
Abstract:
In 2012 the Leveson Inquiry investigated relations between the police and the press, examining the routine systems and processes of police-press relations in the UK and, more specifically, the conduct of senior Metropolitan Police Service officers during an investigation into phone-hacking (Operation Caryatid). The Inquiry is notable in that it shone a light on a normally hidden policing function; it brought the backstage processes of police-media relations, part of police ‘image work’, to the frontstage area. This article considers the Leveson Inquiry and the data it collected as a case study of police impression management - it examines how the police sought to manage impressions about how they manage impressions. It takes a dramaturgical approach drawing on the work of Erving Goffman and Peter K Manning, combined with impression management concepts drawn from management and organisational studies. The article concludes that the identified impression management tactics used by different police ‘teams’ combined to protect the collective police image and to reinforce, for the present, the dominant position of the police in their relationship with the press.

Keywords: Police-media relations, police communications, Leveson Inquiry, impression management, reputation management.

Introduction

The processes of police-press relations in the UK are, in the main, backstage activities rarely of interest to public inquiries and policymakers. This changed with the Leveson Inquiry which brought these activities frontstage and threw the spotlight on the routine formal and informal practices of how the police engage with the news media. Prime Minister David Cameron announced in July 2011 the establishment of an independent public inquiry into ‘the culture, practices and ethics of the press’ in the wake of allegations of phone-hacking and inappropriate relationships between the press and police. The
terms of reference of the subsequent Leveson Inquiry included investigation of the police-press relationship (Leveson, 2012a).

The Inquiry and its resulting dataset not only inform the study of police-press relations, but also enable a case study of police impression management. This article argues that the Inquiry can be examined as a study of how the police attempted to manage impressions about how they manage impressions at a critical time for policing. In this regard, although the Leveson Inquiry was a public inquiry into police-press relations, it represented also an inquiry into policing per se with implications for perceptions of police leadership, integrity and competence. The article casts a dramaturgical focus on the Leveson Inquiry, rooted in the work of Erving Goffman and Peter K Manning but also drawing on studies of reputation and image management. These, from the academic literature in the fields of management and organisational studies, provide individual and organisational impression management concepts that have not previously been applied to police communications research. Their application here provides fresh insight into the image work that police forces engage in and contributes to both the literature on police communications and to the growing body of academic work on organisational reputation and image. At a practical level the article identifies impression management tactics that contributed to the police not only surviving the Inquiry without greater reputational damage but also benefiting from recommendations with the potential to swing the police-press balance of power in their favour. First, though, the background to the Leveson Inquiry is outlined, followed by the sketching out of the Inquiry’s terms of reference and general outcomes relevant to police-press relations. The article goes on to discuss the dataset produced by the Inquiry, together with the analytical framework, which is then applied through case studies of individual and organisational impression management.

Context: The road to Leveson
The police service in England and Wales is a controversial institution which since the 19th century has weathered episodes of scandal and failure, while nevertheless building and managing a reputation as a public service with a high level of legitimacy (Reiner, 2010). In recent years, this legitimacy has been challenged to the extent that Loader (2014) has argued policing is in a state of ‘permanent crisis’. This arises not so much from the police reform programme pursued by the Conservative-Liberal government or the funding cuts imposed across public services, as from a series of scandals, some new and others with historical roots. These run the gamut from police violence (the death of Ian Tomlinson at the G20 protests in 2009) to the orchestration of cover-ups (the Hillsborough tragedy) to investigative failure and spying on the families of victims (the Stephen Lawrence case) to unacceptable behaviours of undercover and senior officers. This article focuses on an Inquiry which grew out of a phone-hacking scandal but which captures within its many threads the contemporary policing themes of questionable leadership, investigative shortcomings and inappropriate relationships.

The origins of the Leveson Inquiry can be traced back to a Metropolitan Police Service (MPS hereafter) investigation, Operation Caryatid, initiated in December 2005 under the overall responsibility of Deputy Assistant Commissioner Peter Clarke, who reported to Assistant Commissioner (AC) Andy Hayman1. The operation’s purpose was to investigate whether voicemail messages of members of the Royal Household were being intercepted. Suspicions of phone-hacking had arisen as stories had appeared in the press, particularly in the News of the World (NoTW hereafter) written by Clive Goodman, which suggested inside knowledge. As a result of the investigation Goodman and a private investigator, Glenn Mulcaire, were prosecuted and sentenced to jail terms in 2007 for illegally intercepting mobile phone messages.

At the time of Goodman’s trial, his activities appeared to be those of one ‘rogue reporter’ but during 2009 The Guardian newspaper published articles arguing that phone hacking was a wider problem
Responding to rising pressure, in July 2009 Sir Paul Stephenson, the MPS Commissioner, requested that Assistant Commissioner John Yates review Operation Caryatid to assess whether further enquiries should be made. Yates dedicated eight hours to the task, concluding there was no new evidence that justified re-opening the investigation, especially when resources were stretched due to counter-terrorism work. This review and the management decisions around it were later to take on greater significance as they were examined in detail at the Leveson Inquiry.

