Creating ‘good citizens’ through community policing: A study of youth police club in the colonial Hong Kong

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Abstract
This study examined the implementation of community policing in Hong Kong with reference from the evolution of the police youth club: Junior Police Call (JPC) programme which targeted the student population. The JPC was established in the 1970s and widely regarded as a very successful community policing initiative of the Royal Hong Kong Police (RHKP) to re-legitimise itself after the territory-wide social confrontation in 1966 and 1967. We analysed the reflection from JPC administrators and participants in a police district with a large school children population, to explore the strategy adopted by the police authorities to practice this community policing programme uncommon in colonial policing. Our study found the police strategically resocialized the youth with the collaboration with schoolteachers and local elites. However, the successful creation of ‘good citizens’ was still overshadowed by her concern for the emergence of social consciousness that might delegitimize the colonial governance.

Keywords
Citizenship, community policing, Hong Kong, police, youth

Received 11 April 2022; revised manuscript accepted 12 April 2022

Introduction
Community policing was a strategy developed from Anglo-Saxon democracies to strengthen the mutual trust and thus secure partnership between police and citizens for more effective crime prevention. It has had vigorous scholarly debates if this initiative is applicable to the non-electoral democratic context, and there are also studies examining how its implementation was adapted to various cultural contexts when it was adopted by leaders in different regimes as a police legitimisation strategy (Brogden & Nijhar, 2013; Cao et al., 2014; Casey, 2010; Cordner, 2014; Davis et al., 2003; Fielding, 2005; Frühling, 2007; Schärf, 2001). Under the British administration, the colonial Hong Kong government and its Royal Hong Kong Police Force (RHKP) introduced a series of policing reforms since the 1970s that were said to be modelled from community policing (Ho, 2020, 2021; Lo & Cheuk, 2004). The establishment of the Junior Police Call (JPC), which targeted the students to be ‘friends’ and ‘fans’ of the RHKP and thus ambassador of crime prevention, was one of the major endeavours widely perceived as the ‘most successful attempt’ among the programmes that rebuilding the public trust towards the police (Hong Kong Police Force, 2022; Lau, 2004a, 2004b; Lo & Cheuk, 2004). The JPC also secured collaboration between the police and the school community and negotiated among the multiple stakeholders involved in the reformed model of policing in Hong Kong after the 1970s. Despite its merits to crime prevention and legitimising the governance, the colonial government and police leaders were also highly cautious of the potential threat of legitimacy crisis that might be brought by the programme, as it raised the
political consciousness and nurtured a strong sense of local identity among the energetic youngsters.

**Research methods**

This study explored the process of collective sense-making when organisations respond to the pressure to change. Our analysis explained how the stakeholders of JPC got involved in the operation of JPC in colonial Hong Kong under the British administration before 1997. We have examined the archived official publications and publicities of the JPC that were accessible through libraries and HKP websites. We have paid particular attention to the two officially publicly accessible newsletters published by the Police Public Relations Branch (PBRB) of the Hong Kong Police, namely, ‘JPC Monthly Newsletter’ and ‘Offbeat’. Among the 18 administrative districts of Hong Kong and six police districts in Hong Kong, we targeted a cluster of respondents who experienced the ‘heyday’ in colonial Hong Kong since the 1970s. They were all from a new town characterised by a large number of grassroots adolescent population and the issue of ‘youth gangs’ has been a major policing issue in those newly developed residential areas in the 1980s who were moved from where it was developed by the government since the 1970s, and witnessed the gradual ‘decline’ of JPC after the millenium years were interviewed. They were all from the same police district, have taken part in the same functions organised by the JPC headquarters although they did not know each others, including commanders representing the HKP, honorary leaders in JPC districts, teachers managing the JPC club in schools; and dedicated members who were active in JPC activities (Table 1). Face-to-face, semi-structured interviews were conducted at the venue in which the respondents felt comfortable and convenient. Interviews were recorded and transcribed, and respondents were invited to recall their JPC experience, retrieve their memorial episodes from JPC and describe the impacts of their work on police-citizen relations and personal development of student members.

