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Exploring Differing Experiences of a Masculinity Contest Culture in Policing and the Impact on Individual and Organizational Outcomes

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Abstract

Despite increasing allegations of workplace harassment and public concerns for excessive use of force, police organizations continue to overlook the environmental factors that contribute to harassment and other forms of misconduct. Using secondary qualitative and quantitative survey data collected from a Canadian police organization (*N*=488), this study explored the specific factors that might contribute to masculinity contest cultures (i.e., cultures akin to a zero-sum competition with rules defined by masculine norms; MCCs). This study also examined whether MCC norms are experienced differently based on level within the organization, occupational role, and employee sex. The study findings suggest that MCC norms may be amplified by a shortage of personnel, and certain policies and practices that pit members against each other. The study also found that MCC norms are not necessarily perceived in the same way. For instance, female and frontline police officers were more likely to perceive their workplace as a MCC. Female officers were also more likely to experience harassing behaviors. This study makes a significant contribution to research and practice as it advances our understanding of MCCs within policing and how they might be changed.

Keywords: Masculinity Contest Culture, Masculinity, Harassment

Introduction

In recent years, police organizations have faced increasing allegations of discrimination and harassment. For instance, several reports have documented the negative experiences of female officers in various police organizations across Canada (Bueckert, 2017; Hasham, 2016; OHRC, 2015; Pearson, 2019; Prowse, 2013; Smith, 2012; Trinh, 2020). Examples also abound of costly discrimination and harassment-related lawsuits, such as the recent settlement of two $100 million class-action lawsuits brought forth by current and former female members of the Royal Canadian Mounted Police (Azpiri, 2020). More recently, the rise of the #BlackLivesMatter movement has placed a significant spotlight on various forms of external misconduct, primarily the excessive use of force and discrimination against Black and Indigenous people in Canada (Forester, 2020). Although these two forms of misconduct are seemingly unrelated, an investigation of a police organization, following the police-involved shooting of an unarmed Black man in the United States, found evidence of an internal culture of harassment and bullying (US DOJ, 2015).

Survey studies have shown a high incidence of harassment in male dominated occupations, such as policing (Fitzgerald et al., 1999), that not only value masculinity over femininity, but often define and prize specific forms of masculinity, including "competitiveness, assertiveness, physical strength, aggression, risk-taking, courage, heterosexuality, and lack of feminine traits" (Willer et al., 2013, p. 983). In these environments, men (and women) are often expected to prove their manhood (i.e., compete in a masculinity contest—a zero-sum competition with rules defined by masculine norms; Berdahl et al., 2018) by behaving in accordance with these desirable forms of masculinity. In such a context, winners are more likely to be straight, white men (Rudman et al., 2012), who tend to be rewarded with higher status jobs and positions

of power (Kerfoot & Knights, 1983; Prokos & Padavic, 2002), whereas the losers are often women and men from marginalized groups (Livingston & Pearce, 2009).

To help identify masculinity contest cultures and their costs for both individuals and organizations, Berdahl et al. (2018) developed the Masculinity Contest Culture (MCC) scale. This scale is comprised of four distinct, but highly correlated dimensions: *dog-eat-dog* (ruthless competition), *put work first* (an expectation of total devotion to work over family or other outside obligations), *strength and stamina* (equating strength and stamina with status), and *show no weakness* (pressure to avoid vulnerable emotions or uncertainty) (Berdahl et al., 2018). Initial testing demonstrated that the MCC scale correlated with greater organizational dysfunction, negative behavior, and poorer individual outcomes for both men and women, including bullying and harassment (Glick et al., 2018; Matos et al., 2018). As part of this early research, Rawski and Workman-Stark (2018) provided the first evidence of a MCC in policing and its relationship with negative outcomes. Specifically, the authors found that perceptions of the workplace as a MCC correlated with lower psychological safety and organizational identification, job dissatisfaction, reduced psychological wellbeing, and higher intentions to leave.

Despite the findings from this initial research, little is known about the environmental factors that may contribute to MCCs (such as internal policies and practices), whether MCC norms are consistent across functions and levels and contribute to negative outcomes over and above other variables (such as climate and personal demographics), and whether they are perceived differently by diverse groups of employees. Using secondary mixed survey data collected from a Canadian police organization, I explore these questions in greater detail. I also seek to replicate findings from prior studies. This article begins with a review of the relevant literature and presentation of the study hypotheses. The methods and results are then reported;

followed by a discussion of how the findings contribute to the current understanding of MCCs within police organizations.

Masculinity Contest Cultures in Organizations

The Masculinity Contest Culture (MCC) construct is largely based on the theories of hegemonic masculinity (Connell & Messerschmidt, 2005) and precarious manhood (Bosson & Vandello, 2011). As the most honored form of masculinity (Connell & Messerschmidt, 2005), hegemony is "not only most revered when enacted by individual men, but most effective in maintaining power and privilege for men when enacted collectively" (Schwalbe, 2014, p. 31-32). Even though few men may embody all aspects of hegemonic masculinity (i.e., successful, White, heterosexual, athletic, confident, courageous, stoic, and virile; See Connell, 2005), these dimensions of masculinity continued to be idealized and thus become norms (Connell & Messerschmidt, 2005). Norms are a powerful aspect of an organization's culture and are described by Schein (1990) as the pattern of basic assumptions that are taught to new members as the correct way to perceive, think and feel. When hegemonic masculine prescriptions are endorsed by organizations, they reinforce traditional notions of social status as defined by gender, race, class, and heterosexuality, and may lead to individuals feeling pressured to conform to these masculine ideals to gain and maintain status (Cialdini & Trost, 1998). Of note, research by Munsch et al. (2018) revealed that employees may publicly act as though they support masculinity contest norms, even when they personally reject them, because not endorsing them may be viewed as a weakness.