Speculation continued regarding the extent of phone-hacking, its victims, the levels of knowledge within the newspaper industry and the nature of the relationship between senior MPS officers and employees of News International (NI), the publishers of the NoTW. In July 2011, events reached a head with one striking event after another, including: reports that murdered teenager Milly Dowler’s voicemail messages had been hacked (4 July); NI’s announcement that the NoTW would close on 10 July; the House of Commons Home Affairs Committee (HAC) took evidence on phone-hacking from, and criticised, senior MPS officers, e.g. Andy Hayman was described as ‘more Clouseau than Columbo’ (12 July) (HAC, 2011: Ev 58); the MPS Commissioner Sir Paul Stephenson resigned, announcing the decision as ‘a consequence of ongoing speculation and accusations relating to the Met’s links with News International at a senior level’ (17 July) (MPS, 2011); Assistant Commissioner John Yates resigned (18 July); the House of Commons Culture, Media and Sport Committee took evidence on phone-hacking from James and Rupert Murdoch and former NI CEO Rebekah Brooks (19 July); Former NI executives Andy Coulson, Rebekah Brooks and Neil Wallis were all arrested during the month². It was amidst these conditions that, on 13 July, Prime Minster Cameron announced the judge-led public inquiry.

**Process and outcome: The Leveson Inquiry and Report**

‘Public concern hereabouts may be expressed in just one sentence: the relationship between the police and the media, and News International in particular, was, at best, inappropriately close and if
not actually corrupt, very close to it. Furthermore, the nature of this relationship may explain why the police did not properly investigate phone hacking in 2006 and subsequently in 2009 and 2010, preferring to finesse the issue on these later occasions by less than frank public statements.’

Mr Robert Jay QC’s opening statement to Module Two, 27 February 2012.

The prime purposes of a public inquiry are to ascertain facts and to make recommendations for the future from the lessons learned. The terms of reference in respect to the press and the police for part 1³ of the Leveson Inquiry were: (1) To inquire into the contacts and the relationship between the press and the police, and the conduct of each; and (2) To make recommendations for the future conduct of police-press relations. Module Two (of the Inquiry’s four) was devoted to meeting these terms and it ran from February to April 2012, taking evidence from 93 witnesses.

The flow of the Module Two hearings reflected a two-pronged strategy adopted by the Inquiry team. The first part examined police procedure around the review of Operation Caryatid. The concern here was to establish whether decisions had been made on an objective basis or had been influenced by relationships that existed between some senior MPS officers and employees of NI. This part of the module involved close questioning of current and former NI employees and MPS officers and staff, including the previously mentioned former senior officers, Stephenson, Yates, Hayman and Clarke. The second part examined the routine processes and cultures of police-press relations in London and across the regions, taking evidence from beyond the MPS.

The Leveson Report was published on 29 November 2012 in four volumes totalling 1,987 pages. Of these, 252 pages were devoted to police-press matters in volume two. Relevant findings are discussed below, but in general the police escaped excoriation. Leveson found no extensive evidence of corrupt behaviour but was critical of some senior officers’ judgement and leadership and the consequences for public perceptions and the reputation of the MPS (Leveson, 2012a:980). Recommendations were
relatively few, the general thrust being to call for more formal reporting of contacts between officers and the press, greater consistency of police-press policies and practices nationally and ‘clear and direct’ policy guidance (Leveson, 2012a:995). These outcomes, depending on their practical application, had the potential to reinforce the balance of power uncomfortably towards the police in terms of controlling contacts with the press and, hence, the information flow into the public sphere (Campbell, 2013; Smith, 2013).

The Leveson dataset and the study of police-press relations

The Inquiry was established under the 2005 Inquiries Act, which provides the power to summon witnesses. The 93 who were called gave evidence from a range of perspectives to document how police-press relations were being conducted across police force areas in the UK. Witnesses included: serving and former police officers from forces in England, Scotland, Wales and Northern Ireland; heads of the communications function from a range of forces; a number of senior detectives with experience of dealing with the press during high profile investigations; crime reporters from national and provincial newspapers; editors of local newspapers; representatives of police inspection, complaints and accountability bodies. The Inquiry processes created three types of data. First, the witness statements which varied from short and bland to extensive and detailed. Second, the verbatim proceedings of each morning and afternoon session were transcribed. Third, video recordings were made of the hearings. The statements (with supporting exhibits), the transcripts and video recordings were all placed on the Inquiry’s website, before being transferred to the National Archives for preservation (http://webarchive.nationalarchives.gov.uk/20140122145147/http://www.levesoninquiry.org.uk/).

While the data were collected specifically to enable the Inquiry to meet its terms of reference, the different data types also provide a dataset that can be analysed for purposes beyond Leveson’s objectives. The witness statements set out personal and organisational perspectives, the transcripts
reveal how these were questioned and elaborated upon, and the video recordings capture the exchanges with the attendant body language and subtleties of interplay between judge, counsel and witnesses. In sum, the dataset comprises a comprehensive resource for the analysis of police communications.

The Inquiry’s focus on police-press relations may seem anachronistic given the decline of the newspaper industry and the rise of the ‘24/7 news mediasphere’ (Greer and McLaughlin, 2011). However, given the specific concerns that gave rise to the Inquiry, Lord Justice Leveson stressed the need to maintain concentration on the press. This emphasis on newspapers is a consistent topic in the vibrant international literature on policing and the media (Chermak and Weiss, 2005; Chibnall, 1977; Ericson et al. 1989; Greer and Reiner, 2012; Lee and McGovern, 2013, 2014; Leishman and Mason, 2003; Lovall, 2003; Mawby, 2010a; Motschall and Cao, 2002; Reiner, 2008; Schlesinger and Tumber, 1994; Surette, 2010). This literature has a number of recurring themes including: power relations and their ebb and flow in a symbiotic relationship (e.g. Greer and McLaughlin’s (2012a/b, 2013) analyses of ‘Trial by Media’), the professionalization of police communications (Mawby, 2010b), the impact of ‘new’ media and the consequences of changes in the media industries (Goldsmith, 2013; Lee and McGovern, 2014).

