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# **Implications of police occupational culture in discriminatory experiences of senior women in police forces in England and Wales.**

**Keywords:** police culture; senior women in policing; sexual harassment; social identity theory

## **Abstract**

Perceptions of police occupational culture were measured in a sample of senior women in policing (N=169) through an on-line survey conducted late 2017/early 2018 to explore occurrence of sexual harassment and sex discrimination. Negative aspects of ‘cop’ culture are associated with greater rates of harassing and discriminatory experiences. Social Identity Theory (SIT) examined the salience of role, gender, and seniority as factors relevant to those experiences. Conclusions discuss implications for reform and cultural change.

## **Introduction**

This paper examines sexual harassment and sex discrimination as experienced by senior women working within the occupational cultural milieu of police forces of England and Wales against the climate of the “Me Too” social media movement (Wolfe, 2018; Bisom-Rapp, 2018)). We pose two key questions in this study. First, how do senior women in policing perceive the police occupational culture within which they work? Second, what is the association between our respondent’s perceptions of the police occupational culture and experiences of sexual harassment and discrimination? In this study, we report the experiences of a non-probability sample of both senior women police officers and support staff. Senior women in policing are a hard to reach group (Marpsat and Razafindratsima, 2010) for which Tansey, (2007) suggests non probability sampling is appropriate. In answer to the first research question, the findings reveal our respondents vary in their characterisation along dimensions of a somewhat retrogressive traditional orthodoxy (often referred to as ‘canteen’ or ‘cop’ culture) and more progressive accountability (sometimes cast as ‘reform’ culture). Regarding the second research question, we found that where the perceived occupational culture has retrogressive elements, senior women (both officers and support staff) are more likely to suffer discriminatory treatment and be exposed to sexual harassment. We draw on Social Identity Theory (SIT) to explain the impact of differing aspects of our participants’ identity in terms of their role (sworn versus non- sworn), gender and seniority on their exposure to discriminatory behaviours.

## **Background**

### *“Me too”*

In October 2017, the New York Times published an article about actress Ashely Judd’s accusations of sexual harassment against Harvey Weinstein, the film producer. Alyssa Milano tweeted, “if you’ve been sexually harassed or assaulted write ‘me too’ as a reply to this tweet” (Wolfe, 2018). This set off the viral “Me Too” response on Twitter and other social media platforms as literally millions of individuals, mostly women, from across the spectrum of working environments described their personal sexual harassment experiences (Bisom-Rapp, 2018). The importance of the ‘Me too’ phenomenon lies partly on the resurrection of the issue of sexual harassment as a continuing problem in the workplace, invoking a sense of agency whereby women could tell their stories and be believed, and constructing a collective narrative of its widespread occurrence and harmfulness (Wolfe, 2018).

The further implication of ‘Me too’ is that it questioned the efficacy of work-place anti-harassment policies and the complacency of organisations’ reliance on the presence of diversity training to reduce their legal liability rather than any serious attempt to eradicate the problem (Bisom-Rapp, 2018). Bisom-Rapp suggests that ‘Me Too’ potentially has the potency of a cultural ‘rupture’ (p. 75) and in turn to incentivise ‘good faith’ efforts to prevent discrimination and harassment. The relevance for the present paper is that within policing in England and Wales, despite a raft of policies and guidance the issues of race and ethnicity have eclipsed those relating to gender (Morris, 2004; Foster et al 2005) and the presence of cultural resistance to diversity training (Dick and Cassell, 2004; Rowe and Garland, 2007).

### Police Service in England and Wales

The police service in England and Wales is made up of 43 forces. Although these are independent organisations, there is a strong sense of a common identity embedded in the idea of the British model of policing (HMIC, 2009) borne of its historic genesis and the founding ideals of Sir Robert Peel. Women constitute 29.8% of the police establishment in England and Wales. 6,463 hold the rank of sergeant or above (Hargreaves et al, 2018). This is 17.7% of the complement of serving police women (the equivalent percentage for

men is 24.1%). Sixty three per cent (38,521) of the support staff are women but it is not known what proportion hold a supervisory grade.

Civilian (non-sworn/non-warranted) or support staff have been employed since the inception of the Metropolitan Police in 1829, but it was a Home Office 1983 Circular (114/83) that provided the impetus for an expansion in numbers, role and seniority. The modest corpus of research looking at the experiences of professional support staff and comparing them to warranted/sworn officer colleagues generally report few differences, e.g., in organisational commitment (Dick and Metcalfe, 2001) or stress levels (McCartey and Skogan, 2012). In the context of Swedish police, Osterlind and Haake (2010) found police leaders with sworn backgrounds more easily commanded respect and credibility than their non-sworn counterparts. Alderden and Skogan (2014) note research evidence suggesting civilian staff are more likely to be bullied and a perception that they are undervalued compared to sworn/warranted officer colleagues. These authors speculate that as women make up the majority of non-sworn/non-warranted staff, the male police officer majority privileges masculine qualities and de-values those activities perceived as feminine, such as support and administrative work. They suggest tensions between officers and civilian staff have 'deeply cultural roots' (p. 264) with not only officers fearing evaluation or supervision by civilians, but holding beliefs that 'outsiders' cannot understand the job of policing.

