

Article

Hiding in Plain Sight: Directed Surveillance as a Bodily Practice

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Abstract

In this article, we empirically explore directed surveillance as bodily practice—material bodies observing other material bodies. Such low-tech police surveillance practice (Haggerty 2012) relies on a police officer’s body as a tool and medium for information gathering. The theoretical framework used in this article is inspired by Merleau-Ponty’s phenomenology of perception and the body (Merleau-Ponty [1945] 2005). The empirical starting point for our analysis is in-depth interviews with police officers conducting directed surveillance of mobile organised crime groups, supplemented by some observations. Findings illustrate how police officers conducting directed surveillance have internalised advanced perceptual and bodily skills that enable them to keep an optimal distance from the subject of their surveillance, suppress bodily responses, stay in character to protect their cover story, and appear relaxed when they are, in fact, vigilant. With this article we aim to contribute to increased knowledge and more precise discussions concerning the tacit and corporeal aspects of directed surveillance.

Introduction

Surveillance is often mediated through technology (Lyon 2018), giving rise to a data-proxy of the criminal, algorithmically constructed from the disembodied exhaust “emitted from the [criminal’s] body as it interfaces with networked sensor technologies” (Smith 2016: 110). In contrast, directed surveillance is, to a large extent, a “low-tech police surveillance practice” (Haggerty 2012: 237) that relies on a police officer’s body as a tool and medium for information gathering. Information is gathered with and through the police officer’s body. In this article, we empirically explore directed surveillance as a bodily practice.

Directed surveillance may be categorized as “covert and non-deceptive” surveillance (Marx 1988). It is not intrusive and is usually undertaken for a specific investigation or operation to obtain private information about a particular person (Loftus 2019) in order to aid an investigation or to prevent a crime (Bjerknes and Johansen 2009). When police conduct directed surveillance, they keep a person suspected of having committed or having intended to commit a criminal offence under surveillance without the individual’s knowledge. Neither the person under surveillance nor the public should be aware of the police when directed surveillance is conducted.

This article focuses on the aspects of conducting directed surveillance in the field. This includes following, watching, and listening to people without them being aware of it (Loftus and Goold 2012). Such directed surveillance may be conducted from a stakeout location, by tailing an individual on foot, or by using public and private transportation, such as cars, bicycles, motorbikes, and buses (Bjerknes, Fahsing, and Bergum 2018).

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The working hypothesis for the current article is that a deeper understanding of directed surveillance can emerge from using the officer's body as a tool and medium for information gathering and the object of our study. A focus on the material body of the police officer also brings to the fore the material body of the criminal and the context in which an interaction between the watcher and watched takes place. Ball (2005: 132) points to the complexity of our object of study: "The 'work' undertaken by individual subjects who watch and are watched is manifestly intertwined with their lifeworlds, cultures, and selfhood, and the tactics of personal and bodily integrity."

We are influenced by the corporeal turn (Mutlu 2013) and aim to promote an increased interest in embodied practices and the role of the skilful body in policing, which is the main working tool and medium for conducting directed surveillance. Accordingly, this article is primarily about material bodies surveilling other material bodies. As pointed out by Haggerty and Ericson (2000: 611), "A great deal of surveillance is directed towards the human body." Research that entwines the fields of surveillance and embodiment has been limited (French and Smith 2016), and there is limited empirical research on the body as a tool and medium within policing studies.

While there has been an increase in research on police investigatory practices (Bjelland and Dahl 2017), the general public's knowledge of the police is primarily based on uniformed officers, whose operations are clearly visible to the public (Mac Giollaibhuí, Goold, and Loftus 2016). Acts of covert policing, such as directed surveillance, are an aspect of policing about which the general public has little knowledge. Furthermore, there is little empirical research on covert policing (Loftus and Goold 2012: 278; Loftus 2019). The goal of the present article is to contribute to this field. One explanation for the lack of public knowledge and lack of literature about covert policing is that some aspects of policing effectiveness depend on the secrecy of its methods (Clark 2007). Discussions of such matters stop short of disclosing sensitive tactics and techniques for obvious reasons (Harfield and Harfield 2005).

A large part of police officers' professional knowledge is complex and difficult to describe in words (Dean, Fahsing, and Gottschalk 2007; Holgersson, Gottschalk, and Dean 2008; Stelfox 2011). Hence, much police work is based on individual police officers' *tacit knowledge* (Dean et al. 2008; Stelfox 2011; Bjerknæs, Fahsing, and Bergum 2018), which includes covert policing skills. For police officers, tacit knowledge is a mix of practical skills, competence, and individual experience. This makes tacit knowledge difficult to document because it is individualistic and dynamic (Dean et al. 2008).

