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Whilst the campaign for more women in policing in Britain spans well over a century, there has been a significant drive over the past decade to increase women's representation within policing. Diversity agendas and initiatives, including a growth in flexible working and mentoring schemes have done much to reshape the working practices of policing to encourage women's increased participation and progression, (Silvestri, 2015). At the same time, a number of wider police reform agendas concerned with bringing about greater professionalization and modernisation are challenging established and entrenched ideas about policing and its workforce (Charman, 2017; Holdaway, 2017). With women currently forming 29 per cent of the workforce and 23 per cent of those in police leadership roles (Hargreaves, 2017) there is much to be positive about as women are undeniably present and engaged in policing. The appointment of Cressida Dick in April 2017 as the first female Commissioner of the Metropolitan Police in its 180 year history is further testament to the success of women in policing. Given this narrative of success, it is becoming increasingly difficult to make the case that the police service is not doing enough in relation to developing diversity, yet inequalities remain and policing and police leadership remains the preserve of white men. This paper goes some way toward making sense of this paradox.

Against a backdrop of police reform, this paper focuses on women in police leadership and critically considers the recent introduction of Direct Entry in policing in England and Wales. Hailed as an opportunity to bring about greater diversity within leadership ranks, this organisational change represents a momentous and radical break with the ideology of internal recruitment and the strictly 'male' linear career model that has dominated British policing since the nineteenth century. Through its focus on leadership, the paper departs from well-established scholarship on women and policing which has for the most part been concerned with the rank and file. In doing so, it redirects attention to an alternative site within which gendered power is located, performed, perpetuated and sustained and so develops a more complex reading of the gendered nature of policing. Drawing on Acker's (1990, 1992) theoretical work on gendered organisations I argue that greater attention needs to be paid to the ways in which cultural and structural constructions of the 'ideal' police leader are gendered. In this way, the paper both affirms and extends theoretical insight into the ways in which organisations are gendered. Conceived of as someone who possesses an "intangible presence" (Smith, 2016), I outline some of the ways in which the 'ideal' police leader is aligned

to traditional conceptualisations of the 'heroic male' through expressions of *doing time* and demonstrations of strength, stamina and endurance. More particularly, I develop the idea of direct entry as a disruptive tool within the police organisation with considerable power to challenge entrenched beliefs about the 'ideal' police leader as male and the attendant gendered demonstrations of commitment, competence and credibility.

Made up of three parts, the paper draws upon the discourse of organisational change as a unifying and organising principle to drive forward a more critical discussion about the position and potential of women within policing. It is guided by Chan's (1996) instructive call for police scholarship to be more open and receptive to the idea of organisational change and is shaped by her fundamental argument that we need to allow for both the possibility of and resistance to change. The first part critically explores the narratives of success that have accompanied the changing position of women within policing over time and within an international setting. With a hugely positive public facing 'success' story, it demonstrates the gains made by women in carving out a career in policing. It also calls for considerable caution in such readings and emphasises the growing tendency for both academics and policy makers to uncritically accept the idea of organisational success. In calling for caution, I provide a counter narrative to the dominant discourse of success and challenge the focus on the numerical as an indicator of progress. Closer analysis of workforce data reveals a plateau in the representation of women police and in some cases, regression and loss (R, 2015). Beyond the numeric, research also continues to emphasise the discriminatory ways in which gender impacts on women police. It is within such a paradoxical landscape that this paper sits – the issue of gender equality within policing is perhaps best described as complex and contradictory. The second part problematizes the taken for granted understandings and representations of gender within policing. With a growing global body of literature on women police, contemporary theorisations across jurisdictions remain locked into and inextricably bound up with analyses of the 'cult of masculinity' (Fielding, 1994). Infused with ideas of crime fighting and associated physicality, the 'cult of masculinity' is demonstrative of the gender meanings, identity and performances of the lower ranks. In this paper, I argue that whilst the 'cult of masculinity' remains an important construct for understanding the gendered experience of women and men within policing, its explanatory power is not sufficient for understanding how gender manifests itself and is present within leadership. Police leaders experience an altogether

different working environment with different gendered expectations and organisational scripts that validate credibility, competence and commitment in assuming rank. As police organisations throughout Europe, the US and Australia undergo considerable organisational restructuring through downsizing, delayering and increased civilianisation (Burke & Mikkelsen, 2006, Loveday, 2008; Ramshaw, 2013), the third part focuses more closely on the changing nature of the police career itself. Subject to a wide-ranging reform agenda striving toward greater professionalism within its work and workforce, the past decade has seen the development of a professionalization framework with a remit to increase workforce diversity and raise standards in relation to training, education, leadership development, skills and qualifications (Bryant et al. 2014). This final part explores direct entry as one aspect of the police reform agenda and reflects upon the scheme's potential to disrupt entrenched ideas about policing and to bring about greater diversity within leadership ranks.

