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Please cite this publication as follows:

Silvestri, M., Tong, S. and Brown, J. (2013) Gender and police leadership: time for a paradigm shift? *International Journal of Police Science and Management* , 15 (1). pp. 61-72. ISSN 1461-3557 .

Link to official URL (if available):

<http://dx.doi.org/10.1350/ijps.2013.15.1.303>

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'Gender and Police Leadership: Time for a Paradigm Shift?'

Marisa Silvestri, Stephen Tong and Jennifer Brown

ABSTRACT

Despite a number of initiatives aimed at improving the representation and progression of women in the police service in England and Wales, the number of women in leadership ranks remains low. At the same time, a concern over the quality of police leadership has been at the forefront of much public debate in recent years. This paper focuses on recent proposals to reform the way in which senior officers are recruited through a discussion of the appointment of non-sworn/ 'outsider' officers through the adoption of direct and multiple entry models of recruitment as outlined by the Winsor Report (2012). Hailed as an opportunity to secure an alternative face to police leadership, we reflect on the growing disquiet over police leaders and leadership and consider the possibilities of such a reform agenda for the representation and progression of women in policing. We propose that whilst a multi-point system of entry for specialisation or leadership roles may offer a number of opportunities to a Service in crisis, such a reform agenda may ultimately serve to threaten and further undermine women's participation and status in policing as 'outsiders'.

INTRODUCTION

The advent of the police and crime commissioners (PCC), criticism of police public order tactics, evidence of serious police misconduct following the 1989 Hillsborough tragedy, the abuse of police powers to perpetrate sexual violence (IPCC & ACPO 2011), the announcement of the *Stevens Independent Commission into the Future of Policing*, the recent publications of the Winsor Review of *Police Pay and Conditions* (2011 and 2012) and Peter Neyroud's *Review of Police Leadership and Training* (2011), shows there clearly is a mood for some fundamental rethinking about policing within Britain.

More specifically, there is a clear and emerging critical dialogue on the role and representation of police leaders in the twenty first century. Plagued by a series of high profile events and chief officer resignations, the past decade has witnessed a growing disquiet over the failures of police leaders and of the need to transform and diversify police leadership (Condon 1997, HMIC 1996, HMIC 1999, Home Office 2010, and Vick, 2000). In July 2011, Conservative Prime Minister David Cameron, told the House of Commons that the system for producing police leaders was 'too closed', with 'only one point of entry into the force'. He went on to note that 'There are too few - and arguably too similar - candidates applying for the top jobs'.... I want to see radical proposals for how we can open our police force and bring in fresh leadership'. Here, the prime minister is referring to the possibility of recruiting people with the different competencies, potential, or track record directly into roles as chief police officers. At the same time, attention has increasingly been directed towards the lack of diversity among police chief officers, with the issue of police representativeness currently being considered as part of the 'professionalization of policing' debate in the United Kingdom (Neyroud, 2011; Winsor, 2011 & 2012).

Current figures for England and Wales demonstrate that only 16.3% of women officers are located in the ranks of Chief Inspector or above (Laverick, 2012). Alongside their small number, research continues to demonstrate the gendered nature of policing and the limited progress made towards integration, an issue that is common across jurisdictions and not peculiar to England and Wales. In a rare international review of the progression and integration of women in policing, Van Ewijk (2012) notes that there is no evidence of a fully integrated police organisation where women represent 50% of the officer workforce and enjoy an equivalent share of the full range of roles and ranks within the police hierarchy.

While the need to develop a fair and equitable workplace with regard to gender has been of concern for some time now (see e.g. Brown and Heidensohn 2000, Silvestri 2003, Prenzler, 1998), the lack of women in police leadership took on a distinctive tone following the search to appoint a new London Metropolitan police commissioner in September 2011. Following widespread media speculation over who might succeed Sir Paul Stephenson, the lack of women and ethnic minority officers in the frame for this leadership role became unashamedly apparent. The appointment of Bernard Hogan Howe from an all-male short list served once more to emphasise the lack of diversity at the top of British policing – no women or black or ethnic minority candidates applied for the job. This is not to suggest that women were not encouraged to come forward, indeed, London Mayor Boris Johnson, clearly favoured the appointment of a woman to the top job. Referring to the fictionalised characterisation of women in policing, he stated that ‘What we need is some kind of DCI Tennison character’ (an ambitious, directed and uncompromising character). In predicting possible successors, the Evening Standard (19th July 2011) newspaper ran a double spread feature on potential female

