

**Theorising the role of ‘The Brand’ in Criminal Justice: The case of  
Integrated Offender Management**

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# Theorising the role of ‘The Brand’ in Criminal Justice: The case of Integrated Offender Management

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*The rise of branded programmes and interventions is an important, but largely under-explored, development in criminal justice. This article draws on findings from a study of a British Integrated Offender Management (IOM) scheme to ground a broader theoretical discussion of the meaning and implications of the increasing centrality of such ‘brands’. This article focuses primarily upon the ways in which criminal justice practitioners might draw upon brands in order to (re-)construct their professional identities. On-going fundamental reforms of criminal justice organizations, which have tended to blur the traditionally clear distinctions between professional roles, have made this need to reinforce (and indeed reconstruct) practitioner identities ever more pressing. The article closes by considering the prospects and limitations of criminal justice brands. It is argued that while brands may play an important role in ‘ethically orienting’ relevant practitioners, there is a danger that the absence of appropriate structural underpinnings may prove to be highly counter-productive.*

Key words: policing; organizational change; brands; identity; Integrated Offender Management

## Introduction

A brand can be a specific name, a sign, symbol, slogan or anything that is used to identity and distinguish a specific product, service or business. But a brand is much more than this; it can also be a “promise of an experience” and conveys to

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consumers a certain assurance as to the nature of the product or service they will receive and also the standards the supplier or manufacturer seeks to maintain.<sup>4</sup>

Brands are now so ubiquitous in modern life as to have become unremarkable. We live in a world of ‘brandsapes’ (Sherry, 2005), where, ‘because there are so many of them around us, we rarely question their nature and function’ (Barwise et al., 2000: 73). However, with the important exception of studies exploring ‘image work’ in a policing context (Mawby, 2002; McLaughlin and Murji, 2001), the role of ‘the brand’ in criminal justice contexts has remained largely under-explored.

As defined by the Intellectual Property Office in the quotation above, brands constitute not just a label or slogan that ‘badges’ a product, service or organization but also a ‘promise’ to customers or service-users – of quality, commitment and/or a certain way of behaving. In an increasingly mediatised world, many criminal justice initiatives have come to share characteristics with, and perhaps even to become, brands – such as police Safer Neighbourhood teams, Police Scotland or police forces as a whole (Mawby, 2002). ‘Re-brandings’ of existing services also occur with increasing frequency, as for example in the creation of the Border Force from parts of the previous United Kingdom Border Agency or the renaming of the ‘Metropolitan Police Service’ (Olins, 1988).

Such developments may trigger concern about a creeping commercialisation or trivialisation of important state functions; as, for example, in the introduction of staff in quasi-military uniforms at border control points as a result of the introduction of the Border Force. To be clear at the outset, we share many of these concerns. However, we suggest below that brands, broadly understood, can have positive, as well as negative, implications. In particular, brands may have important identity-shaping functions for people working within criminal justice organizations. Recent research on the police service has found that

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<sup>4</sup> Intellectual Property Office definition of brand <<http://www.ipo.gov.uk/types/tm/t-about/t-what-is/t-brands.htm>> accessed 16 April 2014

identification with the organization can be an important factor shaping police officers' job satisfaction, compliance with rules and regulations, and willingness to take on extra-role activity (Bradford et al., 2013); while those working with other types of organization have stressed that brands can form an important locus of identity formation and reproduction over time (Gioia, 2000).

This article seeks to contribute to the understanding of the role of brands in criminal justice contexts, particularly in relation to how 'branding' influences processes of identity reproduction. Findings from a study of an Integrated Offender Management (IOM) scheme, operating within a region of England and Wales, are used to ground a broader theoretical discussion of the meaning and implications of the place of 'brands' in criminal justice. The paper proceeds in five parts. Part 1 introduces IOM and describes our research methodology, while Part 2 describes IOM police and practice within the research site. Part 3 moves on to consider IOM as a brand, and describes the ways in which criminal justice practitioners might draw upon brands in order to (re-)construct their professional identities in a context of on-going organizational change. Part 4 provides a discussion of the broader benefits 'branding' exercises might provide, but also the limitations and difficulties that (over) reliance on brands might pose, while Part 5 draws together these strands in conclusion.

## **1. Introducing Integrated Offender Management (IOM)**

Integrated Offender Management (IOM) was officially launched by the Home Office in 2009 (Home Office and Ministry of Justice, 2009). IOM is an overarching framework that allows local and partner agencies to come together to ensure that the offenders whose crimes cause most damage and harm locally are managed in a coordinated way. It seeks to 'reduce crime, reduce re-offending, improve public confidence in the criminal justice system, tackle the social exclusion of offenders and their families and drive organisational performance delivery

improvement’ (Home Office and Ministry of Justice, 2009: 3). IOM builds on existing offender-focused initiatives such as Prolific and Priority Offenders (PPO), Multi-Agency Public Protection Arrangements (MAPPA) and the Drug Intervention Programme (DIP).<sup>5</sup> There is no national ‘IOM model’ as IOM is intended to be sensitive to local structures, needs and priorities. IOM schemes are, however, guided by the following principles:

