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Preventing the Use of Force Through Police Negotiation

Exploring the Role and Potential of the Norwegian Crisis and Hostage Negotiation Unit

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Abstract
The aim of negotiation is to avoid violent intervention in situations and incidents where people are acting in a threatening manner. The use of negotiators has proved an effective response to critical incidents. Through participant observation and interviews, this study explores the Norwegian Crisis and Hostage Negotiation Unit (CHNU). CHNU is a separate unit, and three aspects differentiate it from similar units in other countries: its members have full-time positions; they go out on patrol; and all are trained to deal with every kind of negotiation, whether involving suicidal and mentally ill people, barricades, kidnappings, or terrorism. The way this agency is organized has resulted in a highly expert and successful negotiation team, and their contribution goes beyond preventing violent intervention. The article discusses the role of negotiation and argues that it should become part of the operational gold standard at a much earlier stage and be used more often as the first line of action during the mobilization of police resources.

Keywords
hostage and crisis negotiation, police use of force, communication, conflict management, prevention of violent intervention

1. Introduction

In popular culture, the police crisis and hostage negotiator is presented as someone who is brought in when it looks unlikely that the special weapons and tactics (SWAT) teams will be able to resolve a situation without risk to hostages' lives, and a successful negotiation ends with the hostage taker coming out with his hands over his head to surrender. This reduces negotiation to a plan B intervention, once tactical intervention has been unsuccessful, and additionally reduces the chances of success.

In Norway, the Crisis and Hostage Negotiation Unit (CHNU) is the most highly trained police unit in communication and negotiation. CHNU is a national emergency response unit with special expertise in negotiation in 'hostage and kidnapping situations, and in other

organized and serious crime' (Politidirektoratet, 2011). As a national emergency response unit, CHNU's remit covers the entire country. CHNU is set up as a separate unit of full-time negotiators and differs from similar units in other countries in the following three aspects: its negotiators have full-time positions within it, they go out on patrol in the central parts of the capital, Oslo, and all are trained to deal with every kind of negotiation, whether involving suicidal and mentally ill people, barricades, kidnappings (both at home and abroad) or terrorism.

Having full-time positions gives CHNU negotiators much greater scope to develop their role, which is very important to the development of each individual's skills. As full-time negotiators, 30 per cent of their working hours is devoted to certification and skills maintenance training. The other 70 per cent is spent carrying out regular patrols in Oslo (CHNU takes part in both daytime and evening patrols), developing its methodology, and sharing its skills (with both internal and external collaborators). This means CHNU officers do plenty of ordinary police work when they have no assignments involving pure negotiation. There is always a set number of negotiators available during the night for national and international on-call emergency response.

The most important function of negotiation in policing is to avoid violent intervention (Johnson et al., 2018; Strentz, 2013). Typical responses to critical events are either negotiation or tactical response by means of force and use of marksmen (Baruch & Zarse, 2012). Negotiation has proved to be an effective and successful intervention, reducing the risk of injury and death.

This article explores the role of negotiation in police practice and discusses its potential in future policing. The research question are:

1. What philosophies and methods are used by the Norwegian CHNU?
2. What types of assignment do the CHNU respond to?
3. What place does negotiation have as a subject in Norwegian police culture and the police organization?

The article is organized so that the next section gives a background and a theoretical framework related to crisis and hostage negotiation, followed by an overview of the data material. In the results section, CHNU's philosophy, its methodology, and what it does are presented, and there is a focus on topics such as the kind of tasks it carries out, how effective it is and what they can contribute beyond surrender. Next, the status of negotiation in the Norwegian police is discussed, with the ultimate aim of discussing whether the time has come to redefine the place of negotiation in police operations.