candidates entitled '*Can these women save the Met? Restoring trust lies with senior females*'. Such calls for more women in leadership to 'clean up' policing has become a familiar mantra in times of crises, controversies and 'integrity lapses' (Savage and Charman, 1996; Mitchell, 2003). Heidensohn (1992, 2000) suggests that at moments of crisis the police service often turns to women as "a desperate remedy" to offset staffing shortages, avert criticism, as an antidote to corruption or symbolically to demonstrate a softer side to policing. Fleming and Lafferty (2003) concur in arguing that visible movements towards achieving greater gender equity owe much if not more to organisational crises than to measures explicitly designed to achieve greater equality such as equal opportunities legislation and policy. They cite the powerful effects of the *Fitzgerald Report* (1989) and the *Wood Commission* (1997) in influencing and driving forward the debate about women in policing in Australia. Concerned with bringing about change to the heavily male-dominated 'cop culture', both reports point to the direct association between increasing the number of women police officers and reducing the levels of complaints against the police organisation.

The recent appointment of South Africa's first female police chief, Mangwashi Victoria Phiyega, has also been firmly located within such discourses, being cited as 'South Africa's hope, the saviour of the nation's corruption-riddled, scandal-plagued police service' (The Guardian, 13th June, 2012). The appointment of Phiyega is particularly pertinent, not least because of her appointment as South Africa's first female chief but perhaps more compelling is her status as an 'outsider' with a non-policing background. A former social worker with a corporate background, an MA in Social Sciences from the University of Johannesburg and a Diploma in Business Administration from the University of Wales, Phiyega has been criticized heavily for lacking any policing experience. We consider the potential impacts of such a status later.

This paper focuses on current proposals to reform the way in which senior officers are recruited through a discussion of the appointment of non-sworn/ 'outsider' officers through the adoption of direct and multiple entry models of recruitment as outlined in Part 2 of the Winsor Report (2012). Hailed as an opportunity to secure an alternative face to police leadership, we consider the possibilities of such a reform agenda for the representation and progression of women in policing. We begin with an review of the call for an alternative police leadership, firstly, in relation to the demands of the new policing landscape and secondly, in relation to securing greater police legitimacy and social justice more broadly. In so doing, we reflect on the advantages of recruiting a more gender balanced police service. We then focus on the police career itself, exploring more particularly the gendered nature of the journey to the top and consider the potential opportunities and threats posed by a reconfiguration of the police career through the adoption of alternative entry points.

DEMANDS FOR AN ALTERNATIVE LEADERSHIP

The new policing landscape

The extent to which we can talk of a new policing landscape remains a lively and contested debate within the literature. On the one hand Pagon (2003) suggests that developments in policing, worldwide, are sending signals that a paradigm shift is 'inevitable'. Faced with the globalisation of crime, international terrorism, budgetary constraints, increased fear of crime and disenchantment of some sections of the community, he argues that there has been a change from the mythic crime fighting paradigm to one in which there is a stronger external orientation, professionalism and emphasis on local arrangements. On the other hand, Jones and Newburn (2002:143) indicate that whilst there have been far reaching changes in British

Policing, these have been less radical than suggested. Jones and Newburn (2002) point to consistency over time and differences between nation states that have not been subject to academic rigour.

