Police ça Change? Cressida Dick, Institutional Racism and the Metropolitan Police

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Abstract
This article considers the recent resignation of Metropolitan Police Commissioner, Cressida Dick, and places this event within the context of ongoing attempts to address institutional racism in the police. The article argues that successive police commissioners have publicly supported tackling institutional racism while maintaining serious reservations about the concept and, in the case of Dick, ultimately rejecting it. It goes on to show that Dick's record on tackling institutional racism has been partial and contradictory, focussing on recruitment of ethnic minorities whilst simultaneously increasing use of stop and search tactics. Institutional racism, I argue, is a useful, but frequently misunderstood concept. Institutional reform, however, is possible if we recognise that everyday individuals actively create and maintain institutions, which is to be contrasted with the conventional approach to institutional reform where it is the institution that moulds or reforms the individual. As such, reforming the police requires starting at the bottom as well as the top.

Keywords: Cressida Dick, Metropolitan Police Service, institutional racism, Stephen Lawrence

Introduction

> Last week, I made clear to the Metropolitan Police Commissioner the scale of the change I believe is urgently required to re-build the trust and confidence of Londoners in the Met and to root out the racism, sexism, homophobia, bullying, discrimination and misogyny that still exists. I am not satisfied with the Commissioner's response. On being informed of this, Dame Cressida Dick has offered her resignation. It's clear that the only way to start to deliver the scale of the change required is to have new leadership right at the top of the Metropolitan Police. (Sadiq Khan, Mayor of London, 10 February 2022)

THE RESIGNATION of Metropolitan Police Commissioner, Cressida Dick, on 10 February 2022 reflects not only the souring of relations between the Mayor of London and his Police Commissioner, but is also a damning indictment of the Metropolitan Police Service's ability to address enduring problems of 'racism, sexism, homophobia, bullying, discrimination and misogyny'. Dick became Police Commissioner in 2017 and, like those before her, was charged with implementing the recommendations of the 1999 Macpherson Report into the investigation of the racist murder of 18 year-old Stephen Lawrence in south east London in 1993. That Dick has now resigned in these circumstances prompts the question of why, despite attempts to reform the Metropolitan Police Service over the course of more than two decades, pervasive discrimination persists. There is also a need to query whether the concept of institutional racism continues to aid or obfuscate institutional reform, and whether insights drawn from our understanding of institutional racism can be extended to addressing misogyny, homophobia and bullying in the police. In this article, I consider Dick's tenure in reforming the Metropolitan Police, while also subjecting the concept of institutional racism to scrutiny as a way of evaluating the nature and problem of institutional reform.

The Mayor's assessment of Dick's performance is undoubtably shaped by a litany of scandals and crises at the Metropolitan Police Service in recent months. Just nine days before Dick's resignation, the Independent Office for Police Conduct (IOPC), which investigates complaints into the police, published the findings of its investigation into a series of linked incidents occurring at Charing Cross police

station from 2016 to 2018, where officers shared racist, sexist, misogynistic and Islamophobic messages.[1] Of the fourteen police officers who were investigated by the IOPC, two were dismissed for gross misconduct, one resigned before the IOPC hearings took place, while other officers were offered training and were permitted to continue to serve in the Metropolitan Police Service. One officer was subsequently promoted. The investigation by the IOPC revealed that the nature of the problems at Charing Cross were cultural and systemic:

> We found multiple concerning behavioural themes about the attitudes and behaviour of police officers that ran through the investigations:
>
> - bullying and aggressive behaviour
> - 'banter' used to excuse oppressive and offensive behaviours
> - discrimination
> - toxic masculinity, misogyny and sexual harassment
> - challenging and reporting improper conduct.[2]

The death of Sarah Everard, who was murdered while walking home in London in March 2021 by a serving police officer, is a further example of how gender-based violence was exploited by those with power and with a public duty to protect.[3] The police's reputation was further marred when a probationary police officer guarding the Everard murder scene allegedly sent colleagues inappropriate messages via social media about her killing.[4] The Metropolitan Police Service also came under fire for a heavy-handed crackdown on the vigil for Everard in London.[5] In a separate case, two Metropolitan police officers were jailed for taking and sharing photographs from the murder scene of Nicole Smallman and Bibaa Henry in London in June 2020.[6]