### Women and Policing: narratives of success?

This first half of the twenty-first century has been characterised by much optimism in relation to the representation of women working within the criminal justice system. The past year alone has seen a number of gender victories for women's representation and participation in criminal justice work in the UK. At the time of writing, working alongside Commissioner Cressida Dick, women now preside over a number of key positions in a range of law enforcement and related organisations; Chief Constable Sara Thornton leads the National Police Chiefs Council, Dame Anne Owers sits as Chair of the Independent Police Complaints Commission; Chief Constable Lynne Owens is the Director General of the National Crime Agency; Alison Saunders is the Director of Public Prosecutions and Amber Rudd presides as Home Secretary. Indeed, there has never been a time in which women have been so visibly present and engaged in the leadership and administration of policing and criminal justice. Accompanying this numerical success story, there has been a significant building of the equalities architecture within British policing, with a broad range of diversity and equality policy initiatives aimed at improving the representation of women, including increased opportunities for flexible working, part-time working, networking and mentoring opportunities (ACPO, 2010). This narrative of 'success' is echoed across a number of international jurisdictions. Whilst data is often patchy and incomplete and with the exception

of a gross under-representation of women police in non- democratic/emerging democracies (Natarajan, 2008), the resounding message on the presence of women police on a global stage is one of considerable transformation and improvement. In their review of women in policing in the US, Archbold and Schulz (2012) emphasise that there are more women employed by police agencies than ever before, with both the actual numbers of women officers as well as their overall percentages in most departments having increased over the last four decades; Mazowita and Greenland (2016) point to an increase of women police in Canada as does Khanikar (2016) for India; Prenzler, Fleming and King (2010) report an upward trend in the recruitment of women police in their review of Australia and New Zealand; and a review by the Institute for Public Security of Catalonia (2013) point to an overall upward trend in the employment of women police throughout Europe, with Estonia standing as a beacon of success at 33.9%. Such headline improvements have formed a powerful evidence base for police organisations across the world to claim successful organisational change in relation to equalities agendas, enabling a more legitimate basis from which to carry out the policing mandate.

Whilst the power of such positive discourses can often provide a much needed impetus to drive forward organisational change agendas, they can simultaneously mask alternative realities. Considering organisational leadership more broadly, Collinson (2012) draws on the metaphor of 'Prozac' (a drug used to moderate depression and induce 'artificial happiness') to describe the ways in which excessive narratives of positivity encourages leaders and organisations to 'believe their own narratives that everything is going well' leaving little or no space for more critical voices (Collinson, 2012: 87). In line with this I argue that excessive positive discourses on the representation and experiences of women within policing simultaneously serve to conceal and obscure ongoing gendered power dynamics within policing. A more critical reading of workforce data reveals a somewhat contradictory picture to that presented above. In their analysis of England and Wales, Laverick and Cain (2015) note a loss of women within particular ranks and reductions in female joiners. With regard to women in leadership, they argue that a number of police forces (16 out of 43) have no women in chief officer roles and 13 forces have witnessed a reduction in female chief officers since 2009. Such variation and loss is echoed in Australia by Prenzler et al. (2010:593) who found considerable difference between departments concluding that based on the existing

trajectories of women's progression thus far, the proportion of women sworn police will peak at around one-third and will be followed by a period of decline, given the problem of women's resignation rate. In the US, Cordner and Cordner (2011) emphasise that the appointment of women into policing has hit a plateau. Alongside these observations, research continues to confirm an enduring 'heterosexist male' police culture in the twenty-first century (Atkinson, 2016, Brough et al. 2016; Khanikar, 2016; Loftus, 2008; Silvestri, 2017a).

In building a counter narrative to contemporary claims of success, I also urge readers to adopt a historical lens when considering the position and participation of women police over time. It is worth remembering here that women have been engaged in the project of policing and of police leadership since the turn of the twentieth century. Often overlooked in mainstream accounts of police leadership, a number of women can be identified as holding police leadership roles in England during that time, including Nina Boyle, Commandant Margaret Damer Dawson and (Sub) Commandant Mary Allen. These women police leaders played an enormously important role, both in leading the campaign for women police as well as carrying out central functions of policing albeit in a separate sphere (see Silvestri, 2017b for a fuller account of their leadership styles and status as police leaders). An awareness and acknowledgment of women's presence and participation in police leadership over a century ago encourages greater critical reflection on the idea of change and continuity with regard to the wider discourses of gender equality and policing. One thing we know with great certainty is that women have been trying to secure a permanent place across all ranks within policing for over a century now (Heidensohn, 2000). A historical lens also informs us that from the very outset, women have been perceived as 'outsiders' to the project of policing and their presence resisted. In an international study on women and policing, Brown and Heidensohn (2000) document the powerful consensus of opposition that marked women's entry and integration throughout various countries. The resistance toward them as leaders in England is captured neatly by Chief Commissioner of the Metropolitan Police, Sir Nevil Macready, who refused to make women a permanent part of his force in 1914, noting that women of the time were "too educated" and would "irritate" male members of the force (Boyd, 2014:76) . I revisit the idea of resistance toward women police throughout this paper. My purpose in making a brief historical detour here has been threefold: firstly, to serve as a salutary reminder that women have been present in leadership roles for over a century now; secondly,