There is certainly evidence of some reform in the recruitment of women and the professionalization of the police service in England & Wales but not the fundamental review and reform evident among other police services such as the organisational/structural change and recruitment of catholic officers seen in the Police Service of Northern Ireland as a result of the Patten Report (1999). Whilst this paper precludes a full discussion of the extent and nature of such broader transformations, the significant issue we stress here, is that in relation to police leadership, there is little doubt that contemporary police leaders inhabit and navigate a different terrain to that of their predecessors, with the competencies demanded from a modern police manager 'almost precisely the opposite of those required by their predecessors a century, or so, ago... [Moreover] ...the 'qualities once revered are now reviled' (Wall, 1998: 202-3). The expansion of new public management (NPM) principles during the 1990s and the emergence of a strong performance culture with the introduction of performance indicators, league tables and increased internal and external audit and inspection mechanisms, signified a powerful attempt to transform the policing paradigm from a narrow conception of the police as a law enforcement agency to a broader conception of the police as a service. In turn, such change has fundamentally altered the skills base required of police leaders and managers, necessitating them to be more active and interventionist than they had been in the past (Long, 2003) and more 'transformational' than 'transactional' in leadership style (Drodge and Murphy, 2002; Dobby et al, 2004). Well versed in the languages of 'business', police leaders are now expected to be 'managers' and put under increasing pressure not only to perform, but also to

be engaged increasingly in multi-agency partnerships (Bayley and Shearing, 2001 ; Blair, 2003; Casey and Mitchell, 2007). There is a paradox here in the insistence of successive governments to have a crime control agenda for police and insistence of decreases in crime and the involvement of police in communities i.e intervention in causes of crime e.g. The Prevent policy of combatting radicalism. The latter type of social welfarist interventions call on collaboration, co-operation and long term objectives (better suited to feminine styles of transformational management) yet the driving for crime control suggest transactional styles. This ambivalence presents a divergent focus for policing and recent survey results (Brown, 2012: personal communication) shows that the police service itself is evenly divided about which focus to take.

Legitimacy and Social Justice

Alongside managerialism as a driver of change, developments in equality and diversity agendas have also left their mark on the new policing landscape. The police service has made significant progress in recent years in demonstrating its commitment to equality, diversity and human rights. Promoting such agendas has been firmly constructed as an effective mechanism through which policing can maintain its tradition of policing with the consent and cooperation of communities. A recent joint report published by ACPO, APA and the Home Office, *Equality, Diversity and Human Rights Strategy for the Police Service* (2010) maintains a clear link between internal workplace diversity and external service provision, reporting that a more diverse workforce will result in: a broader range of information for decision making and a wider range of possible solutions; a willingness to challenge established ways of thinking and consider new options; improvements in the overall quality of the team; better staff management, leading to improvements in staff satisfaction; a reduction in the number of employees leaving the service,

and fewer grievances and complaints; better relationships with the community, resulting in a more effective service and better quality services, leading to increased public confidence.

Part of the call for increasing the representation of women in policing has been to emphasise the 'distinctive' contributions that women bring to the work of policing and to that of police leadership. There is now a considerable evidence base that suggests that women officers: *are less aggressive, use less force and adopt less confrontation styles in their interactions* (Brown and Langan, 2001; McElvain and Kposowa, 2008; Waugh et al , 1998; Rabe-Hemp, 2008, 2009; Schuck and Rabe-Hemp, 2005); *adopt a higher ethical code of conduct* (Brereton, 1999; Corsianos, 2011; Lonsway, Wood and Spillar, 2000; Waugh, Ede & Alley, 1998; Fleming & Lafferty, 2003; *demonstrate greater empathy and communication skills in serving the needs to women and children, especially those subject to violent or sexual abuse* (Brown and King, 1998; Page, 2007; Schuller and Stewart, 2000; Sun 2007); *have stronger relations with the community* (Miller, 1999; Brown and Woolfenden, 2011; *are better equipped in developing positive long term relationships in partnership working* (O'Neil and McCarthy, 2012); and *adopt more transformational leadership styles than their male counterparts* (Brown, 2007; Silvestri, 2003, 2007 and Heidensohn, 1992; Rabe-Hemp, 2008; Whittred, 2008).

It is this final proposition that interests us most here. Findings from Silvestri (2003) and Whittred (2008) demonstrate that senior policewomen are engaged with a more holistic, participative, consultative, inclusive and transformative style of leadership, not traditionally associated within the police organisation. The benefits of such a style have been emphasised by a number of police commentators, in short, those using participatory transformative leadership styles are more likely to bring about successful long-term change in policing and move the

Service in line with a greater 'ethical' and 'quality of service' culture and ultimately greater legitimacy in its relationships with citizens (Adlam and Villers, 2003; Marks & Fleming, 2004; Casey and Mitchell, 2007; Dobby et al, 2004, Densten, 1999; Villiers, 2003; Wood, Fleming and Marks, 2008; Hassell and Brandl, 2009: 424). Given the arrival of PCCs and the need for new accommodations in the accountability of police leadership, collaborative and co-operative relationships are more likely to be effective than combative and competitive ones. In the present changing landscape of policing, we argue that extending women's sphere of influence in leadership roles may allow the police to rise to the current challenges and precipitate some constructive new thinking about leading and managing the Service.