Cressida Dick and institutional racism: a troubled relationship

The examples of a toxic culture at the Metropolitan Police Service abound, but Cressida Dick, the Metropolitan Police Service's first female and openly homosexual Commissioner, remained optimistic up until the end of her tenure that police reform was both possible and in progress under her steer. There is, then, a clear gap between Dick's own assessment of police reform and the reality of the situation on the ground, which brings us to two pertinent questions: first, how might we understand and evaluate Dick's approach to police reform? And, second, what is her record on, and how did she interpret tackling institutional racism?

During her time as Police Commissioner, Dick sought to reiterate that the Metropolitan Police Service has 44,000 personnel and for an institution of this size it is to be expected that a small number of the force may be deviant.[7] This interpretation of the problem is not only misleading, but undoes much of the advances in thinking about the nature of the problem affecting the police since the publication of the Macpherson Report in 1999, which Dick, like Police Commissioners before her, had been tasked to implement. Such an account simplifies racism to the acts of individual racists, while negating racism's place in 'the deep, unconscious structure of British common sense, often crystallized in institutional

[1]The Independent Office for Police Conduct's (IOPC) statement about this case; https://www.policeconduct.gov.uk/recommendations/thematic-learning-issued-address-cultural-concerns-nine-linked-investigations%E2%80%93 (accessed 18 February 2022).

[2]IOPC Operation Hotton, learning report, 2022; https://www.policeconduct.gov.uk/sites/default/files/Operation%20Hotton%20Learning%20report%20-%20January%202022.pdf (accessed 20 June 2022).

[3]H. Wistrich, 'Misogyny in the criminal justice system', *The Political Quarterly*, vol. 93, no. 1, 2022, pp. 64–68.

[4]IOPC investigation into referrals linked to death of Sarah Everard; https://www.policeconduct.gov.uk/news/two-further-iopc-investigations-after-referrals-linked-death-sarah-everard (accessed 18 February 2022).

[5]Ibid.

[6]IOPC investigation into police officers who took photographs at a crime scene; https://www.policeconduct.gov.uk/news/former-metropolitan-police-service-officers-jailed-taking-photographs-crime-scene (accessed 18 February 2022).

[7]Metropolitan Police Service, 'The structure of the Met', data, correct as of 31 January 2022; https://www.met.police.uk/cy-GB/heddluoedd/metropolitan-police/areas/about-us/about-the-met/structure/ (accessed 18 February 2022).

cultures', resulting in 'yawning gaps between policy and practice in these institutions'.[8]

Importantly, the Macpherson Report recognised the problems affecting the police to be systemic and institutional, rather than individual, isolated and relating to a few 'bad apples' who proverbially spoil the barrel. Individual-level racism undoubtedly still matters, but the Macpherson Report moves our understanding of racism forward in specifying the role of institutions in reproducing racism. Institutional racism recognises that institutions, intentionally or not, move racism within and across institutions, and that they produce outcomes which favour some racial groups while disadvantaging others. It may be useful at this stage to outline Macpherson's definition of institutional racism:

> The collective failure of an organisation to provide an appropriate and professional service to people because of their colour, culture or ethnic origin. It can be seen or detected in processes, attitudes and behaviour which amount to discrimination through unwitting prejudice, ignorance, thoughtlessness and racist stereotyping which disadvantage minority ethnic people.[9]

In evaluating Dick's performance as Police Commissioner, a tendency to focus on rooting out bad behaviour at the individual level and focussing on individuals rather than institutionally generated problems and solutions, is indicative of the approach that Dick gravitated towards. This, coupled with strong leadership and a view to reforming the institution from the top, also characterised her approach as Police Commissioner. Consequently, and despite Dick's best intentions and willingness at the start of her tenure to tackle institutional racism, Dick, much like her predecessors, did not fully grasp the nature and challenge of institutional reform that was required, and this, I suggest, is explained by her lack of understanding of the institutional-level dynamics that underpin institutional racism, as well as a limited grasp of the relationship between people and the institutions they comprise.