to emphasise that given this presence, greater caution should be afforded to contemporary narratives of success and lastly, to remind readers that since their inception, women have been firmly cast as 'outsiders' within policing. What follows is an insight into the gendered nature of police leadership.

**Problematizing representations of gender and policing: enter the 'heroic male'**

Acker's (1990, 1992) theory of gendered organisations is an important starting point for any discussion on women and work. In her analysis, Acker overturns the idea of organisations as gender neutral entities emphasising the ways in which organisations are inherently gendered. Through a series of gendering processes, she argues that organizations provide forums within which cultural images of gender, beliefs, symbols, accepted routines and ways of working are produced and then reproduced by individuals and organizational structures. Gender in this context is defined as a contextually situated process rather than as an individual characteristic. Instead of a characteristic that people have, gender is something that individuals do with their behaviour and organisations do through the gendering processes and structures. In this way, she argues that "meaning and identity are patterned through and in terms of a distinction between male and female, feminine and masculine" (Acker, 1992: 146). It is through the construction of such 'gendered personas' based on the creation of difference within institutional settings that organisations are able to routinely perform gender and it is here that 'ideal' workers are constructed. Whilst Acker denotes a number of gendering processes, in this paper I focus more particularly on the ways in which gendered institutions marginalise women through the construction of images, symbols and ideologies in the workplace that legitimize masculinity. In identifying such ideologies, Acker (1992: 255) further directs us to make visible the 'gendered substructure' within which spatial and temporal arrangements of work are found. Any analysis of the gendered substructure of policing then would be incomplete without an appreciation of the police career itself. It is here that meanings about work and workers are located and the 'ideal' police officer and police leader are constructed. I return to this later in the paper. For now, I want to problematize what we already know about gender and policing.

Police scholarship has done much to document the ways in which gender is routinely constructed, performed and reinforced within policing. The damning impact of the 'cult of masculinity' and its attendant association with physicality is a recurring motif within gendered analysis of policing. Without wanting to rehearse well established debates, women's perceived lack of physicality and 'masculine' capacities for aggression, violence and danger has long been used as a rational and legitimate reason for their exclusion (Heidensohn, 1992, 1994, Prokos and Padavic, 2002; Prenzler and Sinclair, 2013; Natarajan, 2014; Rabe-Hemp, 2008, 2009; Morash and Haar, 2012). Responding to what they describe as the 'atheoretical' nature of research on women and policing, O' Connor Shelley et al. (2011) draw on Acker's framework to organise the literature regarding women's experiences of policing. They provide an excellent and comprehensive overview of the ways in which practices within policing serve to; '*legitimize hegemonic masculinity*', '*control and segregate women*', '*do gender*' and '*construct gendered personas*, injecting a much needed and welcome theoretical lens to the study of gender and policing. Without wanting to diminish the significance of existing theorisations on women and policing, much of this work remains locked within established and long-standing theorisations about the gendered nature of policing and of masculinity more particularly, failing to move beyond routine legitimised constructions of police masculinity as those associated with the 'cult of masculinity'. As a result, they stunt our understanding of the gendered order within policing and fail to appreciate the complexity and multiplicity of gendered identities within policing. They also inhibit an appreciation of the ways in which organisations and organisational identities change over time – gender identity here is not conceived of as fixed but rather is perceived to be a fluid category. In her analysis of women in management across a range of sectors, Due Billing (2011: 303) questions the continuous use of the "male as the norm", arguing that such an idea rests upon a discourse that celebrates rigid ideas about the differences between men and women, work and identities. Through an emphasis on the "male norm" she argues that women are perceived uncritically as its victims, which in turn, "freezes the intellectual project too categorically". She goes on to argue that it is here that variation, complexities and contradictions may be lost when holding on to essentialist understandings such as the male norm (ibid: 298). There is much to be gained from such an insight when thinking about women in police leadership. We know that women in police leadership experience their setting in distinctly gendered ways (Silvestri, 2003; Morash and Haar, 2012) and whilst there are various ways in which the



culture of police leadership is performed, the focus in this paper is to draw out the setting within which the 'heroic male' police leader emerges and is reproduced within the police career itself.

