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Influence Policing: Domestic Digital Influence Campaigns and Algorithmic Strategic Communications in UK Law Enforcement and Homeland Security

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This paper conceptualizes an emerging model of algorithmic policing; '*influence policing*'. This harnesses the affordances of Internet platforms to conduct domestic digital influence campaigns for crime prevention. These campaigns use sophisticated targeted messaging to directly 'nudge' behaviour and shape the culture of specific groups. By targeting people using micro-level behavioural, personal-interest and location-based data, influence campaigns aim to employ insights from behavioural psychology to prevent crime at a distance. We theorize this with an analysis of a dataset of more than 12,000 adverts and in-depth fieldwork with a dedicated police strategic communications team. Influence policing provides law enforcement with new capacities to craft and manicure hidden digital encounters with targeted publics, raising questions about its democratic character and police accountability.

KEY WORDS: influence, policing, algorithmic governance, AI, platforms, social media

INTRODUCTION

Dating back to the earliest public statements given by senior officers, communications work has long been a core part of policing to shape media reporting of crime, disorder and representations of the police in popular media (Reiner 2012). More active communication strategies, like the awareness campaign, emerged over the latter half of the 20th century, often based on the social marketing strategies emerging in public health and are captured in criminological visions of crime control in the early 21st century (Garland 2001; Lupton 2012). The 'reassurance policing' programme reflects a more recent example of the recognition of the value of communication to overcome specific challenges or improve trust and confidence (Innes 2003). While the rise of the mass media in the mid-20th century gave the state a new space to project the power and image of the police, the rise of digital media has brought with it several perceived challenges

for policing (Colbran 2020). The capacities for more 'massified' communication between members of the public have, in combination with the business models and content promotion technologies of the platforms, seemingly intensified several existing social problems—including radicalization, misinformation and online misogyny among others (Williams and Burnap 2016; Yar 2018).

By virtue of the privatized nature of the Internet's architecture, public–policing is often not seen as the primary agent of online 'policing' and rely on non-state actors' cooperation with specialist units (Yar and Steinmetz 2019). As a result, police initially assimilated digital spaces as surveillance and intelligence-gathering tools (e.g. Williams *et al.* 2013). As shown elsewhere (Collier *et al.* 2021), policing organizations across the United Kingdom have been developing communications work informed by commercial digital marketing strategies that engage the sophisticated forms of targeting enabled by social media and digital infrastructures. Although previous research focused on the use of social media accounts by individual police officers and forces (Williams *et al.* 2013; Goldsmith 2015), there remains no sustained examination of police use of targeted advertising in online platforms (though some related exploratory studies are available, see Fielding 2023). Targeted advertising interventions use the deep surveillance capacities of platforms to deliver 'nudges' that hope to subtly reshape the behaviours and cultures that the police and their partners perceive to be at the root of particularly intractable crime problems. We suggest these changes reflect the rise of a novel model of policing that we term *Influence Policing*. *Influence policing* involves the combination of preventative communications-based proactive interventions employing 'behaviour change' techniques enabled by the targeting infrastructures of surveillance capitalism and the platform economy. This activity is a subset of a wider regime of *influence government* throughout the UK public and third sector (Collier *et al.* 2022). We argue this represents the move of police communications from a supportive role to the digital 'frontline', where it is no longer simply an awareness-raising function.

Below, we critically analyse this growing phenomenon through an empirical study of influence policing campaigns in the United Kingdom. We examine how the police communications profession is making sense of and incorporating an advanced set of digital infrastructures, designed for commercial marketing into the domain of law enforcement and security. We present case studies via analyses of interviews, focus groups, documents and 12,000 adverts scraped from the Meta Ad library. First, we briefly outline the relevant criminological and policing literature to which this speaks, signposting previous research on police communications, policing models and wider scholarship on the incorporation of new forms of expertise into police work. After setting out our research methods, we outline the scope and spread of 'influence policing' in the United Kingdom, describe six key 'modes' we observed, and reflect on their implications for policing and society. We argue that influence policing represents an evolution of police power and presence in digital spaces deployed to counter emerging threats and new 'risky' groups. Platforms, their opaque algorithmic and networked structures of organic influence, play a central role in mediating, modulating and redirecting this new hidden modality of *holographic police power* at their chosen targets.

FOUNDATIONS OF POLICE COMMUNICATIONS AND PREVENTATIVE POLICING

Police communications and social media

The earliest examples of police communications in the United Kingdom focused on describing police activities to the public and assisting media reporting of crime (Reeves and Packer 2013). Managing perceptions of crime quickly extended to other forms of communications work, focused initially on public relations (PR) and image management. As UK police

professionalized, the numbers of specialist support staff grew, including communications specialists (Mawby 2010a, b). Throughout successive crises of public confidence and scandals (especially relating to the use of force by officers), police media work has developed into both 'crisis communications' approaches and those more directed at community outreach and responsiveness to local issues in the vein of democratic policing (Jones 2008). Recent scholarship explores the extension of police communications to social media; from individual officers' accounts to regional or service-level accounts run by dedicated communications teams (Ralph and Robinson 2023). Previous policing research on social media has been principally concerned with the police use of platforms to share content as users. As Bullock (2018a) argues, police have sought to mobilize social media to '(re)present order' in ways that seek to achieve policing goals, whilst also shaping public perceptions of the police.

Online services, especially the ecosystems underpinning large ad-funded social media platforms, facilitate the exertion of influence in several distinct ways; 'organically' via horizontal social networks, via 'influencers' with large and small audiences, and via paid targeted advertising embedded in the digital 'streets' of everyday life (Lipsman et al. 2012). Accounts that generate followers from content and opinion gain considerable capacity to influence behaviour and culture—it is on this *influencer* model that policing research has focussed, namely the role played by official police social media accounts and sometimes individual police officers with large social media followings, in exerting police presence and influence online (see Bullock 2018a; 2018b; Ralph 2022). Police envisioned that the affordances of social media would democratize interactions with the public, turning police communications from monological into dialogical interactions with communities. However, Bullock's (2018a; 2018b) work highlights that this democratization and elevation of dialogue failed to manifest. Instead, police use of social media centred around Twitter (now X.com) and usage appears primarily as unidirectional broadcasting and 'help-seeking' rather than pursuing the conversation.

