"Calling for Help: The discursive construction of civil obedience, institutional authority and social influence during calls to the Police."

PLEASE NOTE: This working paper is a live document intended to inform and stimulate discussion and debate within the partner organisations involved in this specific research project, but also to contribute to a wider conversation involving academic and police related colleagues. PLEASE DO contact us if you have any comments or questions or would like to discuss the ideas in this presentation further: Please contact the lead author – Dr Alexandra Kent. - A.Kent@keele.ac.uk

KEELE & STAFFORDSHIRE UNIVERSITIES POLICE KNOWLEDGE FUND DISCUSSION AND POLICY DOCUMENTS

Keele & Staffordshire Universities Police Knowledge Fund Discussion and Policy Documents

This presentation is one of a series published in open access format by members of the joint academic research team from Keele and Staffordshire Universities as part of a broader research project - ***Developing an Action/Work-based learning system for improved knowledge exchange, development and implementations through partnership working*** (Project code J11).

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This series of discussion and policy documents and presentation slides is intended to inform and stimulate discussion and debate within the partner organisations involved in this specific research project, but also to contribute to a wider conversation involving academic and police related colleagues.   The views expressed in these documents are those of the individual authors and should not be regarded as representative of the views or official policies of any of the Police or related agencies that have collaborated in our research.

These documents regularly draw on research and evaluation of procedures and practices in a range of Police Forces, Offices of Police and Crime Commissioners and related partner agencies. While the project that has stimulated these documents was initially formulated in partnership with particular Police and related agencies and organisations, it should not be assumed or inferred that the discussion contained in these documents specifically relates to these partners, their policies or practices.

These documents are intended to be accessible to non-academic readers, and to provide an overview of a range of ideas, concepts and outputs from our research. We want these documents to stimulate debate and develop further knowledge exchange and production with a wider range of potential partners. If you have any comments or questions or would like to discuss the ideas in this document further, please feel free to contact the project lead cited on the title page.

Context and Rationale for this Presentation

'Calling for Help: Assessing and improving the effectiveness of communication during calls to the police'

This presentation relates to early outcomes from a project working with 999/101 call handlers to explore interactions between call handlers and members of the public who have called these services. The issues of potential mis-communications in interactions between police call handlers and members of the public who ring 999/101 have been flagged up in discussions within our partnership, not least in the context of ongoing reviews of the 999/101 service, several critical practice reviews, a recent Domestic Homicide Review and a related IPCC investigation. Specialist academic colleagues have been working with call staff to identify and address these underlying issues.

Outcomes to date (Revised February 2017). It can be useful to think of a conversation in terms of a racetrack. You start at the beginning with the caller and along the way you complete various projects. You anticipate and avoid hurdles or you construct hurdles that can knock the interaction off course and prevent you reaching the finish line successfully. This 'Test Bed' project has mapped out the conversational 'racetrack' of a total of 501 999 and 101 calls to date and fed this analysis into a series of Knowledge Exchange Groups (KEGs) with key staff to help call handlers identify what sorts of problems and roadblocks can occur in conversation, as well as the techniques and strategies that best resolve these problems.

Significant progress has been made with the analysis of the call recordings. The team have been focusing on developing collections of call extracts that it will be most useful for the call handlers to look at during KEGs and training. In addition to the complete detailed call transcripts, we now have collections of:

- 149 examples of opening requests for help
- 35 examples of call handlers asking callers for their ethnicity
- 33 examples where the call handler declines to provide the assistance requested by the caller (either because it is not a policeable matter or because a different response will be provided) (23 fully transcribed)
- 8 examples of either particularly clear explanations of what will happen next or where the caller queries this
- 25 examples of where the action of completing the computer log interferes with the verbal communication within the calls
- 19 examples of call handlers addressing issues of vulnerability in the call or log
- 27 examples of calls involving individual with mental health concerns
- 37 examples of calls involving domestic incidents
- 6 examples of 999 callers being told to call back on 101

The team is continuing to build these collections for use in the upcoming KEGs and in training of new staff. Various formats for the KEGs have been trialled over the course of the Project to explore the most effective approach to sharing knowledge. This has included:

Shift-based workshops - focused on exploring the landscape of 999 and 101 calls and encouraging call handlers to become analysts of their practice.
Cohort training working with small groups of new call handlers during their initial training. These KEGs focused on helping them retain an appreciation of the caller's perspective, particularly when informing them that it is not appropriate for the police to respond to their request for assistance in the manner they have sought.