Tacit knowledge is the *implicit knowledge* gained through individual experiences and actions and is, therefore, often learned on the job (Polanyi 1967). This is in contrast to *explicit knowledge*, which is often learned through formal training. One of the most important features of tacit knowledge is the extent to which it is incorporated (Loenhoff 2015: 25). Polanyi (1967: 14–15) recognises the body as "the ultimate instrument of all our external knowledge." Hubrich (2015: 42) argues that embodiment is an important property of tacit knowledge: "Following Polanyi, embodied knowledge should not be conceived as propositional knowledge, but rather as prereflexive tacit knowledge, i.e. as a bodily competence to act and as a skill of perception."

To gain a deeper understanding of the tacit and bodily aspects of directed surveillance, we need to unpack it and find a language for talking about its many aspects and components. Unpacking tacit knowledge while focusing on its shared and embodied nature is important (Loenhoff 2015), particularly in organisational learning and knowledge production (Nonaka 1994; Lam 2000) and the development and professionalisation of policing (Fashing 2013; Bjelland and Dahl 2017). Exploring police officers' tacit knowledge related to directed surveillance may improve the accuracy of discussions and provide greater precision and clearer distinctions.

The theoretical framework used in this article is inspired by Merleau-Ponty's phenomenology of perception and the body (Merleau-Ponty [1945] 2005). Merleau-Ponty attempts to break with the dominant assumption in Western thought that human agency and consciousness reside in the mind, while the body is merely the

mind's "interface" with the world. His phenomenological analysis of perception led him to give primacy to the body as the seat of agency and meaning-making. The distinction between mind and body thus dissolves, giving rise to the need for a unifying concept to capture the sum of the two: "the lived body." Central to Merleau-Ponty's theory is the idea that the lived body is skilful, active, and always has a directedness and intentionality towards the world and others.

The empirical data presented in this study draw primarily on interviews conducted with officers working on a police force specialising in crime perpetrated by mobile organised crime groups. It is further supplemented by some observations of how the officers conduct directed surveillance. Accordingly, this article may be considered to have empirical phenomenology. Phenomenology is primarily a philosophical exercise and not an empirical discipline (Martínková and Parry 2011; Purser 2018). However, phenomenological analysis of particular aspects of human experience may still benefit from engagement with empirical data (Purser 2018).

This article is organised as follows. Previous research is presented in the next section, followed by a presentation of the theoretical framework. The third section concerns the methods used. The data are analysed in the fourth section. In the final section, we present some concluding remarks.

Previous Research on Covert Surveillance

The continuous enhancement of technological surveillance is one of the most striking trends in the history of policing during the twentieth century (Sheptycki 2000: 311). Foucault (1977) claims that bodies may be seen as objects of information. Today, bodies are repeatedly exposed to surveillance; they are frequently scanned, recorded, and registered in countless networked databases (French and Smith 2016). Hence, in surveillance, it is not the material bodies *per se* that are tracked but rather their datafied signatures (French and Smith 2016). Lyon (2001) notes that the rise of the surveillance society has involved the disappearance of material bodies and that "surveillance that watches visible bodies seems increasingly limited" (Lyon 2001: 15). However, while there has been an increase in technologies that assist surveillance, a considerable amount of surveillance still involves material bodies surveilling other material bodies (Marx 1988; Haggerty, Wilson, and Smith 2011). When the body is present in surveillance studies, it is primarily the monitored body (Ball 2005), not the body of the monitor.

There is little empirical research on covert policing and directed surveillance. There are, of course, important exceptions (see, for example, Carlström 1999, 1997; Loftus and Goold 2012; Mac Giollabhuí, Goold, and Loftus 2016; Dahl 2020, 2019; Loftus, Goold, and Mac Giollabhuí 2015). However, these texts do not explicitly focus on the body, although the role of the body is implicit. Visibility and invisibility are central to the policing and social control of public spaces (Cook and Whowell 2011). Loftus and Goold (2012: 275) demonstrate "how officers attempt to blend into their surroundings and render their work invisible in order to intrude into the daily lives of those people considered suspects." Dahl (2020) describes how police officers conducting directed surveillance need to chameleonize to avoid detection by blending into and mirroring their surroundings by adapting their appearance in terms of both looks and behaviour to resemble people in the vicinity. Thus, police officers conducting direct surveillance must be experts at microsociology; they must be able to read their surroundings and have considerable knowledge of social interactions. Appearing "natural" is essential for police officers conducting undercover policing (Carlström 1999; Mac Giollabhuí, Goold, and Loftus 2016; Dahl 2019), and bodily appearance is imperative (Loftus and Goold 2012). Police officers conducting directed surveillance should have no striking or distinguishing features, and their physical appearance should be unremarkable. They cannot afford to be too attractive or too unattractive. In short, they need to look like "your average Joe" (Loftus and Goold 2012: 282). This indicates the importance of the corporal when studying directed surveillance.

In the existing empirical literature in the field, we find that there is a lack of focus on the corporal aspect: the body, which constitutes the working tool of police officers conducting directed surveillance. With this article, we aim to contribute to the field by exploring directed surveillance as bodily practice.