Henry (2023) illustrates this 'influencer' mode of policing is ill-suited to the democratic policing values and practices, and distracted by sensational, provocative or 'edgy' content. Instead, Henry proposes the need to see these digital 'encounters' as interaction rituals, representing a more fruitful approach to understanding police legitimacy and authenticity online. Henry (2021) highlights that analyses of these interactions have been preoccupied with studies of face-to-face interaction revealing the fragility of interaction-ritual chains when artificial intervention disrupts organic sociality (e.g. MacQueen and Bradford 2015). A key starting point for our study is the importance of moving beyond direct face-to-face interactions. Social Media platforms transform how publics 'encounter' the police and these interactions are of increasing importance to policing organizations' strategies for building trust and confidence. Starting from the 'encounter' and working upwards recognizes the criticality of viewing police interactions (or their absence) online or physically as equally important. Furthermore, it prompts us to consider the 'symbolic weight' those policing encounters carry when directed in particular ways and at particular people (Henry 2021). This 'symbolic weight' is conceptualized in policing canon and grounded in the monopoly of force and the 'latent resource' of the police's capacity to exert it (Bittner 1967; Brodeur 2010; Reiner 2010). In this paper, we consider how influence policing evolves the mobilization of that 'symbolic weight'.

Rather than bidirectional encounters with 'influencer' police officers and services (e.g. Ralph 2022), it is the direct targeting model of platform 'influence' that concerns this paper. The online environment of the major platforms, the 'digital street' (Lane 2019; Hsiao et al. 2023)), is embedded with surveillance and influence infrastructures that support directly targeted communication and advertising. Targeting is built on their collection of large amounts of intimate user data capturing behaviour, social networks, locations and interests as well as conventional socio-demographics (Knoll 2016). Using this data, platforms deliver tailored messages to

groups 'in situ' at the moment where, normally 'consumption', decisions are made (Ruckenstein and Granroth 2020). This business model, often termed 'surveillance capitalism' (Zuboff 2015), goes beyond traditional postcode, demographic and consumption pattern segmentation to individually tailored real-time advert campaigns (Kent *et al.* 2022). A mature ecosystem of marketing consultancies and support services has developed around this business model that range from large marketing agencies (e.g. Saatchi and Saatchi) to small and medium enterprises (SMEs). In the United Kingdom, the public sector has increasingly employed these tools to deliver targeted behavioural marketing campaigns in the service of achieving policy objectives across most areas of government (Collier *et al.* 2022).

Preventative policing and communications

Early forms of preventative policing relied heavily on police *visibility* to reassure the public, maintain order or directly deter crime. Reiner's (2010) account of the police elicits the potency of the 'uniform' as a communicative instrument of order maintenance. Latterly, Innes (2003; 2014) laid out the centrality of police visibility for public perceptions of disorder in local areas, notably where police presence could communicate 'control signals'. In the context of austerity, Sindall and Sturgis (2013) identified a qualified relationship between the visibility of police in neighbourhoods and public confidence, whereby a reduction in police numbers was connected to the decline of confidence and legitimacy. Yesberg (2023) and colleagues found that police visibility was a key predictor of public trust, and in turn, collective efficacy.

Although police visibility is generally considered in terms of physical presence, police organizations have also developed their 'presence' elsewhere—particularly those created by media. As television and print media spaces proliferated with a post-war boom in consumer marketing, the police sought not only to establish a symbolic mediated presence but also to use these channels to fulfil the democratic aim of *informing* the public (Jones 2008). Drawing on the increasing influence of a 'social marketing' approach developed from the 1970s health and public safety work (Andreasen 1994), police forces and their partners began to engage with media as a potential space to achieve social crime prevention aims (Burrows and Heal 1980). In policing, this took the form of an awareness campaign; traditionally delivered via television and radio adverts, comments in articles, posters, leaflets and billboards. They focused on raising awareness of crime problems and encouraging corrective 'responsible' behaviours (e.g. locking doors and windows, wearing a seatbelt) in a context of increasing pressure on police to 'perform' effectively (Garland 2001; Hope 2004).

Media became a means to access private spaces less accessible to direct intervention but where police needed to be *seen* as active. Campaigns also mobilized a movement of crime prevention through changes to the built environment and a market of private security products. At the same time, the decline of police legitimacy in the United Kingdom after successive crises and scandals throughout the second half of the 20th century (see Reiner 2010) made this professionalized communications work appear an attractive form of remediation. A tacit campaign goal was to shape public perception of the police more broadly and thus manufacture consent for 'hard' operational policing responses against minoritized communities (see Hall *et al.* 1978).

Behaviourism, problem-oriented and intelligence-led policing

The contemporary evolution of communications relates to two strategic developments in public–policing; the rise of problem-oriented and intelligence-led policing (ILP) models (see Bowling *et al.* 2019). These have sat alongside the rise of 'behaviourism' in a range of key UK Government policy areas (e.g. health, policing and security). In a public sphere defined for a decade by under-investment, police, like other state institutions, have been tasked to 'do more with less'. We argue Influence policing is emerging in a context of crisis, resembling previous

pushes towards 'cost effectiveness' and 'efficiency' that long precedes recent austerity policing. Like influence policing now, both intelligence-led and problem-oriented models of policing emerged in response to previous 'crises' of legitimacy and the rise of new public management (Reiner 2010).

Problem-oriented policing (POPs) (see Goldstein 1979) emerged when demand for police services exceeded response capacity. POPs reflected an approach seeking to improve efficiency through tailored policing-derived solutions built on the analysis of specific crime problems (e.g. SARA, PAT methods) (Tilley 2008: 380–382; Tilley and Scott 2012). One well-cited local example is a surge in large appliance thefts from building sites in Charlotte-Mecklenburg. The response included no public consultation or engagement and instead pursued a pattern of behaviour change in the way contractors purchased and stored appliances (see Tilley 2008: 381). It remains a common tool in policing toolboxes and arguably is manifesting in online contexts in ways which have gone unrecognized thus far and as we illustrate below, influence policing incorporates elements of this model.

There are also parallels between strategic communications and ILP centres the generation and use of 'intelligence products' from the analysis of a range of data sources, on which tactical and strategic law-enforcement decision-making can be based (Ratcliffe 2008). It is intended to be proactive and preventive. While Ratcliffe contends that ILP is inherently about 'smart enforcement' to maximize effectiveness, Bullock (2013) suggests ILP is much larger than a specific strategy like POPs, reflecting instead a 'philosophy' about the role of data in directing police activity about which the public may be unaware. As with the specialist activities associated with ILP, the strategic communications specialists we discuss below reveal the continued pluralization of policing internally and across sectors (Rowe 2018), and in this case an evolution of the way datasets manifest in police operational strategy. Our empirical work reveals intelligence-informed strategic interventions that address both specific local problems and national-level issues.

Influence policing is not carried out by frontline officers, yet is considered direct police intervention intended to disrupt and deter offending. Campaigns are informed by intelligence products like those in ILP but are operationalized by shifting the police from social media 'user' to 'sponsor'. Influence policing is not merely a problem-oriented tool, but a developing philosophy of intelligence-led interventions integrated with surveillance capitalism's infrastructures to overcome the current constraints and resourcing challenges of frontline policing. Police communications have been predominantly considered an ad hoc supportive service for police work and 'image' rather than direct frontline work. Below, we see that police organizations' use of online advertising infrastructures constitutes a hidden form of 'police-public encounter' and mobilization of police power. We suggest that influence policing is potentially more resistant to visibility, scrutiny and accountability and raises questions about the future of 'democratic policing'.