In a more explicit move away from institutional racism, Dick famously insisted, when speaking on Channel 4 *News* in 2020, that the term institutional racism was no longer 'helpful' for understanding racism in the police service, instead pointing to a 'zero tolerance approach' meaning disciplinary action for anyone who broke the rules. In the interview, Dick claims that following positive changes implemented since the publication of the Macpherson Report, the police had come a 'very, very, very long way'.[10] The point Dick emphatically makes in the interview is that much was learnt from implementing the recommendations of the Macpherson Report and she was responsible for instituting many of the recommendations.

Clarity about what we mean by institutional racism is paramount, because it is an abstract term and subject to misinterpretation. Aside from Dick's rejection of the concept, it is noteworthy that in an interview soon after Dick's resignation on the BBC *Newsnight* programme in February 2022, the Deputy Police Commissioner of the Metropolitan Police Service, Bas Javid, repeated the assertion that institutional racism equates to all members of the police being called racist—an assertion which has a history.[11] For example, Sir Paul Condon, Commissioner of the Metropolitan Police (1993–2000), highlighted in 1999 the problem with the concept of institutional racism in his evidence to the Macpherson Inquiry:

> If this Inquiry labels my Service as institutionally racist the average police officer, the average member of the public will assume the normal meaning of those words. They will assume a finding of conscious, willful, or deliberate action or inaction to the detriment of ethnic minority Londoners. They will assume the

[8]S. Hall, 'From Scarman to Stephen Lawrence', *History Workshop Journal*, no. 48, 1999, pp.187–197, at p. 189.

[9]*The Stephen Lawrence Inquiry*, Macpherson Report, Cm 4262-I, 1999, para. 6.34, p. 28; https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/277111/4262.pdf (accessed 20 June 2022).

[10]Channel 4 *News* interview with Cressida Dick, 13 August 2020; https://www.channel4.com/news/met-police-commissioner-cressida-dick-responds-to-institutional-racism-claims (accessed 18 February 2022).

[11]BBC *Newsnight* interview with Deputy Assistant Commissioner, Bas Javid, 15 February 2022; https://www.theguardian.com/uk-news/2022/feb/15/senior-met-officer-acknowledges-racism-problem-force-bas-javid (accessed 18 February 2022).

> majority of good men and women who come into policing … go about their daily lives with racism in their minds and in their endeavour.[12]

Despite Paul Condon's objections to the term, he publicly supported efforts to address institutional racism. Dick also initially supported these efforts before rejecting the term in 2020. This, then, brings us to the crux of the problem for the Metropolitan Police Service: successive Police Commissioners have publicly stated their support for tackling institutional racism, while maintaining deep reservations about the utility of the concept and, in the case of Dick, ultimately, publicly rejecting it. What is also abundantly clear is that there has been a failure to comprehend what institutional racism is. As Paul Condon and Bas Javid's misgivings about the term indicate, institutional racism has been taken to mean that everyone in an institution is racist. Evidently, there has been an inability to move beyond thinking about the problem of racism as originating at the individual level, whether that be in terms of identifying the sources of racism, or how to approach institutional reform. The dismal picture painted in the opening of this article outlining repeated crises at the Metropolitan Police should not, then, come as a surprise. Instead, it serves as a troubling reminder that Dick's tenure as police commissioner continues the longstanding tendency of successive police commissioners to question the value of, or distance themselves from, a notion of institutional racism, while both misunderstanding it and, at times, publicly advocating for it.

Implementing the Macpherson reforms

Whilst Dick contended in her interview with Channel 4 *News* that by 2020 the lessons pertaining to institutional racism had, under her leadership, been learnt and it was time to move on, it is worth taking a closer look at the policing landscape in London under Dick's leadership. My aim here is to consider the extent of the change in the Metropolitan Police Service since 1999 and how far it has come in implementing key recommendations of the Macpherson Report.