Expanding the Use of Covert Policing but with Limited Training

Directed surveillance is not taught in the Norwegian police's three-year bachelor's degree programme. In Norway, the Norwegian Police University College offers only one course on directed surveillance. It is taught when needed (approximately every second or third year when there are enough students). The core group of students in the course consists of police officers who want to work in special operations and become professional covert officers. However, with the change from reactive to proactive policing (Maguire and John 2006, Ratcliffe 2016), there has been an expansion in the use of "exceptional methods" in ordinary crime cases (Fyfe, Gundhus, and Vrist Rønn 2018; Larsson 2018), which may be seen as function creep (Dahl and Sætnan 2009).

While covert policing was previously a police method primarily reserved for serious crimes, especially those related to drugs, it is now used for less serious criminal offences, such as volume crimes (Sharpe 2002; Loftus and Goold 2012; O'Neill and Loftus 2013; Mac Giollaí, Goold, and Loftus 2016). This implies that many police officers who conduct directed surveillance do not have formal training. This is also mentioned by Kruisbergen, de Jong, and Kleemans (2011). Carlström (1999) writes that knowledge of directed surveillance can be achieved through alertness and confidence in the officer's own experiences. Loftus and Goold (2012: 284) report that covert policing is a shared practice learned through socialisation at work, often by being paired up with a more experienced partner.¹ Accordingly, knowledge transfer often takes place within a community of practice, as it often does in groups of people who share the same profession (Wenger 1998). However, this may be a challenging and time-consuming method of learning (Dean et al. 2008).

Theoretical Framework

In this section, we present some theoretical concepts from Merleau-Ponty's ([1945] 2005) phenomenology of the body that may be fruitful in understanding directed surveillance as a bodily practice. As argued by Purser (2018), introducing the principles of Merleau-Ponty within a discussion of an empirical field, such as directed surveillance, allows philosophy and practice to be combined without prioritising one over the other. This allows for a more thorough understanding of directed surveillance as a bodily practice.

The embodied nature of the human condition was already implicit in the works of Husserl and Heidegger, but Merleau-Ponty was the first philosopher to examine the central role of the body in human existence in detail. In his seminal work, *The Phenomenology of Perception* ([1945] 2005), Merleau-Ponty stressed that every analysis of the human condition must start with the fact that the subject is bodily present in the world. To Merleau-Ponty, we are not Cartesian self-knowing entities detached from external reality but living organisms embedded in the world whose self-awareness arises from interaction with the physical environment and other subjects.

The Lived Body

Our bodies have a dual nature. When we see ourselves in the mirror, we see our bodies as objects among other objects in the world, but, at the same time, it is the body that makes it possible for us to see ourselves. Merleau-Ponty ([1945] 2005) termed the latter the *lived body*. It is as living bodies that we exist in the world, or, as Merleau-Ponty ([1945] 2005: 169) puts it, "The body is our general medium for having a world." The lived body manifests itself mainly as its possibilities for acting in the world, expressing "I can." We live our

¹ This is similar to knowledge transfer regarding criminal investigations. Dean et al. (2008) write that the art of criminal investigation may also be characterised by tacit knowledge and that the implementation approaches to learning investigative practices are dominated by tacit knowledge and generally restricted to apprentice-type strategies (team rotation, mentoring, buddy systems, and so forth). Often, an experienced police officer is teamed up with a novice so they may pass on their tacit knowledge built up over years of experience. "Such a one-on-one approach takes a very long time before the assumed assimilation of shared tacit knowledge may become evident in the work practices of the novice using this apprentice model" (Dean et al. 2008: 344).

lives through our bodies, but only occasionally does this fact become an object for reflection. This requires a reframing of some sort. Examples include situations where the body does not perform as expected because of injury or fatigue, for example, or when one is asked explicitly to reflect on the aspects of one's own body. Most of the time, however, as we go about living our everyday lives, the well-functioning lived body is transparent to us, as we do not need to pay attention to it.

The Learning Body

Merleau-Ponty ([1945] 2005) argues against describing skilful actions as the result of cognitive processes. Bodily skills, such as control of one's bodily motions and the ability to handle objects, are at the core of our being. Although we are clearly born with a capacity for certain skilful bodily actions, Merleau-Ponty stresses that the specific way in which these skills are developed in each of us is the result of our previous interactions with others and the world. The body is learning. He describes our capacity for skilful actions as "habits" and shows how they both broaden and constrain our potential reactions to a given situation.

Dreyfus and Dreyfus (1980) build on Merleau-Ponty's ([1945] 2005) concept of the lived body in presenting their own theory of skill acquisition. They describe five levels of skill mastery, ranging from novice to expert. At the lowest level, the novice typically acts by following the rules and procedures they receive without understanding them. With increased proficiency, the skill becomes more embodied and develops from a cognitive skill to a tacit bodily one. At the most advanced level of mastery, the expert does not need to spend time making decisions because they know how to perform the appropriate action without calculating or comparing alternatives.