RECONFIGURING THE POLICE CAREER: OPPORTUNITY OR THREAT?

In an analysis of police leadership, Silvestri (2003) argues that the system of progression enshrined in the 1964 Police Act has ossified such, there has been little change to the way in which Britain's police leaders are recruited and trained. Governed by a strict linear career path, the police service continues to operate an ideology of internal recruitment with a single entry system in which all officers without exception beginning their careers as constables. From here, career advancement is achieved through climbing a highly structured career ladder through a series of ranks. There is little doubt that the journey to police leadership is a long one requiring a series of methodical, systematic and well-timed promotions (Reiner, 1991; Caless, 2011).

An appreciation of the importance of this temporal dimension to securing police rank reveals the high degree of predictability about male promotion prospects inherent within the police career structure itself. Premised on an 'ideal' type of worker in which the possession of a 'full-time, long and uninterrupted career profile' reigns, the impact of such a strict linear profile holds serious implications for some women wanting to progress within policing. The

'irresolvable conflict' that exists between balancing family commitments and a career in policing remains a major issue, leaving those women seeking to balance family and work less able to display the 'right' amount or 'type' of commitment and credibility necessary for higher rank (Archbold and Hassell, 2009; Dick, 2005; Prenzler et al, 2010; Silvestri, 2006; Turnball and Wass, 2012). The proposal to encourage direct or multi-point entry to the police service as outlined in the Winsor Report (2012) therefore marks a radical departure for the police service in Britain and poses a number of important challenges to both the composition and culture of police leadership.

An investigation into the appropriateness of current entry routes into the police career forms the basis of Part 2 of *the Winsor Report (2012)*. The investigation has proved to be wide ranging in its enquiry and has covered much ground in raising fundamental questions around the issues of police recruitment; including asking questions about what sort of people join the police service; what sort of qualifications they have; the appropriateness of such qualifications and of current entry levels. In brief, three forms of direct entry into senior roles have been proposed. First, a new scheme would enable recruits to become inspectors in three years (or two years for participants who were already police officers). Essentially a fast-track scheme, it would be open to police officers and to people from outside the service. Second, the report proposes a scheme to recruit people of exceptional achievement and ability directly into the police service at the more senior rank of superintendent. Finally, there is the recommendation that chief constables should be able to be recruited from senior police positions abroad, but only if their experience is in a common law jurisdiction which practises policing by consent. While the recommendations are still undergoing consultation and review, it is worth reminding ourselves here that such a concern over the selection, training and composition of senior officers is not

new and can be located at the outset with the creation of Peel's new police in 1829, which dictated that policing 'should not be the occupation of gentlemen' (Blair, 2005). This view was based on the premise that the police should be representative of the general public, or at least that was the aim. Despite this view and perhaps understandably, early appointments of senior police officer positions were reserved for senior military officers and the judiciary. The Desborough Committee in 1919 also examined the case for a fully professional police service, stating that 'no persons without previous police experience should be appointed as chief constable in any force unless he possesses some exceptional qualification or experience which especially fits him for the post' (see Reiner, 1991:15). In the 1930s the Trenchard Scheme allowed graduate entrants directly into the rank of 'junior' Inspector – about half of the candidates on the scheme were also drawn from police officers already within the organisation that had demonstrated high potential - the scheme was criticised and short-lived.