In the workplace, a masculinity contest culture can be viewed as the organizational manifestation of precarious manhood (Bosson & Vandello, 2011), in which individuals are constantly required to prove their masculinity to others. Proving masculinity—often considered synonymous with leadership and competence in male-dominated domains—is a process that must

be continuously pursued in the face of threat and challenge (Gilmore, 1990). Normative pressures on both men and women can motivate them to engage in extreme work hours, and cutthroat competition (Berdahl et al, 2018), as they seek to fulfill a perceived expectation to "aggressively compete and dominate others" (Kupers, 2005, p. 713).

Ultimately, participation in the masculinity contest reflects the competitive pursuit of workplace status that requires demonstration of masculinity, pits men against other men, and disparages women and femininity (Berdahl et. al., 2018). To secure manhood, and dominance over women and other men in the workplace (Britton & Logan, 2008), and to respond to identity threats, men have engaged in negative behaviors such as physical aggression and risk-taking (Bosson et al., 2009); avoidance of femininity (Vandello & Bosson, 2013), such as displays of weakness, vulnerability and emotion, other than anger (Kupers, 2005); decreased liking for nonprototypical members of the gender in-group (Schmitt & Branscombe, 2001); projected assumptions of homosexuality onto a male target (Bramel, 1963); and sexual harassment of women (Maass et al., 2003). While both men and women within MCCs must play the game to be successful, many negative behaviors are likely to be enacted by men, thereby suggesting that MCCs disproportionately affect women.

Research has shown that social class influences the types of masculinity that are valued in occupations (Connell, 1995). For instance, masculinity contest behaviors are often found in blue collar male-dominated occupations that generally require less educational requirements for entry, typically involve dangerous work, and where mostly men compete for status. Such occupations include mining (Forestell, 2006), construction (Iacuone, 2005), firefighting (Desmond, 2006), the military (Hinojosa, 2010), and policing and other protective services (Cheek & Miller, 1983). Masculinity contest behaviors are also expected to emerge in hierarchical, paramilitary

organizations where members compete for favor and promotion up through the ranks (Workman-Stark, 2017), and in contexts in which masculinity is challenged, such as when women enter traditionally masculine jobs (Cockburn, 1991; Padavic, 1991).

Preliminary research has shown that when people perceive their workplace as a MCC they are more likely to report lower levels of psychological safety, organizational identification, job satisfaction, psychological wellbeing, and intentions to remain with the organization (Glick et al., 2018; Matos et al., 2018; Workman-Stark, 2018). Although not previously tested within a policing context, MCCs have also been found to be associated with gender, ethnic and sexual harassment (Glick et al., 2018).

Policing as a Masculinity Contest Culture

Schein (2010) proposes that specific cultures may develop within occupations, particularly if members have common backgrounds, and are trained and socialized in the same way with the same values. For instance, early research on police culture suggested that it evolved from the working-class backgrounds of police recruits who were preoccupied with maintaining self-respect, proving masculinity, and viewed the use of violence as legitimate (i.e., not taking crap from anyone; Wilson,1968). In most jurisdictions today, policing continues to be a hierarchical, paramilitary and male dominated occupation that is associated with dangerous work. For example, a study involving members of a police department in the U.K. revealed a preoccupation with the crime control mindset, which reflected a masculine ethos that was wrapped up in an image of conflict and danger (Loftus, 2010).

While no significant differences have been identified between the typical characteristics of police recruits and that of general members of the public, research has shown that through the socialization process (i.e., exposure to occupational norms), recruit attitudes and values undergo significant change (Crank, 1998; Lundman, 1980; Reuss-Ianni,1993) as they adopt the shared

beliefs of other police officers (Crank, 1998; Skolnick, 1994). In the book, *Inclusive Policing from the Inside Out*, Workman-Stark (2017, p. 21) shares the story of 'Jim' as an illustration of how recruits can be socialized on the job.

> As a young recruit, Jim was encouraged to be aggressive and to just do 'what it takes' to prove himself, even if it meant violating someone's civil rights. Jim described this team as a 'cowboy' platoon that was all about proving they were 'man enough' to do the job and the things no one else wanted to do. Women had it particularly tough as they had to work twice as hard to prove themselves as "real men" and as capable as their male colleagues, yet they were often just as aggressive and committed to doing 'whatever it takes'.

Fielding's (1994, p. 47) earlier depiction of the police 'cult of masculinity' captures the stereotypical values of certain forms of masculinity within policing, including:

> (i) aggressive, physical action; (ii) a strong sense of competitiveness and preoccupation with the imagery of conflict; (iii) an exaggerated heterosexual orientation, often articulated in terms of misogynistic and patriarchal attitudes to women; and (iv) the operation of rigid in-group/out-group distinctions whose consequences are strongly exclusionary in the case of out-groups and strongly assertive of loyalty and affinity in the case of in-groups

Not surprisingly, these elements of police culture reinforce the notion of masculinity as a central part of the police identity, with 'feminine' characteristics dismissed or marginalized (Corsianos 2011). A study involving the Scottish police demonstrated the persistence of the 'cult of masculinity' with distinctions made between the tasks associated with proper policing and those regarded as 'feminine' and 'women's work' (Atkinson, 2016). Similarly, Silvestri's (2017) recent review of police culture highlights the centrality of 'manliness' to the construction and identity of the 'ideal' police worker. Because preserving masculinity has been a central component of the police identity (Corsianos 2011), male officers are particularly vulnerable to certain expectations of manhood. Indeed, prior research has widely examined how male officers are more likely to strike back at perceived identity threats by emphasizing their physicality and heterosexuality, by devaluing 'feminine' work (i.e., service oriented jobs), and by making a clear

distinction between themselves and those who threaten their identity, such as women and marginalized and subordinate men (i.e., racially diverse and effeminate or homosexual men, Brown 2007). Thus, the entrance of women into policing has often been met with significant resistance from male officers who believe that women pose a threat to the occupational solidarity of policing, and/or they are unfit for the physical and emotional demands of the job (Chan et al., 2010).