Gardner (1995), although coming from a different theoretical tradition, lists bodily-kinaesthetic intelligence as one of seven "intelligences." He elaborates that this also includes a sense of timing, a clear sense of the goal of a physical action, and the ability to train responses. People who have high bodily-kinaesthetic intelligence should be generally good at physical activities, such as sports, dance, and acting. Gardner (1995) suggests that careers that suit those with high bodily-kinaesthetic intelligence include athletes, dancers, actors, builders, and police officers.

Embodied Perception

Time is a fundamental property of the human condition in all phenomenology. Past and intended future colour the present. Of special interest to Merleau-Ponty ([1945] 2005) is how intentionality influences perception—i.e., how our focus and purpose affect how we see the world. To Merleau-Ponty, perception is not the passive reception of stimuli but a process in which an active body becomes embedded in its surroundings. For Merleau-Ponty, there is no perception without action; perception requires action and involves the entire body. Perception is a continuous interaction involving the subject's intentions, expectations, and physical actions.

According to Merleau-Ponty ([1945] 2005), humans have a tendency to attempt to achieve the best possible "grip" on or optimal viewpoint of a situation. Dreyfus (1996) uses the example of a spectator in a gallery, placing themselves at the optimal distance from a painting to get the best grip of the artwork. Aiming for the maximum grip is, to Merleau-Ponty ([1945] 2005), not a conscious task but a bodily perceptual skill. Although we are born with the potential for perception, in a similar way as with other bodily skills, the way in which each of us perceives the world is the result of our previous interaction with it and with others. Perception is thus, to a large extent, an acquired skill, and different professions consequently develop different perceptual skills coloured by the specifics of each profession's practice.

The Imagining Body

Merleau-Ponty ([1945] 2005) distinguishes between movements made on purpose "as movements" and movements made naturally as part of a situation. He describes the former as being abstract and the latter as concrete. If a person is asked to place their left foot in front of their right, the resulting movement is abstract because it is made outside the normal context of bodily movements. In the context of everyday walking, the same kind of movement would be concrete. Abstract movement is what enables us to step out of habitual

behaviour and use the body to imagine and communicate alternative courses of action. Through this kind of playful simulation, we explore possible futures. The body thus has the capacity for imagining.

The Self-Aware Body

Shusterman (2008) builds on Merleau-Ponty's concept of the lived body and uses the term *somaesthetic observation* for the body's ability to reflect on itself in action. We all conduct somaesthetic observation in everyday life when we observe our bodily reactions to specific situations: tense shoulders on our way to a job interview, excitement before meeting a person we like, or tiredness after a long day. Somaesthetic observation can be improved through training in drama and dance classes and Eastern mind–body practices, such as t'ai chi, yoga, and martial arts. The body thus has the potential for self-awareness.

The Research

In this study, we draw upon data derived from a research project on police work involving mobile organised crime groups in which forty-five interviews with police officers about the investigation of such crimes were conducted. The present study is based predominantly on interviews with police officers working on a specialised task force. These officers included both operational intelligence officers and investigators. Most of the police officers were in their thirties and early forties. The gender balance among the interviewees mirrored the gender composition of the task force: most were men but women were also included. Only experienced officers, predominantly those with knowledge of covert policing or mobile organised crime groups, were included on the task force.

One of the main responsibilities of operational police officers on the task force was to conduct covert policing and directed surveillance. When needed and convenient, the investigators also conducted covert policing. Therefore, interviews with both operational intelligence officers and investigators were included in the analysis. The notion of the body and its importance in directed surveillance may be seen as what Tjora (2018) calls an inductive aspect of the data. This was something brought up in the interviews by the informants and became more apparent over the course of the analysis. These interviews were supplemented with some observations of covert policing. The use of a mixed-methods approach when studying the role of the body is an advantage, as bodily practice is primarily tacit knowledge. Observing the informants allowed us to ask better questions in the interviews and unpack important aspects of tacit knowledge.

Analysis

In this section, the role of the body in directed surveillance is explored by analysing selected parts of our field notes and interviews through the theoretical lens of the presented phenomenological framework.

Becoming Aware of One's Own Bodily Skills

It is difficult to be conscious of one's own embodied knowledge, and it can also be difficult to articulate it (Collins 2010). During an interview, one of the experienced police officers reflected on his surveillance skills in comparison to those of interns: "You learn from your own mistakes, and you learn from others' mistakes in a way. It is very interesting to see what one has learned over the years and to see what is no longer an issue for me, but what might still be an issue for the interns. That is when you realise that okay, maybe I have actually learned something over the years that I have been here" (Interview 23, interview with police officer by Johanne Yttri Dahl, March 29, 2017). Using the theoretical lens of Polanyi (1967), we can see the above statement as an example of tacit knowledge being explicated. Because much of the directed surveillance training in Norway is not explicit, those who learn it are often unaware of what they have learned and unable to verbalise it. In this case, the police officer only became aware of what he had learned over the years (tacit knowledge) when observing interns conducting directed surveillance. This does not necessarily mean that he was able to verbalise it, but he could acknowledge it.