**Police as an organisation and community policing**

**Police organisation: Coupling and decoupling-updated literature**

In this study we adopted the concepts of decoupling and sense-making in an organisational context to explore the individual and organisational responses to the adoption and implementation of community policing. Weick (1976) argued that in any modern complex organisation, including the police, various elements, such as goals, structures, processes and outcomes, are not necessarily rationally connected and coordinated but tend to be simultaneously interdependent and autonomous, that is, loosely coupled with each other. Moreover, the location, scope and degree of autonomy and interdependence are often contingent on the prevailing demands from the internal and external environments in which the organisation is embedded. This structure allows each element in the organisation certain flexibility to interpret and implement any changes in the face of complex demands (Crank & Langworthy, 1992; Orton & Weick, 1990). This indeterminacy of autonomy and interdependence tends to become heightened when the ambiguity of the demands is relatively high. In other words, decoupling tends to become particularly salient when organisations encounter nascent and innovative demands from their internal and external constituencies during calls for reform (Orton & Weick, 1990).

Thus, loose coupling enables organisations to respond to changing demands and expectations. An organisation would integrate an innovation into its formal structure to be seen to be fulfilling new expectations, but it is also possible to decouple and buffer its everyday activities to prevent disruptions due to the potential conflicts and inconsistencies between the existing and new expectations (Orton & Weick, 1990). The exploration of the underlying sense-making processes of participants in organisational reforms is thus essential for its evolution. Weick (1995) argued that individuals and organisations engage in sense-making to understand and respond to changes in the environment and to survive. Members of an organisation collectively make sense of and attribute meanings to changes in the environment, which constitute the social foundation of organisational change (Scott, 2014; Zilber, 2008).

However, only few studies have explored the processes and sequences through which the members of an organisation collectively negotiate and decide how to respond to the demands of the environment (Maguire & Mastrofski, 2000). One exception is Maguire and Katz (2002) who explored the outcomes of the sense-making processes among police who were involved in the implementation of a community policing programme and found that the decoupling between structure and practice was concentrated on middle-level managers. However, it is also important to examine the sense-making processes of not only the police but also the other stakeholders. This is particularly relevant when examining community policing, which usually involves both the police and the community it is intended to serve (Manning, 1997; Thacher, 2001).

The concepts of loose coupling and sense-making enable researchers to explore the range of responses to organisational transformation beyond the narrow focus on organisational effectiveness and efficiency. In this study, these concepts are used to extend the scope of analysis to focus on how the participants in the community policing reforms, which include the police and members of the community, make sense of and understand the emergent ideas of community policing and implement those ideas in actual practices (Manning, 1997).
Table 1. Profile of interviewees.

| Interviewees | Profile | Involvement in the JPC in the 1980s |
|--------------|---------|-----------------------------------|
| P1           | Retired Senior Superintendent | Former PCRO of PPRB and served as take charge of JPC management in HQ |
| P2           | Retired Sergeant              | In charge of JPC activities in Police District |
| P3           | Retired Sergeant              | In charge of JPC activities in Police District |
| T1           | Retired Secondary School Teacher | In charge of school JPC club and Disciplinary Head in school |
| T2           | Retired Secondary School Teacher | In charge of School JPC club |
| T3           | Retired Secondary School Teacher | In charge of the school JPC club |
| M1           | Former Junior Police Call Member | Became a member of the JPC in 1980, JPC Leader |
| M2           | Former Junior Police Call Member, Graduated from Cadet School | Police Cadet School graduate. Was a JPC member before enrolling as a cadet |

The concept of community policing

The concept of community policing encompasses a wide range of ideas and practices that emphasise transforming the relationship between the police and the policed. It is considered to be a progressive break from the standard, or professional, model of policing. The proponents of community policing advocate expanding the roles and expectations of the police and members of the community and transforming the goals and structures of the police force to achieve those expectations (Broden & Nijhar, 2013; Cordner, 2014; Fielding, 2005; Mastrofski, 1991). Various definitions of community policing have been advanced to capture its core elements (Johnston & Shearing, 2003; Maguire & Mastrofski, 2000). It is also a holistic practice that focuses on proactive crime prevention instead of crime removal and seeks to problem solve by attending to the needs of the community. The policing authorities would seek collaborative partnership with the community and active engagement in community building (Cordner, 1998, 2014; Greene, 2000; Skolnick & Bayley, 1988).