Since then there have been a number of initiatives that have attempted to recruit talented and/or educated recruits. Punch & Lee (2006) describe a number of initiatives aimed at identifying talent from established ranks to identifying talent from inside and outside the organisation from Bramshill scholarships and graduate entry schemes through to the Essex Scheme aimed at fast tracking graduates and access to higher education for serving officers with potential for leadership. Through a combination of accelerated promotion schemes (the special course and graduate entry scheme) through to experiments of police officers engaging with university education for the first time (Essex scheme/Bramshill scholarship) these initiatives have attempted to enhance the standard pathway for career progression within the police service. Though such schemes may have had an impact on the career trajectories of

some senior officers, they have done little to shift the ideology of internal recruitment and the principle that senior officers begin their careers from the level of constable.

While private sector organisations embrace fluid multi-tier entry within their businesses, public sector organisations have recently begun to recruit 'outsiders' to senior strategic positions within their organisations (e.g. NHS, HMPS). Similarly the military have a long tradition of recruiting graduates to higher officer ranks than applicants with lower level qualifications. In relation to policing, there is evidence from other lateral entry schemes taking place in police services outside the United Kingdom (USA and Canada). The Hong Kong Police Force has two entry levels at Constable (requiring 5 HKCEE passes) and Inspector (requiring a Hong Kong degree or equivalent). Police services in the Netherlands, Sweden and South Africa also recruit professionals from other sectors into the police service and permit acceleration through the ranks. Brodeur (2010) points to educational requirements and women out performing men in secondary education credentials and entry exams to police education/training routes into the police in Canada and France as a factor in the increase in female police officers. The impacts of such alternative systems on increasing the number of women in policing have been particularly significant in Sweden. With a strong reputation for gender equality, the Swedish police service has done much to attract women in policing and into leadership positions through appointing them as non-sworn employees (civilian employee without formal academy training) - about 40% of all employees in the Swedish Police are women and among police officers specifically, they form 25%. The number of female leaders has also increased this past decade and in 2010 approximately 22% of police officers are women leaders at different levels (The National Police Board, 2008 cited in Osterlind & Haake, 2010).

Arguably, and on the face of things at least, such recruitment strategies have enabled women an alternative route into police leadership. And while their experiences as ‘outsiders’ have yet to be played out and documented fully, our knowledge of the importance that police officers attach to ‘organisational belongingness’ together with their long tradition of exercising resistance to organizational change initiatives (Skolnick and Bayley, 1988) provide us with grounds for speculation. Histories of policing have demonstrated that bringing about change in the police service is a difficult and often protracted process. The move to reconstruct police services as corporate entities more particularly has been resisted vigorously by senior police officers, rank and file police, and their unions (Bayley, 1994; Fleming and Lafferty, 2003). Savage (2003) reminds us that the British police service has been the most effective of all public sector organizations in ‘*resisting reform and subverting modernization*’ (original emphasis). Caless (2011: 186-187) describes a mixed response from chief officers to the appropriateness of multi-tiered entry into the police service. The following chief officers neatly encapsulate alternative positions:

‘[T]here must be hundreds of people who could do this job as well as me. I think the best way to start this change process would be to open up all ranks to competitive entry’.

‘It is the extent of operational experience (and I really emphasise this) that gives the police leader two things (a) credibility with front line officers and (b) the likelihood of making the right decision’.

A recent survey of police officers by Brown (personal communication) further demonstrates a degree of ambivalence around officers’ views of direct entry. While Winsor’s (2012) proposal to open up senior ranks to ‘outsiders’ has found backing from some ACPO officers, there is considerable concern over such a move. Various police associations have already voiced their opposition to such proposals, expressing concern that outside candidates will lack both the necessary operational experience and attendant credibility necessary for police leadership.

Such concern was recently echoed by Chief Constable Lynne Owens (Surrey Police) at the Superintendents' Association Conference (2012). In her address to delegates, she emphasised that officers should start as constables in order to 'learn effective leadership'. More particularly, she hit out at claims that allowing candidates to enter the police service at superintendent level would improve diversity. On the contrary, she maintained that solutions to improving police leadership could and should be located within the police service itself.

