously, and challenge political influences on policing, which they otherwise could not, through tactical use of social media.

It studies British police officers acting as online protestors using Twitter to challenge these influences and decisions, and eventually run online campaigns, during the years of austerity and major police reform under a Conservative-Liberal Democrat coalition government. More than 35,000 police officers marched on Parliament in 2012, during a period when Twitter and other social media platforms were emerging as tools in protest movements, from the Arab Spring to Occupy.

This study, the first to examine these police officers and their action, proposes them as 'constrained protestors' operating in a tactical online public space. It identifies a typology of a niche form of protest, centred on their differing communication strategies and dynamics. It also develops a further typology of police Twitter use, which by including this overlooked group, places different emphasis on previously categorised aspects.

Critical case studies, alongside contextual background, were conducted on hashtag campaigns such as #NoConfidenceInTheresaMay and #StopPoliceCutsMay10, and semi-structured interviews were carried out with 17 police protestors.

A conceptual framework is derived from those used in previous analysis of protests, especially as applied to those using social media. There is a focus on collective versus connective action; communication dynamics, leadership and organisation; consideration of emotions; and protest spaces, along with elements of counterpublics and the public sphere.

Police officers have only featured in protest movement studies as instruments of the state for law and order. Equally, studies on the use of social media by police focus on the organisation's professional and corporate communications purposes. This research examines them as protestors, finding both commonalities and variances in the

theoretical aspects, while also arguing for their relevance in studies on police use of social media.

The thesis contributes to the body of knowledge and ongoing debates in the study of protest movements. It also contributes to the growing body of research on police use of social media.

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Acknowledgements

Sincerest thanks are due to my supervisors Professors Einar Thorsen and Stuart Allan who both strongly encouraged my PhD journey. Einar encouraged me from the first moment I toyed with 'filling out the form'. His invaluable guidance has been continuously positive and incisively helpful, which, along with his innate understanding and necessary patience, has made all the difference to its completion. He has gone above and beyond in keeping me on the journey when life threw some serious roadblocks in the way. Stuart gave me the confidence to submit a paper from my Masters thesis, and thus join him at a memorable international conference, Moral Panics in the Contemporary World, with the leading scholars Stanley Cohen, Jock Williams and Chas Critcher, whom I had previously only met through their writings.

Both Stuart and Einar made a PhD seem feasible, not least due to their down-to-earth approachability, warmth and humour which have helped many others on such a journey. I feel truly fortunate to have had such supervisors.

I was also fortunate in the administrative presence of Cansu Kurt-Greenn, who has been unfailingly helpful, across the miles, in sorting various complications especially around my 'life's roadblocks', with her steady, friendly and reassuring capability of removing worries. I will have added much more to her workload over the years.

For really ensuring I was still here to complete this thesis, my enduring gratitude and lifelong debt goes to the Auckland Rescue Helicopter crew, who plucked me from a forest somewhat broken, but in time, and the staff of Auckland City Hospital ICU and Orthopaedic wards who successfully put me back together again over the past 18 months.

This thesis would, of course, not have been possible without my busy and work-pressured interviewees. They gave so generously of their scarce time to connect with me and share their knowledge and experiences. They also gave their trust. For all of this, I am truly grateful.

Thanks also to family and friends for their support and encouragement as well as my former workplace Bournemouth University for providing such a wonderful opportunity in the first place, and my current workplace AUT University, which, along with my colleagues there, has been as considerate and supportive as possible to enable me to

Chapter 1 Introduction

Like other marching protestors, they came from all over to congregate at the appointed time and place, some travelling overnight from further-flung parts of England and Wales, some straight from a working night shift, but all in good spirits, according to their social media posts on the day. All, more than 35,000, were buoyed by determination to get their message across - peacefully and in a very orderly manner, despite a palpable anger shown via their posts. It was unusually quiet, with no chanting, though they allowed themselves to slow handclap and boo as they passed the Home Secretary's office in Whitehall, apparently some of the "politest booing" ever heard at a protest. However, these protestors were different: they were police officers, and they were also off-duty for striking is forbidden to them. They were protesting then, in 2012, not only against cuts to police funding, as part of the Conservative and Liberal Democrat coalition Government's austerity measures in the public sector, but against its reform plans which included what they saw as a dangerous politicisation and privatisation of policing. Thus, not dissimilar to any protest march, they bore placards, with slogans with political messages: "Police for the Public not for Profit"; "Cuts are Criminal"; Cutting police by 20% is Criminal"; "Don't ConDem Policing"; "Our Communities are our Stakeholders"; all these were official placards of the Police Federation of England and Wales. Others were officers' own creations such as "No right to strike, every right to be shafted", while some wore tee-shirts with the message "Get Shafted and Carry On". Outside the Home Secretary's office they left the notice: "Policing by consent, established 1829, dismantled without consent 2012" (*The Guardian* 2012).

But this unusual physical and public protest manifestation was also buoyed by an online police protest activity which had already reached significant momentum, having been building in the preceding years. It was this which triggered this thesis.

There has been no previous academic study of these police protests and very little on the use of social media, especially Twitter, by individual police officers in a non-corporate or professional communications sense.

This thesis makes an original contribution to key debates in the protest movements field by examining early use of Twitter by police officers through the conceptual lens of this and other theory. It analyses how police officers were able to engender a protest movement on social media involving mostly anonymous individuals, initially just making use of the relatively new platform to communicate but gradually moving into online action.

The research in this thesis applies aspects of theories developed to examine protest movements, which were often against governments and authority, to police officers who generally are seen as representatives of authority and an instrument of control during protests. They are thus usually seen by protestors as the 'them' in 'them and us' but here the police would be conceptualised in the unusual position of the 'us', with the government and others being the 'them'.

The march itself was organised by the Police Federation of England and Wales, the police officers' staff association. However, separately it was earlier, online, that many individual police officers and supporters had taken to Twitter in particular, from as early as 2008 – 9 to explore its possibilities. This activity was separate to any official police force accounts, with only one force having joined in 2008 and still not all by 2010. They were using Twitter ahead of any consideration and creation of official police policy on its use as it was not until December 2011 that Her Majesty's Inspectorate of Constabulary (HMIC) recommended such a policy should be developed. For individuals, some chose to tweet under their real name and rank, while others chose to create an anonymous or at least pseudonymous account. Initial reasons or motivations would vary, from connection and communication with public communities they served, or other police or wider public circles, to raising awareness of issues. In all cases they were increasing their own network connections with others. The nature of social media and policing, but also simply Twitter itself as a relatively young platform, was also a unifying shared interest. In some way, however, many of these initially disparate accounts appeared to come together in varying degrees to produce what could be clearly seen as forms of online protest activities. These initially centred on the Government's

proposed police reforms, which coalesced into its 2010 Vision of Policing. They continued as these began to be enacted in the ensuing years.. Momentum gathered as these proposals also combined with the Government's 2010 announcement of planned funding cuts. Individuals on Twitter began responding to announcements, challenging the reasoning behind them, the news media, and, increasingly directly, the politicians, or other 'architects' of the reforms, such as think tanks.

Such initial responses were very much made by individuals as individuals, even where Twitter followers echoed such sentiments or retweeted. However, creative and increasingly tactical use of the platform's tools produced 'unifying' hashtags which themselves often carried a message. In 2011, one proclaiming #noconfidenceintheresamay (then Home Secretary) was the subject of a successful Tweetathon which saw it reach No 5 in the UK trending boards. Others included #antiwinsornetwork (Tom Winsor was the first non-officer appointed as HMIC, Her Majesty's Inspector of Constabulary); #PFTP, Policing for the Public, not for Profit; and later, #CutsHaveConsequences. Creative individuals also added the use of images, and their own graphics and even videos.

This was happening even as the Twitter platform itself was emerging as a tool in worldwide and global protests, sometimes referred to at the time as "Twitter Revolutions" - and throwing new complications into the field(s) of study on protest movements. These protests included the 2009 Climate Camp, 2009 Toronto G-20 protests, 2009 disputed Moldova elections, the 2011 Arab Spring and the initial Occupy movement (Poell et al. 2018; Segerberg and Bennett 2011), all subject to wide-ranging study by researchers in this field. But researchers have also studied smaller, even niche, Twitter-mobilised mass protests, from South Korea's anti-beef rallies (2008) and the janitors' protest (2011) to a locally-rooted environmental campaign on the Swedish island of Gotland (Choi and Cho 2017; Orestig and Lindgren 2017). Because of this, a theoretical conceptualisation drawn from such research was strongly indicated as the most relevant and useful way to examine what appeared to be police protest activities on Twitter, and to best explore specific elements of interest for this thesis, which include unusual aspects of the position of the individuals involved as well as their constraints, and the notion of online protest space.

However, in the long history of protest action, policing tends to be associated, both in research and actuality, as an extension of the state as either 'law and order' or 'repression', especially of the democratic right to protest. Police officers themselves tend to feature as a by-note. So any public protest, even that such as any online expression of dissent, is unusual, and the 2012 police protest march was a rare example of street protest action - the biggest number that had ever done so.

Police do not feature in such protest movement literature except outside the parameters as an authoritarian presence. They are not generally seen to adopt the role of protestor, so naturally they have not been the focus of research into protestors' use of social media. Meanwhile the literature on police and Twitter, and other social media, is mainly limited to research into the institutional uses or lack of, and focuses mainly on recent practice.

However Twitter and other social media have now afforded officers new opportunities to engage in public discussion, debate and dialogue. Prior to Twitter, some police officers had created their own blogs under pseudonyms which allowed the possibility of a dissenting voice, at least from official lines. Some of these led to best-selling books such as Wasting Police Time by 'PC David Copperfield' (2006) and Perverting the Course of Justice by 'Inspector Gadget'(2008), while then-Detective Constable Richard Horton won the 2009 Orwell Prize for his blog under the pseudonym Nightjack. The advent of social media, particularly Twitter, has since enabled many police bloggers to reach not only a bigger audience, but a wider-ranging one. It also enables them to engender a more publicly visible debate. Nevertheless, this is not straightforward as regulations restrict public engagement in political matters, and expressions of political beliefs, along with anything that might bring police into disrepute.

In producing the first study of these police officers and their actions, and by using existing theory and debates, this niche police protest movement can also help further our understanding of protest movements. This thesis also contributes to the growing body of research on police use of social media, which has tended to focus on professional and corporate use with little study of independent and protesting individuals' use, and where it has, focusing mainly on its potential as an academic research source into aspects such as 'cop culture'.

This research also captures an important moment in time, in the emergence of Twitter use as a protest platform, and at a time of policing and socio political change. All these were in some sense experiencing a transitional moment, along with associated upheaval. It looks at the activity in the years leading up to the 2012 march itself as well as some key events that followed in the years after and are relevant to the study.

This thesis sought to find in what way this online protest activity by officers and sympathisers, and the ensuing physical protest, could be analysed and described; how and where it might chime with the study of protest movements; how the individuals dealt with the issue of anonymity and indeed possible cultural constraints of their very work organisation; what risks they faced and the role of any accompanying emotions they felt; how the individuals in it appeared to come together yet have their own very individual online presences; what, if anything, lay behind apparently spontaneous moments of 'digital enthusiasm'; how they saw themselves when using 'we'; and where, as in what spaces, and how they protested. The latter was also of interest because a march or physical public protest, of the type described at the start of this section, is an extremely rare event and, generally, just not an option for this group of protestors.

The research questions arrived at were:

RQ1 What were the motivations for individual police officers to use Twitter outside formal police organisation structures?

RQ2 To what extent did their use engender expression of dissent and protest?

RQ3 What evidence was there of leadership and co-ordination?

RQ4 How did forms, practices and epistemologies of police officers' Twitter protest compare to previously analysed digital protest?

Chapter Two reviews the literature around social media use by police organisations, which are highly hierarchical and regulatory and in some senses an antithesis to its spirit. It also provides context, backgrounding the evolution of social media deployment, from first use by individual officers and forces, and the conflicts arising. The literature in this area does not show a focus on police as protestors themselves, but the issues and tensions emerging around social media use give essential context, as do two studies on anonymous and otherwise officers' use of social media, independent to

their police organisation's official use. The chapter analyses Crump's typology of official police Twitter practice. His typology was used to code his seminal 2011 research *What are the Police doing on Twitter?*, and was the first of its kind to map police use of Twitter. Although mentioned or acknowledged by other researchers, it has not been further developed. This study reappraises his coding in terms of unofficial police Twitter activity, which was not considered in the original. The chapter also examines the concept of police or 'cop' culture, especially in terms of identity or identitisation, the latter proposed by Melucci as a better term to capture the dynamics of a collective (1995; 1996). The chapter also backgrounds the organisational structure and constraints faced by any police officer using social media, as mentioned briefly above and enlarged upon here. Police officers and their behaviour, are highly regulated, working as they do in a strongly hierarchically-structured organisation. As well as being forbidden to strike by law, police work under regulations, the breach of which carries potentially life-changing consequence. These restrictions are established on grounds of public and legal perceptions of impartiality, which deter them from expressing political affiliations, or views, or criticising the Government. They must avoid doing anything that will damage the reputation of the police itself.

Thus this research was interested in the motivations for officers deciding to protest online against, among other things, the proposed reforms, the logic behind reform decisions, the execution of them and substantial funding cuts. As mentioned, this online protest was underway well before PFEW's decision to call the physical protest, 2012 march against the Government's austerity measures of cuts to police funding. Similar cuts were the reason public sector workers protested, going on strike to march on the same day (prison officers, like police also forbidden from striking, nevertheless also carried out limited industrial action at this time).

To better conceptualise the framework for this research, Chapter Three examines the literature on key theoretical issues which have continued to be developed within the concept of online contemporary or 'new protest movements' using social media, and the new debates and issues arising from studies of these.

It notes the arrival and use of social media by protestors has further complicated the field of study, while offering new possibilities. The nature of large protest movements such as the 2010 Toronto G20 protest, the Occupy movements, post-election protests

during 2009 in Iran and Moldova, the 'Arab Spring' and others using social media highlighted an acceleration of activist connection and communication including message-spreading, and enhanced visibility of protest (Juris 2012; Poell and Darmoni 2013; Poell 2014; Shirky 2011). The arrival of digital media networks brought with it new theoretical considerations as well as revisions of the old, and it could be argued it has strengthened some of the traditional arguments over others, even giving new life to some which were at risk of neglect.

One such area concerns Melucci's theory of collective identity (1995; 1996) and its role in collective action, something which contemporary scholars such as Pablo Gerbaudo, Emilio Treré, Stefania Milan, Anastasia Kavada and others have urged a reconsideration of in researching the protest use of social media platforms. Melucci had felt that studies were hampered by a dualistic legacy of either structural analysis or individual motivations, parallel and sometimes entwined explanations but not filling a gap in explanation. This included not being able to show how social actors come together to form a collectivity, how they recognise themselves as part of it, and how (or why) it makes sense for them to act together. He stressed it should be remembered it was a process, ie constantly evolving, an open ended and dynamic process, due to the active relationships between the actors, and how they negotiate their interactions, all of which is of interest to this thesis' subject matter.

Later, a 'neglect' of collective identity concerned Gerbaudo and other scholars, who felt that many researchers focused on the new wave of social media-platformed protest from other viewpoints that marginalised the importance of Melucci's theory. In particular, the focus on structural organisation, and the emphasis on large digital networks, resulted in the formulation of the connective identity model (Segerberg and Bennett 2012), suggesting a redundancy of collective identity. And finally, they felt popular 'big data' methodologies were resulting in a neglect of qualitative methods, which, it was cautioned, were the only ones that could explore the points Melucci was highlighting.

Along with the connective identity model, came the concepts of networks or platforms such as Twitter, having horizontal rather than vertical communication structures, and this concept was also transferred to the protest movements using them (eg Penney and Dadas 2012). At their most controversial it was argued this apparently resulted in leaderless movements with the platform's structure and functions being what enabled the coming together of people into a movement. Others have rejected this, highlighting

different versions of organisation or leadership. In his rejection of this, Gerbaudo (2012, 2017) not only reiterated many 1960s and 70s counterculture movements as aspiring to the same 'leaderless' aims but highlights the ignoring of digital vanguards. He shows these as often behind the scenes, such as Facebook admins or "activist tweeps" who can be shown to play an organisational role, whether reluctantly or otherwise ie social media has facilitated a soft but complex form of leadership. Again, this thesis explores this aspect of the 'group' being studied as well as in various apparent campaigns.

Some scholars have also urged, in the light of social media-facilitated protests, a reconsideration of older debates around the emotional elements of such, especially when considering collective identity. Scholars have shown emotions are instrumental in online protest, such as moments of "digital enthusiasm" (Gerbaudo 2016b). He argues this is influenced by online "vanguards", who, through messages of an intensely emotional nature, assist in creating an online "emotional contagion" which can be instrumental in encouraging people to change from by-stander to participant.

The varying and often debated concepts of offline and online public space in protest movements are also examined as relevant to this thesis. Just as the arrival of social media further complicated and conflicted theories around protest movements so too the concept of public space is further expanded by the concept of 'online spaces'. A key element then, is where a movement is situated. Most literature focuses on online activity mainly as it helps to mobilise protestors to physical offline protest activity. However, the subjects of this study, police in the UK, are restricted from taking part in traditional physical offline protest activity (amid other restrictions mentioned earlier). So, this thesis looks for protest models in authoritarian regimes but finds, even here, some physical offline protest eventuates. Also challenged in an era of social media protest is Habermas' concept of the public sphere (1989). This has led to some polarising debates, while also triggering a reach towards theories examining counterpublics, or aspects of them, which can shed light on such movements.

Chapter Four explains the overall methodological approach and methods to contribute to answering these questions. A mixture of qualitative interviewing and critical case studies was used, with purposive selection. This research, from an ontological perspective, sought individuals' knowledge, motivations, views, understandings, interpretations, experiences, interactions, and emotions. Semi-structured interviews

were conducted with individuals identified though purposive selection, who were involved via Twitter in some or all of the events studied, or contributing in other ways through Twitter. From coding themes, a final subset was developed. The critical case studies are set within a researched contextual socio-political background. They include identified campaigns such as #noconfidenceintheresamay; other tags such as #timeonmyhands, the build up to and of the march itself, as well as relevant "moments of collectivity" on Twitter. This method involved research and close reading of publicly- available archival material, including posts on Twitter, Facebook, forums and blogs; news articles; photos and images; and documents of government and other organisations. In terms of tweets and posts, these also provided evidence of both individual and collective people's actions and decisions, and even some of the emotion, motivation or reasoning this research was interested in.

There were important ethical considerations especially around anonymity as most interviewees operated under this online, but it was also to protect people to enable them to speak freely, given the examples (shown later) of repercussions. This constrained the use of some interview extracts such as those mentioning specific incidents, people, events or locations. It also constrained full integration of the methods, again to prevent jigsaw identification between interviewees and events examined and described. It also meant the rich details of the interviewees' profiles could not be identified in the sampling description, publicly at least. Nevertheless, this did not thwart the overall aims of the research, including that of obtaining rich and important detail.

A further next two chapters show and analyse, with reference to the literature, the findings through the critical case studies (Chapter Five) and the in-depth interviews (Chapter Six).

Chapter Five outlines the contextual background of the political environment and police situation leading up to and at the time of the activity before examining and analysing three online protest hashtag activities, one of which involves an early tweetathon. It then examines and analyses the offline protest march, and the accompanying ongoing online protest activity, drawing on the literature. It develops findings and starts to conceptualise original elements of these protests with particular focus on tactical use of online public space, the elements of connective and collection action, the similarities and differences to researched protest action and the relevance of constraints on

protestors. These contribute towards answering all of the RQs. A typology of police protest Twitter practice is also developed.

Chapter Six shows and analyses the data gleaned from the semi-structured interviews and presented in defined categories. Part of this allows a typology of motivations to be created. Also, where relevant, analysis is in the context of the previous chapter's findings, as well as the literature, to give further depth and clarification. From this culmination, insights can be developed towards fuller answering of the RQs. At the same time this enables a new typology of overall police Twitter activity which includes police protestors to be developed.

The conclusion, in Chapter Seven, provides a synthesis of the conclusions drawn from the previous chapters, highlights key findings, explores the potential for theoretical points, and suggests further research possibilities.

As mentioned previously, this study helps to capture one original part of the moment in time when social media, particularly Twitter, was first being used in protest. In this case it was protest activity which was unusual in itself for this section of society. It aims to examine how a protest movement starts – how individual disquiet or initial murmurings unite and the relevance of the social media platform in this particular study. For example, how well, if at all, the participants knew each other before their Twitter presence, how and why they began using the platform and whether these motivations changed, and what the platform enabled. The nature of these protestors throws up interesting elements about barriers or deterrents to their actions and the nature of protest spaces. All of these aspects were important in locating the study within the conceptual framework developed from research and theory around protest movements, particularly 'digital protest', and those focused on Twitter, as well as concepts of space.

As the next chapter shows, there is a growing body of research around police and their use of Twitter, as well as other platforms. However, there is no real focus on the use by individual officers using it to protest. Nevertheless, the background of official police use is important, in understanding the complex context in which the study is set and the organisational and cultural constraints affecting such protest and protestors themselves, including the concept of police culture, and problems faced by some innovative police bloggers.

Chapter Two: Police Use of Twitter

2.1 Introduction

The arrival of social media brought with it complex issues for both the highly hierarchical and regulatory police organisations, and their officers, in terms of using it. This chapter examines the literature on police use of Twitter, in particular, to give an overview of the emerging tensions and issues arising. It also includes a contextual background, drawing strongly on news articles, on problems faced by the early vanguard of police bloggers and the emergence of police Twitter individuals.

Hu et al. (2018) claim that academic researchers have paid little attention to social media use by police (p.547) despite its growth among police departments worldwide. They highlight the early studies about what police 'do' on social media in official communications use (eg Crump 2011, discussed below) as well as more recent studies focusing on the impact of its use on police and agencies (Grimmelikhuijsen and Meijer 2015); organisational issues suggesting insufficient training to maximise Twitter potential with research resulting from the 2011 riots in London and other cities (Proctor et al. 2013).

Indeed, in a recent review of research on social media and policing, the authors found:

> Over the past decade, scholars in several disciplines have analysed social media's effects on policing. Despite their contribution, knowledge remains incipient and fragmentary (Walsh and O'Connor 2019, p.1).

However, there are studies about the uses of social media by localised police departments and services in the USA, Canada, Australia and Europe as well as the UK. Many indeed focus on what police official accounts are putting out on Twitter, and other social media, often via content analysis or big data methods, but also examine

implications for police communication and influence on police activities (O'Connor 2015; Ailleo 2017; Beshears 2017; Dai et al. 2017; Forsgren et al. 2018; Huang et al. 2017; van der Velde et al. 2015). Other researchers, such as Karen Bullock, examine this as well as what Twitter use has and hasn't, and might and might not, achieve (2017, 2018). UK police social media practice during specific incidents, such as the 2011 London riots, has been the focus of a number of studies (Proctor et al. 2013), including those of overseas (Denef et al. 2013). Again, these focus strongly on official police utilisation of the platforms and mediums. Likewise, Andrew Goldsmith's 2015 study focuses on the problems of social media use and police indiscretion, arguing a lack of understanding and training leads to harm, but, although discussing off duty use, it does not address the issues central to this thesis.

There are some interesting tangential studies which will be examined, with some elements useful for background or comparison. They come closest to this thesis' central focus, while also edging a gap in the literature which this thesis aims to contribute towards filling. Hesketh and Williams (2017) identifies Twitter as a new police "virtual canteen" or forum space, and refers to anonymous officers as key among those using it. However, their study's focus is on the potential of this as a valuable source for academic research and information, whether to study 'cop culture' or for increased police management awareness of officer concerns. The concept of the virtual canteen, though on blogging platforms rather than Twitter, arises earlier in Susie Atherton's 2012 study of anonymous blogging police officers' posts. These, however, she examined from a mainly police 'cop culture' viewpoint. These studies are the closest research to this thesis' topic. As such this chapter also includes contextual background essential to this thesis in showing what mainly charts the rise of not only official police Twitter use but that of individuals. This is gleaned from varied resource types, and and the next section begins this.

2.2 UK individual police use of Twitter – the early years

UK police forces have shown growing interest since 2008 in using social media to engage with the public, in a political agenda context to increase public trust and confidence in the police, as well as enlisting the public as jointly responsible for crime

fighting (Crump 2011). It's important to note that Crump's study, while a seminal one, documenting what was then known about the start of police Twitter use, relied on the Twitter lists kept by a colleague at the National Police Improvement Agency (NPIA). As explained in further details below, these lists only recognised what the list holder deemed official or real-name police accounts, or that would or could be identified as such.

Thus Crump (2011) identifies the oldest official account run by the force centrally, using the force name and branding, as that of the West Midlands Police, with its oldest returned tweet sent in December 2008. The oldest local police neighbourhood team account was that of the Sevenoaks local team (Kent Police) whose oldest returned tweet was February 20, 2009 (Crump 2011). This was followed swiftly by Inspector Dave Barf of North Yorkshire Police on February 23 2009 to represent the Whitby safer neighbourhood team @NYPWhitbySNT.

The first non-anonymous individual officer believed to start tweeting, entirely on his own initiative, was also from North Yorkshire Police, PC Ed Rogerson (later Inspector) of Harrogate @hotelalpha9 who joined on March 25 2009 (personal communication via Twitter, 2011). However, anonymous officer and blogger @ResponsePlod had joined a few weeks earlier on March 6 (Twitter date join). By Jan 2010, a number of anonymous or pseudonymous officers had joined, including @kennydownsouth and @bosco, to name a few (ibid). It is possible, if not highly likely, that there were earlier ones than these highlighted.

The sudden rise in the numbers of officially and unofficially tweeting police and sub groups came about ahead of any formal national policy on social media, in particular Twitter. The NPIA, set up in 2007 (and wound down and closed by 2012) to support police, particularly in the areas of information technology, information sharing, and recruitment, and establish best practices for community engagement, took on a 'facilitating role' as the Twitter platform gained traction. The Association of Police Officers agreed NPIA should take on a supporting role for forces using social media but that each force's practices would be subject to the force's own guidance (Crump 2011, p.9). By October 2010 there were 140 neighbourhood or local police teams on Twitter but only 36 police forces (of 43 in England and Wales) had corporate Twitter accounts. Six had not joined while four accounts were inactive (Crump 2011 pp.8, 13). Dorset had

opened one but kept it locked (personal observation). The increasing number of tweeting police were initially informally recognised by the NPIA's digital engagement officer Nick Keane, later of the UK College of Policing. Though not formalised, he kept Twitter lists which requires the forces' verification of the accounts on it and permission to tweet, whether group or individual. It was an often-daily growing list of more than 1500 by 2013, including accounts for police helicopters, and even dogs and horses. (Later it was subdivided, with 2453 for UK Cops who Tweet, 50 UK Police Force Twitter and numerous others among subdivisions of the latter forces). However, as explained, these lists did not include anonymous police tweeters who would not identify themselves or, for example, did not want their management to know who they were. The list also did not include the sometimes outspoken branches of the Police Federation although it did include their individual representatives if they were also force-approved tweeting officers.

Confirming the nature of growth, some users later explained that Twitter use "grew organically with little direction", with any later strategies only following this development rather than informing it (Bullock 2017).

> It felt like the right thing to do so we went on and did it, after we did it and learnt lessons we went back and properly put a formal strategy in place', noted one participant (Bullock 2017, p.7) .

Such an improvised approach, says Bullock, helps to explain a lack of clarity found in any overall objectives to using social media, with them at times even appearing to be in conflict with each other; also the widespread variation both within and between police constabularies of use, and both quality and content. Use was also applied differently depending on the amount, and type, of support available. Overall, the study's interviewees found support infrastructure for would-be officer Twitter use was "weak": official guidance and training was found to be of limited use, resulting in them learning how to use social media experientially through trial and error (Bullock 2017, p.6).

2.3 Police use of Twitter – different ways, different risks

> Embedding social media into police communications is challenging and the

technology itself will not bring about the organisational and cultural changes needed to transform police-citizen engagement (Bullock 2017, p.1).

By October 2010 Greater Manchester Police became the first in the world to launch a 24-hour tweetathon, posting on Twitter every incident logged in the time frame, mainly to raise awareness of the complex nature of what police dealt with, and how much time officers spent on non-crime matters. In terms of public engagement, this received a positive response, through social media and news media, and the force considered the awareness-raising aim was well achieved. This was followed a few months later by the Birmingham South Police 24-hour event in January 2011, which also aimed to increase community engagement by giving an insight into daily duties and answering questions (also successful, this was followed by a later identical event) .

By August of that year, Twitter use took on a more urgent purpose in the England Riots (also known as the London riots). The outbreak of rioting and looting had spread from Tottenham, London where protests began after the police shooting of Mark Duggan on August 4, as they attempted to arrest him on suspicion of planning an attack in retaliation for the death of his cousin. In the ensuing disorder, at various cities and towns across the country, police forces used Twitter in particular to make public service announcements, notably to refute ill-founded rumours of supposed incidents, and in doing so, to reassure the public (Crump 2011). There was also some success by police using Twitter analytics in thwarting incidents where people had gathered via social media (Williams et al. 2013). In one incident officers arrived at Oxford Circus in time to confront 50 to 60 youths gathering in response to a message stating 'Meet Oxford Circus shops going to get smashed up. Get free stuff' (HMIC 2011a). But there were difficulties with the sheer quantity of the social data appearing (Williams et al. 2013). And the report of the HMIC (which ironically at that time did not yet have its own functioning Twitter account) highlighted a need for better systems of monitoring community tensions via trends in social media (Williams et al. 2013; HMIC 2011a).

But individual officers have also used Twitter in innovative ways, often before their forces adopted it, to engage with people in their community – and beyond; for crime prevention and crime solving; to promote events and elements of the police culture; to present the 'human' side of police; to provide information about both incidents and the police job; and to address perceived attacks on police culture and working conditions by

management, the Government, and others. Blogs, YouTube videos and other social media may be combined with their tweets. Most of the latter were, or are, anonymous police tweeters, which though mostly 'aimed at' fellow police, garner a public following (some of these have pre-existed Twitter as blogs, for example, Inspector Gadget). Verification at grassroots level can sometimes be difficult but there is a raised awareness among such tweeters of 'Mittys' (an allusion to the fictional Walter Mitty) or fantasists after the Inspector Winter incident (Laville 2012. See also Chapter Four, p.93). Police Federation tweeters have also used Twitter to engage with the public in a way not possible before through the mediation of news media (Chamberlain, personal communication, 2014).

There was early evidence of a clash of views over corporate-speak and any suggestion of imposing a 'right way to tweet', as explored later in Chapters Five and Six. As mentioned, the NPIA offered support and suggestions to forces, but it was agreed individual constabularies would set their own guidance for social media practice (Crump 2011 p.10). Her Majesty's Inspectorate of Constabulary (HMIC), in its Dec 2011 Review, suggested police forces needed a social media policy in place to protect their reputation through staff use. It warned about the lack of guidance for personal tweeting by police staff. At the time of that report, although it stated the majority used it 'responsibly', of 469 cases of police or staff inappropriate use of all social media, 67 led to a caution, fine or dismissal (Dec 2011). Unusually for a somewhat culturally closed-ranks group (Reiner 1992), the clash over 'control' is frequently debated publicly on Twitter, especially every time a popular account is closed down or its operator censured or put under investigation, for example, @theDutySgt, @topshampolice, @newquaysgt, @responsesgt and that of James Patrick who has since left the force as a result (BBC, 2014). These cases and issues are discussed more fully in Chapter Five.

Although an ambitious national agenda led by the NPIA on behalf of the Association of Chief Police Officers (ACPO) promoted the use of social media, with a strategy guidance document entitle *Engage* (NPIA 2010), Crump, researching the possibilities concludes that "the constraints of police culture means that in terms of this ambition at least, Twitter has been used cautiously and as a reinforcement for existing communication" (2011). He believed that although it can be useful in localised incidents, Twitter was best used as a broadcasting tool, eg for sharing press releases and states "it is less conducive to serious deliberation and activism" (Crump 2011, p.5).

Twitter, with its own bottom-up model of development, while "a novelty in a hierarchical organisation", would not on its own "bring about the cultural change needed to make genuine engagement possible" (ibid, p.24). He also draws on research suggesting serious activism is a strong tie phenomenon and that weak ties rarely lead to high levels of activism (Shirky 2009). This is refuted to some extent by later scholars, as discussed in Chapter Three (Gladwell 2010; Penney and Dadas 2014; Poell, 2014; Pavan 2016). Crump suggests while social media already reduces the level of commitment needed to join in, Twitter actually minimises. Thus, he concluded that while networks are suitable for some engagement, they are "not for fundamental change, for which more committed styles and methods of leadership are needed" (Crump 2011, p.5). This didn't detract, he concluded, from its use as keeping communities informed but in terms of genuine debate and engagement it "seems likely" that Twitter's use would be to publicise their occurrence in other places, whether at meetings or online elsewhere, eg Facebook (ibid, p.25). He acknowledged that moving to more open communication is "inherently challenging" especially for a police service and cites Brainard and McNutt (2010): "asking officers to wear two hats – that of neutral, authoritative professional on the street and that of a facilitator and collaborator online, is asking a great deal" (p.4).

The lack of engagement with public on police social media accounts was also echoed in a 2014 study of the Top 10 US municipal police departments' official social media accounts (Brainard and Edlins 2014). They found no clear preference between them for any particular platform (out of Twitter, Facebook and YouTube) and that the majority made interaction with residents *possible.* However, while residents responded to PD posts, the PDs were less active in engaging with those responses and where they did they tended to end conversations by dropping out of them (ibid, p.14). The study highlighted exceptions, such as Dallas PD requesting engagement (in 2011) through a Facebook post for identifying a robbery suspect, but concluded this was not representative of general usage (ibid, p.15).

It is possible that this was still very much early days for police social media engagement in the US as later, and more recent, studies have found better engagement there and in the UK (Beshears 2017; Meijer and Thaens 2014; Fernandez et al. 2017), again referring only to official or recognised accounts.

In an effort to identify which posts engaged audience, an earlier study of Dorset Police's Twitter account found longer posts which included positive sentiment (and sent out before 4pm) received the most attention, as did placename posts about weather, roads and infrastructures, which were more likely to be shared via retweet (by tweeting citizens being helpful to others) than those about crime (Fernandez et al. 2014). The same authors' later UK-wide study found differences between corporate and non-corporate police accounts (note the latter are not anonymous individuals, but identified officers or positions or teams). One important difference was that for non-corporate accounts, the individual posting was key to generating engagement, whereas for corporate accounts this was related to the content. The corporate accounts mainly 'broadcast', and generally tweets were of a more formal tone, while non-corporates, using a friendlier tone, were also much more interactive with their audience. However tweets from both types received highest levels of engagement when they were also humorous (Fernandez et al. 2017, pp.299-300). The difference between such accounts also highlights the tension for police Twitter accounts, whereby friendly, engaging and humorous engagement tends to be at odds with the idea of traditional professional police communication as "neutral, impersonal and authoritative" (Bullock 2018, p.355; Reiner 2000). This is also reflected on more thoroughly later in this chapter. Most official sub-accounts, eg neighbourhood policing sections, separate to their official force account, are tightly controlled by the force's communications team, including who has access to them, for both controlling communications and lessening risk, Bullock (2017) found, when interviewing a sample of police officers and staff across five constabularies. Some communications or PR managers tend to prefer team Twitter accounts rather than those under a named individual (and some do not allow the latter or tightly control them), not least as when officers change position, or leave, it can affect continuity. But this control can affect the tone of posts and many interviewees felt that the individual-named accounts had better community engagement than the corporate-toned team ones. More to the point, "time and time again participants drew attention to how the successful Twitter accounts were essentially driven by personalities (ibid, p.9).

Participants in Bullock's 2018 other study also drew attention to how many corporate accounts were predictable, dull and even "banal" but she highlights again the tension for officers and staff in using humour "due to its disruptive qualities" (Bullock 2018,p.356).

The use of humour disrupting the organisational identity of a public service such as police is one tension explored by Rasmussen in a study of a range of Norwegian

emergency and security services via interviews with their communications staff, often directors, identified as those who worked the most with the organisations' social media accounts (2017). A book of 'funny tweets' by police in Norway has won social media awards, with a highlight being a Norwegian security police tweet to the CIA: "Welcome to Twitter @CIA. Better late than never" (ibid, p.89). But humour, argues Rasmussen, can throw up challenges for such organisations' use of it on social media:

> while humour helps fashion more flexible and risk-taking organisational identities, it can also stand contrary to a bureaucratic ethos of public servantship and equal treatment. Dilemmas thus arise for public authorities that seek to adjust to the times and still remain 'in character' (Rasmussen 2017, p.89).

Humour fits with the more informal and even personalised communication style of social media; but a tension exists with personalising civil servantship which risks altering the relationship between citizens and institutions such as police, which by the nature of their powers and responsibilities are in a different position from citizen to citizen. Humour "always contains personal valuations" so too high a frequency is also at odds with the stance of impartial "bureaucratic ethos" which "legitimises a public authority's superiority and power" (ibid, p.107). Use of humour can improve public engagement with posts, and with popular ones by extension may increase the popularity of the organisation itself; but this can be at risk of its organisational identity – dominating what should be its identifying character due to its key roles (which are generally of a serious and professional nature).

Meanwhile, Bullock had not intended her 2017 research to be on Twitter use alone, "however it soon became clear that Twitter was the primary platform used by officers and staff – something which has implications for the nature of communication" in terms of potentially narrowing their audience reach (Bullock 2017, p.5, p.9).

She concludes a combination of factors and tensions were inhibiting the platform being transformative for police: despite any decision at the top of a force to embed Twitter as a means of communication, many officers may be yet to be convinced, not least due to fears of risk, reputational both individual and force-wide. Also, among those who had embraced it, some found chief senior officers had not, so were unsupportive, either through lack of knowledge and understanding, and/or views of it being a "time-consuming distraction", though participants were clear it was not, as well as risky for operational security and force reputation; and basic cultural contradictions and tensions

with loss of control of any 'message', and the nature of the technology as information disseminating and novel in communication methods versus traditional police practice of tightly proscribed roles (ibid, p.6). Bullock's 2018 conclusion echoes Crump (2011) in that:

> Embedding social media into police communications is challenging and the technology itself will not bring about the organisational and cultural changes needed to transform police–citizen engagement (Bullock 2018, p.1).

Frequency of social media engagement with the community was found to be the most important factor in a study of Arkansas sheriff offices when it came to successfully building community relations and crime solving (Beshears 2017), a finding which included a recommendation for the sheriffs to increase frequency. However, this study was limited by not considering message content or the type of engagement. In contrast, Australian researchers found evidence of successful practice there (which it could be argued has also developed in some parts of the UK). They found police had more successfully embraced Twitter than the rest of the justice system, showing "fulsome and strategic use of social media" (Johnston and McGovern 2013). They credited this to a number of things including a focus on "conversations" and "information-in" as well as promoting a positive police image.

This thesis will also look at whether and how the engagement by non-official police Twitter accounts (as well as some enterprising official individuals and accounts) with both public and distant colleagues, does seem able to fulfil some of the roles Crump and others found official communication accounts unable to.

2.4 Typology of institutional police Twitter use

Crump's 2011 study was the first to classify types of UK police official Twitter use, for the purpose of coding results in his research, and has been referred to by many scholars since (Wilkinson 2016; Dai et al.. 2017; Jansen et al.. 2018). As well as categorising what he found, he also suggested three strategy models to improve on it, for official police purposes.

It is important to note that Crump carried out his research while on leave from the then-NPIA (as a Visitor at the Oxford Internet Institute (OII) and at Nuffield College,

University of Oxford), aiming to test whether there was evidence of success for the strategy of exploiting social media, as led by the NPIA on behalf of ACPO and enshrined to an extent in the *Engage* document (see 3.3). Its emphasis was on openness and accountability, and engagement via a 'dialogue' between local police and citizens.

Also that outside its scope were other significant areas relating to police and social media, including its use as an intelligence source, during real-time emergencies or safety issues, and a tool for knowledge sharing within police organisations.

Part of the study was to find how police forces were actually using social media as part of their engagement strategy by looking at their Twitter network sizes and densities, and content nature.

This, notwithstanding the focus of the study, and what had to be left as outside the scope, this was still the only attempt at categorising, as per its title, "What are the Police doing on Twitter?"

Crump found four categories, *Patrol, Information, Partners* and *Other*, containing 16 sub-categories described as follows:

> *Patrol*. Reports of frontline policing activity, whether patrolling or carrying out follow-up action resulting in an arrest, the resolution of a situation, or the conclusion of a case.
>
> *Information*. Police requests for information from the public (e.g., about incidents, missing or wanted persons) and flows of information to the public, in crime prevention and public safety advice and general reassurance messages.
>
> *Partners*. The development and management of partnership relationships, either with other emergency services, local authorities, educational establishments and voluntary bodies, or with the public. This category included all exchanges with members of the public.
>
> *Other*. Messages that did not relate directly to any of the above policing functions. They were either about supporting issues (internal police business, whether official or informal) or about the mechanics of social networking, or were about matters relating only tangentially to the business of policing (e.g., television programs, local celebrities, or national events which did not engage the local police) (Crump 2011, pp.3-5).

Of relevance is that the Twitter use that this thesis examines is not covered in these main categories nor can it usefully be grouped in 'other' under the "supporting issues" sub-category, nor would it appear to strictly be covered by "national events which did not engage local police", and neither of which are examined in the detail required for this thesis.

Crump went on to hypothesise three strategy models that could improve 'official' police goals for engagement and communication, *Broadcasters, Local Knowledge Gatherers and Community Facilitators*:

> Model 1: *Broadcasters* will seek to maximise the number of followers, especially those in their target audiences. They will be especially interested in followers who themselves have large numbers of followers, who tweet a lot and who are likely to retweet police messages.

> Model 2: *Local knowledge gatherers* will maximise the number of people followed, especially in the local community. They will look to follow those who themselves follow a large number of people and who could therefore be more likely to retweet and mention others.

> Model 3: *Community facilitators* will employ elements of both strategies and will encourage relatively dense groups within their networks as potential sources of comments on ideas and sharing news. (Crump 2011, p.24)

These models focus strongly on follower numbers and the possibility of spreading messages via retweeting but do not explain how stronger connections might be formed which might encourage this. Model 3 would rely on strong engagement with and within this group but *how* is unclear. Although these are models developed to improve official police strategic goals, again they will be examined in the context of what this thesis discovers about the use of Twitter by the alternative police voices. It will, however, examine whether the alternative police voices on Twitter, found and analysed in it, can fit into any of the initial categories found or, in fact, suggest the creation of a new model.

Where other researchers have acknowledged Crump it has been in the context of official police communications. For example, Dai et al. (2017) carried out the first study of traditional American local police departments districts to analyse their variety of posts and interactions with their local communities (p.782). They looked at seven districts in an area of Virginia, examining the variation in posts put out on both Twitter and Facebook, in the context of strategies to engage their surrounding communities. Though

acknowledging Crump's categories, they also looked at other theoretical fields to draw upon marketing and public relations, and viewing the citizens as consumers of the police services. Thus they used Mergel's 2013 framework of social media strategies for the government to interact with the public. It broadly defines three categories of strategies: one-way push, two-way pull, and networking, with collaboration arising from the latter being the highest level of public engagement.

> Each strategy has its own goal and mission, and the level of citizen engagement and participation is increased when the strategy moves away from one-way push toward two-way pull and networking (Dai et al.. 2017, p.785).

They found that certain types of posts were not only more engaging for the community but that they and the interactions differed according to whether Facebook and Twitter were used, this showing that the citizens used these platforms to interact in different ways. For Twitter, they were found more likely to interact with helpful information-sharing posts, especially real-time traffic and weather, whereas for Facebook, they were more likely to interact with posts about the agency and officers.

Again, this is very much from a business organisation purpose viewpoint and in terms of official police communications roles.

Crump's categories were, however, directly drawn upon in research into the problems faced by 'campus cops' or private security organisations on five Canadian university campuses, when it came to whether Twitter improved or increased their legitimacy, for example, to avoid perceptions such as not being 'real cops' (Wilkinson 2016). This was in light of other studies suggesting police tweeting had potential to decrease their legitimacy (Goldsmith 2010; Schneider 2016) as well as those finding it could increase legitimacy and compliance by promoting expertise (Lee and McGovern 2014). Wilkinson examined, among other aspects, how what they did on Twitter corresponded or not to Crump's observations of what UK police were doing in his outlined categories, slightly adapting these to answer "What are UCS services doing on Twitter?". He found the majority of tweets, 41%, were engaged in *Network (Partner)* with a further 20%, although grouped into the O*ther* category including a component of networking, eg about campus events. In this sense, of networking, they were meeting one of their stated goals of making UCS known and approachable. The second highest category was *Information* at 28%, again unsurprising, and only 9% of tweets fell into the *Patrol* category (with three of the 14 schools not tweeting about it at all). He found tweet

content focused on legitimation, within which expertise, 'repair' work when mistakes or perceived mistakes were made, and establishing their legal authority were all done successfully and educatively. As well, tweets were generally embodied in a spirit of being there to help, encouraging a sense of community, and UCS being part of it, along with student personal responsibility. While Wilkinson's concluding focus moved to comparisons with other legitimisation research, and the challenges faced by campus cops on re-establishing themselves with each new cohort of students, his findings appear to show a stronger, successful element of network category use. While a direct comparison with the UK police study, even on this element alone, would simply not be accurate, the friendly but professional tweet content mirrors the more successful forces, or sub divisions, who were engaging well with public in a more human communication manner.

No literature could be found which shows non-official police Twitter activity examined in terms of Crump's typology. At the time it was published, such activity was already sizeable and would increase. Thus this thesis argues that non-official use is an element of police social media communication which warrants consideration to form a more complete picture of what police were doing on Twitter, not just those fulfilling an approved role.