METHODS

After learning of the use of targeted digital law enforcement campaigns in our previous research (Collier *et al.* 2022), we were particularly interested in understanding how police were adapting theories, practices and technologies of influence to the unique landscape of law enforcement which has become so established in commercial marketing and other policy areas. To that end, we sought to explore:

1.   What is the nature and scope of police behaviour change campaigns?
2.   How are theories of crime, influence and behaviour change informing campaigns and their developers?

3. How are policing organizations appropriating the targeting capacities of the digital advertising infrastructures to deliver these campaigns?

In 2022, after political and legal pressure stemming from concerns about election interference, the Meta Ad Library became available as an extensive resource to obtain advertising data. We have written about our approach in detail elsewhere (Collier *et al.* 2023; 2024). For this study, we queried the names of all policing organizations in the United Kindom. We searched for ads run by the Home Office, Ministry of Justice and Scottish and Welsh Governments and conducted exploratory research to identify any gaps. In some cases, this revealed data from local or regional accounts (e.g. Birmingham Northeast Police). Finally, we searched for relevant charities and partners (e.g. Crimestoppers and Violence Reduction Units). This generated a dataset of 12,000 adverts (an advert may run as a single segment or be targeted at different segment groups as individual ads). This will not be exhaustive, but we suggest it provides a suitable starting point for a systematic overview of influence policing operations.

The project had access to Police Scotland's strategic communications team and conducted in-depth interviews with practitioners, wider participation in discussions and focus-group sessions and analysis of 21 documents relating to 7 campaigns, including 5 strategy documents, 6 evaluations, 5 insight reports and 5 communications plans. We also received two additional Police Scotland communications strategic documents relating more broadly to the adoption and evaluation of strategic communications approaches. The research was subject to institutional ethical review by the University of Edinburgh. While the ethical issues for elite interviews and document analysis are generally well established, in this case, we also considered the ethical challenges raised by the Meta Ad library data and targeting materials. We draw selectively on other known campaigns out with the dataset to better illustrate our framework of influence policing below.

FINDINGS

Influence policing: mapping modes of cultural and behavioural engineering

The Meta Ad library strikingly reveals the scale of influence policing activity conducted by UK law enforcement. The data discussed here only includes Facebook and Instagram adverts, and not advertising from other platforms. From the Meta Ad Library alone, we found five English constabularies, along with the Scottish and Northern Irish national services, investing significant resources in digital behaviour change campaigns on Facebook and Instagram since 2021.

We observed police organizations using seven different approaches to behavioural targeting in the Meta Ad Library (discussed further in Collier *et al.* 2023; 2024). This is in addition to smaller-scale experimentation in several other English constabularies and widespread use by governments, centralized agencies and departments; national governments, the Home Office, the National Crime Agency and Counter Terror Police. Finally, we observed thousands of adverts run by local partners with police involvement—including Restorative Justice charities, Police and Crime Commissioners, Violence Reduction Units and charities like Crimestoppers. Arguably, this warrants the empirical examination of 'influence policing' as a novel mode of exerting police power in the United Kingdom.

Influence policing is composed of three component frameworks—social marketing practice, behaviour change or 'nudge' theory and advanced digital targeting. They are configured in radically different ways towards different ends in vastly different contexts. Using inductive analysis of our database, we sought to identify different approaches to targeting, the *rationalities* underpinning the campaigns, different material configurations of technology and distinct institutional goals. Several approaches were apparent but shared key similarities and configurations of ideas, practices and technologies.

Within this heterogeneous landscape, we identified six distinctive modes of influence polic-ing. We structure the findings of the study according to these six modes; *choice*, *risk*, *oppor-tunity*, *community*, *coordination* and *territory*. For each, we discuss the rationalities, practices, topics and material uses of digital advertising and targeting approaches and support the claims with examples from campaigns. Crucially, within each, the police deploy an apparent *vision of crime*—drawing on different theoretical resources, (implicitly or explicitly) connected with criminology's repertoire. Although these are theorizations of *crime*, in this context they under-pin different forms of influence policing.

Choice—the citizen as a civic consumer

The first model we observed in Scottish campaigns and in some larger English constabularies (e.g. GMP), operates through the lens of consumer choice and identity. Behaviour change is understood as a form of 'rational choice' underpinned by cultural narratives, habitual individual and collective behaviours and individual and group psychology. In this model, policing institu-tions can be understood in much the same way as Coca-Cola or Nike—major brands with a role in creating and shaping culture on a large scale.

> For us in Police Scotland, that role is fundamentally based around the principles of marketing and branding. So, I look at public confidence, we measure most of what we do in policing by how confident the public are in us, and do they have trust in police. Can we continue to police with consent? If we've got the trust of the public then yes, we can, if we don't then no we can't. And public confidence to me is the equivalent of any big brand's brand marketing. That's their basis of what they do—this is what people think of you, the first words that come to mind when they talk about you. You say Coca Cola and people instantly know what the brand looks like, what the logo looks like, what they stand for, what they do, where you are, what part of the market, in terms of the 'four P's' you're in. So, for me, public confidence is like our branding.
> (Police Scotland communications officer)

One campaign which exemplifies attempts to reshape culture through the lens of consumer choice and identity is Police Scotland's *That Guy* campaign, aimed at preventing sexual violence. Shortly before the launch of this campaign, UK news media reported that a serving police officer had abducted and murdered Sarah Everard (The Guardian 2021). Cognizant of the catastrophic impact on public confidence, many forces responded quickly, by encouraging self-protective behaviours in women. News articles have captured some of the advice provided in the wake of the murder. *MyLondon* (2021) quoted New Scotland Yard as suggesting:

> Our advice [to women being stopped by police] is to ask some very searching questions of that officer: Where are your colleagues? Where have you come from? Why are you here? Exactly why are you stopping or talking to me[...] Ask to hear the voice of the operator, even ask to speak through the radio to the operator to say who you are and for them to verify you are with a genuine officer, acting legitimately.
> (New Scotland Yard Press Office)

The Metropolitan Police Service was heavily criticized for suggesting that women who were suspicious of an officer 'shout out or flag down a bus' (The Independent 2021). Combined with the controversial response to a public vigil held in memory of Sarah Everard, media and public criticism of policing intensified drastically. By an accident of timing, the 'That guy' campaign was released in the following weeks. The campaign contrasted sharply with those victim-responsibilizing 'awareness' campaigns and 'PR' communications, by targeting men and

encouraging the 'calling out' of male sexual entitlement among peer groups. The adverts (Figure 1) centred around the message 'Don't be that Guy', and encouraged men to challenge peers displaying misogynistic attitudes, behaviours and violence. Crucially, they shifted responsibility away from victims to wider peer groups, emphasizing that inaction reflected complicity. The response to the campaign was positive and reinforced narratives of a distinctly more progressive character in 'Scottish' policing (Collier *et al.* 2023).