However, the wide variety of types and scopes of models and practices of community policing have made its effects difficult to evaluate. Moreover, wide discrepancies are often found between the discourses and practices of community policing (Rosenbaum & Lurigio, 1994). Despite the ambiguities, community policing has been deemed a much-needed innovation in policing and has rapidly emerged as a global phenomenon (Burruss & Giblin, 2014; Morabito, 2010; Skolnick & Bayley, 1988). Hence, scholars have argued that research needs to go beyond mere evaluation exercises to further explore how community policing is interpreted and understood by different participants and stakeholders. Such an approach would enable a deeper understanding of the consequences and social implications of community policing. Different modes of community policing practices emerged in different socio-political contexts. Its ‘effectiveness’ on trust building and reduction of crime in the community also varied (Arias & Ungar, 2009; Blair et al., 2021; Crank & Langworthy, 1992; Fielding, 2002; Maguire & Katz, 2002; Wu & Sun, 2009).

Community policing practice in Hong Kong and the Junior Police Call

The two territory-wide social unrest that occurred in Hong Kong in the late 1960s provided both an imperative and an opportunity for the colonial government to adopt a more active approach to formulating and implementing social reforms (Jones & Vagg, 2007). The government took a series of policy reforms to raise the standard of living of the general population, promote social cohesion and a sense of community and strengthen social stability and order. These attempts to enhance the legitimacy of control and governance aimed to prevent further disturbances and unrest (Carroll, 2007; Scott, 1989). It was also believed that a stable and prosperous Hong Kong might serve as political leverage in the pending negotiations between the British and Chinese governments on the future of Hong Kong (Lui, 2012).

After the launch of compulsory and free education to all children since the 1970s, the design and reform of curriculum has been the major concern of education practitioners. The arrangement of extra-curricular activities to engage students during their free time has drawn spectacular attention as the colonial government concluded that disengagement of young people into the community was the key factor among the causes for the street-level confrontations and violence between the police and citizens in the 1967 disturbances (Carroll, 2007; Hong Kong Government, 1968; Jones & Vagg, 2007; Lau, 2004a, 2004b; Lui, 2012; Yep, 2013; Yep & Lui, 2010).

Under this backdrop, the Royal Hong Kong Police (RHKP) launched a number of community policing initiatives aimed at rebuilding the relationship between the police and the community and overturn the hitherto negative public perception of the police (Ho & Chu, 2012; Lo & Cheuk, 2004). The Junior Police Call (JPC), a ‘club’ established and managed by the police to solicit membership from the school children, was established for crime prevention function and indoctrination of the youth through extra-curricular activities. The JPC was very popular during the 1970s and 1980s and has since become one of the largest youth organisations in Hong Kong. It was regarded as the
most successful of the various community policing initiatives undertaken to improve the image of police and the relationship between the police and the public (Ho & Chu, 2012; Hong Kong Police Force, 2022; Lo & Cheuk, 2004; Wong, 2010).

The case of the Hong Kong JPC is unique in a sense because the region’s colonial history presented challenges in regard to the formulation and implementation of community policing initiatives. The primary objective of community policing was to strengthen local identity and sense of belonging in Hong Kong, and thus encourage members of the community to participate in crime prevention in collaboration with the police (Maguire & Mastrofski, 2000). However, the colonial government and the police had to be cautious as well to guard against the identity consciousness that would delegitimize the colonial governance. The police faced the paradox of how to empower the community without raising the public awareness of the contradictions inherent in the undemocratic governance structure of Hong Kong, which at the time was not open to local people (Carroll, 2007). The JPC programme and its implementation is thus scholarly significant showing the strategies adopted by the non-fully democratic authorities to recreate a policing context that could legitimise its governance (Maguire & Katz, 2002; Weick, 1995).