### **Police occupational culture**

The concept of a police occupational culture has preoccupied scholars for the last fifty years. Its origins can be found in ethnographic studies of policing in the 1960s and 1970s (cf Banton 1964; Skolnick, 1966; Westley, 1970; Manning and Van Maanen, 1978). In recent years there has been some critical re-assessment (Loftus, 2009; Waddington 2011; Reiner, 2016; Charman, 2017). There is also a body of scholarship looking at the impact of police occupational culture on women serving in the police, such as performance (Westmarland 2001), stress (Chan, 2007) and inhibitions to the occupancy of senior rank (Silvestri, 2007).

The notion of culture has often been employed as an explanatory device to account for police (men's) behaviour, particularly misconduct (Prenzler, 1997) and bias (Murphy et al

2017). Steinþórsdóttir and Pétursdóttir (2017) draw on the work of Berdahl to suggest that in a context where one's place in the gender hierarchy is threatened, such as policing, there is a greater likelihood of sex based harassment. Also, where attempts are made towards equal treatment, the threatened group is more likely to retaliate with harassing behaviours. Rowe and Garland (2007) suggest diversity training within police forces of England and Wales was perceived as a 'tick box' exercise fulfilling Home Office requirements rather than providing meaningful change. Loftus proposes (2009:82) that resistance to equal treatment can be attributed in part to 'ressentiment' (original italics). This French term has wider resonance than its English equivalent and describes an ongoing and entrenched resentment against those who possess or claim access to desired goods and values. This is underpinned by a sense of loss and nostalgia through the imposition of 'political correctness' governing banter, restrictions on use of language, and undermining of entitlement held by the male majority, having to compete with women and those from ethnic minorities for promotion and prized roles, such as investigation.

Harassment operates to preserve men's status in the hierarchy (Parker and Griffin, 2002; Steinþórsdóttir and Pétursdóttir, 2017). Wolfe (2018) observes that the 'Me Too' testimonies demonstrate the persisting and enduring presence of sexual harassment despite the introduction of anti-harassment policies and grievance procedures. Sexual harassment and discrimination remains present in the police workforce despite comprehensive policies being set in place relating to affirmative action, equal opportunity and other strategies e.g. in England and Wales (Dick and Cassell, 2003, Foster et al 2005); Australia (Prenzler, Fleming and King 2010); The Netherlands (Haas et al, 2010); Iceland (Steinþórsdóttir and Pétursdóttir, 2017) and the USA (Haar and Morash, 2013).

Reiner (2010) holds that police culture operates as a frame of reference, essentially the world view of the largely male rank and file police officer, as a way to orientate their behaviour. Reiner's (2010) own characterisation of 'core' police culture remains much the same as when he first described it in the 1980s – i.e., (crime) action oriented, cynical, pessimistic, conservative and suspicious. According to Reiner, macho, racist and sexist attitudes, internal solidarity, social isolation and prejudice provide the informal rules governing behaviour, the potency of which derives from three shaping factors identified by Skolnick (1966): the exercise of authority, danger and pressure to produce results.

Moreover, officers holding perspectives close to the ideal of ‘traditional’ police culture are more likely to engage in violence, externally and internally. Such ideas continue to resonate in contemporary accounts (Atkinson 2017) in the form of de-valuing, de-grading and de-professionalising women, often through office banter, derogation and gendered bullying (Steinþórsdóttir and Pétursdóttir, 2017). Others have shown the adverse impact of such behaviour on women’s career progression (Dick and Metcalfe, 2001; Howes and Goodman-Delahunty, 2015), lack of support (Hassell and Brandl, 2009) and gender segregated tasking (Haake, 2017).

Loftus (2010) argues that the traditional cop culture may potentially be challenged by more recent developments and reforms within policing, which are expected to weaken the potency of negative cultural influences. For example, shifts towards community (Sklansky, 2014); reassurance policing (Innes et al., 2009); recasting the public as customers and imposition of performance indicators (Savage, 2007); critiques of officers’ prejudicial behaviours (such as sexism, racism and homophobia) resulting in efforts to increase ethnic and gender diversification (Reiner, 2010); introduction of ideas deriving from procedural justice (Bradford et al., 2014) and more recently the professionalisation agenda (College of Policing, 2016; Williams and Cockcroft, 2018). According to Loftus these innovations could introduce alternative cultural influences, such as the ethic of care (Heidensohn, 1986, Rabe-Hemp, 2008), more academically informed practices (Brown et al, 2018) and a model for a police identity based on procedural justice (Bradford et al, 2014).

### **Social Identity Theory**

Whilst culture might provide the script, and is a feature of the group, identity is located in individuals and can be determined by the context of the culture surrounding them (Lawson, 2014). Police identity as conceptualised by Hoggett and colleagues (2014) is a fundamental aspect of an officer’s sense of self and a source of pride and value gained through belonging. Bradford (2014) has previously suggested that this sense of belonging captures the worth people place on the group and their membership of it enhancing their self-esteem. Values associated with masculinity map onto, and are congruent with police culture. Male-typed jobs require characteristics that are contrary to those thought stereotypically appropriate to women. Successful women, especially those who have

achieved seniority, violate these stereotypes and challenge their male counterparts (Leskinen et al, 2015). Acker's (1992) work on organisational life, demonstrates that the behavioural consequences of such challenges can be discrimination and resistance by those whose identities are threatened.