This article acknowledges the established literature, but the intention is to step beyond the existing canon and to examine police communications drawing on impression management and organisational reputation literature not previously applied to policing in a systematic way.

The methodological approach, therefore, comprises documentary analysis of the Leveson dataset to underpin the article and, theoretically, the use of the concepts of dramaturgy and impression management to make sense of the ways in which the various police actors presented themselves at the Inquiry. This approach makes an original contribution by blending familiar and unfamiliar literatures to draw out and identify more clearly than hitherto the less obvious, more subtle components of the
‘image work’ that police organisations engage in (Mawby, 2002). In doing so, it takes forward our understanding of police communications in an increasingly visible operating context (Goldsmith, 2010) and enables an insight into the factors at work that contributed to the police surviving the Inquiry relatively unscathed. To provide an external perspective on police performances at the Inquiry, the article also draws on Nexis-generated UK newspaper coverage of the Module Two proceedings and the Inquiry’s report.

Analysis: Taking a dramaturgical perspective

The analysis in this article is informed by the dramaturgical perspectives of Erving Goffman (1959) and Peter Manning (1997, 2003). Goffman’s (1959) exposition presented social life as a series of performances. In this reading, people adopt roles in their social and professional lives, they perform and interact with others who play complementary roles guided by established cues and taken-for-granted rituals. Routine scripts structure encounters, aided by props and masks that normally ensure face is maintained and embarrassment minimised, frontstage, in public areas. In contrast, in backstage areas, the masks drop somewhat. In his analytical description of roles, performances, sets and regions, Goffman laid out how individuals and teams negotiate ‘the presentation of self in everyday life’. The Module Two data enable us to consider the presentation of self from the perspective of individuals, teams, and organisations, and from this to consider matters of police impression and reputation management.

Goffman’s ideas have inspired the work of scholars across fields (Brissett and Edgely, 1990). His influence and the dramatic metaphor are sprinkled through criminal justice research, including studies of courts (Stone et al., 2014; Wagner and Cheng, 2011), prison (Watson, 1982; Wilson 2008) and policing (Crank, 2004; Librett, 2008; Perlmutter, 2000). In particular, Peter Manning (1996, 1997, 2001, 2003) has applied a rigorous dramaturgical approach to the analysis of policing that began in 1973 when his
fieldwork revealed (1997:5) ‘that policing was a masterful costume drama, a presentation of ordering and mannered civility, that was also dirty work’. Persistently questioning what holds the ‘show’ (1997:4) together, Manning’s subsequent studies, e.g. of the beating of Rodney King (1996) and the crime drop in New York (2001), evidence how the dramaturgical approach can reveal both micro and macro dramas of control (Manning, 2003:4).

Pertinent to the study of the Leveson Inquiry is Manning’s notion of ‘the impossible mandate’. This is the situation in which the police have a self-proclaimed, publicly accepted mandate to prevent and detect crime, to apprehend offenders, and to enforce the law apolitically, efficiently and professionally (Manning, 1971:151). Manning (1997:30-2) argues that as the police cannot achieve this mission, they dramatise the appearance of control and effectiveness. Therefore, at the heart of the dramaturgical endeavour is to examine what Manning (1997:35) refers to as the ‘selective presentation of behaviours for public view and the symbolizations referring to those behaviours conveying a message or set of messages about the meaning of those behaviours’ (original italics). Following Manning’s lines of thought, at the Leveson Inquiry there was a battle for the appearance of order as the daily dynamics of the Inquiry unfolded and the various actors positioned themselves. Lord Justice Leveson recognised this battle. This is clear from his meanderings on the nature of perception and reality. The word ‘perception’ is used 275 times in the Leveson Report’s four volumes and 143 times in volume two which covers the police and the press. It repeatedly arises in the daily transcripts. For example, when former AC John Yates is being questioned concerning whether it was appropriate for him to conduct the Operation Caryatid review given his close relationship with Neil Wallis, (the former deputy/executive editor of the NoTW), Lord Justice Leveson interjects:

‘It is not that you would in fact be influenced or affected; it is that here was the Metropolitan Police having to review an inquiry which it undertook in circumstances in which some pretty big
players were expressing concern. [...] your friendship with Mr Wallis, therefore the perception might be that you would be affected. Not the reality, but the perception.'

(Transcript of afternoon hearing, 1 March 2012).

Indeed, the report makes a point of comparing and contrasting perceptions and reality (e.g. Leveson, 2012a:851 and 952). To wit, the hearings took evidence concerning: the levels of hospitality extended by members of the MPS and provincial chief constables; the extent of friendships between some senior officers and NI employees; the employment or contracting of former NI employees by the MPS; work placements within NI for the children of senior MPS officers; the loan of a retired police horse to Rebekah Brooks; the MPS Director of Public Affairs, Dick Fedorcio, allowing NoTW crime reporter Lucy Panton to use his office and computer. At face value, the extent of links between the MPS and NI are shocking, fuelling suspicions of inappropriately close relations. However, the Leveson Report dispelled the notion that the relationships were corrupt or had influenced decision-making. This applied to both strands of the Inquiry’s investigations. With relation to Operation Caryatid’s review, Lord Justice Leveson concluded:

I am satisfied that I have seen no basis for challenging at any stage the integrity of the police, or that of the senior police officers concerned. What is, however, equally clear is that a series of poor decisions, poorly executed, all came together to contribute to the perception that I have recognised. (Leveson, 2012b:18).