**Missions and organisation of the Junior Police Call (JPC)**

The Junior Police Call scheme (JPC) is a registered non-profit society under the law of Hong Kong established in 1974 under direct management of the Police Public Relations Branch (PPRB) of the Hong Kong Police. Its primary objective was to foster a youth-police partnership in the community and enhance their public trust to the police. With 118,450 members being recruited in the first year, it has later developed to be the largest youth organisation in Hong Kong. The JPC targeted the teenagers from the ages between 9 and 16 (it was lowered to aged 6 in 2018) and the JPC leaders were aged 17 to 25. There were also mature members who were staff officers, course instructors and committee members. The number of members was about 9,000 when it was established in 1974 and expanded to 196,005 in 2018. Up to 2020, 809 School-based JPC clubs were founded and members were funded to have regular extra-curricular activities with personal development and civic education purposes under the stewardship from teachers and police officers, and district club houses, usually located at the premises of the HKP, were set up for the exclusive use of members for gathering and activities (Hong Kong Police Force, 2022).

The PPRB was also responsible for planning and formulating the work plans of the JPC and coordinating and organising the activities. At the beginning of the year, the PPRB would consult with the Hong Kong police, including the Crime Wing of the Crime and Security Department and the Operation and Support Wings of the Operations Department, to identify the priority areas to work on, such as the major changes in the crime trends in that year. The Bureau then introduced broad guidelines and annual themes for the JPC to follow. The JPC in turn directed each district branch to formulate plans and organise activities within the broad guidelines and themes. There was considerable variation in the type and scope of activities across the different districts. The activities were organised at two different levels. At the community level, there were district JPC clubs attached to the police stations in different police districts. Community-based activities aimed to reinforce the community awareness and nurture a more ‘positive sense of citizenship’ for JPC members were organised by the police officers stationed at the district clubhouses, including community and beaches clean-up campaign, fund-raising by selling ‘flag’, visits to the elderly homes, inter-districts members reunion gathering and sports competitions (Hong Kong Police Force, 2022).

During the 1970s and 1980s, each JPC district branch was led by a sergeant and four or five police officers, who would participate in the activities with the students. The officers communicated with and visited schools and planned and implemented various activities. They also organised regular meetings with the representatives of the JPC School Clubs and teachers from the participating schools, which were usually held at the beginning and end of each year. The teachers considered the activities the students would likely join and then let the students cooperate with the police in preparing and implementing the JPC activities. Shortly after its establishment, the RHKP worked closely with the Education Department to encourage the setting up of JPC School Clubs in primary and secondary schools and arranged a large array of extracurricular activities. At school level, the JPC school clubs were funded by the JPC headquarters to arrange free activities and territory-wide competitions for members that have been very popular among the grassroots students who considered the activities ‘eye-opening’. The regular activities include subject knowledge quiz competitions, visits to the police stations, police cadet schools and other disciplinary forces and television stations. The initial emphases showed underlying the goals of the JPC and the efforts to cooperate with educational institutions. The programme aimed to promote norms and values among the young through socialising in extra-curricular activities.

The JPC has undergone some structural reforms in the last decade to curb its declining popularity among the youth when facing the ‘stiff competition’ with the other youth uniformed units in schools and districts. Thematic training courses with policing knowledge, leadership skills, management skills and personal development were provided by the Police to the JPC members. An Activity Centre and Integrated Youth Training
Camp was established in 2019 for the members activities (Government Information Service Hong Kong, 2017). More than 1,000 members have taken part in the annual JPC Flight Crime Summer Camp (Government Information Service, HKSAR, 2017; Hong Kong Police Force, 2022).  

