

# Gender, Policing and Inclusion: Opportunities for Change

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# Introduction

Issues concerning the treatment of women police officers by police services across the globe are at the forefront of media, government, and public attention. For example, in May 2017, the Federal Court of Canada approved a Gender-Based Harassment and Discrimination Class Action lawsuit against the Royal Canadian Mounted Police. We have also seen women take on historic leadership roles within the policing. For example, in 2017, Cressida Dick was appointed Commissioner of the Metropolitan Police Service in London, UK. In 2018, Brenda Lucki became Canada's first permanent female RCMP commissioner. Most recently in Australia, Katarina Carroll has just been appointed the first female Police Commissioner in Queensland's police service (2019). As such, policing currently is in a moment of tension between the 'retrogressive' or 'canteen culture' and the newer 'progressive accountability' management style of policing (Brown et al. 2019). In other words, while progressive changes can be found, much work remains in order to eradicate the remnants of culture throughout all levels of policing that disproportionately disadvantage women.

Although police organizations express a commitment to increasing the percentage of women police among their ranks, persistent barriers to inclusion and progressive change are affecting efforts to recruit, retain, and promote women officers. Women, for example, face an array of structural and cultural barriers to fitting in and working toward affecting progressive change (Archbold & Hassell, 2009; Barratt, Bergman & Thompson, 2014; Chan, Doran & Marel, 2010; Kingshott, 2013; Martin & Jurik, 2007; McCarthy, 2013; Rabe-Hemp, 2008, 2009; Rabe-Hemp & Humiston, 2015; Langan et al., 2017, 2018; Schulze, 2010; Workman-Stark, 2015). Women are often: ostracized in a culture of hegemonic masculinity (Martin & Jurik, 2007; Parnaby & Leyden, 2011; Prokos & Pradavic, 2002; Rabe-Hemp, 2008, 2009; Silvestri, 2007; Workman-Stark, 2015); forced to repeatedly prove physical and emotional strength in an attempt to be accepted (Langan et al., 2017, 2018); subject to sexual harassment (Brown et al. 2019; Segrave, 2014), isolated from informal networks at work, and discounted and excluded from promotional opportunities (Dodge et al., 2010) and assigned to cases that demand intensive emotional labour (Martin, 1999). As a result, women can experience higher levels of stress (Cox, 1996; Welsh 2010) or burnout (Kurtz, 2008), as well as low morale and identity conflict (Bikos, 2016). These outcomes are intensified for women officers who are mothers for they: encounter negative workplace responses to pregnancy (Langan et al., 2018); experience demotion or reassignment during maternity leave (Agocs et al., 2015); and have to re-prove themselves as officers upon returning from maternity leave (Langan et al., 2017).

# Why Gender Diversity is Important

The research tells us that gender-balanced teams and equality in leadership positions bring greater creativity and innovation to investigations and more support for the welfare and well-being of officers. Policing must adapt to the modern world in which crime is both global and digital. Advanced information technology is playing a progressively more important role in policing and security and a police service that can combat terrorism, fraud and sexual exploitation must be equipped with up-to-date technology, as well as with data literacy and information technology skills. The present dearth of women in cyber security and in senior management roles is a serious and present deficit in policing effectiveness and requires urgent attention if the current challenges are to be met. Furthermore, as a public institution, policing should better reflect the public it serves.

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## Workshop on Recruiting, Retaining and Promoting Women Police

On April 29th and 30th, 2019, Drs. Debra Langan, Carrie Sanders and Julie Gouweloos hosted a 2-day international workshop, Recruiting, Retaining, and Promoting Women Police Officers: An International Comparison of Challenges and Opportunities for Change, at Wilfrid Laurier University to address the gap that exists around policy recommendations and their implementation by policing organizations.



# Who we are

The workshop brought together internationally renowned policing and organizational change scholars including Dr. Jacqueline Drew of Australia (AUS), Dr. Debra Langan, Dr. Carrie Sanders, Dr. Julie Gouweloos, Dr. Linda Duxbury, Dr. Ivona Hideg, Dr. Rachael Johnstone, Dr. Rebecca Sullivan, and Superintendent Nina Vaughan of Canada (CA), Dr. Jennifer Brown, Dr. Jenny Fleming, and Dr. Marisa Silvestri of the United Kingdom (UK), and Dr. Carol Archbold, Dr. Dorothy M. Schulz, Dr. Corina Schulze, and Dr. Tara O'Connor Shelley of the United States (US).