2. Background

The Norwegian police are known for their lengthy training (in the form of a bachelor's degree), for being unarmed (not carrying firearms, although guns are kept locked in their vehicles), for enjoying a very high level of public trust (Thomassen, 2013; Thomassen et al., 2014), and for the high proportion of female officers (Jon, 2021). They are part of an Anglo-Saxon tradition, described by Caless and Tong (2015) as 'civilian policing, with a uniform that [is] distinctly unmilitary, a decentralized structure and a modicum of independence from the governing power.' The philosophy is 'policing by consent' (Reiner, 2010). The principles of 'least possible use of force' and 'conflict resolution via communication' are strongly held (Lie & Lagestad, 2011) and are given a great degree of emphasis in police recruitment

and training (Bloksgaard et al., 2020; Bloksgaard & Prieur, 2016). These police ideals can also be seen in the characteristics the Norwegian Police University College (NPUC) considers desirable in prospective police students: decisiveness and a willingness to act, combined with analytical skills and the ability to be open, inclusive, cooperative, and mature. NPUC highlights the importance of respect, integrity, empathy, good communication skills, and sound ethical standards (Politihøgskolen, 2020). Many of the same values and capabilities can be observed in other Nordic countries (Bloksgaard & Prieur, 2016; Inzunza, 2015).

As in other Western countries, negotiation became an established branch of policing in Norway following the tragic outcome of the police assault against the group holding 11 Israeli athletes hostage during the Summer Olympics in Munich in 1972 (McMains et al., 2021). Crisis and hostage negotiation was introduced into the Norwegian police in 1983–84, and in 1986 and 1991 a small number of officers were sent on a course at Hendon Police College in the UK, and subsequently for further training in negotiation in the United States and Canada. In 1993, in preparation for the 1994 Winter Olympics in Lillehammer, these officers, with the assistance of the FBI's Fred Lanceley, were responsible for training several more police negotiators (Røren, 2011). In the first 10 years following the introduction of trained negotiators in Norway, negotiation was a supplementary competence which some officers had, and which could be used if situations arose that required crisis and hostage negotiation. These officers had a little time set aside from their ordinary work for training and further skills development. (There is still, in some police districts, officers for whom negotiation is an additional skill alongside their normal work.)

In 2006, a negotiation group was set up in the Oslo police district and named the Crisis and Hostage Negotiation Unit (CHNU). Initially, CHNU involved part-time service, with negotiation a secondary function of officers holding other posts within the police district. In 2014, the decision was taken to strengthen CHNU by training more negotiators, and CHNU became a separate unit in the Oslo police district, with all negotiators being given full-time posts within it. This arrangement allows them to go out on routine patrol, and all are trained to deal with every kind of negotiation task. Information about the number of negotiators working in CHNU is classified, so cannot be revealed here. As with other specialist agencies in the police, CHNU was long male-dominated, but the most recent intake has raised the proportion of women, giving CHNU a gender balance of 40 per cent women and 60 per cent men.

From a policing perspective, crisis and hostage negotiation is still a young and evolving field, whose aim is to obtain the subject's compliance without the use of tactical force (Johnson et al., 2018). The purpose of negotiation is to avoid violent intervention through dialogue, and the use of negotiators is considered an effective method of responding to critical incidents (Oostinga et al., 2018). Strentz (2013) defines crisis negotiation as 'a process designed to save lives of responders, victims, civilians, and the subject' and, he continues: 'We take time to listen so the crisis can be resolved by bringing the subject to his senses, not necessarily to his knees.' The 'appropriate use of time' is highlighted by McMains et al. (2021) as one of the most valuable tools a negotiator can bring to the situation. Unlike tactical responses, which have the advantage of speed but also carry a greater risk of injury or death, negotiation is 'a peaceful approach, with fewer injuries, less liability, and greater appeal to public relations' (Baruch & Zarse, 2012).

The Behavioural Change Stairway Model (BCSM) is central in the field of negotiation, moving from active listening skills (ALS) through empathy to influence (McMains et al., 2021). The goal is to change a subject's behaviour, and to achieve this, a negotiator must use ALS to facilitate empathy, which enables the development of a rapport with the subject.

This, in turn, provides a basis for influence and behavioural change (Johnson et al., 2018; Vecchi et al., 2005). Empathy is a key tool and basic part of crisis negotiation, helping build a relationship, encourage trust, and defuse emotions. McMains et al. (2021) state: 'Through research in therapy and counselling, empathy has been established as a necessary condition to facilitate change in a person.'

Active listening skills (ALS) are considered fundamental to negotiation, with McMains (2002) calling them 'the aspirin of negotiations'. McMains et al. (2021) include the following skills: asking open-ended questions; using effective pauses and minimal encouragers; mirroring; paraphrasing; and emotional labelling. Through active listening, the negotiator can display warmth, understanding, and empathy (Bodie et al., 2015). Active listening is also demonstrated through non-verbal cues and elements such as appropriate eye contact, open body posture, and positive voice tone (Johnson et al., 2018).