Those threatened may retaliate by increasing the distinctiveness between themselves and those perceived as 'other' with greater competitiveness to ensure organisational resources and rewards accrue to the in-group (Breakwell, 1983). Peters et al, (2012) suggest identity fit dynamics often have negative implications for women in male dominated occupations. In policing, this has been played out as the POLICEwoman or policeWOMAN dichotomy (Martin, 1990). The former is where identity stresses overachievement and conformity to the male police occupational culture and a weakened identity as a woman. The latter is an emphasis on a feminine role identity and an underplaying of the dominant masculine features of the police role. Breakwell (1983) argues that in male dominated environments, men who feel threatened seek to re-establish continuity with traditional gender roles.

Social identity theory (SIT) posits that people identify with salient groups and by comparison, distinguish themselves from others (Oakes et al, 1994; Haslam, 2014). A central tenet is the sense of 'oneness' or belonging to a group (Van Knippenberg, 2000). Thus a person's identity derives from their knowledge about and the value and significance they attach to their membership of a salient group. An important aspect of SIT is the comparison process defining in-groups and out-groups, the former being groups to which people feel they belong, whereas the latter is where the person is seen as an outsider or 'other' (Murphy et al 2017). SIT predicts that members of out-groups are more likely to be discriminated against, e.g., by a process called 'out-group punitive effect.' This resonates with the resentment concept described by Loftus. Thus when a person identifies strongly with a given group s/he will be more prepared to interpret the world and their own place within it, in a manner consistent with that group's values, ideology and culture. A meaningful group is where members perceive less difference between themselves, than between themselves and other people (Van Knippenberg, 2000).

A further conceptualisation within SIT is the idea of 'sub-ordinate' and 'super-ordinate' identities (Oakes et al, 1994). Whilst people define their identity in terms of their relationship to others, this can be done at different levels of abstraction, depending on the

wider context: on the subordinate or individual/personal level (where my identity is what makes 'me' distinct from 'you'), and on the social level (what makes 'us' distinct from 'them') (Hoggett personal communication, March 2018). People can have multiple social identities that become more or less salient depending on context.

So, in the case of POLICEwomen, a police identity is super-ordinate and values associated with femininity are suppressed. The reverse is the case of policeWOMEN where gender-identity is super-ordinate and values associated with femininity are accentuated. Rabe-Hemp (2009) confirms this via earlier gender and policing research, which found some female officers align themselves with the dominant masculinised police culture. Rabe-Hemp (2009) also found that women who identified with and supported other women were often chided by policemen. Women who socialised with other female police were termed an 'estrogen mafia' and were often subject to out-group punitive effects such as isolation.

### **Sexual harassment and discriminatory behaviours**

Pina et al (2009) note that sexual harassment is usually cast as unwanted verbal or non-verbal conduct that violates the target's dignity and/or creates a hostile and intimidating environment. Leskinen et al (2015) suggested that gender harassment is identified by sexist remarks, pejorative terms of address, crude behaviours and infantilisation. More intrusive unwanted physical contact and sexual attention and sexual propositioning have also been identified (Fitzgerald et al, 1997). It is also evident from previous research that exposure to harassment may be direct (as a target) or indirect (as a witness or bystander), and both can result in adverse consequences (Hitlan et al, 2006). Of relevance to the present study is the Victorian Equal Opportunity and Human Rights' Commission's (2015) findings that located the 'causes' of sexual harassment in the police in the state of Victoria, Australia as being entrenched in police culture.

### **Research questions**

Much of the available literature on sexual harassment and discrimination in policing has focussed on operational street level officers rather than looking at the experiences of the wider community of women working within the police service, namely more senior women and the equivalent non-sworn staff. This together with consideration of whether



officers and staff identify with the description of their working environments presented in the research literature, guided our first exploratory research question:

- 1) How do senior women in policing characterise the occupational culture in terms of traditional attributes (as identified by Reiner, 2010) and newer reform attributes (as discussed by Charman, 2017; Metcalfe, 2017 and Bradford et al, 2014)?

Social identity theorising has been increasingly used to explain organisational behaviours in the workplace (Van Knippenberg, 2000) and more recently applied to the police occupational culture (Charman, 2017). SIT is particularly useful in helping to explain contextual performance, i.e., behaviour that supports the organisational, social and psychological environment such as helping or hindering others and considering (or not) others' interests. SIT, then steered our second question:

- 2) What is the association between perceptions of police occupational culture and punitive behaviours, operationalised as sexual harassment and discrimination, in terms of a participant's gender, role and seniority?

## **Method**

### **Sampling**

A key methodological challenge for this study was gaining access to the research population, i.e., senior women in policing; this is largely because of their relatively small numbers and geographic dispersion. We overcome this limitation by employing a non-probability sampling strategy, namely 'time-location sampling' (Marpsat and Razafindratsima, 2010 who describe this as a process of approaching hard to reach research participants in a place where the population of interest may be visiting. Brown and Heidensohn (2000) had used such a strategy in 1996 to conduct a comparative study, utilising an international sample of police women attending the joint International Association of Women in Policing and European Network of Policewomen conference.