These scholars are on the cutting edge of evidence-based research on the issues experienced by women police officers and the institutional policies and practices that present challenges to recruiting, retaining, and promoting women. The goal of the workshop was to work with these international researchers to identify how we can transform the rich literature on barriers to recruitment, retention, and promotion of women police officers into an actionable Opportunities for Change document to be disseminated widely to police organizations and beyond.





# 1

## Challenges to Recruitment

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- Services often recruit women who already wish to join via university and college programs with policing or criminal justice focus. Services need to consider recruiting strategies that extend beyond these approaches.
- Services are facing new labour shortages in part related to the heightened public scrutiny from community members and other regulatory bodies.



# Opportunities for Change:

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## Recruitment Practices

1

Focus not only on recruiting women, but also on valuing different perspectives and different experiences and seeing these differences as an asset to policing.

2

Go beyond traditional recruitment sites to include recruitment from computer technology programs, sporting organizations, and various other college and university programs where intelligent and creative women are located.

3

Engage in mentoring and recruitment strategies that explicitly demonstrate that the service values women. Furthermore, services that have women represented in recruitment advertisements, send targeted letters to potential recruits, and engage in meaningful face-to-face interactions tend to recruit more women.

4

Target Science, Technology, Engineering, and Mathematics (STEM) programs to work towards developing a workforce with data literacy, computer and science training to tackle the complex and ever-changing nature of crime and criminal justice.

5

Better communicate perks and benefits associated with the job when engaging in recruitment activities, such as family accommodation policies, professional development opportunities, further education opportunities, and job mobility opportunities within the service. These are all factors that people entering into the workforce are interested in, and they are features that will attract new employees. People may not feel comfortable inquiring about these job aspects, so it is beneficial to use them as a recruitment tool.



6

Create organizational awareness and support for an inclusive - not just gendered - focus. This will create an environment where diversity is viewed as an asset while reducing problems such as tokenism.

7

Change the model of the 'ideal' police officer. Examine current 'ideal candidate' criteria and identify sites for change.

8

Look at your service's current requirements and survey comparable departments or organizations for novel ideas around recruiting.

9

Review recruitment strategies in light of current demands on, and changes to, the role of police. Reassess what knowledge, skills and abilities are needed to 'fit' that role and change entry requirements to match current roles.

10

Make wide-spread cultural changes that demonstrate that policing organizations value women and their diverse experiences.

11

Provide a better description of what policing actually entails to dispel stereotypical notions of what it involves. Australia's "That could be me" 50/50 recruitment strategy is a good example.

12

Do a public survey to assess: (1) community perceptions of what a career in policing looks like; (2) the aspects of a career people aspire to or look for. Use the results of the survey to structure advertising and recruitment strategies that speak to those desired qualities.



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## Challenges to Retention

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Challenges to retention include the following: a 'boys' club' culture; workplace harassment; difficulties with work-life balance; compromised health and well-being; insufficient reward systems; discrimination and workplace inequality.



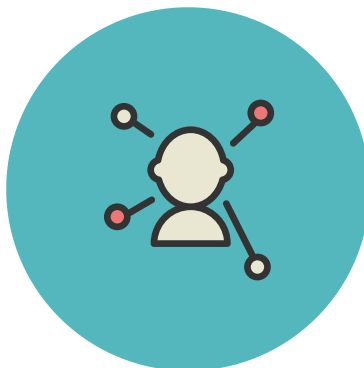
photo: Singapore Police Force



# Opportunities for Change: Retention

The widespread cultural changes necessary to creating an environment where women and other marginalized groups not only feel welcomed, but no longer experience discrimination and harassment, are far too complex to fully unpack in a document such as this. That said, we acknowledge that these deeply rooted cultural realities operate in policing organizations across the globe and offer some steps that will begin this work toward positive change.