The construction of leaders within conventional leadership theory has for the most part been person-centred with those in power assigned an omnipotent and heroic status (Burns, 1978; Gronn, 2002, Hearn and Collinson, 2014). Informed by a masculinist paradigm of leadership the image of the heroic leader is underpinned by universalistic norms and beliefs that call for certain behaviours and characteristics. As Maier (1997) argues, 'being hard-nosed and adversarial is taken for granted. Managers are expected to be single minded, devoted to the pursuit of organisational goals and objectives, to be competitive, rational, decisive, ambitious, efficient, task-and results oriented, assertive and confident in their use of power' (cited in Olsson, 2002:143). Whilst both men and women can display such behaviours, such traits themselves are socially ascribed to men and generally understood as masculine (Collinson & Hearn, 1996). The presence and pervasiveness of such heroic narratives has much resonance within the police organisation where the police leader has been conceived of through romanticised symbols of heroic importance. The heroic aspects of the police leader stem not only from the power inherent within the role itself but also from the associated masculine attributes of strength, stamina and endurance required to climb to leadership ranks. The construction of police leaders as a power elite more generally has undeniably done much to cultivate the idea of the 'heroic male'. Analyses by Wall (1998), Reiner (1991) and Caless (2011) have emphasised police leaders as elites in which commonalities and shared belief systems result in chief constables consequently speaking 'a common occupational language' (Wall, 1998:315). In making sense of this they draw on policing's militaristic legacy that saw the police organisation adopt a hierarchical, quasi-military style and orientation. Whilst there is much to be gained from Cowper's (2000) critique of the often superficial associations made between the military and policing, there are undoubtedly important conceptual similarities that lend themselves to understanding the importance that such a legacy has had in shaping the practices and behaviour within the organisation. Organised through a heavily demarcated rank structure with its attendant chain of command and control approach to leadership, the police organisation operates within a clearly defined hierarchy of power with clear messages about deference and respect. Moreover, the quasi-military hierarchical structure reinforces

an authoritarian, impersonal and transactional style of leadership within policing, traditionally associated with men (Herrington and Colvin, 2016; Jermier and Berkes, 1979; R, 2007). With leadership conceptualised in relation to the individual leader rather than a collective, social process, it is not surprising perhaps that such leaders assume the role as romanticised symbols of heroic importance (Mastrofski, 2002; Meindl, 1995, Neyroud, 2011). Embedded in such heroic rhetoric are gendered beliefs of the 'ideal' police leader. I have argued elsewhere that the behavioural expectations of police leaders are different to their rank and file counterparts and are best conceived of as operating within a 'smart macho culture'. Less concerned with traditional performances associated with the 'cult of masculinity' and operational physicality, police leaders are expected to demonstrate an altogether different set of gendered behaviours. With an emphasis on "competitive masculinity", police leaders are expected to be "tough and forceful, aggressive, competitive and performance driven" (Silvestri, 2007:49). Such traits can be located clearly in the progression structures that govern and prescribe the police career itself and it is here that dominant meanings about credibility, commitment and competence that form the 'ideal' leader are enshrined.

Since the formation of the public police in 1829, the police service in England and Wales has operated a strictly linear career model, with a single entry point and an ideology of internal recruitment. All officers begin their careers as police constables and work their way through a series of ranks based on a hierarchical ordering. In this way, those serving at the top of the police hierarchy as police chiefs are drawn from the same pool as the officers they lead. With the journey to the ranks of police leadership a long one, accounts of police leadership have emphasised the heroic, masculine connotations of strength, survival and endurance in the climb to the top of the police elite (Reiner, 1991; Wall, 1998; Caless, 2011; Silvestri, 2003). The temporal arrangements that govern the police career then feature heavily in the construction of the 'ideal' police worker and leader. Here the capacity to *do time* – both in the everyday and across a career is key (Turnball and Wass, 2015). In relation to the everyday, the heroic stamina required for a policing career is reproduced in the day to day organisation and expressions of time within policing with senior officers engaged in 'extreme/ over work' and through being 'ever available' (Turnball and Wass, 2015; Caless, 2011) but it is the demonstration of *doing time* across the course of the police career that is most salient here.