### **The sample**

A total of 336 delegates attended the Senior Women in Policing (SWIP) conference in November 2017. In all, 153 delegates completed the survey, giving a response rate of 45%. The sample included 7 male participants, 6 women constables and 5 non police delegates. These 18 were eliminated from the present analysis yielding a usable sample of 52 senior women support staff and 83 senior women police officers. An additional sample of 34 senior police women were recruited from a professional development seminar held in January 2018 in a large Metropolitan force, boosting the sample of police officers to 117, and giving a total of 169 respondents.

Table 1: Numbers and rank of women serving as police officers in England and Wales (E & W) and sample

Rank	Total no and % of all women serving in a supervisory rank in E&W		N in sample by rank* % of sample as a function of all officers serving in rank	
	N	%	N	%
<b>Constable</b>	30153	( 82%)		
<b>Sergeant</b>	4199	( 11%)	8	(0.1% )
<b>Inspector</b>	1306	( 3% )	18	(1.3%)
<b>Chief Inspector</b>	400	( 1% )	37	( 9%)
<b>Superintendent</b>	235	( <1%)	36	(15% )
<b>Chief Superintendent</b>	65	( <1%)	8	(12% )
<b>Chief officer</b>	58	( <1%)	4	(12% )
<b>Total</b>	36417	100%	111	

\*6 police officers declined to give their rank

We acknowledge that our sample does not reflect the proportion of warranted/sworn or non-warranted/sworn staff in the research population, or the rank distribution of officers<sup>1</sup>. Therefore, we do not claim generalizability and/or representativeness of the findings. Given the difficulties of obtaining probability samples from hard to reach populations, our data offers instead the basis for exploratory analyses and insights that will hopefully build on previous scholarship and stimulate further research.

### The Survey

A survey was developed and distributed through the Qualtrics platform that enables the online collection of research data. One section of the survey questionnaire asked

respondents for demographic and occupational details, including role, rank or grade. Given our interest in police occupational culture, 17 descriptors were listed drawing on the previously cited literature and included ‘macho’, ‘cynical’ and ‘suspiciousness’, indicative of ‘old’ culture; and ‘caring’, ‘inclusive’ and ‘progressive’, indicative of ‘new’ culture. Respondents were asked to score on a 5 point Likert scale of strongly agree (1) to strongly disagree (5) whether they felt the adjective was currently an accurate description of the police service (i.e., the lower the score the greater the agreement.)

As police identity has featured as a potential correlate of cultural characterisations, a scale was adopted from Hoggett et al. (2014) comprising the six following items to which the respondents indicated their agreement or disagreement on a 5 point Likert scale (1= strongly disagree, 5= strongly agree):

- When someone criticizes the police, it feels like a personal insult;
- I am very interested in what others think about the police;
- When I talk about the police I usually say we rather than they;
- The police's successes are my successes;
- If a story in the media criticises the police I would feel embarrassed;
- When someone praises the police it's like a personal compliment.

The Cronbach's alpha reliability for the scale was 0.87 and the higher the score the greater the identification.

In relation to sexual harassment, respondents were asked if they had been subjected to unwanted verbal harassment, unwanted physical contact, or unwanted sexual propositioning in the preceding 12 months, as a target, bystander, or been told about in confidence. They were also asked if they had dealt with such behaviours either informally or formally. Responses were restricted to either yes (1) or no (2).

In addition, questions on other potential discriminatory behaviours were included, such as gender task stereotyping, differential responses of men and women to promotion, not being given credit for work done, bullying by someone senior, and colleagues' attitude to male and female parents and their respective child care commitments. Responses were again, either yes (1) or no (2) as to whether the respondent had recently observed these behaviours. A total score was computed creating a discrimination scale with a Cronbach's alpha of 0.70. Note the lower the score the more discriminatory the behaviours observed.

Finally, a number of open ended questions were used to elaborate our statistical findings through qualitative information. In terms of the process, University ethical protocols were complied with, and permission to access the SWIP conference delegates and the professional development seminar participants was granted by the organisers.

### Analytic strategy

The analysis was completed in four stages. Stage one outlines the descriptive and bi-variate statistical analyses reporting the demographics and discriminatory experiences of the sample. Due to the relatively small size of our sample, both parametric and non-parametric statistics were employed. Stage two determined the cultural categorisations. To achieve this, Guttman-Lingoes Smallest Space Analysis (SSA) was used. This is a non-metric multi-dimensional scaling statistic that makes no assumptions about the underlying structure of data. This approach has been employed before to explore personal meanings (Brown and Sime, 1982) and applied to the exposition of personal and occupational identities in gay and lesbian police officers (Wootton and Brown, 2000). A data matrix of the profile of responses make up the columns, in this case 17 cultural characterisations, whilst each individual's ratings are shown in the rows. Rating scores in the matrix are correlated and then converted to linear distance. The higher the correlation, the shorter the distance. The items are plotted as points on a visual map. A goodness of fit measure, the coefficient of alienation, generally held to be 0.15 or lower, indicates an acceptable graphic representation. Interpretation of the visual representation is made by a partitioning of the space. In this case there is an a priori hypothesis that the space can be divided in terms of 'old' (traditional) and 'new' (reformed) characterisations of the culture. Stage three involved the creation of two scales derived from the above analysis. An 'old' culture scale made up of the eight items characterised as 'traditional, having a Cronbach's alpha of 0.77. A second 'new' culture scale of eight reform items had a Cronbach's Alpha reliability of 0.83. Both scores were indicative of acceptable scaling. Stage four utilised a binary logistic regression to explore the magnitude and significance of associations between sexual harassment, police identity and old (traditional) occupational culture.