On the surface, this campaign appears to be a standard campaign benefitting from 'savvier' messaging and fortuitous timing. 'Under the hood', it combined behaviour change 'nudges' with strategic digital targeting. The campaign emerged directly from Police Scotland's annual strategic priorities and was delivered by the 'strategic communications' unit of dedicated *influence officers* (our term) whose team drew on the academy, internal police data, criminal profiles and engagement with a range of third sector partners to develop a psychological and behavioural profile of those involved in sexual violence against women. It addressed the intractability of narratives around consent (especially from authority sources), the persistence of victim-blaming and the role of male sexual entitlement as a key factor reinforced by lower-level misogynistic sensibilities in peer groups.

The resultant campaign involved a combination of communications products aimed at challenging dominant narratives and inciting both cultural and behavioural change; pushing men to engage with secondary content that would assist them in challenging those in their peer groups directly. By harnessing 'peer influence', the campaign not only targeted the friends of people in 'risk groups' for misogynistic violence with adverts but also included the use of paid influencers from relevant communities to enhance the peer-messaging function. It used digitally targeted advertising infrastructures to deliver adverts to young men in Scotland—including geo-targeting based on location, and microtargeting by age group, relationship status, interest in dating and pornographic content and keyword use on Twitter.
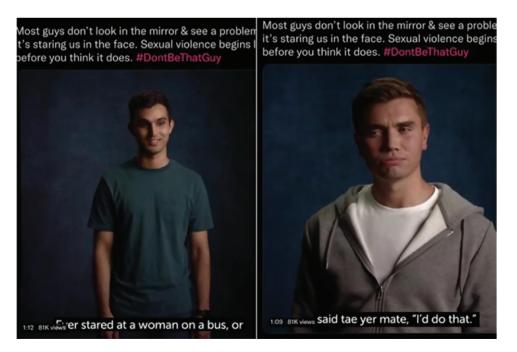

Fig. 1 Police Scotland 'That Guy' campaign

Here, strategic communications go beyond crime prevention 'nudges' to include organizational reputation management and positioning the police in relation to a 'hot' issue. They intend to *create* culture as much as respond to it—evoking identity (both national and community), the relationship (both current and aspirational) the audience has with the police and situating these interventions as part of a cultural and political landscape. Importantly, these are not the 'flat' and bidirectional communications of police using social media. Instead, they give the police sophisticated cultural, behavioural and infrastructural tools to frame conversations about and understandings of the organization itself. They intervene in *policing* as much as they do in *crime*. The campaign pushes its audience to choose an identity (which includes a relationship with policing) as well as making a behavioural choice. While *choice* campaigns employ targeted behavioural design, they are delivered as wide-band, national conversations that aim both to have targeted prevention impacts on behaviour and also engineer wider-scale cultural change. This reflects the organization of Police Scotland's strategic communications. Since the amalgamation of Scottish constabularies, these have been conducted by a comparatively well-resourced centralized specialist team within a national communications department rather than multiple teams at a local level.

A UK-wide example of a *choice* campaign can be found in the National Crime Agency's and here, West Yorkshire Police's *Cyber Choices* campaign (Figure 2). More closely targeted at young people and their parents (serving ads based on Google and YouTube search histories), this invites young people at risk of involvement in cybercrime to reflect *on what kind of person they are* and where they want their life to go, giving them a 'choice' of pathways.

> Those with a real interest in how tech works could have a bright future ahead. Skills in coding, gaming, cyber security or anything digital-related, are in high demand, not just in the UK but also abroad which means that young people may have an opportunity to travel to interesting places whilst learning new cyber skills.
>   Unfortunately, the digital world can also be tempting for young people for the wrong reasons. Many are getting involved in cyber crime without realising that they are breaking the law. This can have serious consequences for someone's broader future and not just their career.
>   (National Crime Agency, 2023)

The 'choice' here is not just one of behaviour—but of *personal* id*entity*. Criminal behaviours and impressions of police are framed as chosen aspects of selfhood assembled by individuals as part of their sense of self. While these adverts seek to consequently shape behaviour, the interesting element of these campaigns is generally linked to supportive services supporting positive choices, with the 'police' lending authority, legitimacy and in some cases, a fear-based reinforcement. Each campaign seeks to support police legitimacy and authority by underpinning the interventions, but also by representing a positive image of the organization. Nudges here are softer, with police communicating 'strategically' in the manner of a large-scale commercial brand. Befitting this approach, a 'national' place-based character or tone-of-voice (e.g. 'Scottishish' of PS examples) enhances the campaign's relevance to the target population.

Opportunity—individualized situational crime prevention

The second mode uses digital adverts to intervene in the *situational* dynamics of criminal opportunity by signalling capable guardianship or increasing perceived risk. *Opportunity* campaigns hybridize digital ads with 'hotspot policing'. Instead of focussing on epidemiological assessments of risk factors or risky groups, this model understands crime as ecological and committed by rational actors whose offending behaviour is a function of criminogenic opportunity structures (Cohen and Felson 2006; Cornish and Clarke 1986). This more hypodermic mode has

the advantages of enabling (1) police intervention and visibility despite a scarcity of resources, (2) accessing hard-to-reach groups resistant to police contact and (3) overcoming conventional territorial and jurisdictional constraints of nation-states via the projection of police imagery and messages into near or distant targets' online lives.

Opportunity campaigns tend to be top-down with little community involvement and use more invasive forms of interest-based targeting when the behaviour is seen as susceptible to change ('in the moment' of offending). One example from the NCA delivers a browser-based advert when someone searches for an illegal online service (see Collier *et al.* 2019) highlighting its illegality and the risk of prosecution if used. They employ specific targeting, aiming to mini-mize exposure beyond their selected audience.