Merleau-Ponty's ([1945] 2005) reflections on the transparent nature of the lived body and Dreyfus and Dreyfus's (1980) concept of skill acquisition enable us to go beyond the lens of Polanyi (1967) and examine the nature of the police officer's tacit knowledge and his process of explication in more detail. The lived body of the police officer is mostly transparent, and changes to it are thus mainly hidden from reflection in everyday life. The transition of the lived body from something transparent to an object of reflection requires a reframing of the situation; in this case, that of working with inexperienced interns. The interns' lack of skills became the new background that made the officer's own skills apparent and an object of reflection. The police officer reflected on the nature of his tacit knowledge and how what was no longer an issue for him was still an issue for the novices. This is an example of what Dreyfus and Dreyfus (1980) describe as the transition from novice to expert, where an important acquired perceptual skill is to learn what to ignore and what to focus on in a given situation.

Acquiring Bodily Skills

One of the experienced police officers reflected on what happens when directed surveillance skills are improved:

There are so many thoughts spinning in my head at the same time. It is merely a question of capacity, and that is what I mean by experience; capacity is what limits the use of the directed surveillance gaze.² If you have good capacity, are experienced, and in a way have several of the basics in your body, it is much easier to release capacity to use the physical surveillance gaze in the right way. (Interview 18, interview with police officer by Johanne Yttri Dahl, March 2, 2017)

In this passage, the police officer describes a transition in expertise from having everything “in [the] head at the same time” to having “several of the basic [things] in your body,” thus making it “much easier to release capacity.” This illustrates the transition from the novice level, where skill is cognitive—“in the head”—towards becoming an expert, where several of the skills are internalised “in your body”—that is, embodied (Dreyfus and Dreyfus 1980). In dual processing³ terms (Evans 2003), the police officer goes from having to deal with a situation as explicit knowledge (“in the head”) to having it internalised as implicit knowledge (“in your body”). When the skill is internalised, it contributes to a release of mental capacity. An individual's working memory (Miyake and Shah 1999) sets limits as to how much explicit knowledge a person can have “in the head at the same time,” but moving knowledge to the body (implicit knowledge) releases capacity to do other tasks “in the head.”

The tacit knowledge of an experienced police officer regarding directed surveillance is thus embodied in what Chan, Devery, and Doran (2003) define as “bodily knowledge”—the psychical and corporal disposition of police officers. Following Dreyfus and Dreyfus's (1980) argument, it appears that an experienced police officer in the field responds to important aspects of a situation (embodied/implicit knowledge) without having to rely on reasoning (explicit knowledge). Trusting this embodied feeling without first knowing what triggered it becomes an important part of what constitutes expertise in directed surveillance.

Keeping the Body at an Optimal Distance

One of the fundamental differences between uniformed police work and covert policing is their different foci (Loftus and Goold 2012; Dahl 2019). Uniformed police officers aim to gain an overview of a situation with the purpose of spotting crime (Finstad 2000), while the directed surveillance gaze is predetermined and

² The directed surveillance gaze is how police officers use their gaze to watch, follow, read, and give meaning to the people they are observing. It is a focused and concealed gaze and can be demanding to use. It may be both a proactive and a reactive gaze, as it is used to both detect and prevent crime. It becomes operational when information about a specific subject or case is to be obtained (Dahl 2019).

³ In *Thinking, Fast and Slow*, Nobel laureate Kahneman names two parallel thinking processes: System 1 (fast, implicit, and intuitive) and System 2 (slow, explicit, and rational) (Kahneman 2011).

focused on observing something specific (Dahl 2019). Another major difference between uniformed police work and covert policing is that uniformed police officers are intentionally visible, whereas police officers working covertly must blend in with their surroundings and render their work invisible (Loftus and Goold 2012; Dahl 2020).

One police officer described how he maintains an optimal distance when conducting directed surveillance:

Sometimes it is necessary to observe up close, while sometimes it may be enough to keep a distance. To keep distance because you have other means that will tell you what is going on. I think that is part of the directed surveillance gaze: that you know at all times how close you have to be. How close do you have to watch? To have an eye for what is or is not important to see what is more or less important to observe. It is always difficult to tell what is or is not important, but actually, it is something you learn after a while. In the beginning of your career, you think everything has to be very detailed. After a while, you learn that maybe if he is talking to the lady behind the counter, the conversation is probably not so important, so I won't get so close that I can hear what is being said. But you never know. It might be that he is asking for directions to our target. (Interview 18, interview with police officer by Johanne Yttri Dahl, March 2, 2017)

In this passage, the officer describes how he aims for the maximum grip on the situation by placing himself at an optimal distance from his subjects when conducting directed surveillance. Merleau-Ponty ([1945] 2005) writes that the maximum grip is not a conscious task but rather a bodily perceptual skill that makes us manoeuvre our bodies to get an optimal view of the object of perception. Perception is active and involves the whole body. Moving the body to get an optimal view is thus an integral part of the police officer's act of perception.