## **Results**

Stage one: descriptive and bi-variate analyses

Police officers and police staff respondents had equivalent levels of seniority and were equally likely to have child care responsibilities, to have either an undergraduate or master's degree and have equivalent marital status. Police officers were slightly older, had on average served longer in the police, were responsible for more staff, were more likely to work in a male dominated setting and held an operational rather than support role compared to their non-sworn/non-warranted counterparts.

Table 2: Sample characteristics

<b>Demographic/occupational characteristics</b>	<b>Police officers</b>	<b>Support Staff</b>	<b>Statistical Significance</b>
<b>Marital status</b>			
Single	11% (9)	10% (5)	
Married	77% (85)	79% (41)	
Same sex relationship	6% (7)	2% (1)	
Divorced	7% (8)	10% (5)	NS
<b>Child caring responsibilities</b>			
	58% (58)	58% (31)	NS
<b>Average age</b>			
	45.7 years	43.1 years	t=-1.9 p<05/ Sign Mann-Whitney U
<b>Level of education</b>			
Undergraduate degree	65% (68)	65% (32)	NS
Master's degree	26% (34)	26% (12)	NS
<b>Rank</b>			
Sergeant	7% (8)		
Inspector	16% (18)		
C/Inspector	33% (37)		
Superintendent	32% (36)		
C/Superintendent	8% (8)		
Chief officer	4% (4)		
<b>Grade</b>			
Intermediate		6% (3)	
First line manager		11% (6)	
Middle manager		47% (25)	
Head of Department		26% (14)	
Chief officer/executive		9% (5)	NS
<b>Role</b>			
Support	81% (87)	93% (48)	Chi square 81.6 p<000
Operational	18% (19)	6% (5)	
<b>Average length of service</b>			
	22.2 years	14.7 years	t =-6.4 p<.001/ Sign Mann Whitney U
<b>Average number of staff responsible for</b>			
	122	15	t=81.6 p<000/Sign Mann Whitney U
<b>Gender ratio</b>			
More men than women	54% (58)	30% (15)	Chi square =22.6 p<000
About the same	34% (37)	24% (12)	
More women than men	12% (13)	46% (23)	

The next set of results report responses to the police identification scale, sexual harassment and other discriminatory experiences.

Table 3: Police identification, sexual harassment and other discriminatory experiences

<b>Police identity</b>	<b>Agree/ S/Agree (all)</b>	<b>Staff</b>	<b>Officers</b>
When someone criticizes the police, it feels like a personal insult	59%/ 12%	60%/ 10%	58%/ 13%
I am very interested in what others think about the police	55%/ 31%	58%/ 31%	53%/ 31%
When I talk about the police I usually say we rather than they	46%/ 41%	42%/ 40%	48%/ 41%
The police's successes are my successes	49%/ 22%	46%/ 27%	50%/ 19%
If a story in the media criticizes the police I would feel embarrassed	45%/ 13%	42%/ 10%	46%/ 15%
When someone praises the police it's like a personal compliment	52%/ 17%	50%/ 17%	53%/ 18%
<b>Average Police identity score (range 6-30)</b>	<b>23.0</b>	<b>22.9</b>	<b>23.1</b>
<b>Standard deviation</b>	<b>3.8</b>	<b>3.5</b>	<b>4.0</b>
<b>Sexual harassment</b>	<b>Yes (all)</b>	<b>Staff</b>	<b>Officers</b>
Unwanted comments and jokes			
Target	33%	32%	34%
Bystander	42%	44%	41%
Been told about	27%	28%	26%
Dealt with informally	21%	16%	18%
Dealt with formally	17%	14%	18%
Unwanted physical contact			
Target	4%	0%	6%
Bystander	2%	4%	1%
Been told about	10%	7%	12%
Dealt with informally	11%	11%	11%
Dealt with formally	15%	11%	16%
Unwanted sexual propositioning			
Target	11%	9%	11%
Bystander	4.5%	7%	3%
Been told about	10%	9%	10%
Dealt with informally	8%	5%	9%
Dealt with formally*	11%	2%	15%
<b>Other discriminatory behaviours</b>	<b>Yes (all)</b>	<b>Staff</b>	<b>Officers</b>
Men applying for promotion even if not fully qualified*	86%	71%	93%
Women less willing to apply for promotion unless fully qualified*	79.5%	67%	85%
Stereotypic gender tasking	59%	50%	63%
Men taking credit for the work of a woman*	54%	42%	60%
Being bullied by someone more senior*	49%	35%	56%
Making voice heard in meetings	47%	50%	47%