[12]Macpherson Report, para. 6.46, p. 30.

The Macpherson Report provides seventy recommendations, which have been adopted to various degrees by the Metropolitan Police Service, as well as by other police services across the United Kingdom. These range from the more general recommendations of increasing openness, accountability and confidence in the police (Recommendations 1–11) to specific actions such as providing racism awareness and cultural diversity training to police officers (Recommendations 48–54). They also include the designation and training of family liaison officers (Recommendations 23–28). The Macpherson Report then recommends that police forces should be representative of the communities they serve and suggests targets for the recruitment, progression and retention of minority ethnic police officers (Recommendations 64–66). This led to an ongoing effort to increase the numbers of black and minority ethnic police officers in the police force and has constituted a primary focus of police reform strategy for Dick, as well as her predecessors since 1999.

In 1999, under the then Home Secretary Jack Straw's Action Plan, ten-year targets were identified which aimed at ensuring that the police forces in any particular area would reflect the ethnic make-up of the area it served. It is also worth noting that Straw's Action Plan gave significant impetus to, and in some cases funding for, black and Asian professional associations.[13]

The first set of targets set in 1999 for recruitment were not met by 2009 by the Metropolitan Police Service, nor by nineteen other police forces.[14] On black and minority ethnic recruitment levels today, let us consider the situation on the ground as derived from the most recent publicly available data. At the end of March 2020, 92.7 per cent of police officers in the United Kingdom were white and 7.3 per cent were from Asian, black, mixed and other ethnic

[13]S. Holdaway and M. O'Neill, 'The development of black police associations: changing articulations of race within the police', *The British Journal of Criminology*, vol. 44, no 6, 2004, pp. 854–865.

[14]Home Affairs Committee, *The Macpherson Report—Ten Years On*, 22 July 2009; https://publications.parliament.uk/pa/cm200809/cmselect/cmhaff/427/42703.htm#note30 (accessed 17 February 2022). By the end of 2008, twenty of the forty-three forces in England and Wales, including the Metropolitan Police Service, had not reached their individual target.

backgrounds.[15] This compares with 4.8 per cent about a decade ago.[16] With regards to progression rates, we see that 4.3 per cent of senior officers were from the Asian, black, mixed and other ethnic groups combined, compared with 2.8 per cent in 2007.[17] In 2020, the Metropolitan Police had the highest percentage of police officers from Asian, black, mixed and other backgrounds combined (15.5%) out of all police forces and at the time of the 2011 Census.[18]

These figures show progress, but the progress is slow. Under Dick's leadership (2017–2022), while the Metropolitan Police Service may have the highest levels of diversity compared to all other UK police forces, it is worth remembering that 40.2 per cent of people in London are from Asian, black, mixed and other ethnic backgrounds, and so diversity in the force is far from the goal of reflecting diversity in the city of London.[19]

The focus by the police on increasing ethnic minority recruitment over recent decades is also indicative of a continuation of a focus on personnel, or an individualistic approach to reform, rather than tackling the pernicious mechanisms that combine to embed racism in the police. Diversifying the workforce may, in time, contribute positively to change in the police force, but such an approach does little to acknowledge or address the complex interactions between the culture and practice of the police and how it sustains and reproduces racism throughout the institution.

Rethinking institutional racism

While progress on the implementation of the recommendations of the Macpherson Report offers one perspective on how far the Metropolitan Police Service has come in recent years, it should not detract from the fact that the concept of institutional racism has been subject to a range of interpretations and modes of application. Confusion about the term may explain why some may want to move away from it.