Additionally, the maximum grip in relation to physical surveillance may include other senses, such as hearing, as mentioned by the informant. There is a difference between hearing (perceiving sound by ear) and listening (receiving sound waves and understanding them by paying full attention to the words and sentences of the speaker). Therefore, for police officers conducting directed surveillance, obtaining the maximum grip includes finding the right balance between hearing, getting an overview of the situation, and listening to obtain specific information.

Furthermore, what constitutes the maximum grip may be situational and can depend on the intention of the operation as well as to what type of crime the directed surveillance is related. If the related crime is credit card theft, obtaining the maximum grip requires seeing the credit card; for other types of crimes, this may not be relevant information.

The officer quoted above further reflects on how obtaining the maximum grip when conducting directed surveillance is a learned perceptual skill that is improved through practice. The officer mentions how he, as a novice, did not have this as an embodied skill but as a more conscious activity. He describes how, as a novice, he thought that he needed to hear and see everything, but, as his skills advanced, he learned how to obtain the maximum grip by reading an entire situation and intuitively making appropriate decisions concerning what to focus on and what to ignore. This illustrates how the skills and knowledge of directed surveillance can become embodied.

The way in which police officers obtain the maximum grip on a situation is highly affected by the surroundings in which the surveillance is conducted, as illustrated by a police officer in the following quote:

It's a matter of distance assessment and such things. For example, I think that if you follow a person, you would want to be as close as possible to have control, but if you walk on a long stretch of road and the person has nothing, like there aren't any houses, no parked cars, there's nothing, then there's not much point in you staying ten metres

behind that person.... If you're in the city, it's much easier to stay close. It's more important to stay close because there are so many corners, there are so many doors and so on. (Interview 9, interview with police officer by Johanne Yttri Dahl, February 13, 2017)

This example of a police officer finding the optimal distance from their subject while conducting directed surveillance is different from Dreyfus's (1996) example of a gallery guest finding the optimal distance from a work of art. The police officer's object of perception is not a static object but another person that the officer must maintain a certain distance from in order for their cover to not to be "blown." Accordingly, the maximum grip in directed surveillance implies seeing as much as possible without the individual noticing that they are being observed. This means that the officers cannot get too close to the subject, even though doing so would perhaps permit the best perception. As the body is the working tool for officers conducting directed surveillance, they must adapt the maximum grip according to the situation in question. In addition, they must adjust to the norms in a given space because what is considered an appropriate distance is in cultural flux. To the experienced police officer, taking all these aspects into consideration is an embodied skill that is learned through years of practice as part of a professional community.

Including the Body in Cover Stories

While cover stories are subject to visual and verbal challenges (Loftus and Goold 2012), it is crucial that officers conducting physical surveillance always have a cover story. Perhaps the most obvious reason for this is that, if someone asks what they are doing, they need to have a response in order to not blow their cover. Another reason to have a cover story is that it may have positive effects on the bodily expression of conducting physical surveillance. When observing an informal exercise on directed surveillance, the importance of letting the body embody one's cover story becomes abundantly clear. The following extract from our field observations illustrates this:

Four officers are conducting directed surveillance on a subject; in this case, a police student acting out a script. They have tailed him from the car into a café in an open area of a shopping mall. The officers have spread out to be able to observe as much as possible. The student acting as the subject gets up to leave the café. At the exact same time, all four covert officers rise and walk nonchalantly towards the exit. (Field observation April 3, 2018)

When the police student acting as the subject was later asked to identify when he felt as if he was being observed by the police officers tailing him, the situation in the café was the first he mentioned. He explained that he had not known who the officers were before they all rose from their chairs at the exact same time as he did. This illustrates the importance of staying in character and embodying a cover story so that one's cover is not blown even when something unexpected happens. In this case, staying in character could have involved taking another sip of coffee before leaving the café, thus making the behaviour appear more natural. The above example also illustrates the need to coordinate cover stories when working as a team to make the group behave and move as naturally as possible.

One of the more experienced police officers reflected on the value of cover stories during surveillance: "How I see it is that you are getting close to something if you manage to have a cover story and to complete your movements in some way, rather than freezing up. But you must be seen as having a purpose all the time. If you are in motion, you are going somewhere, or you might be just sitting there and drinking coffee" (Interview 6, interview with police officer by Johanne Yttri Dahl, February 9, 2017).

The police officer stressed the need to have a cover story with a clear purpose and to move in a natural way without "freezing up" as "[completing] your movements" implies not interrupting the movement associated with being a customer in the café. A movement done purposefully without a cover story, such as drinking coffee in a bar during surveillance, is abstract (Merleau-Ponty [1945] 2005) in the sense that it is not directly part of surveillance. Without a cover story, drinking coffee is something the police officer instructs their

body to do. With a believable cover story, the officer's body will react naturally according to their purpose in the story, and the coffee drinking will not be abstract but concrete.