2.5 The concept of 'cop culture'

Scholars continue to debate the very concept of a 'cop culture', or the police officer's working personality and behaviours, initially outlined by Skolnick in 1966, highlighting 'danger', 'authority' and 'constant pressure to appear efficient' (in Reiner, 2002). Further ethnographic studies, also dating back decades, include Niederhoffer (1967) who launched scholarly interest into 'police cynicism', developing an index or scale with which to 'measure' it, and which was variously analysed with attempts to refine by many scholars since including Regoli and Poole (1979). Debates surround whether as a concept it is useful for research purposes, and, if it is, whether it is a negative or positive influence for police practice and community (Hoggett et al.. 2014; Goldsmith 1990; Loftus 2010).

Reiner (1978) further defined and enlarged the 'core characteristics' of cop culture, which he has since argued remain as evolving and transforming commonalities (2010), namely: a sense of mission ('protect and serve', the 'thin blue line'); hedonistic love of action; and pessimistic cynicism; with other key facets of suspicion; solidarity and social isolation ('us and them'); and conservatism. Machismo was also included in earlier versions. He notes the solidarity belies internal conflicts especially between police management and frontline, while the 'us and them' can refer to different types of both. But despite Reiner's and others' further re-evaluations and refinements over time, Sklansky (2007) says that for some scholars, an unchanging and negative understanding of police culture is "a story of cognitive burn-in" which frames their ideas (p.20).

He and other scholars have countered what they see as a strangely homogenous description, and one where, in research, the term is often pejorative, "almost universally condemned", questioning the assumption of unchanging culture, as well as dismissal of strengths, and reasons for a work culture in the case of this subset (Charman 2017, p.172; Sklansky 2006; Waddington 1999; Chan 1997). Waddington challenged the notion that police "talk" could be equated to "action", ie what officers said was indicative of how they would behave, concluding instead what occurred in the police canteen was "expressive talk… to give purpose and meaning to inherently problematic occupational experience" (p.287). The importance of the police canteen was as a workspace where officers could unwind and talk freely, to download to colleagues events and experiences from the street, to receive reassurance and support – he likened its importance to a 'repair shop'. As highlighted later in this section, many UK officers have lost their canteens, due to "austerity measure" (Hesketh and Williams 2017, p.350). Chan questioned "core assumptions" and, with others, called for a re-evaluation of this "homogenous set of values, attitudes and behaviours which transcend time, location, role and rank", to allow multiple conceptions of culture into the understanding of police (Charman 2017, p.128; Sklansky 2006; Chan 1997; Waddington 1999). While a number of scholars, especially more recent, have differentiated between the myriad policing roles and tasks, from urban to rural, and community policing to special forces, as well as gender, rank and uniformed or non-uniformed, still "the original narrative persists" (Charman 2017, p.128), and despite the fact that the social context of policing has fundamentally changed since the early academic writings on policing cultures in the 1960s (ibid, p.2).

She questions whether the same behaviour and values are indeed unchanged in the 21ˢᵗ century, managing to supersede all structural, political changes to society and police organisations, and even the rapidly changing profile of recruits. Like Waddington and other scholars, Charman highlighted a more positive aspect of viewing police culture, including as a tool for coping, learning and rule adaptation.

Waddington and others do not dismiss aspects of cop culture typology, albeit with the proviso it cannot be applied to all, and some are useful in this research. They include the concept of defensive solidarity which highlights the "truly ever-present danger" in being accused of improper action, especially when this may not be decided as such by police management until long after the action. As a consequence of policing citizens, rather than the "wilful imposition" of management,

> policing is a 'punishment-centred bureaucracy' in which officers are rarely praised for good practice, often because it is invisible to the organisation, but face draconian penalties if they are deemed to have behaved improperly (Waddington 1999, p.301).

Hence an observed awareness of officers avoiding or mitigating such problems and with some, often "lower ranks", adopting lying low tactics as they see every action taken as "fraught with danger" (p.302) and thus adopting a defensive solidarity.

This is also demonstrated in terms of social media, especially Twitter use, where it is easy to see officers may consider it 'more trouble than it's worth'. Examples of such 'trouble' relating to Twitter protest activity are shown and discussed in Chapter Five, but Goldsmith's 2015 paper Disgracebook Policing focused more on what he describes as the rise of police indiscretion causing, or with the potential to cause, harm to police integrity, effectiveness and reputation, mostly through officers' off duty activities. His study explicitly excludes any whistleblowing activity, and nor does it mention anonymous accounts and any difficulties associated with managing them. Nevertheless, his analysis could be used as a textbook deterrent for officers in general. While acknowledging the usefulness of social media in official police communications, he felt the increasing use of such platforms by police communication departments can also contribute to the off-duty risks. With a higher percentage of younger populations expressing the most regret for youthful posts, he warned this was likely to include

younger, less-experienced officers. Social media posts have longevity, so activities even before they join may come back to haunt them and damage both theirs and police's reputation. In the same way, off duty behaviour such as sharing 'fluff' posts, apparently innocuous, which can turn into 'dirt' or damaging posts have potential for the same. Social media risks highlighting off duty behaviour which would not be a problem if it were not for increased visibility. There was also the risk of officers being identified and located by offenders through their 'private' social media activity. While Goldsmith pointed out the platforms themselves should make it easier to change privacy settings, he recommended police organisations also do more – while some social media policies were appearing, he stressed they and training will need to "keep abreast" of the situation and a deeper understanding was required of current social media digital behaviour to be aware of the potential consequences. Ideally, a regulatory response would involve the platforms themselves as well as officers and their employers, not least for the right and ease which with to have posts removed (Goldsmith 2015).

In a similar vein, an HMIC report highlighted problems as more officers moved from Facebook to Twitter (HMIC 2012), reflecting the national growth in the latter platform, compared to 2011. They identified 185 profiles accounting for all of the 357 cases of "potentially inappropriate behaviour" found, with 71% on Twitter. The categories are interesting as while offensive language and behaviour counted for the most (132), the others three were extreme opinions on the Government (36), negativity towards work (70) and comments on police protocol or procedure (119 instances) (HMIC 2012, p.23) where it is not wholly clear if this involved compromising operational practice. Forces were given the information to "handle as they saw fit", though the HMIC previously noted it was "disappointing" that of 43 accounts identified in the previous year and referred back to relevant forces, three quarters of the problematic comments or pictures were still visible to the public (p.23). In some contrast, other researchers have found Twitter use offering more positive benefits for non-corporate police tweeting and, if anything, the UK police Twitter population was somewhat cautious, certainly when it comes to sharing information with academics. These are examined in the next section.

2.6 The alternative police social media

While the police organisation was still sorting out a protocol hopefully-aimed for national use, or guidelines for best Twitter practice, individual officers who had long been blogging, mainly under pseudonyms, had already embarked on a Twitter experiment with many more joining them purely on the platform.

For many there was already evidence supporting a wary approach and the choice of anonymity. An anonymous police officer began blogging as Nightjack in 2008, at such a high standard that he won an Orwell Prize, the UK's most prestigious award for political writing, in 2009. *The Times* newspaper exposed his identity after winning a High Court ruling which decreed he had no right to his anonymity (EWHC 2009), a landmark ruling which in effect decreed the internet a public space. Only later was it revealed this had been obtained by the reporter's 'computer hacking' of his email address (Halliday 2012), for which *The Times* was sued by Nightjack who reached an out of court settlement (BBC 2012; Halliday 2012). The reporter was arrested and a *Times* solicitor was suspended from practising for six months (O'Carroll 2013). But the damage was done in 2009 as soon as Nightjack was revealed to be then-Detective Constable Richard Horton (Siddique 2009). In "what may be one of the fastest police disciplinary processes in history," said Orwell Prize director Jean Seaton (2009), he received a written reprimand and his award-winning blog was shut down.

However, PC 'David Copperfield' is believed to have been the first police blogger, starting in 2004 about gardening but eventually focusing on the problems of modern policing with the Policeman's Blog, critical of 'top brass' and Government. Some of his posts were 'used' and reprinted (without permission) by *the Daily Mail* which did, however lead to a book deal for *Wasting Police Time*. Susie Atherton argued that the public interest in policing as told by police can be traced back to the launch of this book (2012). 'Copperfield' also had numerous media 'appearances', finally revealing his identity as Stuart Davidson in 2007 via the BBC's *Panorama* programme, and leaving the UK force to work as a police officer in Canada (Davidson 2010; O'Hara 2007).

The novelty of blogging police was researched by Atherton (2012), mainly from a police culture perspective, and highlighted other key bloggers, with names such as Inspector Gadget (also an author of books), The Thin Blue Line, The Duty Sergeant (who would later prompt a Twitter hashtag support campaign after deleting his blog and Twitter account), Thinking Policeman, and Stressed Out Cop. Atherton's interest was in

seeing what aspects of police 'cop culture', in its varied scholarly-defined forms, were present in the forum of online blogs where anonymity should allow freedom of expression. She found evidence of 'sense of vocation', 'solidarity', 'cynicism', 'wit and humour' ("in the face of adversity"), and 'conservatism' with criticism of the then-Labour Government, but little in the way of 'machismo' while 'pragmatism' also featured strongly. In essence, she postulated that some core characteristics of 'cop culture' were displayed, which could be seen to have both possible implications for operational policing along with the process of police reform, as cautioned by Loftus (2010), but also could be, in fact, a valuable outlet for officers. As 'snapshot' research it showed how officers were using blogs and

> how it extends police culture beyond the physical world. This forum in itself
> might be viewed as a safe space to express views deemed unprofessional on the
> streets, but which maintain and preserve police culture characteristics in the
> form of a 'virtual canteen' (Atherton 2012, p.37).

Hesketh and Williams (2017) have since posited that Twitter is also a "virtual canteen" for officers, ie places where they can share thoughts and concerns about policing. While anonymous police Twitter accounts are not explicitly stated as among the participants who are using this (although it refers to officers using their private accounts), this is inferred when they stress these forums offer "a 'private' space" as an "anonymous forum" for officers who are otherwise "not typically willing to openly discuss their thoughts on the current state of policing" and at a time when "police morale is reportedly low" (ibid, p.346).

The virtual canteen references the police canteen culture (the 'safe' workspace for talking, offloading etc discussed earlier in 2.5), somewhat appropriately, as the authors explain, "these opportunities to socialise in a relatively safe internal environment have consequentially been removed by austerity measures; that is, the large-scale closure of policing canteens across the country" (p.350). Thus, they report, the anonymous forums on social media can in some sense replace this virtually, perhaps even improve on it in allowing more open debate on policing, albeit public-facing, and also act as a support mechanism. The importance of the latter was backed up by a 2015 survey of officers, initiated via Twitter, which resulted in a strong theme highlighting the support network it provided, and an "anonymous arena where they could disclose their concerns away

from an environment they considered as unsupportive". This alone "offered insights into the restraints of an internal culture that denies officers the opportunity to talk about their anxieties" (p.350). Results from a hashtagged Twitter debate the following year, (and it's important to note these debates include identified officer accounts at all levels taking part) highlighted the following themes:

Concern about officer anonymity and force inconsistency about the use of social media.

The importance of being discrete about what is disclosed regarding tactics and sensitive details, especially in relation to local communities.

The role of social media in starting conversations about important issues, putting people in touch and allowing leaders to be more transparent and explorative in their approach to the frontline (Hesketh and Williams 2017, p.351).

While Hesketh and Williams say the first two are "to be expected", the third shows a "broad recognition" of Twitter as a platform for improving communications

for leaders, the public, the research community, and for the police. It facilitates the link with people with similar interests and ideas, and provides a forum for leaders to observe current feelings from those on the front line (Hesketh and Williams 2017, p.352).

But they caution that what was also clear was officers' concern about "reprisals" and repercussions if they shared concerns openly along with a lack of clarity around what they could and couldn't share.

Police officers are subject to a raft of legislation around behaviour. They are forbidden by Parliament to strike (since their last in 1919), and "must not take any active part in politics" to prevent questioning of impartiality, nor must they publish on social media or elsewhere, "anything incompatible to policing principles (Code of Ethics 2014, ss6.5, 7.5; The Police Conduct Regulations 2008, 2011, 2012, 2018). Transgressions leave them open to the powerful Police Standards Departments (PSD), in each force, with stressful misconduct investigations which can potentially lead to career damage, demotion, or sacking.

2.7 Background: Key Police Reform issues and figures in the Age of Austerity

This section highlights issues and key people involved which became a focus of the protesting officers, and assists in understanding tweet context, hashtag campaigns, and other references discussed later in this thesis.

Although the vehicle of police reform, under successive governments, has ever been in motion, the speed and scale of change showed a marked increase under the 2010-2015 Conservative and Liberal Coalition Government (Con-Lib) led by Prime Minister David Cameron (Con) and Deputy Prime Minister Nick Clegg (Lib). In its first eight months, in the aftermath of the worst financial crisis since the Great Depression of the 1930s (Lee 2011), this Government declared a programme of government spending cuts, or 'austerity', for the public sector to "deal with" the country's budget deficit and national debt of then £77billion, which they linked to the previous Labour Government's "public spending splurge" allegedly while the private business sector and others "were tightening their belts" (Cameron speech, 2010). The speech included his infamous mantra "We are all in this together," (in which speech he attributed it to George Osborne, Chancellor of the Exchequer) and declared "unavoidable" cutbacks, which would be "painful" to "get it back in line".

The key politicians in this era of police reform were Home Secretary Theresa May (later Prime Minister) and the initial policing minister Nick Herbert (Minister of State at the Home Office with responsibility for policing and at The Ministry of Justice for criminal justice) from 2010 until 2012 when he stepped down (and was replaced by Damien Green). He was also a co-founder in 2001 of the conservative and free market think tank Reform, which claims to aim at "better and smarter" public sector services through deregulation and private business collaboration, which though declaring itself "strictly independent and non-party", is also described as "right-wing" (Monbiot 2011; Reform).

However it was Policy Exchange, described as "the UK's leading think tank" by itself (Policy Exchange) and "right-leaning" by the BBC (2011), which was to show the greatest influence in government policies on police reform, producing reports with recommendations, some of which were adopted by the Government. Its first ever report in 2003, *Going Local: Who should run Britain's Police?* recommended improved local accountability with the introduction of publicly-elected US-style "sheriffs" or election

of the chairmen of the then-existing local police authorities, with the power to hire and fire chief constables and control police force budgets (previously held by the chief constables) (Loveday and Reid 2003). This was adopted as government policy by the new Con-Lib coalition as it came to power with its "The Big Society" agenda,

> founded on local initiative, voluntary activity by the public, and a facilitative approach by public service professionals. The emphasis on local policing has been carried forward, boosted by the proposal for a democratisation of local police accountability through the replacement of appointed police authorities by elected police and crime commissioners for each force (Home Office 2010) (Crump 2011, p.7).

The creation of the PCC role was announced by the Con-Lib coalition government shortly after election as part of its 2010 vision for policing triggered concerns about a 'politicisation' of police in a number of quarters. These included human rights and civil liberties advocacy organisation Liberty which warned against "dangerous levels of political interference in operational policing" with power concentrated in one individual, (amid concerns for potentially extreme politics such as far right or single issue) and the loss of complete police independence from partisan politics instead of accountability to the law. It called the plans flawed with no reliable evidence for "turning 180 years of British policing tradition on its head", nor public support for doing so, according to a March 2011 YouGov survey commissioned by the organisation. Only 15% surveyed said they would trust an elected PCC to protect them from crime, instead of a chief constable reporting to a local police authority (Liberty 2011).

The first PCC elections were held and post holders elected in 2012. At the same time the Government introduced police and crime panels for each force, to provide a check on PCC plans and operation, under the Police Reform and Social Responsibility Act 2011. Of the 40 elected PCCs in the second elections in 2016, all, except three independents, were party political compared to 2012, which saw 12 independent candidates elected.

Among other police-reform related Policy Exchange reports was the 2011 "Cost of the Cops" (Boyd et al.), which highlighted what it called "The Great Police Expansion (2001-2010)", questioned the cost value of larger number of police officers, and raised

concerns over a public-perceived lack of visibility and availability of officers, according to a YouGov survey (p.12). The report compared police, if they were a single company, with Tesco, highlighting police had a 22% higher employment figure (p.7). The Government's planned 20% budget cuts for 2010-15 were large historically, it said, "but not excessive" (p.7). Its "more visibility for no cost" recommendations amid the cuts to officer numbers were for officers to patrol alone rather than in pairs, and the novel idea of police wearing uniform to and from work when using public transport.

> Forces should take fully into account the significant 'bang for your buck' potential of this policy of expecting officers to wear uniform on the way to work – it will increase visibility significantly and without having to increase officer or PCSO headcount or even changing deployment practices (Boyd et al. 2011, p.17).

The co-author Blair Gibbs was a key figure in this time, also due to his forthright Twitter presence. Before his stint at Policy Exchange he was senior policy adviser and chief of staff (2007-10) to Nick Herbert, the Policing and Criminal Justice Minister, as outlined earlier.

Another key figure at this time was Tom Winsor, appointed in 2010 by Theresa May to carry out a wide-sweeping review of police pay and working conditions. She warned nothing would be "off limits", in describing its proposed scope and depth (BBC 2010). (Winsor, a lawyer, had held the former government post as Rail Regulator, under a Labour Government). The controversial 'Winsor Review' came in two parts, with the first (2011) recommending 'pay savings' of £1.1billion with the result some officers would receive pay cuts and others more pay, though only £625 million of the savings would be redirected into policing, specifically 'frontline'. Part 2 (2012) identified long-term reforms, including direct entry for outside professionals to high-ranking posts such as Superintendent; increased entry level educational qualifications (minimum three A Levels); compulsory redundancy; fast tracking, performance pay and a new higher retirement age among others.

Controversy also greeted the March 2012 announcement of his appointment as HM Chief Inspector of Constabulary (HMIC), as the first 'civilian' (ie not ex-police) to hold the post, a job which included a thorough annual assessment of efficiency and

effectiveness, and a role enshrined in the recently enacted 2011 Police and Social Responsibility Act.

As the coalition took power in 2010, the Police Federation of England and Wales (PolFed) were aware of some scale of the impending reform with the appointment of Nick Herbert as minister, due to his previous role as Shadow Minister for Police Reform and "the architect" of the Conservative police reform blueprint, 'Policing for the People'. Along with others, they wanted instead a Royal Commission on policing and police funding. Before the government laid out its spending review, the federation held a media conference:

> in which we made clear that financial cuts to policing and a reduction in police officer numbers would result in 'Christmas for criminals', a catch-phrase that captured press attention and caused some discomfort for the government. (Police Federation 2010, p.1).

In return, May accused them of scare tactics while Herbert gave an indication of the relationship to come:

> They were saying there's going to be murders and rapes through reductions in budgets. Then we've had the head of the Police Superintendents' Association saying there would be riots. What next? Plague and pestilence? (*The Guardian* 2010).

But the publication of the Comprehensive Spending Review, outlining four years of planned spending, "shocked" the organisation which was "extremely disappointed" at a drastic reduction in police funding of 20% with the biggest cuts in the first two years.

> This, after the HMIC had warned that any financial cut in excess of 12 per cent would result in a detrimental public service. We made clear to government that this would jeopardise public safety and called upon them to urgently reconsider (*The Guardian* 2010, pp.1-2).

In 2011, the year of the London Riots, which triggered smaller riots and disorder throughout the country, PolFed stepped up its response aimed at alerting the public to possible consequences of the 20% cuts. It launched its 'Cuts are Criminal' campaign with national and regional newspaper advertising, along with billboards on transport

and elsewhere. It coordinated action to lobby MPs and others, encouraging its members to do the same. Its reaction to the Winsor Review (Part One) was summed up in its annual report:

> it became very clear that the Home Secretary's acceptance of the Winsor Part One report was more to do with ideological change rather than considered reform which could still deliver the government fiscal savings (Police Federation 2011, p.2)

As well, it carried out its own research into the report's "alleged evidence" and "discovered that a number of individual officers Winsor said he engaged with did not exist", resulting in a "fundamentally flawed" report. But an open letter to May did not prompt an investigation into their "serious claims", with the Home Secretary responding with a reiteration of her confidence in Winsor (ibid).

This coordinated campaign relied somewhat on the traditional conduit of traditional news media, and did receive coverage, but an initially-uncoordinated response to the cuts was brewing on social media, in particular Twitter.

2.8 Summary:

There is a tension between the use of social media such as Twitter with its open and potentially disruptive qualities, by highly hierarchical and regulatory organisations such as the police. This chapter provides context while backgrounding the evolution of social media deployment, from first use by individual officers and forces, and the conflicts arising. The literature in this area tends to focus on the organisational use of Twitter, but the issues and tensions emerging around social media use give essential context, as do two studies on anonymous and otherwise officers' use of social media, independent to their police organisation's official use. The chapter analyses Crump's typology of official police Twitter practice which is re-examined later in this thesis. The chapter also examines the concept of police or 'cop' culture, especially in terms of, while also backgrounding, the organisational structure and constraints faced by any police officer using social media. Police officers and their behaviour are highly regulated, working as they do in a strongly hierarchically-structured organisation. As well as being forbidden to strike by law, police work under regulations, the breach of which carries potentially life-changing consequence. These restrictions are established on grounds of public and legal perceptions of impartiality, which deter them from expressing political affiliations,

or views, or criticising the government. They must avoid doing anything that will damage the reputation of the police itself.

Thus this research was interested in the motivations for officers deciding to protest online against, among other things, the proposed reforms, the logic behind reform decisions, the execution of them and substantial funding cuts.

The next chapter draws on literature on protest movements, particularly those using social media, and explores some key debates, as well as the notion of online public space.

Chapter 3: Social Media Protest and Movements

3.1 Introduction

The use of Twitter as a tool in major protests around the world prompted initial debates mainly focused on whether it did really offer anything new, particularly in terms of effecting any change, and what, if any, credit really was due to the nature of the platform in terms of sending and receiving messages. But soon, 'how' rather than 'whether' became the focus of research, and further debate, as did smaller or more localised protests. Protests which appeared strongly reliant on social media such as Twitter, such as the 2011 Occupy Wall Street (OWS) (Reuters 2011) and even more so the protests it spawned, came under eager research scrutiny albeit with ensuing divisions about what it could tell us in terms of the 'how'.

This chapter looks at the debates around such digital protest which also pertain to this thesis' study of the police protest in its use of Twitter and other social media. This includes the nature of Twitter itself, its role in community-building, and in motivations and participation in protest. It also examines the debates arising from studies into how Twitter functions in a protest, in particular the debate around collective action or 'connective action'; the role played in 'digital contagion' and 'digital enthusiasm' (also in Facebook use), and strategies used, as all of these will be compared in the examination of the police protest. Elements of repression, and oppression, of digital protests are also examined as relevant, along with digital protestor tactics. Tactics and strategies for such protest also lead into a key area which examines the nature of protest 'spaces' especially in digital protest. Several of the debates are elucidated by reference to pre-digital protest and social movements theory, larger discussions of which are appended.

This chapter begins with Twitter's original functions, the often-user led development of its changing – and unintended – use, and debates which arose, all of which provides a base for the later research which followed.

3.2 Twitter: the changing nature of a communication tool

Twitter quickly developed into something other than its original intention of a marketing tool with a simple 'what are you doing right now?' (Gruzd et al. 2010). The speed of social media development, often via its users, means that definitions and descriptions can quickly outdate. Twitter, developed in 2006 to send instant status updates and "inconsequential" information, evolved, often through its users, to eventually be described as a microblogging service. Yet even its co-founder Evan Williams admitted in an interview that defining Twitter was hard.

> With Twitter, it wasn't clear what it was. They called it a social network, they called it microblogging, but it was hard to define, because it didn't replace anything. There was this path of discovery with something like that, where over time you figure out what it is. Twitter actually changed from what we thought it was in the beginning, which we described as status updates and a social utility. It is that, in part, but the insight we eventually came to was Twitter was really more of an information network than it is a social network (Williams in Lapowsky, 2013).

However, many users and researchers find it does indeed work as a social network, depending on communities' and individual's uses. Many uses don't appear to have changed so much since one early analysis of Twitter community showed "the main types of user intentions are: daily chatter, conversations, sharing information and reporting news. Furthermore, users play different roles of information source, friends or information seeker in different communities…." (Java et al. 2010, p.2).

Initially Twitter allowed users to post character-constrained messages via a range of technologies such as mobile phone, instant messaging clients and the web (Zappavigna, 2011) with eventually the Twitter app (as well as the existing website) allowing easy and simple direct input from smart phones on the go. It also allowed users to attach to the messages other media, for example, images and footage, as well as links to more information in the form of websites and pages. Initially the messages were constrained to 140 characters (due to the initial phone texting capability for 'sending' posts) but even then the link-based nature of many tweets, which meant they were not limited to

just a 140-character message, and the trend to re-send (retweet) was considered and analysed as a form of data sharing and shared conversation (Hermida 2010). In turn, the retweet function, originally started by users and then adopted by Twitter in its format, creates a distributed conversation allowing tweeters to be aware even if not part of it (Boyd et al. 2010). Twitter's user community also organically developed the hashtag (#) function, which offered a user-friendly aggregation of any tweet using particular word or phrase groups with the hash symbol in front. It also instantly denoted to users relevant tweets whose authors had used the hashtag and arguably intended it to be part of a 'group'. It was originally proposed by Chris Messina (2007), as a simple way any user could help aggregate the tweets of groups, and/or easily find relevant content and updates. Though Twitter 'rejected' the idea, its use by community during the 2007 San Diego forest fires with #sandiegofire to easily follow updates (Messina 2007) saw growing and widespread adoption. Hashtags can both provide one-place information sharing as well as introduce people of like interests whether these be listeners of #theArchers, viewers of #bbcqt (BBC Question Time) or those sharing protests such as #occupywallstreet (which became #ows). In ongoing events hashtags will diversify to help easier access or visibility of the information. For example, during the August 2011 UK riots, tweeters hashtagged their own geographical areas in tweets about witness, concern or information seeking, and clean-up efforts (personal observation; Proctor et al. 2013). However hashtags have evolved to have extra purposes – they are often used creatively to express something for example, "sarcasm or irony", or plain humour, or simply to add information (Burghardt 2015).

This section is interested in the relevance of Twitter's forms and functions to the underpinning element of the users' community or communities. A key function is that it is open and public (no joining or friending required as in Facebook) and instant, ie real time. The public nature of social media networks (rather than networking sites requiring joining or linking) allows users to make connections with others that might not have been made otherwise (Williams et al. 2013; Boyd et al. 2007; deBeer 2008). The relevance of Twitter's ease for doing this in terms of protest processes is of interest in this thesis. Ease of use, particularly via mobile devices and even the speed of touch screen apps, also accounted for the growth of Twitter. Relevant to the timescale of this study's events, there was an initial explosion of participation, driven by user-friendly internet tools, new mobile devices and better connectivity (Newman 2009), in particular the aforementioned ability to text from a phone directly to the platform, swiftly replaced

by direct input. This was still growing around the time of the key events of this research. Namely, by the end of 2013 80% of UK Twitter users were using their mobiles to engage with it, slightly leading the rest of Europe. The mobile Twitter users were also more frequent users (Twitter 2014). UK figures reported in 2015 showed 15 million UK users, up from 10 million in 2012 (*Telegraph* 2013; McGrory 2014). By contrast other sites such as Facebook were static or even showing signs of decline (McGrory 2014).

3.3 Twitter: community building

As a result of some of these forms and functions, awareness systems are created which also assist the development of a shared culture, and which can link users across geographical boundaries (Dourish and Bly in Hermida 2010). And Gruzd et al. declared that due to the nature of Twitter's design, it was "impossible for them to be on Twitter and not to be aware of other residents of this virtual place" (2011). The Twitter network as studied by Gruzd is "…both real and 'imagined'":

> It is real because the participants interact… it is imagined because they have some sense of community, of interpersonal commitment. This is profound, because.. Twitter was not originally designed as a tool to support the development of online communities (Grudz et al. 2011, p.20).

This finding expanded Honeycutt and Herring's (2009) and Boyd et al.'s (2010) work that showed Twitter was being used for collaboration and conversations despite being originally designed as a broadcasting platform (Gruzd 2011). Such specific research into Twitter as a community-building tool, or something that can create a sense of community, was in contrast to earlier arguments about the effect of the internet. These saw the internet's ability to create communities of users who never meet as potentially having harmful effects on 'real' communities by reducing person-to-person contact and interactions. As Grudz put it, one "early influential article" (Kraut et al. 1998) "stretched the evidence to contend that the Internet pulled people away from their in-person ties" (p.2).

Against this, Grudz et al. argued,

>For years, social scientists have responded by systematically showing that almost all people who interact communally online also see each other in person. They have found that the Internet and in-person contact extend and enhance each other, rather than replace each other (Grudz et al. 2011, p.2).

But the notion of "community" has often been caught between concrete social relationships and imagined sets of people seen as being 'similar'. Social media enables people to interact without meeting physically:

>Into this mix came Twitter…. Connections on Twitter depend less on in-person contact, as many users have more followers than they know. Yet there is the possibility that Twitter can form the basis of interlinked personal communities – and even a sense of community… even though Twitter was not designed to support the development of online communities (Gruzd et al. 2011, p.2).

Thus studying Twitter can help to understand how people use new communication technologies to form new social connections and maintain existing ones. Later, Milan (2015) highlighted that it "blurs the boundaries between the real and the virtual"… "where the online is not ontologically distinct from the real life" (p.891).

Elsewhere, observers suggested social media growth was "reversing a 40-year decline in civic and community group participation", according to Hocheiser and Shneiderman (2010). They added, however, that while the energy around it can be tapped for socially constructive ends, corporate and government mindsets need changing to match. And Twitter and social media enables ad-hoc, and often temporary, social network communities arising around an event which can also be source of valuable information and communication, for example, during a crisis or natural disaster such as the 2010 Haiti earthquake, the 2008 Mumbai terrorist attacks, or even forest fires in France or floods in Australia (Longueville et al. 2009; Goolsby 2010; Bruns 2014).

Other researchers have worked on developing mathematical models to try and determine the flow and impact of tweets (Boyd and Yardi, 2009) and even reliable quantifiers of the human emotions within them, especially in terms of spikes in social tension (Burnap et al. 2013). In social network analysis (SNA) of Twitter, logarithms

have been used, and refined, to find clusters which are "generated as people decide for themselves who to reply to, mention or retweet" (Himelboim et al. 2017 p.3). By measuring the different characteristics of these clusters and their network, the flow of information in it can be better understood. Others have examined the role of international police interest in protest networks within the context of a public secret sphere (Bratich 2013). However, it is the research carefully examining from a grassroots perspective how a network community itself uses Twitter, a tool that may have helped enable its formation, which is of particular interest to this research project and its methodology.

3.4 Twitter: tool of protest?

Analysis and debate around Twitter function in protests movements is becoming increasingly nuanced. This was evidenced by an early debate between several theorists through the *Information, Communication & Society* journal (Bennett et al. 2014; Gerbaudo 2014; and others) and discussed in more detail later, but which ultimately centres on the relevance or otherwise of central leadership or hierarchy in the organisation and forming of movements amid a debate on the role in this by the very nature of Twitter in particular. As such, it is important to note that these case studies and discussions look beyond the function of simply sending and receiving messages. The latter featured in the earlier, often polarised debates around the so-called "Twitter Revolutions" of 2009 in Moldova (including 'silenced' journalists who used it as an alternative platform) and Iran (where users were limited, and tended to be the young wealthy who could possess a mobile phone), while it's argued that grassroots protests were organised 'traditionally' and by the opposition (Ali and Fahmy 2013, p.61). There, the contention became whether, not just how, social media had any "real consequences for contentious politics" (Aday et al. 2010 in Segerberg and Bennett 2014). Some of these concerns are also present in debate on social media use in the later Egyptian and Arab Spring protests.

The polarisation of views on the 'value' of Twitter and other social media in protest campaigns and movements was exemplified by the debate between Malcolm Gladwell and Clay Shirky (2010, 2011) both in separate publications (books, journals and newspapers and periodicals) but also in a brief side-by-side debate in *Foreign Affairs*

magazine. Gladwell felt Shirky and others had oversold the power of social media activism. He argued that it, along with its horizontal rather than hierarchical structure, favoured weak ties, lacking the necessary commitment and organisation to successfully protest against large and powerful organisations; for example, he felt networks could not strategise properly when everyone had an equal say. As there had been collective action and mobilisation long before social media, then it was hardy an "innovation" as it wasn't solving a problem. He went on to say, "Just because innovations in communications technology happen does not mean they matter" (Gladwell 2011).

Shirky, who held that the individual and sharing nature of social media might create its own collectivity and thus bypass traditional organisation, countered that while it might allow some superficial actors, committed protestors or campaigners would make full use of the technology's affordances - it had allowed insurgents to adopt new strategies which had also been crucial (2011). Shirky also felt the arguments were more complex than a polarised view, something which other researchers were discovering.

Penney and Dadas' study of Twitter use in the Occupy Wall Street was based on 17 in-depth interviews of people involved in it to discover "how people are using language to construct new social and political realities, and how they are incorporating social media technologies into that process" (2014). It builds on work by Jenkins who (pre-Twitter) examined how 'new media' could support democratic change by enabling users to bypass the mainstream media, stating: "those silenced by corporate media have been among the first to transform their computer into a printing press. This opportunity has benefitted third parties, revolutionaries, reactionaries, and racists alike" (2006, p.221).

In particular, Penney and Dadas' OWS study examined Twitter's role in terms of counterpublics, Fraser's concept (1990) of subordinate publics, whose issues tend to be excluded from the main public sphere(s). She argued they develop their own parallel arenas in which to come together, and formulate and circulate counter discourses to insert themselves into the public sphere to contest and alter dominant public discourse. Thus they can legitimise sidelined issues and become a competing public. Pfister (2018) has further described counterpublics as "groups that distinguish themselves from the rational-critical debate of dominant publics through different dispositions, styles, and strategies for steering public attention".

Indeed, Penney and Dadas' OWS study found that a combination of Twitter form and function, and how its users operated it, meant "a rapid digital circulation of texts allows protestors to quickly build a geographically dispersed, networked counterpublic that can articulate a critique of power outside of the parameters of mainstream media" (Penney and Dadas 2014, p.1). But, they argue, it is aspects of Twitter which also help to define OWS itself as a counterpublic: key characteristics include its adoption of a leaderless, horizontal structure, characterised as 'the multitude form" (Hardt and Negri 2011 in Penney and Dadas 2014); users able to continuously tweet and retweet about the movement from disparate locations and beyond mainstream media, echoing further Warner's definition in terms of discourse circulation, and exchange of opinion, distinct from authority; and changing 'publics' depending on the circulation of discourse (2002). The authors argue OWS engages with multiple audiences, "as public tweets serving the internal needs of the movement may double as opportunities to inform external publics, publicize the cause, and potentially recruit new members" (Penney and Dadas 2014 p.4).

Importantly, they highlight how Twitter's "specific architecture" emphasises rapid textual exchange among a multitude. It can publicise simultaneously enabling protestors to "concurrently communicate among themselves and also potentially attract sympathetic outside audiences"; the short message limit enables swift comprehension and is easily forwarded – and encourages people to compose tweets with 'rhetorical velocity' as well as to recirculate by linking and retweeting. Here, they suggest, the use of Twitter not only lends itself to the activity required in counterpublics but may actually "foster such processes through the aggregated tweeting and retweeting activities of individual users" (Penney and Dadas 2014). Thus, the locationally-disparate members – who may not be present at street protests – can still play an active role in the shaping of the counterpublic, acting as "signal boosters", using Twitter "to amplify the rhetoric of the face-to-face protests and contribute to the growth of the movement across physical boundaries" (Penney and Dadas 2014). Twitter enables connections to be made with fellow activists or like-minded people so building social ties to build social movements. While, as above, Twitter's horizontal, non-hierarchical form lends itself to the dynamics of such movements, it is likely to be adopted as a matter of philosophical principle "as a central locus of promotion, information-sharing, organising, and community-building in years to come" (Penney and Dadas 2014).

The chiming of Twitter's form and function with collective (protest) action had already been observed by other scholars, notably in Segerberg and Bennett's study of two 2009 simultaneous climate change protests (2011) and later, that of the OWS movement (2014). The study of the climate change protest camps, one in London and one in Copenhagen where the 2009 United Nations summit was taking place, looked at the role of Twitter as an organising mechanism, and in the context of one which is actually embedded in the protest ecology in which it operates. This highlights at least two important aspects: Twitter's "role as both a networking agent in, and window on, the protest space" (Segerberg and Bennett 2011, p.201). Though stressing this approach can only be indicative, and "Twitter may play very different roles in different ecologies", they declared three focus points emerge:

- Twitter streams can be crosscutting networking mechanisms: attracting diverse individuals and organisations, from either in the midst of the action or from afar, and thus can be seen as transmission belts as they cut across and connect
- Twitter streams embed and are embedded in the gatekeeping processes: visible through which and how many people introduce particular types of links, or amplify cues such as @replies and RT retweets
- Changing organisational dynamics over time: the fluid nature of the evolving environment as both actual events and interactions change with some streams operating like "epistemic communities" and others "brief beacons (Segerberg and Bennett 2011, pp 201-202).

Recognition of the ways in which "social technologies infuse specific protest ecologies", argued the authors, calls for a more nuanced theory and analysis beyond the argument of "weak ties and horizontal decentralised organisation vs strong ties and hierarchical centralised organisation", that suggested digitally networked action was ill equipped to bring about systemic change (2011). They asked: "Will the revolution be Twittered? It is more important to ask how social media embed and engage different ecologies of dissent" (Segerberg and Bennett 2011, p.213).

The authors' study of OWS groups, as well as expanding on these points, further examines how the dispersed users come to feel part of a collective action, without, they argue, familiar forms of 'social glue' or formal leaders. They also theorise that their

concept of "connective action", rather than collective action, is a better model for contemporary digitally networked action and continue to dispute the need for central coordination or even a strong identity (Bennett et al. 2014). The debate arising from this and counter-arguments are explored more fully later in this chapter. Finally, trying to understand how crowds or publics use technology to gain a significant presence in political life can help understand "pathways of change chosen by actors faced with different opportunity structures in different social and political contexts" (Bennett et al. 2014).

A limitation of some of the earlier studies already mentioned, however, was noted by Poell (2014), as being that many only looked at "part of the relations in which social media are embedded" (p.718). Many focused on links with (mainstream) news media, suggesting that social media still was the carrier and provider of "general public discourse". There was also a heavy focus around discursive exchanges such as links between blogs. In contrast, powerful sharing of images and videos tended to be neglected even though these resulted in accounts becoming among the most prominent. The use of the platforms accelerated communication, enhanced its visual presence, and offered protestors self-representation rather than reflecting mainstream media, if they used it as such, and thus giving them better control of their messages (p.728).

Pavan and others examined how online activism, exploiting the affordances of the medium, or technological tools, integrated with offline activity to produce "a unique socio-technical system of action" (2013, 2016). In particular, she examined tweetathons run by the transnational feminist campaign Take Back the Tech! (launched by the Association for Progressive Communications Women's Networking Support Program (APC WNSP)). She found they could switch communicative strategies to sustain the campaign, and showed how social media could be exploited in different mobilisation stages and political situation: "In this case, the networked structure of participation that is built thanks to the Internet not only is important but it becomes truly fundamental for the mobilisation dynamic" (Pavan 2013, p.11).

This study also found content quality of tweets was a more reliable indicator than quantity for key 'nodes' in the campaign's global network. And finally,

> the examination of contents allowed us not only to see that social media can be
> used to "organise" on a large scale spreading calls for action but that there is an

actual use to construct an overall collective meaning and a shared symbolic universe, which passes through different insights on the issue addressed (Pavan 2013, p.24).

Such aspects of Pavan's study are particularly relevant for this thesis which also examines an early UK tweetathon, carried out by police protestors.

3.5 Motivations and Participation: identity and repression

What helps or hinders people in joining in with a protest? The political system(s) which protest movements are embedded in are likely to affect the supply of individuals to participate (Klandersmans 2004). "Repression" and "facilitation" distinguish between political systems that increase or decrease the costs or risks of participation. Under a repressive political environment (and relatively speaking, even under a democratic one, but here the former is highlighted): "people may lose friends, they may risk their jobs, or otherwise jeopardise their sources of income, they may be jailed, and they may even lose their lives" (Klandersmans 2004 p.366) (see also 2.6.1). This concern is relevant for this thesis' interview subjects, as mentioned in Chapter Three, who risk disciplinary procedures including job/career loss for publicly expressing political criticism of government or even the police organisation. Alongside this, the organisation is hierarchically structured, ingraining in the culture the characteristics of command and order, and law-abiding, and associated caution in behaviour. Thus also relevant is the argument that knowing or being able to see what other people are doing also influences participation, as explained by Rule (1988 in Klandersmans 2004). He argued that more people are motivated to join in collective action when they can see increasing numbers of others taking part, as their individual thresholds to participation are passed. Thus social networks are vital in spreading news of behaviour or intentions of others. Following these lines, there are obvious implications in terms of speed and amplification with the arrival and use of Twitter and similar instant, public, digital messaging systems.

Gerbaudo, referring to protest movements in Egypt, Spain and the United States, also highlighted social media as a transformative tool enabling, by encouraging or enthusing, motivation to participate (the concept of 'digital enthusiasm' is explored more fully in

3.12). Importantly, he highlighted it was not just an information-circulation tool, but a "key means of motivation" by allowing organisers via widespread hopeful, personal and passionate messages, to dispel fear and suspicion, and even convert it into collective enthusiasm. It was involved in the "transformation of negative sentiments of anger and indignation into collective political passions informed by the hope of prevailing over an unjust political system" (2012, p.264), explaining "these hopeful messages and the page users' enthusiastic response were instrumental in convincing otherwise recalcitrant and dispersed constituencies to make that leap of faith" (ibid, p.268).

Identity - such as belonging to a group – is another motive but it's important to realise that participants can gain multiple aspects of identification in collective action: "the movement's cause; the people in the movement; the movement organisation; or the group one is participating in; and the leader of the movement" (Klandersmans 2004 p.367). This thesis will examine what 'multiple identities' may be present in police protestors beyond the surface obvious.

In terms of collective identity (discussed in more detail in 3.6), Poletta and Jasper (2001) warn against ascribing this 'too expansive' theory to explain aspects of social movement theory. They suggested it was too often used as a 'gap-filler' but also precludes development of collective identity resulting from the movement itself. People's choice from within their own range of groups, roles and positions was still little known as are the emotions that shape collective identity:

> taken as a whole, the literature on collective identity still leaves fuzzy the relations between identity and an individual's calculus of self-interest. Is the identity or interest the bedrock of individual choice? (Poletta and Jasper 2001, p.299).

This thesis aims to explore some of the individuals' choices and interests.

Nevertheless it is a reasonable expectation that people who share prior bonds with others in a group will indulge in solidaristic behaviour as they have "big stake in the group's fate". In collective action they are "likely to contribute" however minor the effect (Fireman and Gamson 1979 in Jasper and Poletta 2001, p.299). They argue

though that apparent loyalty can be dissected to show a number of 'ties' but these could be altruistic, moral, loyal or actually mainly self-interested with participation giving benefits in terms of others' opinion, ie self-interest in reputation.

What was felt to be an over-reliance on big data and network theory focus has resulted, in recent years, in a call to reapply Melucci's (1995, 1996) "overly neglected" theory of collective identity (Gerbaudo 2015). This was even as other scholars proposed moving beyond this with the aforementioned theory of connective identity to suit digital networked protest (Segerberg and Bennett 2015, 2012). As shown in the next section, this has engendered lively and detailed debate, with new concepts being posited in an attempt to harness what might appear to be happening into systematic analysis and understanding.

3.6 The contemporary collective identity debate

Melucci developed his theory of collective identity before the modern iteration of the internet, but recently scholars have argued both against its neglect and for its validity, to show how it, or key aspects, can be applied to modern protest movements (Gerbaudo, Kavada, Milan, Bastos, 2015).

Melucci felt the path of studies suffered from a division due to a "dualistic legacy of structural analysis as a precondition for collective action and the analysis of individual motivations. These parallel, and sometimes intertwined, sets of explanations never fill the gap between behaviour and meaning, between 'objective' conditions and 'subjective' motives and orientations" (2004). Importantly, for this study:

> They never can answer the questions of how social actors come to form a collectivity and recognise themselves as being part of it; how they maintain themselves over time; how acting together makes sense for the participants in a social movement; or how the meaning of collective action derives from structural preconditions or from the sum of the individual motives (Melucci 1995, p.53).

He stressed collective identity could be shown to create a system of tensions leading to collective action and thus important for researchers to understand that it was a process, "because we are dealing not with a thing, but with a process continuously activated by social actors" (Melucci 1995, p.73), fraught with uncertainty in which the researcher must partake. To reflect this, he urged the use of 'identisisation' rather than 'identity' (Melucci 1996, p. 77) to reflect this, the open-ended and dynamic process, whereby a group's common practices are as important as other characteristics, such as mission statements (Kavada, 2015).

In a current social mediascape, Melucci's recognition of communicative channels and technologies of communication as key parts of social relationships forming a movement, are relevant, argues Milan (2015).

Melucci explained collective identity as 'how acting together makes sense for the participants in a social movement' (1996, p.69), results from 'negotiated interactions and relationships…and … the fruit of emotional recognition' (1989 p.35). As further elucidated by Milan, "contrary to its etymology, it does not presuppose unity and coherence but is in continuous evolution. Most importantly, it is the result a 'network of active relationships between actors'" (Milan 2015, p.892; Melucci 1996, p.71).

Milan argues that where collective identity has featured in contemporary studies it has either been watered down into a sense of community, or a 'mechanical' approach has been taken, for example, 'enumerating frames', with the result that the cognitive (subjective character) or the cultural artefacts (objective outputs) are the focus rather than its intersubjective nature, which is 'dismissed'. The sense of individuality somehow collapses into a collective "through which they recognise themselves in some sort of 'we-ness' (real or imagined) that stands for collective agency" (ibid, p.892). But in contrast this dismissed and neglected area is what is important:

> Melucci's emphasis on the relational and intersubjective nature of identity
> building and the centrality he attributes to communicative action make his
> approach particularly useful for present-day reasoning about movement
> identities (Milan 2015, p.892).

Further, Gerbaudo (2015) sums up Milan's research into social media and cloud computing's effect on collective action, which she terms 'cloud protesting', as a

reconfiguration of collective identity "and the processes of its creation in the digital age as an exercise of individuality, performance, and visibility" (pp.868-9).