Dick, Condon and Javid's interpretation of institutional racism as discussed here reflects a longstanding misunderstanding about what institutional racism is, what an institution is, and the relationship between institutions and individuals. I address here these points of misunderstanding and highlight gaps in our understanding of what institutions are and are not—and where institutional racism fits into this picture. My overall argument challenges the tendency to see institutions as entities which hold the power to socialise individuals and change their behaviour for the better. Instead, I suggest that institutional reform must be premised on the understanding that it is individuals who comprise, create and imagine institutions which, in turn, guide people's cognition about said institutions, or *how things are done here*. As such, to change and reform institutions requires changing people's ideas about what the institution is, its core principles, ethos and practices, rather than thinking of the institution as an external entity which holds the power to change people. On this account, it is *institutionalisation*, meaning the individual's active creation, investment in, and maintenance of institutions which should be our focus, and not the institution as a reality that exists as distinct from individuals, who should be moulded to create one's ideal institution. The latter is an externalist approach to institutional reform, which unhelpfully separates people from institutions.

Despite Paul Condon and Bas Javid's misgivings, institutional racism does not mean that all the people in an institution are racist. This interpretation reduces institutions to individuals, whilst neglecting the active role individuals play in creating institutions. Individuals are active creators of institutions, but it is also possible to argue that individuals are distinct from institutions. Addressing the problem of how to conceptualise and understand institutions will help to grasp the implications of an institutional analysis and how to reform troubled institutions.

As Wight points out, while the Macpherson Report offers us the concept of institutional

[15]Home Office data on the police workforce, 29 January 2021; https://www.ethnicity-facts-figures.service.gov.uk/workforce-and-business/workforce-diversity/police-workforce/latest#main-facts-and-figures (accessed 17 February 2022).
[16]Home Affairs Committee. *The Macpherson Report: twenty-two years on*, 30 July 2021; https://publications.parliament.uk/pa/cm5802/cmselect/cmhaff/139/13907.htm#footnote-776 (accessed 17 February 2022).
[17]Home Office data on the police workforce.
[18]Ibid.
[19]Regional ethnic diversity data, 1 August 2018; https://www.ethnicity-facts-figures.service.gov.uk/uk-population-by-ethnicity/national-and-regional-populations/regional-ethnic-diversity/1.6 (accessed 17 February 2022).

racism, its definition of institutional racism is partial because it focusses on institutional racism as outcome, rather than explaining where the racism comes from, or who is responsible for it—if indeed it is individuals.[20] One approach would be to assume that institutional racism comes from the people inside the institution and, indeed, this is the dominant approach taken when trying to reform institutions of their racism. This, however, takes us back to an individualist approach and back to a focus on individual-level racism which just happens to take place on an institutional scale. It is this latter approach which, in practice, is the overriding legacy of the Macpherson Report.

Souhami argues that post-Macpherson, definitional ambiguity about what institutional racism means led to a focus on individual behaviour and to rooting out racist behaviour, a point that has also been made by others.[21] For example, Souhami suggests that the Macpherson Report led to a focus on the eradication of racist language, which was a positive change, but clearly does not exhaust the scale of the task affecting the police service. A focus on diversifying recruitment adopts the same kind of approach. As welcome as a more diverse police service is, more diversity by itself cannot change an institution: even if the target of a more representative force is met, it will not change the culture of the institution. Increasing diversity is a form of essentialism by another name. It assumes that by being black, those individuals are necessarily anti-racist by definition and will change the culture of the institution. It would be disingenuous to suggest that changing personnel does not lead to positive change of some degree, but such an approach is limited at best. The point that a notion of institutional racism is designed to address, and that the police's focus on recruitment necessarily misses, is that when individuals—black or otherwise—enter the police service, they are inducted into a particular kind of culture which reproduces racism. Thus, the problem is institutional, rather than individual.