The perception referred to is that the MPS had become too close to NI. Similarly in terms of the cultures and practices of police-press relations, tested across the areas of hospitality, briefings, leaks and tip-offs, Leveson noted the sharp difference in the cultures in the MPS and the provinces and concluded that the substance of these relationships was less an issue than how things were seen. He diagnosed (Leveson,
that the relationship was ‘in need of recalibration’ and that perceptions needed to be better managed through clear leadership and policy guidance that set standards for national consistency.

Leveson’s comments on the significance of perceptions and their relationship to actuality, sit easily with the work of Goffman and Manning. Goffman provides a perspective and a vocabulary to aid analysis, while Manning’s insight provides the rationale behind the need for the police to manage the appearance of order at the Inquiry; for institutional credibility, they must hold the show together. How police forces seek to do this in their communications functions has been explored through the study of police ‘image work’, namely the activities police forces engage in to project meanings of policing and which, in varying circumstances, work for and against legitimate policing (Mawby, 2002). The Leveson Inquiry provides a rich case study of dramaturgical image work and another textured level of analysis is added through incorporating within the analytical framework concepts from management and organisational studies. Across these areas literature exists, sometimes in silos, that examines the common ground of how organisations, and individuals and teams within them, seek to influence internal and external perceptions. This ‘impression management’ literature encompasses, but is not limited to, the concepts and practices of: individual and organisational impression management (Bolino et al., 2008; Highhouse et al., 2009; Mohamed et al., 1999; Rosenfeld et al., 1995), image construction (Gilpin, 2010; Roberts, 2005), corporate/ organisational reputation and identity management (Albu and Wehmeier, 2014; Barnett et al., 2006; Lange et al., 2011; Ravasi and Phillips, 2011; Sohn and Lariscy, 2014). These studies overlap different fields of study and are international in subject matter though relatively few focus on the UK. The settings range from hospitals to libraries (Arndt and Bigelow, 2000; Radford et al., 2011) and from banks in crisis to hi-fi manufacturers (Albu and Wehmeier, 2014; Ravasi and Phillips, 2011). Although the private sector dominates, they include themes transferable to the public sector.
A number of studies (Barnett et al., 2006; Bolino et al., 2008; Highhouse et al., 2009; Lange et al., 2011) have attempted to impose some order on this literature. They commonly note difficulties of definition and terminology; ‘image’ and ‘reputation’ are used loosely and different terms are used to describe the same phenomena. Barnett et al. (2006) propose that a combination of internal perceptions (identity) and external perceptions (image) result in corporate reputation, which provides a widely but not universally accepted working definition of these terms and how they relate to each other. Despite the diversity in this literature, and the absence of studies that address policing organisations, a number of common themes emerge that enable the development of four points of analysis for case studies of impression management, namely levels, dimensions, processes and tactics.

First, impression management can be analysed at the levels of the individual, the team and the organisation. Studies have tended to focus on one level rather than examining ‘cross-level and multi level’ dimensions (Bolino et al., 2008), which are particularly pertinent to police forces. In this respect, Goffman observed (1959:164-5) that within some groups the ‘good reputation of one practitioner depends on the good conduct of the others’. Being assessed through the actions of others speaks to the nature of there being 43 police forces in England and Wales that together are judged as ‘the police service’ and where the activities of one large force, the MPS, sometimes creates the impression that one case equals all cases (Foster et al., 2005). Such cross-level dimensions were apparent at the Leveson Inquiry, discernible in the rhythms that developed of comparing the conduct and practices of local and national journalists and the characteristics of provincial forces and MPS-based media relations.

Second, in respect of dimensions, the most common distinction noted in the literature is that impression management can be a positive or negative force. Rosenfeld et al. (1995:6) drawing on Schlenker and Weigold (1992) make the distinction between the expansive and the restrictive views of impression management. The former, positive perspective acknowledges impression management is actively used
to achieve individual, group and organisational goals. The latter, negative perspective labels impression management as manipulative and self-serving.

Third, although the literature includes few studies that focus specifically on the processes of impression management, these are integral to any analysis of how it is practised. However, Roberts (2005) identifies three key processes (derived from Leary and Kowalski, 1990), namely monitoring the awareness of others’ perceptions, becoming motivated to change those perceptions, and then constructing a persona which is intended to change them. Although Roberts was writing about individuals, these processes are applicable at the team and organisational levels.

Fourth, the tactics of impression management have been a consistent subject of study from Goffman (1959) to the present (McDonnell and King, 2013). Mohamed et al. (1999) extended earlier work at the micro level by proposing a taxonomy of organisational impression management tactics. They categorised the tactics in a two-by-two matrix as assertive or defensive, and indirect or direct. The assertive and defensive tactics are proactive and reactive respectively, while direct tactics focus on one’s own organisation in contrast to indirect tactics which seek to improve or protect one’s own image by managing information about associated others. Examples include making positive associations with favourable others, e.g. ‘Boasting’ about the association or, in contrast, obscuring links to unfavourable others, e.g. the tactic of ‘Burying’. Although published in 1999, this taxonomy remains relevant, its influence on contemporary studies is evident, differences in terminology notwithstanding, and it has not been superseded. There are clear parallels between some of the tactics and the neutralization literature (Sykes and Matza, 1957), the denial literature (Cohen, 2001;) and also the dirty work literature (Ashforth et al., 2007). The taxonomy is presented in Figure 1 and is discussed below in relation to the Leveson data.