- all partners tackling offenders together - local partners (both criminal justice and non-criminal justice agencies) encourage the development of a multi-agency problem-solving approach by focusing on offenders, not offences
- delivering a local response to local problems - all relevant local partners are involved in strategic planning, decision-making and funding choices
- offenders facing their responsibility or facing the consequences - offenders are provided with a clear understanding of what is expected of them
- making better use of existing programmes and governance - this involves gaining further benefits from programmes (such as the prolific and other priority offenders programme, drug interventions programme, and community justice) to increase the benefits for communities, and will also enable partners to provide greater clarity around roles and responsibilities
- all offenders at high risk of causing serious harm and/or re-offending are ‘in scope’ (Home Office and Ministry of Justice, 2009; 2010)

## Researching Integrated Offender Management

The authors were engaged by Thames Valley Police and Thames Valley Probation to establish a definition of Thames Valley IOM (TV-IOM), both in policy (“What is it intended to be?”) and in practice (“What does it actually do?”). In short, the study sought to map ‘reality’ to ‘design’. Data collection comprised a full population survey of TV-IOM police and probation staff and focus group interviews with TV-IOM police and probation staff. Survey responses were received from 15 police officers (79% of total), six probation officers (43%), two substance misuse workers and six probation support officers/caseload administrators (35%). Four focus groups were conducted in different areas of Thames Valley, with two groups comprised mostly of police staff and two comprised mostly of probation staff. Focus group size ranged from seven to 14.

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<sup>5</sup> For a detailed definition of MAPPA, see Kemshall (2001). For discussion of DIP and the role of treatment programmes in British criminal justice policy, see Reuter and Stevens (2008).

Two limitations should be noted. First, resource constraints precluded prolonged first-hand observation of TV-IOM officer activity. Second, it must be emphasized that the methods utilized sought, and obtained, self-reported staff activity and understanding of TV-IOM. Full details of the research findings are presented elsewhere (Annison et al., 2014). The most salient findings are presented below.

## **2. Thames Valley IOM Policy and Practice**

IOM was introduced to Thames Valley during 2009 and has continued to develop since that time. In keeping with national expectations,

[IOM] is the strategic umbrella that brings together agencies across Thames Valley to prioritise intervention with offenders causing the most crime in their locality (Thames Valley Police et al., 2010b).

Thames Valley Integrated Offender Management (TV-IOM) is primarily directed at serious acquisitive crime, though local police areas have some flexibility in order to identify and manage key crimes in that area (Thames Valley Police, 2013b). As of 1<sup>st</sup> May 2013 the IOM cohort comprised 320 offenders, with a total annual throughput of 1,340 offenders. Approximately 95% of this cohort were male.

The research established that TV-IOM *in principle* comprises a number of core aspects: intensive police supervision and support of offenders, matched by intensive probation supervision and support; responsive policing – the provision of carrots and sticks intended to motivate offender behaviour; additional service provision; and improved intelligence sharing between police, probation and other agencies. Each aspect will now be discussed in a little more detail.

### ***Police Intensive Supervision and Support***

A fundamental change introduced by TV-IOM was the creation of the role of the 'IOM police officer', and the deployment of such officers across Thames Valley. Nineteen IOM police constables were employed in 2011-12, falling to 18 in subsequent years. This initiative fits with the developing expectation that policing should be 'less reactive and more proactive' (Tilley, 2003), seeking better to engage with communities and addressing the long-standing issues which may lie behind more immediate demands on their time (Newburn and Reiner, 2012). The current job specification for the role states that IOM officers are expected to:

Case manage offenders in the IOM Group to reduce their offending using two elements of the scheme - Catch & Convict and Rehabilitate & Resettle.

...

[and] spend a large percentage of their time in face to face contact with the named offenders and will be expected to develop a professional relationship with them that effectively combines enforcement activity with support and engagement (Thames Valley Police, 2013a).

As discussed further below, our findings made clear that IOM police officers are required to engage with offenders in a manner more akin to traditional conceptions of probation rather than those associated with policing (Kemshall and Maguire, 2001). Further, the intensity of supervision is intended to relate directly to the severity of risks and likelihood of re-offending posed by the offender (Thames Valley Probation, 2011).

### ***Probation Intensive Supervision and Support***

Thames Valley Probation officers have a duty to 'act as the offender manager for all IOM offenders' (Thames Valley Probation, 2011), but the nature of probation activity is essentially left unaltered by the creation of the TV-IOM scheme. Probation officers continue to be expected to engage with TV-IOM cohort members by reference to the offender management model (Home Office, 2006), with the nature and extent of interventions guided by a Risk-Need-Responsivity approach (see McGuire, 2004).

### ***Responsive Policing – ‘Carrots and Sticks’***

Central to the TV-IOM scheme design is a ‘carrot and stick’ policy, whereby offenders who engage with the scheme are provided with interventions and support, while those who fail to engage with the scheme should expect:

Robust policing with regards to their offending – to prevent further offending through police monitoring and speedy apprehension. (Thames Valley Police et al., 2010b)

Implicitly, a further ‘carrot’ is that compliant offenders will be treated less robustly by police officers whom they may encounter; and indeed can expect to be intercepted by officers on a less frequent basis (Thames Valley Probation, 2011). There are intentional echoes here of the ‘offender compact’ pilots,<sup>6</sup> which involved a written commitment to the community that places demands on the offender to withdraw from criminal behaviour in exchange for assistance with meeting needs – such as jobs, homes or drug interventions.