What is an institution? Thinking on this subject tells us that institutions are not the same as organisations: they can include organisations, but institutions are more complex. Institutions exist as sets of ideas and meanings, such as the institution of marriage or the nuclear family, but may also have material aspects, such as formal rules and constitutions, as in the case of the Metropolitan Police Service. Further, institutions comprise individuals, but they are more than that. For instance, we may look to the formal rules, processes and constitutions of an institution to explore its identity and culture, but this can only give us a partial picture. Instead, and in addition to the former, we must add a consideration of the informal rules and culture of an institution—the *how things are done here*. This brings individuals into the picture, but bringing individuals into play is not the same as saying that institutions are only groups of individuals. While there is a tendency to reify institutions in this debate, meaning to think that institutions exist as separate and distinct phenomena, a more helpful approach would be to see institutions as enacted and constructed by individuals, but subsequently as being distinct from individuals given their collective potential. Thus, it is helpful to focus on *institutionalisation*, rather than to narrowly situate institutions as external phenomena in the world.

In effect, such an approach means that if an institution is institutionally racist this is because some, but not necessarily all individuals see, interpret and construct the institution in that way. If individuals changed their behaviour, the institution would also change, which is different to imposing change from the top of an institution as a leader might do. Leader-led change may of course have some effects, but neither change at the top of an institution, nor change to the formal rules in an institution can by themselves precipitate and sustain institutional change. Instead, we need to recognise that it is individuals who maintain, construct and enact institutions, so we need to focus on them. This is not an individualist approach, but an institutionalist approach. Institutions, then, are distinct from individuals and should be thought of as distinct phenomena for the purposes of the task

[20]C. Wight, 'The agent-structure problem and institutional racism', *Political Studies*, vol. 51, no. 4, 2003, pp. 706–721.

[21]A. Souhami, 'Institutional racism and police reform', *Policing and Society*, vol. 24, no. 1, 2014, pp. 1–21; J. Lea, 'The Macpherson Report and the question of institutional racism', *The Howard Journal of Crime and Justice*, vol. 39, no.3, 2002, pp. 219–233.

engaged in here, but it is clearly important to acknowledge the myriad ways in which institutions and individuals relate to each other.

Reforming institutions that are racist, sexist, homophobic and bullying requires an approach to discrimination that is more nuanced than has historically been the case. Diversity within institutions can be presented in narrow terms, even when it has the best intentions. Approaches today include unconscious bias training and celebrating or promoting diversity. A more meaningful approach would be to recognise that experiences of race run deep for both victims and perpetrators of racism—and is part of lifelong socialisation. Being aware of race and how we see, interpret and create institutions requires delving deep and then thinking about the role we play in constructing and imagining institutions. If we do not take the time to reflect on our own relationship to race, then we are likely to reproduce harm, and institutions are likely to continue to reproduce racism and other social ills. Thoughtful engagement on these issues would have to be done in a sensitive and non-judgmental way.

The over-policing of black communities: stop and search

The Macpherson Report, much like the Scarman Report before it, recognised the breakdown in relations between black communities and the police and the urgent need to address this.[22] Macpherson highlights the necessity to re-build communities' trust in the police, with the report recommending for it to be a ministerial priority that all police services 'increase trust and confidence in policing amongst minority ethnic communities' (Recommendation 1). Two decades on, in her evidence to the Home Affairs Select Committee on the twenty-year anniversary of the Macpherson Inquiry (10 July 2019), the opening question by the Committee Chair, Yvette Cooper MP, sought to inquire into Dick's understanding of why there continued to be disparity by ethnic groups in levels of confidence and trust in the Metropolitan Police Service. The point was made that this confidence gap has implications for whether certain ethnic groups felt they could turn to the police if they needed help. If policing in the UK is done by consent, meaning that communities support and approve of the legitimate work of the police, then confidence and trust in the police is critical.

The most recent available data on young people's confidence levels in policing supports the view that tensions between black communities and the police have intensified rather than declined during Dick's tenure. The data shows significant disparities in confidence levels for white as compared to Asian, black, mixed and other ethnic backgrounds communities and these differences are starkest for black young men of the 16–24 age group. For example, looking at the 2020 Crime Survey for England and Wales as relates to London, among 16–24 year-olds, a lower percentage of black people (63 per cent) had confidence in their local police than white people (79 per cent) and Asian people (76 per cent).[23] From available data, in every year from 2013 to 2021, a lower percentage of black Caribbean people had confidence in their local police than white British people.