All situations that negotiators have to deal with are stressful. As McMains et al. (2021) point out: 'Physically, adrenaline is dumped into the system and body functions are on full alert. Emotions, anxiety, and fear are elevated.' For a negotiator, it is essential to be able to reduce stress in the hostage taker, by being calming and reassuring, using ALS, and being non-aggressive and non-threatening (McMains et al., 2021).

There will also be a lot of stress on the negotiator: 'The negotiator realizes that every word said, every action taken, and every decision made may cost lives' (McMains et al., 2021). The negotiator's ability to deal with stress is crucial, and they need to have their stress management tools fully internalized.

To be a good negotiator requires sufficient practice for the techniques to be internalized, and training is therefore important as it 'bridges the gap between instruction and the real world' (Baruch & Zarse, 2012). There is a well-developed tradition within the negotiation field of using role play for the acquisition of and training in the necessary skills (Van Hasselt et al., 2008).

3. Methods

Ethnographic and observational studies are often used for researching police culture and organization (Manning, 2014;) and typically involve accompanying police on patrol (Dahl & Tjora, 2021). By contrast, empirical negotiation studies are often based on questionnaires or interviews (Grubb et al., 2022; Johnson et al., 2018; Oostinga et al., 2018). There has previously been scant ethnographic research because of the way negotiators were organized, but thanks to CHNU's being a unit, whose members have full-time negotiator positions but still go on patrol, I was able to carry out a ride-along, ethnographic and observational study[1] of them.

I followed CHNU from October 2018 to February 2020, at which point Covid-19 stopped my fieldwork. The fieldwork was most concentrated in autumn 2018 and between spring and June 2019. During these periods I often went out on patrol with CHNU officers, especially on evening and weekend shifts, and I also joined them for training days, certification, meetings, and skills-building activities. Additionally, I conducted more structured interviews. In total, the data comprises 326 hours of observation and interviews. Through observing the full breadth of CHNU's activities, including training and meetings where its

1. The study is approved by the Norwegian Center for Research Data

members share their expertise with colleagues in addition to going out on patrol, I have gained good insight into CHNU's philosophy, its method, and the types of assignments it has. Through my involvement with CHNU I came to know all the negotiators quite well and have been on patrol with the entire unit. Being out on patrol mostly entailed 'back-seat research' (Høigård, 2011), but on some occasions, I patrolled with a single negotiator and so sat in the front passenger seat, a position described by Dahl & Tjora (2021) in relation to researchers as *riding shotgun*.

On patrol, I also usually accompanied the negotiators when they left the patrol car, observing their encounters with the public and how they handled situations. I followed them wherever they went – whether in the public space on the street or into private houses. For my own safety, I was occasionally asked to stay in the car and wait until the situation had been resolved. During the observation this happened twice, and none of the situations led to negotiations. Since CHNU officers often use the telephone as a work tool and call the person they want to negotiate with, I was able to listen to the negotiators speaking to them by conference call.

Studying CHNU has shown me the importance of observation as a method of gaining knowledge about the culture in the unit and for studying practice. Had the study been conducted purely as an interview survey, much core information would have been lost – partly because I would not have been able to ask key questions if I had not seen the negotiators at work, and partly because the negotiators are perhaps not fully aware of their own culture.

Field notes were made (using either a laptop or pen and paper) while the negotiation was underway, when we were back in the patrol car, or when I arrived home after the shift. When the negotiators were using the telephone, I was able to make notes in real time.

In addition to using participatory observation, I also interviewed almost all the CHNU negotiators. The number of personnel in CHNU is classified information, so the number of interviews cannot be disclosed. They took place in spring 2020 (over the telephone due to the pandemic) and lasted between 1.5 and 2.5 hours. As I knew all the interviewees well, the interviews were not, in my opinion, adversely affected by not occurring face to face. In the interviews, I was able to ask the negotiators to go more deeply into questions to which observations had not provided an answer. I was also able to explore each individual negotiator's motivation, views, and experience. The interviews were recorded and later transcribed verbatim. The excerpts provided here are translations from Norwegian by the author. The data, both from fieldnotes and interviews, were encoded manually and subjected to a thematic analysis based on previous research and theory (Widerberg 2001).