In their recent article, Rawski and Workman-Stark (2018) discuss how police cultural norms are consistent with the four dimensions of a masculinity contest culture (Berdahl et al., 2018). The authors suggest that the *strength and stamina* dimension can be observed through the value that is placed on physical strength, courage, and authority, while the sanctions imposed against those who do not conform or who are viewed as weak (Nolan, 2009) are representative of the *dog-eat-dog* dimension. Further, the authors illustrate how the *show no weakness* dimension emerges through the emphasis that is placed on emotional self-regulation and the avoidance of any displays of femininity, such as showing vulnerability (Addis & Cohane, 2005). Finally, the authors suggest that the *put work first* dimension is evident in the long-hours norm, where a full-time, uninterrupted career path is an appropriate demonstration of commitment to the job. Subsequent testing of the MCC scale, by the authors, provided empirical support for the existence of MCCs within policing.

The recent settlement of two large class-action lawsuits by the RCMP, described in the introduction to this article, along with many of the independent reviews examining police culture, suggest that cultural norms consistent with MCCs promote the acceptance and normalization of discriminatory and harassing behavior (Broderick, 2016; Government of Australia Equal Opportunity Commission, 2016: Victoria Equal Opportunity and Human Rights Commission, 2015). In addition, these MCC norms have also lead to officers downplaying or hiding poor

health, taking excessive risks, and/or using force inappropriately (Workman-Stark, 2017). As an illustration, Workman-Stark (2017) recounted the experience of 'Joe', a police officer from Ontario, Canada, following his decision to attend a gay pride event with a lesbian colleague. Upon returning to work for his next shift, Joe was completely ostracized by the platoon. For the remainder of the shift and over a period of several weeks, the isolation continued, including the refusal of his colleagues to back him up as he responded to calls for service. Although he was a straight man, his association with members of the gay community had violated normative prescriptions of masculinity, and therefore, he had become tainted as a 'not real man' (Berdahl et al. 2018). To protect themselves from being perceived as 'guilty by association', Joe's colleagues distanced themselves from him. In response, Joe turned to physical violence against members of the public to prove his masculinity, which resulted in numerous complaints of misuse of force.

Taken together, this review of the literature illustrates that police organizations promote cultural norms that are representative of a masculinity contest and produce harmful outcomes for organizational members (mainly women), and the communities they are charged to serve and protect.

The Effects of Individual and Functional Differences

Functional Differences

Within most police organizations in Canada, there are two distinct occupational roles: civilian staff and police officers. In recent years, the number of civilian employees has grown twice as quickly as that of police officers (accounting for approximately 30 percent of all police personnel, See Conor, 2018); with civilian personnel assuming roles in community liaison, specialized support for criminal investigations, investigation of economic and computer crimes, and intelligence collection and analysis (Council of Canadian Academics, 2014). Despite the expanded roles of civilians within policing, the literature continues to provide support for MCCs

that are associated with traditional police officer roles. Specifically, Rawski and Workman-Stark (2018) found that police officers were more likely than civilian employees to perceive the workplace as a MCC, thereby suggesting that individuals in traditional police officer roles are more likely to be susceptible to the masculinity contest as they compete against each other for status. Based on the foregoing, I suggest that functional differences (i.e., being a police officer versus civilian employee) will be related to individual perceptions of a MCC.

While police organizations may share a common occupational culture, Schein (2010) suggests that different cultures can emerge at various levels within an organization. For example, Schein (2010) refers to a distinct operator culture that is often associated with frontline employees. Similarly, research on police culture has identified two primary cultures with policing that are differentiated by rank: the street cop culture and the management cop culture (Reuss-Ianni, 1993). Whereas the street cop culture is consistent with elements of the masculinity contest, the management cop culture primarily consists of a commitment to rules, regulations and management functions. In other words, MCC norms are expected to be more pervasive within the ranks of frontline members. Thus, it is expected that lower level employees, mainly police officers, will be more likely to perceive their workplace as a MCC.

Individual Differences

Status construction theory helps explain how hierarchical relationships among individuals are created based on beliefs that people who belong to certain social groups (such as defined by age, gender or race) are held in higher or lower regard than individuals from other groups (Ridgeway & Erickson, 2000; Webster & Foschi, 1988). For instance, gender status beliefs expect women to be less competitive, more risk averse and less able to command authority in specific situations (Wearing, 1996). Because the prototypical police officer is viewed as aggressive, competitive, brave, and strong, women are less likely to be valued and selected as

police officers. Of note, women currently account for 22% of all police officers in Canada (Conor et al., 2019). According to hegemonic masculine theory, the endorsement of this revered form of masculinity "guarantees (or is taken to guarantee) the dominant position of men and the subordination of women" (Connell, 1995, p. 77). Therefore, in a masculinity contest culture such as policing, higher status men are more likely to be winners of the contest, whereas women are more likely to find themselves behind subordinated and marginalized masculinities (as defined by sexuality or race), and to be on the losing end of the masculinity contest (Livingston & Pearce, 2009; Rudman et al., 2012). Additionally, when women perform 'masculine work' they may be perceived as challenging masculinity (Cockburn, 1991; Padavic, 1991), thereby compelling dominant men to denigrate and harass women in response to a perceived identity threat (Maass et al., 2003). To this end, prior research has shown that women in policing experience higher levels of gender stereotyping, discrimination and harassment (Hassell & Brandl, 2009; Rabe-Hemp, 2008). In short, the literature implies that women are more affected by MCCs than men; therefore, it should be expected that women are more likely to be sensitive to and to perceive their workplace as a MCC.

Based on a review of the literature, I theorize and test the following hypotheses:

Hypotheses 1: MCC norms will be significantly related to: (a) increased harassment, (b) lower organizational identification, (c) job dissatisfaction, (d) higher turnover intentions, and (e) reduced psychological wellbeing.

Hypothesis 2: Occupational role will be significantly related to MCC norms, with police officers more likely than civilian staff to perceive their workplace as a MCC.

Hypothesis 3: Level will be significantly related to MCC norms, with lower-level employees more likely to perceive their workplace as a MCC.

Hypothesis 4: Employee sex will be significantly related to MCC norms, with women more likely to perceive their workplace as a MCC than men.