In reaching high rank, expectations of the ideal police leader suggest the possession of an “uninterrupted and full-time career” profile, unblemished by career breaks or alternative working patterns, such as part time or flexible working arrangements (R, 2003, 2006). And whilst there is nothing official to prohibit police leaders from having worked part-time or taking a career break on their journey to the top, undertaking such ways of working sit in direct contrast to the ideal police worker, with part time officers often perceived to be less professional and less committed – as workers who enjoy ‘privileges’ rather than ‘entitlements’ (Charlesworth and Whittenbury, 2007). Such beliefs have significant consequences for women who report an ‘irreconcilable’ conflict in balancing a career in policing with the demands of family life. Research on women police leaders indicate that women have a tacit understanding that anything less than the ‘ideal’ career trajectory affects their promotion and career prospects in discriminatory ways (Silvestri, 2006). With the ‘heroic male’ leader established as the norm, the cultural context of policing enables the (re)definition of credibility, commitment and competence in such a way that acceptability and suitability criteria match the preferred male candidates – and so emerges the ‘heroic male’ as victorious. The contradiction and irony here is that it is the very structural changes themselves aimed at improving equality, such as part-time and flexible working patterns, that both enable and disable women simultaneously. The gendered implications are clear - whilst all officers (both male and female) experience the pressure to demonstrate credibility, commitment and competence and to *do* time as the police career prescribes, for the most part, it remains the case that men have more access to the resource of time and thus are more likely to be able to work full-time and without interruption and so accumulate and fulfil the ‘ideal’ criteria. Unable to meet the demands of time within policing, Dick (2015) argues that women struggle to be perceived as authentic members of the leadership professional community. Moreover, failing to conform to these norms further reinforces organisational cultural prescriptions that valorise the ‘heroic male’ and secures men’s position as ‘insiders’ and deserving legitimate owners of high rank and women as undeserving, reconfirming their status as ‘outsiders’.

The recent introduction of Direct Entry then poses a considerable challenge and disruption to the police career itself, to the ‘ideal’ worker, and to the idea of the ‘heroic male’ more specifically. With policing a closed and homogenous group, with rigidly formed ‘in’ and ‘out’ groups, direct entrants bring with them the capacity to challenge the demarcations within

policing that confer powerful acknowledgements of 'insider' and 'outsider' status. Direct entrants do not begin their careers at the bottom of the police hierarchy, instead they join the ranks of police leadership as legitimate 'outsiders', claiming rank without doing the prescribed time so deeply ingrained within the gendered substructure of policing. The idea of 'insider/outsider' is complex here and refers not only to the identity of officers as 'insiders' compared to direct entrants as 'outsiders', but also refers to the complex divisions that exist within policing. A host of minority groups have long been constructed as outsiders within policing. Holdaway (1996:21) develops the idea of 'internal outsiders' to describe the experiences of BME officers. Subject to considerable race-related barriers to advancement, BME officers are subject to a range of exclusionary practices that result in their isolation and discrimination with the police service (Holdaway and Barron, 1997; Holdaway and O'Neil, 2007). The same is true for Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual and Transgender officers who also experience 'outsiderism' (Colvin, 2009) in the form of isolation, prejudice and marginalisation (Lyons et al. 2008; Jones, 2014; Rennstam, and Sullivan, 2016). Women police have long been considered as 'outsiders' to the project of policing. Beginning their careers outside of mainstream policing in a separate sphere, it was not until 1973 that they were integrated into the police service with their male colleagues. And whilst women have now assumed their positions in a variety of roles and ranks, research continues to emphasise their 'internal outsider' status to the job of policing. In this way, minority groups (outsiders) who enter as direct entrants might be best conceived of as 'outside outsiders' – I return to the implications of this later. In what follows, I explore the rationale for the emergence of direct entry and offer a critical commentary on the capacity of such a policy initiative to reshape the normative and gendered order upon which credibility, commitment and competence rest.

### **Direct Entry: Challenging the 'heroic male'**

With an overarching mandate to professionalise policing, the pace of organisational reform within British policing since the turn of the twenty first century has been relentless (Holdaway, 2017). Whilst diversity initiatives such as flexible working, gender networking and mentoring schemes are welcome and have resulted in some positive opportunities for women to continue their careers within policing, they are limited in their capacity to disrupt entrenched beliefs about the 'ideal' worker or to challenge the century old police career model within

which they are formed. Following a catalogue of visible failures, malpractice and scandal within policing, there has been much public discourse and disquiet about the quality and nature of police leadership in recent years (Neyroud, 2011; College of Policing, 2015). At the heart of this criticism has been a concern over the homogeneity within its ranks. I remind readers that the police leader in England and Wales is undeniably a white man, with only 24 percent women and 4 percent black and minority ethnic in leadership positions (Hargreaves, 2017). In 2011 the then Conservative Prime Minister David Cameron, drew attention to the problems of the selection process, noting 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” (Cameron, 2011). In the following year, proposals for alternative entry points formed part of a series of controversial recommendations made by Sir Tom Winsor’s review of police remuneration and conditions (Winsor, 2012). Facing considerable resistance to his ideas, Winsor noted that of all his recommendations, the issue of direct entry “provoked the deepest thoughts and analyses with consultation responses universally cautious of its benefits” (Winsor, 2012:175).