4. Results

4.1 CHNU's philosophy

The Norwegian model for crisis negotiation is based FBI's Crisis Intervention Model (Vecchi, 2009) and Roberts's Seven-Stage Intervention Model (Roberts, 1991). However, it has adapted theory and practice to Norwegian conditions and culture, the crime situation in Norway, and its own philosophy.

As explained in the introduction, CHNU is a national emergency preparedness unit with special expertise in negotiation, whether in terrorist, hostage-taking and kidnapping situations or in other 'organized and serious crime' (Politidirektoratet, 2011). The unit was established to tackle extraordinary events, and it could easily have set itself apart to concentrate on these. Instead, CHNU's philosophy is based on the idea of using every opportunity in everyday life as an important resource and to make a difference to people's lives, while

at the same time remaining prepared for whatever extraordinary events might arise. In its encounters with any party carrying out or threatening to carry out an extraordinary act, CHNU is therefore concerned not to think of them as 'other'; it instead focuses on what is 'alike' in such situations. CHNU's capability coordinator puts it like this: '*What does some poor bloke up on a bridge deciding whether to jump and a terrorist have in common? Nearly everything! In both cases we are dealing with a person made of flesh and blood.*' CHNU assumes that 85 to 95 per cent is alike, and what is not alike can be specifically trained for. From this perspective, negotiating with desperate, suicidal, mentally ill, and/or aggressive people becomes, at the same time, training in dealing with the extraordinary. And, through negotiating with such people, CHNU can usually help improve their situations through them getting out of the acute crisis and also help them to get health care.

When entering into negotiation with someone, it makes sense to start by trying to establish a 'favourable negotiating atmosphere', which involves taking time to bring their level of activation down and increases the chances of influencing them.

Throughout the negotiation, attempts are made to calm the other person and reduce their stress levels. As their stress levels go down, the chances of being able to influence them go up, and in an improved negotiating climate, it may be possible to reach a solution to the situation. The focus on finding a solution together reflects the emphasis CHNU puts on maintaining the other party's autonomy in the choices made. When negotiating with suicidal individuals, CHNU emphasizes that suicide is not a crime and is a choice the individual must make for themselves. However, they attempt to convince the individual to postpone the decision until a time when they are not in the middle of a crisis. CHNU emphasizes the importance of not manipulating people in crisis by lying to or deceiving them.

Establishing contact and getting the other person to speak is the first stage in being able to negotiate. So when setting off for the address where the person is, CHNU officers usually seek to establish swift contact by telephoning. If there is no answer, they will often send a text message saying who they are and why they want to make contact and asking the person to answer their next call. They will ring and ring and not give up. My observations show that, as a rule, the phone ends up being answered, and contact established. CHNU officers not only understand the importance of making contact but also of explaining why they are doing so. Being open and honest about their intentions is important in ensuring predictability. '*It is only when our intention in making contact is clear and understood that we can begin to discuss solutions to the situation. Do we agree about the solution? Often not, but it is important to find out what we can actually agree on,*' says the capability coordinator. For CHNU, establishing contact is part of an ongoing process of ensuring there is agreement about the purpose of the contact.

4.2 CHNU's methodology – keeping it simple

The literature usually distinguishes between expressive and instrumental crises (Oostinga et al., 2018; Vecchi et al., 2005). CHNU also builds on this by making a distinction between crisis negotiation and conflict negotiation. The former involves people in crisis. In conflict negotiation the expectation is that the other person will be more rational and systematic. CHNU aims to keep things simple rather than follow a complicated procedure. For people in crisis, the focus is on providing emotional first aid. CHNU has a mantra about deciding how 'close to the edge' the person is. If they are experiencing intense feelings, there is normally little room for sensible and rational arguments. In a person who is driven by emotion and is in crisis, it will take very little to push them over the edge. In crisis negotiation, CHNU follows the simple but effective formula '**listen**, **reassure**, **explain**' (Scavenius, 2017). The first

important task is to reduce the emotional load. That is, to get the stress levels down and the person calmer. In negotiating with people in crisis, CHNU's first objective is to work with the person's feelings. The key to turning the situation around lies in getting the person to feel they have some degree of control over what is happening and that events will follow a predictable course.