**Figure 1. Mohamed et al. (1999): A Taxonomy of Organizational Impression Management Tactics**
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<th>Assertive Tactics</th>
<th>Direct Tactics</th>
<th>Indirect Tactics</th>
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<td>Ingratiation</td>
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<th>Defensive Tactics</th>
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These four points of analysis, informed by Goffman and Manning, provide a practical framework to examine image work at the Leveson Inquiry. The Inquiry was a front stage area in which individuals and teams were performing, managing impressions of themselves, their police forces and the police service nationally. These were not mutually exclusive roles, as will unfold through the examination of individual and team impression management.

**Holding the police show together?**

*Individual level: presentation of self and self-preservation*
Goffman (1967) argued that participants in every encounter put their ‘face’ at risk as they present themselves in a way that reflects their status and expertise. Encounters routinely involve decorum and include collusion with team mates, other teams and the audience in order to avoid public embarrassment. However, there are scenes where it is acceptable for the ‘game of polite interaction’ to be disrupted (Goffman, 1959:205). While Goffman cites the example of criminal trials, this also applies to public inquiries. There are high levels of co-operation between performers, but there is also scope for constructive discord in the search for answers to difficult questions and to press performers on the veracity of their accounts. Clear examples of this occurred at the Inquiry when counsel questioned witnesses about the nature of MPS/NI relations, e.g. Robert Jay’s questioning of former ACs Yates and Hayman. The Inquiry team’s two strategic lines of questioning coalesced with their appearances; both were questioned concerning their involvement in Operation Caryatid and their approaches to relations with the press. Newspaper coverage anticipating their evidence highlighted Yates and Hayman as vulnerable to criticism with The Independent reporting ‘Leveson returns to tackle police’s bungled phone hacking inquiry’ (27 February 2012). Both gave evidence on day four of the module, (1 March 2012), following the detectives directly involved in Operation Caryatid.

Yates’s long (46 pages) witness statement tracked a dazzling career, charting his rise to Assistant Commissioner and national lead officer for counter-terrorism. The statement presented a dedicated officer successfully leading difficult assignments, including the Jeffrey Archer perjury case, the re-investigation into the murder of Damilola Taylor and the ‘cash for honours’ investigation. These cases and his national counter-terrorism profile led to frequent contacts with the press which he considered part of his senior officer role. The statement also covered in detail his review of Operation Caryatid. Overall, the statement presented the gravitas of a successful senior officer. However, questioned via video-link from Bahrain where he was working as a consultant, this self-presentation was unpicked by Mr Jay as he pressed Yates to clarify the minutiae of his actions around Operation Caryatid and the
details of drinking champagne and dining at prestigious London restaurants with press contacts, attending football matches with Neil Wallis, and his role in Wallis’s daughter securing employment with the MPS. Given the accumulation of evidence, Yates had little option but to adopt defensive, direct tactics, providing an ‘account’ of his behaviour and decisions that stopped short of ‘apology’ (Mohamed et al., 1999). During testy exchanges Yates justified his actions and declared his conscience was clear, though he regretted the Caryatid decision with the benefit of hind-sight:

I have a reputation and a track record of doing difficult things and doing them in a dispassionate and evidence-based way and that's exactly what I did in this case. (Transcript of afternoon hearing, 1 March 2012).

Moving on to Hayman, we find an example of events that ‘discredit or otherwise throw doubt’ on an individual’s self-presentation (Goffman, 1959:23). We see two very different projections at the Home Affairs Committee (HAC) meeting of 12 July 2011 and then at the Leveson Inquiry on 1 March 2012. At the HAC hearing Hayman deployed an authoritative ‘front’ in terms of his posture, speech and facial expressions. His presentation was that of a self-confident former senior officer expecting a high level of respect. This performance did not convince the audience (the Members of Parliament sitting on the HAC) and he suffered embarrassment. Sensing that Hayman’s representation was not ‘consistent with external standards of professional competence and character’ (Roberts, 2005:700), the HAC members questioned his competence and integrity, with one, Lorraine Fullbrook MP, describing him as ‘a dodgy geezer’ (HAC, 20011: Ev 61). When later asked by the same MP whether he had ever received payment from a news organisation while a police officer, Hayman’s affronted and animated response – ‘Good God, absolutely not. I cannot believe you suggested that’ (HAC, 2011: Ev 63) - is captured on YouTube under the heading ‘Policeman Andy Hayman goes ballistic’
Unimpressed by Hayman, the HAC chair, Keith Vaz concluded the questions archly, to audible laughter in the background, with the words ‘Mr Hayman, I normally sum up people’s evidence but on this occasion I think your evidence speaks for itself’ (HAC, 2011: Ev 63). Hayman was later interviewed by Sky News and London’s LBC radio station and complained bitterly about his treatment and the ‘lynch-mob mentality’ of the Committee members.