Findings and discussion
Socialisation beyond the curriculum

The mission of JPC is to inculcate the qualities of good citizens and promote a better relationship between youths and the police through the arrangement of a variety of extracurricular activities to the members. Those gathering, training and leisure activities served as the supplement to the academic studies in the formal curriculum and took up the re-socialisation functions to the school children. The Social and status groups used symbolic and material artefacts to establish and reinforce a sense of group identity among the members (Bourdieu, 1984; Collins, 1971). These artefacts helped contribute to the distinction between insiders and outsiders. As mentioned by our interviewees:

‘There was a JPC uniform for us. It just looked like the PE uniform in school but the Junior Police Call logo on the tee was very similar to the badge of Royal Hong Kong Police. We feel we were a member of the force and feel proud when putting on the uniform that might get the respect and admiration from the others. We must produce the membership card and sign-in for every visit to the Club House and enjoy the amusement facilities for free. This was proof of identity and really a privilege for us from grassroot families. I remember how excited I was when I got the card, and some parents would keep on checking the status of their kids’ membership application with the JPC police officers’ (M1 & P2).

The uniforms, membership cards and privileges for members were all important symbols and rituals that carried the cultural meaning of being part of an exclusive group (Durkheim, 1956). This contributed to the establishment of a sense of identity among the members, and for some of a sense of superiority and pride. Meanwhile, advanced access to the community and policing news was also highly treasured by the members in that pre-digitisation era in which the internet was not available and social capital was still a very important means for information acquisition. The JPC Club houses provided a meeting place for the youth to interact and associate with each other and police officers, and the ‘exclusive accesses for members to access information and resources provided further incentives and benefits’ (Portes, 1998).

‘My school was just next to the JPC Club House, and I knew that the JPC Clubs in different schools would send student representatives to attend the periodic gatherings and activities there. We would have regular ‘Base Camp’- overnight stay over activities for members. We had intensive chats with the Police officer commanders, and they provided us with a lot of ideas on personal advancement during the camping’ (M1).

Prevalence of syndicated corruption, non-transparent policing procedures and doubtful quality of human resources caused a generally negative impression for the police before the 1970s. The JPC also created a new and alternative channel for the youngsters to re-understand the police which were eager to reposition themselves.

‘I remembered there were five police officers in the JPC meeting. Some were in plain clothes and said they were affiliated to the ‘Police Community Relations’. I was shocked because my belief was that all the police would be in uniform and patrolling on the streets. How come there was a ‘PR unit of the Police’? I also found the police station was very ‘mysterious’ and the police were very ferocious. All were totally out of my imagination’. (M1).

The reflection of ‘ferocious’ and ‘mysterious’ from the JPC members clearly showed the lack of understanding among the students to the police. The JPC provided a soft platform for ‘ice-breaking’ – connecting the students, community and the police. Meanwhile, the social and status groups often used sanctions to discipline members when they deviated from the promoted norms and values of the group.

‘The JPC Club was just an interest group but its emphasis on ‘discipline’ was remarkably different from other societies in schools. As the police officers presided over the meetings, we would make the members ‘well-behaved’, and we would scold and sanction the ‘bad’ (ill-tempered) participants in the activities. The Club was to train members to be ‘good citizens’ and ‘less rebellious’. I found most members would respect our authorities and follow our instructions’ (P2 & P3).

Recall from police commanders of the JPC showed their explicit belief: JPC was not only a leisure club but an educational place to indoctrinate the concept of ‘good citizen’ to the school children in a quasi (if not fully) disciplinary context. Sanctions would be imposed for ‘misbehaved’ participants to cultivate the accepted norms and values among the students. Non-compliance members would lose their privileges and access to the resources and be marginalised from the club. The police would display an upright outlook, authority figures and become the role model of the young members, and resocialize them through periodic group activities.