Although presented and conceived of as a new approach to thinking about the recruitment of senior officers, another brief historical detour again demonstrates concern about the selection, training and composition of senior officers as an ongoing issue. A review over time confirms a number of failed attempts to modify the police career with considerable resistance within policing toward reconfiguring the basis from which senior officers are appointed. In 1919 the Desborough Committee examined the case for a fully professional police service, concluding 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” (cited in Reiner, 1991: 15). The issue was revisited in the 1930s by Lord Trenchard (Commissioner of the Metropolitan Police 1931-1935) who emphasised the need to develop police leaders with high educational achievement. Under his command, the Trenchard Scheme recognised the need to identify talent within the service that could be fast tracked to more senior positions and went on to allow graduate entrants directly into the rank of junior inspector. Whilst the fast tracking of officers has had longevity within the

service, a change in commissioner and the outbreak of the war in 1939 led to the demise of the direct entry pathway. Further confirmation of direct entry as unwelcome strategy within policing can be found in the Royal Commission of 1960 which concluded that it was fundamental that police officers should only be recruited at the rank of constable and that direct entry at any other rank was undesirable (Smith, 2015). Since then, there have been a number of initiatives that have attempted to enhance the standard pathway for career progression within the police service, including Bramshill scholarships, fast-tracking graduate schemes and access to higher education for serving officers with leadership potential (Lee and Punch, 2004). Whilst these 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. The stubborn and protracted resistance to reconfiguring the police career tells us much about the power of meaning attached to a police identity. It was against a backdrop of a “never ending” crisis of police leadership that the direct entry for Superintendents was introduced (Rowe, 2006). Given the considerable and fierce backlash within policing to the introduction of direct entrants, Chief Constables across the 43 constabularies in England and Wales were given the freedom to decide whether they wanted to recruit direct entrants under the scheme. With the majority of forces declaring it a step too far in their workforce modernisation agendas, only seven forces elected to take part in the scheme. Nationally 867 applications were made, of which 46 were supported by forces for progression to the national assessment centre. Of those, 13 (nine men and four women - two BME) received a recommendation from the College of Policing to be awarded a place on the 18 month training programme (Smith, 2015). In November 2014, nine individuals took up posts as the first cohort of direct entry Superintendents. There have been subsequent cohorts and moves to increase the number of direct entrants across police roles – direct entry for Inspectors emerged in 2016 and at the time of writing the Metropolitan Police service is recruiting direct entrants to the role of detective.

Although somewhat premature to assess the experiences of and impact that direct entrants have had on policing, there is considerable scope here to reflect upon the potential of such a scheme to bring about change. Unlike organisational initiatives aimed at changing or improving the self, such as mentoring and leadership initiatives, often designed especially for

women, direct entry can be considered as a transformative intervention strategy with the capacity to challenge core organisational values, beliefs about work and the way in which work is organised and valued. The value of mentoring and leadership training together with more populist advice for women to be more confident, take control and 'lean in' (Sandberg, 2013) have now become fairly well established tropes for women aspiring to leadership roles. Though instructive for women, at the heart of such initiatives and interventions is a concern with the individual and with women as deficient. The targeting of women here sets out to encourage women to adopt existing ways of working, bringing women up to par with their male counterparts. These ideas form part of the postfeminist construction of women as subjects prone to self-surveillance, self-improvement and self-transformation (Kelan, 2009; Lewis et al. 2017). With structural arrangements untouched, women themselves are identified not only as the problem but also as the solution. Such approaches do not problematize the career itself or the gendered substructures upon which they rest. Instead, they are underpinned by the idea that organisations are gender neutral with all members having an equal opportunity at achieving rank. Consequently, individual women are encouraged to reflect and build upon their deficiencies to join their peers (men and women) in the competition for leadership roles. I reiterate Acker's starting point that organisations are not gender neutral but are gendered and the 'ideal' worker is male. The arrival of direct entry therefore, in principle at least, affords an opportunity to problematize the 'rules of the game' itself.

In their review of the police leadership literature, Pearson-Goff & Herrington (2014: 17) draw out the key characteristics regularly perceived to be attributes of effective police leaders by subordinates. Here "legitimacy in the eyes of one's staff" was central, as was the need for leaders to be seen as "good coppers" and for subordinates to know that a leader could "pound the beat" and do the job of a front-line officer. The heroic masculine pursuits of action orientation and crime fighting still function here as key elements of organisational identity for officers. Through the accomplishment of an operational background, the police leader is able to command respect and claim authority as both competent and credible. Direct entrants from the very outset arrive with no police operational experience or a crime fighting background and so possess none of the traditional markers of police masculinity as enshrined