What's less clear in a Meluccian sense, however, argues Kavada (2015), is how this interactive process takes place and how communication technologies affect the process of 'identisisation' (involving the "development of common practices, codes of conduct, demands and statements and their codification in 'texts'", which "encapsulate the movement's identity" (ibid p.879).

Kavada's study (2015) of Occupy movements used Meluccian theory to examine the place of social media in communication processes that render an aggregation of individuals into a collective which although loose and decentralised still constitutes a distinct collective actor. She focused on the processes involving both offline and online spaces where, alongside the looser digital networking, "a group of activists come to consider themselves as a movement" (p.874).

She proposes that collective action be conceptualised as:

> emerging in interconnected and overlapping texts and conversations that unfold
> in conversation sites with varying spatialities and temporalities in which people
> come together to coordinate and act collectively (Kavada 2015, p.876).

With this she discussed ways in which 'activists' social media practices helped to 'create the collective', to constitute the Occupy movement as an actor with its own collective identity" (ibid, p.876).

This, and others' work on considering the Meluccian role, is in contrast to research that suggests social media use is incompatible with any development of the collective.

3.7 The connective action argument:

Some theorists believe social media networks have affected and shaped some social movements to such an extent that the model of collective action cannot be applied without stretching too far its possibilities and capabilities, thus:

> Efforts to push these kinds of organisation into recognisable social movement

categories diminish our capacity to understand one of the most interesting developments of our times: how fragmented, individualised populations that are hard to reach and even harder to induce to share personally transforming collective identities somehow find ways to mobilise protest networks from Wall Street to Madrid to Cairo (Bennett and Segerberg 2012, p.751).

Instead, Bennett and Segerberg posited the logic model of connective action, with a core position of "the recognition of digital media as organising agents" (2012, p.752) and stating that the presence of such media do change the "core dynamics of the action" (ibid). The process of sharing, by individuals into and across the networks, is the "linchpin". They assert that the collective action model may have suited the study of protests stemming from the older, formalised organisations, with their central leaders and headquarters. But connective action was the model for newer movements, which arise from the transmission of personalised action frames across digital social networks "that self-organise largely without central or 'lead' organisational actors, using technologies as important organisational agents" (ibid p.755).

They did stress there can be a hybrid model, involving a formal organisation enabling the movement, but, with the message spread through personalized action frames, this too would sit within the connective action model. And they stated that in some cases a movement or protest action may change or have simultaneous processes that fit the different models, for example the G20 London and the Occupy Rome protests. They argued that connective action networks are harder to analyse as they don't behave like formal organisations. The latter have a physical location centre, are

> hierarchical, bounded by mission and territory, and defined by relatively known and countable memberships (or in the case of political parties, known and reachable demographics). By contrast, many of today's issue and cause networks are relatively de-centered (constituted by multiple organisations and many direct and cyber activists), distributed, or flattened organisationally as a result of these multiple centers, relatively unbounded, in the sense of crossing both geographical and issue borders, and dynamic in terms of the changing populations who may opt in and out of play as different engagement opportunities are presented (Bennett and Segerberg 2012, p.759).

However, their arguments have been strongly contested by other scholars, particularly with respect to the idea of 'leaderless' movements, and the subordination of the united

'we' of collective action, as discussed in the next section.

3.8 Debating connective v collective action

The suggestion that collective identity is not relevant for analysis of some protest movements is strongly contested by others (Gerbaudo 2012, 2014, 2015, 2016; Gerbaudo and Trere 2015) including those who suggest further developing it (Kavada 2015; Milan 2015).

Gerbaudo agrees that 'personal action frames' are used in contemporary protest action, reflecting some of the move away by young people from traditional collective organisations such as political parties or trade unions – but that this represents the rise of new forms of collective identity rather than it being rendered irrelevant (2014). At that time of political and economic crisis there was "a new desire for collectivity, in which individualised social media communications are often perceived simply as a springboard for a process of social and physical recompositions" (p.268). He agrees the new forms, such as Occupy and Anonymous movements, are ad hoc and far removed from the traditional, but:

> They are forms of collectivity in which individual users through the internet and beyond come to develop a sense of belonging to something bigger than themselves, and in which 'the small and fitful contributions of the crowd', such as choosing a certain profile picture, posting certain hashtags or retweeting certain messages appear in the guise of identity subscriptions, acts through individual internet users assert: I belong (Gerbaudo 2014 p.268).

And he points out that the rise in study of then-new social movements of the 1970s and 1980s, such as student, feminist and environmental, also reflected young people's move away from formal mass-membership organisations:

> The notion of collective identity thus provided scholars with an explanation for the coherence of collective actors otherwise deprived of the strong strategic coordination, encountered in mass membership organisations (Gerbaudo and Trere 2015, p.867).

They argue too that personal networks have always been complementary to collective identity, through ties and a sense of belonging to a group or category.

Milan argues that social media, rather than just allowing the personal identity, contribute to change identity building. They "amplify the 'interactive and shared' properties of collective action… They foster an extension of activism, and of the collective experience in particular, into the private sphere of individuals and their quotidian, strengthening the symbolic nexus between activism and personal life" (2015, p.893).

The suggestion that increasing 'leaderlessness' is a feature of connective action is also challenged, and, as a key difference in this debate, is examined in the case of the police protest movement through RQ3.

Gerbaudo cautions against an "obsession" with micro-operations in technical networks as a way to understand a strong degree of coherence, and calls for a closer look at what the authors termed 'core producers' when it comes to the question of leadership (2014).

Modern movements' network and flexible character may mean increasing complexity in the form of many leaders or centres of leadership, but does not mean leadership or power dynamics have disappeared, "rather a reorientation of leadership and its adaptation to post-Fordist societies", as studies on 'power' accounts in social media movements have shown (Gerbaudo 2017, p.189). His study of the management of key Facebook and Twitter accounts in the largest of such movements, such as Occupy Wall Street, Indignados and UK Uncut, argues that their social media teams should be seen as "digital vanguards", "collective and informal leadership structures that perform a role of direction of collective action through digital communication" (2017, p.186). These include Facebook admins or simply activist tweeps who do organise, whether reluctantly or otherwise. It is this soft but complex form of leadership which social media has facilitated (2012, p.13).

Kavada (2015) also agrees that even in apparently "loosely-structured" movements, they "still need to develop their self-understanding as distinct collectives with their own agency" (p.883). In her study of Occupy activists, she combines Melucci's theory (1996), highlighting its conceptualization of collective identity as open-ended, multi-layered and dynamic, with those from the field of organisational communication "to better explain the communicative aspects of the process of identisation" by investigating interconnected and overlapping texts and conversations across sites of varying spatialities and temporalities, "focusing specifically on the role of social media within this communicative ecology". Despite the emphasis by others on social media

"loosening and individualising collective action, such platforms are important in the process of creating the collective".

As such, this method "allows us an insight into the activists' efforts to create a collective that was both inclusive of the 99% and a distinctive actor with its own voice" (p.883).

Milan, meanwhile, in her conception of "cloud protesting" (2015) finds similarities with Bennett and Segerberg's logic of connective action, "being based on an 'act of personal expression and recognition or self-validation achieved by sharing ideas and actions in trusted relationships'" (Milan, p.895). But, she stresses, it "emphasises the fundamental broker role of social media in building 'internalised or personalised ideas' as opposed to merely circulating them" (ibid), with social media playing a grounding role in "making meanings tangible". Further, she argues that the use of social media actually provides a variation on Meluccian theory in regards to the "politics of visibility" (p.896). Social media allows individuals joining in, to become the centre of the story, and by using tags, citations and so forth, appeal to bystanders, thus reinforcing the collective 'we' while also triggering further exchange and communication, and, in contrast to one-off physical gatherings or events, "allow for a permanent re-enactment of social action in online platforms…In doing so, they stretch the duration and lifecycle of mobilisation" (Milan, p.896).

This way, "the unmediated encounter between individuals enabled by social media results in the 'collective' being experienced through the 'individual' – a far cry from earlier conceptualizations of collective identity" (p.896).

In examining the nature of the police protestors' movement, such nuanced versions of the traditional definition are important and useful in attempting to define what was occurring.

3.9 Twitter as a tool of repression in protest

Several researchers have highlighted that while Twitter and other social media can offer advantages in enabling protest movements, it can also expose to the state or others, people's involvement in this, as well as how they are organising and thus enabling

targeted repression, through data control and tracking (Steinert-Threlkeld et al. 2015; Egorov et al. 2009; Kalathil and Boas, 2003).

However Steinert-Threlked's big data research across thousands of protests in many countries showed a statistical link between online activity and offline protests the next day. They conclude that the same visibility also enables would-be protestors "on the fence" to gain information about the protest, see how widespread it is and that it is "therefore safer" to join (Steinert-Threlkeld et al. 2015, p.8).

The double-edged sword, however, is reflected by Owen (2016), who says while Twitter use in protests is celebrated in providing the alternative information voice to police/law enforcement agencies and the state, the latter find the social media data 'beneficial'.

3.9.1 Policing of protest, off and online

In offline protest, particularly on the streets, and whether legal or not, the policing of them has always been a factor, as by their very nature they impact on the state to keep public order (della Porta and Fillieule 2004). The policing of protest, or what the protestors call repression and the state calls law and order (ibid) is of importance to social movements as it "reflects public conceptions about the very right of expressing dissent through protest actions" (Guigni 1999, p.67). In Western Europe, the tendency has been an evolution from brutal methods attempting to shut protest down to one of flexibility and facilitation for a 'peaceful protest'. This does not mean there will not be 'reversions' at times, which can also be linked to the governments of the time. When a student protestor was shot dead in Frankfurt in 1967, at a time when West Germany was still developing a new democracy, while juggling it with that of anti-Communism, it triggered academic protest in numerous statements of condemnation of authoritarianism and brutal repression of fundamental rights while civil liberties groups called for legislative action to reduce repression and enable legitimate protest. At the same time civil liberties coalitions, concerned about violent forms of action, denounced violence as a protest mechanism, not least as it deterred masses from attending protests and in this case, damaging the peace movement's goals (ibid).

Two coherent policing styles have been identified (della Porta and Fillieule 2004), "one more opportunist, tolerant, soft, selective, and flexible, the other legalistic, repressive,

hard, diffuse, and dissuasive" (p.218). The former (arguably the preferred modern version in the UK for the 'legal protest'), involves planning and negotiation/cooperation ahead, tolerance of large numbers, low reliance on force and "the development instead of prevention and negotiation with a flexible implementation of the law" (ibid). Police themselves were also found to distinguish between 'good' and 'bad' protestors, based mainly on whether they saw it as legitimate protest. They distinguished between those operating in 'good faith', especially 'ordinary' people who didn't usually protest and who were doing so over social concerns, and those who they saw as the 'rent-a-mob' professional protestors enjoying provocation (Waddington 1994, pp.112–13; Fillieule 1997, pp.311–28; della Porta 1998, in della Porta and Fillieule 2004, p.226).

The advent of social media has brought difficult new dilemmas for policing which also feed into surveillance concerns. During the 2011 London riots, there was concern that some groups had coordinated via Blackberry Messenger SMS, while Twitter posts had spread both true and false accounts of where trouble or looting was happening, or the extent of it. The Metropolitan Police revealed that at the height of the unrest it had even considered switching off social media but decided against it on legal advice. In fact (as mentioned in Chapter Two) police officers on the ground had used Twitter to contradict false claims and thus deter others from 'turning up to join in', while also reassuring residents, while Twitter was also used to pull together communities in the clear up afterwards. Nevertheless in the immediate aftermath, the government appeared to be strongly considering possibilities around imposing blackouts, or 'switching off' social media in future events, although this was met with concerns about censorship. A later *Guardian* analysis of Tweets also 'undermined' the government's position on this, it claimed. By the time they met with social media platforms' representatives, however, they had withdrawn from this proposal but other forms of restriction and increased surveillance were not ruled out (*The Guardian* 2011b; 2011c; 2011d; Fuchs, 2012). Overseas, however, this tactic had already been used that year when the Egyptian government did decide to 'turn off' social media by curtailing internet access for four days amid the political unrest (Tierney 2013). The effect was that the protestors "left the digital public sphere" (ibid p.86) and onto the streets, knocking on doors and spreading the word in person, thus "reconnecting the city" before gathering in Tahir Square for the biggest protest.

3.9.2 Online surveillance and monitoring

From the blunt tool of simply switching off social media, law enforcement agencies have moved to seeing it as a resource, and, according to Owen (2017), it provides the state with "a multitude of resources to extend its reach and to ensure political order" (p.688). Protestors, explains Cammaerts, while using the very social media tools which facilitate organisation, dissemination of messages and coordination of events are in turn made vulnerable by the same affordances (2015). At the bigger end of the scale, users of the internet and social media in particular are susceptible to "omni-optic" surveillance by the state with some countries using dragnet strategies to collect and record not only their own citizens' use but those of other countries. He and others contend that while this is present in authoritarian countries, it is "as much – if not more so – in mature democracies" (p.20). Ostensibly this has been under national security and 'the war on terror' reasons, but evidence has emerged of such laws and facilities being used against unions, anti-capitalist groups and radical environmental groups.

Scholars (Fuchs et al. 2012; Cammaerts 2015; Owen 2017) remind us that social media are commercial or corporate spaces with problematic tensions between the nature of these and their heralding as liberal spaces "advocating freedom of speech, facilitating democratic struggle against authoritarian regimes, fuelling revolutions etc" (Cammaerts, 2015, p.16). In fact, he asserts, in Western democracies they become "illiberal and repressive spaces" when internet companies or platforms can shut down access to sites or users under breach of terms and conditions of use.

Examples include Amazon Web Services blocking access to the WikiLeaks site in the wake of its disclosures of US diplomatic cables; Twitter closing the account of Anonymous as it campaigned to support WikiLeaks and its architect Julian Assange; and PayPal (and similar sites, banks and credit card companies) closing, freezing or restricting Wikileaks financial accounts (ibid).

However it was whistle-blower Edward Snowden's high profile revelations about surveillance and that platforms themselves are complicit in states' monitoring of citizens which exposed the extent (Greenwald and MacAskill, 2013). Specifically, that they provided access to users' information via the PRISM program. This program enables intelligence agencies to collate all information available on a person through SNSs, including photographs, relationships and habits into condensed profiles (Owen,

2017). And, as above, while these are ostensibly obtained in relation to controlling terrorism, "in practice 'mission creep' occurs so that these are made available to control internal dissidents" (ibid p.698).

The USA's Department of Homeland Security, for example, regards social media monitoring as an important element of "situational awareness", to be alert to possible threats by monitoring social media feeds about events in localities – and usefulness was shown during response and recovery efforts during Hurricane Sandy in 2012. But the DHS has also since monitored the #blacklivesmatter hashtag on Twitter during lawful protests, as well as the social media activity of Black Lives Matter activists (Owen 2017).

At the lower end of the scale, smart phones themselves, the technological tools using the platforms, can also provide information, such as location and movement via GPS but also records kept within the phone. In social media posts, meanwhile, the metadata produced when they are published or broadcast offers more surveillance opportunity through cross-referencing the tiny traces of information linked to each post (ibid).

But even at the most basic scale, much can be gleaned with advances in 'Open source Intelligence' (OSINT), in the collection and analysis of social media data among other sources to predict and pre-empt crime or disorder. In the policing of protests, social media uses include monitoring tweets during a protest to track the movement of demonstrators, identifying rioters by "infiltrating" social media communication, and collating profiles on those involved (Dencik et al. 2018), the latter standard practice for organising intelligence on criminal suspects, and using social media to broadcast information and advice to affected communities, as discussed in Chapter Two. Such practices are categorised under the prevention, or pre-emption, of domestic extremism and disorder, with a problematic aspect being its definition and where its boundaries are blurred. Dencik et al.'s study, through interviews with five senior police staff, of UK police's use of this for policing some demonstrations and protests highlights that although algorithmic processes are used, they come with the challenge of human aspects of pre-existing bias and agendas, among other things, and the claim of 'professional judgement' and discretion, even with some using the latter to take into consideration and acknowledge problematic areas when forming a view (2018). Similar concerns

were identified by Matescu et al. (2015), who highlighted the complications in interpreting online behaviour accurately.

Nevertheless, protestors too have been quick to adapt to use similar methods on those doing the surveillance as well as attempt to circumvent information gathering. Awareness has been heightened - as a result of Edward Snowden's high-profile revelations about surveillance, some internet activists altered their online practices (Owen 2017). In fact, at this time, awareness rapidly rose among the general internet-using population, with a worldwide survey showing 60% had heard of Snowden and 39% of those had reacted to protect their online privacy and security as a result of the revelations, a percentage extrapolated to suggest at least 700 million users had done so (Schneier 2014, in Owen 2017). Activists generally know (by now, at least) not to discuss or plan protest tactics over social media, using it to mobilise before moving to smaller, more hidden methods such as Facebook groups. They can use Twitter and other platforms, and other methods, during a protest in 'sousveillance'. This includes monitoring police actions and disseminating the information to the crowd in a bid to avert such police methods as 'kettling', where protestors are herded into cordoned-off zones. While Earl et al. (2013) herald such uses as a "levelling of the playing field to some extent", Owen cautions this is optimistic and argues that some of this activity itself can be harvested to be used against the protestors involved.

Indeed, Wilson found that the practice of video activism at protest events has "potential for both negative and positive outcomes in terms of activist aims" (2012, p.33). He interviewed 17 people involved in video activism, who used it as a form of counter-surveillance at Australian protest events, aiming to secure safety, and deter or document instances of police violence, and provide evidence of misconduct, in a process of witnessing, or witness video. On the negative outcome side, several said being the camera person or videographer was likely to make them a target for police, getting "roughed up", and having equipment "trashed" or confiscated, and difficulties getting it back. Another downside was the footage obtained could be used evidentially against the protestors themselves, whether from their publishing it, or the seizing of it. Both protestors and police in Australia mobilised law, using legal arguments to a fine degree, whether on the ground or in court, as part of the moves and counter moves. Other interviews highlighted the increasingly absurd scene of a multitude of camera devices on both sides as individual police officers also took to using them, potentially leading to

>…a Kafkaesque situation where 'counter counter-surveillance promotes a spiral
>of surveillance enmeshed within layers of neutralisation. The surveillance spiral
>ends in cancelling out whereby the act of monitoring has surpassed both action
>and control (Dean 2012, p.38).

Groups like CopWatch (mainly in the USA and Canada, but also in Australia), whose primary aim is to monitor police activities, provide advice to video activists, with the Sydney Copwatch publicising techniques to avoid confrontation and arrest. Dean found there was "no doubt" that video counter-surveillance could be empowering, via its initial aims. But it was important to note the "double-edged" nature.

As Owen says, some tactics do create "spaces of freedom and resistance that are likely to make very real gains", citing the example of smartphone being used to video – and share – excessive police violence in Ferguson, Missouri, in August 2014, during unrest following the police fatal shooting of Michael Brown. This included police hostility towards those trying to film them, protestors or news crews alike, including pointing guns at cameras/phones and threatening to fire them. Many similar examples, and worse, have, of course, been seen since, making their way to news broadcasts around the world. Otherwise Owen says, the balancing situation between protestors and police use of social media, is more akin to a 'cat and mouse' process of adapting tactics.

And as Cammaerts argues, while stressing a very uneven playing field, adaptation and changing practices have been a staple of resistance throughout history:

>we can witness a permanent dialectic between the appropriation of and
>experimentation with various form of media and mediations by resisting
>subordinate actors, and the subsequent attempts of dominant forces in society to
>close down these emancipatory fissures, after which new ways to circumvent
>and pervert the limits and controls are sought. Long may it continue!
>(Cammaerts 2015, p.24).

Along with elements of the above discussions, the following sections are key interest areas for this research thesis, concerning debates around how people might come together to protest, in what protest spaces, and the involvement of emotion.

3.10 The concept of online 'public' space, and as a protest space under authoritarian regimes

It can be seen in the preceding sections that there are already allusions or references to aspects of an online place or space. In contemporary debate, whether this can be considered a 'place', and notwithstanding the techno-commercial debate about a 'public space', has become a growing issue. It is important to highlight here that many of the arguments around it still frame it within the context of the links or relationship between activists' physical protest space and online protest space in most social movements or protests. Certainly this was the case in earlier discussions which considered there to be a "complex interplay" between online and offline for social movements (Trere 2012) with Castells linking the space of new (digital) protest movements to that of flows and places. It was argued that movements organise, mobilise and protest through their shifting and blending of the online and offline worlds or spaces (ibid, p.2370).

There are a huge variety of definitions of physical public space. There are those deemed non-commercial including any which may serve as congregational areas, such as streets, parks, or squares, which some researchers see as the clear definition when talking about protest. However even these also carry rules of potential control for the users, even though these may not be obvious or need to be often enforced. Other researchers include "semi-public sites" such as cafes and pubs (public houses) or bars, ie commercial in formation. Oldenburg had earlier defined them as third place or space, neutral ground where people can gather and interact (1991). These definitions are argued for in terms which highlight important sites of social interaction outside the home and work, allowing people to come together and socialise (Humphreys 2010; Carr et al. 1992) and these may often be self-organised in ways invisible to outsiders or public policy planners to act as a "social glue" (Worpole and Knox 2007), even while their more obvious rules of use can lead to some uses being privileged over others (Holland et al. 2007). Carr et al.'s five terms to connect space to its users (comfort, relaxation, passive and active engagement, and discovery) includes "the contribution to democratic inclusion by encouraging interaction between acquaintances and strangers" (Lopes et al. 2012) while others, such as Watson (2006) mention the need for democratic protest. An

important note is that the sites above are not defined by their physical venues but by how they are used by people ie not every pub might work as a third place (Oldenburg 1991; Wright 2014).

The identification of online networks as spaces has also been wide-ranging and nuanced. As discussed earlier, in terms of the users themselves, Grudz tried to capture what he described as "profound" in what seemed to be happening on Twitter when it came to the possibility of communities. The Twitter network was "both real and imagined" (2011) due to people interacting on it with a sense of community, and commitment to each other. He highlighted that although its use depended less on in-person contact it could thus still form "even a sense of community". Oldenburg's third place theory started to be looked at in online terms as a "third space", initially in virtual sense associated with online gaming and forums. Milan's contention of Twitter was that it "blurs the boundaries between the real and the virtual"… "where the online is not ontologically distinct from the real life" (2015, p.891).

One of the biggest debates centres on varying adaptations of Habermas' concept of the public sphere, namely, for this thesis, in terms of protest movements using social media. Scholars, including Habermas himself, had already wrestled with contradictions and ambiguities within the original concept, including the bourgeois public sphere, relying as it did on coffee houses or salons among public places where discourse could take place, as well as privately-owned newspapers within a public discourse space of print (Habermas 1989; 1992; 1998; Tierney 2011). The theory has "gone through many phases and iterations" (Poell and van Djik, 2016) but at its core is still the idea that it involves public dialogue or debate among citizens able to express their ideas and opinions. In common with others they highlight problems such as the platforms themselves being commercial and not public as such and argue that as "technocommercial assemblages" they "shape and translate user activity" (ibid p.230; Poell and van Djik 2013). They also claim that on social media platforms it is emotional connectivity and related symbols that brings fundamentally different people together to protest rather than the key components of public sphere theory's dialogue or political programme (Poell and van Djik 2016, p.232), also that social platforms differ in the very transient nature of any protest moments. While acknowledging that public space may be temporarily appropriated and constructed in such protests, they argue public sphere theory is not helpful:

new forms of activism articulated through social media cannot be adequately understood through public sphere theory… a new approach is needed to gain insight into how current technological, commercial and cultural changes affect contentious communication (Poell and van Djik 2016, p.227).

Also 'discarding' the use of public sphere theory are Deluca et al. in their 2016 study of how Chinese citizens use social media to protest in what they theorise as "wild public screens". In terms of the nature of this thesis' protestor subjects, this and other research is relevant in examining how Chinese people use social media to protest under their relatively restrictive regime and what restrictions they face. China currently ranks 177 out of 180 countries in the World Press Freedom Index (Reporters Without Borders, 2019), and has by far the largest censorship effort (King et al. 2013), however, its state 'repression' is a more complex situation than often initially understood and, in common with other social movements, physical protests can occur (ibid; Deluca et al. 2016). The "Great Fire Wall of China" blocks whole international websites including social media sites such as Facebook and Twitter. However, within the country, RenRen is similar to Facebook while Weibo is a Twitter substitute along with another major rival, Weixen, although the latter differs in that its friend networks are more private and exclusive, requiring invites. In contrast to the US or many Western countries, there is a proliferation of smaller, similar sites, often locally based, all of which are subject to state fines or shutdowns (King et al. 2013; Deluca et al. 2016). Much of the censorship is manual and as it is applied to key words, creative citizens are swift to adapt with substitute words or symbols, constantly reinventing as necessary. But King et al. found the purpose of such a programme was not to suppress every 'scathing criticism' against officials, government or policy voiced by citizens on social media with many thousands of such individual posts 'allowed' to stand (2013). Rather, regardless of specific content and, to an extent, exact numbers, it was when volume and intensity of posts created a "volume burst" which could indicate signs of potential or emerging collective action, that censorship activity increased dramatically, with around 80% of posts 'cleansed'.

This could be seen in examples with clear potential collective action such as posts expressing collective anger about lead poisoning in Jiangsu Province's Suyang County from battery factories and involving some villagers gathering at the factory to demand answers. But also triggering censorship was a volume burst associated with protests about ethnic stereotypes in the film Kung Fu Panda 2, with little potential for future protest. Non-political surges can also be heavily censored, for example, those on a local

site in Zeijhiang province causing a "mad rush" on salt after Chernobyl by suggesting the iodine in it could tackle radiation poisoning. Here the authors argue that this was likely due to concern about "localised control of collective expression by actors other than central government" (ibid, p.8). They posit that officials know that "looking bad" does not threaten their hold on power, but will act against any discussion which could lead to transferring power to a locus triggering connective action by a mass of citizens (ibid, p.14). This could also be triggered when known activist posters were present. Also, they argue, allowing people some freedom to express thoughts to government can ultimately assist it in keeping the masses happy. But, with any discussion that brings large numbers together, the effect seems to be "the Chinese people are individually free, but collectively in chains" (ibid).

Nevertheless their creative and large scale use of social media to protest and engage in environmental activism has been categorised by Deluca et al. as an inventive reimagining of public space through "wild public screens" (2016, p.206) on social media sites. The 'wild' connotation refers to the myriad networks and the constantly changing tactics of protestors using them, as well as the nature of protest messages in China, with the affective emotion of rage a powerful combiner and propeller. In case studies of environmental protests, such use was found to overwhelm censors, leading to offline, ie physical protests, some of which turned violent while others simply involved large numbers 'strolling'.

All produced images to multiply online and the protests resulted in a backdown by authorities, from the 2012 siting of a wastewater pipe into fishing grounds in Qidong, to halting the construction in 2013 of a uranium processing plant. In Qidong, the prospect of the pipeline pumping industrial wastewater into the East China Sea, with fears of water and fishing grounds contamination, led to citizens sharing anger and information "via tangled networks of online and off-line communication". Physical protests produced images of "bloody faces, overturned police cars, and sign-wielding protesters" which flooded Chinese social media, reaching across the country too quickly for government censors (ibid, p.322).

Images are also harder to quickly censor, as are voice messages, changing word use, symbols and homonyms, aided by Chinese language characteristics, and all creatively used by protesting citizens.

Deluca et al. rejected the notion of the public sphere for such protest movements as an

"archaic" and "ossified" Western construct, in a society which allows 'free speech' but in pre-approved zones to guarantee peaceful public spaces. They argue that in the US rights to protest had been relegated to "fenced pens" or dispersed due to zoning laws. In contrast, protest in China, on or offline, is 'wild' in it carrying all risk with no guarantees. They hold that the public sphere concept also does not cope well with the modern global surveillance society (GSS). Americans are now subject to constant surveillance even if they are not fully aware while the US itself is the world's foremost surveillance power. In contrast, Chinese citizens have lived with overt surveillance a lot longer and have thus developed protest accordingly:

> When words are censored, they use images; when images are censored, they deploy walkie-talkie functions; when a certain phrase is censored, they replace it with one of the Chinese language's multitudinous phononyms. Networks of activated citizens overwhelm the army of censors, making spaces for successful activist efforts and offering hope through incessant creativity (Deluca et al. 2016, p.327).

As such, they theorise, wild public screens signifying inventive imaginings of public space and protest in an *un*civil society, is a better fit for protests using social media under modern global surveillance. In terms of this thesis, it's important to note that even with these Chinese case studies, concerning restricted citizens, they still demonstrate that offline protest events occur, as well as the widespread public protest.

This was also the case in Vietnam's "6700 people for 6700 trees" campaign, when authorities began cutting down trees on Nguyen Chi Thanh Street in the capital Hanoi without prior notice or consultation (Duong et al. 2019). However, the social media campaign, mainly on Facebook, and carried further by news media, was very careful to avoid using the word protest, which in what the authors describe as an authoritarian setting, would be seen as anti-government and bring repressive action. Instead, it and any demonstration were framed as 'cultural events', focusing on the trees and avoiding obvious finger pointing, while also trying to meet and discuss the issue with the authorities (ibid, p.147). Those tasked with organising protests did so without carefully avoiding using that and similar words. They also countered any attempts to depict the campaign as anti-government. By strategically framing the movement via social media, argue Duong et al., it continued until the tree felling was halted and the prime minister called for an investigation.

Other researchers find in cases involving authoritarian regimes that there is still room for arguments based on public sphere theory, due to the possibilities afforded by the internet and social media. Ruijgrok (2019) argues that even before this it would be incorrect to claim a public sphere could not exist, however agrees it was difficult to find spaces to meet and mobilise protest under authoritarian regimes. He holds that the internet changes the dynamics of protest in authoritarian regimes by giving citizens access to more information, which can help enable protest, despite authoritarian attempts to control cyberspace. This also includes aspects of the politics of visibility, previously discussed, where seeing numbers of other disgruntled citizens can increase confidence to join a protest.

That information includes the increasing use of pictures and videos which are "dramatic, striking and vivid", he explains, playing an important role in decision making before protest:

> Although the effect of videos or images is not predetermined, it is likely that when visual materials go viral during protests this pushes people into action. For instance, videos and photos of chanting crowds, officials being caught red-handed committing crimes of corruption, or human rights violations by the state can incite reactive emotions such as anger and moral outrage that have been shown to mobilize people (Ruijgrok 2019, p.502).

While this is also done in democracies, he believes it is unlikely to have such powerful similar effects as even before the internet, news media gave access to such image-based information.

Meanwhile, Thorsen and Sreedharan's study on Saudi Arabian women's use of Twitter to express themselves against *mahram*, or lifetime male guardianship, and the defacto driving ban, found the platform provided shared communicative spaces having several characteristics commonly shared with public sphere(s) (2019). In this regime women are excluded from participating in the offline public sphere for cultural and political reasons, including gender segregation. However, the anonymity of Twitter provided a "safe place" for women to deliberate the issue, and also, as a shared space for men and women, somewhat transcended the "traditionally highly gendered and segregated" offline public spaces (ibid, p.1129).

> The internet enables people to do online what they cannot do offline. In this

context, the online public spaces that have emerged in Arab countries could be seen as examples of counterpublics, where women have been able to articulate political views (Thorsen and Sreedharan 2019, p.1125).

Offline acts had to be careful not to break laws against gathering or congregating in streets, so individual women videoed themselves cycling or walking in protest against the driving ban, and tweeted this out. Despite the extreme restraints, and thus compromise, nevertheless they were arguably able to take their protest into offline physical spaces. By using hashtags, often #EndMaleGuardianship, these offline actions fed into the online campaign.

These "online communicative spaces" allowed women otherwise marginalised to publicly express their views which could represent a counterpublic, "to counterbalance authoritarianism", and also allowed a meaningful dialogue between women and men, found Thorsen and Sreedharan (p.1124). However they argue that characteristics of the communication and views were mixed and eclectic, so it did not fit the definition of a normative Western public sphere, although sharing key elements such as rational and critical debate, and greater inclusivity. Nevertheless, taking into account the restrictive environment in which this online communicative space formed, they hold that Saudi women protesters on Twitter form "counterpublics with open boundaries inside broad dominant public space", which "target the dominant public(s) by agitating for their ideas not only in public spaces but in shared spaces where mainstream audiences also participate" (p.1138).

In these examples from various authoritarian regimes, citizens are not expected to speak out against the structures or people of power and any attempt to do so is deterred, restrained or done with difficulty within the constraints of the authoritarian environment of that regime. Analysis of where they nevertheless try to challenge in these environments leads to different arguments and revisioning around the concept of the public sphere. Similarly, a parallel can be drawn with the *dynamics* of certain institutional structures, such as the police organisation, with its inherent and regulated deterrents and restraints which can also constrain its members from speaking out against those in power. Further examples in the context of counterpublics and social media protests are examined in the next section.

3.11 Niche and smaller social media protests

Big or global protest movements feature strongly as case studies by researchers. The examples in this section show how small and niche movements, like the subject of this thesis, can contribute to overall research.

Useful insights result from examining smaller or even niche protests where those involved are every bit as motivated by their concerns of grievances as those in bigger or global ones. Those already mentioned, such as Vietnam's "6700 people for 6700 trees" campaign (Duong et al. 2019), even the internal Chinese movements such as Quidong's environmental protest (Deluca et al. 2016), and the following examples have been shown to be successful without a global network take up or global solidarity and support. Relevant to those arguing within a public sphere context is Fraser's definition of "weak publics", as those who form and hold opinions but are without the powers to enact decision making and change which affects them (1990).

In South Korea, Choi and Cho (2017) examined two movements, seeing them as counterpublics mobilised by social media. One was national and the other a local one which turned national. The latter centred around the sacking of 174 janitors from Hongik University after protesting against wages and conditions, including forming a union and staging an occupation of the university in 2010/11. As the researchers explain, initially it was one of many such labour disputes across the country set in the context of increasingly neoliberal conditions. Online debates about the issue began to bring it more strongly into public awareness and eventually online and voluntary supporters on Twitter came together to form a group, the sarcastically self-named "Frivolous Outsider Group". As well as offline organising of sympathy and support, messages of moral outrage surrounding the janitors' plight were spread and echoed, building on nationwide general citizen concern and anger around deeper issues of concern about the country's direction. The movement resulted in ordinary members of the public - initially local - expressing their outrage, writing letters to the janitors, visiting the strike site "unorganised", and contributing financially and practically, such as food, electric blankets or whatever could help them at winter time in an unheated building. The support of a prominent actress, who also visited, and tweeted this out along with her support, boosted the movement. Affective emotions in the style and content of the posts were also a contributory factor. The protest action resulted in the janitors regaining their posts with better pay and conditions. Choi and Cho examined

this case and that of the nationwide 2008 beef strikes in the theoretical context of social media generating counter-public spheres, in particular the association of online and offline spaces to build solidarity and "to express people's discontent against mainstream media" (2017, p.15). As they summarise, "people who lost confidence in the mainstream media and their roles as the public sphere were led to organise alternative sites for solidarity and collaboration" (ibid, p.27).

This concept was also Choi and Cho's focus for the protest against a government decision to re-allow imports of US beef older than 30 months into the country, amid fears of mad cow disease. National candlelit vigils were held and members of one specific online community, MLBPARK, began to post their own thoughts and pictures, in a response to what was perceived as a neoliberal news media's skewered reports. Again, emotion was key in engaging others and spreading messages online. The action developed into copying news articles and reposting them edited with deletions and additions. Members also updated situations live from the streets, while adding more information later, to the point that their website became a news source. As well, the group encouraged people at the vigils to donate towards funding the placement of self-designed protest advertisements prominently in the newspapers. Choi and Cho's examination of the two cases, while developing their counter-public sphere arguments, showed the minute details of people's participation in the protest, including innovative practices, whether in the use of social media and online media, or printed advertisements as in traditional protest. It also showed how individuals combined both online, where a momentum was achieved, and offline, to the point of comradeship among strangers (ibid, 2017).

Seeing the movements as counterpublics mobilised by social media, the researchers identified three key aspects: communality, relationality and plurality. Communality, borne of a 'communal effort', contrasts with the rules of privatisation and global neoliberalism by the very nature of counterpublics' actions, with fundamentals such as sharing, exchanging, and creativity enhanced by the characteristics of Twitter and other social media platforms: "In contrast to the rules of privatisation, market populism and domination, counter-public spheres provide spaces where people can think of and experience alternatives to the neoliberal" (ibid, p.28).

In the relational sense, they argue, counterpublics are based on equality rather than

dominance, avoiding a structure or hierarchy in the traditional sense. Through social media they are continuously evolving through "developing networks and connections" through people, technologies and objects, so that new protest movements:

> acquire power through the number, extensiveness and stability of the connections they contain—connections that are contingent and continuously changing. In this sense, they are neither homogeneous and unified nor personal and in isolation; rather, they are collectives of singularities (Choi and Cho 2017, p.28).

They hold that in these examples of mobilisation there was no central organisation, rather it was individuals' participation and scattered groups which drove them. In this sense, "counter-publics are open to all and developed through active participation", but "they resist government intervention and control; that is, counter-publics are inherently neither private nor public".

Following this, they argue that protest movements must consist of plural actions, that is they cannot be "forged, maintained and expanded" by any single person or entity ut "mediated through online networks, counter-publics are corporeal and narrativised, material and discursive, physical and affective" (ibid, p.28).

Choi and Cho also highlighted the importance of feelings and emotions in mobilising and sustaining such movements and counterpublics. Social media enabled a sense of belonging, with the large scale spread of personal and collective stories, sharing of feelings, and connecting people whether they met in person or not. Tweets expressed compassion, sympathy and "stirred" emotions, which included anger and celebration. They hold that "emotions are essential to ethical reasoning and a vibrant political culture" and on social media form an "affective space". Also, while people physically met when they went to the janitors' occupation of the university, or in the street protests and candlelight vigils for the beef protest, at the same time the mediated experiences of such were crucial: "Through these affective experiences, the very streets and bodies were transferred to the internet, where they were indefinitely multiplied and expanded" (ibid, p.25).

The importance of considering emotions in studying protest movements is discussed in

depth in the next section (3.11).

While the longevity of such counterpublics may not be long, for example 1000 days for the anti-beef rallies, the intensity of the people's energy and attachment, their emotional and other investment, is reflected in the sense of belonging. At the same time, such energy and solidarity represent serious public pressure, which "cannot be ignored by the institutions and authorities that are responsible for the situations and are supposed to be accountable to the public" (ibid, p.26).

But the issue of what 'local' and 'locality' actually is can become problematic in contemporary studies where technology allows global scale communication, explain Orestig and Lindgren (2017). Their study on a very-local environmental campaign against a proposed limestone quarry in the Ojinare forest on the small Swedish island of Gotland showed Twitter was used to speak to and beyond the local context and population, and make an attempt to link the campaign's struggle with others. The long-standing campaign began in 2005 with the multinational company Nordalk's application for the quarry, and moved through seven years of court proceedings but escalated in 2015 when tree felling began before a resolution resulting in protestors occupying the forest. The Swedish government allied with the Nordalk company, on the grounds of investment in jobs and expansion of its mining and minerals sector, but the activists found support in different political parties, such as the Greens, as well as the European Parliament, NGOs and independent scientific experts. The activists did establish contacts with EU politicians and indigenous peoples' movements which helped "strengthen their legitimacy… by getting support from representatives of strong publics" as well as linking the conflict to conflicts elsewhere. However they faced "a balancing act" to not alienate their local community support, against Nordalk claims that outsiders without local interest were involved. As such the activists were pressured to demonstrate their local knowledge and investment in the Gotland community in their arguments. Orestig and Lindgren explain it is "quite problematic" to decide whether Ojinare was a local or transnational movement. Nevertheless they argue that the protestors struggled to link to global concerns and the movement's success was from its connection with local knowledge and concerns, upon which the protestors framed their social media interactions. As a weak public they mobilised to influence those within strong publics, those who could make decisions. Through strategic use of social media communication technology they were able to reach out to form alliances and enlist support from strong publics. On the other hand, vitally, they established their base in the

forest itself and make direct contact with the local communities to demonstrate local ties to the outside world at the same time as trustworthiness in the eyes of the local communities.

This also helped frame it in the context of struggles between communities, authorities and multi-national corporations, while also rooting it in the local in terms of dedication to the island and its history. As such, in this study, the authors argued for the notion of a 'local moral economy' playing a key part in such a local movement.

Smaller protest movements may allow more detail, and more comprehensive of the overall protest, to be 'mined' at the movement 'coalface'. As such, the police protest case study has validity, albeit also niche and relatively small, alongside the bigger case studies.

3.12 Emotion, digital enthusiasm and emotional contagion in social media protest

A social movement may provide an environment for people trying to understand "what's happening"… "to exchange experiences, to tell their stories and to express their feelings", says Klandersmans in highlighting another motivation to participation (2004, p.365). But he was also highlighting the arguments by Goodwin et al. that emotions play an important, and often undervalued, part in understanding social movements, their development, and political protest (2004). Such an understanding, especially of development, is taken into account with this thesis' methodology choices, and answering parts of each of the four Research Questions.

The presence of a shared emotional connection was highlighted in studies on online communities, counteracting concerns that human connections were at risk in such computer-aided ties (Grudz et al. 2011; Hiltz and Wetman 1997; Bastani 2001). Part of Grudz et al.'s content analysis of an online community's 600 tweets used the Macmillan and Chavis (1986) definition of shared emotional connections as sharing common places, spending time together, and similar experiences. Grudz et al. held that the community exhibited instances of such shared emotional connections (2011, p.18).

While many of the following discussions focus on emotions which could be classified as strong and passionate, it is important not to overlook that of humour, particularly as this is prevalent in 'cop culture' (see Chapter Two, pp.59-60). Baym (1995) showed that this emotion helps to create group identity and solidarity, in line with other studies

showing humorous exchanges help to form stronger social connections (Braithwaite et al. 1999; Maloney-Krichmar and Preece 2005). Grudz et al., too found this element present in their 2011 content analysis.

Goodwin et al. (2004) argued "bringing emotions back" will result in better in-depth descriptions of protest movements but also – because emotions are a dimension of social action - shed light on "key issues" such as: "Why do people join or support movements? Why do movements occur when they do? Why and how are movements organised the way they are?" (ibid, p.425).

These issues are something this thesis aims to examine in this particular study. Answer to the first question can be sought initially through RQ1. This, along with contextual analysis, may also shed light on the second, why movements occur when they do. And the third, regarding organisation, is examined mainly by RQ3, but also to an extent by RQ2.

Meanwhile, with the urge to 'reconsider emotions' in social movements, the added ingredient of social media has provided renewed impetus and evidence for this, including the use of powerful images and video, as discussed in 3.10.

The emotional component of traditional protest movements (Goodwin et al. 2004; Jasper 1997; 1998; 2011; Klandersmans 2004), and its importance, has been further developed by scholars researching online protest action and movements (Papacharissi 2015, 2014; Gerbaudo 2016).

Papacharissi holds that people's self-expression enables empowerment if they believe their views count, and social media can enable feelings of engagement (2015, p.3; Van Djik 2013). While online and offline protest activity is likely to be in tandem, "online activity may connect disorganised crowds and enable the formation of networked publics around communities, actual and imagined. These publics are activated and sustained by feelings of belonging and solidarity, however evanescent those feelings may be" (2015, p.3). Affective emotion is also demonstrated around the hashtag function which, she says, also enables crowds to become "networked publics" who can express themselves both collaboratively and individually, coming together (or breaking apart) around "bonds of sentiment" - "but it is a public display of affect that unites,

identifies, or disconnects them" (Papacharissi 2014; Papacharissi 2015, p.2).

What she describes as affective publics can, she says, reveal underrepresented viewpoints and thus disrupt dominant narratives. But she cautions that while "at times of collaborative mobilisation, affect can sustain feelings of community, that can reflexively drive a movement forward" it can instead "entrap it in a state of engaged passivity" (2015, p.2).

Gerbaudo (2016) agrees with Papacharissi's proposal that social media platforms like Twitter and Facebook have a strong emotional aspect. In his analysis of episodes of huge spikes of user engagements during the 2011 Egyptian revolution and Spanish Indignados movements, Gerbaudo argues that these "moments of digital enthusiasm" were built by an emotional dialogue between (Facebook page) admins, whom he also terms "vanguards", and ordinary internet users, whom he also terms "crowds", who reinforced their hopeful narrative messages, eg predicting the success of the movement, generating a process of "emotional contagion" which paved a 'psychological' way for mass protest. He highlights the "intensely emotional character" of online conversations which took place months before actual physical protests as well as during them in posts "abounding with exclamations, smileys, and capital letters" (2016, p.255).

The importance of the use of affective emotion was to mobilise hundreds of thousands of people through social media, as their individual emotions "fuse into a collective sense of possibility", in a movement which lacked traditional protest organisations' structure and resource. The downside was some fickleness in such digital enthusiasm that saw engagement drop after peaks of activity in both movements (ibid, p.256).

Gerbaudo points out (much like earlier theorists in pre-digital movements) the neglect of the emotional element in social movement study. In particular, that contemporary debate around social media and activism had focused more on its ability as a "low-cost channel" to circulate information, ie "an overly structuralist and behaviourist view". A current revival of looking at emotions in such studies chimes with his view of communication as not just cognitive, but also affective, especially in situations of emotional contagion.

He reiterates Melucci's call (1996, as outlined earlier) for a revival of emotions in social movements study. The more recent work of those such as Godwin, Jasper and Polletta (2001, as above) and how Klandermans et al. (2011, 2013) have looked at mass anger as

a "stereotypical protest emotion" (2013, p.893) also being an important component of participation in protest. Likewise Castell's (2012) highlighting emotions of indignation and hope as key themes in social media, and Gerbaudo's own analysis of how negative anger and indignation were transformed into "collective political passions informed by the hope of prevailing over an unjust political system" (Gerbaudo 2016, p.258; 2012).