The JPC members’ senses of pride and superiority were also partially derived from external and public recognition:

‘Episodes of the JPC activities were regularly reported in television and newspapers and members often looked very cheerful and prospective. We felt the status, prestige, and honor as part of the Club, and also changed our impression of the Police’ (M2).
The JPC were publicised by the RHKP authorities as a unit composed of ‘good youngsters with promising and prospective outlook’ (Hong Kong Commercial News, 1975). The positive image was highly treasured by the members. The distinctive status of the JPC was carefully crafted and maintained through a variety of social and cultural means. Those who complied with the promoted norms and values were rewarded while those who failed to be punished. The strategy successfully consolidated their awareness and obligations to the group as a whole and reinforced the sense of identity among them. As Scott (2014) argued, the JPC was effective in cultivating the qualities conducive to being a good citizen and promoting better relationships with the police through indirect socialisation.

**Strengthening the ties between police and community elites**

At the community level, the police authorities have identified the active figures and elected representatives as office bearers of the JPC. Members of the District Council, district and rural committees, for example, would be appointed as honorary leaders of JPC. They were the donors of resources for activities and volunteer work for the development of JPC. A JPC police officer recalled:

‘We would look for the elites and community leaders and invite them to be the President or Honorary President of the JPC and Flight Crime Committee members in different police districts. Some district leaders who made significant contributions in the JPC development would also be nominated for the honour of Justice of the Peace (JP). It was our objective to secure a reciprocal relationship with them. Elites could get their reputation, District Councillors could get constituency support in elections, and we could have resources donated by the private sector and created a sustainable working partnership with district activists’ (P1).

The police worked on multiple fronts to solicit and secure community support by communicating and interacting with community leaders. The incorporation of community stakeholders to the JPC, including members of the District Council, Mutual Aid committees, Rural committees and Clan committees. They not only provided the expertise but also were the major donors of resources for JPC activities. This created an image of public participation in the JPC activities, and apparently increased the public accountability and transparency of policing.

**Loose coupling as the strategy**

At the school level, the teachers reflected on what they have done for the JPC club:

‘I have been curious why there was “JPC (Junior Police Call)”, but without “JFSC (Junior Fire Service Call)” ? I noticed that the JPC was affiliated to the Police that would have the community resocialization missions that was carried out by the prevailing government since the 1970s. The JPC created a positive image of the police and tightened its connection with the community and youngsters. Schools could have additional resources, both monetary and expertise, the frontline teachers and principals were all happy to take part in the work of JPC school clubs. The connection with the Police also provided invaluable social capital to disciplinary head teachers who have to settle the ‘troublesome students who joined the gang groups and have misbehaviour’. (T1)

I did not have a clear idea what the JPC was about when I was assigned for this coordinatorship, but I was happy to see the positive changes of students who were their active members’ (T3).

Teachers of the school JPC clubs might not have strong awareness and understanding of the tasks they were assigned, which showed there was a certain degree of ‘loose coupling’ within and between the JPC and the school (Orton & Weick, 1990). Moreover, the non-alignment of understandings reveals the complex interplay between the considerations of the teachers and the police. The primary concerns and considerations of the teachers were apparently closely related to the requirements of the schools’ top management, their increasing resources and their students’ exposure to more extra-curricular activities. However, this looked insignificant for the JPC development and even catalysed the resocialization and remarketing campaign stewarded by the RHKP officers organising the JPC activities. The school teachers were most happy to be the facilitator and ‘free-riders’ of the transformed behaviour of the JPC members.

**Conclusion**

Our analysis attempted to make sense of the establishment and evolution of Junior Police Call in Hong Kong by the concepts of organisational decoupling and sense-making in organisation theory. We have identified three modes of interaction and engagement between the police and the different participants and stakeholders in the JPC as part of the community policing programme implemented in Hong Kong during the 1970s and 1980s. The club activities and exclusive privileges for members resocialized the grassroots students in which their parents were generally sceptical to the police and fostered closer relationships and thereby promoted a positive image and acceptance of the police among the youth. The interaction between the police and students in the school JPC Clubs created a new identity for the JPC members who were privileged to get access to some cultural and social resources that were scattered in prevailing moments for the grassroots school children. The exclusive social capital and even possible use of sanctions by their police mentor was very ‘attractive’ for the grassroots school children who desperately sought for identity and recognition in the community. The JPC successfully absorbed a large cluster of youngsters becoming their
affiliates, if not fans, that would be very significant for the strengthening of the crime prevention strategy since the 1970s. As argued by Jones and Vagg (2007), this youth police ‘fan club’ indeed effectively served as a depoliticised means of promoting the legitimacy of the police’s control over society.