In conflict negotiation the other party is more instrumentally driven, will have their feelings under greater control, and therefore be more rational. The person is not 'close to the edge'; they have enough headspace to be able to relate to logical arguments. In this situation, the key to being able to bring about a change is showing respect, forming a relationship, and taking care that the other party retains a sense of autonomy. Every stage of negotiation planning requires skill, knowledge, and training to internalize the process and be effective. Active listening techniques, learning to listen to both verbal and non-verbal communication, and managing to get the person's stress levels down while, at the same time, gathering information, are complex and intense processes (Norton & Petz, 2012). Kelln and McMurtry (2007) describe crisis negotiation as 'a complex verbal dance between the negotiator and the subject'. CHNU is continually evolving: the capability coordinator constantly monitors how it is working and introduces improvements all the time. Each time there is a challenging assignment, this is evaluated afterwards by the whole group, and, where there are audio logs, these are listened to, to see what went well and what could be improved. CHNU is always looking to identify and develop what can be improved.

4.3 What does CHNU do?

Training and certification

As mentioned, 30 per cent of CHNU working hours are used for certification and training. However, CHNU officers view any assignment in which they come into contact with people while on patrol as an arena for training too. Each assignment with agitated people and those in crisis is a good opportunity for CHNU officers to practise their negotiation skills. Its large number of assignments gives CHNU a unique competence and is very important in helping its negotiators acquire the expertise they need. One of them describes the most important elements of this competence as follows: '*So we have a breadth of experience. We have hundreds and hundreds of assignments a year. You become more assured and used to the routine. And then we train really, really a lot on things relating specifically to negotiation. Getting so much experience on patrol makes us more assured and versatile.*'

Because they are out on patrol in Oslo, CHNU officers pick up a large number of assignments. They attend cases where having officers with communication and crisis negotiation skills makes sense. In particular, they are called on to attend in situations where someone is suicidal or psychotic. CHNU members see these as natural assignments for them given their competences, and every such assignment represents an opportunity to train and to improve their capability as negotiators. Training, training and more training is an important factor in being good and succeeding (Grubb et al., 2022; Van Hasselt et al., 2008). By patrolling and participating in ordinary police work in Oslo, they receive a lot of training in communicating and negotiating with people in all kinds of situations. As one negotiator put it: '*We have a lot of assignments. They're there – so you can train and train, but you get the best training from talking to people. You'll never be tested to the same degree with role play.*' This was confirmed in a study by Grubb et al. (2022), where they write that their informants 'were quick to praise the training that they received', but they also felt strongly that there was no substitute for 'the real thing' or 'live scenarios'. On-the-job training or operational experience was, therefore, identified as a vital component, enhancing both negotiator skills and abilities.

Types of assignments

A summary and review done by CHNU's capability coordinator show that in 2020 CHNU recorded a total of 604 negotiation assignments. These can be categorized as in the table below.

Table 1. Negotiation assignments recorded by CHNU in 2020

Barricade situations	High-risk arrests/ apprehensions	Kidnapping situations	OMI (Ongoing mass injury)	Other negotiation tasks	Total
40.9%	24.5%	1.8%	0.3%	32.5%	100%

The biggest category, at just under 41 per cent, was barricade situations. 'Barricade' is defined as 'people holding hostages, including suicidal people who are holding themselves hostage' (Strentz, 2018). High-risk arrests and apprehensions accounted for almost a quarter of assignments. These are situations assessed in advance by the police as potentially leading to resistance and possible violence, involving the planned arrest or apprehension of persons. Cases of kidnapping make up less than two per cent of CHNU's assignments. Kidnapping is an infrequent occurrence in Norway, and many of the cases that do occur are what the police call 'bad on bad', meaning individuals within the criminal milieu. The hidden total of such cases is believed to be considerable, but the police, and therefore CHNU, are seldom involved while such cases are in progress. OMI stands for 'ongoing mass injury'. Such incidents trigger a national procedure for the emergency services (police, fire, rescue, and health services) to work together. Events classified as OMI are extremely infrequent in Norway – CHNU was involved in only two of these in 2020. The category 'other negotiation assignments' comprises 32.5 per cent of the total. It includes assignments that do not fit into other categories, among others work with suicidal people not seen as representing a threat to anyone other than themselves. Assignments involving suicidal and/or mentally ill people can be registered in both 'barricade situations' and 'other negotiation tasks'. An enumeration shows that 59 per cent of negotiator assignments in 2020 were shown to have involved potentially suicidal people in one way or another. This does not mean they were necessarily actually suicidal, but rather that an assessment of this was required. Similarly, 49 per cent of assignments involved mental illness (again, those involved may not necessarily have been mentally ill, but a mental health assessment was required).