The officer quoted above also reflected on how always having a cover story when conducting directed surveillance is a skill he had learned through trial and error and interactions with colleagues within his community of practice over the years (Wenger 1998). This had become a core element of his professional skill set, his tacit knowledge.

Having a solid cover story is similar to how method actors rehearse for a play. Method acting, built on the early work of Stanislavsky, mobilises the actor's conscious thoughts and aims to "activate other, less-controllable psychological processes—such as emotional experience and subconscious behaviour" (Benedetti 1999: 170). When acting out a character, the actor's body *becomes* that of the character. The actor adjusts the techniques of the body that are culturally dependent (Mauss 1973). When done successfully, this affects everything from gait, posture, and pace to gaze and temperament. Further, through method acting, "the actor searches for inner motives to justify action and the definition of what the character seeks to achieve at any given moment (a 'task')" (Benedetti 1999: 182). By providing a cover story for themselves during surveillance, such as waiting for a loved one, the police officer conducting covert physical surveillance makes use of the lived body's ability to activate its everyday coping skills as if the officer were the imagined character. Ordering and drinking coffee now comes naturally, as does picking up a newspaper at the counter.

Suppressing Bodily Responses

According to Lomell (2007: 151), there is suspense in watching someone who is not aware of it. This tension is derived from the fact that "we are, by proxy, present in the scenes without the actors knowing it" (McGrath 2004: 47). Police officers conducting physical surveillance must strive to draw as little attention to themselves as possible (Carlström 1997). One police officer explained how it was essential that they not show signs of fear or surprise so as not to blow their cover:

There are some basic principles that you get from the beginning. And learning or forcing yourself to... suppress natural impulses occasionally. For example, if you go around a corner, right, and suddenly, the criminal is standing there, that you do not go "iiiih" (high inhalation), but you continue. The undeviating course, right, and you continue in your natural gait, and sort of suppress the natural impulses. There's lots of them, and that may be convenient if someone tells you in advance, so that you are conscious that if—okay, if he suddenly appears in front of me, I'll just continue. (Interview 15, interview with police officer by Johanne Yttri Dahl, February 24, 2017).

The police officer's quote illustrates that, if one is to master the art of directed surveillance, it is imperative they master one of the core elements of bodily-kinaesthetic intelligence: control of one's bodily motions. Accordingly, it is important that, if a subject suddenly turns around and looks at an officer, that officer must have trained responses that enable them to suppress their bodily reflexes. If you are watching someone without them knowing and they look right back at you, the natural instinct might be to gasp for air or pull your gaze back. However, if officers do this, they may be noticed by the subject and subsequently busted.

Another important aspect of high bodily-kinaesthetic intelligence that is imperative to the suppression of bodily responses, as described by Gardner (1995), is a clear sense of timing and of the goal of your movement. Accordingly, as pointed out by an informant, an officer conducting directed surveillance must always have enough foresight to envision several possible outcomes from a given situation.

The quote from the police officer above may also be seen as an illustration of how he has moved from abstract to concrete behaviour, as he manages not to stop or gasp for air if a subject turns around but instead continues to walk nonchalantly, appearing as if nothing has happened. Learning to suppress natural responses is an important part of socialisation in many cultures, but there is a difference between "facework"

(Goffman 1955) or keeping face in a social situation and suppressing fight-or-flight responses to threatening situations. The latter requires a great deal of alertness. As the police officer in the above quote highlights, it helps to be aware of possible outcomes of a situation before you enter it. This illustrates the importance of mental preparation in embodied knowledge (Hoel, forthcoming).

The ability to suppress bodily responses is clearly a bodily skill and something that can be trained and perhaps even embodied. To recognise a bodily response is a prerequisite for being able to suppress it. The latter aspect of body consciousness is what Shusterman (2008) calls somaesthetic observation. Accordingly, the officers must explore the body's ability to reflect on itself in action and subsequently make their bodies and bodily reactions the objects of perception. It was our impression that the police officers in this study consciously worked with somaesthetic observation.

Concealing Bodily Perception

As police officers conducting directed surveillance must chameleonize, both when it comes to looks and behaviour, it is important that they appear similar to the people in their vicinity (Dahl 2020). One informant said: "Clearly, on the subway, bus, car and so on, you must be focused in a sort of relaxed way. So, it all depends on the surroundings" (Interview 7, interview with police officer by Johanne Yttri Dahl, February 9, 2017). This quote implies that, when conducting directed surveillance, officers must appear to be relaxed when, in fact, they are very focused. Accordingly, the police officers must make their behaviour appear consistent with the image they want to present, for example, when an officer is observing a subject in a café. The officer must appear to be relaxed while drinking their coffee, perhaps talking with a friend, while actually remaining highly focused on what the subject under surveillance is doing.