The interactions between the police and the community leaders revealed how they collectively made sense of the emerging JPC initiative during their interaction. They also illustrated how both parties exchanged symbolic and material resources when striving to consolidate mutually beneficial arrangements. Moreover, the police were able to incorporate the support of community leaders and hence enhance their legitimacy in the community (Crank & Langworthy, 1992; Scott, 2010, 2014). The JPC development also demonstrated that loose coupling was an important strategy for reconciling the potential inconsistencies between different stakeholders. Rather than treating such non-alignment as a problem, loose coupling served to buffer the potential disruption arising from the inconsistencies in the goals and demands of different stakeholders and thus from interfering with the everyday operations of the JPC and the schools (Orton & Weick, 1990).

The interaction between the teachers and the police was predicated on how they made sense of and attributed meanings to the JPC activities at school. This enabled the parties involved to come to mutually beneficial arrangements. The teachers considered the benefits to their schools and the students to be sufficient justification for cooperating with the police, while the police valued having the opportunity to cultivate the proper values and norms among the students and promote a positive image of the police among the students.

This study found the RHKP has adopted a relatively soft and indirect strategy to reposition herself in the community. As a flagship component in the community policing programmes, the JPC has achieved remarkable success to nurture a strong constituency of support from the youth in the community. In addition to the identity and privileges provided to the JPC achievement, the success of police re-legitimisation was also because of the institutionalisation and professionalisation attempts to increase its human resources quality, law enforcement capacity and public image and more importantly, eradicating the syndicated corruption. The success of this approach was shown to be contingent on the significance of the police as an organisation attributed to decoupling, which allowed the different parties a certain flexibility to come to arrangements that maximise the chances of obtaining the necessary material and symbolic resources. It was also predicated on the dynamics of the interactions between the police and various stakeholders, including the teachers, students and the community. The different modes of interaction shown in this study reflected the precarious balance between the different understandings of the JPC and its consequences, which were born out of the prevailing socio-political environment in the 1970s to 1980s.

The JPC could be understood as the police using an innovation to respond as an organisation to changing social expectations and demands and to garner and maintain legitimacy (Crank & Langworthy, 1992; Manning, 2003). We noticed how different participants made sense of and responded to the innovative changes and extrapolated the meanings that the participants attributed to the changes in policing (Maguire & Katz, 2002). Our analysis shows the applicability of the concepts of organisational sense-making and decoupling to the study of the police as an organisation. Decoupling enables us to delineate the organisational processes, rather than the instrumental outcomes, of implementing community policing. Moreover, the sense-making of the different organisations helps further our understanding of the meanings that the participants attributed to the process, which contributed to the successful implementation of the JPC in Hong Kong during the 1970s and 1980s.

We echoed the observation of Scott (2014) who was the first academia proposing the intellectual significance for the studies on scrutinising the sense-making and negotiation among the different parties. This would be particularly insightful to explore the dynamics of the interactive process under the transforming political and policing context in the transition of Hong Kong administration after the sovereignty retrocession to China since 1997.

The membership and activities of the JPC were immediately affected by the social confrontation in summer 2019. The annual Junior Police Call Fight Crime Summer Camp was cancelled due to the unsatisfactory enrolment. Comparing more than thousands of registrations in 2018, only about 100 applications were received. Among 21 police districts, 18 districts recorded zero registration. There were also the applications for withdrawal under the sentimental police and citizens relations resulting from prolonged street confrontation and violence. The teenagers started to be sceptical of the JPC and were reluctant to take part in its activities steered by the HKP and his allies anymore. The didactic indoctrination of ‘good citizens’ concepts from an officially managed platform in a top-down approach seems not an effective means for trust building and youth socialisation anymore, given the prevalence of more convenient and alternative means for information accessibility. The Junior Police Call Scheme was the most successful community police project. It has successfully resocialized the young people to develop a sense of responsibility and care for the society. The transforming HKSAR politics in the last decade, however, recontextualised the policing in the SAR and eroded the trust between the police and citizens that have gradually developed since the 1970s.