### ***Additional Service Provision***

Thames Valley Police state that TV-IOM cohort members can expect, by dint of being in the scheme, entry to suitable change and support programmes, the chance to gain useful qualifications, and support in managing money, housing, education, training or employment (Thames Valley Police et al., 2010b). These are intended to be additional ‘carrots’ incentivising offenders' participation in and compliance with the scheme. The extent of additional service provision in practice is discussed below.

### ***Improved Intelligence Sharing between Police, Probation and other Agencies***

A key goal in the development of TV-IOM was to ‘help to develop partnerships and improve our “grip” on the most problematic offenders’ (Morrison, 2008). The co-location of police and probation officers was intended to support on-going face-to-face communication between

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<sup>6</sup> See, for example: <http://www.cjp.org.uk/news/archive/justice-minister-visits-offender-compact-pilots-in-shropshire-11-09-2008/> (accessed 2 December 2014).



relevant police and probation officers, and to facilitate quick and easy access to police and probation information systems by IOM officers.

## TV-IOM Practice

Thus far we have primarily described how TV-IOM was designed to function *in principle*. Perhaps unsurprisingly, however, while we found that core components of TV-IOM design were generally reflected in practitioners' reported practice, the nature of activity 'on the ground' was often rather different from that envisaged by the original principles. Moreover, the centrality for practitioners of 'IOM-as-brand' emerged as an additional aspect of the scheme not explicitly specified in the intervention model.

### *Intensive supervision by police*

Mike Nash introduced the concept of the 'polibation' officer to denote the perceived fusing of police and probation roles at that time (Nash, 1999), and to reflect concerns that probation officers would become increasingly focused on control and surveillance to the detriment of their welfare-oriented objectives. It was thought that probation would 'go the way of the police' (Nash, 2008: 306). However, the current research suggests that in this case, TV-IOM police officers are adopting a role which is heavily welfare-oriented; in other words, these officers seem to have 'gone the way of probation' (Mawby and Worrall, 2004):

I'm seeing you [TV-IOM cohort member], you do burglary and I hate you for that. But you've got a drugs problem. The reason you've got a drugs problem is because you've got a problem that happened with your mother, you were abused, you were brought up [a certain] way. That's part of our job – we're trying to turn you around... Whereas the shift officer, they haven't got time to mess around with you on that. They've got a job to do. (Police officer, Focus group)

The whole point...is getting in their homes, meeting their families, knowing their sisters, knowing their partners. I'm not saying you become part of the family, but... their mum will ring you up, their sister will ring you up: 'he's going

downhill?...They don't like the police, but we're alright. (Police officer, Focus group)<sup>7</sup>

Police IOM officers reported spending a considerable amount of time with a small number of IOM cohort members, engaging with them, developing working relationships, and supporting their desistance efforts. TV-IOM police officers' work appears to be 'welfare-oriented' in the manner that Nash (2008) described 'traditional' probation work:

A welfare approach was not about making life better for offenders by providing counselling and practical assistance: it was this but linked to their offending behaviour. It was a welfare approach linked with the causes of crime and, in some cases, if these causes were ameliorated, the risk of further crime was lessened. (Nash, 2008: 309)

There was some evidence to suggest that with probation officers experiencing severe time and resource constraints, TV-IOM police officers increasingly supplanted them in assuming responsibilities traditionally associated with the probation role (Nash, 2008: 305):

Ironically [IOM police officers] have become the good guys, while we have become the bad guys, because we have to enforce the orders. (Probation officer, Focus group)<sup>8</sup>

With non-statutory cases, [probation] are not measured on it. So we become probation officers to the non-statutory offenders. We're taking them to appointments, filling out their forms. Probably not the best use of police time. (Police officer, Focus group)<sup>9</sup>

### ***Intensive supervision by probation***

By contrast probation practice appeared to have remained largely unchanged by the introduction of IOM. Probation officers reported that decisions about the intensity of supervision and support provided to an offender continued to be based on risk assessment and were largely unaffected by IOM status. Probation officers simultaneously continued to orient themselves around labels and models of working which pre-date TV-IOM, most notably the

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<sup>7</sup>For similar findings, see Dawson, Stanko and Rehman (2011: 21).

<sup>8</sup> See Mawby and Worrall (2011), where a similar experience of 'mission distortion' was reported in relation to the precursor PPO scheme.

<sup>9</sup> Similar findings were reported by Senior et al (2011: 23). 'Non-statutory' offenders are those sentenced to less than 12 months in prison, who are not currently subject to probation supervision.

predecessor PPO (Prolific or other Priority Offender) programme. The research therefore concluded that, with the exception of improved intelligence sharing with the police (see below), the activities of IOM probation officers are largely indistinguishable from 'standard' probation practice.