At Leveson, Hayman projected a contrasting self. Dressed soberly with a darker tie and added glasses, he presented a reflective and less assertive front. Almost contrite, he was prepared to consider criticism and to respond evenly with a new deference towards his questioners (Figure 2). Between the HAC meeting and the Leveson Inquiry, Hayman had ‘changed faces’ (Roberts, 2005). He had engaged in the ‘construction’ process of impression management, namely enacting a persona in an attempt to influence and change the perception of others, as a direct response to the HAC appearance. He deployed a ‘confirmation’ strategy (Roberts, 2005) presenting the front of what might be expected from a senior police officer, namely serious and cooperative. As a result the encounter was not the ‘bloodbath’ anticipated in the press (Daily Mail, 27 February 2012), but an understated performance. He was more attuned to the standards of professionalism expected in this front stage area (Goffman 1959:111) and adjusted his self-presentation accordingly. Adopting a neutralisation strategy of ‘it was not as it now seems’ and the defensive direct tactic of providing an account (Mohamed et al., 1999), Hayman said of his gregarious socialising with the press:

So it was nothing but enthusiasm and a … bit hasty, […] But the point you’re making in hindsight as we pour (sic) over this, at the time it was absolutely well intended, honourable, but on reflection I can see what people can see. (Transcript of afternoon hearing, 1 March 2012).
The newspapers had predicted ‘jaw-dropping’ testimonies (Independent on Sunday, 26 February 2012) and following Hayman and Yates’s appearances, the broadsheets focussed on the relationships Yates, particularly, but also Hayman had developed with members of NI. Sketch writers played on the extravagant nature of the police-press relations, e.g. Michael Deacon’s Telegraph piece lead with ‘Tale of the Met chief who got his feet under the table ... all the best tables, in fact’, while The Guardian featured both the unwise entertaining and the flawed decision making under the title ‘Dinner at the Ivy, champagne from NoTW, but ex-police chief denies any influence’. More detailed criticism followed in the Inquiry’s report which confirmed a ‘perception was clearly created that the decisions made by Mr Yates were affected by his relationship with NI personnel [...] the damage done to the reputation of the MPS as a consequence has been significant’ (Leveson, 2012a:920).

Hayman fared no better. While the embarrassment of his HAC appearance was not repeated due to his self-presentation, the Inquiry’s report left no doubt as to Hayman’s self-awareness and ultimately his suitability for senior leadership. It said that he was just about the only person who could not see the foolhardiness of some of his behaviours (e.g. not only his expansive socialising with NI reporters, but also entering into a contract to write a column for The Times newspaper owned by NI). Lord Justice Leveson was unconvinced by Hayman’s new insight. He criticised Hayman’s behaviour as ‘imprudent’ and ‘ill-judged’ though not dishonest (Leveson, 2012a:905).

**Figure 2. Individual Impression Management – Andy Hayman ‘changing faces’**

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<tr>
<th>Andy Hayman at the Home Affairs Committee (12 July 2011)</th>
<th>Andy Hayman at the Leveson Inquiry (1 March 2012)</th>
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<td>• ‘I can absolutely say that any hint of being in</td>
<td>• ‘Would you mind, sir, if I just spent a couple of</td>
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In the days following the appearances of Yates and Hayman, other former senior MPS officers gave evidence, including four ex-Commissioners, before the focus switched in turn to crime reporters on national newspapers, and then to senior officers, heads of communication, and newspaper editors and crime reporters from outside London. While all 93 witnesses were concerned with maintaining individual face, many of them also had a wider, team role. Goffman (1959:108) defined a team as ‘a set of individuals whose intimate cooperation is required if a given projected definition of the situation is to
be maintained’ and in this respect the witnesses fell into three broad teams representing particular constituencies. These were: (1) former and current police officers and civilians employed by the police service, (2) newspaper reporters and editors, and (3) policing stakeholders with an oversight function, including representatives from inspection, complaints and oversight bodies. Further, these broad groups can then be sub-divided into a number of specific teams, e.g. Yates and Hayman were not only representing themselves, but also a team of former MPS officers. This was the group of retired officers who had been senior MPS officers during the phone-hacking investigation and review. Other police teams included a team of former MPS Commissioners, a team of current senior MPS officers, an ACPO team representing the police leadership nationally, and a Police Provinces team, which itself was divided into sub-teams of chief officers and forces’ heads of communication. With the exception of the ‘Inquiry team’, the witnesses can be allocated to one or more (if they have a role with overlapping responsibilities) of the following:

1. **The Inquiry team**: Lord Justice Leveson and Counsel to the Inquiry.

2. **The former Commissioners**: Lords Condon, Stevens and Blair, and Sir Paul Stephenson.

3. **ACPO**: These witnesses had a national policing role through their activities on behalf of the Association of Chief Police Officers, e.g. the ACPO President Sir Hugh Orde.

4. **The MPS Current**: The Commissioner, Sir Bernard Hogan-Howe, and members of his senior command team.

5. **The MPS ‘Old Boys’**: Retired MPS officers, (all males), who held senior management roles in the MPS during the phone-hacking investigation and its review. Former ACs Yates, Hayman, Clarke, and Quick, Deputy Commissioner Godwin and Head of Public Affairs Dick Fedorcio.

6. **The Police Provinces**
   a. **Chief Officers**: Chief constables from England, Wales, Scotland and Northern Ireland.
   b. **Force Heads of Communications** who gave evidence with their chief officers.
7. **The Detectives**: Senior detectives with experience of high profile investigations that involved national, sometimes international, media interest.