Gerbaudo focuses on enthusiasm, grouping it in 'moods', or diffusive affective emotions, including optimism, pessimism, confidence, and anxiety. He distinguishes it from 'reflex emotions', "more associated with biological states" such as anger, fear or joy, and further from 'moral emotions', which require awareness and understanding, such as compassion and indignation. It's important to note that for this he focused on Facebook pages which are characterised by a strong hierarchy and the roles of the admins, as vanguards, who control content and even participation (more so than Twitter) and as such represent the more traditional social movement organisational division between leaders and participants (ibid, p.257, 258).

Anger in political protest can be seen as both disruptive and destructive or productive and empowering, explains Wahl-Jorgensen (2018), speaking of blogs or news articles and arguing a "typology of mediated anger". The move to bring emotions back into protest social movement studies challenged the idea that emotion and rationality are distinct, after scholars for many years favoured the latter and ignored the former. In her typology she identifies "rational anger", where protestors are "simultaneously angry and rational, peaceful and protesting" (p.2071) and at one end of the spectrum as "rational and legitimate anger", often portrayed in news coverage as people being angry but protesting peacefully, with the other end being illegitimate and irrational, with another category in between of aggressive or disruptive anger but nevertheless fuelled by rational and legitimate concerns. She argues that rational anger "forms the basis for comprehensible projects for social change" (p.2077).

The importance of feelings and emotions in mobilising and sustaining such movements and counterpublics is also highlighted by Choi and Cho in the previous section. Social media, through tweets of compassion, sympathy and "stirred" emotions, whether anger or celebration, enabled a sense of belonging, connecting people whether they met in person or not – and via such platforms form an "affective space" (p.25).

However, in the pertinent research studies examined, there is scant exploration of use of humour in online protest movements, not only as a bonding tool, but as a powerful

means of engaging public interest.

Grudz et al., while studying online communities rather than protest movements, found humorous exchanges were important in forming stronger social connections (2011), while earlier, Baym showed that humour helps in creating solidarity and group identity (1995).

In discussing humour in terms of emotional responses, Morreal specifically refines it to 'amusement', as in our response to humour (1983, p.267) (and which is wholly relevant to his paper). This thesis acknowledges that but uses 'humour' for defining tweets using it (not least as whether the humour intended is amusing to a range of audiences cannot be assumed).

This thesis examines the nature of the police protestors' emotions and, where found, type of anger, as expressed in written artefacts and by individuals themselves. It also considers the usefulness of humour in police use on Twitter.

3.13 Chapter Summary:

The arrival of social media networks has introduced new layers of complexity in the research of protest movements. Even prior to this, it tended to draw from many different fields of study with a somewhat fragmented result, "rooted in different fields – among which are sociology, anthropology, political sciences, psychology and history – that seldom speak to each other" (Mattoni and Trere 2017, p.252).

Nevertheless, this thesis draws on some key, if debated, areas which have been used for studying social media protest action. This has included the theory of connective action rather than collective action, although some arguments suggest a hybrid model is possible. Alongside this is the development by others of the 'traditional' concept of collective action in the new mediascape. There is division about whether newer methods of social protest truly enable 'leaderless' organisation, or instead, soft and complex leadership, such as explained by Gerbaudo in his identification of the notion of digital vanguards and digital enthusiasm contagion (2016; 2017). This division extends to whether the case study examples cited, often of large or global movements, can be termed collective, or otherwise, with implications for explaining the finer details, including hows and whys, of social movements. The nature of the technology,

providing accessible instant data with promises of gathering quantitative measurements, initially meant a surge of research focused on 'big data'. Some argued this was at the expense of essential elements, especially when it came to studying social movements through mass data but not at the individual or ground level, although increasingly theorists have combined these. The nature of the platform(s), and their use by protest movements, has raised theoretical issues around the concepts of what constitutes a community, as well as how they form.

The older argument about reincorporating and recognising the importance of emotions involved in protest movements has arguably been given new life, also through the expression possible on social media. Gerbaudo has advanced this with a focus on the conversion of anger to digital enthusiasm, and its role in mobilisation, as well as identifying digital vanguards (2016; 2017). Again, methodologies to look at emotions, and some of the other aspects, by way of mass data, especially for movements involving hundreds of thousands, either combine, or contrast, with using individual interviews.

The debated nature of public space is, like social movement theory itself, further complicated and conflicted by the arrival of social media and the concept of online 'space'. Alongside these debates, the relevance of public sphere theory is also contested. Some theorists (Deluca 2016; Poell and Djik 2016) reject or describe as 'not useful' the public sphere concept to examine or explain social movements, not least in authoritarian societies such as those of China, Iran, Saudi Arabia and other Middle Eastern states. It is argued the initial western concept could not exist in these and does not take into account how social media users in authoritarian regimes have been quicker to use the technology to work around censorship in a non-civil type of protest action. But others argue that such movements, while not 'fitting' a traditional western public sphere concept, or difficult to exist as such (Ruijgrok 2019), still share key elements with it, forming different ideas of counterpublics (Thorsen and Shreedharan 2019; Choi and Cho 2017) and thus aspects of public sphere theory can be usefully employed in studying such cases. In the same way that much pre-online theory has been, and continues to be, re-examined in the light of technological changes such as social media, so too will be other long-standing theories, rather than being wholly rejected.

In this chapter, research literature around police features them in terms of law and order, in liberal democratic systems, or repression in some countries, along with online surveillance in both, when it comes to protests and protest movements. This thesis,

however, turns to this literature, particularly that analysing social media protest, to try and explain the notion of police as protestors.

Chapter 4: Methodology

4.1 Aims and originality of the research

This thesis makes an original contribution to key debates in this field by identifying and examining an unusual protest movement on social media involving mostly anonymous police officers, who were initially trying out or using the relatively new platform Twitter, but moved into online 'action', protest or otherwise. There has been little if any academic study of these police protests and very little on the use of social media, especially Twitter, by individual police officers in a non-corporate communications sense whose use of Twitter developed parallel to, and at times exceeded that of, official police use and accounts.

The research applies theory developed to examine protest movements – which were often against governments and authority – to police officers who generally are seen as representatives of authority and an instrument of control during protests, thus by protestors as the 'them' in 'them and us'. Here the 'alternative voice' police studied become an 'us', with the government and others being the 'them'. Such definitions also give rise to comparison, unusual though it may seem for the reasons mentioned above, with the concept of weak publics and counterpublics as discussed in arguments around development of the public sphere theory (Fraser 1990).

It also explores what constituted these protestors' space of protest, a "place" defined by the various constraints of their role, with emphasis on the notions and concepts of public online spaces.

It aims to capture the embryonic stage of online connections, and the motivations involved, to better examine some of the theory around how an online protest movement might arise, its organisation and tactics and strategies used.

It re-examines Crump's typology of official police Twitter activity, to develop this in the context of unofficial activity.

This research captures part of the moment in time when social media was first being significantly used in protest, and, in the specific group studied, protest activity unusual for this section of society.

This chapter restates the research questions; discusses and explains the methodological approach taken; discusses and explains the decisions on the specific methods used, namely qualitative (in-depth) interviewing of purposively sampled tweeting police officers or former officers, and critical case studies in a contextual background; the ethical considerations and decisions, including the use of anonymity and the use of online data such as posts; how the methods, including their analysis, were carried out; the researcher's relevant background as primary data instrument.

4.2 Research Questions:

The following Research Questions were developed in terms of examining a protest or social movement by individual police officers and supporters, and most openly represented on the Twitter platform.

RQ1 What were the motivations for individual police officers to use Twitter outside formal police organisation structures?

RQ2 To what extent did their use engender expression of dissent and protest?

RQ3 What evidence was there of leadership and co-ordination?

RQ4 How did forms, practices and epistemologies of police officers' Twitter protest compare to previously analysed digital protest?

4.3 Methodological approach

From an ontological perspective, it was determined this research needed to seek police tweeter individuals' knowledge, motivations, views, understandings, interpretations, experiences, and interactions, and even emotions, whether remembered or current, as they "are meaningful properties of the social reality which (the) research questions are designed to explore" (Mason 2002, p.63). At the same time, it was important that a contextual background was provided, along with case studies, both of which required research investigation of publicly available material. The latter had the potential to also provide evidence of both individual and collective people's actions and decisions, and even some of the emotion, motivation or reasoning given the socio-political environment at the time. Overall, in an essentialist/realist approach, a straightforward deduction or theorising of meanings, experience and motivations can be taken from language, seen as reflecting people and enabling them to articulate meaning and experience (Braun and Clarke 2006; also Potter and Wetherell 1987; Widdicombe and Wooffitt 1995).

As discussed in Chapter Three, much valuable empirical information on protest movements using social media has been provided by researchers using 'big data' to describe or explain aspects of network theory, connections, overlapping, influencer accounts, and creation of mathematical models to try and determine tweet flow and impact, while others have tried to measure emotional content with computer programs (Castells 2012; Boyd and Yardi 2009; Burnap et al. 2013; and others). There was concern, however, that this was shifting the research focus away from the very human people at the heart of such movements; missing or diluting the individual role in protest or collective identity, the personal motivations and risks, the emotional component for which interviews are indicated (Jasper 1998; Goodwin et al. 2004) to help explain why people support movements, why do movements occur when they do and why and how they are organised. Melucci's concern, though pre-Twitter and not relating to the above 'focus' argument, was about then-methodological divisions and approaches that could not show how "social actors come to form a collectivity and recognise themselves as being part of it; how they maintain themselves over time; how acting together makes sense for the participants; or how the meaning of collective action derives from structural preconditions or from the sum of the individual motives." (1995, p.53). This research aimed to examine these aspects in police protest voices while also referring to

Melucci's reminder that collective identity was "not a thing but.. a process continuously activated by social actors" (ibid). Since Melucci wrote this of course, as Chapter Three shows, there has been an increase in research focused on some of these aspects, and using both big data and qualitative methodology. For example, Gerbaudo's studies of digital enthusiasm, looking at both empirical spikes of user engagement alongside the building of emotional contagion via the messages in admin or 'vanguards' posts (2016) and conversations with internet supporters or 'crowd'. Meanwhile, this thesis also draws on the methodology of Penney and Dadas, who sought to examine the experience of Occupy protestors (OWS) with purposive selection and qualitative interviews of 17 Twitter account holders, explaining while such a sample could not be representative of the huge OWS activist population, and generalisability was limited, it nevertheless provided 'rich, first-hand data' with a useful role for theory building and other studies (2013). In comparison, their OWS study drew the eventual sample size of 17 from a much bigger populace than this study's relatively much smaller niche police movement.

The aims of this thesis indicated a qualitative methodology approach, as its methods can provide richness, depth, and nuance, as well as context and complexity, from which arguments can be developed about "how things work in particular contexts", such as the subject, and participants, of this research. Many such methods involve an 'interpretivist' philosophy in terms of discovering how a social world is understood, experienced, interpreted and constituted. They are flexible in terms of data generation, meaning that while it must be systematically and strategically conducted, ie decisions made on a sound basis, the researcher should be flexible and sensitive to any changing context or situation (Mason 2002; Holloway and Todres 2003 in Braun and Clarke 2006; Thomas 2006). However, it's also important to note that because qualitative research is "a broad church", offering a wide range of approaches from different disciplines, a clear definition is difficult (Ritchie et al. 2013; Denzin and Lincoln 2011). Practically speaking "It has no theory or paradigm that is distinctively its own ... Nor does qualitative research have a distinct set of methods or practices that are entirely its own" (Denzin and Lincoln 2011, p.6). Within this broad church, Seale, Mason and others argue for pragmatism, a flexible approach which chooses the methods which will best fit the research questions (Ritchie et al. 2013; Seale et al. 2007), and an approach applied in this thesis' methodology choices. Mason and others stress the importance of a critically reflexive researcher at all stages, constantly scrutinising decisions and approaches, and realising their own role, recognising that even while aspiring to

neutrality or objectivity, it cannot be wholly achieved (2002). It involves the researcher looking inwards and is a continuous and ongoing process (ibid; Traherne and Riggs 2015). In this sense, this thesis' researcher's background is explained in relation to the subject area, along with an element of pre-research Twitter 'participation', which both identified and informed the study. The related, underlying framework of fallibilism also informs this and qualitative research itself: that 'truth' or 'knowledge' can only be approximated in research, not dogmatically asserted, for example, even people's 'genuine beliefs', of which they speak, cannot be ascertained to be a certain truth or knowledge; people can only speak their own truth as they see it, and in their opinion; the researcher also contributes to this uncertain position as the primary instrument for the data collection; and as such any analysis must be careful not to 'position itself above judgement' and should provide material for readers to judge it, ie be accountable, (including the position of the researcher) (Powell 2001; Mason 2002, p 7; Seale 1999, p.6; Creswell 1994; Merriam 1988). For, as Marshall and Rossman put it, "this acknowledges the fact that we can never know everything and that there is never one complete Truth" (2011, p.220). This is particularly so when the experiences of human lives are involved, and thus relevant for this research, in both the interviews methodology and analysis, and that of the observance of the human communication via social media.

Nevertheless, Seale cautions against the pitfall of misuse, specifically using a fallibilistic approach by

> presenting a personal interpretation and then simply saying that people are free to disagree if they so wish. It requires a much more active and labour-intensive approach towards genuinely self-critical research, so that something of originality and value is created, with which, of course, people are then always free to disagree, but may be less inclined to do so because of the strength of the author's case (Seale 1999, p.6).

This is something this thesis sought to achieve, by showing not only the pragmatic approach the research has taken, (and which is explained in more detail throughout the rest of this chapter) but also the detail of the findings, the interviewees' own voices, and the drawing of analyses.

4.4 Methods

In order to answer RQ1, it was essential to hear directly from the individual police tweeters involved and, as discussed in more detail below, semi-structured interviewing, rather than, for example, surveys, was indicated as the best method to properly explore this. This approach was designed to enable a grassroots micro-examination of the dynamics associated with how a protest movement starts and its evolution, also as queried by Melucci (1995, p.53). This method also assisted in answering RQ2, as did examining individuals' and groups' declarations and explanations published on social media, unearthed as part of the wider contextual case studies. The latter gave the essential background to the issues arising, as well as their political and police-socio context, and the two methods together, along with the examination of the existing literature, addressed RQ3.

Drawing on the above, qualitative interviews and critical case studies were decided on as methods to address the research questions and to offer a holistic and contextual concept as far as was possible.

4.4.1 Qualitative interviewing

In this case, semi-structured interviews with the police tweeter participants were a meaningful way to gather the type of information outlined at the start of 4.1 above. It was appropriate for answering RQ1 and partially RQ2. Such interviewing, of which there are many described types, at its most informal can be seen as "a conversation with a purpose" (Burgess 1984) or "a construction site of knowledge" (Kvale 1996). Researchers may take the stance of a 'miner', excavating information out of the subject's experience, or a traveller, on a journey with the interviewee or partner to find perhaps hitherto unknown territory, more construction or co-construction (Kvale and Brinkmann 2009; Mason 2002). For the purposes of my research the latter was the prevailing approach – participants spoke of both personal experience and observations, and their reflections on them. Patton's typology includes the interview guide or topical approach which is minimally structured, in terms of organising a specific time, and pre-prepared questions or topics (2002). However, the researcher must be capable of exploring aspects beyond these, which appear during the interview and question accordingly, for which superb listening skills are required, along with those of personal interaction, question framing and 'gentle probing' (Marshall and Rossman 2011).

Aspects of my background are relevant to this as is the requirement for building trust with the interviewees, who were understandably cautious.

The limitations of the method include practical, eg time-consuming, and theoretical, eg limited generalisability, not least due to the non-randomness of the sample. There may be flaws involving the 'open-ness' or even truthfulness of interviewees as well as non-awareness by the researcher of their role in any 'construction of knowledge', hence the need for constant reflexivity (ibid; Mason 2002; Silverman 2000). There are ethical considerations, including anonymity and informed consent, which are discussed later in this chapter in relation to my research.

Pitfalls lie in the analysis of such material and the researcher must guard against "an anecdotal response… in relation to conclusions or explanations. Brief conversation snippets from unstructured interviews… are used to provide evidence of particular contention. There are grounds for disquiet in that the representativeness or generality of these fragments is rarely addressed" (Bryman 1988, p.77 in Silverman 2000, p.11). Thus as Rasmussen did in his study of police social media and humour, it is important to try and represent with enough detail rather than short, fragmentary statements (2017, p.93).

4.4.2 Purposive selection and considerations of anonymity and verification

Purposive selection was identified as suited to providing information-rich and relevant examples required for the research aims, including to provide the depth associated with qualitative methods, by identifying and selecting interviewees with knowledge and experience in the related study (Patton 2002; Creswell and Plano Clark 2011; Silverman 2000). It is a valid method involving choices and decisions by researcher(s) about with whom, where, and how the research is done (Palys 2008). It suits the goals and logic of qualitative research, being designed to give detailed understanding of (selected) individuals or groups' experiences and/or to develop theories and concepts (Devers and Frankel 2000, p.264), with "information rich" interview subjects chosen that can provide insight into the research question(s).

The stringent anonymity and confidential requirements and the possibility of jigsaw identification, means that in describing the sample, even an apparently 'anonymous' Twitter account name cannot be published in the thesis, nor, for each individual can useful descriptive characteristics often shown in similar examples. However what

details can be provided of the sample group overall are given here [and steps were taken to enable evidence to be shown to doctoral supervisors and examiners].

I sought interviews with 40 mostly anonymous account holders whom I had observed as key participants in the initial swell of protesting police leading up to and beyond the 2012 height of the initial police Twitter protest. This initial scoping, and the eventual sample, was not decided through statistical data such as number of followers and tweets (or retweets), though many did indeed have large numbers of both. They were primarily identified as key participants through observation (over several years in some cases) of their involvement in or around protest activity, in its development or in one or more of key developments and events, including those highlighted in the contextualised background and case studies, and for variety of approaches to it.

They included those who used the medium to confront authority figures such as politicians and political lobby group members, those particularly active in certain protest campaigns and those who were slightly less direct in protest but supportive/sympathetic in certain events and using Twitter creatively and innovatively, including early adoptees, many prior to their own forces' use. They ranged in ranks from constable to deputy or assistant chief constable, in a variety of roles and geographical locations, and during the research, several have changed ranks, left Twitter or left the police. The age range was within 25 – 55. They include those without and with tertiary education, those studying for first degrees or doctoral during the research, and those who had prior jobs to policing. They included a few who were also federation reps, though most of these were tweeting in a personal capacity. While most were anonymous, a few had always tweeted under their own name or one which their organisation knew as their identity.

Requests for interviews were mostly initially made via Twitter. Those who weren't mutual followers with my Twitter account were the most difficult to obtain though not impossible, however some of those who had left Twitter remained elusive. Some took months to obtain due to needing a suitable period in their life and work. Some mutual followers, though keen to continue engaging via direct messages, declined the required verbal interview out of work or life pressures, or fear of risking exposure, despite the steps built into the research to protect anonymity, which is explained throughout the method stages. Participant information sheets and consent forms were developed (appendices 2 and 3).

Eventually I obtained 17 semi-structured interviews, most of which were conducted over Facetime or Skype, with two conducted in person and three via phone, between May 2012 and Jan 2018, with the majority between 2017 – 18. This time span is elucidated further below, including effects on the validity of the data. The variation in contact method was a pragmatic approach to secure the interviews due to either geographical location or the interviewees' time availability or personal preference. Since these were all synchronous verbal interviews, and in keeping with existing literature on approaches to interviewing (Devers and Frankel, 2000; Mason 2002; Alastutar et al. 2008), I did not consider there to be any adverse effects on or inconsistency in the results between the audio interviews and others, nor between the technology-enabled and in-person face-to-face. The interviews were detailed, with most between an hour to more than two hours long, frank, in-depth as intended for a qualitative rather than quantitative analysis.

The time span of the sample period is due to several reasons, though primarily is one of a lengthy time taken to gain consent for many of the interviews, and then, the commitment to do them. In some cases, this hinged on a slow build-up of trust in the researcher, in others, simply finding space in hectic lives (sometimes both work and personal). Many off-the-record conversations were had in the process of developing the research, some verbally, but many via Twitter's Direct Messaging (DM) facility. The latter was initially felt to be ostensibly private, but later, concerns arose over some forces later seeking passwords for successful accounts which had been set up independently in the early days. This was mainly for those whose operators, while publicly semi-anonymous, were known to their forces, a few of which decided policy should be to have them under the umbrella of official communications. In an emergency, for example, the password would enable all accounts to be used by a communications team to publish useful notices – but it would also allow access to DMs. Also, as disciplinary cases over Twitter use began to occur (as discussed in Chapter 5), there was growing concern among independent operators about the security of such communication . While these direct message exchanges helped provide context for this research, they could not of course be used as primary research data for which formal, recorded interviews were required. In some cases, agreement to participate in the research was positively indicated early on, but the commitment to an interview could not be gained, despite maintaining tactful contact. External events involving officers falling foul of social media, or simply concerned about career development, meant some

views changed as to the wisdom or preference of taking part in such research. This was despite assurances of confidentiality and anonymity. This concern continued for some even when they left the police and embarked on new careers, over the research time span. However, some of those reluctant to be interviewed did nevertheless assist my research; for example, one vouched for me with another interviewee, and others, I understand, promoted my research in small ways which I believe helped when I approached others.

Meanwhile, in contrast, others found that retirement made them more comfortable about taking part by the time I came to interview them. The initial – and very early – 2012 interview was 'opportunistic', in that this key interviewee would be briefly at an event in my location. A face-to-face introduction enhanced trust-gaining and allowed explanation, followed by their preferred face-to-face interview the next day. This was lengthy and wide-sweeping, as I was aware of how early in the process it was. However, contact about the research was maintained over the time span and allowed a check back when in later stages any further questions arose. This was also the case in a 2014 preliminary interview which was repeated in 2016, a year in which four others were obtained for the first time.

There were some researcher personal life events which hindered the steady course of the research, which was always run alongside a full-time job. One was my remaining parent's decline and death in 2015, followed by personal medical issues. In 2016 I embarked on a lengthy application process for a post in New Zealand, which also included a long return flight for second interviews. This was successful, resulting in a 2017 upheaval of life to move there and embark on a busy leadership role. However, I resumed seeking and obtaining the remaining interviews from September of that year, again interrupted by a personal medical issue, with the majority completed during the NZ academic summer break at the end of the year and early 2018.

In consideration of how this time span affected the validity and credibility of my interview research phase, several studies were illuminating in terms of both disadvantages and advantages (Bowker & Tuffin 2004; Hodgson 2004 ;Walther 1996 in Meho 2006). Many of these studies were focused on e-interview methodology, as this had been found to be more likely to lengthen the process, albeit often, but not always, through an 'ongoing' interview via email or similar. While this thesis' method is clearly

semi-structured, synchronous, non-textual interviews, there were some parallels, for example, maintaining contact over time, building trust and so forth.

Meho (2006) found a contrasting view among scholars, namely, when online contact was over a long period of time. Some found this meant interviewees "experienced a sense of affirmation for their participation" (Bowker & Tuffin 2004; Walther 1996 in Meho, 2006, p.1288). Elsewhere, it was found the longer it takes to *complete* the interview process, the higher the possibility of dropout of participants along with frustration for all involved (Hodgson 2004 in Meho 2006). In this thesis' case, both dynamics were present but with more emphasis on the first. Those who ended up not participating had mainly stayed in touch but never reached a position where they felt comfortable or able to. While the dropout argument pertains more to the actual interviewing process itself over time, via emails, I would argue the passage of time in this thesis' case, albeit unintentional, did eventually enable some participants to reach a position where they felt able to take part, rather than deter.

There were similarities to be found also with James' and Busher's exploration of dilemmas in web-based interviewing, particularly with control of the speed of the process in obtaining interviews (2006). They found the method, compared to researcher-led, semi-structured synchronous interviews, led to a beneficial "shift in power" between researcher and participant, as interviews which the researchers had scheduled for being completed in two to three weeks sometimes extended over several months, as participants responded at a speed which suited the "busy press of their lives" (ibid, p.410). They argued the slower replies improved "the quality of participants' reflections" as they "tended to generate more thoughtful answers and insights" compared to those who responded immediately (ibid).

> Prompt replies, we discovered, were not actually necessary, particularly when slower ones gave opportunity for more powerful reflection on the main focus of the studies (James and Busher 2006, p.410).

Hence, in the James and Busher (2006) study at least, the delays and time differences were not seen as hampering the data obtained. Meanwhile, this thesis, despite using the "researcher-led" methodology, did find the "busy press" of participants' lives was very much a factor in timetabling many of the interviews. James and Busher found the

slower response enabled by the asynchronicity of their methodology advantageous in that "it enabled participants, who might not otherwise have been able to take part in a study to do so" (2006, p.417). In this thesis, a desire to obtain key participants eventually, rather than not at all due to a 'deadline', fortuitously combined with the part-time and sometimes-interrupted nature of this research.

However, in terms of "quality" in the overall set of data, spread as it was over time, I considered several aspects particular to this research. The latter included what sort of problematic differences might be likely due to time between the early interview, the mid span ones and the final largest group. These could include more time to reflect on events which, while enabling some clarity of thought, could mean remembrances influenced by the passage of time, experience since, and a change in concerns about the policing environment. Change and time will usually also challenge recall of all details compared to 'at the time'. I did find discrepancies in some recollections of how much organising there was of some campaigns, compared to my analysis of texts, eg what was posted at the time or shortly after, and these are highlighted – equally, however, some interviewees may not have been aware of the fine details in the first place. However, the 2012 interviewee, for example, was already in reflective mode, having been through their particular relevant tribulations, and did not alter their position in the check-ups which followed. Meanwhile, the later interviews were still rich in the detail and emotion, some of which had been noted in their original posts at the time of events and from which they had not swayed in the intervening period. Rather, a passage of time had enabled further clarification of some aspects for them. They all considered participation important and gave a lot more time to the interviews than I had hoped for. The candour and richness of example extracts in Chapter Six indicate the quality of the material.

 The 17 interviews represent a 42% response rate from my initial starting point, a similar situation to some related peer-reviewed research projects carried out by teams. These include Penney and Dadas' 2014 Occupy study which centred on 17 in-depth interviews, obtained via Twitter and conducted via phone. They felt their recruitment of interviewees via Twitter, which they describe as a "postmodern methodology" suffered for a number of reasons: they set up a "professional sounding" research account titled "OWSprofessors", but ultimately concluded it had made them appear 'newcomers' to the OWS Twitter accounts they were trying to interview, and that appearing

'professional' actually "compromised our credibility as members of the Twitter community" (Penney and Dadas 2014, p.5). As such despite following accounts, they received few followers back. They also fell foul of then-Twitter restrictions of sending multiple same messages to other accounts resulting in their research account being frozen a number of times. Though they felt their efforts eventually gained momentum, "initially, however, it was difficult as researchers to gain traction in Twitter" (ibid, p.6).

Nevertheless, while stating their purposive sample size meant limitations to generalisability:

> We believe that the rich first-hand data gained from this small-scale qualitative interview study has a useful role to play in theory-building, and can inform future empirical studies that employ other methods (Penney and Dadas 2014, p.5).

Similarly, Bastos and Mercea (2016), for their study of serial transnationalist activists, had an interview sample size of 21 individuals after contacting 191. They had initially empirically identified 1,177,549 prolific Twitter postees who posted across area bands with multiple hashtags. They then whittled this down to identify the 200 most active individuals who tweeted with at least 43 and up to 101 protest hashtags and were able to contact the 191 with a research interview request. Only 37 communicated with them, and from these 21 agreed to the interview (ibid, pp.144-5).

These rich interviews, they found, assisted their aim "to provide more depth to the treatment of protest communication on Twitter that adds granularity to network-level inferences" (Bastos and Mercea 2016, p.152).

Verification:

For this thesis' research, verification that individuals identified through Twitter were, or had been, police officers was vital, not least for validity in the theoretical context and drawing of conclusions. My verification steps, outlined below in this section, contrast with some researchers. Atherton (2012), for example, relied on researcher scrutiny of her study's blogs to do this, and researcher decisions made on whether they contained evidence of "specialist knowledge and operational expertise which is clearly attributed

to police work". She felt while authenticity was an important consideration which needed to be addressed, it could also be bypassed to view the blogs as a unit of analysis which presented themselves as a representation (p.7).

However, examples, particularly one, show the necessity. There is a suspicion within the police online community about 'Walter Mitty's' on Twitter ie people pretending to be police officers whether through personal fantasy wishes (from the fictional character in *The Secret Life of Walter Mitty* by James Thurber, 1939, and the 1947 and 2013 films of the same name) or possibly more sinister eg political or propaganda purposes, including discovering identities of real anonymous officers. In terms of a protest cause, such fake personas can obviously be damaging, and the problem was addressed at the 2012 Blue Light UnConference. At this time, there was a heightened awareness due to the case of a seemingly authentic, but ultimately prosecuted, account holder by the name of 'Inspector Winter', who was eventually exposed as a serial conman. Posing as a Metropolitan police inspector, and prominent around the time of the 2011 London riots, he put out such apparently authentic information in articulate and convincing tweets, that he even convinced some police as well as the public and news media. He was quoted in news articles, television and radio interviewed him anonymously and *The Daily Telegraph* paid him for a column about his 'first hand' accounts during the London riots. In person, he passed through police cordons by wearing police uniforms, and having false warrant cards, real police paper forms, and other paraphernalia, while engaging in romantic relationships under the pretence and obtaining money. He was jailed for five years after being convicted of 18 fraud charges, including those involving the women, *The Daily Telegraph* and his use of false police and military identification and uniforms (*BBC* 2012).

Verification of my interviewees was provided either by my having met them in their police role, or confirmed as such by others I had already met, or through mutual contacts. Such meetings or contact-making was done before or during the research and interview process (during the interview process, using mutual contacts to verify was a last resource due to my wish to keep identities in the final analysis wholly confidential, even within the sample group unless they chose to speak about it with each other).

4.4.3 Ethical considerations (Interviewing)

As well as standard considerations when it comes to interviewing people, such as informed consent, discussed below, the key consideration in this research was protecting the identity and retaining anonymity of the participants. This was due to the real possibility of repercussions, especially for their police job (and which are discussed and shown throughout the thesis) and also to enable frankly spoken viewpoints which may differ from others around or within any protest group. The constraint of anonymity is also referred to in other stages of the method description for practical explanation purposes. I offered the option of phone-only interviewing with them making the call from whatever or whoever's device they chose, so even their personal number would be hidden from me. In the event, enough trust was established that all were comfortable with being seen in the interview, and the phone interviews (only one of which I hadn't met) were only chosen by the interviewees for their convenience. True anonymity extended to the description of the sample, and even verification, as already explained. This included 'anonymous' Twitter account names, as the anonymity of these varied as shown in the interviews analysis, for example, some account identities were known to some of their colleagues or bosses. Even if they were not at the time of the research there was a possibility they could be identified at some future stage. Some who had left the police were ambivalent or happy to be identified, however, an ethical consideration was whether it might come to harm them in some future role or work, and for the purposes of research sample consistency anonymity was retained for all. Considerations for this extended into the data analysis.

Other ethical consideration around the interviewing method included the production of a participant information sheet (Appendix 2) and consent form (Appendix 3), and as required by Bournemouth University's Code of Ethics and Research Ethics Committee. Also as required, its ethical approval for the research was gained prior to implementing it.

These are aimed at confirming informed consent among other factors. Mason (2002) and other scholars stress that these should not be seen or used as a 'box-ticking' exercise and ethical considerations should be constantly checked throughout the process as a reflexive researcher. These include consideration of how informed the consent actually is, pressure on interviewees to take part by people in their organisation, if it is through this that they were sought, power balance issues between the researcher and

interviewees, and style of interviewing including over-persistence with questions someone does not want to answer (pp.81-82). In this case, due to anonymity the individuals were contacted directly by the researcher removing organisational pressure; they were all or had been police officers, bringing with it to the interview dynamic a sense of power and related confidence, while the researcher was familiar and confident, through background, with talking with police and in an interview situation. A number of officers were familiar with qualitative interviewing through their own research or having already been the subject of one. All took time to consider taking part and confirming they would do so. Interviewees were told in advance (in the participant information sheet), and it was reinforced verbally or/and by text or Twitter DMs that they could ignore or decline any question they were not comfortable with answering as well as withdrawing from the research at any point. It was also explained that the interviews would be audio recorded and transcribed along with reassurances about what care was taken to avoid identification from extracts used (discussed further under data analysis).

4.4.4 Conducting the interviews

These were conducted at mutually available times, and those which were best suited to the interviewee, especially around their shifts, so ranged from morning to late at night. As explained earlier they were conducted over many months. The format was exploratory as well as using a semi-structured question outline (Appendix 3), which was used as a guide only, to make sure key aspects of the research questions were addressed. In all cases interviewees spoke at length and in detail, and most for between one to just over two hours in a conversational mode. Skype video was used for most, Facetime video for two, phone for three and two in person. All were audio recorded on Dictaphone with the audio files being uploaded for transcription. This was done manually using ExpressScribe which allows the speed to be slowed for accompanying typing speed. The process was useful for reinforcing familiarity with the interview data and beginning the process of identifying key points. Although seven of the interviews were transcribed by a confidential transcriber, I carried out a careful check on the transcripts, alongside the audio, amending where necessary, which also reinforced familiarity with the data (Appendix 4). Both the recording and transcripts were stored privately, ie not on a cloud system or online portal.

4.4.5 Data analysis

Both the research questions and content of the interviews were used to identify initial themes with which to code them (Appendix 5). This enabled key aspects of the research questions to be addressed, but also involved flexibility to see nuanced variations of these themes and unexpected themes. The transcripts were uploaded into QSR NVivo purely for ease of classifying, arranging and sorting under these themes and this was manually done by going through each one. NVivo is suitable for this and while it offers other possibilities in analysis, such as percentage commonality, these are more suited to a larger data set (NVivo). With the method employed, there was no risk of what Baugh et al. (2010) warns of in letting any such program or application control the data analysis. From these a subset of final themes was developed (Appendix 5). Anonymity was important in the case of these police officers for getting honest and revealing information and requires alert care when using extracts in the thesis. A limitation is that it restricts the colour of some of the extracts used due to possible jigsaw identification via specific events and accounts of relevant conversations, especially including useful examples, with superiors and others. Where possible these have been retained for their salient points while removing identifying details. Anonymity also restricts showing the interviewees in the context of their public Twitter accounts which would exemplify their selection in the first place but also show some fascinating background and context. However, this does not detract from the key areas of the ultimate analysis.

In the use of extracting from the interviews, consideration was given to the importance of retaining the interviewees 'own voice', while being careful not to replace analysis with this. To answer some research question elements, for example get a better understanding of individual motivations, and from an ethical consideration of the subjects, it is argued that it is important to show 'in their own words' their own individual processes of reasoning and deduction, as well as retaining the important and very human nuances, including of emotions, to demonstrate what is claimed. There is also the stance taken by others to, as far as possible, ensure "conversations are represented in enough detail, and not as short, fragmentary statements" (Rasmussen 2017, p.93; Potter and Hepburn 2005).

4.4.6 Critical case studies

Critical case studies can help a researcher understand more about specific events – what happened and where possible, how, especially to go beyond accepted or surface appearances. This was essential in this study, as the protest grew within a socio-political landscape whereby this group felt directly affected by decisions taken and, in common with a definition of weak publics, perceived as 'done to them' with no power to change. Such case studies also give the necessary logical context with which to understand the issues being discussed in protest. Thus, along with the reasons discussed below, this method was appropriate and well-suited to this thesis' research, enabling the answering of RQ4 and also partially RQ3. They are an interpretive approach suited to study of complex contemporary phenomenon (Yin 2014 in Thorsen 2016) and a robust method which contributes cumulatively to knowledge, as Flyvberg (2006) explained in his defence of the method:

> For researchers, the closeness of the case study to real-life situations and its multiple wealth of details are important… for the development of a nuanced view of reality, including the view that human behaviour cannot be meaningfully understood as simply the rule-governed acts found at the lowest levels of the learning process, and in much theory (Flyvberg 2006, p.223).

Important too was to see the validity of context-rich research examples as learning about something rather than 'proving' or developing a predictive theory which, he held, was always going to be impossible in the study of human affairs. Concrete, practical (context-knowledge) was therefore what was left – and case studies could produce it (ibid) despite its flaws, as described by Campbell:

> This is not to say that such common sense naturalistic observation is objective, dependable, or unbiased. But it is all that we have. It is the only route to knowledge – noisy, fallible, and biased though it be (1975, p.191 in Flyvberg, 2006).

In this thesis' research, case studies give an exemplar and contextual background to the discussions with the participants; they enable a closer examination of the events in context with theory discussed in Chapters Two and Three, with which to analyse; and

they offer a more concrete footing on which, and how, to link specific events with any protest or possible social movement. Thorsen used them to show in-depth analysis of citizen material contributing to news cycles in specific events and though these were "relatively short snapshots of complex news dynamics" the method rendered "visible subtle, yet important, sequences of how demotic voices, eyewitness accounts, and citizen investigations are remediated across a range of different platforms" (2016, p.52). Also, in the spirit of case study exemplars, as shown in Chapter Two, Pavan's study of the TBTT tweetathon contributed to the cumulative knowledge:

> Thus, the exploration of the TBTT case provides evidence of the usefulness of the proposed approach to reflect on the different modes in which social media can be exploited in different mobilisation stages and political terrains (Pavan 2016, p.11).

4.4.7 Selection and sources

Purposive selection of case studies was also indicated as these were chosen for specific elements with which to answer the research questions. The choices capture the historic moment of emergence of initial protest, by 2011, and some key early Twitter campaigns or protests from #nocofidenceintheresamay tweetathon; #theantiwinsornetwork; #timeonmyhands; and #stopthecutsmay10, to activity before and around the Police Federation's physical protest march on Parliament in March 2012, (as well as the aftermath and repercussions in the immediate years following). It was vital to contextualise these with the background showing the emergence of police protest on Twitter and other social media, as well as investigating other publicly available forums to show links or background information, and political, police organisational or social developments which influenced each protest, thus providing a coherent narrative supporting logical deductions. It makes use of public tweets, associated blogs, public Facebook pages, news reports, government and other organisations' releases and reports, and other relevant material as required. Some of the data in the form of screenshots of tweets or whole pages of tweets, tweeted photographs, blog posts and more had been obtained by the researcher at the time of the events, when only considering the possibility of researching the topic. This proved to be useful for some which had been deleted by the time later wholescale searches, captured by screenshots, were used. These included using the Twitter search function, for tags alone, and for tags

with context words, while being aware of possible variations, for example 'may10' and '10may'. Google search was also used for the same.

Some key tweets and posts were also captured at the time by news articles, particularly when done so as images rather than embedded tweets (which would disappear if the original account holder deleted them), as were controversial tweets from politicians or similar, which were often captured for posterity by protestors on other forums.

4.4.8 Data analysis

Close reading was carried out of social media posts, eg tweets and some Facebook posts, as well as related blog posts. Relevant news articles and police policy documents were also sourced and examined. A pragmatic approach was used to achieve the aims outlined above and invoked the various knowledges of the topic and arenas. This was also enabled though ongoing and lengthy observation and following the dynamics online. Key examples are shown to support the analysis which is woven into the contextual background and case studies themselves. Tweets and any other posts, though presented in the thesis in image form, were used as a textual component of this analysis while still showing them (where possible) in their original form to give their true representation, including any emoticons or creative use, ie as it appeared. It is felt this is lost in transcribing them into textual sentences, though this is appropriate for bigger studies and data sets. Where this type of transcribed representation is seen in this thesis, it was either how they appeared in another source, eg a news article, or where the original version of the tweet was now deleted.

4.4.9 Ethical considerations (Critical case studies)

The use of social media posts in academic research is still a developing field, particularly with regard to ethical (and some legal) considerations. Careful consideration was thus given to this aspect of my research. These included privacy concerns and whether or not the online space could be considered public or private, and possible blurring, for example Twitter versus Facebook versus closed Facebook groups; considerations of the awareness of users of whether they are communicating as if privately rather than publicly, ie impulsive statements in the moment amid a 'disinhibiting' effect of computer-mediated communication, or even aware that their tweets are public, and vulnerable users; and verification issues as discussed previously

(Ahmed et al. 2017; Beninger et al. 2014, Moore et al. 2015). For this study, considerations applied to these concerns for this included: the nature of the job or role of the people whose tweets were examined: legally and organisationally-informed police officers, familiar with regulations and related, sometimes swift, decision-making, as were politicians and associated researchers, for all of which it would be argued that awareness was or should be high. The data for this section was also all publicly available, ie no entry of private forums or Facebook groups was required or thus requested. The Facebook sites looked at were set up as public, often to spread the word to the public, and often disseminated on Twitter as such, so did not involve a lack of awareness of security settings. Twitter itself also informs participants that its tweets are public unless they choose to lock their accounts, (and it could be argued that anyone not aware will soon become aware as they use it and receive attention) as well as by agreeing to its terms and service they permit third party use, which some researchers argue applies to academic uses, though this does not abrogate them from applying ethical considerations. Interestingly using Twitter's advanced search for scraping and downloading contravenes its terms and conditions, though it is frequently done (Ahmed et al. 2014, p.7). Other legal aspects include Twitter requiring that any republished tweets must be whole, ie account holder names should not be removed or obscured (as, however, frequently done by academic researchers for ethical reasons to protect individuals) (ibid, p.8).

4.5 Researcher background, and Twitter involvement relating to this research

When considering the researcher as a primary instrument in qualitative research methods of the type used, they will bring with them a mixture of culture, background and life experience which will influence the research in terms of skills and skill gaps, and bias and cultural perspectives. Self-reflexivity, as explained earlier, is important in qualitative research methodology, and this includes the impact of my background on my motivations to pursue this particular thesis subject. It includes my education, work and career history, and my Twitter engagement. Prior to my current occupation of senior lecturer in journalism and communications, I was for many years a UK NCTJ-trained journalist who worked for newspapers, magazines and television in both the UK and later New Zealand, as well as freelancing while abroad, eg Germany, where I also taught English as a foreign language. In my career, I have covered many crime and

police-related stories. I also worked for a few years for the police (in New Zealand) as a media liaison officer, and trained as a compu-sketch/identikit artist, involving working with victims and witnesses. In terms of skills, and with many years' experience in interviewing elite and sensitive subjects, this has given me experience in organising and conducting interviews which were in-depth even when conciseness and time-contingency was necessary for news reporting, but also for investigative features. With this comes responsibility, covered by various journalism codes of ethics (often union-originated) as well as adherence to media law (not least for legal protection), for areas which include: to conduct oneself ethically, to not misrepresent, to be accurate, to balance, and to aim for impartiality and objectivity.

Journalist and police relations are, or were for many years, an interesting dynamic with tensions whereby each needed the other (for police, mainly for publicity to assist operations and even 'pr'; for journalists, for information and stories), degrees of which see-sawed according to the particular story. Although police were 'elite sources' overall, a journalist can and should still seek to get the viewpoint of 'the other side', with oppositional voices and also those convicted of offences. Thus my stories could show the police in a positive or a negative light, depending on the nature of the story.

My police media liaison job was a new role which I had to self-establish. This involved gaining the trust and respect for the work from officers at all ranks, while working alongside officers and teams on the media aspect of a range of cases and operations, including murders, and a serial rapist in the country's first large-scale profiling case. Overall this part of my career gave me a more rounded understanding of police work. Thus my work background has enabled an informed approach to the research.

In addition to the role, the police also funded me to take a university criminology paper – as my first degree was in science, this was my first foray into social science and humanities. It helped when I later undertook my MA in communication studies, in which I identified a moral panic around "home invasions" in New Zealand, leading to flawed and sweeping legislative changes, and for this I researched the role of police and news media.

When I joined Twitter in 2010, which ultimately decided this PhD research focus, my background meant as well as following or engaging with journalism and hobby-related accounts, I also discovered, followed and engaged with many police-related accounts. I

began to notice, observe and become interested in the debates and actions of individual police on Twitter, mostly, but not all, anonymous. In relation to the latter, and in terms of my communication roles, I was fascinated by some of the inventiveness and dexterity displayed in the tweets, by police officers or associates who were not trained communications staff ('comms'). This included use of language, humour or digital uses of images, videos and hashtags so noted the entertainment factor was also important in engaging me. Within this loose network, I was intrigued by what *seemed* to be the forming of connections, often seemingly serendipitous, a possible group or groups emerging, and a speed and spread of their messages with results in the form of sometimes seemingly-spontaneous protests or campaigns. Thus eventually this led to my choice of it as a research subject.

Prior to any idea of research, and initially as a Twitter user identifying personal interest areas and relevant account holders, I engaged with these police-related accounts as I did others, by following and often being followed back (which also enabled direct messages, which would prove to be useful when it did become a research project), retweeting what I enjoyed or found important, and at times tentatively exchanging thoughts on general life and various subjects, often wide-ranging. Sometimes I felt obliged to try and counteract generalisations about 'the media', especially when journalism was conflated with all other aspects of it. I was able to meet some in person either at 'tweet ups' or if they were passing through my area and wanted to meet the person behind the digital presence. Others engaged by non-public direct message, sometimes to 'agree to disagree' about "the media" but nearly always leading to a sense of mutual respect. These connections would prove vital in later securing research interviews.

Once the research project was underway, through these connections initially established via Twitter, I was also through the platform invited to the inaugural and somewhat innovative 2012 Blue Light Un-conference (set up by emergency services communications professionals but including others from those services, such as tweeting police officers), where I was able to meet more people with whom I had only had a digital association. Another contact enabled me to attend the 2012 annual conference of the Police Federation of England and Wales, in my work town of Bournemouth, the year of the protest march on Parliament, and at the height of disquiet with government, at which then-Home Secretary Theresa May was heckled. Such

meetings helped to verify the identity of some of my anonymous Twitter police accounts and line them up for future research interviews. Equally these initial contacts also provided an important source to verify other or later anonymous accounts I wanted to interview.

Once my research project was firmly underway, however, I felt, as I would in the journalistic practice sense, that it was important that my Twitter account was not perceived to be biased, with particular relevance to not even retweeting controversial or political tweets. As well as a real aim in the interests of reducing researcher bias, it was important in terms of perception as I did not wish to alienate any account holder that I might later wish to interview. With the latter, it is also important to note that even in a generally or apparently united movement or protest, there will be strongly differing views in some areas. For example, at that time some delegates felt it was simply not appropriate behaviour to heckle a politician such as then-Home Secretary Theresa May, however much they disagreed with her actions, while others simply disagreed with the behaviour as they felt it would rebound badly in terms of political decisions affecting police.