### *Additional service provision*

Additional service provision is a core TV-IOM component but full implementation appeared difficult to achieve in practice. Some examples of enhanced service access for IOM offenders included the secondment of a Drugs Intervention Programme (DIP) drug worker to an IOM team, the prioritization of TV-IOM cohort members (to a greater or lesser degree) by an employment service provider and the support provided by the Custody Intervention Programme.<sup>10</sup>

However, these examples of additional service provision were found to be exceptions to the rule. The general level of service provision was seen to be failing to meet the needs of the IOM cohort. Low "buy-in" to TV-IOM from relevant service providers and the complete absence of any provision specifically reserved for TV-IOM offenders meant that TV-IOM cohort members did not typically receive improved access:

It's no more than anybody who goes to the job centre, someone drops in on the drug agency, goes on the waiting list... We don't seem to have other tools. (Police officers, Focus group)

In terms of carrots, we haven't got anything more than the mouldy carrots that we had five years ago. (Police officer, Focus group)

In sum, the level of additional service provision afforded to IOM cohort members was sporadic and extremely limited. It was not at all clear that the cohort were receiving services additional to those they might have received prior to IOM, or if they had been included in some other supervision programme.

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<sup>10</sup>See <<http://www.smartcjs.org.uk/services/index/cip/>> accessed 15 April 2014

### ***Responsive policing – ‘carrots and sticks’***

One IOM officer described the nature and perceived benefits of the IOM scheme thus:

If [an offender is] getting a lot of attention from the police, if they're on the IOM scheme, they'll get less attention from the generic police. Because they know that they're engaging with the IOM team and the IOM police. So that's sometimes a carrot for [the offender]. (Probation officer, Focus group)

A 'Catch and Convict' response – the 'stick' – is designed to be activated only when offenders fail to comply with the requirements of the TV-IOM scheme and fail to engage with its 'Rehabilitate and Resettle' components – the 'carrots'. However, in practice, the 'Rehabilitate and Resettle' response was not necessarily receiving support from all members of the policing community:

From my experience, police remain very pessimistic and negative about offenders being capable of making positive changes and desisting from reoffending... It appears that once an offender is labelled, especially as a PPO, they will be targeted regardless of whether they are making positive change. (Probation Officer, IOM survey)

There have been clashes. Because [area] has a 'Top Ten' of offenders and a lot of our PPOs are in that top ten. So we see [the offender] and they say, "I've been stopped and searched again." And that is almost out of our hands, even of our [IOM] police. (Probation officer, IOM survey)

### ***Improved intelligence sharing***

The key 'added value' of the IOM scheme was considered by many officers primarily to benefit practitioners, rather than cohort members. This benefit was the improvements in intelligence obtained by police and probation:

That stands out for me, coming from a different team. Although in the teams I've worked in before you can ring police intelligence, and you do have access to certain information, I think that so much more information is exchanged informally because we have the morning meetings and because we actually talk [to each other]...You naturally have those conversations, things come up. You can't beat face-to-face contact. (Probation officer, Focus group)

These findings echo the ‘Sheffield study’ of IOM pilot areas, where the co-location of staff ‘facilitated cultural change, case management processes, knowledge transfer and information sharing’ (Senior et al., 2011: iii).

**What is IOM?**

The IOM scheme’s promise to offenders was summarised by an ‘IOM: Information for Offenders’ leaflet:

We can work better with you, making sure that you can access the help and support that you need to reduce the chances of you committing a crime and ending up in court and possibly prison. (Thames Valley Police et al., 2010a)

However, this promise was not realised fully in practice, and this failure of implementation appears to have been due to the variability of police engagement with offenders and the pressures on probation staff, who faced significant resource constraints and new uncertainties introduced by the government’s ‘Transforming Rehabilitation’ agenda (Ministry of Justice, 2013).<sup>11</sup> Further, ‘buy in’ from public or third sector service providers was very limited, making additional service provision limited and sporadic. The most notable, and potentially the only truly distinctive, component of TV-IOM in terms of the interventions actually received by relevant offenders was the intensive, but primarily rehabilitative,<sup>12</sup> supervision provided by police officers. Table 1 summarizes the situation.

Table 1: TV-IOM Components

Component	Implemented?	Notes
Intensive supervision by police	Yes	IOM police officers enjoy significant flexibility and constitute a clearly additional resource.

<sup>11</sup>See ‘Transforming Rehabilitation: Under the microscope’ special issue of the *British Journal of Community Justice* 11(2/3) Winter 2013

<sup>12</sup> This is not to say that IOM police officers are not willing and able to activate a ‘Catch and Convict’ response where appropriate. Further, it is very likely that the police tendency to be ‘task orientated’, ‘authoritarian’ and seek to ‘get up and go’ means that the police approach to ‘rehabilitate and resettle’-oriented tasks substantially differs to their probation colleagues (quoted phrases taken from Dawson et al., 2011: 31).

Intensive supervision by probation	Limited	Probation officers heavily constrained by significant caseloads and general resource limitations.
Responsive policing - 'carrots and sticks'	Limited	Variable support of other police officers undermines this component.
Additional service provision	No, with some localized exceptions	Lack of additional service provision also limits implementation of 'carrot and stick' component.
Improved intelligence sharing between police and probation	Yes	Widely recognized by respondents as the most successful aspect of TV-IOM.

Source: Annison et al (2014).