8. **The Inspectors**: representatives of the Association of Police Authorities, Her Majesty’s Inspectorate of Constabulary, the Independent Police Complaints Commission, the Crown Prosecution Service.


10. **The Provincial Press**: Newspaper editors and crime reporters from local and regional newspapers.

The hearings were controlled by the Inquiry team and, within this, principally by Lord Justice Leveson and senior counsel, Robert Jay QC. Their goals were to ascertain the facts and to derive lessons from the evidence, thereby moving the Inquiry towards meeting its terms of reference. To accomplish this, their role included directing the drama, stage-managing the hearings and interactions, including open discord where appropriate. The dataset reflects only these frontstage activities, the backstage work of the Inquiry team, e.g. the identification and pre-appearance briefings of witnesses remaining unseen.

The prime purpose of a team’s performance according to Goffman (1959:83) is to establish ‘a favourable definition of their service or product.’ The police had set the bar high in marking out an ‘impossible mandate’ (Manning, 1971) and, at the Inquiry, the various police teams were aspiring to convey impressions of police forces individually and of the police service collectively as an impartial, ethical and effective bureaucratic state law enforcement institution. Accordingly, there was an organisational need for some harmony in the performance of the different teams; some ‘reciprocal dependence’ (Goffman, 1959:88) would be involved if the police show was to hold together. Any one witness had the potential to disrupt the performance with inappropriate conduct. During the Inquiry, where there were points of tension between individual recollections of unfolding events within the MPS, individuals balanced the
pulls of self-preservation with loyalty to the team and the greater police family. A case in point was former AC Bob Quick whose recollections (witness statement, paras 58-102) differed at key points from his MPS Old Boys colleagues, particularly John Yates, who submitted a second witness statement to deny a cited conversation with Quick had taken place. Quick alleged that Yates had refused to allow his phone records to be examined as a means of eliminating him as a potential source of leaked information. It was not possible that both Yates and Quick had accurately related this encounter, however, Quick’s dissonant comments were neither wholeheartedly supported by other witnesses nor pursued sufficiently by the Inquiry team to cause significant damage. Although the tension was reported in the press (e.g ‘I’m very well connected, Yates told officer investigating leak’ in The Times, 8 March 2012), the moment passed.

The various police teams, unlike the Inquiry team, were not in control of the frontstage area. In this setting they were unable to dictate the information flow and line of questioning. However, the police teams were able to select from a repertoire of impression management tactics, which in Goffman’s terms (1959:141) can enable the over-communicating of some facts and under-communicating of others. Referring back to Mohamed et al.’s taxonomy, we can plot on the matrix where the police teams are positioned in terms of the impression management tactics deployed (see Figure 3). The Former Commissioners and ACPO team members with the gravitas of long experience, senior command and, in some cases, conspicuous successes, drew on assertive direct tactics, namely, ‘exemplification’ and ‘organisational promotion’, i.e. projecting integrity and evidencing competence. For example, Lord Condon spoke of his personal crusade against corruption (witness statement, para. 20), and Lord Stevens promoted his rejuvenation of the MPS relationship with the media (witness statement, paras 15, 24-25). The Police Provinces team similarly used assertive direct tactics of organisational promotion, but mixed these with defensive indirect tactics that aimed to put distance between policing in the provinces and what had occurred in the MPS. For example, the West Midlands chief constable, Chris
Sims, expressed this through commenting that he was ‘quite surprised to be sitting here’ at the Inquiry other than to prove a negative (transcript of afternoon hearing, 20 March 2012). He did not recognise the issue of inappropriate police-press relations as it was a non-event in his jurisdiction – ‘in all the contact I have with communities in the West Midlands, opinion-formers in the West Midlands, this just has never arisen as an issue’. This tactic of ‘burying’ or downplaying links to unfavourable others, the MPS in this case, combined with assertive direct tactics that promoted existing good work, e.g. the former chief constable and the head of communications from Cumbria provided examples of good practice during crises; the chief constable from Avon and Somerset set the benchmark for hospitality with his notion of the ‘blush’ test; and the ‘can-do’ chief constable of Staffordshire, Mike Cunningham, also the ACPO lead for Professional Standards, detailed the project planning in place to bring national clarity.

The combination of ‘burying’ and ‘organisational promotion’ fulfil a normalisation role. They provide the antidote to the MPS misdeeds; they are the epitome of normality which provide ‘an expressive rejuvenation and reaffirmation of the moral values of the community’ (Goffman, 1959:45). Put another way, this form of image work taps into the ideals of, and reinforces, shared values and legal validity (Beetham, 1991; Mawby, 2002). This is backed-up by Lord Justice Leveson’s reassurances during the hearings that the identified misbehaviour was an aberration and that on the whole the police-press relationship works well.

The tactics adopted by the MPS Old Boys were different as the events and activities under examination occurred under their leadership. Accordingly they could not use tactics that distance and ‘bury’ unpalatable links and, given the evidence, they could not project all-round competence. Instead they deployed defensive direct tactics, providing ‘accounts’ that minimised culpability, the most common account being that a justifiable pre-occupation with terrorism meant that counter-terrorism policing
took priority over phone-hacking investigations. The key message communicated was that phone-hacking should not be taken in isolation, rather it should be considered in the context of the security and policing landscape of the time when the police were primarily concerned with terrorism risks that threatened public safety on a national scale. The team members who received the severest criticism, Yates and Hayman, suffered damaged reputations but weathered the most serious accusations of near-corruption.