Fathers getting more sympathy for child care than mothers	17%	19%	16%
More emotional support being offered to men	13%	13%	13%
More support given to women in physical confrontations	12%	13%	12%
Women taking credit for the work of men			
<b>Average discrimination score (range 8-16)*</b>	11.6	12.3	11.3
<b>Standard deviation</b>	2.09	2.2	1.9

\*Indicates statistically significant differences as explained in text

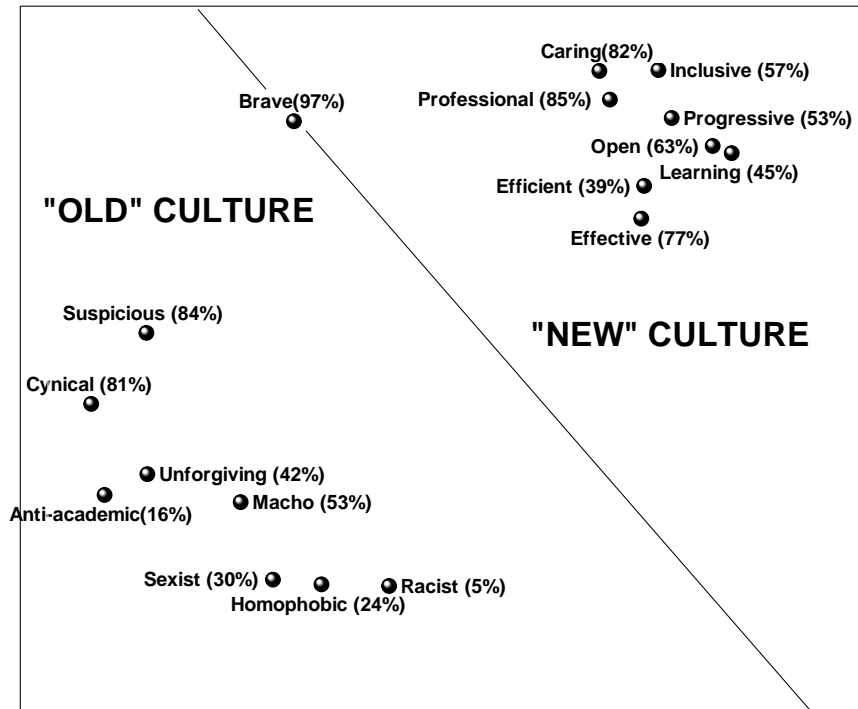
Only one type of sexually harassing experience statistically significantly differentiate police women and their senior civilian colleagues - that of formally dealing with a complaint of sexual propositioning: 15% of officers but only 2% of support staff reported this (Chi-square=4.6;  $p < .03$ ). A noteworthy finding is the relatively low levels of formal resolutions.

There were some statistically significant differences between senior civilian women and senior women police officers in terms of other discriminatory behaviours. In all cases the policewomen had more negative experiences, namely being bullied by someone more senior (56% vs 33%, Chi-square=6.16;  $p < .01$ ); men going for promotion even if they thought they were insufficiently qualified (93% vs 71%, Chi-square =13.3;  $p < .0001$ ); women unwilling to try for promotion unless fully qualified (85% vs 67%, Chi-square=7.0;  $p < .01$ ); and men taking credit for the work of women (60% vs 42%, Chi-square=4.2;  $p < .03$ ). Overall, policewomen were more likely to suffer other discriminatory treatment than their civilian counterparts ( $t = 2.08$ ;  $p < .03$ ; significant Mann Whitney U). Police identity scores did not statistically significantly distinguish between police officers and police staff.

#### Stage two: categorising the occupational culture

Next, we analysed the cultural descriptors. T-tests and Mann Whitney U tests were applied and neither found any statistically significant differences between officer and support staff ratings of cultural characteristics. This then justified using the whole sample (N= 169) to undertake the multivariate analyses. Figure one shows the SSA results. There was an acceptable coefficient of alienation (0.08) for a two-dimensional solution.

Figure 1 Smallest Space Analysis of cultural characterisation (numbers in brackets are the frequencies)



### Stage three: 'old' and 'new' cultural scales

As evidenced in Figure 1, there is a clear partition between what might be seen as 'old' traditional cultural characteristics and 'new' more progressive reformed ones. The characteristics falling either side of the partition line make up the old and new scales, respectively. As 'brave' straddled the partition line, this was omitted from both scales.

Reference to the qualitative comments from the open-ended survey questions suggests that the respondents varied in the degree to which they felt the police service had changed. Some felt much of the traditional culture (as identified by Reiner) persists, as in the following examples:

We have to change but the reality is we don't really embrace it, there is cynicism instead of engagement and positivity about change. In terms of sexism, yes there have been improvements made but when you a look at genuine representation the reality is it is poor. We still operate to a blame culture too much, with less emphasis on learning from our mistakes and



supporting individuals become better at their job, their role. (Superintendent, 28 years' service).

I do not believe the service has changed. There are still practices in place which are archaic. (Middle manager, 15 years' service).

We tinker at the edges but our culture values the notion of [we the] "expert" and won't accept any challenge from outside the service ... We often don't even accept challenge from those non-officer experts who are employed within their professional capability if their advice doesn't match what the senior officers think or want. (Head of Department, 21 years' service).