Notwithstanding gaps in the implementation of IOM scheme components, many of which were outside the immediate control of the IOM management team, and indeed the difficulty in identifying concrete elements of service provision unique to it, IOM was clearly a meaningful programme for the practitioners involved. It constituted a significant locus of meaning to them, and appeared to help focus their commitment to the policy goals it represented, as the following quotations attest:

We could all put in for other jobs, because we've got experience of loads of other things. But we love this, it's brilliant. (Police officer, Focus group)

The impact in trust and communication across agencies has been incredible. IOM is broader than just the pure cohort. (Police officer, IOM survey)

The idea of partnership working is a brilliant one. (Probation officer, Focus group)

We love the job so much, we make it work... You make it work because you care. (Police officer, Focus group)

A key element of TV-IOM appeared to be not so much what actually occurred under the scheme but that it was identified, or *labelled*, as such. Quite aside from discrete elements

of service provision (or police or probation work more broadly), what seemed most important was the existence of TV-IOM ‘brand’. IOM may therefore be regarded as a ‘badge’ or benchmark that guides practice and, perhaps more importantly, provides a banner which motivates police and probation officers in the pursuance of reduced reoffending by a highly recidivist cohort.

In the section that follows we expand on this idea and its possible consequences. We are using the term brand here more as a metaphor than an accurate descriptor; moreover we are not claiming that the set of police and probation practices that constitute TV-IOM have no effect, or are not important. However, seen as a whole, one of the more important aspects of TV-IOM in terms of making it ‘real’ or tangible seemed, on the basis of the research described above, to be the badging of the programme itself. While the total ‘set’ of intervention components is clearly crucial, it is important to note the highly personalised interventions experienced by TV-IOM offenders – the composition of the set of intervention components changed on a case-by-case basis, and were in almost every case interventions that could be, and were, fielded in non-IOM contexts. We suggest, therefore, that the *sense* of collective working - and indeed identity – created by co-location and the TV-IOM brand is as important as the changes to police and probation practice introduced under TV-IOM.

### **3. The Role of the Brand in Criminal Justice**

We begin by further defining the concept of ‘the brand’, before considering the role that such brands may fulfil for criminal justice practitioners such as, in this case, IOM officers. We will then consider other ways in which brands may have an effect in criminal justice.

#### **Defining Terms: The brand in criminal justice**

Recall that according to the Intellectual Property Office’s description brands are not only names, signs, symbols or slogans but also ‘promises of an experience’ that convey

information to both consumer and providers of goods and services. Conceptualised in this way, brands comprise two aspects, one less tangible than the other. Brands are most fundamentally ‘a combination of a set of trademarks (brand name, logo, etc)’, but, importantly, they also encompass consumers’ perceptions and expectations of products or services branded with these trademarks’ (Barwise et al., 2000: 75). Brands speak, in other words, to ‘an aura, an invisible layer of meaning that surrounds the product’ (Neumeier, 2005: 2). In this sense, the service provider or relevant organization is always seeking to influence, but cannot necessarily control, audience perception (Neumeier, 2005: 3).

We suggest that the IOM scheme fulfils the criteria for brands noted above, as do, for example, Multi-Agency Public Protection Agreement (MAPPA) schemes and Youth Offending Teams (YOTs).<sup>13</sup> The acronyms identify a specific service or set of services, and create expectations for both practitioners and offenders as regards the ‘experience’ that the service will provide.<sup>14</sup>

The ‘aura’ surrounding a successful brand is not generally the result of happenstance; an extraordinary amount of money and effort is expended in order to market brands, or their specific products, to potential customers (Kapferer, 2008). Efforts at ‘customer engagement’ are becoming increasingly common in criminal justice: take, for example, crime maps, leafleting (Hohl et al., 2010), and other developments in policing (Mawby, 2002; McLaughlin and Murji, 2001). In the current context, as part of the effort to obtain ‘buy in’ to the nascent TV-IOM scheme, short, bright and clear ‘Information for Partners and Public’ and ‘Information for Offenders’ leaflets were distributed that emphasized the benefits of the scheme for these different groups. For offenders, the scheme is ‘sold’ thus:

We can work better with you, making sure that you can access the help and support that you need to reduce the chances of you committing a crime and ending up in court and possibly prison. (Thames Valley Police et al., 2010a)

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<sup>13</sup> For discussion of YOT, see Souhami (2007).

<sup>14</sup> See also the important discussion of security strategy branding and ‘corporatisation’ in O’Reilly (2010).



For partners, the scheme will support their efforts to use existing resources in a more effective manner:

By targeting those of most concern, IOM aims to manage them consistently, using pooled local resources to turn them away from crime, punishing and reforming them as appropriate. (Thames Valley Police et al., 2010b)

Therefore, Thames Valley Police and Thames Valley Probation's implicit response to branding experts' challenge to assert 'what you do and why it matters' (Neumeier, 2005: 31) was to state that IOM is a coherent and clear brand that provides both a 'modus operandi', a way of thinking, that motivates and propels what IOM officers do, and also a 'promise' – and to an extent a threat – to offenders placed in the scheme. A set of practices a particular group of police and probation officers should engage in are identified, and, concomitantly, a set of experiences a particular group of offenders should participate in and be affected by are set out.

## Organizational Change and Identity Formation

Research suggests brands may be particularly useful in uncertain times, such as those generated by organizational change. Criminal justice organizations now operate in a context of 'permanent revolution' (McLaughlin et al., 2001), where continuous change has effectively become the norm. The most recent, and troubling, example of this is the Coalition government's 'Transforming Rehabilitation' agenda.<sup>15</sup> IOM provides a perhaps less controversial example of organizational change in criminal justice, involving processes whereby additions (for example new units or mergers) or subtractions (elimination of units, downsizing) are made from a focal organization or organizational unit (Albert, 1992).