The Current Study

Considering the negative effects of MCCs for both police organizations and the people within them (Glick et al., 2018; Rawski and Workman-Stark, 2018; Matos et al., 2018), the aim of this study was to examine the environmental factors that might contribute to or subvert MCCs. In addition, I sought to determine if MCC norms were experienced or perceived differently based on occupational function, level or gender. I also sought to replicate the findings from prior studies. For these purposes, I drew from secondary quantitative and qualitative data collected from a large (i.e., approximately 1,000 employees) Canadian police organization in the spring of 2018. I incorporated one open-text survey question to identity factors that might contribute to MCC norms. This question preceded items related to the MCC scale and other study variables within the actual survey, and asked participants to describe what they did not like about working in their police organization. This open-ended question was deemed appropriate for this study as it enabled an unbiased exploration of critical themes pertaining to the negative aspects of the work environment.

Participants and Procedures

The data were originally collected through a survey link that was distributed to all employees from the Chief of Police, who encouraged, but did not require participation. The final sample derived for the current study (N = 488; an approximate response rate of 48.8%) was reflective of the total population with one exception, female police officers were overrepresented (i.e., 23.8% versus 16% in the total population). Overall, the sample was 57 percent male, 93 percent white, and 62 percent sworn police officers. Most survey respondents had between 10 to 14 years (22.3%) and 15 to19 (25.2%) years of service, were between the ages of 35 to 44 years

(28.5%) and 45 to 54 years (39.8%), and were in a nonsupervisory role (68.9%). For the qualitative portion of the survey, 417 participants (85%) responded to the question of what they did not like about working for the police organization. Subsequent analysis of the qualitative sample confirmed a similar composition to the overall study sample; suggesting that non-response bias did not influence the results.

Part One: Quantitative Analyses and Results

In addition to the 8-item MCC scale, and based on previous research (Glick et al., 2018; Rawski & Workman-Stark, 2018), the current study incorporated items assessing organizational climate, and both work-related outcomes and individual outcomes, including harassment, that were combined into additive indices. Except where indicated, participants indicated their agreement or disagreement with each item on a scale from 1, strongly disagree, to 7, strongly agree. Finally, this study incorporated demographic and occupational data pertaining to employee sex, race, tenure, level and role (i.e., civilian versus police officer).

Measures

MCC Scale (IV)

The 8-item MCC scale (Glick et al., 2018) was used in the original workplace assessment. The items and summary statistics are depicted in Table 1. Cronbach's alpha = .80.

Climate Measures (IVs)

Organizational Justice: Eight items (adapted from Bradford et al., 2014; Colquitt, 2001; Blader & Tyler, 2009), were incorporated for organizational justice (4 - distributive justice, 4 - procedural justice). Example items: "Compared with other people in the workplace, I am satisfied with the recognition that I receive."; and "I am given an opportunity to appeal decisions I do not agree with". Chronbach's alpha = .90.

Psychological Safety: Four items were adapted from Edmondson's (1999) psychological safety scale. Example items: "People are able to bring up problems and tough issues", and "People are able to take risks in trying new ways of doing things". Chronbach's alpha = .74.

Outcomes (DVs)

Harassment (DV): Ten items were adapted from a revised version of the Negative Acts Questionnaire (Hoel et al., 2001). Items were excluded that could not be performed by everyone in the workplace (i.e., behaviors unique to one's supervisor or to coworkers), and that captured harassment based on a target's gender or ethnicity. Participants indicated how often over the past year they had been the target of any of the 10 behaviors on a scale of 1 (Never) to 5 (Almost every day). Example items: "Being treated in a demeaning or derogatory way"; "Interrupting or cutting you off while speaking"; and "Having insulting or offensive remarks made about you". Chronbach's alpha = .84.

Organizational Identification: Six items were used from Mael and Ashforth (1992) to assess member perceptions of identifying with the organization. Example items include: "I find that my values and the XXX[1] values are similar"; "I would describe the XXX as a large family in which most members feel a sense of belonging"; and "there is a common sense of purpose in the XXX". Chronbach's alpha = .85.

Job Satisfaction: Three items from Munsch et al. (2018) assessed job satisfaction; including: "All in all, how satisfied are you with your current job in the XXX?"; "Knowing what you know now, how likely would you do this same job"; and "How likely are you to recommend this job to someone else?". The first item was rated on a scale from 1 (very dissatisfied) to 7

[1] "XXX" refers to the name of the organization, which is not identified for this article

(very satisfied), with the remaining 2 items rated on a scale from 1 (very unlikely) to 7 (very likely). Chronbach's alpha = .87.

Turnover Intentions: Two items (Munch et al. 2018), rated on a scale of 1(very unlikely) to 7 (very likely) was incorporated for this measure: "Taking everything into consideration, over the last year how often did you seriously consider quitting your current job"; and "Taking everything into consideration, how likely is it that you will make a genuine effort to find a new job with another employer within the next year?". Chronbach's alpha = .67.

Psychological wellbeing: Three items, on a scale from 1 (all of the time) to 4 (none of the time), were adapted from Stewart et al. (1988). Example items included: "How much of the time during the past 6 months have you been a happy person at work?" (reverse scored); "How much of the time during the past six months have you felt nervous at work?"; and "How much of the time during the past 6 months have you felt depressed about your work environment?". Chronbach's alpha = .69.

Demographic and Occupational Variables of Interest

Dichotomous variables were used to control for employee *sex* (0 = female, 1 = male), *race* (0 = nonwhite, 1 = white), and *occupationa*l *role* (0 = civilian, 1 = police officer). Level within the organization and tenure were controlled for using categorical variables—*level* (1 = nonsupervisor, 2 = supervisor, 3 = manager) —and *tenure* (1= less than 4 years, 2 = 5 to 9 years, 3 =10 to 14 years, 4 = 15 to 19 years, 5 = 20 to 24 years, 6 = 25 years or more).