Chapter Five: Analysis of The Online and Offline Protest to Police Reform

5.1 Introduction

This chapter presents findings from an analysis of the contextual background to police protest tweeting, drawing on documents, news reports, blogs and tweets to illustrate the social media response to political police reform, and case studies of online campaigns and the offline results of these, including a critical case study of the 2012 Police Protest March and social media messages relating to this event.

These case studies speak to RQ 3, but also to some extent RQs 1 and 2. A key point to observe about these protests is that they mobilised online but – except for the hashtag campaign relating to the protest march – not for the ultimate result of a physical offline protest, as is often shown in studies of social movements, such as a street protest. The mobilisation was, for the most, for protest events online.

5.3 The Twitter Protest – early movements

A number of police Twitter accounts were soon vocal about the various reform proposals and ideas. Many, though not all, of these were anonymous (or initially anonymous). *Figure 1* shows a broad sample of early and prominent individual police tweeters. Many account name choices themselves suggest the personal identification with policing.

There were also prominent non-anonymous individual accounts, including former police. Again, it's important to note that while some were vocal protestors, others are included in this table for their early advocacy of police Twitter use and innovation, and corresponding presence in networks. Again *Figure 2* shows a sample of some of the most prominent and representative of different types.

Figure 1. Unofficial individual police Twitter accounts sample table.

@TwitterName	Year Joined	still active?	FollowerNos	Notes/Bios
@MentalHealthCop (Insp Michael Brown	2009	Acct "mothballed" 2019	42.3K	(non-anon pseudonym). Award-winning for social media/mental health and policing Bio: This account is mothballed indefinitely
@NathanConstable	2009	Not since 2018 (formerly prominent acct and blogger)		Initially and mostly anon, but sought for conferences, panels etc on social media/mental health and policing
@KennyPlod	2010	Active under different acct name after brief absence following pressure	2.9K	Initially anon, but identified due to disciplinary. Advocate.
@Boscarelli	2010	Not since approx 2016 (formerly prominent acct)		Anon (now retired officer)
@Carcassian	2010	No since approx 2016/17 (formerly prominent acct)		Anon
@SpartanCop	2010	(now locked)	943	Anon
@SirIanBlair	2011	Yes	7.9K	Anon (now retired officer) BIO: An account from Retired alternative (coughs) MetPol Commissioner SIBBIE. The one on Sky - he might be the real PARODY.
@SgtTCS	2011	Yes	19.6K	Initially anon. Bio: Christian, husband, dad, cop. Control Room Sgt. Int' social media leadership award winner. Social media consultant. Road safety advocate
@Response_Bobby	2011	Yes, but no tweets since 2012	837	Anon. Bio: Warts-and-all tweets from a response officer policing on the frontline, somewhere in northern England. Sarcasm, cynicism and humour guaranteed. Support #PFTP

(continues next page…)

@LaptopCop.BA Hons	2011	Yes	4.6K	Anon. Bio: The personal thoughts & ideas of a serving 'Front Line' police officer based in a city somewhere in the UK...All views are my own & RT's aren't an endorsement!
@TheRealDogberry	2011	Yes but no tweets since 2015	528	Anon. Bio: Started as a character in Shakespeare's 'Much Ado About Nothing'. However, troubling times have resulted in the need for The Real Dogberry's voice to be heard.
@ResponseSgt @ResponseSgtWMP	Pre-2012	Deleted due to pressure. Rejoined recently under own name in post-police role		Pseudonym but known to community while officer and Fed Rep. Now university lecturer
@The_Duty_Sgt	Pre-2012	Deleted due to pressure – closed accounts and deleted blogs		Inspired @SgtTCS and departure was noted on Twitter
@CityGuvnor @CitySarge	2011	Yes	3.8K	Anon. Bio: A thirty-something serving Police Inspector in a large UK city. All comments and views are my own. Formerly known as @CitySarge
@ConstableChaos	2012	Yes	24.1K	Anon initially, now semi-anon. Bio: Chief Officer of the #ChaosConstabularyCreator of the humorous #ChaosBlog Lurker on Bookface:
@LegoCop	2012	yes	4.6K	Anon. Bio: inventor and owner of @BullshirePolice and the 'Bullshire' brand - Contact at sma@bullshirepolice.com
@DedicatedPeeler	2012	yes	4.6K	Initially anon, pseudonym. Bio: Cop - navigating the inbetween - interested in actually changing stuff, creativity, and the perils of conformity #TEDx #WeCops #PhD Candidate @CCCUPolRes
@InspectorGadget	Pre-2013	yes	23.8K	Bio: Policeman. Soldier. Author 'Perverting the Course of Justice'. Advocate of #StopSearch, intusive (sic) surveillance & long sentences as community safety measures

Figure 1. Unofficial individual police Twitter accounts sample table.

Figure 2. Prominent non-anon individual accounts

Twitter Name	Year Joined	Active?	Follower Numbers	Notes/Bio
@StuartHydeQPM (@DCC_StuartHyde)	2009	Yes	4.8K	Formerly acting chief constable and ACPO lead on social media, awarded Queens Police Medal; honorary doctorate for cybercrime prevention/detection. Now consultant on cybercrime, digital forensic and social media. Bio: Supporting the CISP and helping the human side of Cyber Security
@MrCliveC	2010	Yes	8.4K	Former officer, chair Dorset Police Federation, columnist. Bio: Onetime village Bobby & Police Magazine Columnist. Married,3 kids, 2 dogs, / enjoy books, music, poetry, films, theatre and writing. Occasionally writes speeches
@MikePannett	2011	Yes	23K	Former officer, police commentator, active in protest. Bio: Author, Director and senior development consultant for Renegade Pictures, Warner Bros UKTV Former Met & North Yorks police officer. Fly fishing
@J_amesp	Pre 2012	Now locked	41.2K	Openly protesting officer who became whistleblower before leaving police. Bio: Prorogued. To be found at work: @socintuk or http://socint.org.uk Or doing the feel good stuff, slowly, over at @cynefinhedge or http://cynefinhedgefund.com With the creatures outside…

Also playing a part were a growing number of non-officer 'sympathiser' accounts, drawn from the public, affiliated professions including forensic scientists and lawyers, and those with family police connections eg @MrsRuralSgt 'wife of a duty sergeant'. Initially there was plenty of Twitter banter, often led by the secretive parody account @SirIanBlair (see *Figure 2*) and general discussion of police-related life and issues. But what increasingly began to dominate was dissatisfaction at reform proposals, and then the result of some of these coming into effect, along with a sense of their voices not having been heard in the process.

As individuals they found Twitter offered a way to challenge those involved and that could be seen publicly. They tackled statements made on Twitter by those such as former ministerial adviser and Policy Exchange lobbyist @BlairGibbs whose account and tweets were deleted after an unfortunate, and ultimately final, tweet (shown later in this section). However responses to a variety of his now-deleted tweets can still be shown, with the following example from 2011 concerning restorative justice.

Despite the deletion, the replies lend context and clearly indicate these tweets were critical or challenging. In common with other samples, they include anonymous officers, those at the rank of constable, including a police federation chairman, and an assistant chief constable. The responses either offer a chance of informative dialogue, correct his statements, or challenge and call out his authority and motives. It can be argued this is a public form of protest against statements made by one of the police reform architects, with the platform allowing a right of reply which did not depend on gatekeeping of the news media, including choice of news story or sources used in it. Such bypassing is referred to by Jenkins in 'new media's' potential for democratic change (2006), later used in the case of OWS protests to argue Twitter's advantages in establishing a "geographically dispersed, networked counterpublic that can articulate a critique of power outside of the parameters of mainstream media" (Penney and Dadas 2014).

As mentioned in Chapter Two, at this stage in 2011, the public impact of Twitter and other social media was either not on many forces' radar or they were just starting to grapple with the implications. The very-public repercussions were yet to come, as shown and discussed later in this chapter. At this stage many police tweeters, using the platform confidentially, often for some time, were confident in being outspoken. (*NB as explained in the preceding chapter, tweets and posts, while presented in their original image appearance, are to be read as part of the text*).

In the following example, responses are shown to a tweet by Gibbs which is dismissive of restorative justice work, referring to 'hype'. A named officer involved in such work tackles Gibbs with a polite invitation to visit his force to find out more – as named, he can do little more without potentially falling foul of regulations. However, an anonymous officer is able to much more critically highlight his concern about Gibbs' inappropriate and political interference in police operational decisions, and his lack of expertise to do so (thus speaking to RQ2). A former Labour MP chimes in to caution Gibbs about another statement, while the police federation's Dorset branch leader tackles him head on. At this time a PolFed position-holder could also perhaps feel less concern in speaking out, with the association, while not a union, the closest thing resembling it for police:

Later, the assistant chief constable of Greater Manchester Police directly challenges Gibbs' use of the word 'hype':

Again, at this time, such high-ranking officers could be forgiven for also being lulled into a sense of security in speaking out, but later it would be shown rank was no guarantee of protection.

However, the next year (2012) Blair Gibbs was to close his Twitter account amid a backlash, widely reported in news media, after he posted an "insulting" tweet likening himself and his three colleagues to the "four horsemen of the police reform apocalypse". As shown, to make such an analogy at a time of heightened concern and associated stress among officers was considered not only ill-judged and insensitive but "insulting". The tweet was also deleted, but captured in one of the responses and reactions to it, all shared publicly on Twitter:

Via Twitter, such responses also carry and give a sense of real and directly-personal communication, even though Gibbs would not have met many of those responding to him.

As well as the personal element, the informal style and emotion of the response tweets in both these initial small samples have the potential to engage a browsing wider public. Anger and outrage are humanly expressed, as is humour. As discussed in Chapter Three, emotion is argued to be vital in binding, building and driving a movement (Choi and Cho 2017; Gerbaudo 2016; 2017; et al.). Humour in police tweets fits with a more informal and personalised style, contrasting with official or bureaucratic language, but can improve public engagement (Rasmussen 2017) while Fernandez showed both corporate and non-corporate police tweets had the highest public engagement when they included humour (2017).

Twitter also enabled a direct, ie unmediated, and publicly-seen response to MPs, in particular the Minister Nick Herbert. This continued after he resigned his role but carried on commenting on policing. In the following 2012 example, he used Twitter to draw attention to a newspaper article he had written. The platform enables his critics to go direct to him, throwing in a few messages via 'creative' hashtags as they do so, and enlisting the theme of MPs expenses, which could encourage members of the public to identify with aggrieved officers via a shared grievance:

Nick Herbert ✔
@nickherbertmp

Follow ⌄

I never lost my admiration for the police, but
the service must reform or risk losing trust.
My Observer article: is.gd/3BORPT

2:42 PM - 22 Dec 2012

32 Retweets **2** Likes

💬 32   ⟲ 32   ♡ 2

Gene Hunt @GeneGenie67 · 22 Dec 2012   ⌄
Replying to @nickherbertmp

@nickherbertmp why do you harp on about #police reform but do nothing about
yourselves. Note #MPs pension reforms only affect new joiners

💬 1   ⟲ 4   ♡ 1

Policing the Future @PolicingFuture · 22 Dec 2012   ⌄
@GeneGenie67 @nickherbertmp   MPs are supposed to be leaders - and should
have led the way by reforming their own pensions first !!

GB @gavmos · 23 Dec 2012   ⌄
Replying to @nickherbertmp

@nickherbertmp A flabbergasting defamatory piece on the police again. Thanks,
just which piece of the report shows 'admiration' #toiletpaper

💬   ⟲   ♡

Policing the Future @PolicingFuture · 23 Dec 2012   ⌄
Replying to @nickherbertmp

@nickherbertmp I have lost my admiration for the politicians, the H of P must
reform or risk losing trust #expenses #otherjobs #pmqbehaviour

💬   ⟲   ♡

SirIanBlair @SirIanBlair · 23 Dec 2012   ⌄
Replying to @nickherbertmp

@nickherbertmp erm I think you never admired anything police. A puppet never
changes its spots.

💬   ⟲   ♡

Again, the anonymous accounts can be seen to "engender expression of dissent and
protest" (RQ2).

Yet more would be seen in reaction to another of Policy Reform's ideas, reiterated by
Gibbs and his team on Twitter, that in order to increase the "visibility" of police, despite
a reduction in their numbers, officers should wear their uniform to and from work (BBC
2011, Boyd et al. 2011). This idea prompted official responses in the news media from
both police organisations and police federations about serious aspects being overlooked,

such as security, practicality and more. Individual officers took to online police forums to express the same. On Twitter the public could see the more concise, unmediated reaction which was highly critical, including from named senior officers, and again the frustration and "rational anger" (Wahl-Jorgensen 2018) expressed against those seen as not understanding or having relevant knowledge when thinking up policy ideas. A sample of this was shown in these tweets reproduced textually by the BBC in its story on the police response

> (The Police Federation for Northern Ireland) @PoliceFedforNI Going to work in uniform? Suicide here and frequently unsafe elsewhere. High price to pay for extra visibility.
>
> @SuptPayneWMP tweets: I am thinking of having a flashing blue light fitted to my i-phone to enhance police visibility when I tweet. #stupidpolicingideasday
>
> @Peelian_cop tweets: My duty to protect my family comes 1st i'm afraid @Blair_Gibbs I would not put them at risk or my home to give the illusion of more officers
>
> @TheCustodySgt tweets: When will Govt listen to those of us doing the job & not academics who have no experience of policing? Inclusion not exclusion please.
>
> @KennyPlod tweets: It seems the @Policy_Exchange masterplan involves me working every hr god sends, not seeing my family and dying before I can claim pension
>
> @99Ado tweets: so wht if you do plain clothes work, ud have to go to work in uniform to then get changed into civvies, tht be bit dangerous" (BBC 2011)

This small sample of tweets were thus also directly conveyed further beyond the Twitter platform through the news media, in this case its global website, and thus spread to new, non-Twitter audiences who otherwise would not 'see' these voices for themselves. Though a selection, they were otherwise unmediated ie the messages were shown in their entirety. It exemplifies a further reach for any protest voice as, at this time, Twitter posts and conversations themselves were slowly becoming newsworthy in themselves. It suggests a development in contrast to earlier research on social networks which focused on the sharing and recirculation on Twitter of news stories.

From these initial individual protest tweets, the *individuals* protesting could also now see each other along with their numbers, and boldness, reflecting theories around

visibility encouraging participation (Klandersmans 2004) and suggesting the start of coalescence.

While all the individual post examples speak to RQ2, the next section shows concerted efforts as individuals join together, and thus will also speak to RQ3 and RQ4.

5.3.1 CASE STUDIES 1: Loose 'organisation'? The 2011 #NoConfidenceInTheresaMay tweetathon

As stated, these case studies speak to RQ2 and RQ3, but also to some extent RQ1 and towards RQ4. A key point to observe about these case study protests is that they mobilised online but not for the ultimate result of a physical offline protest, as is often shown in studies of social movements, such as a street protest. They do demonstrate a tactical use of the platform, in a protest in an online public space.

In 2011 'tweetathons' were a relatively new Twitter possibility to boost prominence of an event or campaign, with the name coming from 'Twitter' and 'marathon', and relying on as many users as possible to tweet and retweet with a hashtag, usually within a set time span to concentrate the output. Success was denoted by achieving a 'trending' hashtag on Twitter's board. For a tweet to be officially recorded, it had to include not just the hashtag but 'value' in the form of content, eg a relevant comment. A few of the anonymous accounts decided to launch a #noconfidenceintheresamay tweetathon, encouraging 'good content'– a way to spread more of a protest message – as well as the hashtag. The result was #noconfidenceintheresamay reached No 5 trending hashtag in the UK (Trendsmap 2011).
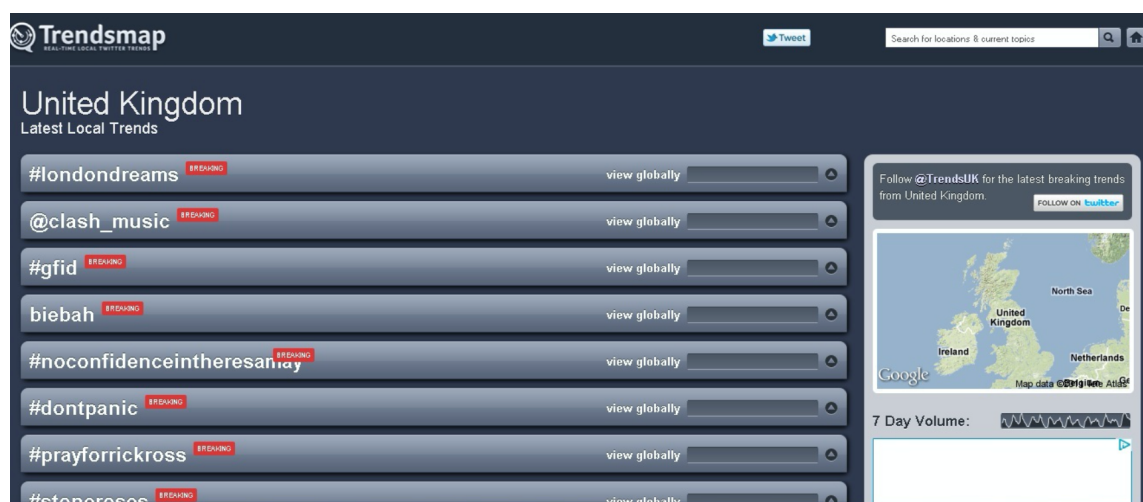
Trendsmap screenshot showing position 5 for #noconfidenceintheresamay

The use of this chimes with research into creative and strategic use by groups to get messages across, for example, Pavan's noting of the TBTT tweetathon showing that supporters made differentiated use of social media affordances to sustain a campaign, with relevance to the different modes "in which social media can be exploited in different mobilisation stages and political terrains" (2013; 2016).The use of the hashtag enables people to come together as "networked publics" and express themselves both collaboratively and individually (Papacharissi 2015) which is clearly demonstrated in the example tweets.

While Twitter provided the catalyst for this campaign, and the online connection of those involved, an initial level of organisation was evident, as well as necessary for the precise timing of the tweets and numbers required as part of a tweetathon. This was by the creation of a Facebook page created under the same name in August 2011 to establish the numbers required for the eventual tweetathon on October 14 2011, as well as 'rules' to enable tweets to count, which included the user adding an original message of their own as well as the hashtag. Further, users were urged to use the required message to link to something of the concerns about or effects on policing of May's government policies, thus raising public awareness. In further organisation, there was active publicising on Twitter of both the Facebook page and attempt, as shown in these posts:

#NoConfidenceInTheresaMay
17 August 2011 · 🌐

Wow 6 likes already! Go GO Go!!! Keep sharing the link with others please! You don't have to be a cop to like the page and have #noconfidenceintheresamay

👍 9

Like   Comment   Share

#NoConfidenceInTheresaMay
17 August 2011 · 🌐

Hi, Please 'like' this page to show your support of the police and that you have No confidence In Theresa May! Spread the word and check back for updates... we'll be holding a big tweetathon soon to get #noconfidenceintheresamay trending, thanks for your support!

👍 15

The use of 'wow' and exclamation marks convey emotion and encouragement as noted by Gerbaudo in his identification of Facebook admins as "digital vanguards", and a form of leadership (2017). The numbers steadily grew, with evidence on both Facebook

and Twitter posts of what Gerbaudo has explained as 'digital enthusiasm' overcoming fear, and this motivation by vanguards of would-be protestors, and their mutual response, would appear to be an example, as well as of a "moment of digital contagion" (2015, 2016) as demonstrated here:

#NoConfidenceInTheresaMay
27 August 2011 · 🌐

4819 of us have #NoConfidenceInTheresaMay you guys are brilliant!!
Keep it going, Copy & Paste the link to your profiles if you can, thanks!

#NoConfidenceInTheresaMay
19 August 2011 · 🌐

We understand the reluctance of some serving officers to get involved. No worries, get your friends and family to sign up. Keep up the momentum. Let's break through 5000 if we can. That's our next target. Start spreading the news. Thank you for all the views on all the threads, especially the last one.

👍 94   39 commen

👍 Like   💬 Comment   ↪ Share

View 33 more comments

#NoConfidenceInTheresaMay
27 August 2011 · 🌐

Keep the momentum going.. We're gathering good numbers now but we would love to get to 10,000 for the tweetathon! Is she a good & suitable home secretary? Do we have confidence in her?

👍 90   18 comments

👍 Like   💬 Comment   ↪ Share

View 15 more comments

Sam Wilson NO.
7y

Mikee Mike McNeil Je dit NON
7y

On the night itself, supporters used their Twitter accounts to take part, also encouraging others, again akin to 'digital enthusiasm', as well as spreading a variety of individual protest messages, as displayed in the tweets below:
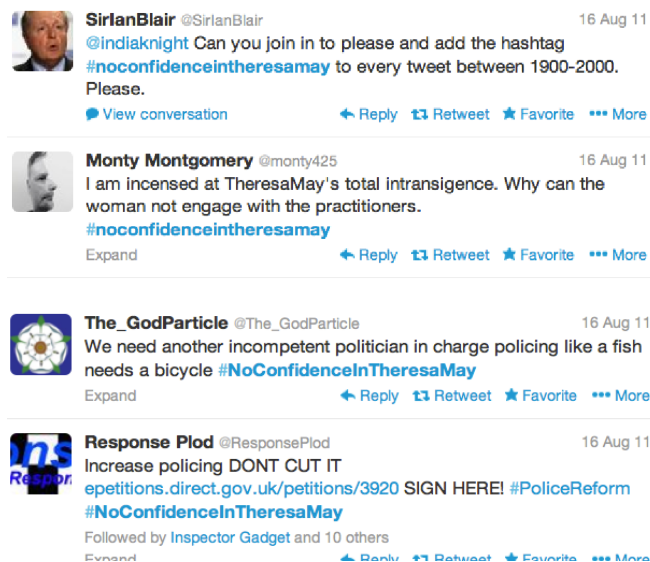
This protest action demonstrates elements of both connective and collective action, with the affordances of the platform playing a role, but also evidence of organisation and a even a light-touch leadership. The Facebook admin(s), when thanking everyone after the event, highlighted that a particular success was the spreading not only of the hashtag message itself, but the many individuals' posts with their own necessary 'good' content to explain why they were protesting, there for anyone to see.

Later, it was revealed the tweetathon idea was a "collaboration with a happy bunch of friends" according to co-organiser @sirianblair, the anonymous retired officer, in a blog guest interview (*russellwebster.com* 2012). It was "like so many things on Twitter" the result of a conversation between himself, a serving officer, @officerwhoever, and a serving officer's wife, @mrsruralsegt, who also developed the Facebook page; (ibid; police.community.com 2011). The blog article described @sirianblair as "a retired police officer who has used his anonymous, spoof Twitter account to great effect in galvanising protests against the proposed police reforms" (*russellwebster.com* 2012). He was a prominent Twitter individual in this and further protest campaigns. In the interview he explained that creating his account with its name a spoof on the real Sir Ian Blair, former Commissioner of the Metropolitan Police, was "to raise relevant policing issues with a sense of humour". As part of this, he invented the #slapslapconstabularly delivering a "virtual #slapslap" in Twitter posts where he felt someone required a "wake up call". He achieved accidental national news coverage when various journalists and others, not checking the account's content or even just its bio, accidentally reported some of his tweets as coming directly from the former commissioner. These included one in *The Daily Telegraph*, and also one reported on *BBC Radio 4* (to the great

amusement of many on Twitter) which centred around a statement by Winsor that some officers were 'barely literate' (and which drew an obvious response):
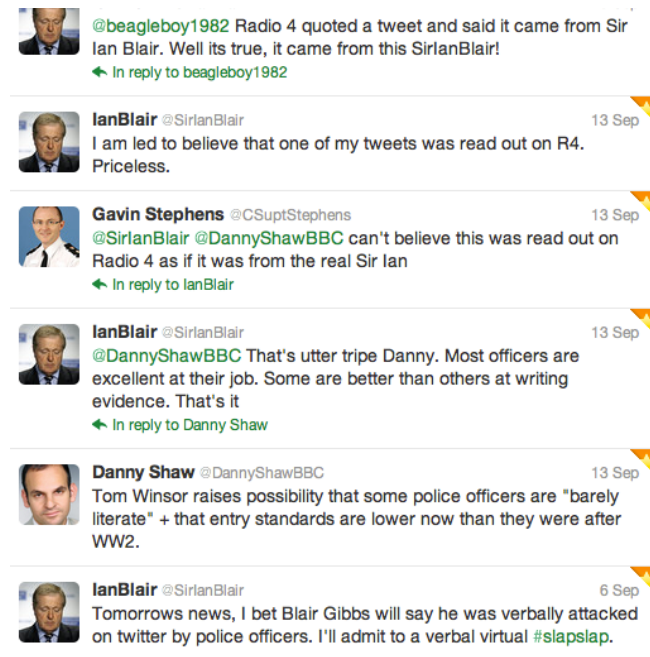
The SNP party also fell foul after putting out a press release with a favourable comment from what they believed to be the real Sir Ian Blair.

In a sense @sirIanBlair is an example of some of the many diverse and original characters involved in the online police reforms protest, which also helped to keep it in the spotlight, part of the "vibrant protest activity via social platforms" and "abundant

creativity" (Poell and van Djik 2016). As discussed earlier, humour is also a valuable engagement tool; it can increase public engagement (Rasmussen 2017), encourage following and retweeting; it can lift a movement's spirits or at least provide light relief.

5.3.2 CASE STUDY 2: Loose 'organisation'? the #antiwinsornetwork

There are many other examples of hashtag campaigns used by those protesting aspects of police reform and austerity cuts as well as decisions taken. Some, like the no confidence tag discussed above, had an element of planning, and later, organisation, while others, often conjured up by an individual, show extremely swift-thinking and rapid movement in responding to power. As a tactic, this works well to counteract the official narrative while simultaneously making the point with evidence in the chosen hashtag which both disputes the official version and can engender support, especially with the use of dark humour.

In terms of the campaigns in general, @sirianblair highlighted the first such involvement of frontline officers:

> Our tags have trended many times helping us get our message out that British Policing has no confidence in the government. And this is the first time frontline officers have used social media to protest and I am proud to have been a part of that. We have succeeded in gaining the public's support (russellwebster.com 2012).

Following the 'no confidence' tag, another planned and ongoing campaign had been apparently aimed at HMIC Tom Winsor, though its main intent was "to keep politics out of policing". As shown in the next chapter, however, some protesting officers preferred less personality-targeted tags, such as #PTFP (policing for the public). Again, for the **#antiwinsornetwork** campaign, @sirianblair suggested it also had organisers of sorts (though these would later explain how they saw it as much more spontaneous as a result of Twitter):

> @cynicalbobby and a few others began to develop the concept of
> the *#antiwinsornetwork* tag and encouraged many front line staff to join Twitter
> in order to protest against the unfair cuts (russellwebster.com 2012).

This eventually included an official blog and ongoing multiple uses of the tag in tweet posts where those protesting who wanted to use it did so – others didn't, including for reasons mentioned and further explained in Chapter Six, such as being too personal. Some saw it as a little close to the edge of acceptable political-related tweeting, at least in terms of potentially bringing trouble on themselves.

Meanwhile, a label of 'organisational terrorists', used by a police force's PR and communications head, was felt by protestors in this and other protests, to be firmly aimed at them. The blog post where the label was used was discussing correct training and support for staff, police in particular, when unleashing the "social media beast" and having procedures in place for "transgressions". Of the latter, it said it was important to distinguish between "the genuine mistake and the organisational terrorist" (Coleman 2012).

The #antiwinsornetwork tag had both similarities to and differed from the previous tag campaign. Some of this is revealed in its first blog post "the birth of the antiwinsornetwork blog" which appeared to have been set up to support the tag initiative. Again, it stated that the idea initially arose through Twitter and highlighted the emotions involved in a way which echoed social movement protests gone before:

> The Anti Winsor Network was born in the Social Media Network Twitter after a group of angry cops started talking. The Police Family came together and said "WE WILL BE HEARD" (antiwinsornetwork 2012a).

The next day a longer, more explanatory and reflective post appeared, "who are the antiwinsornetwork?" to again affirm its origins and expand on a sense of being forced to be involved because no-one was consulting or listening:

> The Anti Winsor Network started spontaneously on Twitter. It wasn't planned. It didn't have an agenda when it started. We are not political activists. A lot of the people involved would normally pay little attention to politics or politicians. We had real concerns about what this government is doing to 'our' Police service. We are on the inside. Police officers, families, friends, civilian colleagues, partner agencies etc (iantiwinsornetwork 2012b).

The claim to spontaneity, when held against RQ4, seems to show similarity with some of the modern social media protest movements heralded by connective action scholars (Bennett and Segerberg 2012) and those who expanded on it (Kavada 2015; Milan 2015). Nevertheless, as it expands, it seems to share commonality with more traditional social movements and protests, involving centrality, a clear outline of grievances and objectives, and methods. In particular, a joining together of all the people who shared these feelings of concern, anger and indignation but who were currently too fragmented or uncoordinated (Gerbaudo 2012, 2017; Kavada 2015). Again, a voice of protest:

> So, one day a couple of months ago, a group of us were voicing our concerns on Twitter and it dawned upon us. There were hundreds of Police groups around on Twitter. We needed to network. To join them together. That way we would have a louder voice. **We were being ignored**. But, if we had enough numbers, **we could make people listen to us** (antiwinsornetwork 2012b) *(emphasis added)*.

Again, tactics were developed. They included getting colleagues who were not on Twitter to sign up, purely to post the tag, and for these, and existing account holders to put it in their account bio (visible profile) and to sign relevant e-petitions. They managed to get mentions in national news media, such as "rank and file officers have vented their fury on blogs like the anti-Winsor Network" (*Channel 4* 2012) though many mentions were in stories about Policing Minister Nick Herbert condemning the network, and those expressing similar views, as an "unacceptably personal and disgraceful campaign" (*Independent* 2012). Unsurprisingly, this resulted in a flood of tweets in response, with the immediate and widespread use among 'members' of a quickly created and creative hashtag, #disgracefulandproud , running alongside the #antiwinsornetwork tag. Some showed photos of also quickly-produced keyrings bearing both slogans, visual and physical artefacts of protest.

By May 22, however, the blog bemoaned an apathy among police to sign an e-petition rejecting Part Two of the Winsor Report into police reform and posts. In keeping with the documented transient nature of online campaigns (Poell and van Djik 2016; Gerbaudo 2012) while the blog posts ceased, on its home site at least, Twitter posts can still be seen using the tag and occasionally talking fondly of memories of its heyday.

5.3.3 CASE STUDY 3: Loosest organisation? #timeonmyhands

Unplanned, and spontaneous, was nevertheless the swift and effective response on Twitter when HMIC Tom Winsor criticised police who used social media against the backdrop of overworked officers:

> "Those (police officers) who participate on social media, blogs and so on are people who have got time on their hands" (Winsor in *The Evening Standard* 2014).

Within hours a #timeonmyhands tag appeared and was being used by not only the regular protestors but many identified officers, and official police account holders, who all added 'value' messages via a range of pithy comments, or sobering evidence of what they'd just dealt with and how much, along with direct contradiction. Some high-ranking police and concerned non-police influential accounts also chimed in to highlight the value of social media in policing. ACPO put out an official statement in response (which then was spread on Twitter with the hashtag added) as did the PFEW. Supportive public accounts responded, locally and nationally, including those such as local business Twitter networks (#DevonHour) as did those from overseas. Blogs were swiftly written and circulated, and the tag's momentum grew rapidly, carrying pointed messages with it, as shown in this sample:

SgtTCS 📱+🚗=❌ ✔ @SgtTCS · 8 janv. 2014
Crimes solved, disorder nipped in bud, rumours dispelled, friendships made, bridges built. **#police** on social media **#timeonmyhands**

Michael Brown @MentalHealthCop · 8 janv. 2014 ∨
One award-winning blog with 400 posts, used half a million times by **police**, the public and health professionals. **#timeonmyhands**

#DevonHour @Devon_Hour · 8 janv. 2014
To ALL **police** on twitter in Devon. Your presence is more appreciated than you realise. Don't worry about the **#timeonmyhands** comments. Pfft

GMP Federation @GMPFederation · 8 janv. 2014
Twitter is a fantastic tool for informing folk about the great work of **police** officer and keeping our members up to date **#timeonmyhands**

Simon Bullock @simon_bullock · 8 janv. 2014
According to **Winsor**, despite averaging 12 hour days so far this week, I still have **#TimeOnMyHands** **#clueless**

💬   ⟲ 1   ♡

Lady S @jules0971 · 8 janv. 2014
Arent we lucky to have **#winsor** @ the helm to sort out all the **#crimestats** & **#timeonmyhands** issues? How did we manage 180 years without him?

💬   ⟲ 1   ♡

Dale.T @daletownsend · 8 janv. 2014
#TimeOnMyHands If **Winsor** was concerned about time police spent doing 'useless' tasks, he would work to lower administrative overhead..

By the next day Winsor had responded with a brief reversal statement, though not on Twitter itself, being "happy to clarify" his full support of police officers and organisations engaging through and using social media. The deputy chief constable of Greater Manchester Police made sure Winsor's statement entered the Twittersphere, as shown in this retweet:

Royston Martis @RoamingRoyston · 9 janv. 2014   ⌄
#timeonmyhands RT @DCCIanHopkins: This is Tom **Winsor**'s statement in relation to his comments yesterday.

"HMIC is happy to clarify this remark. Mr Winsor and HMIC are entirely supportive of the excellent engagement and intelligence work police officers and organisations carry out through online channels, which intensifies and enhances the quality of communication between the Service and the public. Indeed, HMIC has commented in several inspection reports on the importance and benefits of officers having a strong online presence, and engaging with the public they serve through a range of communications channels."

Exposure, however, continued into the next week as news media sought various response angles. These included local newspapers whose regional forces had been advised by HMIC itself in 2011 to put resources into developing social media practices, and were now understandably keen to respond publicly especially to their local communities about why it was valuable (Jones 2014). The tag would also still resurface in future months. It is interesting to note at this time HMIC had still not set up its own Twitter account.

Again, as previously highlighted, the 'public space' for this protest was online. Those protesting mobilised online, for an online protest. Not, as is often shown in studies of social media and social movements, for momentum and the ultimate result of a physical offline protest, such as a street demonstration, which is an important element when considering RQ4.

Tactical use of this online space is shown in these protest campaigns. The aim of the first protest, via a hashtag, was a tweetathon, to hopefully get the protest hashtag trending and recorded as such by the barometers of the time, ie an online manifestation of protest. Even if it had not been successful in this respect, many of the messages contained in the participants' tweets spread knowledge on the platform and thus awareness of why they were doing it. At the same time, many of these messages highlighted innumerable examples of concern to show what lay behind their protest. The tag spread beyond police officers and their followers to the public and their followers, in a time-constrained process which along with Twitter's affordances amplified the message, as explained in Chapter Two. As Pavan's research (2016) shows, a content of a tweet, not just an account's numbers of followers, is important in such an event and thus taking part may have given some users, in particular their message, a bigger audience under the hashtag than they would normally enjoy. And, albeit only temporarily bigger for their Twitter account, their message, views and/or examples will have been seen by more people.

The aim of the second protest tag was also to spread awareness and messages in a similar way in terms of volume, and also to spread an e-petition to increase signatures, though the latter may have presented conflicts for anonymity. Both also received national news media coverage within the context of stories about the wider political issues around police reform which can be argued to spread awareness to a wider audience who might not have been online or using Twitter, or, if they were, missed it. Seeing such numbers joining in, even among cautious police officers themselves, appears to have helped some in crossing the threshold to join in, ie lowering barriers to participation (Rule 1988; Klandersmans 2004). The blatant personal nature of the second, as 'anti-Winsor", may have deterred some, however. However the third example, with the innocent-enough #timeonmyhands enabled even the most cautious to join in a protest to a level they were comfortable with and still impart a persuasive

message. The aims of the third example were basically the simplest of online protests, a spontaneous hashtag which connected with others who 'joined in', and, like the previous examples, showed creativity and the emotional character of social media activism as discussed in Chapter Three, and also highlighted by Poell and van Djik (2014). Wit and humour were particularly strong in this one, and a noted engagement tool for audiences as well as community bonding (Rasmussen 2017; Grudz et al. 2011; Braithwaite et al. 1999; Maloney-Krichmar and Preece 2005).

5.4 Repercussions and sense of oppression

As these protests got underway, there were also, as perceived by the protestors, repercussions starting to appear. Many of these repercussions achieved high publicity as national and local news media also followed, used or were aware of, the anonymous and other protesting police Twitter accounts, which in many cases had gained a sizeable, interested public following too. Popular accounts which suddenly closed, or announced their closure, would lead to a surge of related and concerned posts on Twitter, and blogs elsewhere with supportive tags. Where officers faced disciplinary action, a similar group response often followed. These can be seen as indications of an online community, a sharing of similar emotions, and a sense of solidarity as would be expected in a group which the participants recognise they are part of, and even as an example of active collective identity (Melucci 1995; 1996; Gerbaudo 2014; Kavada 2015).

It is perhaps unsurprising that the HMIC began to take notice of what non-corporate police were doing on Twitter. Their 2012 report, as discussed in Chapter Two, had identified a number of social media profiles accounting for all of the 357 cases of "potentially inappropriate behaviour" found, with 71% on Twitter. Three out of four categories for this were extreme opinions on the government (36), negativity towards work (70) and comments on police protocol or procedure (119 instances) (HMIC 2012, p.23).

As highlighted later in this section, some of the ensuing disciplinary action appeared to many, based on the offending tweets, to be petty-minded, and news reports also highlighted 'coincidences' when action followed after an officer challenged reforms and

individuals on Twitter. This was seen to such an extent that senior police who advocated Twitter use by officers and encouraged them to try it, also took a public stance on over-zealous action.

In some cases, protestors could see where a fellow Twitter user had stepped over the line – but several did highlight the difficulty of protesting by 'telling the public how it is' while not telling it with information which would lead one to fall foul of regulations aimed to protect.

One such example was PC Nick Manning, also a PolFed rep, whose #noconfidenceintheresamay tweetathon posts criticised police cuts through his inclusion of the individual 'value-added content' message required to make them 'qualify'. In his case he used work examples for these. One revealed at one point that there were only three officers covering a large part of Dorsetshire. This triggered a disciplinary case covered by news media, including *The Daily Telegraph*, which ran his tweet content:

"Last 3 nights in North Dorset, 3 cops covering everything north of the A31. The public should have #noconfidenceintheresamay " (Orr 2012).

The Daily Telegraph focused on the official stance, ie that such information could encourage crime, eg burglars taking advantage of low police numbers. It also quoted Manning's local Conservative MP that police officers should not express party political views. Many officers could see the problem in tweeting such information live on Twitter but at the same time could see the relevance in terms of public understanding what was happening with funding cuts. An #Isupportnickmanning tag was already circulating on Twitter, used by police and public alike. The tweets carried a variety of messages, including not only support but highlighting other examples of low police cover, and the issue of freedom of speech, as shown by this sample at the time:

Dawn @Dipster3103   17h
@SirIanBlair good to see you as usual speaking out. #isupportnickmanning too
↰ In reply to IanBlair

Dawn @Dipster3103   17h
RT "@kenworthy39: What we need is 10-20 people to help out here. #isupportnickmanning" << me too!

Shell @MrsDarthFuzz   18h
I suggest everyone in Dorset request of police freedom of info how many cops were on night duty a day of their choice? #isupportnickmanning

Police Inspectors @PoliceFedICC   18h
Honesty is the first chapter of the book of wisdom & it seems all Nick Manning is guilty of is telling the truth! SW #isupportnickmanning

Martin Mitchell @martinpmitchell   18h
#isupportnickmanning Oh, and I forgot - #noconfidenceintheresamay

Martin Mitchell @martinpmitchell   18h
#isupportnickmanning

Cate Moore @cate_a_moore   18h
What our country says is increasingly different from what our country does #badexample #isupportnickmanning

Met2Moz @Met2Moz   18h
We have soldiers fighting for freedom of speech. Does this mean we need them to come home #isupportNickManning

Stephen Bailey @SteveBaileyEcho   1h
Interesting to see lot of support for PC Nick Manning from fellow officers after our story on his twitter posts. search #isupportnickmanning

Gusty Galeforce @GustyGaleforce   3h
"@alcalto: Police officer in disciplinary action for use of Twitter telegraph.co.uk/news/uknews/la…" good luck to him #isupportnickmanning

Mike @Mikebikeandcop   5h
#isupportnickmanning Not going to go into figures, but I truly believe an officer where I work is going to die due to lack of near backup.

Mike Thomas, author @ItDaFiveOh   5h
If you believe in transparency and freedom of speech, there's this hashtag: #isupportnickmanning Google the name. RT if you wish.

Cate Moore @cate_a_moore   17h
"@For_the_defence: #isupportnickmanning see why: forthedefence.org/2012/01/18/in-…"~ read this. It's rather fabulous.

IanBlair @SirIanBlair   17h
@Joanne13Harding very concerned about street crime, robbery, assaults, victims and violent crime with weapons. #isupportnickmanning

Manning was disciplined under Regulation 14 and found to have "undermined public confidence in the Police and brought discredit on the service", prompting ironic Twitter and blog posts (Minimum Cover 2012). Four years later, a *Mail on Sunday* investigation, mentioning this case among others, revealed the situation of low cover was widespread across the country and possibly worse (Beckford 2016).

In the previous year (2011), a popular Twitter account holder (and blogger) @the_duty_sgt also closed his account, prompting online concern, as well as some posts of resilience. Again, as highlighted by scholars, there is a clear sense of personal emotion and comradeship in this online space among people, most of whom only knew each other through the platform (Grudz et al. 2011; Choi and Cho 2017), as exampled here:

Charlie Fox @TooManyBlueys   11 May
Very sad that Duty Sgt has gone from here and closed his blog, a blog that highlighted how important our Police are.

IanBlair @SirIanBlair   11 May
@TheCustodySgt I'm sad at the twitter loss of the duty sergeant. Will someone care to explain was this enforced, and if so by which arse?
↰ In reply to TheCustodySgt

TheCustodySgt @TheCustodySgt   11 May
Officer down. @The_Duty_Sgt is dead. Long live The Duty Sgt. Take care pal. Stay safe and don't let them get you down. #protectourpolice

This case was highlighted again, around the time of PC Manning's case, by police tweeters, including senior officers, journalists (including *The Times* crime reporter) and others, as more incidents began to surface, prompting concerns about a crackdown, and

associated repercussions:

There were other notable cases, some of which followed in the months after the police protest march and the booing of Theresa May a week afterwards by officers at the annual Police Federation of England and Wales conference. They all featured in news media, with a round up by *The Guardian* at the end of the year, which also included a warning against such heavy-handed crackdowns from Gordon Scobie, Police Scotland deputy chief constable who was also a social media advocate, saying forces risked looking out of touch. The cases included that of @kennyplod, who had been active on Twitter challenging the cuts and reforms (as shown in the police uniform tweets above, 5.3), as well as directly challenging individuals such as @blairgibbs. His tweets during the May protest march were also highlighted in *The Guardian's* live blog coverage, with this example, including a somewhat political comment, described as "another good tweet from @kennyplod" (*Guardian* 2012b).

This is a phenomenal sight. Surely even our arrogant govt can't ignore this?

♡ 1:24 AM - May 11, 2012   🛈

However, it was not, ostensibly, for this, nor his earlier reform and direct politician-challenging tweets, that he was investigated a few months later. It was for unrelated "lighthearted" posts. Proving to be not anonymous enough, he was identified and suspended for two months under investigation for (initially) gross misconduct for, as outlined by *The Guardian*:

> a series of lighthearted tweets including a joke that a Saga cruise ship coming into port had "bifocal portholes". It is understood he was told this tweet was potentially offensive to older people. Another tweet that angered senior officers linked to a picture of two seagulls fighting and suggested they were fighting over "a bird", which was deemed potentially sexist. A further tweet praising police officers for filling in for G4S staff at the Olympic Games was deemed a security risk by senior officers (Laville 2012).

Other officers, popular in their communities, were told to stop tweeting, or decided to, sometimes on the basis of only one tweet. When news broke of an investigation into a popular Walsall police sergeant for allegedly breaching strict force rules over Twitter use, after posting a picture of a recovered deactivated WW1 gun and grenade, there was an outcry from local community bloggers as well as on Twitter. The *BrownhillsBob* blog highlighted officers like Sgt John De-Hayes, saying what he did for the community

and police on Twitter had greatly improved his views of the police following bad experiences, not least as a teenager in the 1980s from officers who were "racist" and "aggressive" (*BrownhillsBob* 2012). Sgt De-Hayes was one of the earliest officers using Twitter to engage with his community, before force policies were considered. When they were, he felt forced to remove WMP from his account name, after West Midlands Police decided 'official' accounts had to make their passwords available to comms staff. After the experience of the investigation he closed it down.

The *Guardian* round up also covered the then ongoing, high-profile case of police whistleblower PC James Patrick. He never used anonymity but challenged the cuts and reforms, on Twitter and blogs, and alleged certain political links with groups and individuals associated with police reform, as well as explaining why he thought public safety was at risk. He eventually turned his posts and writings into a book, The Rest is Silence (Laville 2012). The whistleblowing related to his exposure that there had been widespread manipulation of crime figures statistics (Rawlinson 2014) for which he was called to give evidence at a select committee. This in turn resulted in an admission by HMIC Tom Winsor and the Metropolitan Police that this had indeed happened. Even as he was suspended and investigated for gross misconduct, supported by specialist lawyers, he was told not to give interviews to the BBC and others, but he did so. Eventually he resigned.