Several of the informants said that appearing relaxed while actually being highly focused is quite a challenging task. One informant gave the following example of this:

And many of them [criminals] have said that they, in a way, read who is a police officer. You probably get so concentrated when you're out and working so you become... when you go out of the door and are not at work and walk like usual and talk on the phone with friends or something you are all like—Yes, relaxed, but then you turn on that switch and then I think something happens to your face. It's like you're not so relaxed in a way. It's hard to walk around and concentrate, manage to take everything in and also appear to be taking a stroll in the city. That's what we humans are like. (Interview 7, interview with police officer by Johanne Yttri Dahl, February 9, 2017).

Why is it so difficult to appear relaxed when one is actually focused? Through the theoretical lens of Merleau-Ponty's ([1945] 2005) phenomenology, the key to answering this question is the idea that perception is a physical activity. Perception requires action, involves the whole body, and is always directed towards something. As social beings, we are trained to read such acts of perception in others. The police officer who wants to see and hear what the subject of the surveillance is doing is performing a focused act of perception. This act of perception is, by nature, embodied and requires particular movements of the eyeballs, head, and body. Bystanders will read this as the police officer being focused. Hiding such acts of perception is consequently as difficult as concealing other bodily movements. According to Merleau-Ponty ([1945] 2005), that perception is a physical activity that inherently requires action. Using this analytical framework allows us to develop further research on the police gaze, an area of study that has primarily focused on the sociocultural aspects of the analytical police gaze (Finstad 2000).

Concluding Remarks

While the act of material bodies watching other material bodies is the most ancient form of surveillance, not much research has focused on the bodily aspects of such surveillance. Our contributions in this article are both empirical and theoretical. Firstly, our interpretation of interviews and observations illustrates the value

of focusing on the police officers' perceptual and bodily skill. Secondly, the phenomenology of Merleau-Ponty ([1945] 2005) and the somaesthetics of Shusterman (2008) provide a language for discussing the bodily aspects of directed surveillance.

This phenomenologically inspired theoretical framework has enabled us to unpack important elements of the tacit aspects of the bodily practice of police officers conducting directed surveillance. The skilled body of the police officer is the tool that enables them to conduct directed surveillance. Our interviews and field observations revealed that experienced police officers conducting directed surveillance often had an advanced level of reflection concerning the bodily aspects of their work. This included both their perceptual and bodily skills and how their bodies appear to others.

This analysis has revealed some of the challenges of directed surveillance. Furthermore, it has revealed how police officers have internalised advanced perceptual and bodily skills, including how to keep an optimal distance from a subject without their cover being blown, how to suppress bodily responses, how to stay in character to protect their cover story, and how to appear relaxed while being vigilant.

There are similarities between how a police officer keeps an optimal distance and hides their gaze when conducting directed surveillance and how a teacher manages to keep track of students' progress on a classroom assignment by casually walking around the classroom. The difference being that the criminal is not supposed to be aware he or she is being watched, while the students sense the presence and gaze of their teacher and are affected by it. As Marx (2015) describes, the police officer following a criminal is doing *strategic* surveillance, while the teacher walking casually around the classroom is doing *non-strategic* surveillance. The first can be characterised as active perception, while the latter is about maintaining situational awareness. However, both may be characterised by tacit knowledge.

Covert policing and directed surveillance may be characterised as tacit knowledge because there is little formal education in the field (Kruisbergen, de Jong, and Kleemans 2011). Loftus and Goold (2012: 284) write that “the art of undercover policing is learned through on-the-job socialization.” This was evident in our data. Such forms of knowledge transfer may be beneficial but may also be counterproductive if mistakes or unbeneficial operational methods are passed on. A lack of professionalism by police officers may affect security on a micro and macro level: the individual's legal protection and the general rule of law. Therefore, it is important that the field of directed surveillance be professionalised, especially because this policing method is being used with increasing frequency (O'Neill and Loftus 2013; Fyfe, Gundhus, and Vrist Rønn 2018; Larsson 2018; Loftus 2019).

Generally, theoretical education is said to develop “the ability to conceptualize and expand the theoretical and analytic learning process” (Kratcoski 2004: 103–104), while the purpose of practical training is to gain “the skills needed to accomplish the immediate tasks and goals of police operations” (Kratcoski 2004: 104). As directed surveillance is, to a large extent, a bodily practice, it is our belief that it is best taught through a combination of theory and practical exercises, which lead to a transfer of implicit and explicit knowledge. It is our belief that the phenomenologically inspired theoretical framework presented in this article can be of value in educating police officers in directed surveillance.

It is our belief that directed surveillance education can benefit from input from other professional practices that require the development of advanced perceptual and bodily skills, such as theatre and dance. As with actors and dancers, the perceptual and bodily skills of police officers are key to top performance during directed surveillance. Bodily directed-surveillance skills take years to develop and, thus far, have not been sufficiently reflected upon by professionals, researchers, or educators. We believe much can be gained by exploring the perceptual and bodily skills involved in directed surveillance, thus bringing these currently tacit aspects of policing to the fore where they can be studied, reflected upon, shared, discussed, and improved.

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