> I think it's using communications as a tactical tool to really make a difference in public. You know, and I think that's maybe slightly different to the long burn of a domestic abuse or a sex-ual crime campaign, where you may not see results for many, many, ten, twenty, thirty years … the counter-terrorism policing thing is actually trying to do something on the ground at a specific time to either put someone off or to, to, you know, to uncover something, or to make a difference.
> (Police Scotland communications officer)

Another example from the Meta Ad Library is a campaign delivered by Counter Terror Police under Operation Servator (Figure 3), which used location data to target specific areas in

Fig. 2 Cyber Choices campaign, West Yorkshire Police (Online)

the United Kingdom. Using fine-grain targeting around specific postcodes where high-security government buildings or other targets are located, this allowed the deployment of an advertising 'nudge' to phones located in these areas, often presenting a visual image of police along with a warning.
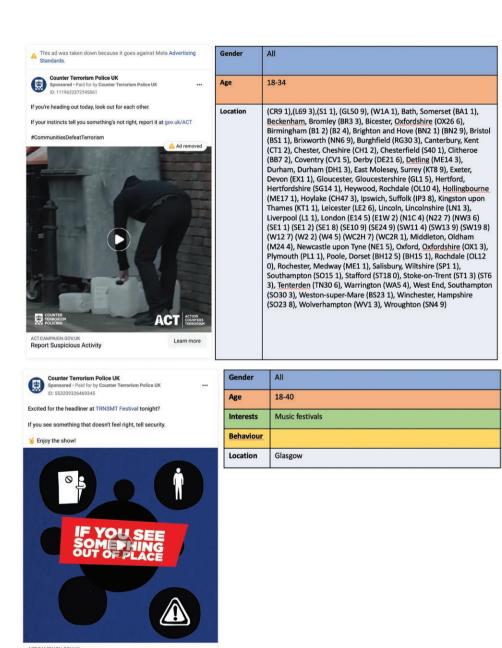
Gender	All
Age	18-34
Location	(CR9 1),(L69 3),(S1 1), (GL50 9), (W1A 1), Bath, Somerset (BA1 1), Beckenham, Bromley (BR3 3), Bicester, Oxfordshire (OX26 6), Birmingham (B1 2) (B2 4), Brighton and Hove (BN2 1) (BN2 9), Bristol (BS1 1), Brixworth (NN6 9), Burghfield (RG30 3), Canterbury, Kent (CT1 2), Chester, Cheshire (CH1 2), Chesterfield (S40 1), Clitheroe (BB7 2), Coventry (CV1 5), Derby (DE21 6), Detling (ME14 3), Durham, Durham (DH1 3), East Molesey, Surrey (KT8 9), Exeter, Devon (EX1 1), Gloucester, Gloucestershire (GL1 5), Hertford, Hertfordshire (SG14 1), Heywood, Rochdale (OL10 4), Hollingbourne (ME17 1), Hoylake (CH47 3), Ipswich, Suffolk (IP3 8), Kingston upon Thames (KT1 1), Leicester (LE2 6), Lincoln, Lincolnshire (LN1 1), Liverpool (L1 1), London (E14 5) (E1W 2) (N1C 4) (N22 7) (NW3 6) (SE1 1) (SE1 2) (SE1 8) (SE10 9) (SE24 9) (SW11 4) (SW13 9) (SW19 8) (W12 7) (W2 2) (W4 5) (WC2H 7) (WC2R 1), Middleton, Oldham (M24 4), Newcastle upon Tyne (NE1 5), Oxford, Oxfordshire (OX1 3), Plymouth (PL1 1), Poole, Dorset (BH12 5) (BH15 1), Rochdale (OL12 0), Rochester, Medway (ME1 1), Salisbury, Wiltshire (SP1 1), Southampton (SO15 1), Stafford (ST18 0), Stoke-on-Trent (ST1 3) (ST6 3), Tenterden (TN30 6), Warrington (WA5 4), West End, Southampton (SO30 3), Weston-super-Mare (BS23 1), Winchester, Hampshire (SO23 8), Wolverhampton (WV1 3), Wroughton (SN4 9)

Gender	All
Age	18-40
Interests	Music festivals
Behaviour	
Location	Glasgow

Fig. 3 UK Counter-terror 'nudge' adverts

Other campaigns conducted under 'Servator' targeted phone music festival attendees. We observed several campaigns operating in this 'hypodermic' way to deliver a timely 'nudge' to the target. Sometimes, this was based on physical location, but often involved triggers for online behaviour. For example, one Police Scotland campaign directed fear-based messaging at targets using keywords associated with child abuse on Twitter (Collier *et al.* 2023).

Another campaign raises important ethical questions about the potential uses of opportunity to influence policing. The 'Migrants on the Move' campaign was run in collaboration with a 'migration behaviour change' agency. Written in Arabic, Pashto and Vietnamese, the adverts were designed to target people in a series of small villages in Northern France and Belgium seeking asylum in the United Kingdom, aiming to 'nudge' them away from attempting to cross the Channel in a small boat.

The adverts mobilize fear-inducing graphic depictions of boats sinking at sea (Figure 4), dogs searching trucks and military-style drones (Figure 5), with text designed to elicit a heightened fear response in the viewer. These adverts ignore the complex contexts of persons seeking asylum and influence their 'rationality'; they risk being considered a people smuggler and imprisoned if they help steer the boat, they risk betrayal by people smugglers, there is a high risk of death, or drones and dogs will deploy against them.

The campaign's complex segmentation (see Figure 4) reflects its specific target audience(s). It was delivered to more than 650 'segments', each with a tailored message and targeting specification. Some ads targeted less than a thousand people (Kurdish speakers currently staying in Brussels; Vietnamese people travelling away from family in Brussels or Calais, or Arabic speakers who had just left Brussels with interests in a range of Afghan sporting pages), while others had larger audiences.

This mode contrasts with the *choice* approach—the brand of the law enforcement agency or government plays little role, and there is no attempt to shape a wider culture or identity. Instead, like a digital version of the cardboard cut-out of police officers used to deter shoplifting, the content is designed as a 'hypodermic' form of communication; a signal injected into the

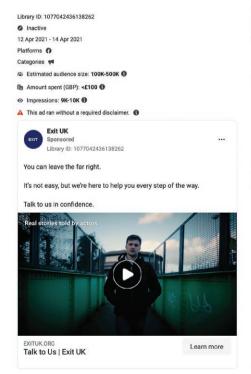**Fig. 4** Home Office refugee campaign

Fig. 5 Home Office refugee campaign (part 2)

information environment intended to be internalized directly by the recipient at the optimal moment to change behaviour.

Risk—digital inoculations in epidemiologies of crime

The third observed mode employed a 'public health' rationality using designated risk categories. Individuals and communities are sorted into risk-based profiles with certain characteristics increasing or decreasing the perceived risk of offending or victimization. Risk campaigns rely on the display of indicative criminogenic characteristics rather than ecologies of criminal opportunity. Like the 'epidemiological' rationality of Prevent (Heath-Kelly 2020), risk-based campaigns involve the 'scientific' identification of risk factors in relevant publics, followed by surveillance and pro-active 'treatment' of different groups to prevent crime. The campaigns deploy a risk-based logic of profiling and intervention based on data points designated as criminogenic and associated with target communities (e.g. language, likes and interests). The behavioural focus of *opportunity* messaging is combined with attempts to shape the culture of sub-groups through the propagation of counter-narratives. These interventions might be understood as attempting cultural inoculation or treatment within the information environment. They are often clandestine, seen only by the target population and sometimes obfuscate a targeting agency's involvement by functioning through a proxy.