A large amount of working time is given over to certification, training, and exercises. Different scenarios are created for training in different situations, such as large hostage operations, OMIs, barricade situations, and assignments involving suicidality. The training is seen as useful, and the experience from exercises as transferable to real-life situations. One negotiator said: '*A lot of the training that we are given is extremely good. I feel that the exercises come very close to reality. So, when we work out for real, it's a lot like when we train. Because it's so close to the training provided for us.*'

International research shows negotiation to be effective (Grubb et al., 2018; McMains et al., 2021). Statistics from CHNU assignments confirm this. Of all assignments where the negotiators managed to establish contact with the other party and to initiate negotiations, only 10 per cent ended unresolved. This figure includes cases where the police or CHNU had to discontinue their efforts due to a change in the situation, such as the health services attending to the person in question, or more serious incidents elsewhere requiring assistance.

Fully 77 per cent of incidents where CHNU established contact with the other party ended with the latter giving themselves up without resistance. If CHNU officers have contact at an early stage, they will most often negotiate their way to a peaceful solution. Thirteen per cent of cases ended in police action, and in most of these, CHNU contributed either by collecting information or in some other way creating a tactical advantage for the intervention.

As explained in the Introduction, a traditional view of negotiation sees the negotiator's contribution as getting the other party to come out with his hands over his head or talking the suicidal person down from a great height or in from the edge. Negotiation certainly can contribute in this way. However, this is a very narrow view of it – negotiation offers much more than that. Through negotiation, negotiators can collect much useful intelligence, increasing the likelihood of success in a tactical operation. CHNU distinguishes between advisory capabilities, sensor capabilities, and effector capabilities. Through contact and negotiation with the other party, CHNU receives information that can be used to support decision-making by the officer in charge, through situation updates, assessments and recommendations, counselling, and mentoring.

CHNU understands *sensor support* as referring to the negotiator's ability to gather sensory data about a specific target area. Through their negotiating, CHNU officers can gather information relevant to the police management of the situation. Even where the negotiation does not lead to a surrender, CHNU can capture a lot of information both from the person being negotiated with and from background noise. Background noise can, for instance, allow CHNU to confirm or dispute the other party's geographic location, or where they are in a house, which can assist the police management of the situation. Additionally, CHNU can reveal whether there are any third parties present; what kind of capacity the person has; and the mental state they are in – in crisis or conflict? It may also be able to establish if they are considering using a weapon against the police or if there is a danger of 'suicide by cop'.

Effector support refers to the negotiator's ability to influence the conditions (effect) in a specific target area. Through this, CHNU can contribute to reducing threat and risk, reducing the use of force, and providing tactical advantage by, for example, diverting the other party or ensuring their surrender takes place in well-lit conditions so misunderstandings are avoided.

4.4 The status of negotiation in the Norwegian police

'*First and foremost, we are police*,' said the CHNU officers on introducing themselves to me. CHNU officers are keen to 'be something else' and to appear different from ordinary police officers. At the same time, being operational is important to them, and they definitely have no wish to be people who do nothing but 'talk'. As one officer put it: '*CHNU is law and order, not a cup of tea, not a social worker nor child protection who'll kiss people. We are police first and foremost!*'

Clearly, CHNU is at pains to be recognized and taken seriously within the police force. Particularly at the start of my fieldwork, CHNU officers typically believed that their competences were going unrecognized. This is related to perceived attitudes about the negotiators. As one officer said: '*In the past, we were probably seen as second-rate police. […] The control room and others think that all we can do is talk to people and that we get in the way of operational solutions. And when the negotiators arrive: "You'd better just take your jacket off and get some air, because this is going to take some time."*'

While CHNU officers express concern about whether their expertise is recognized within the police force, I observe they are treated with great respect by all the colleagues they come into contact during the course of assignments, exercises, or informal conversation. Many of

their colleagues say clearly that negotiation is a very exciting specialty, and many say that that they themselves would like to work in the field or be more involved in it. These observations are, of course, not methodologically reliable as a measure of CHNU's status in the force since those colleagues who are best disposed toward CHNU and its abilities may be the ones most likely to seek out CHNU to offer this kind of recognition. That said, feedback from colleagues is so generally positive that it is difficult to believe this does not say something about attitudes to CHNU.

