



Researching gender and law enforcement as public health input

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In western developed countries women make up approximately 20 per cent of the police workforce. Estonia boasts the highest proportion of female officers with 33 per cent (Resetnikova, 2006), while among the lowest is Pakistan with fewer than 1 per cent (Peters, 2014). These figures show that the extent of women's inclusion in policing is globally disparate, but why is this so and does it matter? Policing is traditionally held up as a male occupation due to perceived necessity of physical strength, though many studies have rejected the view that effective policing requires the bodily authority associated with masculinity (Lonsway, 2000; Silvestri, 2003). Police agencies are under increasing pressure to be 'professional' and accountable to the whole community, including having a workforce which reflects the diversity of people they serve. Promoting and upholding an 'internal culture of mutual respect and fairness' can be seen as important ingredients in securing community support (Sutton, 1996). There is a range of circumstances which can propel women into law enforcement occupations, but these are not necessarily linear projects because they also relate to the status of women in broader society. Increasingly, it is recognized that policy transfer or export has unevenly travelled from Global North to South (Carrington, Hogg, Sozzo, 2015; Connell, 2007), sometimes with poor outcomes or unintended consequences. The nature of, and prospects for, women's integration in policing, their rights and safety, thus, rely on strategies both inside and outside the police organization and appropriate for local circumstances.

Whilst law enforcement has not usually been perceived to have an explicit public health role, there has recently been growing interest in the many ways in which law enforcement, especially police, contribute to the public health mission (Van Dijk & Crofts, 2017). Looking at a specific police-health nexus, women's participation in policing has shown benefits associated with responsiveness to—and reduction of—gender-based violence (Miller & Segal, 2016). Women officers are also less likely to use excessive force (Lonsway, 2000; Porter & Prenzler, 2017; Schuck & Rabe-Hemp, 2007). Thus, the presence of police women can have dual effects on public health: firstly, as protectors who prevent violence in the community, and secondly, as less inclined to be perpetrators of violence in their official capacity.

Within western liberal democracies, women have often pursued full integration (after a period of segregation) into policing, undertaking the same training and initial operational deployment as men. This approach relied on pioneering women who were prepared to publicly and overtly resist workplace segregation (Brown, 1997; Strobl, 2008), but this tactic is not globally uniform. Strobl (2008) argues the trajectory for women's integration in policing in the West coalesced around availability of legislation to litigate against gender discrimination and wider feminist movements in the 1960s. These dynamics enabled a 'cultural space' for dissent not necessarily available to women in some places. Strobl specifically mentions Muslim Arab contexts. That is not to say Muslim Arab women do not engage in 'politicking', but that it is done within certain cultural parameters which avoid overt confrontation and maintain the 'power and control associated with the male identity' (Strobl, 2008, p. 55).

Despite some universalities, there are different policing paradigms with distinctive systems and cultural differences (Van Dijk, Hoogewoning, & Punch, 2015). Subsequently, there are different drivers for women's inclusion in policing and the nature of their inclusion. In some cases, it is to address the needs of women in the community (for example, gender-based violence and Women's Police Stations in Brazil) (Hautzinger, 2002); in others, a broader top-down government push for gender equality and equal opportunity (see post-Confucian Taiwan) (Gingerich & Chu, 2013), or as a response to public criticism, as in the aftermath of the Nirbhaya gang-rape case in 2012 which instigated reforms in the Delhi Police (Khanikar, 2016). In the Ukraine, an unstable security environment has seen gender-sensitive police reform as a key driver for improving policing with a view to being an exemplar for gender equality community-wide (Weitenberg & Grey, 2018).

Barriers to women's participation in policing also vary across different legal frameworks, local cultures, and institutional practices. For example, departmental policies compelling women to cut their hair to shorter than one inch prior to entering police training in Texas had differential effects on potential African-American applicants (Kringen, 2014). A lack of uniforms, lockable toilets and changing rooms, and exposure to sexual assault dissuades women from policing in Afghanistan (Hancock, 2013). In some instances,

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official policies, such as ceiling quotas, exist that make it more competitive for women than men to be selected (e.g., a maximum quota of 15% females in Vietnam) (Bộ Công an, 2016, Article 3). In Turkey, a member of the police selection committee admitted to unsavoury methods to limit women's recruitment, saying, "In fact we do not want to recruit them, but officially we have no right to bar them. To make them unsuccessful, we ask some really illogical and difficult questions" (Caglar, 2004, p. 360). In Bahrain, the impact of social stigma on family and marriage prospects affects women's participation due to cultural parameters regarding religious identity (Strobl, 2008).