While used in other areas of policing, this model typifies numerous de-radicalization campaigns delivered by state-supported charities. These were some of the most specifically targeted in our sample. We include a single illustrative example here—a charity whose goal is to support the deradicalization of those on the far right (Figures 6–8). This campaign was

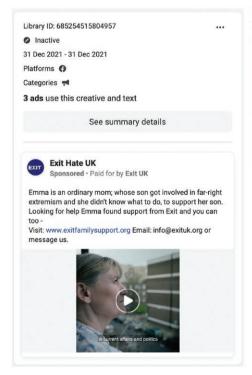| Gender	All
Age	16-30
Interests	Bet365, First-person shooter games, Online casino, Online gambling, Paddy Power, Sports betting, William Hill (bookmaker)
Exclude interests	Animal Equality, Attitude (magazine), Daily Mirror, Equal opportunity, Equality and Human Rights Commission, Feminism, Gender-neutral language, Gender-specific and gender-neutral pronouns, Genderqueer, Greenpeace USA, Michelle Visage, RuPaul, RuPaul's Drag Race, Social equality, The Guardian, The Times, United Nations Human Rights Council, Vegan Recipes, Vegan nutrition, Women's empowerment
Behaviour	Soccer fans (high content engagement)
Location (living in)	Bedford, Birmingham, Blackpool, Bolton, Bournemouth, Bury, City of Bradford, City of Salford, City of Sunderland, Coventry, Dagenham, Denton, Tameside, Derby, Dewsbury, Dorchester, Dudley, Exeter, Guildford, Halifax, Harrogate, Harrow, Hereford, Huddersfield, Leeds, Leicester, Lewes, East Sussex, London, Luton, Maidenhead, Manchester, Middlesbrough, Newcastle upon Tyne, Nottingham, Nuneaton, Oldham, Plymouth, Portsmouth, Preston, Rochdale, Romford, Sheffield, Shrewsbury, Southend-on-Sea, Stafford, Stockport, Stoke-on-Trent, Telford, Wakefield, Wigan, Wilton, Redcar and Cleveland, Wolverhampton, Worcester, Worcestershire

Fig. 6 Exit Hate Campaign Segment 1

notable as it involved targeting different adverts for different people within the same campaign. Adverts were targeted at those on the far right, at their parents and at social workers in their area. Each received tailored messages. For example, one ad targeted young people with a range of interests and dislikes;

It is worth noting the use of personal interests as both inclusion and exclusion characteristics. Certain interests (e.g. personalities, sports), somewhat tenuously associated with the far right were used to target a select audience of young people. Exclusionary interests diverted the adverts *away* from those with what were considered risk-mitigating characteristics: expressed interest in left-wing or progressive beliefs. Similar approaches were deployed when targeting parents (Figures 7 and 8).

Interestingly, the targeting of fathers (see Figure 8) pursued a socially conservative audience, but one without an interest in content associated with the US far-right. The adverts were targeted in very specific locations: several dozen very small villages—many around Knowsley (the site of far-right disorder 6 months after the campaign ran) and Sandwell, and some small towns proximate to military or caravan sites. While only speculation is possible, analysis of the list suggests that they are driven by intelligence products on far-right recruitment rather than external marketing, government, or third-sector managed datasets (e.g. MOSAIC).

This mode of influence policing reveals how online infrastructures enable micro-targeted interventions. As advertisers, policing organizations can 'carve out' and reach specific sections of the population to reflect their 'risk profiles', widening the material elements police can use to refine the segmentation of their interventions. Where conventional risk society policing relies on mentalities of risk assessment that stem from the insurance industry, social work and

Gender	Women
Age	18-65
Interests	Asda, Beauty Dior, Fine Gardening, Keller Williams Realty, Liberty (department store, Long weekend, MSC Cruises, Marks & Spencer, Next plc, Rightmove, Royal Caribbean Cruises Ltd, Sainsbury's, Staycation, Waitrose
Location (living in)	Corsham (Wiltshire)

Fig. 7 Exit Hate Campaign Segment 2

forensic psychology (Ericson and Haggerty 1997), influence policing diverges from these pillars. We observe a form of knowledge work which assigns 'risk' to constellations of a wide range of highly dynamic algorithmically inferred behavioural, social and cultural characteristics. The risk-based mode reveals how platforms and advertising infrastructure equip policing institutions with more sophisticated tools for social and cultural differentiation and exert power and influence over 'problem populations' in real time without revealing the use of profiling power to the public.

Community

The fourth observed mode represents an evolution of police use of organic social media to engage in 'dialogue'. Community campaigns employed paid peer influencers to capitalize on their community following of pre-assembled self-selecting publics (i.e. 'like, follow, subscribe'). In this example, dedicated campaign accounts are created where police branding is not prominent. The advertiser then employs partners, celebrities and other media to reshare campaign content. This mode enables policing organizations to contribute to and 'craft' organic conversations without necessarily invoking the consequences of their symbolic or visual presence. Partners provide a level of legitimacy among target populations, while police fulfil a coordination role and ultimately can underpin campaigns with institutional authority. Community influencers offer clear advantages in terms of representing a way of entering conversations that is already salient with the target community while minimizing the disengagement of targeted groups who dislike or disregard the public–police. Equally, influencers take on much of the work of managing reach and audience across many channels or platforms.
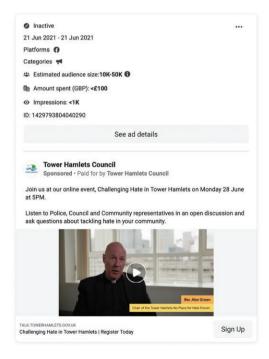

Fig. 8 Exit hate Campaign segment 3

Several campaigns in the dataset used these methods. For example, the '*That Guy*' campaign used a range of influencers; footballers, bloggers and video game influencers. In West Midlands, an influencer campaign conducted with a private agency engaged at a much lower level, focussing on improving confidence in the police among black communities.