Rowe (2004) points to the 'considerable internal resistance' that the non-sworn leader faces, stressing the importance of being a sworn officer with a long and established police career as a way to secure legitimacy and trust between peers and with subordinates. In relation to women, such findings are echoed by Stenmark (2005) and Osterlind and Haake (2010) in their work on Sweden in which they report that police leaders with sworn backgrounds were able more easily to command a respect and credibility than their non-sworn counterparts, with non-sworn police leaders looked upon by serving sworn police leaders as not particularly suited as operational leaders or those who lead other police officers. With women already constructed and conceived of as 'outsiders' to the project of policing (Brown and Heidensohn, 2000) lacking in both 'credibility' and 'commitment' (Silvestri, 2007), recruiting non-sworn women to leadership ranks risks pushing women even further into the wilderness of 'outsiders'.

The resistance and subsequent vilification experienced by Christine Nixon, Victoria Police Force's (VPF) first female commissioner (2001 -2009), offers some insight here. Metz and Kulik (2008) argue that whilst Nixon was not a classic example of an 'outsider', in that she was a sworn officer rising through the ranks, her career background bore many of the hallmarks of an 'outsider'. They note her appointment as a 'risky move' - not only was Nixon a woman

(conceivably already an 'outsider') - but she was also notably different from her predecessors along several dimensions: her work experience came from a state outside Victoria, she had an academic background and she lacked operational experience. Though her status made for some difficulties in gaining acceptance, Metz and Kuli (2008:375) argue that these differentiating factors also gave Nixon a 'distinct advantage'. Through adopting a consultative and inclusive leadership style, Nixon introduced a 'blitz of changes' designed to address discrimination within the VPF, at policy, structural and cultural levels. In relation to changes to the workforce, one of her more pertinent interventions involved making changes to the composition of the Corporate Management Group (formally known as the Executive Command), with the appointment of more 'outsiders', in which Human Resource Management and Ethics were propelled into holding prominent roles. Considerable organisational and cultural change was achieved under her leadership and she is hailed as having 'changed the male hegemonic culture of the organisation'. Though Nixon's appointment offers us the potential to think about the possibilities of leadership beyond a traditional police operational career profile, the intense resistance and notoriously difficult relationship she shared with the Police Association, as documented in her memoir *A Fair Cop* (2011), serves as a powerful reminder of the serious implications that may follow when perceived 'outsiders' assume positions of power and use their authority differently.

CONCLUDING THOUGHTS:

Despite new approaches to recruitment and leadership challenges, there is little empirical evidence available that considers the success or otherwise of alternative entry models. At the same time, there is mounting concern that recruitment and progression routes within the police may not be fit for purpose for contemporary policing leadership challenges. The barriers

of a rigid inflexible hierarchy rehearsed earlier in this paper not only provide an obstacle to potential leaders but also prospective employees with specialist skills. Whether potential candidates aspire to specialist roles such as detective work or would like to apply skills developed in the private sector in a policing context (such as finance or computing skills) they are required to complete the standard probationary period and wait for an opportunity to arise that could be up to several years. Similarly, prospective police employees with leadership potential face the prospect of years at lower ranks before the opportunity to work in a strategic capacity arises. These barriers not only contribute to the attrition of those already within the service but contribute to the lack of competitiveness the police service offers to other careers that have professional status, more attractive career opportunities seeking talented staff.

If the police service is to recruit more competitively, attracting a broad range of talent and a more representative intake of society there will need to be substantial cultural and structural change within the service. Attempts to make these changes may face opposition from those already in the service that may feel under threat. If professionalization is to be the main driver for these reforms it is important to ensure that it is not just new recruits and leaders that are furnished with recognition of skills, development and training but those already within the service also have access to opportunities to progress and/or specialise. This potential threat or resistance from the current workforce is also an opportunity to take the service as a whole through professionalization reforms. Multi-point entry for specialisation or leadership roles may offer an opportunity to a Service in crisis to attract the best talent available while enhancing opportunity to the current workforce. It may also indirectly serve to loosen the stronghold that men have on police leadership, enhancing women's progression through the ranks more quickly. This is especially important given the alarming findings reported by Brown (2012) that four in 10 women police officers have considered leaving the force because of low morale,

concerns regarding flexible working and child care considerations. The effects of this on an organisation that can only recruit its leaders from within its own ranks are considerable. With the pool from which to fish new talent skewed towards men, the hope of achieving greater diversity at the top becomes an increasingly distant one. The continued absence of women (and other underrepresented groups) ultimately undermines the police services' capacity to be able to claim legitimacy.

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