Analyses and Results

A Pearson's correlation analysis was conducted to examine the relationships between the primary study variables. Table 2 depicts the means and standard deviations for each of the variables, along with the correlation matrix. The analyses revealed statistically significant relationships between MCC norms and lower levels of distributive and procedural justice,

psychological safety, organizational identification, job satisfaction, and psychological wellbeing. Table 2 also illustrates that MCC norms were highly correlated with harassment and turnover intentions.

The first group of hypotheses predicted that MCC norms would be significantly related to the following outcomes: (a) harassment, (b) organizational identification, (c) job satisfaction, (d) turnover intentions, and (e) psychological wellbeing. To test these hypotheses, I conducted linear regression analyses, controlling for the climate, demographic, and occupational variables in all analyses. Table 3 shows that MCC norms were significantly related to harassment (B =.139, p < .001), organizational identification (B = -.118, p < .01), turnover intentions (B = .039, p < .01), and psychological wellbeing (B = -.020, p < .05), but not job satisfaction, thereby providing support for Hypotheses 1a, b, d, and e.

Hypotheses 2, 3, and 4 proposed that occupational role, level within the organization, and employee sex would be significantly related to MCC norms, with police officers, women, and lower level employees more likely to perceive their workplace as a MCC. In Table 4, I regressed each of the independent variables against the dependent variable, MCC. The results show that occupational role, level within the organization, and employee sex were found to be significantly related to MCC norms. Specifically, police officers (B = 3.648, p < .001), employees at lower levels in the organization (B = -1.337, p < .05), and women overall (B = -2.362, p < .01), were more likely to indicate their workplace as a MCC. Thus, each of the hypotheses were supported. As level within the organization was represented by a categorical variable, I conducted a one-way ANOVA to examine the differences in MCC scores by each of the three levels. As expected, frontline, nonsupervisory employees were more likely to report higher levels of MCC norms (M = 4.00, SD = 1.06) than supervisors (M = 3.66, SD = 1.17) or managers (M = 3.86, SD = 1.21), and these differences were significant, $F(2, 487) = 3.872$, p = .021.

Due to the differences in occupational roles between police officers and civilian staff, and the results of the previous regression analyses, I conducted separate linear regression analyses by occupational role. As shown in Table 4, level within the organization (B = -2.248, $p < .05$) and employee sex (B = -3.039, $p < .01$) were significantly related to MCC norms for police officers only. Continuing with this line of enquiry, I conducted independent t-tests to determine if there were gendered differences in harassment experiences based on occupational role. While female civilians had marginally higher harassment scores than men, these differences were not significant. Conversely, female police officers reported harassment scores (M = 1.65, SD = 0.59) that were significantly higher than those reported by male officers (M = 1.43, SD = 0.49), $t(298) = 3.120$, $p = .002$. The general conclusion from these results is that MCCs are associated with traditional police functions, which are typically performed by police officers.

Part Two: Qualitative Data and Results

Using an inductive approach, I first examined all responses to the open-text question (N=417) to derive specific themes (Knobloch, 2008). This process involved a series of steps, including (1) becoming familiar with the data, (2) searching for themes, (3) reviewing themes, and (4) defining and naming themes (Vaismoradi et al., 2016). This process was repeated until all responses had been categorized. Through this process, I identified ten major themes pertaining to the negative aspects of working at the police organization under study. As most responses were straightforward, there was little ambiguity as to which category they should be assigned to. In order of frequency, the first theme pertained to general descriptions about the work environment (29.5%) and incorporated the following sub-themes: perceived status differences between groups of employees, negative/political environment, general issues of fairness, bullying/harassment, and lack of psychological safety or trust. I then grouped several related subthemes under the second larger theme of leadership (27.5%), including lack of support, lack of accountability,

favoritism/nepotism, inconsistent behavior, poor communication, and a disconnect from frontline operations. The remaining themes were identified as follows: external factors, such as criticisms of the police (10.2%), insufficient human resources (10%), human resources policies and practices, including those related to promotion and advancement (6.6%), organizational changes (2.4%), members not pulling their weight (2%), shift work (1.8%), issues with the police union (1.8%), and internal bureaucracy (1.4%). Although these themes are consistent with feedback provided in policing surveys more generally, they offer some explanation that aspects of the organizational climate may have been insufficient for countering the harmful effects of a MCC.

Evidence of a MCC

Following the initial analysis of the data, I then used a deductive approach to examine the responses to the same question for evidence of each of the four MCC dimensions (Berdahl et al., 2018). S*how no weakness* prescribes a swaggering confidence that admits no doubt, worries, confusion or mistakes, as well as suppressing feminine emotions; *Strength and stamina* associates achieving workplace respect and status with being physically strong and athletic, and having endurance and stamina; *Put work first* reflects no interference with work from any outside or personal sources, such as family obligations, not taking any breaks or leaves of absence (seen as signs of weakness); and *Dog-eat-dog* characterizes the workplace as hypercompetitive where winners dominate and exploit the losers, and others cannot be trusted. Of the original responses to the survey question, 33.6% (140/417) were specifically coded for the MCC, with the *Dog-eat-dog* (69%) and *put work first* (18%) dimensions representing the highest frequency of coding, followed by *physical strength and stamina* (11.4%), and *show no weakness* (1.6%). The data suggest that the salience of the latter two dimensions were largely contingent upon both the nature and scheduling of work. Specifically, officers working shifts and responding to call for service, were more likely to reference the importance of being physically fit for duty and to

criticize officers who were on 'restricted duty' status due to a health issue or being injured on the job. A few respondents also acknowledged the continued efforts of the organization to better support the mental health of members; however, the responses suggest that a stigma still exists. As one male officer stated: " I suffer from PTSD ADD and Mild depression. The only member who knows this is my current supervisor. I dare not tell anyone else for fear of persecution in some way or another....". For brevity, I focus the remainder of the analysis on the most frequently coded dimensions, which correspond with the highest mean MCC dimension scores from the quantitative data.