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<sup>15</sup> See footnote 11, above.

Corley and Gioia (2004) suggest that organizational change does not simply pose prosaic, practical challenges for staff. Rather, such developments can have deep and lasting effects:

With unknowns come ambiguities. When those ambiguities concern the identity of the organization itself, it becomes difficult for members to make sense of who we are as an organization, especially when traditional referents for understanding that identity lose their relevance. (Corley and Gioia, 2004: 173)

Mawby and Worrall (2004) reported that in IOM's forerunner, the prolific priority offender (PPO) scheme, staff operated 'on the margins' of their own organization. This raised 'the question of the extent to which project staff retain distinctive professional profiles' (Mawby and Worrall, 2004: 67). Mawby and Worrall suggested that partnership schemes such as PPO might give rise to an 'inter-agency' approach, where the collaboration 'interpenetrate[s] and thus affect[s] normal internal working practices of the agencies' (Mawby and Worrall, 2004: 65; Crawford, 1998).

The establishment of IOM teams in Thames Valley appears to have resulted in the 'blurring of traditional agency roles' (Nash, 1999: 366) to a greater extent than documented by Mawby and Worrall (2004). Where in PPO, 'the probation service staff retained their primary goal of changing the behavior of the project participants, while the primary goal of the police staff remained to reduce crime and enforce the law' (Mawby and Worrall, 2004: 68), IOM appears to have instigated far greater slippage:

I say, "I won't arrest you. If you're wanted for an offence, it will be local CID, neighbourhoods [police], or whatever. If I come walking up to the door, it's to give you a lift to your probation appointment, or to check that you're where you should be. But that's it." (Police officer, Focus group)

Rather than the predicted ‘policification’ of probation (Kemshall and Maguire, 2001: 252), the present research suggests that IOM has rather led to a cultural and practical shift of police officers *towards probation*.<sup>16</sup>

Naturally, any such change is not and will not be monotonic, but rather imbricated within other organizational modes, identities and practices. Indeed, while scholars such as Janet Chan have warned against reliance on overly broad depictions of policing cultures (Chan, 1997), we nonetheless note that the police officers involved in the present study drew on features noted by Reiner (2010) – cynicism, pessimism, machismo, pragmatism – as a contrast to their new role as IOM police officers:

Well, we’re the ‘pink and fluffy brigade’, aren’t we? (Police officer, Focus group)

In some ways, and certainly at a personal level, respondents described changes positively: they were liberated from shift work and afforded considerable freedom to develop their own approach to ‘turning around’ IOM cohort members. However, this altered role raised an unavoidable question: is a police officer who, by his or her own admission, spends the majority of his or her working day engaging in ‘social work’ *really* a police officer? IOM officers confront this question particularly forcefully when they engage with police colleagues, who may – and indeed often do – have starkly different priorities and working assumptions.

Organizational change, such as that engendered by IOM, can thus give rise to ‘identity ambiguity’, where ‘old identity labels still exist yet no longer apply and new identity labels have yet to take on meaning for members’ (Corley and Gioia, 2004: 199). In this case, it appears that the old label of ‘police officer’ no longer ‘fits’, while the new label of ‘IOM officer’ is of little utility if it is perceived either as a meaningless ‘empty vessel’ or as a

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<sup>16</sup> This is of course not to deny that probation practice itself has dramatically altered in recent decades.

synonym for ‘probation officer’. In other words, the creation of the IOM units gave rise to a need for police and probation officers to forge a shared identity that allowed them to function effectively, but in a way that builds upon, and is congruent with, their existing work identities.<sup>17</sup>

It is here that we suggest that the IOM ‘brand’ can play an important role. The brand, and in particular the ‘carrot and stick’ offer to offenders, contributes to the development of a coherent outward-facing image that makes IOM police and probation officers’ activities congruent with ‘mainstream’ criminal justice goals. This may be particularly important for IOM police officers, given the more fundamental changes experienced by them under IOM.

As Gioia et al (2000) note, there is a paradox at the heart of successful organizational development:

The creation and maintenance of an apparently enduring identity are essential to long-term success ... [yet] ... organizations must possess the ability to adapt quickly to increasingly turbulent environments (Gioia et al., 2000: 64)

The IOM brand, for IOM police officers, seems particularly valuable in allowing them to ‘change and yet somehow stay the same’ (Gioia et al., 2000: 64). Police officers interviewed appeared to have seized on the ‘carrot and stick’ approach as a way of reconciling their ‘dual identity’ within IOM, and its relationship with broader trends in policing:

It’s the two strands. ‘Catch and convict’ – if you stick two fingers up at us, I’ll get you back in prison as soon as I possibly can. If you want to resettle and work back into the community, I’ll do every single thing I can do to help achieve that. (Police Officer, Focus group)

I like to say (to offenders), “We do what we say on the tin”. My aim is for you to stop offending and that will happen one of three ways [desistence, conviction or death]... And I think if you’re black and white with them, they still understand that you’re a police officer. You never want them to forget it. (Police Officer, Focus group)

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<sup>17</sup> For a detailed ethnographic discussion of the ambiguities raised by the bringing together of such inter-agency teams, see Souhami (2007: chapters 2 and 6).