According to Dick's comments at the Home Office Select Affairs Committee in July 2019, the reasons for this gap in confidence levels are in part historical and generational. However, one of the clear contributory factors, which she acknowledges and, in turn, defends in her evidence to the select committee, is the use of stop and search tactics both in the case of suspicion-based stop and search (Section 1 of the Police and Criminal Evidence Act 1984) and suspicionless stop and search (Section 60 of the Criminal Justice and Public Order Act 1994). In the year ending March 2021, 695,009 stop and searches were conducted under Section 1 stop and searches.[24] This is a 24 per cent increase compared with the previous year and the highest number of stop and searches since the year

[22]L. S. Scarman, *The Scarman Report. Report of an Inquiry*, Harmondsworth, Penguin, 1986.

[23]Home Office data on confidence in the police, 12 May 2021; https://www.ethnicity-facts-figures.service.gov.uk/crime-justice-and-the-law/policing/confidence-in-the-local-police/latest (accessed 17 February 2022).

[24]Police powers and procedures data, published 18 November 2021. Stop and search data year ending 31 March 2021; https://www.gov.uk/government/statistics/police-powers-and-procedures-stop-and-search-and-arrests-england-and-wales-year-ending-31-march-2021/police-powers-and-procedures-stop-and-search-and-arrests-england-and-wales-year-ending-31-march-2021 (accessed 17 February 2022).

ending March 2014. Individuals from a black or black British background were searched at a rate 7.0 times higher than those from a white ethnic group (compared with 8.8 times in the previous year), across England and Wales.[25]

Stop and search powers have a longstanding history of criminalising young black men, who may be stopped because of the suspicion of a crime or, in the case of Section 60 stop and searches, without suspicion of crime. The use of such tactics has long been seen as a mode of surveillance of black communities through routinely over-policing young black men on the streets where they live.[26] That stop and search levels increased under Dick's tenure suggests that she was committed to this strategy, despite acknowledging the negative effects it has on levels of trust and confidence in the police among minority ethnic communities. In her evidence to the Home Affairs Select Committee, Dick argues that stop and search powers afforded to the police reduce knife and other violent crime in the capital, which in her view disproportionately takes place in areas where the highest concentrations of black and minority ethnic communities reside, hence the need to routinely conduct stop and searches there.

As shown, Dick believes that maintaining the heavy use of stop and search is an acceptable price to pay if it results in crime reduction, despite the acknowledged negative impact it has on police-community relations. Adopting a 'tough on crime' stance and protecting Londoners from apparent threats remained the priority during Dick's tenure, and although stop and search exacerbated tensions with black communities, reducing antagonism between the police and black communities was not a priority. It is thus hard to reconcile Dick's commitment to improving black communities' confidence in the police (Recommendation 1 of the Macpherson Report), and Dick's support of the increased use of stop and search during her tenure.

Paradoxically, then, the key reforms conducted during Dick's time as Police Commissioner were individualistic in target rather than institutional. These reforms focussed on the diversification of the police force with less than favourable results, whilst continuing to dent confidence and trust in the police through increased use of stop and search powers. Although Dick was clearly disappointed in leaving her post earlier than planned and in the Mayor of London's lack of faith in her progress on institutional reform, it is difficult to see how her approach would bring about the reform that is urgently required in the Metropolitan Police Service. It is also clear that the next Police Commissioner will have to reflect carefully whether to continue in the footsteps of Condon and Dick, or to offer a more serious and vigorous effort at tackling institutional racism as well as other forms of institutional-level discrimination.

The police are the public and the public are the police?

Calls for the 'end of policing', to abolish and de-fund the police, and to end the ever-increasing reach of the carceral state form the counter argument to debates about police reform.[27] From this viewpoint, the police are beyond reform and communities can and must do a better job themselves. Such a perspective is reasonable given the current state of UK policing and while we certainly need to limit police powers and challenge the over-policing of black communities, abolishing or de-funding the police seems politically unlikely. Investing in meaningful reform would better serve us in improving policing in both the short and long term. Meaningful reform of the police must start with the recognition that racism is complex and changing; it operates at individual and institutional levels and the police must acknowledge and work to address their own complicity in this.