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Managers Discussion KEGs

•   Vulnerabilities. – The team has conducted work with managers on the issue of vulnerabilities. This resulted in tangible recommendations that have subsequently been submitted as a report to the Head of Contact Services
•   Call Resolution. – The team has conducted work with managers on the issue of call resolution. This resulted in the managers resolving to change some aspects of how they advise and support the call handlers on their shifts. It also helped to inform and focus my subsequent analysis of how call handlers can effectively close down calls for which no police response will be provided.
Work Shadowing - Team members have observed call handlers during night shifts (10pm-7am) and evening shifts (3pm-10pm) to explore the situated experience of their work environment. During these shadowed shifts the researchers were able to discuss with several call handlers issues relating to their call handling practices and explore the rationale behind their choices during a call. The researchers also observed how the computer system both facilitates and impedes the call handlers' effectiveness.

Calling for Help:

The discursive construction of civil obedience, institutional authority and social influence during calls to the Police

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Data and Method

- I'm interested in how and when authority and social influence attempts are leveraged during calls for help from members of the public to service institutions.

- I used Conversation Analysis (Sidnell & Stivers, 2012) and Discursive Psychology (Edwards & Potter, 1992) to study calls to 999 police emergency, and 101 police non-emergency lines.

- All names and identifying information in the transcripts included in this presentation have been changed

Service	No of calls	Mean duration	Total recording time
Police 999	30	4m43s	1h06m
Police 101	38	10m58s	4h45m

Theoretical background

- Civil Obedience
  - Entitlement to request help (Heinemann, 2006; Curl & Drew, 2008: Craven & Potter, 2010)
  - Stake management (Edwards & Potter, 1992; Potter, 1996; Woofitt, 1992)
  - Epistemic primacy (Heritage, 2012a&b)

- Institutional Authority
  - Mandated remit and scope for action
  - Deontic authority (Stevanovic & Peräkylä, 2012)

- Social Influence – "getting someone to do something"
  - Sequence organisation and the context renewing nature of talk
  - Accountability (Robinson, 2016)

Callers' civil obedience

- Seek to recruit the institution to assist with their problem (Drew & Walker, 2010; Larsen, 2013).

- Design their reason for calling as institutionally relevant

- Construct their own behaviour as legally and morally defensible [Legitimate doctorability] (Heritage & Robinson, 2006)

- Work to bolster their credibility as an informant (Wooffitt, 1992)

P179 - 999 Three lads

```
01  Police:     P'lice eme:rgency,
02              (0.7)
03  Caller:     >Hi Duck<. Erm (0.3) .hh I've just been (0.2) I-
04              leav Clarindon °tuh pick me gi:rlfriend up,°
05  Police:        Yeap
06              (.)
07  Caller:     And uh fhree la:ds: got out of a ca:r
08  Police:        O[ka:y,            ]
09  Caller:         [>An' li:ke,<]
10              (0.3)
11  Caller:     .hh An' started assaulting me.
12  Police:        Okay.
13              (0.2)
14  Caller:     I've got li:ke (0.2) bruised ribs, (0.4) .hh Cut on me:
15              (0.3) hheadh, Un' then like (.) a chipped to:oth.
16  Police:        Okay,
```

Use of police terms to describe what happened

P264 999 Suspicious person trying to open doors

```
01  Police:   P'lice eme:rgency,
02            (1.0)
03  Caller:   Hiya. I'm jus' ca:lling from (Meadow ha:ll) in Fieldi:ng.
04  Police:   Yeah
05                (0.4)
06  Caller:   An basicly I'm just walking my >dog,
07            =I don't< wanna jump tuh conclusions,
08                (0.3)
09  Police:   [Yeah  ]
10 Caller:    [Bu'i'm] just walking my do:g, An' I've sin a la:d, (0.6) Wiv a
11            blond ma:nbu::n wearing a body warmer tryna open fhr:ee
12            doors,
13                (0.4)
14     Police:    Right. Okay [ >Hou:se   doo:rs  ] o:r ca:rs?
```

Constructs self as a law abiding citizen, who isn't unreasonably nosy or judgemental

Social Influence

- The calls are structurally organised such that Call handlers typically make decisions about and control future courses of action relating to the caller's situation.
- The phases of the call typically progress as follows (Whalen & Zimmerman, 1990):
  - Problem presentation / request
  - Interrogative series
  - Response
  - Closing

- Proposal / declaration of outcome decision
- Contestation / acceptance of outcome by caller

- Callers try to maximise the chance that the call handler will align with their version of events, accept their reason for calling as genuine and appropriate, and (ultimately) provide the desired service (as opposed to some unwanted service or no service at all).