The abnormal, 'soft', approach taken by IOM police officers thus becomes re-cast as a pragmatic, hard-headed contribution to broader policing goals of crime reduction and community safety. This characterization of their work had been of great value to the local areas that had developed the most effective working relationships with other police units:

The priority crime teams...trust us, over the years they've learned to trust our judgment. To listen to us when we say, "don't go and harass [a cohort member]."  
(Police officer, Focus group)

The emphasis placed on intelligence sharing by IOM police officers in the study further speaks to the ways in which the IOM brand was able to harmonize 'traditional' policing goals and the more recent developments represented by such partnership schemes:

From the police side of things, we're looking at intelligence. When they come in for meetings we're looking at what they're wearing, who they've come in with, if they've changed their telephone number. Home visits, we're looking round...who's at the house, things like that. All of that feeds in to the police, so that we've got a bigger picture of Joe Bloggs. They are put under a bigger spotlight by being under IOM. (Police officer, Focus group)

In these ways, the IOM brand, as an aspect of organizational identity (Gioia et al., 2000), serves to provide an account of and justification for the IOM teams and their working methods that facilitates both internal and external congruence. It allows for the forging of an identity that is common and relevant to IOM police and probation staff (internal congruence), and one that is compatible with more traditional conceptions of policing and policing goals (external congruence). We have suggested that the brand, and the identity work that it facilitates, is particularly important to police officers. It allows them to portray an image that combines aspects of the traditional police role with the new reality of partnership working.

#### **4. Prospects and Limitations of Criminal Justice brands**

In this penultimate section we consider further aspects of criminal justice brands and the roles – positive or negative – they may play in criminal justice arenas.

## IOM as an ethical brand?

Criminal justice scholars have increasingly focused on the concept of legitimacy, and its relationship with crime and citizen compliance (Jackson et al., 2012). Work on legitimacy, institutionalism and identity can be drawn together to suggest that criminal justice brands such as IOM might serve an important ethical function.

Bottoms and Tankebe (2012) have recently discussed the extent to which legitimation processes are ‘dialogues’ in which power-holders present claims to legitimacy to ‘audiences’ that respond to such claims. On this account legitimacy, as a property of a particular organization is an emergent property of the relationship between that organization and the public(s) it serves and/or governs (Bradford et al. 2014). The utility of brands in such circumstances appears obvious, since they provide a medium through which claims to legitimacy can be transmitted (Mawby, 2002: chapter 3). Yet, much work on legitimacy stresses that legitimation processes must be based in an important sense on values and shared ethical norms (Beetham, 1991).

Criminal justice brands could serve as vehicles by which to assert and sustain ethical boundaries, and communicate values to clients and partners at the level of everyday experience. This would stand in contrast to an approach whereby standards are imposed from above. If contained within distinct and potentially distant rules and guidelines, the usual dangers arise that boundaries will be inappropriately altered or ignored in practice (Robinson and Burnett, 2007); and, equally, that value communication will fail. There are parallels here with Skowronek’s (1995) consideration of the ideational component of state institutions: ‘they prescribe actions, construct motives and assert legitimacy’; they generate understandings of ‘official duty and legitimate authority’, which compel, but also place limitations upon, the office-holder’s activity (Skowronek, 1995: 94). From this viewpoint,

meeting the standards expected of IOM officers – of fairness, probity, or effectiveness, for example – becomes not a separate and aggravating burden, but an integral part of what it is to be an IOM officer.<sup>18</sup> The brand constitutes a ‘compass’ or orienting symbol to ‘be learned, taught, replicated and cultivated’ (Neumeier, 2005: 139). Brands such as IOM may thus have two functions: they drive practice forwards, but also provide a means of establishing ethical limits.

### Criminal Justice ‘consumers’ and the Placebo effect

Our research focused on how police and probation staff experienced IOM delivery. Another important dimension is, of course, how intervention branding affects those targeted: here, offenders enrolled in IOM. Offenders are knowingly labelled as "IOM offenders". In the case of non-statutory offenders, participation is voluntary and relies on the 'carrot and stick' inducement described previously. IOM has to be marketed to these offenders to ensure their participation. In the case of statutory offenders, however, the IOM label is assigned with or without the offenders' consent. How these two forms of IOM involvement might affect offender behaviour is unclear.

Labelling theory suggests that people may affirm or reproduce (or indeed subvert) the behavioural implications of labels assigned to them: excluded, offender, deviant on the one hand; included, citizen, non-deviant, on the other (Becker, 1963; Lemert, 1951). If IOM serves merely as a stigmatising label that sets prolific offenders apart, the intervention's branding could have iatrogenic effects. Being labelled as an IOM offender could then detrimentally consolidate criminal identities and signal criminal status rather than enhancing rehabilitative efforts. On the other hand, if the IOM brand is recognised by its ‘consumers’ (offenders, their associates and the wider community) as a positive, convincing signal of

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<sup>18</sup> We might consider here the resonance achieved by the Prison Service’s ‘decency agenda’ (Cavadino et al., 2013: 187-188).

desistance and an offender's commitment to self-rehabilitation, then such branding itself could constitute an effective active ingredient of the intervention. If the IOM brand is 'sold' successfully, it could bolster offenders' efforts and help to reshape their social identities by dissuading potential co-offenders from associating with them and allowing them to demonstrate that they are genuinely "going straight" to potential employers, landlords and non-criminogenic social contacts (Maruna, 2012).