**Author contributions**

LKH and KW generated the research idea. KW did the fieldwork and collected the data. LKH carried out data analysis and interpretation. CCWH did the literature review. CCWH, LKH and KW wrote the original draft for submission. LKH and KW did the manuscript revision. All authors have read and approved the manuscript.
Funding
The author(s) disclosed receipt of the following financial support for the research, authorship, and/or publication of this article: This research is partly supported by the Internal Research Grant of the Education University of Hong Kong, RG40/2016-2017R.

Declaration of conflicting interests
The author(s) declared no potential conflicts of interest with respect to the research, authorship, and/or publication of this article.

Notes
1. Members of the JPC reached about 210,000 in 2013 but it gradually dropped to 190,000 in 2018. In November 2021, there were 104 Advanced Leaders; 336 Leaders and 167,503 members. Hong Kong Police Force (2022). Organisation and Development of JPC. https://www.police.gov.hk/ppp/en/16_jpc/develop.html (Accessed 27 March 2022).
2. Lo and Cheuk (2004), Jones and Vagg (2007), Wong (2010) and Ho and Chu (2012) have reviewed and identified several key programmes introduced by the RHKP since the 1970s to reach out to the community and attempt to improve its public image. The PR unit – Police Public Information Bureau was established to strengthen the publicity, an ‘ambassador’ of police-Police Community Relations Officers (PCRO) was appointed to explain police work to the public. For the first time, ‘Fight Crime Campaign’ was launched to seek partnership with communities for crime prevention. At the district level, the Neighbourhood Police Unit scheme and Junior Police Call (JPC) scheme was followed to acquaint the residents and young people with police work. At schools, the Police School Liaison (PSL) scheme was introduced to prevent gangs from infiltrating to schools.
3. Three missions of the Junior Police Call were explicitly stated in the police propaganda when it was founded in 1974: (1) To provide recreational activities and entertainment for young people, so that they need not be playing in the streets, which may acquaint them with bad friends; (2) To teach JPC members to become good citizens with a strong knowledge base and encourage them to be public-spirited and (3) To encourage young people to be friends with the Hong Kong Police Force, and build a bridge between young people and the Hong Kong Police Force (Hong Kong Commercial News, 1975).
4. The JPC School Clubs had three major objectives as well: (1) To promote young people’s interest in JPC activities and attract new members to join the JPC, (2) To promote student-police relations, and provide an outline of the activities to the School Liaison Officers (SLOs) and (3) To organise some well-organised activities for students and meet the school’s extracurricular activity requirements, and prevent other adverse effects to curb the triad infiltration in schools (Hong Kong Commercial News, 1975; JPC Monthly Newsletters, Royal Hong Kong Police, 1975).
5. It was reported that the significant drop of active JPC members since the 2010s despite the numerical increase of the total registered members. Reasons for its declining popularity were said to be the ‘old fashioned activities’ arranged by the JPC leaders, competition from other youth units in school and community, changing sub-culture among the school children as well as their personality.
6. The JPC undertook several organisational reforms in the 2010s. Membership was categorised to normal members from ages 6 to 25; the Leader aged from 10 to 25 who fulfilled and passed training at leader level; Advanced Leader who passed the advanced leader training course recommended by the PCRO; and the instructor who are have served as police officers. Interested parties who are above the eligible age (25) could also join as Staff Officers and Committee Members of District Support Group based on the nomination from the PCRO. A permanent activity centre and Youth Integrated Camp was established in 2017 for regular courses and training camps for members. Hong Kong Police Force (2022). Organisation and Development of JPC. https://www.police.gov.hk/ppp_en/16_jpc/develop.html (Accessed 27 March 2022).

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