> WMP have just commenced an innovative campaign with 'Tap In' to deliver a new social media campaign, based on authentic conversation with a Black Generation Z audience—a core demographic in delivery of our Uplift ambition. The campaign will activate the WMP vision by fostering real conversations about Policing with Black Communities […] The campaign will form its core basis upon partnering with strategic UK and Midland-based influencers. These influencers will provide WMP the opportunity to create awareness and generate positive sentiment around policing, as well as take advantage of advocacy/positive engagement with people in positions of influence.
> (West Midland Police)

Incorporating celebrity is not a new feature of awareness campaigns, however, the use of 'influencers' is distinct in its closeness to peer influence (some with only a few thousand 'followers'). The pitfalls of these campaigns mirror those of older forms of celebrity-based advertising; celebrities may fall into disrepute and undermine the campaign, or police may lose control of the messaging. However, some challenges are more novel. Given the much larger and unregulated nature of the influencer economy, the selection of key influencers is mediated not only by low-level marketing agencies but also bought through sites that algorithmically select influencers to cater to specific communities. This more direct contact with their fanbase, desire for authenticity and often lack of management means influencers themselves accrue substantial

Fig. 9 Tower Hamlets Hate Crime Campaign

risk. As they create their own content for campaigns and personal channels, this can lead to clashes with desired messages. Equally, influencers manage their presence through the collection of data and metrics from the platforms to which police have no direct access. Last, there is the question of transparency and fairness. It may not be clear to communities who are paid or paying for promoting police messages, and this can exert a wider cultural force as policing may become a lucrative or exploitative market for culturally influential figures.

Coordination

The fifth mode of influence harnesses the capabilities of targeted advertising infrastructures rather differently. These campaigns looked more traditional, often simply advertising a supportive service. However, they use the opportunities presented by platforms to reach 'information-poor' groups with which the police struggle to engage. It retains the public health view of the 'risk' model but prioritizes the coordination of service provision, pointing people to support in a digital multi-service environment. Coordination campaigns are targeted, rather than part of a wider conversation, but are designed bottom-up, often co-produced with communities and fully 'supportive' in design. Rather than mobilizing the police image and its symbolic power (and connotations of force), they often seek to neutralize it. Criminal justice organizations function as the 'glue' between a matrix of agencies. The campaign itself doesn't seek to directly produce the desired outcome, instead, it connects and aligns its audience with the wider supportive services that might produce it.

An example is the Scottish Violence Reduction Unit's *You Decide* campaign which advertised support services to those likely to have experienced serious violence. It targeted people living in areas of deprivation and visited small geographic areas around hospitals using location data. Intended to substitute the physical Navigator services (Hodgson *et al.* 2022), which were unable to run during the cornoavirus pandemic initiated lockdown, this enabled tailoring the content by location so that voice-overs matched local accents (Collier *et al.* 2023).
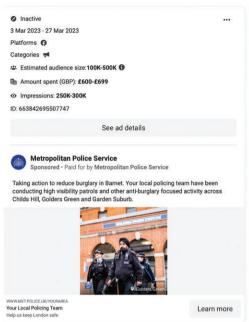
Another example, advertising a hate crime outreach event in partnership with Tower Hamlets Council, shows even careful targeting of a 'hard to reach' community (Figure 9).

This presents both a complex targeting product and a stereotyped view of a social audience; a monolithic vision of the Muslim subject. One of the behaviours targeted used a Facebook ad category which automatically detected how users' levels of content engagement changed during Ramadan, enabling advertisers to target religiously observant Muslims by proxy.

Territory

The final mode resembles the opportunity model but services a different purpose and targets a broader area (e.g. the 'digital space' of a London borough) or platform (e.g. TikTok). Less concerned with opportunity and practical guardianship, territorial campaigns assert presence and project symbolic power on behalf of the state and law enforcement. The adverts broadcast two intended narrative functions; likely perpetrators receive a fear-based message, while likely victims are 'reassured' by police visibility. While campaigns aim to affect criminal behaviour, they assert a territorial and symbolic police presence, often in (digital or physical) areas where this is presence contested or unavailable. Evaluation of these campaigns is a secondary concern—the point is to demonstrate 'we are here' and respond to your concerns. One example is the Metropolitan Police's location-based patrol campaigns (Figure 10).

This targeted individual London postcodes, with content tailored for each location by addressing concerns raised in the Police and Crime Surveys. In this way, these campaigns project an image of the police, often to supplement community-based patrol, enhance visibility and intensify 'hotspot' or 'saturation' policing activity. Although they crudely include some

Gender	All
Age	13-65
Location	London (NW4 9)(N2 0)(N2 8)(N3 2)(N3 3)(NW11 0)(NW11 6)(NW11 7)(NW11 8)(NW11 9)(NW2 1)(NW2 2)(NW2 3)(NW2 4)(NW2 5)(NW2 6)(NW2 7)(NW3 7)(NW4 1)(NW4 2)(NW4 3)(NW4 4)(NW9 0)(NW9 5)(NW9 6)(NW9 7)(NW9 8)(NW9 9)

Fig. 10 Metropolitan Police Eeassurance campaign

behaviour change components (e.g. deterrence), their aim appears to be the projection of symbolic power and authority of the police into a specific physical place, but virtually.

DISCUSSION

We conclude by critically reflecting on 'influence policing' as a framework for understanding a range of contemporary police practices. It is not our intention here to suggest that the individual approaches outlined are particularly 'new' in terms of marketing practice or behaviour change interventions. However, we argue that the use of these tools by law enforcement to virtually harness the 'symbolic power' underlying conventional frontline policing requires analysis and scrutiny. Bluntly, the police are unique in being the only advertiser that can legitimately deploy coercive or lethal force against their audience.[1] This raises several questions about ethics, democracy, scrutiny and accountability with which criminological scholars are generally concerned.

The ethics of influence policing

We can begin to understand the ethical and democratic challenges posed by influence policing by drawing on and extending analyses of algorithmic prediction in policing activity. As Moses and Chan (2016) highlight, the 'black box' character of algorithmic infrastructures, be they predictive or otherwise, inhibits the capacity of individual officers and police organizations to account for their decisions. This opacity is further compounded by the privatized nature of the influence infrastructures they employ which are not subject to public scrutiny and suffer from well-established bias and prejudice reproduced by algorithms and machine-learning (Ferguson (2016); Kaufmann *et al.* 2019). Influence policing is relatively invisible when compared directly

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1   We acknowledge that zemiologists and green criminologists may rightly argue that businesses do deploy lethal or coercive force. We suggest this has a different orientation to exerting state power and authority.

with policing activities like stop and search where bias is more readily available for scrutiny publicly. Micro-level targeting employing inclusion and exclusion criteria means adverts can purposefully be hidden from all except their targets, including those groups more likely to scrutinize them. At present, the authors did not identify a formal mechanism by which these campaigns could be held to account as operational activity, as they are widely seen as 'just communications'.

This point becomes particularly salient when we appreciate that influence policing reflects public–police organizations taking a professional interest in the television habits, online browsing and cultural commitments of the public. Influence policing exploits the vast yet intimate data collected by Internet platforms to achieve operational policing goals. This data, intended for commercial advertising, is exceptionally intrusive and raises questions about privacy, especially when in the hands of police where no legal threshold is required to justify their use.