Later in 2014, a highly-respected, high-profile and award-winning police tweeter also fell victim to an investigation by his West Midlands Police force, albeit a very short-lived one. Inspector Michael Brown, who tweeted and blogged as @mentalhealthcop, was seen as a national resource, not only for police but mental health organisations, on issues around the policing of people with mental health. As a winner of the national Mind Media awards for his blog, he had received wider public coverage and a huge number of followers (currently 42.5k). As such, when his Twitter account was suddenly suspended, though he was not initially told why, something of a Twitter storm broke. This triggered an inundation of queries to WMP senior officer accounts and with widespread national news coverage, the force's media comms office. News that there was an investigation (though it was shut down by higher-ranking officers within days and no disciplinary action eventuated) prompted public criticism from a number of respected quarters. One commentator quoted in news coverage, (Chris Hobbs, a former special branch officer who was also active on Twitter) not only criticised the action for

'humiliating' a 'venerated' officer, but also highlighted an important side effect of putting fear into other police using social media, given this could happen to such a high-profile officer:

> Outside observers may well conclude that the actions of West Midlands police were deliberately designed as an object lesson to all those 'junior officers' who dare to break ranks and tell it how it is. Even if Inspector Brown is allowed to continue tweeting and blogging front line officers will have been taught a lesson, namely that any form of whistle blowing could well result in a nightmare, life changing scenario.'' (McCarthy, 2014)

That there could well be, and has been, a cumulative and oppressive result for protesting police officers from such incidents which were not even directly connected with protest is to be considered in light of barriers to participation, as discussed by Klandersmans (2004) and others. In the police's traditional roles in protest movements, they might be seen to have the balance of power. These findings illustrate that when police are the protestors, they are potentially subject to a variety of unique repercussions which are to be feared. In addition, in the use of social media, 'guidelines' were rarely clear cut within some individual forces, varied between them, and subject to ad hoc change over time, as mentioned in Chapter Three (Bullock 2018; Hesketh and Williams 2017). An outright political tweet may not bring action one month but another later one will, or even merely humorous ones. Each force's Public Standards Department (PSD) could vary in its approach to tweets, but all carry far-reaching powers with the potential to damage careers or result in job loss, and isolation from the 'police family'. It's argued the 'bringing into disrepute' charge can be practically a catch-all in social media use. When a number of disciplinary actions are being taken and/or Twitter accounts suddenly disappear, taking with them the online presence of a person that many connected with in their online community, that has an effect on networks which Grudz termed "real and imagined" communities (2004). Even a sense of the emotion of loss is present in some of the Twitter responses to the missing. When such events feature in news media, as well as spread through the online platform, it can be argued that oppression moves from a sense to a deterrent reality.

Therefore, police who wish to protest, or feel driven to such a stance which is at some odds with their culture, are already well aware of the regulations and restrictions they

face, and the presence of the PSD, albeit with a lack of clarity and consistency that varies from force to force and even over time. With additional factors such as those outlined above, this thesis argues that police who are protesting can only act as *constrained protestors*, in a way unique to a vocation which also binds them together.

## 5.5 Online protest to offline action – the police protest march

Unlike the previous police protest march a few years earlier, the May 10 2012 event had a distinct advantage in the form of the Twitter presence of already protesting police and supporters. Some of the results of that in engaging numbers of not only police attending (35,000), but also public support, are illustrated in interview extracts in the next chapter. While the Police Federation itself was of course active on Twitter in the lead up, the online presence of those who already had either large or wide, ie plenty of non-police public, followings could only bolster the general exhortation to either attend, support online or even just take notice.

That there was political support was also assisted by the public sector workers' unions marching against austerity cuts at the same time. For seasoned public protestors, it must have seemed strange to realise that, for once, nearly everyone was on the same side – what message that sent to the government can only be guessed, but *The Guardian*'s liveblogger reporter commented "they must be worried". The Unite union in support had produced a video, put out on YouTube but promoted via Twitter and Facebook, protesting about privatisation of the police. Tactically, individual police protestors had also created videos, including 'instructions/advice for those marching' set to The Great Escape theme music and published on YouTube with links spread through Twitter (thesirianblair 2012). While the march was titled "Against Cuts in Police Funding", protestors were keen to highlight their concerns about the proposed reforms in general, and PTFP (policing for the public not for profit), while others wanted to raise the issue of the right to strike. While there were official PolFed placards, tactical protestors had tee shirts and other artefacts printed to carry their own, often stronger-worded, messages, such as "Carry On and Get Shafted".

With reference to RQ3, this was not a leaderless collective protest. However, as will be shown, around and within it were several collectivities and an example of them coming together - a movement of different online groups, shared political interest and concern, merging together at points in ways similar to those described by a number of different

theories of social media-using protest movements. Also, within the police online, there was the group of those who had been actively protesting for some time, whether anonymous or not.

There were then potentially a number of digital vanguards, as described by Gerbaudo (2015), and as tweet examples will show, clear evidence of enthusing followers with hope and more than a little humour, especially as the day drew near and on the day itself. But 'ordinary' tweeps, as the following sample of tweets show, in the ways highlighted by Segerberg and Bennett (2012, 2013), and others, were busy online, checking correct hashtags, requesting information, commenting, discussing, and sharing promotional videos and information as it arose. Accounts with small follower numbers now, through using the hashtag, had a huge potential audience.
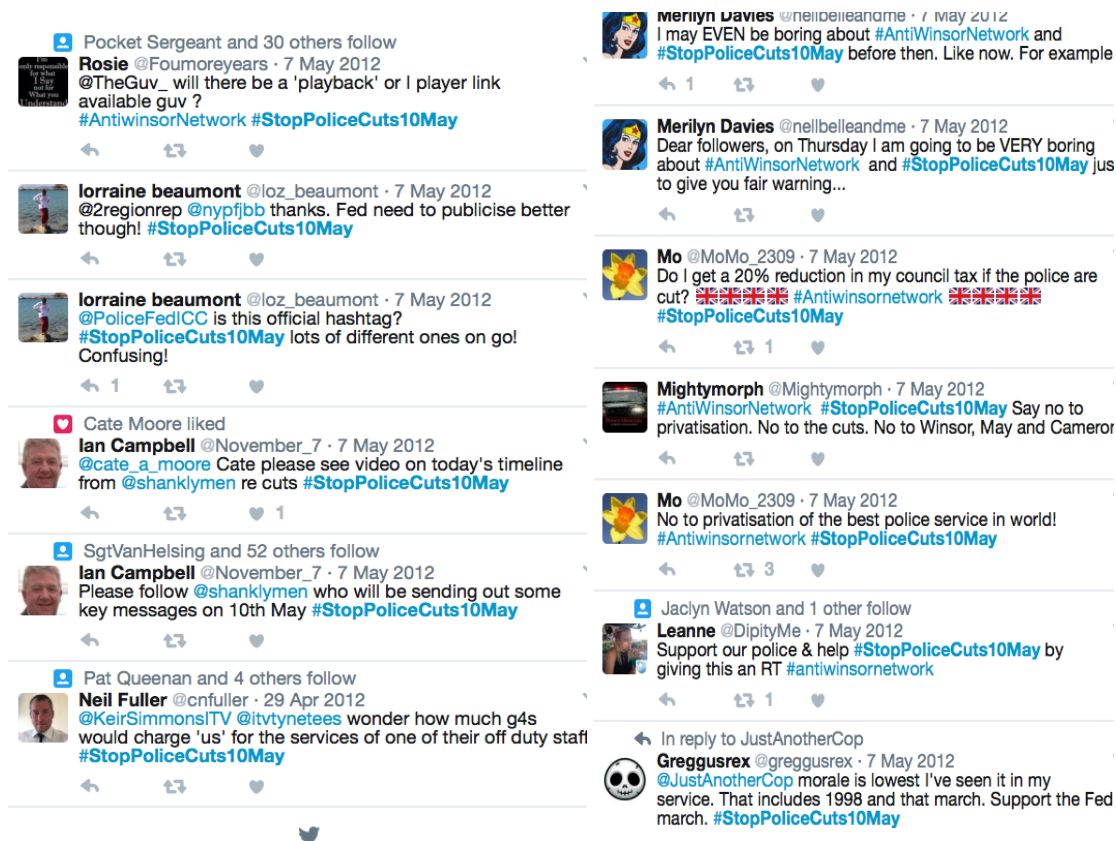
Videos, cartoons and hashtags and tweets themselves can, in an online space, replace the posters and other artefacts used in on offline street protest. They can also boost morale, and enthusiasm and optimism as Gerbaudo's vanguards do, though on Twitter these were coming from anonymous accounts and 'ordinary' supporters as much as 'official' accounts such as the Police Federation, and the former could also take more risks.
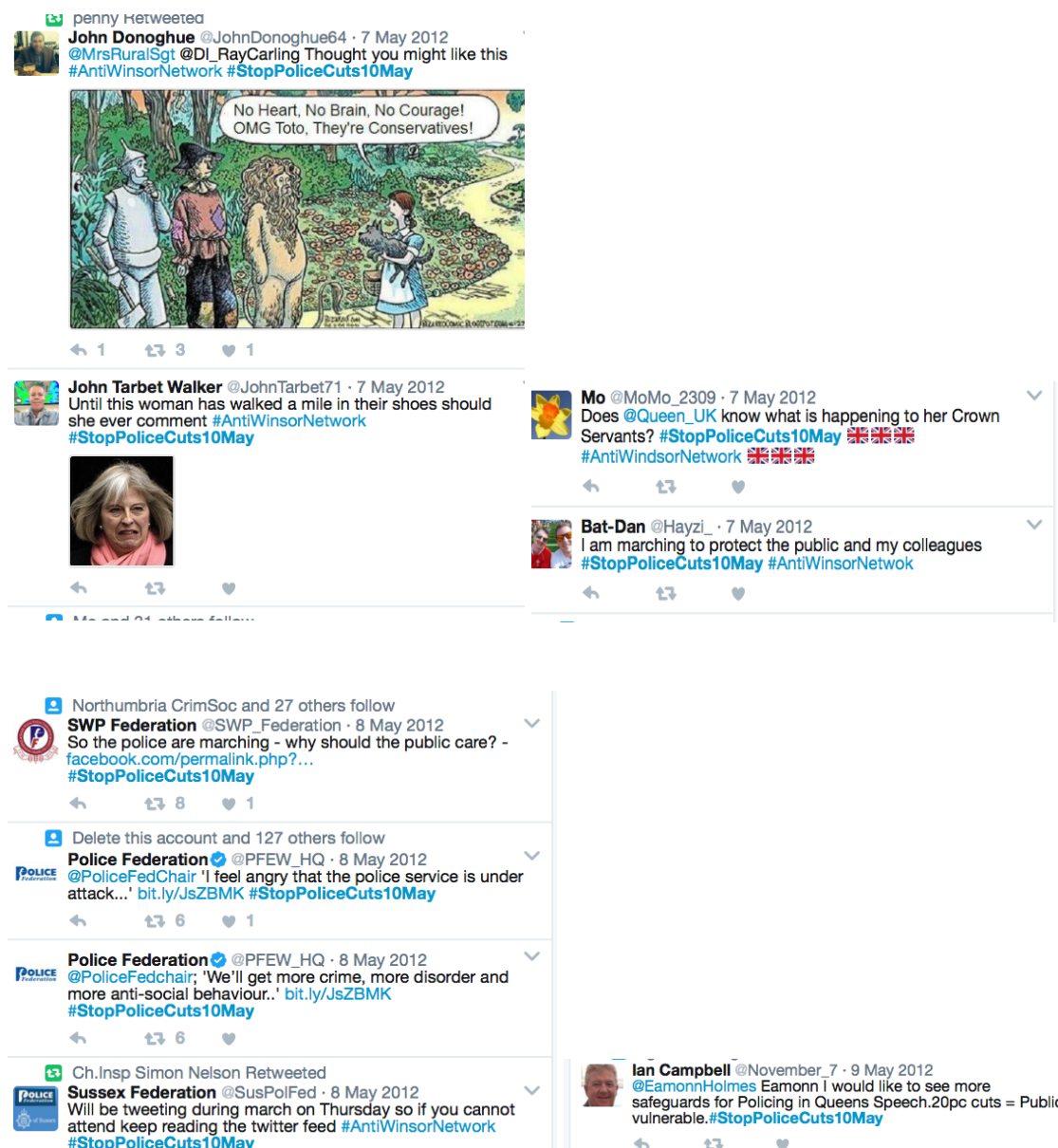
Exhortations, such as those above, to people to tweet why they were marching, or why they supported the march, police or public, and to stay tuned to Twitter accounts or the hashtag to follow it live, help to build the momentum. Several tweeted directly to journalists, celebrities, and even the Queen's official Twitter account. They also boost public and news media interest, as well as lowering the individual's threshold to taking part, as they can see – here in an online space – the numbers of others joining in (Rule 1998; Klandersmans 2004). What can also reduce threshold, especially when protestors are part of a hierarchical organisation, is those at its higher levels also showing support. Many senior officers did so, supporting the march, even if not taking part, and showing this online, even if just to retweet police federation and other posts. But many announced they would be taking part, including the chief constable of Gloucestershire Police, Toby Melville, who had also already declared he was quitting over the cuts

(Laville 2012d). All of this buoyed the protest and added to any digital contagion and digital enthusiasm.

The momentum which was built finally delivered in the size of the turnout on the day, creating the biggest demonstration yet of officers. They had either arranged a day's leave, which is not so straightforward, or were off duty on a 'rest' day, including after a nightshift. As well as standard coverage, *The Guardian* and other news sites ran live blogs, posting officers' tweets. Jokes abounded, from journalists and marchers, about well-behaved and obedient protestors, and likelihood of police 'kettling' themselves (a recently-used police tactic used to control groups of protestors by keeping them stationary in decreed spaces) along with the possibilities of doing so to politicians in Westminster. As mentioned, the use of the affective emotion of humour can also increase audience engagement, as well as uplift a movement. Some supporters came as a pleasant surprise to those marching. Only a few months earlier, the long-standing Occupy tent 'camp' in London had been evicted from around St Paul's by bailiffs and police after losing their court battle to stay. Now, along the police march route Occupy groups, albeit-small, offered support, at least in solidarity against cuts, and that support was swiftly disseminated on Twitter, as the following visual tweets show:
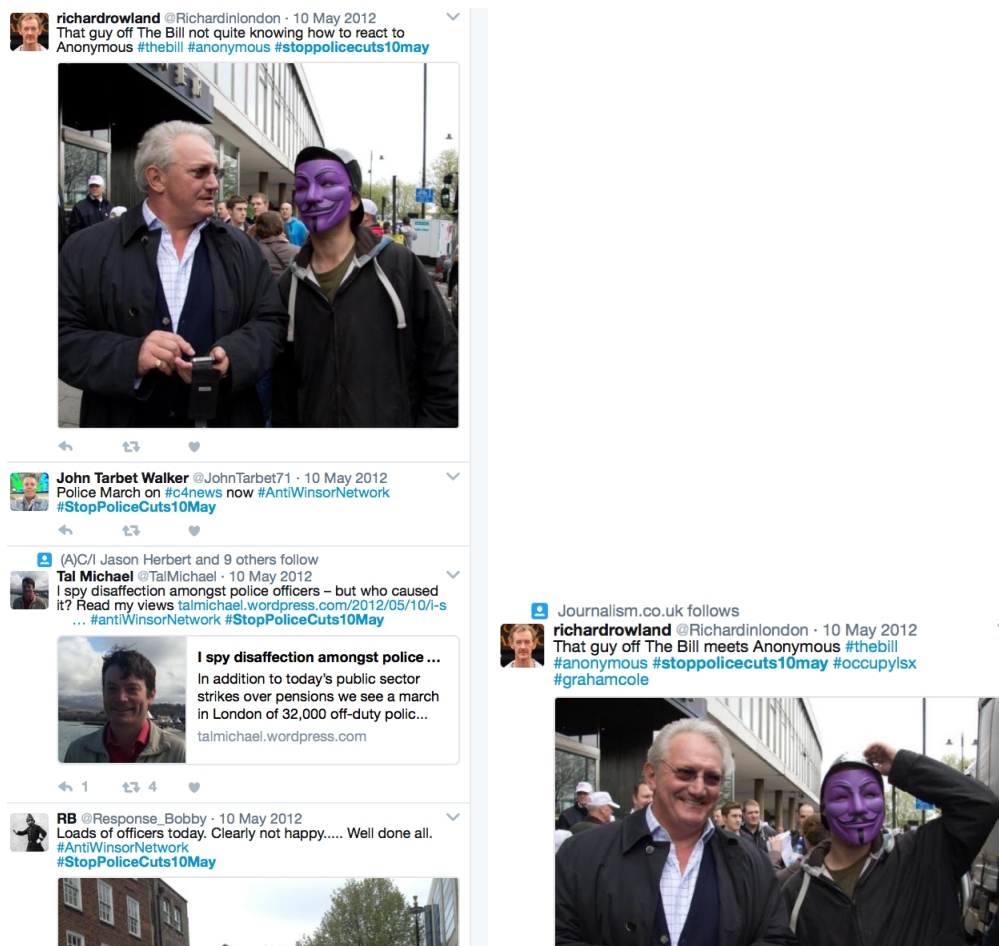

Thames Valley PolFed @TVPFED · 10 May 2012
One of the best signs of today #StopPoliceCutsMay10

Chris @LadfromLancs · 10 May 2012
Good atmosphere in #London. Good support from the public! #StopPoliceCutsMay10

Dr Ross Ritchie follows
Clarky @Clarky_g · 10 May 2012
#StopPoliceCuts10May Some great support for the Police today from the most unlikely places! Good on them!

Mark Taylor @Markat101 · 10 May 2012
Whitehall now peeps - support from #Occupylondon
#StopPoliceCuts10May
#AntiWinsorNetwork

There was also support from celebrities, such as an actor from the TV police show *The Bill*, who addressed a gathering from the stage. This stage was also shared with supportive politicians, all of which was useful for 'enthusing the crowd', and increasing publicity and news coverage for the message to reach other audiences. The unusualness of the police marching, as well as the size of the turnout, meant it often led the coverage of the same-day public sector strike action and simultaneous marches in London.

richardrowland @Richardinlondon · 10 May 2012
That guy off The Bill not quite knowing how to react to Anonymous #thebill #anonymous #stoppolicecuts10may

John Tarbet Walker @JohnTarbet71 · 10 May 2012
Police March on #c4news now #AntiWinsorNetwork #StopPoliceCuts10May

(A)C/I Jason Herbert and 9 others follow
Tal Michael @TalMichael · 10 May 2012
I spy disaffection amongst police officers – but who caused it? Read my views talmichael.wordpress.com/2012/05/10/i-s … #antiWinsorNetwork #StopPoliceCuts10May

I spy disaffection amongst police …
In addition to today's public sector strikes over pensions we see a march in London of 32,000 off-duty polic…
talmichael.wordpress.com

RB @Response_Bobby · 10 May 2012
Loads of officers today. Clearly not happy..... Well done all. #AntiWinsorNetwork #StopPoliceCuts10May

Journalism.co.uk follows
richardrowland @Richardinlondon · 10 May 2012
That guy off The Bill meets Anonymous #thebill #anonymous #stoppolicecuts10may #occupylsx #grahamcole

Officers booed and slow handclapped as they passed the Home Secretary Theresa May's offices, and many wore self-produced tee shirts demanding full industrial rights to strike, with others, carrying strongly-worded, for police officers, if polite, placards.

But what of the role of Twitter and tweeting officers during the march itself? The tweets show the day itself was microblogged in huge quantity and intensity of tweets, not just reflecting the march itself, but the preparations, the departure points and journeys from all over the country, whether by bus, train, or car to congregate on London. The Twitter posts, many with photos, provided a sense of being there for those who could not, or for those who were simply interested or curious. At the same time, these beforehand posts continued the momentum build and enthusiasm for the march ahead. The hashtag use meant posts from even those without large follower numbers were transmitted to a wider audience. Scattered among the tales of journeys was also evidence of tactical social media activity, not by 'admins' but anyone inclined to do so. This included encouraging people to maintain the trending hashtag, especially after noticing "a couple of boxers and a defunct card company" had got ahead on Twitter's trending tables, and using the moment and increased audience to get a higher profile for information about

the protest arguments, whether in tweets, links or blogs. While only police officers could take part in the march on the streets, anyone online who was feeling solidarity, whether with police per se or through anti-austerity or anti-Government sympathies, could join in using the many affordances of Twitter social media. This can be argued to chime with Milan's concept of cloud protesting, where social media, allowing individuals to join in, use tags etc, reinforce the 'we' of the protest, in a very different version of collective identity, allow the collective to be experienced through the individual (2015).

As shown in this sample of posts, Twitter was an online gathering space for tweets showing real-life experiences during the real-time process of protestors journeying to the event on different routes, interspersed with posts boosting the message, sending support and thanks, and exhorting the online crowd. For local and regional publics, protest groups from 'their' force, and their journeys, were clearly shown in what Segerberg and Bennett (2012) describe as a window on the event. The next examples demonstrate this in the visual Tweets of the Oldham Police and the Greater Manchester Police Federation. Alongside these are sample tweets showing others on the journey as well as exhortations, message or support and lobbying:

Nige Gunn @njg28 · 10 May 2012
Rest stop Cherwell Services. Also there 30+ @GMPFed coaches. Services chocker with bobbies. #proud #StopPoliceCutsMay10

Below, along with more support messages, is an information broadcast showing that the hashtag is now "breaking" on the Twitter trends map. As discussed previously, in these earlier Twitter days, trending topics were flagged to all Twitter users and so had the potential to bring in an even wider audience, even if just from curiosity. As this happens, protestors can make sure useful information is going out to a wider audience to spread awareness, as shown by the North Yorkshire Police Federation image of a relevant article from the national PolFed magazine, now published to a wider public audience than just its members:

All of this also meant visibility – marchers could see and be buoyed by the huge audience of public well-wishers, as well as their colleagues who had to work so couldn't attend. They could also see the constant recycling of campaign posters online. The connectivity of the event online, and shown by the posts of those taking part, meant the physical protest was accompanied at the same time by arguably one of the biggest online protests for this cause.

It could be argued the two protest types coalesced into one, and while Milan's cloud protesting identified how online protests could stretch the lifecycle of the protest (2015), compared with a one-day physical event, this is potentially an example of how a simultaneous and concentrated combination of online / offline protest action can boost

the sheer size, volume and effect. Gerbaudo's observance of emotional contagion in protests (2015) can also be seen in this multitude of posts, and again, from far-flung supporters as well as those present at the event..

Demonstrated too is the concept of Twitter being both a networking agent in a protest space, and a window on it (Segerberg and Bennett 2011). In this sense also shown is the visibility of many participating, helping to lowering the risk threshold for others to join in. Visibility is also present in terms of individual police making a political protest with placards and more, some of the wording on which in a personal tweet, outside such a gathering, may feel too risky or daunting (as shown in the next set of tweet images).

However it is important to note the key difference with many other protest movements, where theoretical discussions assume or refer to offline or public protest as integral with online. The latter is often discussed as building momentum until it spills over into physical offline public protest. But this was a carefully pre-planned and sanctioned event and police officers taking part in this very-organised march had to be committed long in advance of the date and organised in terms of getting leave requested or granted, as well as the usual booking of travel and so forth. The online protest prior to these points certainly built momentum for this part but this thesis argues the online protest(s) was valid in its own right, whether or not an ensuing march had taken place. It further argues that that on the event day itself, the ongoing online activity was also validated as a protest in its own right. In this sense, I differentiate it subtly from other social movements' descriptions by scholars, even those shown in authoritarian regimes as discussed in Chapter Three, where the culmination of online protests is often seen as being some protest event in physical space. My differentiation is because this legal march was a very rare and only opportunity for police to openly demonstrate or protest in a physical space. Offline protest is for this group, *constrained* by their very role, in a job which would be at risk if they spontaneously, and thus illegally, took to the streets. Thus, while offline protest action is so often seen as being boosted by online, here it is as important to view that the march itself boosted the ongoing online protest, especially with images of 'traditional protest' from public and police tweeters alike. These, as shown in the following examples, could be argued to give powerful 'real-life' images to what previously had to be fairly anonymous and abstract:

Steve Barrett's Bees 🐝 @ShedStoker · 10 May 2012
@TheGuv_ #StopPoliceCuts10May I was there proud to support serving Officers.

PC Darren Kirkwood @PCDKirkwood · 10 May 2012
Courtesy of Humberside Police Federation & the 200+ Officers that are currently
marching in London #StopPoliceCutsMay10

These, and others shown throughout this chapter, strongly highlight some scholars'
observations on the often-neglected power of images and video on social media when it
comes to studying such social movements (Ruijgrok 2019; Poell and Djik 2014). As
Poell and Djik explained, it is important to study this because their use in protest
"accelerated communication and enhanced its visual representation". Importantly here,
it offered police protestors, like others, "real self-representation, rather than reflecting
mainstream media and better control of their messages" (2014, p.724). Although media
did show plenty of images, in particular *The Guardian*'s live news blog vehicle, the
protestors could not only publish more, and more quickly, to Twitter but they in turn
were amplified by its sharing affordances.

Paul Whitehouse @The_sideburns · 10 May 2012
Marching #StopPoliceCuts10May

Although Rujigrok (2019) feels that the use of such imagery is more relevantly powerful in protests under authoritarian regimes, as Western media means such images are normally available to the public, this thesis argues such "dramatic, striking and vivid" visual materials going viral still exert powerful effects in democracies and protests such as those examined here. Some of those shown in the police protests could indeed incite reactive emotions of moral outrage and even anger which, as he describes, can mobilise people. However, many would also incite feelings of solidarity and power in numbers, as well as a rare outspokenness from a group not normally seen as disaffected and protesting. The latter is rare enough to also draw attention. Both points about the use of imagery also feed into Gerbaudo's point that Twitter is not just an information-circulation tool but a "key means of motivation" by allowing organisers via widespread hopeful, personal and passionate messages, to dispel fear and suspicion, and even convert it into collective enthusiasm. It was involved in the "transformation of negative sentiments of anger and indignation into collective political passions informed by the hope of prevailing over an unjust political system" (2012, p.264).

5.6 A typology of police protest tweeting

From the analysis of the online activity in this chapter, I have devised a schematic digram to represent the roles and communicative dynamics on Twitter of three main groups of actors: police as active protestors, police as cautious supporters, and public as supporters. The categories/groups cannot be wholly definitive, covering as they do varied individuals even within a group and taking into consideration important aspects of arguments discussed in Chapter Three. This also reflects Melucci's idea of movements as dynamic and evolving and it is argued this applies to the motivation of individuals, which can vary over time especially during moments of perceived repression.

What is highlighted in the findings is of people acting as individuals, arguably with varying degrees of both self-interest and group motivation, along with a multi-directional flow of communication, whether informational, questioning, entertaining or purely protest. This flow is also between categories/groups, and events.
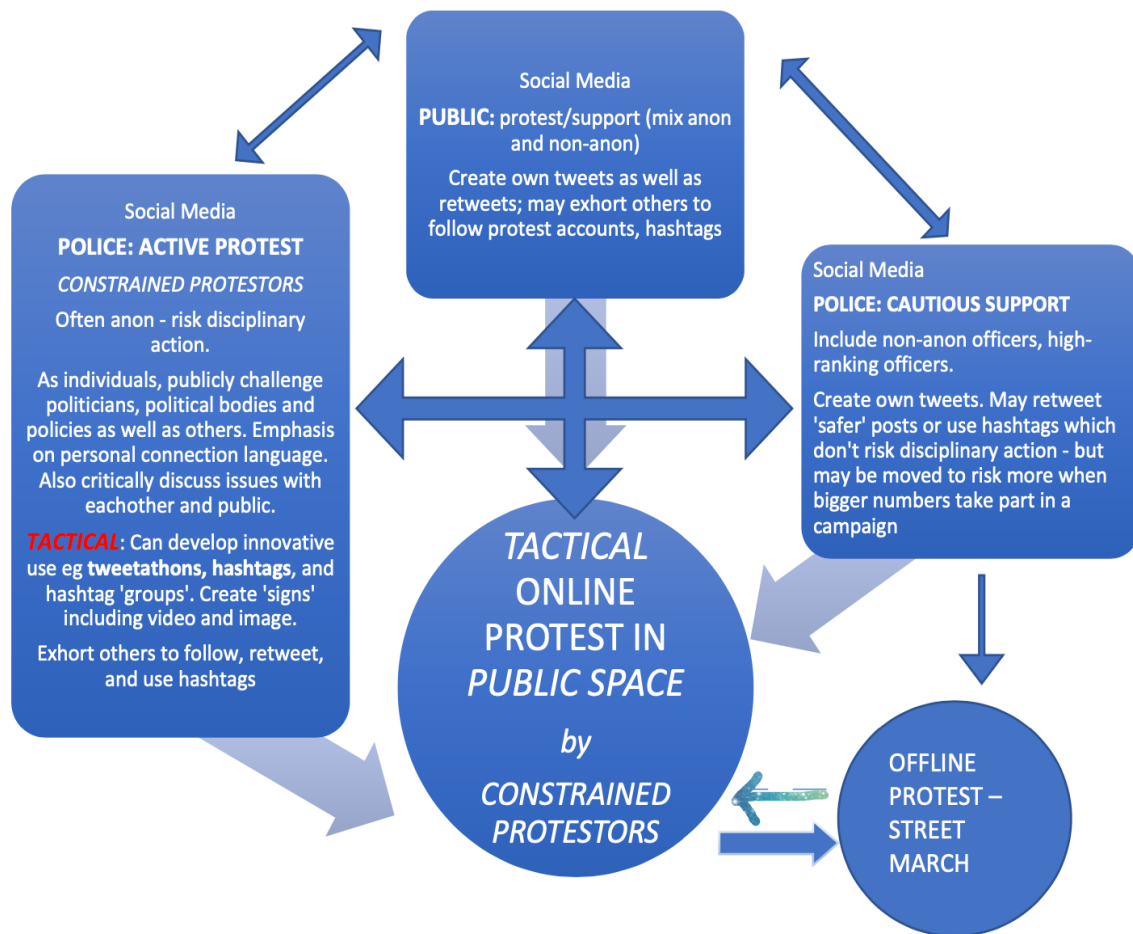
Figure 3. Typology of Police Online Protest on Twitter (Matthews, 2021)

Key is that the dynamics can lead to online protest in a public space which, by nature of the constraints on its key police protestors, has to be an online space – a tactical online public space. This is depicted by the thicker arrow lines in one direction only. This online movement was ongoing and carried out the earliest protests in this space, as shown previously. As reflected by the smaller arrow and bubble, its momentum boosted the offline protest march which, although important, especially symbolically, was a singular and rare event in the overall police protesting actions. Thus this diagram is not the usual depiction showing that all arrows lead to the physical protest. Rather, that when it did arise, it was boosted by the online protestors, some of whom took part. The reverse arrow from the offline protest bubble depicts my argument that the physical protest also boosted the online one. The multi-directional arrows reflect the important fluidity, in categories as well as actions.

In this typology, the *Tactial* element is combined with the *police: active protest* category, who are mostly anonymous, as the nature of their activity could result in disciplinary proceedings as outlined in the high-profile examples discussed earlier. For the same reasons it could also include retired officers as not subject to these. From research earlier in this chapter, this category also initiated or played a role in identified tactics such as the tweetathon and hashtag campaigns, videos and so forth. But it does not preclude non-anon police moving in, such as those usually in the *police: cautious support*, ie changing categories temporarily, even if the risk is higher in certain campaigns. It has been shown that this occurred in different hashtag campaigns such as the #noconfidenceintheresamay, which happened before a perceived crackdown on 'misuses' of social media. However, it happened again later with the #timeonmyhands spontaneous tag. Factors encouraging participation here would include the intensity, via the speed of its spread and sheer numbers taking part taking part, lending itself to lowering barriers of participation (Klandersmans 2004) especially if senior officers joined in. But emotion, mainly that of anger as demonstrated by individual tweets, was also a motivator. And for the element of humour, many seemed unable to pass up such an opportunity for dry, sometimes sarcastic, wit. Gerbaudo's concept of digital vanguards enthusing and exhorting is relevant at points, such as in the Theresa May hashtag campaign as well as the online support for the physical protest on the day (2014; 2017).

The *public support* category can include individuals and organisations, people with or without familial, related work or other connections to police, and even journalists and media where these were in a non-impartial role, eg columnists or radio show hosts. Within here too are those who enjoyed engaging on Twitter with police tweeters, whether initially for humour/amusement, argument or debate, or curiosity and information seeking, but which turned into more frequent online connections. As Grudz et al. put it, through Twitter, inter-linked communities could form, and even experience "a sense of community" (2011). Their role was evident in the riskier campaigns through their online connection with those in the *police: active protest* category.

This potential for fluid movement between categories, indicated by the multi-directional arrows, also reflects aspects of connective action theory, which holds that the modern "unbounded" protests are "dynamic in terms of the changing populations who may opt in and out of play as different engagement opportunities are presented (Bennett and

Segerberg 2012, p.759). But it can be argued it also speaks to some key Meluccian points about movements being a dynamic and evolving process "continuously activated by social actors" (Melucci 1995, p.73). As Milan later argued, "it does not presuppose unity and coherence but is in continuous evolution" due to the networked active relationships among those taking part (2015).

My typology thus shows a more dynamic feedback flow around the online space than might be with other social media protests or movements discussed in the literature. To reiterate it is also distinct from those where a culmination of protest is seen in the physical manifestation of occupations or street protests. It depicts this movement's online protest(s) are arguably more key than the street protest march. The latter is shown, not as an ultimate outcome of the different protest types, but as one smaller manifestation.

5.7 Summary, overall analysis and discussion

The initial online activities shown in the case studies are undeniably protests, which also share some similarities with studied protests and movements. They are protests against aspects of police reform, and funding cuts by the government and its relevant bodies. The protesting sometimes includes challenges aimed at senior police organisation management and even the federation itself for what some saw as not having done enough at an earlier stage to counteract what was happening. They also fit Snow's description in that they "give voice to their grievances and concerns about the rights, welfare, and well-being of themselves and others by engaging in various types of collective action…that dramatise those grievances and demand something be done about them" (2004, p.3) and in operating outside of institutional organisations to act to challenge authority "whether it is institutionally or culturally based, *in the group, organisation,* society, culture, or world order *of which they are a part*" (2004, p.11; italics added).

Snow's definition, of course, was referring to collectivities protesting, and it's important here to distinguish groups within groups. A collectivity can certainly be argued for, changing at different times and events, with smaller groups and individuals united in a

general commonality of protest. They didn't only include police officers, but these, even retired or former, as shown in Chapter Two, are already a strongly-bonded vocational group. It has distinct cultural characteristics which, if not one homogenous 'cop culture', include elements of trust and solidarity, ingredients also needed in protest movements, on or offline. This vocational bonding was also present online, among those who used the platforms, but I argue it took on a distinctive character and identity in terms of a protest movement. In this analysis, evidence for leadership is vague compared to 'traditional' protest movements. Indeed, the extracts of those explaining some of the online campaigns express the casualness with which something was created, seeming to give Twitter itself credit also. This is, of course, notwithstanding the evidence that Facebook pages or blogs were created and decisions were made, such as date and time for a tweetathon, along with statements of purpose. But the leadership and organisational vagueness, along with aspects of how the protest movement spread, can be said to at least echo Bennett and Segerberg's notion of connective action, and decentralised, horizontal or flattened in organisational terms, unbounded and dynamic and changing, including "in terms of the changing populations who may opt in and out of play as different engagement opportunities are presented" (Bennett and Segerberg 2012, p.759).

This of course, is a notion which gives the platform itself power as an organising agent. However, the identification in these protests of at least some initial organisers as vanguards and certainly activist tweeters, supports Gerbaudo's contention that apparently leaderless movements of those described by connective action arguments, actually have leaders of sorts and an arguably collective identity and action (2014, 2017). Meanwhile the emotional content of these protests lends strength to Gerbaudo and others' arguments that such content is a required motivating and mobilising factor in social media movements (2016; Papacharissi 2015).

The protest also chimes with other scholars who retain the notion of collective identity, albeit in different, developing forms (Milan 2015; Kavada 2015). Melucci originally highlighted the importance of remembering the concept of collective identity in protest movements was a continuous process constantly activated by its social actors, ie people, and that 'collective identity' itself did not mean unity and coherence, rather this continuous evolution – a result of what the people in it felt and did (1995). He highlighted important often-unanswered questions around how individuals' self-

motivations or interests might form a collective or common purposes and even how they recognised it as such. But with the contemporary element of social media use, the modern, nuanced debates and posited definitions chime with aspects of my findings. Milan's concept of cloud protesting (2015) and Gerbaudo's aforementioned discussion on the illusion of leaderlessness (2014) acknowledges some of their underlying basis. This includes that of personal action frames, with Twitter users joining in as an act of individual and personal expression which is "achieved by sharing ideas and actions in trusted relationships". The nature of the Twitter protest activity shown in this chapter supports Milan's idea that unmediated encounters between individuals, such as Twitter affords, actually leads to a key variation on Melucci's 'politics of visibility', so that the collective could be argued to be experienced through the individual.

The #timeonmyhands hashtag showed the element of a collective identity while the tweets' content was very much the original expression of the individual. The spontaneity and rapid 'viral' spread can be argued to be due to Twitter affordances, from the first use of the tag to its spread, through its sheer visibility, to others, and as such the word 'campaign' is arguably inaccurate, suggesting as it does much more organisation or leadership. Nevertheless this online outburst achieved a real result with a 'clarification' and borderline U-turn on the original comment being issued within 24 hours. In contrast, the viral spread of the #noconfidenceintheresamay campaign can be demonstrated to be organised and arguably with leaders, initially at least. It can also be argued that by gaining a top trending spot in the UK Twittersphere this too achieved a result in terms of creating or triggering initial awareness for the wider Twitter public.

The activities of exhorting others to follow and support key campaigns and the march itself, in the *police: active protestors* category, fit Gerbaudo's definition of digital vanguards, ie a form of leadership in the online protest world. It's important to note that as a legal march, there was little risk, ie barriers, for non-anon police to promote it on Twitter, by way of the hashtag rather than political comment. However, among the non-anon such comments were more noticeable for this action, again perhaps due to the visibility of the sheer numbers doing so reducing perceived risk, and again emotions of cold anger, along with enthusiasm and hope, again highlighted by Gerbaudo (2014, 2017).

My typology also represents my contention that unlike some key social movements using social media, where a culmination of protest is seen in physical occupations or street protests, this movement's online protest(s) are its main outcome. The important difference with the other movements is seeing police as **constrained protestors**. That is, constrained by their need to conduct themselves lawfully and discharge their duties, combined with legal prevention of striking, and indeed the vocational culture for which playing the role of protestor is not a natural alignment yet which helps to bind them in it. Organisational aspects are also more complicated, including that every officer taking part in the march had to be off duty or granted leave while cover was maintained throughout England and Wales. Thus a police street march is extremely rare, only the third in British history (previous were 2008 and 1918). So the physical protest demonstration beloved of traditional movements is not a key tactic for such constrained protestors. Instead, I contend their real protest space was online and mainly in the Twittersphere becoming, for police protestors, what this thesis labels as their **tactical online public space**. This draws on and extends the concepts of public spaces as discussed in Chapter Three. Twitter's open public nature lends itself to the concept of an online public space. This is despite arguments that as a technological platform business with rules and vested interests it is not as open and public as perhaps perceived. Nevertheless parallel objections apply to almost any 'perceived' physical public spaces too, whether streets or squares or parks, and whether through council by-laws or state laws (note too, coffee shops/cafes and even private salons also can exert rights of control and occupation). Meanwhile police use of this online space is shown to indeed be tactical. This is demonstrated by the use of anonymous accounts, and innovation with and use of all affordances the platform can offer. This includes hashtags, tweetathons, linking to blogs, retweeting, creating and sharing memes, images and videos while using some of the most effective, if brief, individual *human* methods of *communicating* with each other and strangers, horizontally, up and down, and at speed.

This and the concept of the online protest as distinct in its own right, echoes Milan's observations that social media allows individuals to become the centre of the story, and by using tags, citations and so forth, appeal to bystanders, thus reinforcing the collective 'we' while also triggering further exchange and communication, and, in contrast to one-off physical gatherings or events, "allow for a permanent re-enactment of social action in online platforms…In doing so, they stretch the duration and lifecycle of

mobilisation" (2015, p.896).

This chapter analysed, against the contextual backgrounds, the police protest and certain campaigns through individuals' communications conveyed mainly via Twitter, but also blogs, blog interviews and news media. Through the two former mediums, the 'voices' of the respective individuals and thus arguably 'first-hand', many strong findings were able to be made. This 'in their own words' gives evidence for key areas such as motivations and emotions, organisation or leadership, and constraints-related fear and difficulties. In this sense it spoke to all four RQs. However, the analysis in the next chapter will draw on interview data for a deeper exploration and elucidation of these, and the finding of any hitherto hidden aspects. This will also be used to check my typology accurately represents what appeared to be happening as well as confirm or question findings so far, and deepen them. And as previously discussed, analysis of interviews will enable better consideration of the individuals' processes when examining the start and evolution of collective identity in a protest movement. In particular, towards answers, where possible, to what Melucci identified as key questions:

> They never can answer the questions of how social actors come to form a collectivity and recognise themselves as being part of it; how they maintain themselves over time; how acting together makes sense for the participants in a social movement; or how the meaning of collective action derives from structural preconditions or from the sum of the individual motives (Melucci 1995, p.53) .

Chapter 6: Interview findings and analysis

This chapter focuses on the results of the qualitative interviews with individual officers, or former officers to explore individual motivations, knowledge, experiences, perceptions and feelings. The findings and analysis are examined within the final themes decided upon. The aspect of emotions is looked at in relevant sections where they are also seen to come into play alongside contributory factors for the participants.

6.1 Initial and changing motivations for Twitter use

This theme, which also speaks directly to RQ1, was important to get an insight into motivations in terms of individual identity and any signs of evolution to a more collective 'identitisation', especially in terms of 'group concerns', from a Meluccian perspective, as well as other conceptual debates. Here then, we are looking at the embryonic beginnings on Twitter of a potential 'group', preceding any protest activity, although many other studies begin with established protest groups.

From interviews for this category, the detail of which is discussed in depth below, a model will be drawn highlighting the main and overlapping categories.

Interviewees' *initial* motivations for joining or using Twitter showed a large variation, highlighting personal-to-them, ie *individual*, reasons and other personal reasons which were also common to other users, eg interests such as sport, and football. However, key in all was being able to communicate with others, albeit for multiple different reasons, and this communication is seen by participants as 'talking', ie person to person, rather than 'writing'.

This speaks to Diani's point that an awareness of each individual's involvement in multiple organisations and personal networks expands the classic analysis of networks and participation "towards recognition of social movements as complex social systems" (2004, pp.346-7).

As shown in this extract, simple curiosity was one motivation, and like many at the time, involved false starts:

> I was on Facebook and I saw lots of people going on about Twitter. I had no idea what it was all about, so I went and had a look. There was a lot of conversation about it, it was clearly booming, and I'm curious in that way and wanted to see what it was about, but came away completely uninspired at it all and didn't get that at all and just left it. I remember distinctly going back to Facebook and going, 'I have no idea what this is about, I don't get it, I can do everything on there that I can do on here and more so I'll forget that' and I left it for years until I went back to it (0197).

This person would later explain how he suddenly 'got it', however a key point is the suggestion of a 'buzz' around Twitter use at this time, as the platform's use picked up, also encouraging initial exploration and possibly a wider uptake.

For others, the initial curiosity was enough for them to get involved in an almost accidental but humanly-organic way:

> Initially it was just to see what the craic was, because social media-wise I'd always been Facebook. I didn't understand what Twitter was and I always thought it was a bit odd. I started it by just looking at what celebrities were doing, so it was vaguely interesting for a while and then you start getting involved in topics that interest you almost by accident. For me it was football and policing and the policing side was obviously something I was quite passionate about (0198).

Many found such a digital platform can provide a real sense of human connection, or community, as identified by Grudz (2011), Hermida (2010) and others. This is highlighted in this example, where the interviewee tried Twitter having found Facebook was not fulfilling his needs:

> I think the main motivation was because I was off work (work injury) and felt isolated. I had Facebook, but a lot of the stuff going on Facebook is bland and I wanted something a little bit more interactive, so Twitter provided that platform really (0197).

This person too wanted that contact:

> It was first of all having contact with my ex-colleagues in the police and also people [*connected with my post-police creative work*], so it was a bit of a joint reason why I started on social media. Because it's a great way of letting people know, if they're interested in what you're doing, what you are actually doing yourself (0194).

And again, for social reasons which slowly became more about work-related, ie policing issues:

> Personal reasons like Facebook keeping up with people and sport, initially same social thing as Facebook. It grew into work stuff (0209).

Nearly all interviewees referenced their general interest in policing, or that it became something their Twitter use quickly developed into which is probably unsurprising, given previous analysis of 'cop culture' (Reiner 2010). However, although participants could be said to be part of the 'police family' group, such groupings does not mean a homogeneity should be assumed, as cautioned by Klandersmans (2004), Poletta and Jaspers (2001) and others. This common interest of policing is noted at this stage with implications for both individual identity and group identity, among the potential multiple self-identities which Klandersmans argues can be evident in a movement (2004). Such a common interest in policing by individual police officer Twitter users does not translate to each one moving to use the platform in later protest, when a protest-related collective identity might be apparent. Nevertheless, Twitter communications around such a shared theme and interest can help to build a sense of community, with ties and trust, and thus embed individuals within a social network community which can enable a social movement (Dianni 2004). At this stage, it captures part of what might be the evolution to a collective identity in terms of Melucci's 1995 questions (see Chapter 3.6, p.50) .

While all shared an interest in policing issues, for some their Twitter account started out with more of a distinct or pragmatic communications purpose, including being able to reach people beyond policing circles, which in itself could be argued to be more 'isolating' from a police group. At the same time this demonstrates the recognition of the platform's visibility as well as engagement function, especially with the practical examples below. These also show the sometimes-accidental nature of joining the platform.

> I used it because I realised it was a really good tool for talking to people and keeping yourself up to date with things instantly, and I think that was really, really useful in all sorts of ways. I used it to keep in touch and find out what was going on. I remember distinctly I was out on a day off and I picked up on Twitter some people [*in local community*] complaining about [*a big event*] affecting parking, and mostly this wouldn't get picked up. I just called in to [*police operational*] comms centre to get an explanation and fired the explanation back [in a post] so they got an instant response – I think that's what did it for me. The fact you could communicate immediately with people rather than at some later stage, wait around and not get through – and it sort of struck me that's a really good way to communicate [*to public*] (0204).