***Put Work First (n* = 25, 18%)**

As with the s*how no weakness* and p*hysical strength and stamina* dimensions, the work schedule and the nature of the work also influenced the salience of the *put work first* dimension. For instance, frontline officers who respond to calls for service worked defined 12-hour shifts, yet they are often called upon to work overtime and to backfill other teams. Frontline officers (both male and female) expressed frustration with expectations that they be available for extra work, with limited consideration for family commitments. Per one female officer, "[t]hey never adjust for family life, and you're just a number". Another female officer noted that: "It bothers me the pressures put on front line officers to perform, keep up and produce, with limited flexibility for family commitments." Similarly, a male officer indicated:

> I am just a badge number…I feel that no one in the upper management level cares or understands the daily trials we deal with in uniform patrol and the effect this job has on me. I also don't like how my job dictates my personal life and no matter how much I give of myself… it IS NEVER ENOUGH.

In general, both men and women, mainly lower level officers, highlighted the challenges of working shifts, specifically for those with a young family, and their concerns that leaders had limited regard for work-life balance. The data also suggest that personnel shortages, along with

existing policies and practices, may be contributing factors. For example, a male supervisor noted:

> I don't like the fact that as a supervisor, I am often unable to give officers time off because of the low frontline staffing level. I don't like that there is no mechanism to allow officers time off to care for sick children/spouses/elderly parents.

Dog-eat-Dog (n = 97, 69%)

Respondents also described how the organization had created "an eat your own atmosphere" that is exacerbated by a perceived divide between junior and senior staff, the poor treatment of the junior ranks by upper management, a focus on identifying and penalizing mistakes over recognizing good behavior, a promotion process that pits members against each other, and a shortage of personnel. Expectedly, these A female civilian member described the climate as follows:

> It feels as though you cannot trust anyone. There's a sense of paranoia seeping through the entire Service. Everyone is feeling it! The existing 'clicky' atmosphere is still going on - as in who you know rather than what you know. It appears to be an open-fair place to work but in reality, I call it "flavor of day" - rules change with every situation /person, which could render a feeling of unfairness and at some point hopelessness. There was a time where I honestly loved coming to work but in the last few years, that feeling has escaped me.

Respondents referred to the group of people who gained opportunities over others as the "in-crowd mentality", the 'boys club', or as described by a female officer, "the tight network of people who always get what they want over others who work harder." A male officer explained that the reality of the "in-crowd" is either you are part of it or "your prospects can vary from limited to bleak...", whereas a minority female officer depicted the distinction as "some being treated as though they are inconsequential and others can't do anything wrong". Consistent with this theme, a male officer wrote about "[t]he years of watching officers with political connections become leaders in the higher ranks yet lack the respect of the sworn officers." Additionally,

some respondents noted there was little recourse for members who felt they had been treated unfairly. As noted by a female civilian member, “If you feel you've been treated unfairly there really isn't anything u can do about it. Management doesn't listen and does not seem to care at all.”

Whereas responses pertaining to the dog-eat-dog dimension were generally reflective of both men and women, particularly lower level officers, women were more likely to reference issues of harassment and the challenges arising when it was reported. Per a female civilian member: “[p]olicies are in place to deal with harassment in the workplace and when a proven incident occurs, the complainant becomes the victim.” Likewise, a female officer noted that when she complained to a member of higher rank, her direct supervisor (who was also involved in the harassment) was informed, which made “life even worse…” Finally, another female officer shared the following narrative:

> It still is and always will be a man’s world or as they put it “the old boys club”. You get blackballed for defending your own rights and labeled through the entire service. This is due to co-workers touching or attempting to touch me inappropriately. Years ago, my supervisor’s response to my complaint was “ you’ve opened up a goddamn can of worms, I can’t protect you anymore and you need to learn to get along with your peers. This wouldn’t have happened if I wasn’t a female police officer who made the complaint. I was then told by a fellow co-worker that it was my fault, because I was part of the shift and didn’t tell anyone who I was dating!! My private life is my business, not theirs.

Overall, the analyses of the qualitative data revealed consistencies with the quantitative results, namely that the open-text responses coded as representative of a MCC, frequently originated from frontline police officers, with female officers more likely to highlight the dog-eat-dog dimension (“If you don’t step up for yourself people will step on you”; and “You’re either “in” or you’re “out,” and once you’re out, you’re out”). An interesting finding was that civilian staff frequently commented on the differing status between police officers and civilians, and the perception that they (civilians) were viewed as part of the out-group and undervalued.

The analyses of the qualitative data also offered some insight into potential environmental factors that may contribute to or amplify MCC norms, such as a shortage of personnel, human resource policies and practices (including those related to harassment), inconsistent and non-inclusive leadership, and external factors. A key observation from the data is that the internal environment may also be aggravated by the enhanced scrutiny and expectations of the public, with police officers identifying increased stress and concerns with making mistakes and feeling "targeted by society, management…". I further explore the results from both the quantitative and qualitative analyses in the next section.

Discussion

Building on prior masculinity research within policing, the primary goal of this study was to explore the environmental factors that might influence MCC norms. I also sought to examine whether MCCs contributed to negative outcomes over above other climate variables and personal characteristics, whether they were perceived differently based on employee sex, level within the organization, and occupational role, as well as to replicate findings from previous studies, particularly the relationships between MCCs and negative outcomes. Consistent with prior research (Glick et al., 2018; Matos et al., 2018; Rawski & Workman-Stark, 2018), the findings from an analysis of the quantitative data revealed that MCC norms contributed to poorer organizational and individual outcomes, namely lower organizational identification, reduced psychological wellbeing, and greater intentions to leave. One key distinction was that MCC norms were found to be significantly related to harassment over and above the climate factors of organizational justice and psychological safety. Thus, demonstrating that MCC norms may lead to harmful outcomes in the absence of sufficiently positive aspects of organizational climate.

Another distinction was that MCCs were not found to be associated with job dissatisfaction, which might imply that organizational justice and a psychologically safe working environment had a greater effect on job satisfaction.