Generally more inclusive, but the discrimination has become more subtle, and the status quo is hard to shift - it talks of reform - but stays the same. (Inspector, 29 years of service).

Others felt that the seeds of culture change were evident to a greater or lesser extent:

A few years ago I would have said we weren't open to change, we weren't progressive and there was a huge blame culture. I think we have learnt the hard way by being criticized for some jobs nationally and on a more local level but we seem to now be heading in the right direction. (Chief Inspector, 20 years 'service).

I generally believe there has been a culture change at the top of the service, away from some of the more macho, suspicious, intolerant behaviours towards a more inclusive culture. I also believe that police leaders are more open to change than they have ever been. (Head of Department, 12 years' service).

Issues such as sexism, homophobia and racism are talked about openly now and I do feel that we are making progress in terms of people feeling supported to be their authentic selves...I still think there is a long way to go to remove unconscious bias though amongst all ranks and roles, officers and staff and comments are still made that make me question how far we have really come. (Middle manager, 14 years 'service).

Here there is some sense that the culture is in flux, with elements of the tradition culture intact, such as cynicism (81%), suspicion (84%) and machismo (53%). However, there is some indication that other elements are declining, such as racism (5%) and homophobia (24%). Elements of a newer more progressive culture, such as being open (63%) inclusive (67%) and a learning organisation (45%), were also evident.

Stage four: the regression analysis

We conducted a binary logistic regression analysis to explore the association between experiences of sexual harassment, occupational culture and police identity. Taking a step-wise approach, we tested a model that involved experiences of sexual harassment as the response variable, and various explanatory variables based on previous literature (McDonald, 2012), such as being an officer or member of support staff; age; length of service; ratio of gender in workplace; and levels of education. Only old occupational culture and police identity (see Table 4) were statistically significant. Whilst recognising

the relatively low Nagelkerke  $R^2$  (0.16), the analysis correctly classified two thirds (66.7%) of cases. Characterizing the occupational culture as retrogressive was associated with the odds of having experienced verbal sexual harassment as a target by a multiplicative factor of 1.18. Moreover, having a lower score on the police identity scale, indicative of weak identification (i.e. presenting as a policeWOMAN) was associated with a greater likelihood of saying ‘no’ to the sexual harassment item by a factor of .91.

Table 4: Binary Logistic Regression

	B	S.E.	Wald	df	Sig	Exp(B)
<b>Police Identity</b>	<b>-0.97</b>	<b>.048</b>	<b>4.004</b>	<b>1</b>	<b>.045</b>	<b>.908</b>
<b>Old Culture</b>	<b>.168</b>	<b>.045</b>	<b>14.209</b>	<b>1</b>	<b>.000</b>	<b>1.183</b>
<b>Constant</b>	<b>-1.065</b>	<b>1.377</b>	<b>.598</b>	<b>1</b>	<b>.439</b>	<b>.345</b>

## Discussion

There are several noteworthy findings from this study. Firstly, our respondents characterise the police occupational culture in terms of both its orthodox, traditional attributes and more reforming, progressive ones. Secondly, both police officers and their non-sworn/non warranted counterparts report exposure to sexual harassment and other discriminatory experiences. Thirdly, exposure to harassment is mostly associated with the presence of ‘old’ (traditional) police occupational culture in its adverse aspects. Fourthly, there were low levels of informal and due process resolutions indicative of the failures in formal grievance procedures to address complaints.

A more nuanced reading of our results reveals, as implied by Reuss-Ianni (1983), the coexistence of contesting cop and management cultures (which map onto our traditional ‘old’ and reforming ‘new’ scales). The qualitative comments from the questionnaire help to flesh out the meanings of the scales, indicating some tensions between the retrogressive and progressive tendencies. On the one hand, the perception that the occupational culture remains unchanged and retrogressive is suggestive of the rigidity found by Metcalfe (2017) who reported, from detailed interviews with chief constables, a view that some police forces struggle to learn from mistakes or externally driven change. On the other hand, there was a characterisation of a new reformed police culture and the diminution of

the old traditions. This suggests there may be some traction of reforming the culture as suggested by Loftus (2009). The presence of both aspects supports the idea that the police service is indeed in a state of flux (Metcalf, 2017) and furthermore is symptomatic of identity conflict, with some officers ready to change, where others are trying to hold on to their traditional gendered identities. The reviewed research notes the importance that police officers attach to organisational belongingness, which, together with their long tradition of resisting change initiatives, renders change difficult and protracted (Silvestri et al, 2013).

Yet the ethic of care (Heidensohn, 1986) and greater ethical practice (Prenzler, 1997) (reflected in our “new” culture scale) brought by women into policing maps onto the professionalism agenda being introduced by the UK’s College of Policing (College of Policing 2016). Metcalfe (2017:161) suggests the desired transformation can only be achieved by more engaged and empowering leadership, based less on command and control and more on reflexive feedback. Strikingly, comments about the appointment of their new female commissioner, by the senior women attending the MPS workshop attest to this:

I think the Met went through a very dark period when the style of leadership was unforgiving, dictatorial and centred on fear. That has changed for the better particularly with the new commissioner.