in the 'cult of masculinity'. On the contrary, with an emphasis on rewarding more industry-like skills, they bring with them a mandate to demonstrate an altogether less gender specific set of skills. The College of Policing confirm the managerial emphasis from outside industry in formal policy rhetoric, noting that "Senior police leaders manage complex organisations, and the ability to do so successfully will be enhanced by encouraging positive aspects of a more commercial mind-set" (College of Policing, 2015:30). Allowing for the possibility of change, Holgersson (2013:463) argues that "homosocial circuits can be challenged if persons that deviate from the norm are included". Direct entrants within policing certainly fulfil that element. With an alternative mandate, direct entrants bring with them the potential to loosen the firm attachment between police leadership and idealised notions of the 'heroic male'. As outsiders, they bring with them the capacity to question police policy, practice and ways of being. In his positive appraisal of direct entry, Smith (2016: 325) argues that beliefs about policing as a job for life, that time served leads to promotion, together with the idea that those not in the service "don't get" what policing is all about, have become "lazy myths" that have become entrenched within policing. Drawing on interviews with a cohort of direct entrant Superintendents, he emphasises positive outcomes, noting that direct entrants "bring no inhibitors, no cynics and no preconceived ideas of the culture within which they will be operating" (Smith (2016:317). Moreover, he argues that there is "no evidence of 'group think' or any expectation that they would be behaving in certain way" (Smith, 2016:317). Unlike sworn officers, they are not "cut from the same cultural cloth as lower ranking officers" (Cockcroft, 2013:138). In reading this as a positive, it could be that direct entrants do not carry the same cultural baggage that comes from being a sworn officer. I have also emphasized the importance of *doing time* to establishing credibility and commitment for a leadership role. I remind readers that direct entrants come to policing without this temporal history - as outsiders, they have not served their time within policing so from the very outset again, through their mere presence they symbolise an alternative police identity. Indeed, *not* doing time within policing is presented as a distinguishing strength in which there is less time to contaminate and taint the sense of self. Such positive readings of change are echoed in Charman's (2017) recent work detailing the emergence of a '#new breed' of police officer following radical changes to police training and education since the turn of the century. With less reliance on traditional military style training and a greater emphasis on community engagement, together with the changing realities of police work in times of economic



austerity, she points to discernible and positive changes in the cultural narratives of new recruits. Findings reveal a shift in emphasis with officers under the new regime “moving further away from the law enforcing crime-fighter and more towards problem-solving communicator” (ibid: 272) with evidence of “compassion, good communication and a diminishing loyalty to the ‘code of silence’” (p. 339). Perhaps most salient here is not just the changing narrative of the role of the police officer but the acceptance of this new narrative, with police officers drawing on the narrative of “#newbreed” to further “guide their action and navigate the policing terrain” (Charman, 2017: 275). A receding of the ‘crime fighter’ mentality amongst police officers will yield substantial and considerable benefits for women and men working within policing and for police officers’ engagements with citizens more broadly (Dick et al. 2014).

Despite the considerable grounds for optimism presented above, it would be judicious not to overstate the nature and extent of cultural change or the emergence of new identities within policing. Loftus’s (2008) account of the enduring nature of police culture in the twenty first century stands as a powerful and instructive lesson in any assessment of organisational change. In her analysis, she suggests that despite a considerably altered policing landscape, surface level changes have done little to displace the underlying assumptions within policing, with elements of cynicism, suspicion, machismo and a crime-fighting mind-set enduring as essential features of police culture. The extent to which direct entrants have the power to disrupt existing ideas about policing and police culture more broadly and its gendered elements more specifically remains to be seen. It is impossible to suggest with any certainty how these officers will fare into the future but we can be confident that resistance will accompany their presence. One of the direct entrants interviewed by Smith (2016: 319) tells of being turned down by the Metropolitan police for not possessing an “intangible presence” and the “mystique” and “gravitas” required for a police leadership role. Thinking ahead, I foresee that direct entrants (both men and women) will face a number of symbolic “credibility contests” (Lamont and Molnar, 2002:179) in which they will have to prove their worth and value as police staff. As ‘outside outsiders’ I predict that women entering police through the direct entry scheme will experience such credibility contests in a more acute way than their male counterparts and will encounter compounded difficulties in assuming their leadership positions. This concern is confirmed by research on women police in the Netherlands and