The findings also revealed that men and women generally perceived similar workplace norms; however, female officers were significantly more likely than male officers to perceive their workplace as higher in MCC norms. Police officers overall, and police officers at lower ranks were also more likely to rate their workplace as a MCC, compared to civilian staff and higher ranking officers. These distinctions by gender, level within the organization, and occupational role were further illustrated through the qualitative data. Overall, the findings were consistent with expectations, as well as partially consistent with Rawski and Workman-Stark (2018), who found similar differences between police officers and civilian staff. In addition, these findings further validate the unique occupational culture associated with traditional policing functions.

Finally, the results of the quantitative portion of the study indicated that female police officers reported significantly higher experiences of harassment than male officers, which is consistent with prior research (Hassell & Brandl, 2009; Rabe-Hemp, 2008). An interesting observation from the qualitative data is that while men may also perceive their workplace as a MCC, they may not perceive harassment in the same way as women. As one male officer noted:

> My unit consists of 7 people and we are like brothers, we mouth off at each other and bug each other which may appear to be negative from an outsider's point of view. I have never felt more 'in' than when the group of us are making fun of each other.

In sum, the current study builds on the work of Rawski and Workman-Stark (2018) and offers both empirical and qualitative evidence of a MCC within policing, and the harmful outcomes for organizations and individuals, primarily female officers. The current study also

provides the first empirical evidence that MCC norms are related to experiences of harassment within a policing context, and that female officers are more likely to experience harassment than men.

Another goal for incorporating the open-text survey data was to explore other factors that influence MCC norms. While the theories of hegemonic masculinity and precarious manhood suggest that proving masculinity (i.e., participating in a masculinity contest; Bosson & Vandello, 2011; Cialdini & Trost, 1998) is an outcome of the organizational valorization and endorsement of hegemonic norms, the analysis of the qualitative data revealed there may be other factors that contribute to MCCs. For instance, study participants highlighted the negative effects of the enhanced public scrutiny of the police, such as the stress arising from constant criticism, increased liability, and the pressure to do more. As noted by a male officer, "it's not the service [the organization], but the job itself that I take issue with in today's anti police atmosphere."

Prior research on the police culture has highlighted how a sense of solidarity amongst police officers can develop from perceptions that the system is conspiring against them (i.e., the media, the public, and the Courts; Brown, 2007; Workman-Stark, 2017), with officers expected to demonstrate that they are 'man enough' to work around the system and to put down those who do not conform. Together, with the perceived managerial focus on discipline over recognition, a promotional process that pits members against each other, poor processes dealing with harassment, and a shortage of human resources, these factors may partially explain the prevalence of MCC norms, particularly, the *put work first* and *dog-eat-dog* dimensions. These findings are noteworthy as they suggest that although men and women may be motivated to pursue a career in policing out of a desire to serve the community and make a difference, the socialization process, coupled with external factors, and internal policies and practices that create an 'us versus them' mentality, may ultimately suppress these altruistic motives.

Implications for Practice

Typical efforts to address harassment and other forms of workplace misconduct within policing have tended to take a compliance-driven, tactical approach by reinforcing conduct policies and practices, providing harassment and other forms of training to all employees, fixing certain individuals, and increasing the number of women (Workman-Stark, 2017). While this approach may have checked certain boxes, it has largely overlooked the contextual and other factors that lead to certain forms of misconduct.

When certain types of performance are supported and recognized, such as through promotion, existing cultural norms are reinforced, as are expectations about how to get ahead (Stainback et al., 2011). Silvestri (2003, 2007) suggests that the 'macho' culture of policing creates an expectation for leaders to demonstrate an aggressive, competitive, and performance-driven style of leadership, which were reflected in the organizational data. Specifically, officers referenced a promotion process that was often described as 'cannibalistic' or pitting officers against each other to get ahead. These comments are not unexpected, as police performance has typically been assessed at the individual level and focused on key metrics, such as the number of arrests and traffic tickets. However, this means of performance measurement has often been criticized as promoting a culture of individualism and a culture of blame rather than learning from mistakes (Long & Silverman, 2005). Indeed, research has shown that such cultures cause people to focus on proving rather than improving competencies, and to avoid any evidence that would demonstrate incompetence (Edmondson, 2003). Thus, reinforcing the *show no weakness* dimension of the masculinity contest culture, whereby members are expected to demonstrate confidence and not admit doubt, worries, confusion or mistakes, in addition to suppressing feminine emotions.

The current study provides some indication that MCC norms may have been amplified by high workloads and personnel shortages, an enhanced focus on penalizing mistakes over learning and recognizing good work, and promotional policies that pitted members against each other. Coupled with perceived 'attacks' from the media and society, these internal factors may have created the 'perfect storm', in which workplace divides were established and perpetuated by perceived social status. The data further indicate that combatting the harmful effects of a masculinity contest is likely to require a shift in cultural norms through the implementation of new policies and practices, along with a more supportive style of leadership in which police personnel are encouraged to admit and learn from mistakes, to ask for help, and to openly share their fears and anxieties while demonstrating concern for their colleagues.

Promising research by Danbold and Bendersky (2018) also suggests that redefining what it means to be a prototypical police officer may lead to increased support for women and subordinate men in policing. Specifically, the authors demonstrated that emphasizing the value of stereotypically-feminine traits while simultaneously highlighting the importance of masculine traits led firefighters to increase their perception of the ability of female firefighters.

Limitations and Future Research

This study presented the opportunity to examine MCC norms within a police organization and to compare the workplace perceptions of diverse groups of employees; however, this study also had its limitations. First, the organization was largely white, thereby preventing the ability to assess the experiences of minority individuals, namely their perceptions of MCC norms. Future studies should incorporate a more diverse population to explore the relationships between marginalized identities and MCCs. Second, this study incorporated survey data only. While the qualitative survey data offered some insight into factors that may contribute to MCC norms, semi-structured interviews would have likely yielded deeper insights. Third, this study focused

on exploring MCC norms as they pertained to men and women and did not consider the experiences of subordinated identities, such as LGBTQ+ members. Additionally, the current study examined the relationships between MCC norms and harassment, while controlling for other climate and demographic variables. While the results were interesting, future research could examine if certain levels of organizational justice, specific leadership styles, and/or a psychologically safe working environment can overcome the harmful effects of a MCC.