A key point, which crops up, is that this interviewee highlights the communication aspect in terms of "talking to people" when using Twitter although its use is in 'written'

language. As does the next, while showing how he used the medium to improve the communication aspect of his police work:

> [*in my role*] there were lots of people in the public who I had to talk to, but didn't always get the chance to. You don't always get the time to pick the phone up and it's always the same message, so I looked at group emails but then Twitter started. I thought here's a great way, short messages to people I need to engage, but then everyone else can see what I'm doing as well and that's kind of how it started. Because … the local business/community… were all starting to engage in social media at the same time, getting their names out there and I wanted to get messages to them about this is what the police are doing, this is the operation that we're going to do and their customers need to see what we are doing as well, so that everyone knows what's going on (0196).

For others, Twitter seemed to offer opportunities for both creative and work-focused initiatives, as shown by the earlier quoted interviewee who initially didn't see what the fuss was about:

> Because I read a blog by an anonymous cop and suddenly saw an opportunity and thought, it might be interesting and fun to blog as a *[their then police role]* and thought I could probably have a Twitter account at the same time and do the two things. So I went back to Twitter and had a little play with it and once you put a little bit of time and effort in to understanding it you suddenly go, oh, now I get it! Then it flew then from there (0197).

This individual found it useful to show the public the 'human' side of policing and swiftly realised this could be extended to sharing concerns about policing with the public:

> I was aware of Twitter. I'd seen it out and about, and I'll be really honest early on I'm talking a few years ago now, I thought it was a bit of a fad. I thought it wasn't really going to stay. *[eventually after being convinced by a fellow officer]* Now what I don't like is corporatocracy. I don't like having to be tied, shackled, so I set it up, and obviously the public interface side is about showing the human side of policing, but also I use it to get across some real concerns that we've had (0208).

Others highlighted more of a personal discursive opportunity in connecting - talking - with others, both police and, again, beyond:

> I wanted to talk to people about what was going on in their work and I wanted to talk to them and learn from them and I wanted to be able to connect with people who were outside the cops as well (206).

And again at this time, Twitter was found to be more active and open, and thus more useful and rewarding, than Facebook, with this officer also emphasising the 'vocational' nature of police work:

> because I follow a lot of other police, it's not a job as such, it's a vocation. You're off duty obviously but you're not off duty if that makes sense, ie never off duty. It was more active than Facebook, a huge source of information: what's going on, being discussed, and the info was recent (209).

At this stage, these initial motivations show the important point that the majority were not joining Twitter and initially using it, to protest or start a protest movement per se. Overall, it may show the potential start of the development of the individual to 'we' in terms of a protest collectivity – the emergence of a collective action from individuals distinct from the existing 'collectivity' of their police job and the 'police family' culture. Some given reasons chime with the ideas of 'seeing' what other people are doing to influence participation (Rule 1998; Klandersmans 2004) even if not in terms of a protest per se. It also supports Milan's view of the creation of collective identity as an exercise of individuality, performance and visibility (2015), and Bennett and Segerberg's 'emergence of personalised identities', and 'personal action frames' (2012). Emotions were generally positive, seeking the enjoyment of connection and sharing, and of having a useful impact of sorts.

However, in what could be argued to be a definite sign, if still embryonic stage, of protest, there were others who remembered joining Twitter specifically for reasons of providing balance to mediated news media messages whether on any police issue (but which increasingly would become about police reform proposals). As such they were already using Twitter to bypass the gatekeepers, similar to protest movements discussed in Chapter Three:

> First of all I saw Twitter as a means of being able to respond to newspaper and media articles in a way that I know that if I wrote to a newspaper or journalist over something they'd written, the likelihood is they wouldn't publish what I've said and so in response to some articles that I thought were unfair or some that I've felt that you could actually respond to and give a different opinion. I can ensure that my opinion is published somewhere and that if anybody cared to read it they would see what I have to say rather than perhaps someone's interpretation of what I've got to say (0190).

And a few remember a very specific protest motivation for joining at a time when online action had just been started by other officers and supporters, demonstrating the arguments that the visibility of protest increases others' motivation to join collective movements, with it also helping them cross their individual thresholds to participation despite personal risks to job or career (Rule 1998; Klandersmans 2004), even if, as in the next example, participation is cautious, or fraught with worry. And even though still speaking as individuals, the embryonic sense of 'we' is clear, and also in terms of

identifying an "us and them". The reference to actions being "done to us" chimes with the characteristics of weak publics (Fraser 1990):

> There was a sense it [*the policy changes, reform*] was being done to us rather than with us. It was somewhere the people could get together and talk this through. On reflection, open source, open media probably isn't the greatest idea, but I got into it to see what other people were saying and then I found things like the anti-Winsor network *[police protest hashtag]*. I never actually tweeted under that hashtag because I could see that's the kind of thing that would land you in trouble, but from that started to pick up a following of interested parties and following other people, so it was partly rebellion against the fact that the chief didn't want anybody using it *[Twitter]* and also trying to find other people to talk to about what was happening to the police generally at the time (0210).

Note already the caution and awareness of potential repercussions from using the medium. While that interviewee explains why they didn't tweet using a contentious hashtag, they were still able to follow it, and those associated with it, and thus stay connected with the mood and messages carried by it. It also echoes Gerbaudo's explanation whereby individual users come to develop a sense of belonging to something bigger (2014).

Frustration at not having a say about policing issues as well as the reform proposals, was a key emotional motivation:

> I think people go on there to vent in many cases: I'm silenced in work, I can't say these things and I want somewhere to say them. I think, especially for the anonymous accounts, it's almost like a release of huge frustration, you can see it, it's palpable (0206).

Some embraced Twitter as a chance for freedom of speech, within self-imposed boundaries (which didn't always work out):

> Devolved control of communications is the future and I passionately believe in that. This is something that I wanted to do for me as well, there was some, like, values drive in there. I want my voice. I don't want to be silenced. I know I'm not breaking rules. I know I'm not being disrespectful. I just wanted to talk about what was going on at work and this allowed me some platform to do that. That's worked out exactly as I'd expected – and that's not all positive (206).

As previously mentioned on subverting the gatekeepers, the extracts above also indicate the bypassing of traditional information conduits and sources, whether organisational or via news media, to use their own voice directly (Jenkins 2006; Warner 2002).

Changing motivations began to demonstrate the desire to protest in the form of

expressing concern alongside emotions of frustration, injustice and even anger, alongside a sense of wanting not to be powerless.

> I enjoy it, speaking up for people without a voice and I don't like wrongdoing and I don't like the public being given unbalanced viewpoints through people who may have a different agenda. I know there are certain politicians, police crime commissioners and the political side of things is a driving factor, and sometimes you have to not give them a kicking but bring them back down to earth, and give it a bit of reality and balance, and I enjoy that. It's quite right, because otherwise who else is going to do it? (0194).

These protest voices, while wanting to reach the very people with the authority to 'do something', also wanted to reach an audience outside police itself with which to share their concerns. This was a key difference from official police Twitter practice of reaching a public in regard to operational police needs. For interviewees, it also reiterated key differences and improvements on using Facebook.

> It almost provided something for which there was no outlet otherwise it would have been covert meetings in darkened basements somewhere. That's how it felt a bit of the time. Facebook I guess you were yourself, sending pics of the family etc. Twitter allowed you, at least in my initial case, to hide behind this mask of anonymity not because I wanted to do anything sinister with it, but it meant I could actually explore it. So I don't know there was anything else out there except sitting with your colleagues moaning but (with that) you wonder is this localised, is this confined to this (particular) police station at this time of the morning? I think it became what it became because of what it was. Twitter allowed that to develop rather than otherwise it would have just been people moaning in police cars at 4am just generally bitching (0210).

And again, this includes reaching outside the isolation of a police-only community to share concerns. In using Twitter to connect with those outside this community, such individuals were expanding their network and, even if unaware at the time, laying the ground for providing a potential wider audience for any future protest:

> My motivation on Twitter is to stimulate debate, provide a counterbalance. The motivation is that it goes beyond a policing audience. If I was just talking to cops it would be pointless 'cos we all know it... if I can articulate it so someone in the public understands it that's good for me. I'd hate it if I was just talking to police officers. I like it when someone picks up out there and says, 'that's great, understand it now'. (0210)

From the findings in this section, I have derived a model to show the variety and often combined motivations of those forming the community of individual police Twitter users, building to the potential of protest activity (*Figure 4*). The detail, and participants' examples, in this chapter's ensuing sections also speak to parts of the model.
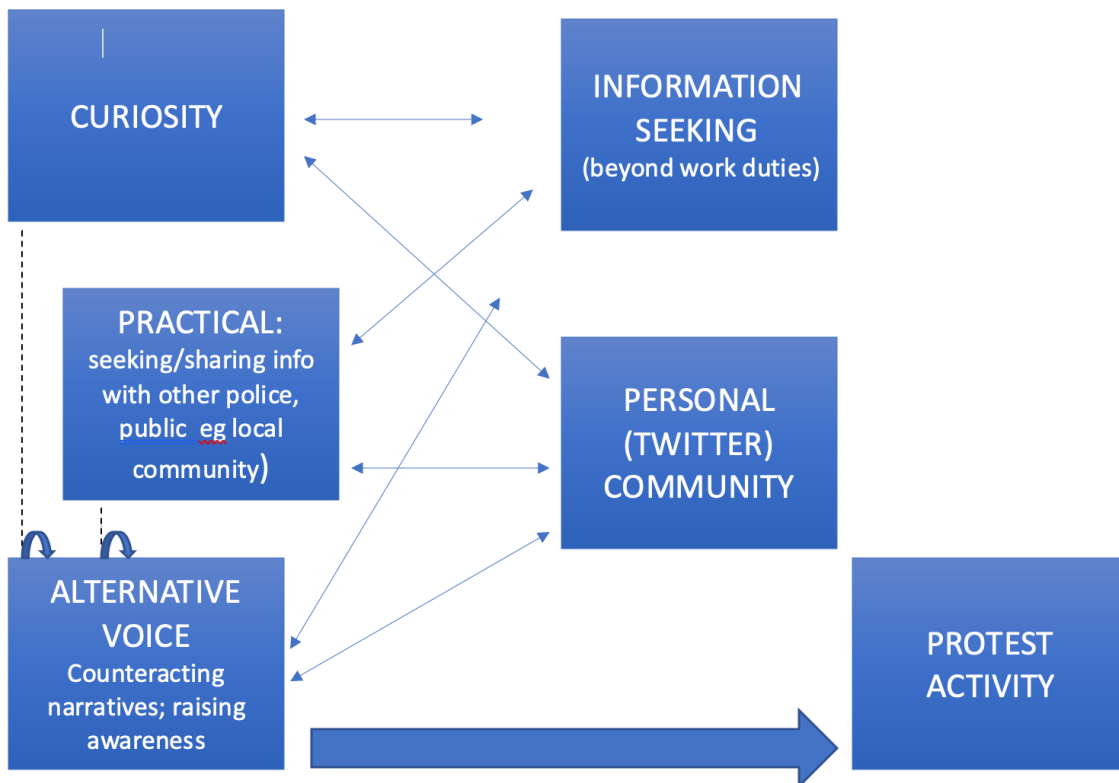
Figure 4. Motivations for unofficial police Twitter use

The primary, ie initial, motivations are contained in the left hand boxes, namely: those joining for mere *curiosity*, such as exploring Twitter; those for *practical* reasons, that is, non-political; or non-controversial *information seeking* and/or sharing in relation to aspects of work duties, by communicating with other officers, often elsewhere, or relevant public communities (including *personal (Twitter) community*) which could include, for example, connection with innovative users of social media, sharing/seeking of useful/interesting/entertaining information; and those seeing an opportunity to use the platform to correct or put their side, ie offer the *alternative voice*. These first three categories may of course overlap among individuals' initial motivations and those in all three may develop into use of one or more of the central boxes. These represent nuanced categories: the engagement with individuals' *personal (Twitter) community,* as both it and the ties within it develop, becomes a strong motivation in itself. The *information seeking (not work duties related)* box differs from *practical* in that it is likely to include issues centering on political and police organisation decisions – while falling short of *protest activity*, so safer. Otherwise, the arrows indicate potential further development of individuals' use, ie users in the initial categories may or may not use Twitter for the purposes of either of the central categories, or may move ultimately, via the broken line arrows, to *alternative voice* and then onto *protest activity*.

While emotions are briefly discussed in this category, these are examined in depth in other sections of this chapter.

6.2 Benefits of Twitter's horizontal communication

Similar to some of the interview extracts above, interviewees reported many and varied benefits they found using Twitter. These extracts provide evidence of firsthand experience of characteristics highlighted by scholars, particularly when it comes to community building. Especially noted was that it allowed users to make connections with others that might not have been made otherwise (Williams et al. 2013; Boyd et al. 2007; deBeer 2008) and its "cross-cutting" horizontal communications form working as "transmission belts" (Segerberg and Bennett 2011, pp.201-202) also led to a certain levelling of status within the force, a useful novelty for many interviewees suddenly able to 'chat' with force leadership and others. There is no doubt for many they felt part of a wider community, on lines with Milan's "politics of visibility" as it related to social media (2015). Some members of this community existed for them only in the virtual space, and what Grudz describes as both real, because participants interact, and imagined, because they have a "sense of community, of interpersonal commitment" (2011, p.20).

> I don't say where I am, but people don't care where I am, I'm a police officer, Twitter has the ability to transcend that patch. I could help someone in north part of Scotland who just happens to know I'm a police officer and happens to come to me for advice. It's removed those barriers... and what you tend to find with (traditional) town hall-style meetings is the same people turned up, followers never increased. I think that's great, and it's internationally as well. Lots of US cops make contact about our neighbourhood-policing concept of talking to people (0210).

As well as international connections, easily and quickly made, the form and function of Twitter and the way people tended to 'be' on it, was shown to have opened up and somewhat levelled the hierarchy of internal and inter-force police communication:

> It gives you the opportunity to speak one to one with chief officers, with policy makers – when they engage. Whereas normally I'm one of 120,000 people, in terms of it's just another face on the ground who wouldn't normally have that access to your chief constable, your PCC, the policing minister. Twitter tends to be them and more personal, more conversational – if they choose to accept it, it gives them the opportunity to see what people are thinking. Because normally, with very senior people there's a filter below them: people who don't want the bosses to know what's going on because it might suggest that they haven't done a good job, so they filter all the bad news. Twitter gets rid of that filter if a chief officer decides to use it that way (0198).

Re-connecting with local community was also important to many, who used Twitter for this and, like their other activities on the platform, ahead of any police force management guidelines or policy on social media:

> I think we were kind of breaking new ground. It just sort of snowballed. People start asking questions about 'what happened tonight?', 'what was that incident the other day?' or 'why was a police officer walking down my street when I haven't seen one for three years?' because I was quite open and chatty with people. I'd made a conscious effort to speak to people (on Twitter) in a way that they would understand, keep the gobbledygook and police speak out of it, as I'm a member of the public as well as a police officer. At that time, there was no policy about how to engage with people, as the bosses were two or three years behind. We were kind of given free rein with what we wanted to do, with the proviso, obviously don't offend, shock, reveal anything that is going to compromise an operation (0196).

This extract also reiterates a natural intuition/ability by many successful police users to communicate with 'normal' human language to connect with people and again, in a way seen as 'talking' to and with them, and in using Twitter, being ahead of 'the bosses', as the next participant highlights:

> But the ground swell has come from below – for me the growth of Twitter across the country has been from the ground swell of lower ranking officers getting to grips with it, pushing it forward to the point where the forces can no longer ignore it because they are getting left behind. Officers are embarrassing them because they are showing them up. We're communicating with our public and what are you doing? (0197).

There were many personal examples of serendipitous connections and opportunities, with participants highlighting this as an effect of Twitter use, reinforcing findings that it allows users to make connections with others that might not have been made otherwise (Williams et al. 2013; Boyd et al. 2007; deBeer 2008). Some have resulted in personal advancement such as in education:

> I follow randomly, a (–) professor from (overseas) and he tweeted out a talk on (–) analytics from (–) at Google, and I would never have found that, short of sitting in that room at Google, which is clearly never going to happen. So without Twitter, the exposure to that learning just wouldn't happen so it's almost like my learning bin. This is the beauty of Twitter for me, and connecting with such others is quite difficult. I just couldn't do it without Twitter, and it is the sharing of the view that creates a connection (0206).

Others found developmental opportunities with the key aspect being the human, personal connection and benefits:

> I was starting to get offers for stuff... speaking, an article, fly to the US etc. It would be really nice if I could do it as myself under my own name. But I've developed a number of really good friendships as a result of it professionally and personally. It's allowed me

access to a university degree I am doing, something I was never ever going to do; to speak at things I never thought possible. It's opened up a number of avenues personally, professionally and friendship wise that I would not have had before (0209).

I've been able to increase my professional network through Twitter, so people who are quite influential, I've now been able to speak to face-to-face and one to one on the telephone (0198).

..but we ended up having a really long conversation on DM about both having suffered PTSD as a result of trauma experienced on the job. That just wouldn't have happened without it. I just would not have made that connection or had that conversation (0206).

These examples also extend the benefits of Twitter public space for police users beyond the Hesketh and Williams 2017 concept of it as police 'virtual canteen'. They also indicate the strengthening of ties within the individuals' communities, which may also lend strength to any protest activity that individual participates in. Interestingly, at this stage, there is a contrast with studied examples where the weak public of a movement or counterpublic seeks strategically as a whole to recruit support from strong publics. Some of these interview extracts (the second, speaking of reaching policy makers, and the final two) highlight just some of the individuals' actions and results which can lead to similar support effects for the community of which they are part.

6.3 Leadership and organisation, and the affordances of Twitter

Overall, interviewees' perceptions of at least the overall Twitter protest, and some of the online hashtag campaigns, was that there either was no leadership or organisation, or, if at all, it was minimal and non-formal. A sense of spontaneity is conveyed by some responses, as well as observing how any various tweet or hashtag seemed to "almost take a life of its own". Elsewhere reference is made to "the group" but alongside a seemingly inherent sense of individual responsibility about anything one might tweet. While supporting Melucci's description of a processual development in social movements (1995), these responses also gel with Bennett and Segerberg's connective action theory (2014), but can reflect too later adaptations of collective theory by Kavada (2015) and others. They also support Gerbaudo's (2014) argument that technological platforms enable interpersonal networks with "resulting actions that can resemble collective action yet without the same role played by formal organisations or transforming social identifications". This part of the analysis speaks to RQ2 rather than RQ3.

Interviewees spoke of a sense of spontaneity, while starting to identify with a group

beyond 'police family':

> I think there was a sense of, someone came up with the idea and this happens on Twitter, when anything goes viral I suppose. It suddenly almost takes on a life of its own, so the individual might even feel a little bit left behind by what they've created, because it becomes very quickly a group movement, which I suppose is the point, because if it's not a group movement it's not going to be as effective at changing views or policy (0198).

> There was no hierarchy, no 'this is a group, this is a person in charge'. No, no – it was entirely spontaneous (210).

There was more evidence, through the interviews, of informal organisation when an initial protest hashtag #antiwinsornetwork, used in protest at the HMIC Tom Winsor appointment and reform driving, was 'replaced' by policing for the public #PFTP:

> We then dropped that and changed it to PFTP – Policing for the Public because it was deemed to be somewhat controversial, playing the man and not the ball type thing so we moved away from that (0199).

This originated, like its predecessor, through the individual protesting tweeters, and not through the Police Federation organisation:

> It was, yeah, nothing to do with federation at all. There were some federation representatives who did (*use it*). What their motivation for that was I don't know, but we certainly had no official agreement with the federation in any way shape or form (0199).

The response to the PTFP hashtag indicated the viral reach through the platform to like-minded individuals, whether police or not:

> I was very surprised (at how well it worked on Twitter); it was almost like the group just grew exponentially. The more police users came on the more we found them coming in to the group and the more we found them helping to spread the message and getting points across to other people, even people not in the policing network, who were shooting up trying to understand what we were trying to do and they were, and you never take a RT as an endorsement of your tweet, but anyone willing to do that, more often than not, is in agreement with what you're saying. It was good to see that on a platform that you could make some progress and enlighten some people as to what was coming. Certainly partnership organisations and some people in the criminal justice system who knew it (*reforms, cuts*) was going to have an impact (on them) as well and had the foresight to see that coming, but in addition to that some people who had no connection who were getting involved (0199).

The same interviewee clearly felt there was not any leadership per se, and that development protest was rather more homogenous and spontaneous. Nevertheless, even while stressing the non-formal group nature, they indicated some informal, ad-hoc organisation took place for some hashtag campaigns:

I think homogenous, definitely, some of us will come out with blindingly good tweets from time to time and we go, yeah that's what we all think and what we all feel, which is great and we RT the hell out of it or whatever else. But we are all collectively responsible and this is what came out when we became the PFTP. We were all jointly responsible for maintaining credibility of the group albeit the group has no boundaries as such there's no limited membership or anything of that nature, but we had to be all singing from the same hymn sheet if we wanted to carry the message through. So there's no leadership, there's just a few prominent tweeters, I would suggest, because they have large followings and so I would imagine there are some in the group who look to those individuals to do something and then they'll follow on the back of it, because a lot of people know what they're thinking and know what they want to say. They just don't know how to say it on Twitter or in 140 characters. Some of the people are very articulate and can do it and that's that, but there's no leadership or hierarchy as such (0199).

They also showed indications of the solidarity and trust found in networked publics who can express themselves individually and collaboratively (Papacharissi 2015):

But there is a sense of obligation to each other to not ruin what we've achieved and that then tempers what you tweet, how you tweet, what hashtag you put with it. We've all got our own personal agendas with policing and what we should be doing and how to inform and educate the public. We all have our own ideas about certain issues but when it comes to core issues we don't want to upset people (0199).

The mention of the 'few prominent tweeters' is the closest it may get to anyone approximating a 'digital vanguard' as identified by Gerbaudo (2017), but is clearly very loose, according to this active participant. Spontaneous was again the description of the hashtag campaign (rather than a protest, though set amid the reform turmoil) #coverforGMP. This was initially an idea to cover for Manchester officers to attend the 2012 funerals of their two murdered colleagues, but ultimately became a campaign for many to travel there to support in attendance. For some in this Twitter community, it was the first time they cautiously met up with fellow officers they had previously only known through Twitter, and were able to put a face to a pseudonym:

It just seemed like it happened, spontaneously, no one took up the batons. I think GMP (Greater Manchester Police) took on the organisation of it, and said thanks for the offer, we don't need you to come and cover our job, but if you want to come along and pay your respects you are more than welcome. I think the initial idea kind of got lost, as the person who said it to me was only certain GMP officers will be able to get time off, we can go up and cover for them so we can go. In theory it was a great idea. If you'd tried to put it in to practice it wouldn't have worked. But the result of it was, a lot of police officers went up there, most of them to pay their respects (0196)

These interview results, it can be argued, show that any organisation in the general protesting police Twittersphere was fairly haphazard so, as a basis for identifying evidence of leadership it is somewhat tenuous. For example, an individual may organise a snappy and pointed hashtag which could take off among the others. Others say there

were no leaders though there was some organisation at parts and mentions 'a few prominent tweeters" who were known for being particularly articulate (with the medium as much as the words). This does not quite reach Gerbaudo's 'digital vanguards' concept (2017) where it identifies them as account holders of an organisation, a role which none of this group officially had. Again, there is some recognition of a 'group' effect, with uses of the plural, though not always easy to clearly distinguish where possible between the 'we' as a protest group of individuals and the 'we' of police culture and police family in the work sense. In this aspect it ties in more closely with Segerberg and Bennett's conclusions in their OWS research (2011, 2014) of connective action, that protestors feel part of a collective action without formal leaders, disputing the need for central coordination or even a strong identity in a digitally networked action, and Shirky's complex collectivity, created by the individual and sharing nature of Twitter, bypassing formal leaders (2011). It should be noted, however, that Gerbaudo (2017) argues that even in OWS there were key account holders. Although Segerberg and Bennett maintain hybrid models are possible, enabled by an organisation but involving message spread by personal action frames and which could be considered for the Police Federation march, they consider these hybrids to still fit a connective action model. But, as previously discussed, both Milan (2015) and Kavada (2015) posit that even in these apparently decentralised movements, it can still be argued that they do, in fact, fall into the collective model.

In terms of Twitter as a protest platform, these accounts also support discussions in Chapter Two about its affordances which may benefit this including its speed, range and penetration of transmission, horizontal rather than hierarchical nature (Shirky 2011; Penney and Dadas 2014; and others); connections being made which otherwise might not have been (Williams et al. 2013; boyd et al. 2007; deBeer 2008; and others); and community building (Grudz et al. 2011; and others). These accounts show participants' beliefs or perceptions that Twitter as a protest platform had a positive effect in spreading messages and more, and importantly, in ways or to an extent which could not always be foreseen.

6.4 The dilemma of anonymity, fear and other emotions

Nearly all the interviewees were using, or had used, anonymous pseudonyms on Twitter. As some explain below, this didn't always mean their identities were

anonymous within their force's higher ranks. For some, they were encouraged and offered opportunities because of their social media practice. However, for others it was felt it had to be tightly guarded. As Chapter Five shows, and some of these interviews, many became quickly aware of real-life job repercussions of using social media either from personal experience through their own force's PSD (Professional Standards Department), or through stressful pressure from higher ranks. All became aware of repercussions for others through discussions on Twitter, associated blogs and of course news media coverage (the former often led to the latter covering it). Being punished, whether by future career damage, disciplined on paper, suspension or even potential job loss – with love of career, mortgages and families uppermost – were very real fears, and a reality for some. A self-likening to 'underground resistance fighters' and elsewhere some considering they had been labelled "organisational terrorists" by a police communications and PR head (Coleman 2012) highlight the point about repression made by Klandersmans (2004) and others when it comes to barriers against people joining social movements and/or taking collective action to protest. The self-descriptions, and those of others about them, along with the concern of consequences, share those of more traditional categories of political protestors and activists, rather than the also-traditional view of conservative British police officers:

> It was very hard – there was a lot of people taking a lot of risks, some of whom were exposed, some of whom who were subsequently disciplined for it. It was almost as if we were underground resistance fighters. We weren't to be exposed at any cost but if we did we knew there would be severe costs and consequences for doing it and that's why so many have maintained their anonymity since, because the job has a very long memory and never forgets. I'm thankfully out of that boat now. If I want to reveal myself and be confident that they can't touch me (0199).

> The anti-Winsor network was viewed by many as a renegade group of people who were labelled 'organisational terrorists' and all sorts of other things (0199).

> There was so much police nastiness shared in the police Twittersphere about officers being put on paper *[disciplined]*. There were people being disciplined for sharing some of the views and I can see some of the arguments for that, but I can't see all of it (0206).

> A lot of anonymous police accounts are because people, I think, feel scared, is probably the best word to use to express their honest held beliefs. Because if they say things about just how hard-pressed things are and perhaps issues around morale or operation issues they will get themselves in trouble (0190).

At the same time, they refer to a need to speak out and connect with others, including making the public aware, about what they perceived as serious problems both current and in proposed changes, which they believed were not being addressed by senior officers or sufficiently enough by the federation. These concerns overrode personal

concerns, and there is a sense anonymity was forced upon them for these reasons:

> The national overall response to cops using social media was particularly led by a sort of big hammer that smashed down and crushed anything, so being anonymous was sort of the obvious thing to do. I was quite clear from the outset that I wasn't here to jeopardise my career or my mortgage or my home and family, but I just want to give an insight in to this world that people don't generally see or have any knowledge of (0197).

That interviewee clearly highlights early awareness of the personal risks involved and the examples in this section express clearly the reality and how protesting police could be considered 'constrained'.

> With other likeminded people there were important issues coming through with the policing world, which ordinarily you wouldn't be able to talk about hence the anonymous account and hence the ability to tell people things that you wouldn't be able to tell them from an official capacity. In reality, all we wanted to do was bring what was happening to the fore in people's minds, because senior officers weren't going to discuss it in a million years. They weren't going to discuss the realities about what was happening. I mean, we saw what was coming and where we are now. We saw that years ago. Unfortunately when we looked to our senior leaders there was no leadership and they kind of forced us into the situation of doing what we did really (0199).

Others also chose anonymity simply because they felt they otherwise weren't allowed to

have any presence on Twitter:

> I'd been lurking on Twitter for some time but under a very private account and I asked internally if I could have a public facing account and I was refused. I'm a militant so I persisted for months, ended up in meetings (with different high-up bosses) about it because they had a really strict policy that basically said no. It got to a point where corporate comms had such a tight control over the use of Twitter and Facebook and other social media that I knew that even if I did get permission I wouldn't have the freedom that I wanted to do what I wanted with the social media. So I set up a pseudo or anonymous account (0206).

Some were semi-anonymous, in that a supportive boss or bosses knew who they were:

> As my organisation got to know who I was, they were happy for me to be who I was, and said you're not saying anything out of turn. I think they quite liked the advantage of knowing I was there, but I wasn't immediately attributable to them, so they had a get out clause if I did something ridiculous (0197).

and supported them when news media requested interviews via their anonymous

account:

> He said, you're absolutely right there with it all, I've got no qualms about it whatsoever, go ahead and do it (1097).

But, in the overall ad hoc approach from police management (Chapter Two), which

itself added to a sense of risk and fear, some found their own bosses unsupportive (or

varying between different bosses) while yet being sought for their input from other forces or branches of the organisation, government departments or conference organisers.

> I was encouraged by another force's [*high ranking boss*] to disclose to my boss who I was on Twitter. He thought he would be supportive. As it turned out they weren't, but by that point the word was out and I was being invited to do stuff (0210).

In several cases, demand to 'do stuff', including conference speaking or committee co-opting on the nature of their Twitter 'work', made it impossible to stay anonymous, within the police at least. This proved to be a double-edged sword with a possibility of specific influence against a freedom, albeit curtailed:

> I was protected by that (anonymity).... when nobody knew who I was I could say what I wanted albeit I've always tried to stay on right side of line and ethics⋯ but when I look back at some of the blogs I was writing which I've taken off line .. I would never post those now. They went up, they were seen, but I took them down because they were quite political. I was able to do that behind anonymity. But not when my identity revealed it to an extent and then it became more widely known. That by then they could find you if they want you (0210).

This became true for some interviewees, as shown in section 6.2.1. Some never felt truly anonymous but still felt the effort to be so enabled some freedom. This participant explains in detail their decisions and concerns of their personal journey through the minefield:

> I think, I've become much wiser, about the platform over the years. Tentatively, very slowly but surely, over the years, I have stepped out of the anonymity. Someone said to me very early on: 'you can't be anonymous forever, you'll have to eventually come out, you'll have to there's just no two ways about it'. And I thought, no I'll be anonymous forever if I like. But in reality, you're not anonymous at all, if people want to find out, I knew that if I did something completely ridiculous, that the knock on the door would be a couple of hours away, because they'd soon find out who I was and someone would say, 'I know who he is and he works there' boom, finish! So, it's more like a very thin veil as opposed to real true anonymity, not going through your browsers, not doing anything really underhand, just sort of hiding behind a different name and a non-generic email address, which is not really the height of cyber security really. But it was just that little barrier that was enough to sort of give you that little bit of security that was enough to enable you to speak that little bit openly about what you saw and got to deal with (0197).

Those who were in a position or had to give up anonymity also found a positive:

> When you're truly anon it gives you the ability to say what you want but it's nice to be able to stand up and say, I stand by what I say. I like to stimulate debate but don't see need to be caustic. I've tried to have sensible discussion and debate, tried to avoid the ad hominem or go for the throat (0210).

Clearly fear and concern was an overriding emotion for many participants, and

obviously this can operate as a barrier to participation in a protest or social movement (Klandersmans 2004). It is likely to be a contributing factor in why people drop out of a movement (Goodwin 2004). But also present are the factors for why "others remain". These may include having enough anger, sense of injustice or lack of fairness, which can overcome the fear, or, as Gerbaudo argues be transformed into positive emotion of enthusiasm and "collective political passions informed by hope" (2012). Interview extracts here and throughout also show a sense of solidarity and mutual trust with others in their Twitter communities, which Papacharissi and others hold can bond and sustain a networked public (2015).

6.4.1 Fear, repression and repercussions

This section explores the views of those directly affected by repression or repercussion, with details of first-hand experience and effects upon those involved. As discussed in Chapter Five, lack of a national police policy on social media use resulted in an ad hoc approach across not only forces but even with senior officers differing within forces as to approval or disapproval. And each force's PSD varied too. What was acceptable, even applauded, as a Twitter style or tweet in one force could bring punishment in another, particularly during the early days of individual officers using Twitter, and especially if senior officers viewed such a public communication tool with suspicion and little personal knowledge. One disciplinary investigating member was unaware of the Twitter platform itself, which was the cause of the disciplinary, and asked for it to be explained (personal conversation). The action taken was described as 'Draconian' and 'using a sledgehammer to crack a nut'. (Some senior officers spoke out against this approach at the time and participants have noticed some relaxation with the passage of time). Some felt in their case that warnings or punishments were clearly an attempt to retain control with Twitter communication perceived as a threat. Others who thought they were anonymous discovered they were not when it came to PSD investigations, while yet others were concerned enough to tighten anonymity. (Among the latter were some who wanted to give an interview for this research but still worried about a possible unforeseen risk).

> *[Twitter]* is communication and that is essentially what we spend all our time in the job doing, communicating with people one way or another. You learn that skill from the day you start to the day you leave. The thing is, when you do that, there'll still be local variations on what they want you to do because it's purely advisory. There's nothing to say this is what you will do, end of, and it's the same with certain elements of the police

regulations. They're open to interpretation because it allows discretion by senior management teams to move within the regulations provided they do so lawfully (0199).

An interviewee who was suspended explains further:

> It's always been difficult with police officers anyway, because there's a massive cross over into our personal lives. Where the line is drawn on showing a sense of humour, who's the arbiter of what is and isn't funny? Who's the arbiter of what is and isn't acceptable? Because all we've really got is the Public Order Act and if something isn't a criminal offence, does it then automatically become ok, or are there still shades of not ok, which is where I fell into. So if your chief officer group or your professional standards department have a different view of social media than you it's really easy to fall foul and find yourself in serious misconduct (0198).

As shown in Chapter Five, punitive action was highlighted by concerned fellow Twitter users on the medium, and sometimes in the news media. Concern was heightened and for good reason. Having any 'aggro' from bosses is concerning to most in a hierarchical organisation. For police, as Waddington states, there is an all-present fear of improper behaviour (1999). Being formally investigated, let al.one suspended, was a traumatic experience, not least due to the nature of their role, responsibilities and culture of pride and professionalism. A suspended officer explained that in some cases one is immediately cut off from not only their work but their colleagues, who are told not to speak with them, and thus their 'police family', while worrying what will happen.

> It went to an investigation. My biggest fear was that it was going to be gross misconduct, which I could be sacked for. You can imagine what pressure that put my family and me under. I couldn't discuss anything during the investigation. I suspended my Twitter account. I was back to my normal role, which had financial implications and having the investigation over my head as well. Until it was decided it was only misconduct, which meant I could only get a final written warning (0196).

The tweet which triggered this (and has been seen by this researcher) was non-political, non-humorous (ie, not a joke in debatable taste) and not breaching operational or police safety. Rather it was a proposal of a fellow officer's idea, though one which would normally be expected to come from, or be approved by, the most senior ranks. That force reviewed its social media policy during the investigation into the interviewee.

> I stand to be corrected, but I think everything I did was in the bounds of the now code of ethics and in the bounds of regulations. I pushed the policy I admit that, but nothing gets changed if nothing gets done (0196).

Other's experienced pressure such as their bosses' disapproval of officers using the platform:

> A *[high ranking]* had said to me, 'get off Twitter, you'll end up on paper'. I was warned

straight away and I went to the fed and said 'look, this is the content, this is what I'm doing, it's non-controversial, it's fact-based, it's researched. I'm not talking about (force) deployment. I'm not talking about how many staff we've got out. I'm not talking about how hard done by we are. I'm just talking about genuine comment and it's informed comment. And the fed said, you have sound legal backing. If it comes to the point where you are put on paper or they try, keep emphasising, this is a private account, it's not a police account (0206).

So that went to an internal local investigation, which was triggered by the same person (high ranking officer who had taken issue with previous popular tweets). It was investigated and no case to answer, so I carried on (0196).

Some found some of the pressuring arguments nonsensical:

One said the (photo) I'd put out was a threat to security, but I pointed out *[the state organisation concerned]* had its own YouTube videos up showing all and far more (0198).

I never said I was a *{particular force]* cop. They said, well you put yourself at risk of terrorism and I was like, oh come on, what a stupid argument. We've got Neighbourhood Policing websites that have got our names and pictures, all of them for decades. Me having a Twitter account is not going to put me at any more risk (0206).

But this interviewee also found support from another high-ranking boss:

He had read one of my blogs. He contacted me. He said, keep going, you're trailblazing. As long as you continue along the same lines as you're doing now and don't do anything stupid, then you're setting a really good example for other people using social media (0206).

Another was questioned about his Twitter use, but again supported and given the go ahead. It could be argued that for officers, the ad hoc approach by the police organisation in general, even within forces, was a source of fear and worry when it came to operating on Twitter.

Interviewees shared their beliefs that some of the sledgehammer action was 'all about control' of communication, or regaining it by some high-ranking senior officers, and possibly for traditional hierarchical reasons, but questioned the logical basis for this given life and death decisions they were empowered to make.

I think there was a worry that there was a lack of control. People as individuals in lower ranks and the higher ranks had little control over it. Although policing is a hierarchical structure, the operational, split second, life-changing decisions are made at a very low level because you haven't got time to consult and we are trusted to do that. We are trusted to go to the scene of an incident and manage it and escalate it where necessary. Firearms officers are all PCs; they are all the lowest rank, yet they carry the capability of taking someone's life and they are entrusted with that decision, and the senior officers, if it's a planned operation, they'll get involved. But on a spontaneous operation you have the autonomy to draw your weapon and use it as you see fit. So they are giving that power to take someone's life, yet other police officers aren't even trusted to put a few words out on social media and yeah, a bit of a dichotomy there I think (0196).

But as it's developed, what I found was over the last couple of years on the policing front, lots of police officers who've got some really interesting things to say up and down the country feel very restricted in what they can and cannot say (0194).

Some officers often stopped tweeting after repercussions, and some permanently, though others decided to persist:

> (*Did you go off Twitter for a while?*)
> Yeah I did, but not for very long actually and that was part of me believing, rightly or wrongly that I'd been treated unjustly and wanting to kick back against it. Actually, I don't think I've done anything too wrong, so I don't think I should stop what I was doing, just moderate maybe (0198).

Again, a sense of injustice and ensuing emotion was key to continuing to participate.

6.5 Police as political protestors online and offline, and collectivity/connectivity

While Chapter Five covers various campaign case studies in some detail, using publicly available material, interviews have given a potentially deeper insight into the motivations, emotions and reasoning of officers who risked criticising government policy or actors in the political arena, or their decisions. Some of the extracts, but not all, refer to the buildup to the Police Federation-organised march, but also show the preceding views of the individuals. Arguably, because of the common focus for protest, it brings the online action closer in line to social movements, people driven to protest because they feel powerless and not listened to by those that have the power to make decisions which affect them in "the world of which they are a part" (Snow 2004) (also Gerbaudo 2012; and others). For some officers it was creatively treading the fine line that might mean a regulations breach:

> (*Re a specific tweet*) That could have been a disciplinary. I'd basically gone out nailed my colours to the political mast and said something anti-government... but for me it was always about attacking policy not people because I can critique a policy idea and make it look like I'm having a debate, but once it is in then it's difficult as then it IS policy (0210).

Twitter had made protest possible for the first time in such a direct way, and in an atypical way for police officers:

> The government was acting surprised by the fact we spoke at all. Typical, the police just stand there and take it. We're supposed to be apolitical, not supposed to have an opinion just do what were told but the fact there's now this vehicle through which the average bobby can have their say anonymous or otherwise, and discuss things with the public, sympathetic or otherwise. If these reforms had been introduced in the early 90s then we certainly wouldn't have seen anything like the reaction now because it would have been silenced, and it would not have been possible to motivate that many people to take to the streets as we did (0210).

There is a clear indication, albeit inherent, of campaigning and protesting online (and eventually on the streets) and with a sense of a collective identity, an awareness of

sharing what others were thinking, while still using 'we' and 'I', in very similar ways to many other social movements:

> The message was quite clear to everybody that we weren't happy with what was going on… It was about what we can see coming in the years ahead, what we can forecast and what we were trying to avoid but the media agenda at that time about pay and conditions rather than what we were actually there for. So you spend your time on Twitter then, correcting the media, correcting what the politicians are pumping out, because they are trying to influence the minds of the public on an issue we weren't campaigning or protesting about. We were actually campaigning about something else and we didn't want to get that message lost in all the noise, so that was part of my thinking on what I was doing at that point on Twitter (0199).

There was also recognition of the individual's actions becoming that of the group's:

> …the individual might even feel a little bit left behind by what they've created, because it becomes very quickly a group movement, which I suppose is the point, because if it's not a group movement it's not going to be as effective at changing views or policy (0198).

There was also a strong sense of officers trying to to do justice to what they saw as the neglected truth of protest by getting out their message to the general public to counteract the government's, and other, versions of the situation in the lead up to the protest march:

> I think the public needed to be made aware that this wasn't about us complaining that we are not being paid enough – that was one of the lowest priorities. The fact was that cuts would have an effect on front line policing, which have proved to be correct. That you wouldn't have the same police service you have now if these cuts went through. You as the public have voted this government in and you need to know what the government is doing on your mandate. The government isn't going to tell you what we think consequences are. It broadened the debate it brought it to more people's attention, and once they realised the police officers are taking their own time to do this, taking leave or using rest days, ie they aren't just downing tools and going on strike, we are just telling you what we think, it did get a lot of support (0196).

As shown in Chapter Five, these voices were picked up by national news media and interviews sought and given. One anonymous officer agreed to give a radio interview of the protesting police viewpoint, but nonetheless worried about 'crossing the line':

> I was very careful. I had a voiceover, and someone acted out my voice for me, because I was really still at that very nervous stage. But it was one of those opportunities not to be missed. I tried to make the point and steered it away from politics. I said it's not about the money, it's about the cuts and what you're doing to the service. It's about these men and women out here are trying their best to keep you safe and we are trying to tell you that we can't manage the workload and they're trying to cut us and say, yes you can and do more. So that was a sort of a practical argument, though it has political aspects and is politically driven (210).

Officers also explained how Twitter enabled the Police Federation to make effective use

of the platform in the lead up to the protest march, rather than relying on news media and contrast it with the non-engagement of government accounts:

> The government, the home office, the MPs put stuff out there. They broadcast they don't interact. But what Twitter allows the federation to do is to counter what's been said and present the evidence and send you a link and redirect you to something else. So the fact that the politicians or government department don't answer, because that's not what they're about, they just put the message out (0204).

Online protest had helped, as hoped by many, to connect with members of the public and gain support, often through engagement. Some of these online public also attended the physical protest in support of their online Twitter police contacts, which it could be argued exemplifies the nature of online social movements to enable apparent 'others' to be a part, albeit in a fluid and dynamic way as discussed by Segerberg and Bennett around unstructured online movements, when arguing their connectivity model (2012). As one police officer noted:

> The interesting thing about the social media aspect is that there were quite a lot of members of the public that wanted to join the march. There were quite a lot of people asking me, 'could we come on the coach with you' and I was saying 'it would be quite difficult to do that'. But there were people from Twitter who I knew came to London who did join us on the march, because people had been tweeting about the reasons why. It wasn't a march in relation to paying conditions; it was actually about what we were concerned about, which was how cuts would impact on the service that we were able to deliver to local people (0198).

Many were in no doubt where the main problem lay:

> But, ideology has no flexibility, it's a disaster and unfortunately they get blinkered and like the apocalypse horseman comment (*the 2012 tweet by Policy Exchange member Blair Gibbs referencing himself and others as 'Four Horsemen of the Police Reform Apocalypse', see Chapter Five*) that showed to me and to everyone else that they're (*government ministers, people at Home Office and Policy Exchange*) unwilling to negotiate and unwilling to listen. I know certain officers trying to negotiate with the Home Office and everything else and not interested, they've got their ideology without flexibility and they are steam rolling ahead with it and that's very political and that to me is wrong. Whoever is paying the highest dollar you get put out what you want to hear and that's a disaster (0194).

Although the online protests and march did not stop the disputed changes, there was a sense that nevertheless something had been achieved, and via the Twitter platform particularly, in terms of communication at least:

> I was there –huge turnout. It achieved nothing, but we didn't think it could. It was the politest booing I've ever heard as we marched past Marshall St. But it was an amazing spectacle. I think all of us knew it wouldn't achieve anything but for the police to do that in the absence of us being able to strike was significant (0210).
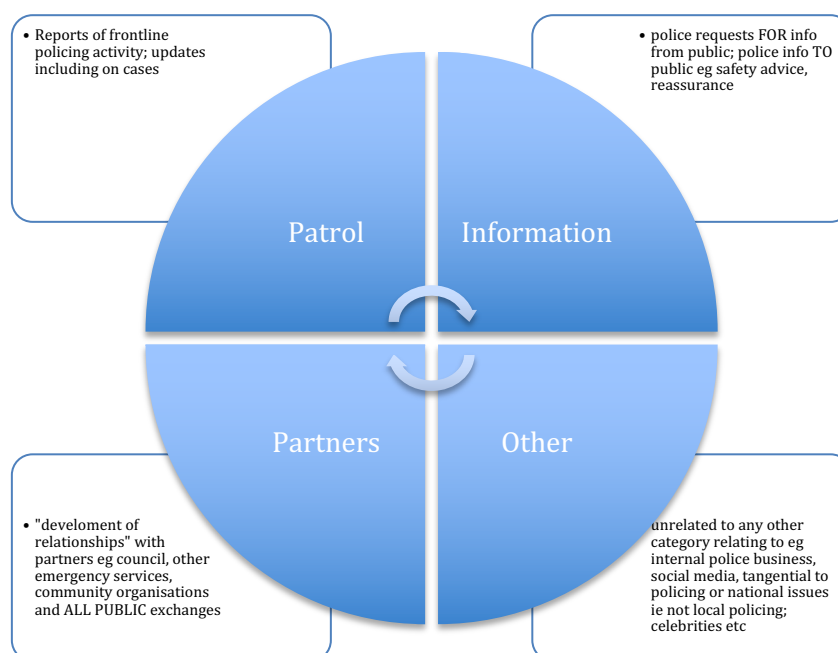
> From a policing perspective, we certainly lost the battle with Winsor because there was a mission there, it was never going to be deviated from. Winsor got his way in the end and nothing we could say on Twitter was ever going to stop it, but did we then maybe create another viewpoint for the public about what Windsor was doing and what he was likely to achieve? And in that regard we could say, well yeah ok, Twitter has been quite successful (0197).