The statement 'the police are the public and the public are the police' is often inaccurately attributed to Robert Peel as the author of the nine principles of policing. However, the origin of these principles is more likely the first Commissioners of Police of the Metropolis, Charles Rowan and Richard Mayne.[28]

[25]Ibid.

[26]B. Bowling and C. Phillips, 'Disproportionate and discriminatory: reviewing the evidence on police stop and search', *The Modern Law Review*, vol. 70, no. 6, 2007, pp. 936–961.

[27]A. Vitale, *The End of Policing*, London, Verso, 2007.

[28]Home Office, 'Definition of policing by consent and historic principles of British policing', freedom of information release, 10 December 2012; https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/policing-by-consent (accessed 15 February 2022).

The principles were set out in the 'General Instructions' and have been offered to new police officers at the start of their careers since 1829. The phrase refers to a philosophy of British policing which emphasises that policing is best done by consent rather than through force by the state. The statement highlights the legitimacy of the police, as well as transparency and accountability in their use of power. Despite these well-intentioned principles, recent scandals show that the Metropolitan Police is a service in crisis. This is because the principle of policing by consent is fundamentally undermined when the police are perceived to be institutionally racist and discriminatory on other fronts. An institutionally racist police force actively damages police-community relations, as can be seen in the parts of London where stop and search rates are highest.

The metaphor of 'the police are the public and the public are the police' is, however, instructive in another regard: it serves as a reminder that if it is members of the general public who become police officers, and if racism is prevalent in the public, it will also then be prevalent in the police force. Critically, however, racism in the police force will be a more pernicious force given the police's powers to intervene in and obstruct people's lives. Ergo, we must work to eradicate racism in the police force as well as eradicating racism in society—the two are related. Further, as recent events involving Azeem Rafiq and his charge of institutional racism at Yorkshire County Cricket Club show, the problem of institutional racism is not restricted to the police and there is scope to address institutional racism across society's institutions.[29]

London is not only the most populous city in the United Kingdom, but it also the most diverse, so policing there is a microcosm of, and model for, the rest of UK policing. In his book, *Black Resistance to British Policing*, Elliott-Cooper reminds us of the less heard side of the story of British policing: the effects of police racism on society and how people mobilise against it.[30] Detailing the long history of black resistance to British policing, Elliott-Cooper shows that the victims of British policing are most often young black men, while resistance to British policing across the decades has been led by women who are the mothers, daughters and kin of these men: from Marcia Rigg of the United Families and Friends Campaign (UFCC), who campaigns against deaths in police custody, to the Black Parents Movement (BPM), concerned with racism in schools and on the streets of Britain, to the activism of Doreen Lawrence in the search for justice for her son, Stephen Lawrence. All these examples reveal the lives lost and impacted either by police racism directly, or by the failure of the police to protect people when they need help.

This article is not an argument against leaders; effective leadership makes a difference. Marcia Rigg and Doreen Lawrence are leaders in their own right, albeit leaders of grassroots movements and who have been cast into these roles through tragic circumstances. My aim here is to highlight the complexity of police reform, to argue that it goes above and beyond choice of leaders and needs to return to debates about institutional racism, rather than think that such debates can be relegated to the past, as Cressida Dick suggests. If the police are to be reformed, then a more robust concept of institutional racism, such as that elaborated here, is an important step in the right direction. It untangles the complex relationship between people and institutions, while not reducing the problem of racism to isolated individuals, be they leaders or bad apples.

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[29]M. Collins, 'Cricket, Englishness and racial thinking', *The Political Quarterly*, vol. 93, no. 1, 2022, pp. 95–103.

[30]A. Elliott-Cooper, *Black Resistance to British Policing*, Manchester, Manchester University Press, 2021.