Another limitation of this study is that it was cross-sectional; therefore, no claims can be made about causality. It is possible that other factors may have created the effects that were reported. Future research should incorporate multimethod, longitudinal designs to demonstrate that harassment and other negative outcomes are due to MCC norms, and to explore the factors that might counter MCC norms. Finally, this study relied on individual perceptions of workplace culture and climate, which may reflect the individual's own biases rather than the shared reality.

Conclusions

Despite its limitations, this study makes a unique and important contribution to the existing literature in that it offers a window into the possible environmental factors associated with MCC norms, thereby presenting possible remedies. Further, although this study involved individuals working together in the same organization, this study also found that MCC norms are not perceived in the same way. For instance, police officers were significantly more likely than civilians to perceive their workplace as a MCC, as were female officers and officers of lower rank. Female officers were more also likely to experience harassing behaviors. Thus, combatting MCCs requires interventions to be pursued on two fronts: one, changing internal policies and practices (including leadership selection); and two, reframing the prototypical traits associated with being a police officer. At the same, these internal changes may enhance police-community relations.

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Table 1

Summary Statistics for MCC8 Scale Items by Dimension

Dimension and item	*M*	SD
Show No Weakness	***3.26***	***1.57***
1. Admitting you don't know the answer looks weak	3.11	1.73
2. Expressing any emotion other than anger or pride is seen as weak	3.41	1.71
Strength and Stamina	***3.65***	***1.35***
1. It is important to be in good physical shape to be respected	4.12	1.64
2. People who are physically smaller have to work harder to get respect.	3.18	1.59
Put Work First	***3.98***	***1.55***
1. Taking days off for family reasons is frowned upon	4.42	1.93
2. To succeed you can't let family interfere with work.	3.54	1.89
Dog Eat Dog	***4.77***	***1.42***
1. If you don't step up for yourself people will step on you	5.17	1.58
2. You're either "in" or you're "out," and once you're out, you're out.	4.38	1.72

Note. $N = 488$.

Table 2

Means, Standard Deviations, and Correlations, all

	Variable	*M*	*SD*	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8
	IVs										
1.	MCC	3.92	1.10	1.000							
2.	Psychological Safety	3.80	1.32	-.64**	1.000						
3.	Distributive Justice	4.60	1.52	-.46**	.52**	1.000					
4.	Procedural Justice	3.91	1.48	-.46**	.56**	.64**	1.000				
	DVs										
5.	Harassment	1.50	0.52	.43**	-.42**	-.41**	-.36**	1.000			
6.	Organizational Identification	4.88	1.25	-.41**	.40**	.45**	.44**	-.30**	1.000		
7.	Job Satisfaction	5.02	1.66	-.37**	.43**	.54**	.46**	-.30**	.58**	1.000	
8.	Turnover Intentions	2.06	1.62	.34**	-.34**	-.44**	-.35**	.42**	-.38**	-.55**	1.000
9.	Wellbeing	3.07	0.58	-.37**	.42**	.50**	.47**	-.48**	.29**	.50**	-.48**

* $p < .05$, ** $p < .01$., *** $p < .001$

Table 3

Regression models predicting individual and organizational outcomes, controlling for climate/demographic variables

	Harassment	Organizational Identification	Job Satisfaction	Turnover Intentions	Psychological Wellbeing
	B (SE)	*B* (SE)	*B* (SE)	*B* (SE)	*B* (SE)
MCC	.139***(.032)	-.118**(.043)	-.014(.028)	.039**(.015)	-.020*(.010)
Sex - Male	-.505(.486)	-.591(.654)	-.282(.433)	.289(.234)	.411**(.154)
Race - White	2.018**(.821)	2.581*(1.104)	.295(.730)	.357(.395)	-.098(.260)
Level	.864**(.328)	1.573***(.441)	.037(.292)	.253(.158)	-.140(.104)
Role – Police Officer	-.452(.508)	-3.168***(.683)	-1.245**(.452)	-.305(.244)	.158(.161)
Tenure	-.020(.138)	-.131(.186)	-.022(.123)	-.034(.067)	.017(.044)
Distributive Justice	-.153***(.046)	.290***(.062)	.310***(.041)	-.126***(.022)	.078***(.015)
Procedural Justice	-.057(.049)	.208***(.066)	.102*(.044)	-.020(.024)	.051***(.016)
Psychological Safety	-.156**(.057)	.112***(.076)	.144**(.050)	-.039(.027)	.038*(.018)
Constant	14.243***(1.98)	20.841***(2.667)	6.691***(1.765)	5.508***(.955)	6.895***(.628)
	F = 19.804***	F = 27.752	F = 28.528	F = 15.756	F = 26.172
	R^2 = .274	R^2 = .343	R^2 = .349	R^2 = .229	R^2 = .330
	n = 481	n = 487	n = 487	n = 487	n = 487

Note. Beta values are reported unstandardized, standard errors are reported unstandardized; standard errors are in parentheses.
* $p < .05$, ** $p < .01$, *** $p < .001$

Table 4

Masculinity Contest Culture Regression Model

	MCC (all)	MCC (police officers)	MCC (civilians)
Variable	*B* (SE)	*B* (SE)	*B* (SE)
Sex - Male	-2.362**(.924)	-3.029**(1.221)	-1.313(1.378)
Race - White	-2.549(1.558)	-3.819(2.213)	-.914(2.112)
Level	-1.337* (.618)	-2.248*(.935)	.435(.871)
Role – Police officer	3.648***(.955)		
Tenure	-.204(.263)	-.414(.416)	.336(.351)
Constant	35.428***(1.974)	42.932***(2.902)	29.46***(2.814)
	$F = 4.269^{**}$	$F = 4.976^{***}$	$F = .598$
	$R^2 = .042$	$R^2 = .063$	$R^2 = .013$
	$n = 487$	$n = 301$	$n = 185$

Note. Beta values are reported unstandardized, standard errors are reported unstandardized; standard errors are in parentheses.

$^{*}p < .05$, $^{**}p < .01$, $^{***}p < .001$