Research on the role of expectancies in processes of psychological and behavioural change also suggests that successfully selling IOM as a brand to IOM offenders themselves could have more direct effects. Interventions are known to be more effective if participants believe them to work due to both 'placebo effects' (Enck et al., 2011) and the power of self-fulfilling prophecies (see Biggs, 2013). Marketing the brand to offenders in such a way that offenders *believe* that IOM provides a special and effective route to desistance may, then, be as important a component as IOM's capacity to actually deliver enhanced rehabilitative services.

## Evaluation

Building on this last point, the increasing use or occurrence of 'brands' in criminal justice may present challenges for evaluation if the labels are used without precision. Evaluation of justice programmes and policies has traditionally focused on the evaluation of entire multi-component interventions. IOM research to date has followed this approach (for example Senior et al., 2011; Williams and Ariel, 2012). However, the need to further disentangle the mechanisms and components through which interventions 'work' is increasingly recognised.

Take the example of 'hotspot policing' (which itself clearly has the characteristics of a brand). The identification of crime hotspots is relatively easy, the proposed response apparently straightforward - send police officers to (aggressively) patrol in those areas for



limited lengths of time – and the evidence suggests this ‘works’, at least in some times and places. However, ‘Hot spot policing’ can cover a range of highly divergent practices, any one of which could on its own produce the benefits usually ascribed to the practice as a whole (College of Policing, 2013).

Even taking the recent, well-known, hotspots experiments (Ratcliffe et al., 2011) it is often unclear which aspect of police practice so branded had an effect. Ratcliffe et al. note that in the treatment areas of the Philadelphia Foot Patrol Experiment there was:

Considerable variation in activity. Some officers engaged in extensive community-oriented work, speaking to community members and visiting childcare centres and juvenile hangouts, whereas others were more crime oriented, stopping vehicles at stop signs and intersections, and interviewing pedestrians (Ratcliffe et al., 2011: 807).

All this is hotspot policing, but what contributed to the reduction in crime?

Variability in IOM design and implementation within and across regions combined with the multitude of 'sub-interventions' it encompasses (police and probation practice alongside drug treatments, employment support, housing assistance and so on) makes the utility of 'whole package' evaluations particularly questionable. If TV-IOM, for example, was found to produce average reductions in reoffending, we would have no way of generalising to IOM interventions delivered in other regions nor of determining whether a single (potentially low cost) component accounted for the entire effect. Progress in intervention optimisation requires a focus on identifying effective core components *and* mechanisms of change .

In this vein, the effect of IOM *as a brand* constitutes one such potential mechanism deserving further exploration. A randomized trial could, for example, be conducted to measure the effects on recidivism of the same service delivery components with and without assignment of the IOM label. Such a trial would be useful not only to those seeking to

improve community supervision intervention designs but would also provide important insights into the extent to which labelling affects offender engagement and outcomes.

## Structural Underpinnings

We have seen above that brands may potentially play an important role in achieving successful outcomes, most obviously by motivating both practitioners and offenders. However, this argument risks over-statement. At the most fundamental level any scheme is likely to struggle to meet its goals if it does not receive adequate resourcing or support – any role for brands in success, or failure, may be ephemeral in comparison to basic financial, structural and political considerations. We may go further and suggest that a heavily branded scheme may actually be more susceptible to negative consequences of under-resourcing. As Barwise et al (2000) note, ‘the role of the brand is to raise expectations in consumers’ minds of specific benefits. These must be delivered on a consistent basis in order to build a franchise of satisfied loyal customers’ (Barwise et al., 2000: 87). Dissatisfied ‘customers’, in this case cohort members, may become disenchanted.

We must also recognise the more general potential for criminal justice branding to drift from an effort to promote knowledge, distribute information and show transparency towards mystification and self-promotion (McLaughlin and Murji, 1998). While police officers in this research were admirably open to dialogue and debate regarding the value, limitations and future of IOM policing, a more defensive organisation may be tempted to distort the brand, using it to further specific goals.

## 5. Conclusions

This article has considered the role of the brand in criminal justice, a potentially important but largely under-explored issue. The article presented findings from a study of a British Integrated Offender Management (IOM) scheme to ground a broader theoretical discussion of

the meaning and implications of the increasing centrality of such ‘brands’. It was argued that brands such as IOM may play an important role for criminal justice practitioners seeking to (re-)construct their professional identity in the wake of substantial organizational change. The increasingly restless nature of national criminal justice policymaking, some of which has resulted in the blurring of traditionally clear distinctions between professional roles, have made this need to reinforce (and indeed reconstruct) practitioner identities ever more pressing.

The article closed by considering the prospects and limitations of criminal justice brands. It argued that while brands may play an important role in ‘ethically orienting’ practitioners, there is equally a danger that an absence of genuine content, and/or inappropriate structural underpinning, may prove to be highly counter-productive. Inevitably, a single article can only scratch the surface of the many issues raised by consideration of the role of the ‘brand’ in criminal justice. It is hoped that the brief consideration of the prospects and limitations of criminal justice brands may prompt further work, theoretical and empirical, in this important area.

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