Uncertainty about the status of negotiators was reflected in their experiences with the control room. On various occasions, CHNU has uncovered cases in the log where its expertise could have been helpful but where the control room had failed to contact them. In one such instance involving someone described as suicidal, a negotiator burst out: '*I wonder why they don't use us? Is it to save us? Or have they forgotten us?*'

At the start of my fieldwork, the act of CHNU officers' going out on patrol was so new that they wondered if the control room forgot they existed and if that was why they were being left out of assignments. The negotiators still find all too often that they are held in reserve by the control room, which restricts the assignments it asks them to take. This is to avoid CHNU being tied up in case something else happens that CHNU officers need to attend instead.

CHNU members talk about the experience of coming to an incident (too) late. The negotiators talk about 'being thrown in at the very last minute', to convey the way they see assignments being conducted. They believe they are often brought in too late, almost as an afterthought.

This concern about whether their professional competence is recognized was most apparent in the first phase of my fieldwork. At that time, in 2018, CHNU had had full-time negotiators out on patrol for two years. When I interviewed them in spring 2020, they expressed greater confidence about having high status within the police. One officer said: '*I'm really proud to be in CHNU with regard to the reputation we have among the police. I really like to come, as a negotiator, to an incident where other officers are present and to see them thinking "it's good the negotiators are here". If they have been in a conversation for a long time or are afraid to have such a conversation, and then we specialists come along – then I often see most people thinking: "It's OK." And that's nice.*'

Since CHNU became better known within the police force, having worked with colleagues from both the ordinary operational service and special forces such as the National Police Special Intervention Unit and the National Police Bomb Squad (and thus having been able to demonstrate its skills), its standing appears to have risen.

5. Discussion: Redefining the place of negotiations in police operations?

Research has shown that physical capabilities have traditionally been highly valued and readily convertible into symbolic capital such as recognition and prestige (Chan et al., 2003; Lagestad, 2012; Leirvik & Ellefsen, 2020). And earlier research has shown that, traditionally, physical capability has been valued more highly than communication skills and an explanatory approach (Hoel & Christensen, 2016; Lagestad, 2011; Loftus, 2009). It appears this is changing in Norway.

Police culture has often been described as a masculine culture valuing danger, excitement, rough methods, and the capture of thieves (Finstad, 2018). Norwegian police culture is rooted in these traditions, but is also open to change. Writing about the Norwegian police,

Finstad (2018) makes it clear the police have undoubtedly changed, and that the changes in Norway are largely the same as those seen in other Western countries. She points to a better trained police force, to a reduced tolerance of discrimination and use of unnecessary force, and to the police having become a far more open institution, adding that 'the masculinity culture has been weakened, and breaches of the law – such as domestic violence – that formerly had low status, have moved up on the priority list'. Police methods too are changing, with less emphasis on physical strength and more on patience and communication skills (Bloksgaard & Prieur, 2016; Gundhus, 2005; Inzunza, 2015; Jon, 2021; Lagestad, 2011; Wathne, 2016).

As indicated in the Introduction, the principles of 'least possible use of force' and 'conflict resolution via communication' are strongly held in Norway (Lie & Lagestad, 2011) and much emphasized in police recruitment and training (Bloksgaard et al., 2020; Bloksgaard & Prieur, 2016). Basic police training takes the form of a bachelor's degree from the NPUC, where great weight is placed on subjects such as communication, conflict management, and professional ethics.

Leirvik and Ellefsen (2020) show that attitudes in the police are changing, and they point to the difference between younger and older generations of police officers. Their study shows that a majority of their younger informants highlight precisely those qualities thought of as their 'softer skills' as making them particularly suitable for patrol work; the study also shows that negotiating and communicative skills are highly valued in the workplace, in addition to physical strength.