Sweden, where there has been active and specific provision for the promotion of women to police leadership roles. Whilst the number of women in leadership roles rose significantly in the Netherlands following lateral entry and the introduction of a target quota, Van der Lippe et al. (2004) outline the ongoing barriers posed by the culture of policing, in which women do not want to be treated differently or be regarded as different. Such findings are echoed in Sweden. Best known for its strong reputation for gender equality the Swedish police service has done much to attract women into policing and into leadership positions by appointing them as non-sworn employees (civilian employees without formal academy training) — about 40 per cent of all employees in the Swedish police are women, and among police officers specifically, formed 28.6 per cent in 2012 (Institute for Public Security of Catalonia, 2013). While the number of women in leadership roles at various levels has increased, research by Van der Lippe (2004), Stenmark (2005) and Osterlind and Haake (2010) continue to emphasise a male dominated managerial culture in which police leaders with sworn backgrounds are more easily able to command 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 senior women already experiencing difficulties in being heard, using power, authority and being accepted as legitimate police leaders (Burke and Mikkelsen, 2006; Archbold and Schulz, 2008; Haake et al. 2017; Silvestri, 2007), recruiting non-sworn women or those without traditional operational backgrounds to leadership ranks risks pushing women even further into the rank of ‘outsider’. This is not to build a case against direct entry. On the contrary, I remind readers of Chan’s (2006) instructive message to allow for both the possibility of and resistance to change. The strong and sustained resistance toward any change in the police career witnessed over the past century is perhaps best understood as an outward and visible manifestation of a power struggle over ‘who’ is best suited to undertake policing and police leadership. The direct entry scheme therefore should be acknowledged for its inherent transformative power to challenge the very essence and core organisational beliefs about ‘ideal’ officers and the ‘heroic male’ more specifically. Its power is enhanced when placed alongside other reforming strategies that call into question the core police identity, including changes to police training and education as identified by Charman (2017) above. When taken collectively, such changes may create a pincer movement of pressure for change resulting in a reconfiguration of the ‘ideal’ police officer.

## Concluding thoughts:

In pushing for a more critical reading of accounts of police organisational success in relation to gender equality, I have emphasised the need to go beyond the numerical in claiming organisational success. Changing horizontal and vertical segregation patterns and unequal numerical representations in the workforce is but one part of achieving meaningful equality. I have also called for a repositioning of our efforts in locating the gendered nature of policing with less reliance on well-established ideas about masculinity. There is considerable scope to expand the lens of scholarship on gender and policing. It is only through shifting the gaze of where gendered power is located that we can better understand the multiplicity of gendered identities present and respond meaningfully to the ongoing concerns about the lack of women in policing. Such a position transcends England and Wales and applies to the global landscape, where the call to increase the representation of women in policing remains a pressing concern. In focussing on gender in this paper and on the reproduction of male circuits of power, I am mindful of Holgersson's (2013: 456) observations in calling for a greater appreciation of the complexity of power when she notes that 'since gender never travels alone other social power relations such as class, ethnicity, race and sexuality also conditions homosociality'. The task for future research here is to expose the complexities of gender through unpicking the various 'inequality regimes' (Acker, 2012) that exist within policing.

Given the strong equalities architecture within the UK, it is becoming increasingly difficult to claim that policy and organisational frameworks are discriminatory. On the contrary, there have never been so many policy initiatives aimed at recruiting more women into policing and public discourse about the benefits of having a diverse police workforce. At the same time, it has become commonplace to associate the lack of women within policing as a problem that resides with women themselves. Whilst there may be some truth in the suggestion that women need to learn to be more confident and 'lean in' to organisational hierarchies – such an approach does little to change the organisational structures and environments within which they 'lean' into – it also responsabilises women for their own success and failures. The reality is that despite a range of equality initiatives, women in policing continue to experience a workplace in which credibility, commitment and competence rest upon gendered beliefs

about the 'ideal' worker. For women aspiring to leadership ranks, the message thus far has been clear - doing time and place through the possession of a full-time, uninterrupted career profile and an operational background is key to being seen in the frame for leadership. Without this, workers risk having their credibility, commitment and competence brought into question. The potential power inherent within the direct entry scheme as a significant and momentous challenge to the police career and to officers' sense of identity then is clear. Direct entry surfaces and exposes the principles upon which such idealised notions and cultures are based and in line with a practice based view of institutional change (Dick et al. 2014) it is through the presence of direct entrants that opportunities emerge for questioning and contesting these principles. Unlike their traditional counterparts, the '#newbreed' of officers documented by Charman (2017: 332) do not align themselves to the traditional narratives of policing as a 'job for life' but describe the police career more of as a 'job for now'. This is a powerful message about changing police sensibilities and one that may enable the acceptance of direct entrants more easily. In predicting the pace of change, I concur with Charman (2017:340) who notes that change will be "slow, incremental and potentially largely unnoticeable but will nonetheless be occurring". The century ideology of internal recruitment within policing has now been fractured and the number of direct entrants looks set to increase across various roles and ranks within policing. The persistent and vociferous resistance toward direct entry enacted by police officers themselves is enough of a clue to acknowledge its potential as a disruptive tool in destabilising police identities and the gendered order upon which they rest. The challenge ahead lies in observing how direct entrants and those around them navigate the opportunities to bring about change.

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