Positive female role models I can aspire to emulating - Cressida Dick being promoted was a huge step forward for senior female officers. (Inspector, 25 years’ service).

I think the MPS went through a very dark period when the style of leadership was very unforgiving, dictatorial and centred on performance through fear. That has changed for the better, particularly with the new Commissioner. (Chief Inspector, 29 years’ service).

Women (sworn or non-sworn) were both exposed to equivalent levels of punitive treatment in the form of harassment, indicating the salience of a gender identity in the context of policing and their shared seniority. Here may be evidence of the ‘catch -22’ described by Leskinen et al (2015), whereby being women and senior violates two norms in male dominated occupations. Our respondents share not only gender and seniority identities but additionally, the non-sworn professional women potentially have a further ‘out-group’ status as civilian or support staff. Tenets of SIT would suggest that the salience of having three possible ‘out-group’ identities would subject them to more

punitive behaviours. However, accentuation effects were directed at policewomen, with more experiencing discrimination, such as readiness for promotion and having men take credit for their work. Perhaps here police identity becomes the super-ordinate category (i.e., POLICEwoman) representing a greater threat to male officer colleagues for recognition and rewards within their domain (as non-sworn women would not be competing for the same posts). Respondents having a weak police identity (perhaps presenting as policeWOMAN) had a lower probability of experiencing unwanted verbal sexual harassment, suggesting that they might be perceived as a lower threat.

It is plausible to suggest that the current police service's transition to an all graduate profession, and the introduction of evidence-based policing practice (Fleming et al, 2016; Brown et al, 2018), represents significant cultural challenge (Hoggett et al, 2014; Metcalfe, 2017). This challenge threatens the traditional 'male' version of police culture, creating a nostalgia for what has been lost (that sense of camaraderie as proposed by Loftus, 2009 and Brough et al, 2016.) and a downplaying of tacit (experiential) knowledge (Honey, 2014). Under these circumstances, men may engage in the 'ressentiment' identified by Loftus and the assertion of gender differences predicted by Breakwell (1983) in the form of sexual harassment, and bullying found by Steinþórsdóttir and Pétursdóttir (2017). Such behaviours, it is argued, operate to retain a 'male' police identity in the organisational hierarchy in the face of external threats by projecting women as 'other', especially those moving into senior positions. If this is the case then an engagement with men is required to reassure them that the craft or tacit knowledge remains of value and can be incorporated into a reformed, evidence-based practice model of policing (Fleming and Wingrove, 2017; Fleming and Rhodes 2018).

## **Conclusion**

The reported experiences of discrimination and harassment by senior women in policing in the current study, albeit not generalizable to the research population, are entirely consistent with workplace surveys (e.g., Equality and Human Rights Commission, 2018) and police surveys in other jurisdictions (e.g., Iceland; see Steinþórsdóttir and Pétursdóttir, 2017; and Australia see Victorian Equal Opportunities and Human Rights Commission, 2015). In the light of the 'Me Too' movement's reconsideration of workplace anti-harassment policies (Bisom-Rapp, 2018), our results echo other police research findings (e.g. Haas et al 2010) that such policies remain ineffective.

SIT provides a theoretical explanation for discriminatory behaviours by the in-group of men towards the out-group of women. An understanding identity dynamics has the potential for remedial measures focusing on reducing the sense of threat, experienced by some male police officers. This is especially the case under conditions where men hold onto notions of traditional “cop” culture. It is also imperative that remedial measures involve strengthening the occupational identity for women under conditions of a new professionalism.

Our study is not without limitations. First, the hard-to-reach nature of our research population (senior women in policing) led us to employ a non-probability sampling strategy. As a result, we cannot claim representativeness of our sample and generalizability of our findings to the research population. However, given the exploratory nature of our study and the logistics of accessing sufficient numbers of senior women working in the police service, we think the numbers we achieved reflect a significant proportion of the population,. Second, we recognise the relatively small numbers limit the inferences we can draw from our statistical analyses. We propose our findings are at best indicative implicating the adverse elements of the police occupational culture in the continued experience of harassing and discriminatory behaviours.

Notwithstanding these limitations, this study, provides a basis from which further exploration of these issues can be pursued. It makes a contribution to the scarce research into senior women in policing. We agree with Metcalfe’s (2017:157) conclusion that despite the rhetoric of incorporating new knowledge into policing in the form of evidence and ‘what works’ research, policing remains ‘fragmented, complacent and defensive’. In order to self-reform, he proposes, the police service requires openness, a capacity to learn and to develop a culture of enquiry (aspects of our ‘new ’occupational culture).

At present it was evident from our respondents that change is being driven by austerity pragmatics rather than principled consideration of equity. Without due regard to equality, the good faith interventions hoped for by Bisom-Rapp (2018) as a result of ‘Me Too’ will not be activated. If women in policing continue to be cast as ‘other’, which is damaging both to their ‘credibility’ and ‘commitment’ (Silvestri et al, 2013), they cannot optimise

their contribution in the promotion of a new professional identity into policing. As Haake, (2017:10) observes, cultural reform in policing is a task for both men and women.

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<sup>1</sup> Although in the cases of inspector, chief inspector, superintendent, and chief superintendent, the sample is approximately one in ten of all of those serving at those ranks in England and Wales.