P020 – 101 Help Moving 0.00-0.33

```
01  Police:      He̲llo ((county)) police control room. How can I he:lp?
02               (0.8)
03  Caller:      He̲llo,=Ma name is Mary Davies,=I live in the
04               Baleford area, .hhh Urm what it is is e:r >a couple
05               years< ago er I had some (.) al'erca̲:tions with my
06               muther,=An' had to move ou̲t, .hh
07  Police:      Mm hm,
08               (.)
09  Caller:      Erm I've curren'ly went back to live with my muther,
10               e#r a couple a weeks ago̲, But erm (.) I've had to
11               stay away from the property: because she's bi̲:t nu̲ts.
12               (0.3)
13  Caller:      .hhh Er: she atta̲:cked me and that. .hh
14               (0.2)
15  Caller:      Erm I need to go back to the property today̲ to get
16               my stuff,=Cause I'v- I've gotta rent a roo̲:m,
17               (0.3)
18  Caller:      But she won't let me to the property̲: without
                 anybody the̲::re like y- yourse̲:lves and that helping.
```

P020 – 101 Help Moving 0.33-1.02

```
19  Police:        =Are you j[ust   wan]tin' uz-
20  Caller:                   >[I wan' um]<
21                   (.)
22   Police:        Are you just wanting us there like to prevent any sort
23                   of breach o'the peace between you an' yuh mu::m.
24                   (0.3)
25  Caller:         Yea:h. But I would like some he:lp please. With my
26                   stu:ff.=I've got no:-one.=W'she won't even let ma
27                   sister help me:.
28  Police:         .hhh Tha:t- tha:t's not something that I can facilita:te.
29                   Erm .hh=
30  Caller:          =Ri:g[ht.]
31  Police:              [Or ] (.) If I mean we we: can (.) you know we-
32                   we're the:re to (.) to basically preserve li:fe and
33                   property.=
34  Caller:         =Yea:h I kn[ow.
35  Police:                      [erm >I- you know we< (.) We can atte::nd
36                   to prevent a breach of the pe:ace, .hhh
37  Caller:         [Yhea]hhh ]
38  Police:         [Bu:t] (.)     ] we ca::rn't (0.2) physically he:lp you move
39                   hou:se.
```

Institutional Authority

- Call handlers interrogate the information provided by the caller for whether it falls within their authority to act or expertise to advise.

- They seek to isolate the aspects of the caller's reason for calling that fit the institutional parameters and attempt to progress these (and only these) towards an institutionally appropriate resolution.

Limited Institutional Authority

- When the call handler's proposed outcome to the call aligns with the caller's reason for calling, callers don't challenge the call handler's authority to make the decision.

- There are limits to the institution's authority. These get exposed when call handler's refuse requests for help.

- Direct refusals of assistance are overwhelmingly paired with some other offer of assistance
  - At the very least the suggestion of a self-remedy.
  - If not advice on alternative courses of action are often sought by the caller