The descriptions, especially when taking into account members of the public connecting with the protest via Twitter, something not researched per se, also chime with earlier social movement theory outlining like della Porta and Dianni's "networks of interaction between different actors which may either include formal organisations or not, depending on shifting circumstances"(1999).

6.6 Towards a new typology of police Twitter practice.

Crump's original development of a typology of official police Twitter practice can be usefully represented as a schematic diagram, which I have created to better show comparisons of this thesis' findings and analysis (*Figure 5*). Crump, in his seminal 2011 study of police Twitter activity, found four categories, *Patrol, Information, Partners* and *Other*, containing 16 sub-categories.

I contend that the diagram, while representing the official Twitter activity he was researching, does not represent the wider police Twittersphere at the time, nor any sense of protest, even from the purely official accounts he examined:

Patrol

Information

Partners

Other

- Reports of frontline policing activity; updates including on cases

- police requests FOR info from public; police info TO public eg safety advice, reassurance

- "develoment of relationships" with partners eg council, other emergency services, community organisations and ALL PUBLIC exchanges

unrelated to any other category relating to eg internal police business, social media, tangential to policing or national issues ie not local policing; celebrities etc

Figure 5. My schematic diagram of Crump's original typology of official police Twitter activity

In keeping with the 'official' focus, the three main categories are clearly angled to police business with anything else grouped into *other*. Nearly all non-work related categories in this chapter's first model *Figure 4* would have to fall into this category, but are barely or not at all covered by Crump's subcategories in *other* which were as follows:

> They were either about supporting issues (internal police business, whether official or informal) or about the mechanics of social networking, or were about matters relating only tangentially to the business of policing (eg, television programs, local celebrities, or national events which did not engage the local police) (Crump 2011, pp.3-5).

However, dealing with even those that are covered by this, from this thesis' findings, general conversation, including humour/banter, is an important human part of engaging and connecting with other Twitter users, and supported by the literature, whether on affective emotions (Jasper 1998; Godwin et al. 2004; Gerbaudo 2014, 2016) or simply the human connection that can arise so that people feel part of a community (Grudz

2011; Klandersmans 2004), regardless of whether that is to engage in any form of social movement.

Thus I propose another typology: Official and Unofficial Police Twitter activity as represented in a schematic diagram (*Figure 6*). It incorporates the variation in Crump's categories as well as different elements found. A key difference in my organisation of these is that it does not separate out any communication exchanges which Crump grouped into this *other* category, but includes these within the existing categories. I contend that these exchanges are as important as those on 'serious business' when it comes to facilitating connections, engagement, community and networks.
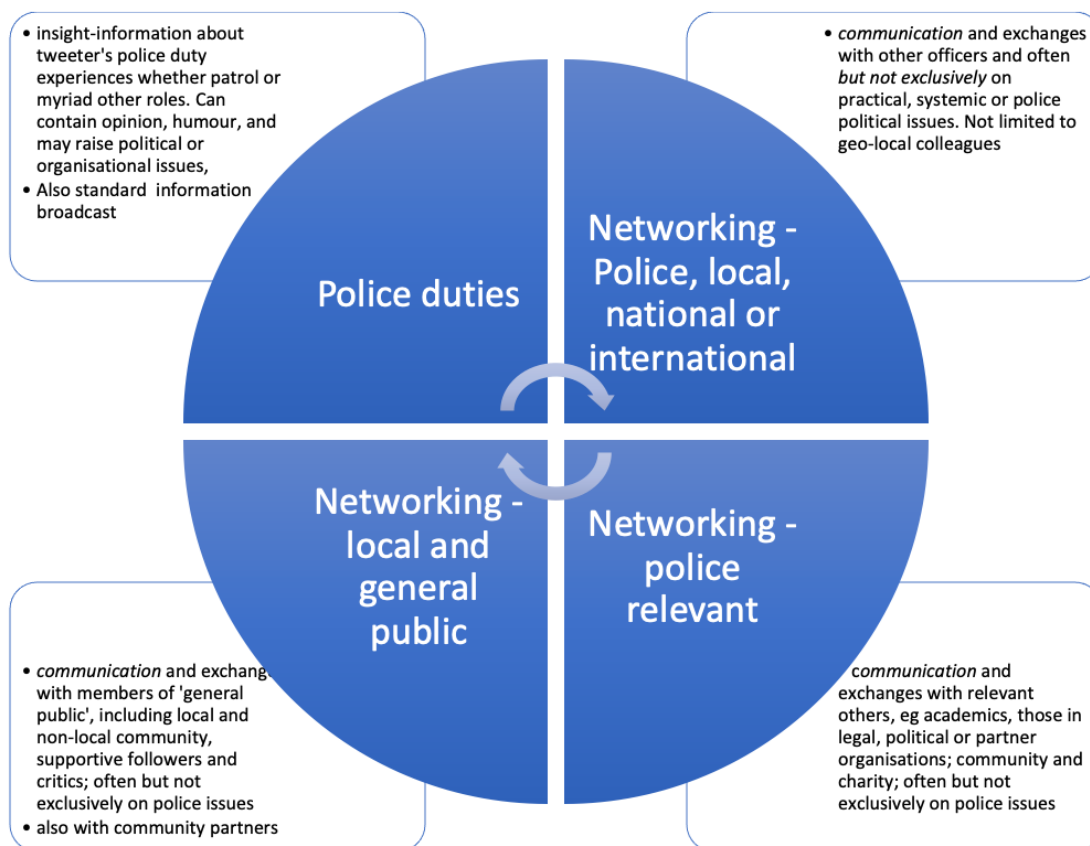
Figure 6. Typology of official and non-official Police Twitter activity

Equally, it is also important to note that this figure does not separate out protest activity (shown in *Figure 4*) but shows how this can arise naturally in each of the model categories, ie it is present in each. It also does not distinguish anon from non-anon Twitter users. For while descriptions of exchanges such as "*may raise political or organisational issues*" in the Police Duties category may be assumed to likely arise from an anon user, the reality is that these also come from a non-anon user, as found in

examples shown in Chapter Five, such as James Patrick, or Nick Manning. Thus this typology aims to encompass an element of the reality surrounding observed real human behaviour in the police Twittersphere examined. Also in this new typology, "networking", as a human communication behaviour, is shown as a key element of the categories, rather than relegated to one category, or an emphasis placed on the obtaining or 'broadcasting' of information.

These factors are also notably dissimilar to Crump's typology which focused on serious/official police business tweets and may be arguably relevant to the aims of his study at the time. But I contend it is helpful not to overlook the large unofficial police Twitter contingent whose public activity would also affect the public's perception of enagaging with the police and awareness of police matters. Likewise, this applies to the "other" tweets of even officially-recognised officer accounts. Thus my typology, which includes them, and their communications, may be more useful to scholars more widely interested in what the police were doing on Twitter.

6.7 Summary

This chapter sheds light on important aspects of police protestors, in different forms, and in terms of social media protest movements.

By hearing from the people at the ground level of initial motivations and how these may have changed, it captures part of what might be the evolution to a group or collective identity. We get a glimpse into how a potential movement may start at the individual level as a development begins to the 'we' of a protest, a contribution to Melucci's point about how social actors come together to form a collectivity and recognise themselves as part of it (1995), when they do, and indeed show it as a dynamic process, rather than a thing, shaped by the actors themselves. Here we can also see the development of a protest collectivity, the emergence of collective action from individuals which is distinct from the already existing 'we' of their vocation and 'police family' culture. In terms also of a dynamic process, this chapter shows the motivations not as static things but shows the reasoning and development of them at a human level, and even a micro level of sorts.

It reinforces the motivations in common with other types of social movements, and counterpublics, as well as key similarities with the concept of weak publics. Here people – to whom such protest is not normally a consideration – felt driven to do so because they feel powerless and not listened to by those that have the power to make decisions which affect them (Snow 2004; Gerbaudo 2012; Fraser 1990; and others).

There is a contradiction with some findings in Chapter Five, regarding evidence for leadership and organisation. Here it is interesting to note the perceptions of participants that there was no leadership or organisation that they would describe as such, although accounts of decisions made, especially using the 'we' pronoun, indicate some organisation at various points. This alludes perhaps more to the soft but complicated form of leadership which social media facilitates, as discussed by Gerbaudo (2012). There also appears to be a self-understanding of a distinct group and very much with its own agency, as highlighted by Kavada (2015). However, the participants also highlight a spontaneous nature to their online protests and a perception that they seemed to develop "a life of their own", in a sense crediting the platform or the affordances of Twitter with the progress of different campaigns' journeys. None of these contradict what is already understood about the nature of Twitter communication but it is important to hear how those using it experience it. They explain how someone who is articulate with tweets, or someone else who comes up with a good idea, are all listened to and as such that message may be developed, and is likely to get promoted through the platform, but they clearly see no particular leader or leaders, rather some that have their respect – and this too varies among the group. These tend to chime with Segerberg and Bennett's connective model but also too with Gerbaudo's points around platforms enabling interpersonal networks that resemble collective action without the traditional role played by organisations in social movements, but which nevertheless does not refute collective action. The previous chapter gave more evidence for Gerbaudo's vanguards of digital enthusiasm, but it is also possible to see here a hint of that. In terms of capturing the shared development of someone's 'good idea' there is a stronger link to an aspect of Milan's concept of cloud protesting where she discusses a "fundamental broker role of social media in building 'internalised or personalised ideas' as opposed to merely circulating them" (2015).

Some aspects of the consequences of protest, the risks taken, while shown in the preceding chapter are here given reflective human voice. They support discussions

about discouragement to participation unless so many take part that it emboldens people – or the extent of emotions that can override it. What was mostly shared was the 'rational' anger (Wahl-Jorgensen (2018) as discussed in Chapter Three), indignation and a sense of injustice at how what had been done 'to them" had been done, from reform conception to implementation. While individual views could vary around these, in terms of the funding cuts it was unanimous. Enthusiasm for campaigns and getting together is also shown in the extracts. It can even be argued that some show how these positive emotions were converted from that anger, as Gerbaudo describes in his discussion of emotional contagion and digital enthusiasm, whereby the negative emotions are "fused" into enthusiasm for the possibilities of hope and justice prevailing over an unjust system (2016).

In terms of police culture, as discussed in Chapter Three, the voices themselves, while showing some themes such as a sense of police vocational mission, as well as those of solidarity and trust in terms of their online activity, also show the individual variations within these, as well as very individual purpose and differing opinions from protest methods adopted to even some of the reform ideas in principle. Solidarity and trust are also evident and are themes found in social movements which Papacharissi identifies as bonding and sustaining a networked public (2015).

The findings contribute to the development of a new typology for police Twitter activity, which includes non-official and anonymous police Twitter protest activity, as well as reorganising categories and emphases.

Chapter 7: Conclusion

This thesis set out to examine police as protestors on social media prompted by observing such activity on Twitter. This activity – posts, discussions, connections and campaigns – came from what appeared to be a community or communities of anonymous police officers, as well as identified ones, and associated supporters, against government austerity cuts to police funding, at the same time as ongoing police reform.

This study sought to answer the following research questions, which were also discussed at relevant points throughout the thesis:

RQ1 What were the motivations for individual police officers to use Twitter outside formal police organisation structures?

RQ2 To what extent did their use engender expression of dissent and protest?

RQ3 What evidence was there of leadership and co-ordination?

RQ4 How did forms, practices and epistemologies of police officers' Twitter protest compare to previously analysed digital protest?

The answers it found, and discussed in detail further below, have enabled me to show the embryonic stage and development of a protest movement and define original characteristics of this protest activity, including that of **constrained protestors** acting in a **tactical online public space**. With this, and other findings, it contributes to a number of debates within the field of studies around protest movements. It also documents and analyses a neglected aspect of police use of Twitter, thus expanding knowledge of this sphere; defines and develops my typology of police protest Twitter and communication dynamics; and develops a broader typology of police Twitter activity.

To expand on the key conclusion findings:

Police as 'constrained protestors'

Police officers are naturally restricted in protest by the nature of their job role, legal requirements and restrictions, and police cultural tradition. Police officers who wish to

protest are further defined by my analysis as **constrained protestors**, who were using Twitter as an online tactical public space by means of its affordances, and their communication strategies, and dynamics therein. They used it strategically and creatively to run online campaigns, whether a tweetathon or just a hashtag, and were shown to have had success by various measurements. The online protest activity dovetailed with a legal but rare police protest march, that is, a form of offline physical protest. I contend that the online activity increased momentum for this event while still standing on its own merits as an online protest movement in a form of online public space. I hold that the police protest activity shares some key commonalities with the many protest movements and arguments in the literature. But it also showed unusual and interesting variations.

Tactical online public space

I differentiate it subtly from other scholars' descriptions of protest spaces, even those shown in authoritarian regimes as discussed in Chapter Three, where the culmination of online protests is often seen as being the mobilisation for a protest event in physical space. My differentiation is because this legal march was a very rare opportunity for these police to openly demonstrate or protest in a physical space, indeed the only one. Any offline protest is for this group, constrained by their very role, in a job which would be at risk if they spontaneously and thus illegally took to the streets. Their protest space is clearly identified as online in a public online space (notwithstanding the debates around its actual versus assumed public-ness) and although even there they are still constrained, Twitter's affordances, combined with their actions, allows them to create a **tactical online public space** for their protests. The case studies highlight key tactics such as the innovative use of hashtags for campaigns, and a tweetathon, but more are shown in the development of the online action, including motivational protest video creation, and adaptations of the affordances of Twitter. Thus, while offline protest action is so often seen as being boosted by online, here I contend that while it contributed to this, the march itself boosted the ongoing online protest, providing also its first images of 'traditional protest' from public and police tweeters alike.

This thesis also led to the development of a a **typology of police protest activity** as well as a **new typology for police activity on Twitter.** In examining Crump's typology of police Twitter practice (2011), the first to categorise police activity on Twitter, I created a schematic diagram for this while noting this typology does not include the

police Twitter activity at the time and which is part of that identified and examined by this thesis' research. Thus, I developed a new typology to represent the police protest activity and the communication dynamics involved, which also reflects some important key findings discussed below. I also finally developed a further model to more usefully represent *overall* police Twitter practice at this time.

These key findings will now be expanded upon in the following section, looking at the detail of answers found to the research questions, individually and as a whole.

7.1 Summary of research question answers/findings, and with implications for further research

RQ1 findings were answered mainly by interviews with the movement actors, but this was illuminated by elements found in the critical case studies and background, particularly through protest actors' voices via their posts or others' blogs. One of the key values of the research was in capturing what might show how individuals start to become, or feel a sense of, a 'we' in terms of collective action, particularly with regard to Melucci's theory of collective identity and his urging for studies to consider this (1995). A few interviews showed an embryonic protest identity, in wanting to put their view – an alternative voice – across to bypass and contradict the mainly governmental narratives appearing in news media on policing and police reform, a start of answering **RQ2**. This endeavour was not through using the social media platform to simply 'broadcast', but to reach out to and engage where possible with a wider public to show a human and first-hand experiential viewpoint, even just to "set the record straight". The majority, however, initially showed reasons which could be common to any individual joining Twitter, including making connections, whether work-related or more personal interests. Wanting to communicate, in a human sense as reflected by the use of the word 'talk', is the shared theme. Through initial shared policing interests there is evidence of an online community forming, as described by Grudz et al. (2011). This may have been boosted by sharing the 'cop culture' of the job or being part of the 'police family' but was not enough on its own. This analysis also shows that motivations developed or evolved in line with what was happening to their "world order of which they are a part" (Snow 2004). Commonalities around the police funding cuts and reforms began to

appear here, along with emotions such as indignation and 'rational' anger alongside a sense of injustice. These are key emotions highlighted in previous studies, and speak to the debates about the importance of emotions in researching protest movements. The tweets and posts among other data used in the case studies gave strong evidence of the extent of the protestors' dissent and expression, in answering **RQ2**, and also provided evidence of the emotional aspect, in the language used, as well as descriptions. Interviews allowed further exploration, giving the confirmation and strength of fine details of personal experience and reflection. The emotion of fear was also predominant, in terms of repercussions already experienced by some interviewees and the effect on others of the potential consequences. This thesis holds that in many cases this, along with anger, was also able to be directed or converted into the more positive emotion of enthusiasm for the possibility of change, as Gerbaudo describes the channelling of anger which can thus go on to propel a social movement (2016). This thesis, however, also highlights humour as an important element, particularly when it comes to engaging with the wider public on Twitter.

The fine detail obtained mainly through interview data, of engagement with others, and emotions conveyed, is also important in reinforcing aspects of counterpublics debates, including the strength of ties, and a sense of solidarity and trust.

All of these aspects were also important in helping to answer the other research questions. To further answer **RQ2**, the content of the Twitter posts shown in Chapter Five, along with some on Facebook or blogs, ultimately show clear dissent and protest, near-identical to expressional type of those seen in any respectable protest movement. They chime with notions of solidarity, fighting against perceived oppression and injustice, and engage and challenge, especially politically.

RQ3 findings also go some way to contribute to **RQ4** as the notion of leadership and organisation feeds into the debate about connective or collective action, and in turn differently identified movement types. **RQ3** findings came from investigating backgrounds of the case studies, and also the interviews, from protestors' viewpoints at least. This comparison showed up some contradictions or tensions when it came to defining the existence of, or strength of, any leadership. Certainly the individuals felt there was no leadership as such, and no hierarchy, and organisation was almost fluid and organic, and interviewees felt whether these 'took off' was nebulously down to the

nature of Twitter. That any campaign was seen as having "a life of its own" was a key perception. These participant views mirror some descriptions found by Penney and Dadas (2014), and Segerberg and Bennett (2011), in their research of online protest movements such as Occupy, and fits some aspects of latter scholars' connective action model. Certainly what was happening in this thesis' study chimed with Penney and Dadas' observations that the combination of Twitter form and function, and how its users operated it, meant "a rapid digital circulation of texts allows protestors to quickly build a geographically dispersed, networked counterpublic that can articulate a critique of power outside of the parameters of mainstream media" (2014).

However, the examination of the case studies clearly showed that there were different individuals at different times starting up or helping different campaigns and action. Gerbaudo's concepts around leadership and organisation in online movements, including "soft" versions, and the presence of digital vanguards (2016), helps to explain some of these apparent contradictions, while reinforcing his and others' point that collective identity is not redundant in 'new' online social media movements, and in fact still very much alive. Applying Gerbaudo's arguments allow for the element of leadership and organisation still being there in this protest activity, albeit as a loose version. It was seen in this research that it was also often fluid and temporal, even coming down to whoever had the time *at* the time, and enthusiasm. It was also found, however, that those who used Twitter communication articulately and deftly might well end up playing this loose role. But it was also found that whether campaigns took off, or not, was reliant on them engaging members of this loose collective, which in turn could be influenced by what was happening at the time. There was evidence that any planning was also loose, certainly not by structured committee and thus differing from traditional ideas of social movement. I find that it is both the people involved, ie the human agency, alongside the affordances of Twitter in terms of speed and spread of messages, that enabled campaigns to 'take off' and seem to have a life of their own. In this, Gerbaudo's identification of what he termed digital vanguards is relevant, though in my study, rather than his researched bigger protest movements' powerful Facebook admins or account holders, even gatekeepers, these were a much softer version, even including his notion of "activist tweeps". As he explains, the effect of social media can be to make leadership and the visibility of it more complex than in traditional movements. This thesis holds that this study is an example of that in terms of the online group and activity. This study also showed the police protest movement was a more flattened

structure than traditional movements, commonalities with those described by theorists such as Segerberg and Bennett (2011; 2014), and Penney and Dadas (2014), among others. While this research question identified some leadership of sorts, the 'movement' was notable for the many useful contributors among its members, who out of enthusiasm, creativity or apparently just because they could, created motivational videos, graphics, images and more, to be shared online, as well as blogs of the moment, hashtags, ideas and more, all to enter the Twitter platform tumbler machine. No one ordered them to do so, or allotted a task. Thus this thesis argues that in these moments when something 'took off', that individual was in an *accidental temporary leadership* role, ie a very soft concept of leadership or accidental temporary digital vanguards.

This situation differed to the protest march on Parliament, which was organised by the Police Federation of England and Wales, and done so in all traditional organisational respects. But with the online group taking part simultaneously as they would if they were not using Twitter, and also as an online group campaigning around it, there are further interesting implications for **RQ4.**

In answering this, I found both commonalities the studied movement shared with others, and key variations and differences. This is to be expected as this is very much a niche protest group in the wider scheme of large and global protest movements. Although individuals in the police protest activity made many overseas connections on Twitter, this protest was very local in terms of the unique organisation of British police, specifically of England and Wales, and the political environment they found themselves in, including the British Government's austerity and police reform measures. So, like the niche and local protest movements studied, it would be hard to recruit global solidarity and support. In referring to the group as singular it does not preclude that members could be said to vary at times, sometimes depending on the campaign of the moment, or even their own situations. Such a shape chimes with the suggestion of the fluid and developing nature of protest movements on social media, as discussed in the literature, building on Melucci's stressing that collective identity was not a thing but a process, dynamic and open ended, continuously activated by the actors (1995; 1996). This point was reinforced by later scholars examining his ideas in terms of social media movements (Kavada 2015). This police protest movement shares the very nature of protest movements as defined by Snow and others, counterpublics, and weak publics, feeling a sense of powerlessness as something is done to them and wanting their voice

to be heard with protest of some kind being the only way to do so. As one interviewee put it, especially when repercussions were at their height, they almost felt like "underground resistance fighters", while criticism of them suggested they could be seen as "organisational terrorists" (a phrase with arguably more personal impact when used against serving police officers). As such, despite the somewhat jarring concept of police as protestors, those involved were sharing in some sense commonalities with activists and movements more associated with protest efforts under authoritarian regimes.

On the surface they used tactics including the use of hashtag campaigns, an early tweetathon, synchronising Facebook users with the spread using Twitter, and sharing information from a variety of sources widely, and all publicly. To take the tweetathon as an example, it highlights Pavan's study (2016) of a social movement using such tactics and identifying the structure of participation "built thanks to the internet" in social media movements. She argues, and my case study would support, that it is truly fundamental for the mobilisation dynamic and the tweet contents in such an event to show "an actual use to construct an overall collective meaning and a shared symbolic universe, which passes through different insights on the issue addressed (p.24).

With even the simplest of the hashtag campaign case studies, accounts with small follower numbers could now, through using the hashtag, gain a huge potential audience. And of course, they showed the use of Twitter to mobilise and build momentum for offline physical protest, in this case the march on Parliament. But there are subtle and importance differences under this surface view.

The police protest was unlike many other social media-enabled social movements, where theoretical discussions refer to offline or public physical space protest as an integral part of the online activity and examine them in this context; in fact, many focus on the online activity as functioning mainly to mobilise participation in the movement for the moments of physical space protest. But unlike other social movements' actions, the police legal (and very peaceful) march was not only rare but the single opportunity for police to openly demonstrate or protest in a physical space. As explained, by law they are forbidden to strike, they had to be off duty, ie between shifts, or had to have been granted leave, a process not guaranteed and dependant on staffing levels and more. As argued in Chapter Five, while the online protest certainly helped to mobilise in advance, by the day of the march participants needed to have already planned and obtained leave and transport. The argument developed below is in a reversal of some

theories in that the offline march acted to boost the online protest in the case of these particular constrained protestors. This is because offline protest in physical public spaces is, for this group, constrained by their very work role as police officers. It is illegal for them to strike, but even if offline protesting in their own time, their job comes with a raft of regulations, under which such activity could result in misconduct investigations and damaging outcomes. There is also the police culture aspect of the notions of duty and service, and law-abiding, which makes police officers not naturally inclined to take to traditional forms of protest in the first place. But it is for the former reasons this thesis defines them as **constrained protestors**, a situation which also applies to their online protest activity, hence the importance for many of having anonymous accounts.

Even in authoritarian regimes, as shown, social media protests in public online space, creatively circumventing censorship, can and do result in physical offline protest activity, such as the environmental protests in Quidong, China, and with success, albeit real risk for the citizens. Similarly the Vietnam trees protest involved also physical public spaces, even though it had to be done very strategically so as not to appear to be a prohibited public protest. The closest comparison to the police situation is perhaps that of the Saudi women's movement, which was also almost all online, although individuals posted imagery of defying rules in physical public spaces. But for the police in this study their main arena of protest activity must remain online. While the nature of Twitter and other social media platforms being seen as public space is a contentious one, to all intents and purposes it indeed works as such for this group of protestors. In fact, this thesis contends, it is the only alternative for them to offline public protest. At the height of the police protest activity, as shown in the findings and analysis, they used it with often creative tactics, enabled by and suited to the platform itself, including getting a protest statement hashtag trending via a tweetathon (at a time when early Twitter users were curious to see such trends); other campaign hashtags and more spontaneous hashtag protests, as well as early production and sharing of videos, images and graphics. All of this could be seen by the public on Twitter but reached other non-Twitter audiences via news coverage as notable, quirky, controversial or effective enough to warrant wider sharing beyond the platform. Wit and humour were often involved in such campaigns and are recognised as a useful emotion in engagement, as is the 'rational anger' and frustration which can motivate people to protest in the first place. All such innovative uses combined with anonymous accounts, and basically

individual *human communication* skills, horizontally, up and down and at speed, in a protest arena I define as **a tactical online public space**.

Because this protest is one foremost situated online, I argue this had implications for the nature of the eventual on and offline activity around the physical protest of the march. On the surface it mirrors many other studied social media protest movements with online mobilisation preceding offline protest, including on-the-day online activity, perhaps even in a circular feeding loop. However the nature of this protest movement led to a different effect with the on-the-day online activity. While all who marched shared common aims and as one group, with a few variations, eg about a right to strike, in keeping with other movements I argue there were groups within the group, reflecting what other scholars have described as the complexity of social media protest movements. The online protest movement was established long before the march was separately organised by the federation. This movement played the major role in the online mobilisation which also spread their narrative about the reasons for protest to a much wider public – formed in many individual messages but with a sense of collectivity. Again, similar tactics to other movements were used, such as using a hashtag around which to build enthusiasm and anticipation via tweets, and various techniques using the affordances of Twitter as described. These arguably resulted in a moment of digital contagion in the hours before and the transmitting of images and experience so that those who could not be there could share. I further argue that the on-the-day online activity, from protestors' different geographical starting points of their journey to London, to the end of the day itself, was able to enlarge and boost the protest itself, also through individuals' own strategic uses. Through adopting the affordances of Twitter, the movement reflected public and political support returning via tweet replies and hashtagged tweets, (and back, to buoy the protestors as well), the recycling of 'artefacts' such as campaign posters, and the evidence of news coverage. All this thus reinforced the protest message itself. Arguably this offline physical protest march was accompanied at the same time by one of the biggest online protests for this cause. While Milan's cloud protesting concept identifies how online activity can relive the physical protests and extend the lifecycle of a one-day event (2015), this thesis contends that this intense simultaneous online activity effectively coalesced with the physical, an example of how a simultaneous and concentrated combination of online offline protest action can boost the sheer size, volume and effect of a movement's actions. As well as this hybrid version, it can also be argued there was a collective 'we' at this point. This is also in

keeping with debates around the temporality aspects of protest movements, especially in the era of social media, where it is, at different times, a mixture of subtly different expressions of 'we' coming together. Here, for example, it could include the long-standing online protestors (police and public) and those who were not but became on-the-day marchers.

On the day others were brought into this collective, if temporarily. These included more members of the wider police group including high-ranking senior officers, even if by innocuous support messages for what after all was a legal protest, public sector unions and members, and even a very small group of Occupy protestors.

Finally, this study of a movement, complex in its very human behaviour, reinforces Melucci's strong reminder about collective identity, the result of individuals and their "negotiated interactions and relationships…and … the fruit of emotional recognition" (1989, p.35), and Milan's further reiteration of it:

> Contrary to its etymology, it does not presuppose unity and coherence but is in continuous evolution. Most importantly, it is the result a 'network of active relationships between actors' (Milan 2015, p.892; Melucci 1996 p.71).

Overall, as well as reinforcing the argument for the ongoing relevance of collective identity, it supports the newer developments of this. It also reinforces earlier studies on the effect of social media on community building and creating a sense of community in an online space.

It finds evidence for and defines some key unique characteristics which will be useful in examining any similar groups in protest.

As demonstrated in the next section, it also contributes to the growing body of research on police use of social media, as this has tended to focus on professional and corporate use with little study of independent and protesting individuals' use, and where it has, focusing mainly on its potential as an academic research source into aspects such as 'cop culture'.

7.2 Two schematic overviews: a new typology of police tweeting

This thesis proposes another typology (*Figure 6)* to show overall police Twitter activity, which includes the overlooked non-official use as well as redistributing importance of activity through category definitions. It shows a different approach to Crump's original categories as well as new elements found. A clear emphasis is on human communication and connection, thus it does not relegate any Twitter exchanges into an 'other' category, as does the original, and instead disperses them within all categories. It is argued these exchanges are as important as those on 'serious business' when it comes to facilitating connections, engagement, community and networks. Equally any protest activity is dispersed into each category. It also does not distinguish anon from non-anon Twitter users, not least as this can be a temporal and shifting area, but descriptions such as, for example, "may raise political or organisational issues" in Police Duties category, can be reasonably understood to be more likely coming from anonymous users, though, as the findings have shown, not exclusively.

It is my contention that this typology fills a gap in understanding police activity on Twitter by including that of protesting officers which, while they may not toe an official line, were nevertheless engaging with the public and others, expanding understanding of their role, and the issues and challenges which affect it, whether political or otherwise. In doing so they bring such issues and debates into the wider public awareness which should not be ignored in terms of 'what are the police doing on Twitter?'. They also provide another information source, an alternative voice, which may not always be seen in official or news narratives. I contend that those researching official and organisational police Twitter activity should consider the relevance of the unofficial police activity also.

For those researching protest movements, my other typology (*Figure 3)* represents the roles and communicative dynamics of the police protest movement on Twitter, and the dynamics between them as well as their tactical online public protest space. It is further elucidated by the text accompanying it.

Both the arguments made and the basics of the *Figure 3* typology itself could be further developed into models with the use of empirical data. They could be considered in the

study of other mainly online protest movements. They could also be useful in the study of other restricted or even constrained protestors. In the UK, the only other category of public sector workers now prohibited from striking are prison officers. This followed government legal action in 2016-17 after officers used 'union meetings' to effect a strike, circumventing the restrictions of voluntary agreements with authorities on any strike action (a restriction also applied to some other groups such as nurses). The *Figure 4* typology could be used to re-examine different aspects of research in police use of Twitter.

Time and resources prevented a study encompassing a bigger time period which is likely to give more information and thus contribute more about the further development and indeed the longevity of online protests. The study is of a niche protest with characteristics peculiar to the group involved, so there are issues for generalisability, as there are with a relatively small participant sample size (though comparable to some similar studies), which means findings from this cannot be generalised. However, as discussed in Chapter Four, this applies to aspects of qualitative methodology, especially purposive sampling and small samples, which nevertheless is defended in that it is often required to gain instead the rich or fine details which can still shed light and contribute to the body of knowledge. Qualitative methods were chosen as the best to approach the research questions, and indeed are advocated in the literature for these. If time and resources permitted, looking at the issue of 'leadership', for example, the use of big data methods might show which were the pivot accounts at different times, ie whether they varied or as shown in some other studies, whether it was content which was key, rather than account follower numbers. As discussed, the researcher's own background affects the obtaining and analysis of data and construction of arguments from it thus can have both negative and positive influences. For the latter, I have argued that my background enables an understanding of the topic and issues, while experience assisted the interviewing process.

There are a variety of possibilities with which to further investigate this particular movement, including that around the life cycles of campaigns, and even the social movement itself, especially in the aftermath of the reforms which came to pass, and the changing nature of Twitter. There are also side aspects of it which could warrant further examination. Some of the findings and conclusions drawn suggest further investigation which could involve a different methodology to uncover other information and detail.

Identifying and examining other social movements where protestors could be considered 'constrained', especially when the protest is mainly online, might help to build arguments and define common characteristics.

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APPENDIX 1

PARTICIPANT INFORMATION SHEET

DATE PRODUCED: 31/3/2016

PROJECT TITLE: Alternative Police Voices in the Twittersphere

INVITATION:
My name is Louise Matthews, senior lecturer and postgraduate journalism course leader at Bournemouth University in Dorset, UK at the time of starting this research [*ADDED FOR FINAL INTERVIEWS:* (now head of journalism at AUT University, Auckland, New Zealand but this is still a BU project)]. I would like to invite you to take part in my research (by way of in-depth interview) into why and how police officers may use Twitter independently of organisational practice, and the communication effects of the tool's particular forms and functions, especially against the background of austerity and police reform. Participation is voluntary, anonymity and confidentiality is default offered and you may withdraw at any time prior to the results being analysed.
Before you decide, please take time to read the following information carefully and discuss it with others if you wish. Please ask me if there is anything that is not clear or if you would like more information.

What is the purpose of the project?

These interviews form part of the research for my doctoral thesis, which aims to complete within the next two years, and associated research papers, some of which will arise sooner.

Why have I been chosen?

You have been chosen as one of a number of current or former police officers, through observation of your current or earlier Twitter engagement.

Do I have to take part?

Taking part in the research interview is entirely voluntary. If you agree to, you will be given this information sheet to keep (and be asked to sign a participant agreement form, or give consent by return email). You can withdraw up to the point the data is processed without giving a reason or there being any negative consequences.

What would taking part involve?

An individual in-depth interview which requires no preparation on your part and will be verbal ie via Skype/Facetime, or in person if this is possible, or - if neither are possible - by phone. It is likely to take a minimum of 40 minutes. The interviews will be audio recorded for transcription purposes only.

What are the advantages and possible disadvantages or risks of taking part?

While there are no immediate benefits for those people participating in the project, apart from an interesting discussion of the subject, it is hoped that this work will add to the growing body of research on the use of such tools in possible enabling of different voices and alternative viewpoints, and associated implications for communications theory, including that of social movements. There should be no disadvantages or risks in taking part due to careful confidentiality and anonymity arrangements.

Will my taking part in this project be kept confidential?

Due to the nature of this research, the default position is confidentiality and anonymity for interviewees (including their Twitter account names where necessary). As per the participant agreement sheet you can also choose to waive this, however I may still need to process data as anonymous for reasons of consistency. I am the only interviewer, and your name(s) will not be linked with the research materials, and you will not be identified or identifiable in the outputs that result from the research, including research papers or the final doctoral thesis.

The audio recordings of interviews made during this research will be used only for analysis and no one outside the project will be allowed access to them.

What type of information will be sought from me?

This part of the research asks what motivates Twitter users (initially and whether this has changed), and their valuable experiences, observations and perceptions of various aspects of this medium. The interview will be semi-structured ie it follows a basic set of questions but is free to diverge as appropriate to better explore what else may arise. As outlined on the agreement sheet, you can decline any question if you wish to.

Contact for further information

Please contact me, Louise Matthews, the principal researcher, on
lmatthews@bournemouth.ac.uk

Any concerns regarding the conduct of the research should be referred to Professor Iain
MacRury, the Deputy Dean of Research and Professional Practice, Faculty of Media
and Communication on imacrury@bournemouth.ac.uk

***SINCERE THANKS FOR TAKING THE TIME TO READ THROUGH THIS
INFORMATION***

Appendix 2

Bournemouth University

Participant Agreement Form

Full title of project: Alternative police voices in the Twittersphere

Name, position and contact details of researcher:
Louise Matthews, Senior Lecturer, Faculty of Media & Communication, Bournemouth
University lmatthews@bournemouth.ac.uk 07889 472070

Name, position and contact details of supervisor:
Dr Einar Thorsen, Principal Lecturer, Faculty of Media & Communication,
ethorsen@bournemouth.ac.uk

	Please initial or Tick below
I have read and understood the participant information sheet for the above research project, and that the data will be used for doctoral research including additional or subsequent research.	
I confirm that I have had the opportunity to ask questions.	
I understand that my participation is voluntary.	
I understand that I am free to withdraw up to the point where the data is processed.	
During the task or experiment, I am free to withdraw without giving reason and without there being any negative consequences.	
Should I not wish to answer any particular question(s), I am free to decline.	
(please delete as appropriate) 1. I give permission for the researcher to have access to my anonymised responses. I understand that my name will not be linked with the research materials, and I will not be identified or identifiable in the outputs that result from the research. *OR* 2. I give permission for members of the research team to use my identifiable information for the purposes of this research project.	
I agree to take part in the above research project.	

_____   _____

_____

Name of Participant   Date   Signature

_____   _____

_____

Name of Researcher   Date   Signature

APPENDIX 3

SEMI-STRUCTURED QUESTION OUTLINE

Q1 Initial motivations - Why….
& describe how you used Twitter (& related to/engaged with others via it)

Q2 How has any of this changed (go through)

Q3 the question of anonymity

Q4 ask re Level of involvement in Twitter campaigns / protest / e-tactics (facilitating) (CoverforGMP) (stopthecuts + march) – any sense of a leadership within this? contrast with police structure / anything else

Q5 ask re any concerns about using Twitter as a platform for protest: eg restrictions (job or platform itself) / surveillance / anything else

Q6 Advantages / what noticed about Twitter, personally or otherwise

Q7 Disadvantages/ what noticed, personally or otherwise

Q8 Specific to police problems eg PSD, Mittys, Social Media policy, PoliceFed comm tool

Q9 anything else we haven't discussed?

APPENDIX 4
Sample extract of interview

LM: Speaking to Policy Reform before they came off Twitter must have taken courage?

IN: I've always had difficulty keeping my mouth shut if I think something's unjust or if I think something is a downright lie, instead of doing the sensible thing often and wandering off to look out the window, I always find myself challenging it, it's happened time and time again recently. So back then I saw all the things they were saying and how wrong they were and I couldn't stop myself trying to put an alternative view across, which is one thing I think Twitter can be good for.

LM: How else has Twitter enabled you to meet or communicate with people you might not have otherwise met or communicated with?

IN: It gives you the opportunity to speak one to one with chief officers with policy makers when they engage. Where as normally I'm one of 120,000 people, most of who are fairly anonymous, in terms of it's just another face in the ground and you wouldn't normally have that access to your chief constable, your PCC, the policing minister.

LM: What's the difference between being able to contact them through email or through Twitter?

IN: If you contact them through their office, they will probably, possibly have an input in to the reply, but they reply will be written for them and it will be coached in quite corporate terms. Twitter tends to be them and more personal, more conversational, which has its downfalls, as people tend to forget their talking to a chief constable, but its more personal. If they choose to accept it, it gives them the opportunity to see what people are thinking. Because normally, with very senior people there's a filter below them, they don't want the bosses to know what's going on because it might suggest that they haven't done a good job, so they filter all the bad news. Twitter, gets rid of that filter if a chief officer decides to use it that way.

(Sample 2)

LM: Was it hard for people to do this?

IN: It was very hard, there was a lot of people taking a lot of risks, some of whom were exposed, some of whom who were subsequently disciplined for it, there was a huge, it was almost as if we were underground resistance fighters, we weren't to be exposed at any cost but if we did we knew there would be severe costs and consequences for doing it and that why so many have maintained their anonymity since, because the job has a very long memory and never forgets. I'm thankfully out of that boat now, if I want to reveal myself and be confident that they can't touch me.

LM: With the anti Windsor network, that was a hashtag and as much of an organisation as it can be on Twitter?

IN: It was, we then dropped that and changed it to PFTP – policing for the public because it was deemed to be somewhat controversial, playing the man and not the ball type thing so we moved away from that.

LM: Were you surprised how that worked on Twitter?

IN: I was very surprised; it was almost like the group just grew exponentially, the more police users came on the more we found them coming in to the group and the more we found them helping to spread the message and getting points across to other people, even people not in the policing network, who were shooting up trying to understand what we…..

Appendix 5

Initial themes used with NVivo sorting/categorising

Initial motivations

Changing motivations

Anonymity

Horizontal communication

Twitter - interaction benefits

Twitter - political communication

Twitter - repression

Emotions

Leadership

Outside (offline) interactions

APPENDIX 6

SAMPLE EXTRACTS OF CODING VIA NVIVO

Reference 5 - 5.39% Coverage

The interesting thing about the social media aspect is that were quite a lot of members of the public that wanted to join the march. There were quite a lot of people asking me, 'could we come on the coach with you' and I was saying 'it would be quite difficult to do that'. But there were people from Twitter who I knew came to London who did join us on the march, because people had been tweeting about the reasons why. It wasn't a march in relation to paying conditions; it was actually about what we were concerned about, which was how cuts would impact on the service that we were able to deliver to local people.

Internals\\Interview Transcription - 0194 - § 1 reference coded [0.46% Coverage]

Reference 1 - 0.46% Coverage

You can't win every battle, but yeah, social media is absolutely brilliant to get strong messages out and that's what I'm doing.

Internals\\Interview Transcription – 0196 - § 1 reference coded [3.91% Coverage]

Reference 1 - 3.91% Coverage

Yes. I think the biggest thing that came next was the disorder in 2011. Where a lot of people wanted a lot of information and wanted to know what was going on. There were a lot of police officers involved in that, a lot of police officers doing tweets, mainly Twitter, facebook wasn't really being used then. Putting out messages, 'this is what we are dealing with, this is what was happening, yeah it looks bad but we've got a lid on it'. I know some senior officers wanted a complete ban on all social media, but I think subsequent enquiries have proved that that would have been the wrong thing to do because the public were hungry for information. 99.9% of the law-abiding public knew what was going on and didn't know how it was going to affect them and were they at risk? Had we shut the door and told them, 'no we're not telling you anything' they would have drawn their own conclusions. There was evidence of that in my own force, where people saying 'oh it's all kicking off in this part of town' and police officers were saying 'funnily enough I'm on this street and there's nothing happening. So it was used to reassure, calm things down and send the message that the police were battling but had it under control.

Internals\\Interview Transcription – 0197 - § 2 references coded [2.11% Coverage]

Reference 1 - 0.90% Coverage

Yes, I think Facebook is limiting in the fact that unless you unlock all your security, it is limited to the people that you know and the people that you talk about and even, I have a page but it is not a remarkable place at all, I don't do Facebook as well as the likes of   do or   used to do and so on. Twitter just has that immediacy about it and you just picking up on conversations.

Reference 2 - 1.22% Coverage

that pub analogy, because Twitter gives you that sort of drop in and drop out analogy and the scope of people is so much broader than on Facebook and particularly if you're anonymous, it gives you more scope to spread your word. I think Facebook is very ad and marketing driven, so its customizing the feed to what it thinks you want, where as

the Twitter stream at the moment is not monetized that way so the feed just comes in and you look at it or you don't and you pick and choose what you want and I quite like that self curation.

Reference 1 - 1.32% Coverage

I think the beauty of Twitter is, your live streaming events, you're live streaming information and you're able to react instantly to information coming out through the media or the press or whatever else and you're able to instantly react and say, hang on a minute, where as on facebook, you out a post up but you have to go and find it, where as Twitter you're on a live feed so the befits of Twitter far outweigh the medium of facebook certainly.

APPENDIX 7

The emotional dimensions of earlier social movements

Goodwin et al. (2004), in taking a cultural approach, believe emotions can be analysed with the same theoretical and methodological tools that have been used to understand cognitive beliefs and moral visions:

> There are public displays of emotions that may be more or less sincere (and judged that way by others), like declared allegiances to publicly shared beliefs and morals (Goodwin et al., 2004 p.414).

Goodwin et al. says that prior to the 1990s, the study of emotions in social movements had been largely ignored, even by analysts taking a cultural approach, and despite a surge since, there are still inadequacies. In one even earlier research, strong (reflex) emotions were associated with irrational behaviour, but, observe Goodwin et al., not only are these not representative of all emotions but even reflex ones only seldom encourage irrational acts. They contrast the suddenness (and sudden subsidence) of reflex emotions with affective ones, such as love and hate, respect and trust which often persist. "Affects are positive and negative commitments or investments that we have toward people, places, ideas, and things" (ibid, p.414). And affection will also be one of the things that commitment to a movement will be based on. Such emotions are:

> the reason we bother to participate in movements at all rather than sit on the sidelines: the costs of participation are lower if participation entails spending time with those we like or love; the benefits are higher if they extend to those we love as well as ourselves" (ibid, p.418).

In terms of loyalty to a group or movement, collective identities are "nothing more or less than affective loyalties" (p.418). As well as those of love, this also applies to the negative feelings for those outside the collective, explains Jasper (1998). "The feelings which participants have toward each other have been labelled the reciprocal emotions of

the movement" especially in terms of respect and trust (Jasper 1998; Goodwin et al., 2004 p.419).

Trust operates as a cognitive shortcut, as in information or situations 'taken on trust'. But little is known about how it might work in social movements eg "how a general trust in one's political system may discourage participation in protest – or encourage it" (ibid p.419), or pertain to the leaders of those social movements.

Goodwin et al. suggest that the different emotion types be analysed with the same tools and methodological approaches researchers have used to understand cognitive beliefs and morality, gathering data on emotions. Thus surveys and in-depth interviews can gather systematic information about emotions of social movement participants or strategies of leaders: "informants may be asked directly about their feelings, or scholars can see if certain questions or cues elicit talk of particular emotions – or emotional talk" (p.424). Content analyses of various records or documents can be done, as can studies of the discourse and frames produced by movements.