Whilst there are different models for women's inclusion in policing, recruitment and selection is only a first step. Retaining women in frontline police work can be difficult. An Australian study found that whilst in training, female police desired equal treatment to their male counterparts; however, after field experience, many policewomen became resigned to 'doing gender' or taking on functions perceived as peripheral to 'core' policing (Chan, Devery, & Doran, 2003). A recent Australian review found that gender stereotyping, sexual harassment, and discrimination led to increased attrition of policewomen (Victorian Equal Opportunity and Human Rights Commission, 2017). Further, the fact policewomen in Brazil were specifically tasked with supporting female victims of violence did not prevent them from sometimes having derisory and cynical attitudes towards those they were supposed to help (Hautzinger, 2002). Indeed, police-women sometimes take on masculine characteristics to fit into the male-dominated police culture and to broaden career opportunities (Rabe-Hemp, 2009). In Delhi, Khanikar (2016) maintains women's presence in a police organization itself is not enough to pursue an emancipatory objective if the organization continues to idealize 'manliness' entrenching the subjugation of women officers.

Of course, the police are a powerful institution and women should have equal opportunity to be involved at the highest levels in the decision-making processes that affect them. But fundamentally, women comprise 50 per cent of the population and so why shouldn't they be jointly responsible for community safety? However, the most effective way to get there varies. Strategies for women's inclusion in policing must take into consideration the varied structural conditions and individual needs of women whilst pursuing the larger goal of a universal gender equality and women's safety.

An important obstacle in designing context-specific strategies is that knowledge about policing has been produced and disseminated unevenly so that our understanding comes from a skewed emphasis on the western experience. Models for women's inclusion in policing in the Global North cannot neatly be transferred to suit the specificities of the Global South (arguably a colonial act itself, according to Strobl, 2008). Strobl argues for more empirical research to be undertaken in different political, social, and cultural contexts to provide evidence for which circumstances, variations, and alternatives are suitable, and that hybrid or 'two-track' system for women's integration into policing may be appropriate for some contexts (2008, pp. 55-56). Equally, the transportation of approaches to address gender-based violence from Global North to South has both questionable ethics and efficacy, and requires greater appreciation of local environs, structures,

and cultures (DeKeseredy & Hall-Sanchez, 2018; Walklate & Fitz-Gibbon, 2018).

To address weaknesses in current theorizing of policing, a conceptual framework is needed to facilitate more nuanced understandings of the relationship between (but not limited to) gender in policing and public health. I suggest a framework for a southern policing perspective to enable exploration of variations and change in other policing cultures and practices outside the dominant western conceptual frameworks. I propose an extension of the interactive model of police culture and practice developed by Chan (1997; Chan et al., 2003) which draws on Bourdieu's (1990) conceptualizations of field and habitus as a relational dynamic. The framework is useful because it provides flexibility for explaining police practices in both northern and southern contexts. It can also account for differences in cultural knowledge and institutionalized practices. A southern policing perspective pays attention to variations in the field, including the historical relations of a particular place, its political system, broad societal culture, legal frameworks, organizations, relations between police and the community, and gender as a social institution. Reflexive consideration of these aspects of the structural environment (and their interaction, given they are not necessarily fixed and thus amenable to change) can promote better design and implementation of approaches inside and outside the police organization.

Fortunately there are platforms in place to further develop this agenda. For example, in 2018 two relevant international conferences will be held in Canada: the first is the International Association of Women Police's annual conference, 26-30 August, in Calgary, followed by the International Law Enforcement and Public Health (LEPH2018) Conference, 21-24 October, in Toronto. In particular, LEPH2018 purposefully seeks empirical research and program examples from the global South to highlight diversity of policing and public health approaches which are culturally contextualized. Whilst held separately, the conferences' goals are inextricably linked in their ambition to deliver a more holistic and community-based inclusive model to safety and well-being, law enforcement, and public health.

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CONFLICT OF INTEREST DISCLOSURES

The author declares there are no conflicts of interest.

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