In contrast to the MPS Old Boys, the MPS Current team used a combination of assertive and defensive direct tactics which combined the tactic of ‘organisational promotion’ with that of highlighting contemporary ‘pro-social behaviour’ which aimed to provide confidence that the introduction of an untainted new senior management team, new policies and practices would atone for previous MPS lapses. For example, Sir Bernard Hogan-Howe was presented as the new-broom Commissioner (from September 2011) who would reset relationships with the media in the spirit of Lord Stevens’ acclaimed 1990s policy, but sensitive to contemporary conditions. This pro-social tactic from within the MPS combined with assertive tactics of the ACPO and Police Provinces teams presented a united policing impression that the police service nationally had taken stock, was identifying best practice and was keen to push on with its implementation. This was recognised in the Leveson Report:

It is clear that the Police Service as a whole has responded positively and proactively in the wake of the public concerns which led to the setting up of this Inquiry in July 2011. I welcome the thoroughness and good sense of the changes which have been recommended to date, and the spirit in which the Police Service has demonstrated willingness for implementing appropriate and judicious enhancements of the existing regimes (Leveson, 2012b:23).
The Report, then, criticised individual police officers but generally endorsed the police institution, a position largely reproduced in the newspaper coverage following the Report’s launch. The next morning, 30 November 2012, *The Guardian* reported ‘Some relief for Met as corruption claims are rejected’, while the *Daily Mail* commented it was the ‘Day the police got out of jail: Lord Leveson insists officers acted with integrity over phone hacking probe’. *The Independent* reported ‘Blunders not corruption led to bungled police response’, and the *Daily Mirror* ran an article titled ‘So who gets a kicking?’ which, after listing the failings of the press and politicians, noted that John Yates received ‘stinging criticism’ but that the police were ‘cleared’ of corruption. In ensuing days, however, stories appeared concerning the leniency Leveson had shown towards the police (eg the *Telegraph* and the *Mirror* on 3 December 2012).

As for the ‘public concerns’ which led to the Inquiry, these were not directly reflected in measures of public confidence in policing which remained stable in London and nationally during and after the Inquiry according to the Crime Survey of England and Wales and the MPS Public Attitude Survey (CSEW, 2012, 2014; MPS, 2013).

*Figure 3. Police Teams and their impression management tactics*


Concluding comments

Using an analytical framework underpinned by the dramaturgical perspectives of Goffman and Manning and operationalised by impression management concepts has enabled a textured analysis of the police image work at play during the Leveson Inquiry. Returning to Manning’s question posed earlier in this article, the police held the show together through effective communication, the subtle patterns of which were revealed through the analysis of the police team performances. The police performers offered their audiences idealised impressions, moulded to fit society’s understandings and expectations (Goffman, 1959:44-5) and collectively they fought successfully for the appearance of order. Individual senior MPS officers were exposed as lacking judgement, but Lord Justice Leveson did not doubt their integrity. While this played into dominant political discourses concerning the weakness of police leadership, on the whole the police service as a national institution avoided acute public embarrassment. The Leveson Report’s recommendations recognised that the police were taking steps to develop a nationally consistent approach to press relations, anticipating the recalibration of the police-press
relationship that Lord Justice Leveson advocated. In this respect, the police ‘got off lightly’. The full consequences of the Inquiry’s recommendations are still working their way through into policy and practice and require further research, but the signs to date suggest that the balance of police-press power has swung in favour of the police who have subsequently used the developing national guidance and the recommendations for the recording of police-press contacts to further control the flow of police news and information (e.g. Campbell, 2013; Smith, 2013). Nevertheless, the research evidence over several decades teaches us that police-media power relations ebb and flow in different locations and over time and, accordingly, we should eschew being overly-deterministic. In this respect, the Leveson case study provides food for thought concerning the many threads of the police-media relationship and the challenges of projecting a coherent and consistent national police image as crises continue to engulf the police. The well-established, once symbolic collective image of ‘British policing’ has faded and is increasingly difficult to maintain. At the Leveson Inquiry, the show held together, but the contemporary police service in the UK comprises a multitude of forces and agencies covering diverse locations and fulfilling contrasting functions. These operate in a multi-media context and possess a variety of image makers that create diverse impressions to a variety of audiences. In such circumstances Manning’s ‘impossible mandate’ remains cogent, not least for police communicators.

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Notes

1. The senior management structure of the MPS comprises, in hierarchical order, Commissioner, Deputy Commissioner, Assistant Commissioner, Deputy Assistant Commissioner, Commander.

2. In June 2014 Coulson was found guilty of conspiracy to intercept communications and was sentenced to 18 months imprisonment. Brooks was acquitted. (Wallis was not charged and was released from police bail in February 2013).

3. The terms of reference for part 2 of the Inquiry included examination of whether the police received corrupt payments connected to unlawful conduct within NI and other media organisations. However, part 2 was put on hold in May 2012 pending criminal prosecutions for phone-hacking which are incomplete at the time of writing. It remains uncertain whether part 2 will take place.

4. The Nexis database was used to search the UK’s national and local newspapers for online and print coverage of the Leveson Inquiry during the periods: (a) 26 February – 12 April 2012, which encompassed the day preceding the start of Module Two and one week after its close; and (b) 27 November – 12 December 2012, which captured the two days prior to the launch of the Leveson Report and the following two weeks. These searches generated over 1700 items for examination.
References