P099 101 - Safe & Well 0.00-0.46

```
01  Police:   ((county)) P'lice contro:l room,='ow can I he:lp.
02            (0.5)
03  Caller:   .h Hi:: my name's Pandora Blom ringin' from Sweep
04            living support servi:ce in Fli:nt. .chhh E::rm I:'m ri:nging
05            if I curn (.) s- arra:nge a:: (.) safe an' we:ll check for one of
06            my cu:stomers,=Th#u:rt's (.) gone mi:ssi:ng:. .hhh He's a
07            nineteen year old vuln'rable yo:ung ma:n?
08            (0.5)
09  Police:   How lo:ng's he bin mi:ssing for.
10  Caller:   .hhhh Er he's been missing for three da:ys.
11            (1.0)
12  Caller:   .hhh=
13  Police:   =°O°kay, In terms of a sa:fe 'n' well then,=D'you
14            know whe:re (.) he i#::z.=Or:=
15  Caller:   =.h W- we we do:n't know whe:re he i::s. I'm 'iz (.)
16            ho:using wo:rkhe:r, .hh A::nd he normally see:s hi::s (.)
17            >personal< assi:stant at Emerge every da:y,=.hhh Ehm:
18            (0.4) >there u-< (.) there are (.) concerns= >re:cent<
19            concerns of se:lf ha::rm, .hhh Bud <a:lso: uhm abo:u'>
20            hhm (.) .hhh the vu:lnerability of the young ma:n with (.)
21            uh:m (.) the company that he hangs ou:' wi:th?
```

```
22                (0.6)
23  Police:       °.tch° Oka::y,=In terms of doin' a sa:fe and well
24          then. We're no:t >gunna be able to do that<.='Cuz
25          we do:n't know whe:re he i:s, But we cu:n (.) We
26                can look at [repor[tin' 'im] mi:ssing then,
27  Caller:                     [.hhh  [uih     ]
28                (0.5)
29  Caller:       .hh Uhyeah I wa:nted e:rm (.) I nee:ded the
30                p'li:ce to be at the pro:perty with me.
31                (1.5)
32  Police:       So- >Is he a:t the property #then?
33                (0.3)
34  Caller:       nn We: don't know,=We need to che:ck tha.
```

Sequential construction of authority in interaction

- As noted in other settings (Kent, 2011), in interaction the successful assertion of deontic authority requires it's ratification from the recipient.

- The authority of even organisations as powerful as the police must be co-constructed in every interaction alongside the co-construction of the caller's civil obedience and deference to the the institution's authority.

```
01  Police:      Why: [d'ju nee]d the police the:re.
02  Caller:           [Wu- °n° ]
03                 (0.3)
04  Caller:      Because he's a vu:lnerable adu:lt, I: am going to
05               the prop[erty,=An' I need .hht                ]
06  Police:             [Ju:st because he's vuln'rable does]n't
07               [n- doesn't need the p]olice [to ne:ed to atte:nd].
08  Caller:      [I:  need  POLI::ce     ] (0.2) [        assistu:n     ]ce.
09               (.) .hh I: need th'poli:ce assistance to: that
10               property.=I am reque:sting pr'lice assistance. (0.2)
11               .hh er to: that property. (.) Becuz a young man ma:y
12               be in da:nger,=.hh He has been missing for three
13               days,=He doe:sn't no:rmally go missing for .hh (.)
14               this amount of t[ime ]
15  Police:                      [WHY:] is he in da:nger.
16                 (1.4)
```

17 Caller: .tchhh He could be a <u>ri</u>:sk to himself,=Annee (.) could be a
18   <u>DA</u>:nge[r:]
19 Police: [>An' if<] he's a risk [to him<u>se</u>:lf you would need an=
20 Caller: [to   (.)   other   p<u>e</u>:ople   in   =
21 Police: =<u>a</u>:mbulance.=You <u>wo</u>:uldn't] need [the p'<u>li</u>:ce.]=
22 Caller: = the comm<u>u</u>:nity.   ]   [.hhh   ]=But (.)
23   >but he< m<u>a</u>:y i- but- (0.2) °ughh° (0.8) c- <u>Ca</u>:n I speak to
24   Someone <u>el</u>se abou' this. >u- I'm I'm< <u>ju</u>:st tryin tuh do mah
25   #job he:~re# .HH~h (.) Erm and u- (.) What I'm a<u>wa</u>:re i::s (.)
26   is that <u>thi</u>:~s <u>i</u>:s (0.3) usual >s<u>ta</u>:ndard procedure,<=Now
27   <u>my</u>: <u>ma</u>:nager Tina Looker isn't actually HE↑re at the
28   mom<u>e</u>:nt, (.) .hh errm a::nd the d<u>u</u>:ty social worker's rang me
29   up conc<u>e</u>:rned, .hh <u>I</u>:'ve spoken to my mana<u>ge</u>:r, [A:nd   ]
30 Police: [If so:c]ial services are conc<u>e</u>:rned, Then social services need
31   to at<u>te</u>:nd.

Conclusions

- Calls for help from public services are structurally organised around orientations to civil obedience and institutional authority.

- However, such orientations are sequentially produced moment-by-moment by the individual speakers party to the call.

- Thus interactional and discursive resources of interpersonal social influence that apply to everyday interactions are equally relevant during talk between two institutions.

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