- 1** Do a data audit and analysis to acquire an understanding of your organizational attrition and reasons for departure, rates of promotion, and length of tenure in different ranks.
- 2** Establish an anonymous and external reporting and tracking system to eliminate the stigma associated with mental health issues. Outsource well-being and mental health support needs to public services who are trained to work with public safety organizations.
- 3** Create a family-supportive environment. Work-life balance is the cornerstone of a productive and happy work place. The workforce is changing, as men and women are taking on child care and home responsibilities and they require a supportive work-life balance. Suggestions in this regard include flexible scheduling; redesigning shift work by looking at other emergency services for innovative ways of doing scheduling; providing for job sharing and part-time work; establishing childcare at the workplace; and providing sleep rooms.
- 4** Create programs that identify 'agents of change'. Provide a fast track program to appeal to officers who are driven to rise through the ranks. Development programs that identify and support the most driven officers will help to retain leaders.



# Out of the Box Ideas:

## Cultural Changes

- Place greater value on traditionally feminine approaches to police work. Gender research shows us that all people have both masculine and feminine traits. Effective policing requires a combination of masculine and feminine approaches and acknowledging this can benefit everyone.
- Examine weaknesses in current harassment protocol. Rather than having the onus fall on the person being harassed (disproportionately women and other marginalized groups), other officers should be encouraged to step in, file complaints, and advocate for progressive change.
- Services should also work to enact equity-based approaches to change that address current forms of inequality and take bold steps to re-imagining police work.

## Secondment



- Develop secondment programs. By developing partnerships with community organizations and private industry, officers can gain a variety of skills by working alongside others in different occupational contexts beyond policing. This model has been used by the College of Policing in the United Kingdom.



# 3

## Challenges to the Promotional Process

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- The amount of time required to successfully engage in the promotional process is perceived as too arduous.
- The promotional process is viewed as inequitable and unfair which leads some people to choose to not engage in the process.
- The ways in which mentorship does, or does not, happen is often disadvantageous to women and results in stigmatization and tokenism.



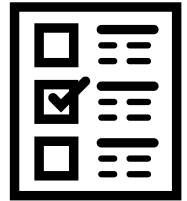
# Opportunities for Change:

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## the Promotional Process

1

Survey members to acquire a better understanding of how they: (1) define success; (2) perceive the promotional process; and (3) explain why they do, or do not want to, engage in the promotional process. Use insights to redesign system to ensure leaders (are encouraged to) participate in the process and are rewarded appropriately.

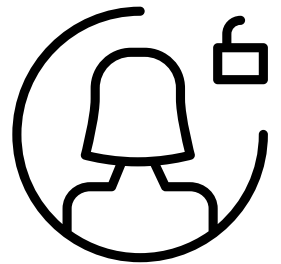


2

Recognize and identify new skills and competencies required to combat the complex and ever-changing crime environment (such as cyber crime, data science practices, data analytics).

3

Redefine the competencies required for promotion to better reflect both the masculine and feminine traits embedded within police practices that both men and women can aspire to. For example, placing greater value on traditionally marginalized forms of community involvement (i.e. forms that are done largely by women).



4

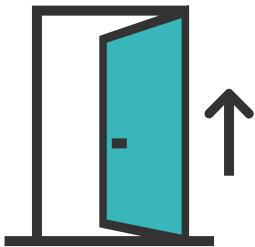
Create a confidential application process wherein categorical markers (i.e. feminine names) are excluded from applications. Incorporate external review members to aid in evaluating members throughout the process.



# Out of the Box Ideas:

## "Direct Entry"

Problematize the 'rules of the game' by securing an alternative face to police leadership through a "Direct Entry" system that appoints non-sworn/'outsider' officers through the adoption of direct and multiple entry models of recruitment (Silvestri et al., 2013). This approach has been adopted in the United Kingdom through the College of Policing. In 2014, the College of Policing, under instruction from the Home Secretary, launched a new Direct Entry to Superintendent programme. This 18-month programme trains and prepares external recruits for substantive superintendent roles into the police service. The Direct Entry programme provides an opportunity to bring new perspectives and diverse backgrounds into policing. Evaluations of the program are underway and will be available in late 2019.



Reconsider the traditional career trajectory. For example, traditional promotional trajectories require uninterrupted careers. Women who require breaks in their 'time on' due to maternity leave or part-time work scheduling are at a disadvantage in the traditional career trajectory. Services may reconsider whether the standard timeline is in fact the best way to identify and promote leaders.

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**CRSP**  
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