Even though the status of communicative and explanatory-style policing in general, and of CHNU in particular, seems to be rising, the traditional understanding of how assignments should be resolved and what the negotiator can contribute remains dominant. This is apparent in the organization, among patrol officers and in written operative procedures, as in the Police Emergency Preparedness System (Politidirektoratet, 2011). In a skills-sharing situation with operational officers, CHNU officers asked the gathered police staff: '*What do you think we can offer?*' Back came the laughing response: '*Talk!*' This was followed by answers such as: '*Get the other party to cooperate, give us advice, and take over if everything is stuck*.' Here, the patrol officers make it plain that they see negotiation as plan B, to take over if their own efforts have failed to resolve the situation.

Such an understanding is also seen in the Police Emergency Preparedness Systems (Politidirektoratet, 2011), where the normal order of steps taken during an armed intervention is given as follows:

- Locating
- Observing
- Isolating
- Evacuating
- Negotiating
- Organizing
- Assessing the situation
- Intervening (and arresting)
- Preserving the scene

As we see, negotiation comes a long way down the list – only appearing at stage five. In traditional police work, locating will mean driving to where the incident is taking place so as to observe and gain an overview of the situation. Once an overview has been formed, the

aim will be to try to isolate the object of the incident and to evacuate others caught up in the situation. All of this takes time, and supposing that each of these steps takes 10 to 15 minutes, an hour could pass before the negotiators become involved. CHNU's tasks can in fact be carried out parallel to the other tasks carried out by other units, and because their most important tool is the telephone, they can work from a distance. Their way of working is to try to telephone the person concerned immediately, without waiting until negotiators have arrived at the scene, often establishes contact fast. And with that, immediate observation follows, providing information about what is happening at the scene long before the officers physically arrive there. But because the negotiation stage is so far down the list and is seen as a strategy only when 'things have become stuck', the opportunity for swift resolution is lost.

The most important argument for changing police culture towards considering negotiation as an early intervention is, of course, that negotiation is a peaceful police intervention that can 'result in an increased likelihood of successful peaceful resolution' (Grubb et al., 2018). Negotiation is a conspicuously preventative method that uses communication to resolve deadlocks in the most appropriate and justifiable way possible.

In Norway, crime prevention is defined as the police's primary strategy (Politidirektoratet, 2020), and great emphasis is placed on police methods that prevent criminality, avoid the unnecessary use of force, and maintain public trust in the police. Negotiation is a preventative method that, in crisis situations, can have both a risk-reducing and an injury-preventing effect by avoiding the use of force. By negotiating and spending time establishing relationships, CHNU concludes most of its engagements without using physical force. Attempting to resolve a situation by using negotiation as a first step fulfils the aim of prevention as the primary strategy. Additionally, negotiation is effective, giving good results. The fact that only 13 per cent of those cases where negotiation takes place end in tactical intervention shows that it genuinely prevents the drama of tactical intervention and that it does indeed avoid potentially violent interventions. As Grubb et al. (2018) put it, negotiation can 'play a role in whether individuals live or die'.

6. Concluding remarks

The traditional understanding in Norway of what constitutes 'real police work' is changing, and communication and conflict management now enjoy a much higher standing in police work generally than they did some decades ago. Negotiation as a field represents a refinement of communication work in the police, and its most important function is to prevent violent intervention. I therefore join with Grubb et al. (2019) who write:

> Without HCNs [hostage and crisis negotiators], there is no doubt that many individuals would die, or be seriously injured. On this basis, it is commonsensical to suggest that the role should be given more credence within the policing arena and HCNs should be credited more highly for the work that they do.

It is at the sharpest end of the police's negotiation work/organization that the Crisis and Hostage Negotiation Unit (CHNU) is to be found. The way this unit is organized in Norway, with its full-time negotiators also doing ordinary police work out on patrol and being trained to deal with every kind of negotiation assignment, has resulted in a highly expert and successful negotiation team. The Norwegian CHNU has refined the art of negotiation, and police work itself, to such a degree that the Norwegian police ought to review the way operational work has traditionally been carried out. Negotiation should become part of the

operational gold standard much earlier and be used more often as the first line of action during the mobilization of police resources. Negotiation is a way to avoid violent intervention, but it can do much more than simply deliver total surrender, as this study of the Norwegian CHNU has shown. The decision support, sensor support, and effector support that the negotiators are able to contribute often means that a tactical intervention can be carried out with even greater certainty, thereby lowering the risk of serious injury. The time has come to elevate crisis and hostage negotiation from being plan B, when everything has become deadlocked, to being an active part of the operational solution.

Declaration of interest statement

The author report there are no competing interests to declare.

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