This also raises questions of how the police create and reify 'problem populations' and constitute 'risky' groups. Stigma arising from highly invasive cultural and behavioural targeting can itself provoke powerful backlash effects and resentment (as well-established in other areas of targeted police interventions). Many of the profiles we document here involve clear stereotyping, partly emerging from the platform itself. While Meta does not allow targeting directly on ethnicity and religion, policing organizations have used a mosaic of intimate cultural and behavioural characteristics to recreate their segment. Therefore, the design of the platform itself is implicated in creating stereotyped profiles, drawing on their own assumptions and research about target groups. As platforms evolve to incorporate more individualized content and targeting profiles through the use of generative artificial intelligence, these issues and potential harms may be amplified.

A more positive vision of 'influence policing' might adopt some features of Police Scotland's *That Guy* campaign. This engaged with third-sector groups and members of the public, bringing them directly into the research, design and assurance processes for the campaign. Its intended method of action was openly stated, the police role in the campaign was clear, its use of targeting was broad rather than invasive and it engaged at the macro-level—contributing to a national cultural conversation that extended beyond the intended groups' behaviour. However, despite the positive aspects, this does not address privacy concerns that come from using digital targeting or—however laudable the aim—whether it should be the role of the police to reshape 'culture'. This is counterposed to the more harmful and problematic examples in the dataset which reflect a top-down, hypodermic approach using opaque targeting methods, racial stereotyping, deliberate use of fear-based tactics against vulnerable groups, deploying stigma and operating extra jurisdictionally on an audience with no mechanism for recourse.

Although we have not directly explored this in our proposed framework by virtue of our dataset, there is the additional possibility of using these strategies to target police officers themselves with culture and behaviour change campaigns. Currently, the private sector targeted ads infrastructure is not used to message serving officers—although these behaviour changes and bespoke targeting methods are being adopted in recruitment campaigns for police and other criminal justice workers. Instead, campaigns targeting officers are distributed via internal communications networks and publications. Examples of uses in the Police Scotland's Corporate communications strategy include continuous professional development, ensuring compliance with vehicle regulations and insurance policies and raising awareness of 'regulations'. Given the technological infrastructure underpinning frontline policing (PDAs, work phones and device splash screens), there is ample scope for the above models to be used to target specific officer groups with interventions to address current issues including misogyny, racism and queerphobia both within the police and in their interactions with the public.

The notion of a 'don't be that officer' campaign raises interesting questions about the willingness of policing organizations to utilize influence policing tactics internally—segmented and

tailored to target different 'risk' groups and cultural sensibilities within public–policing. These might draw productively on the wealth of critical policing scholarship that maps out the structural, cultural and behavioural dimensions of these long-standing issues in depth. This would undoubtedly be a controversial idea, though one which might highlight some of the wider problems of stigma, privacy and legitimacy in question.

Crafted encounters and holographic police power

Distinguishing influence policing from the police as 'influencers' requires a deepening of how we understand police-public interactions. It reflects not only the use of a behaviour change toolkit but an evolution of the exertion of police power in interactions. Influence policing seeks to harness the symbolic weight of face-to-face police-public interactions and deploy it paradoxically in ways both more widely dispersed yet specifically targeted at granularized constellations of social and cultural characteristics. Influence policing can be both proactive and reactive, founded on 'high-policing' strategic intelligence while targeting low-policing environments at scale with limited visibility. Crucially, influence policing redefines the conditions of police–public interactions in a way which decreases their public exposure, while amplifying their capacity to identify and target specific populations and amplify police presence, often without their knowledge, dialogue or (direct) consent.

Influence policing is of growing importance to police organizations against a backdrop of austerity. Demand on police to respond to growing crime problems (e.g. cybercrime) and public health crises is increasing, while staff recruitment and retention have declined. Influence policing campaigns can mobilize a salient image of police capacity where there is decreasing availability of physical frontline resources. Like earlier policing models, influence policing is developing in tandem with contemporaneous organizational crises and evolving technologies. At the same time, the 'threat landscape' of law enforcement and its response is increasingly abstracted and digitized (Terpstra *et al.* 2019), with misinformation, online harms and other sources of digital risks characterizing a chaotic information environment. Influence police work may increasingly be used to fill voids in frontline capacity, where public–police need to be seen to be doing something and problems 'about which it is felt that something ought to be done' and therefore might be understood as having *holographic* qualities (described in Linneman and Turner 2022). This policing hologram attempts to use influence infrastructures embedded throughout societies to project the power of 'police' into local and national spaces, all in a climate of strained or absent physical resourcing, either due to austerity or to the digital nature of the space itself (Terpstra *et al.* 2019).

CONCLUSION

We argue that 'influence policing' constitutes something distinct from public–police as social media 'users' seeking to use online platforms to engage the public in accessible and 'authentic' dialogical interactions to enhance community connectedness (Henry 2023). Instead, we have found that marketing rather than PR-focused police communications is emerging as a specialist policing role, serving several functions we conventionally associate with street-level encounters. Those engaged in influence policing see their work as similar to frontline police work, and not merely auxiliary. Rather than simply injecting signals into the information stream (Ilan 2020), or removing unwanted signals (such as Drill videos), targeted advertising infrastructures afford police a sophisticated set of tools with which to reshape culture via tailored and targeted interventions. Far from authentic interaction rituals (Henry 2023), these encounters are primarily unidirectional and do not require the publics to 'opt in' or 'consent' to police encounters beyond social media platform's terms of use.

Influence policing is predicated on a sophisticated grasp of the hybridization of physical and virtual space. The hybrid 'street' or 'beat' reflects the integration of online space into the policing of physical space (i.e. postcode/community targeting) and individual experience and the integration of technologies of control into the built environment of our online and hybrid spaces. The crafted encounters described here result from this integration of digital and physical streets. Tailored representations of policing and the symbolic power of the police are projected towards designated publics in real time using location, socio-demographic and interest profiles. Simultaneously, these affordances allow police power to be projected to others in the same community in a completely different voice and tone, propagating an entirely separate affective experience, all while others may be unaware of police presence entirely.

Finally, the rise of influence policing raises significant questions about the continually evolving role of platforms and their affordances in enabling the public–police and state to exert power at a distance. The police are afforded the ability to engage in complex and multi-faceted 'facework'. Services can maintain multiple faces simultaneously with each face performed only to its appropriate audience, all while minimizing exposure to interactional scrutiny. Influence policing is inevitably always seeking to enhance the image of policing as present and waiting (Figure 5), as understanding and empathetic (Figure 8) and as aligned with contemporary understandings of victims and public sensibility (Figure 1) at different moments. Whether the targeting categories created by the infrastructure are an accurate reflection of real publics or not, they clearly have the capacity to exhibit performative power of their own by fragmenting the landscape of experiences of policing. By recognizing influencing policing as a police-public encounter that exerts power, we argue it must be scrutinized as such. This should prompt us to take seriously what this means for the scrutiny and accountability of domestic digital influence campaigns in law enforcement.

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