

MANUSCRIPT PUBLISHED IN JOURNAL OF SOCIAL ISSUES

**Masculinity Contest Cultures in Policing Organizations and Recommendations for
Training Interventions**

**Shannon Rawski
University of Wisconsin Oshkosh**

**Angela L. Workman-Stark
Athabasca University**

Abstract

In the wake of the #BlackLivesMatter and #MeToo movements, police conduct has been increasingly scrutinized by the public, especially the use of excessive force, fatal shootings of unarmed civilians, and sexual harassment scandals within policing organizations. Through a review of the policing literature and data collected in a Canadian policing organization, we highlight how masculinity contest culture is related to police misconduct. All four factors of masculinity contest culture dimensions can be observed in policing including: (1) “show no weakness”, (2) “strength and stamina”, (3) “put work first”, and (4) “dog-eat-dog”. Masculinity contest cultures lead to negative outcomes for both individual officers (e.g., harassment, discrimination, stress), policing organizations (e.g., lawsuits, turnover), and communities (e.g., officers’ use of excessive force). Training interventions are often suggested to prevent or remedy the negative effects of masculinity contest cultures in policing organizations. However, a review of the training literature suggests that training interventions are unlikely to be effective in contexts where organizational norms are at odds with the training content. Our analysis of police data, along with the literature review, conclude with a paradox - the very organizations that need training interventions the most (e.g., policing organizations that often promote and tolerate sexual harassment) are the least likely to benefit from those interventions. To address this paradox, we invoke the theory of social interactionism and reconceptualize training as an organizational sensegiving mechanism. This new theoretical foundation offers new directions for future research on training in masculinity contest cultures and new insights for practicing police administrators and public policy officials.

Masculinity Contest Cultures in Policing Organizations and Recommendations for Training Interventions

Since police culture was first studied in the 1960s, proving masculinity has been identified as a persistent theme (Wilson, 1968). The need to demonstrate that one is physically and mentally tough enough and capable of adapting to the hostile working conditions, remains deeply entrenched as these norms are reinforced through the process of socialization at each stage of an officer's career (Crank, 1998; Skolnick, 1994). As a result, men who spend their careers in policing can develop highly masculinized self-identities that serve to perpetuate these cultural norms.

Because policing continues to be a male-dominated occupation, masculine norms of behavior are commonplace and are reflective of a masculinity contest culture (MCC) that includes four defining features: (1) show no weakness, (2) strength and stamina, (3) put work first, and (4) dog-eat-dog competition (Berdahl, Cooper, Glick, Livingston, & Williams, this issue; Glick, Berdahl, & Alonso, this issue). While some elements of masculinity may be necessary for police work (e.g., valuing the physical fitness required to chase down a suspect), when policing organizations endorse masculinity contest cultures, norms, and values, negative results can ensue for individuals, organizations, and the communities they serve.

For instance, the #BlackLivesMatter movement in the United States has raised awareness of police misuse of force, often with fatal consequences for unarmed Black civilians. More recently, the #MeToo movement has raised awareness of sexual harassment within policing organizations and other industries. Not surprisingly, these two forms of misconduct are linked. An investigative report by the US Department of Justice found that a culture of internal sexual harassment and bullying was evident in a policing organization where one officer fatally shot an unarmed civilian (US DOJ, 2015). Such abuses point to the pressing need for research to better

understand why police are so susceptible to these forms of misconduct and what can be done to improve these organizations in the future. We suggest that police work can often encourage MCCs, whereby officers' enforcement of strict hyper-masculine norms encourage the use of excessive force and harassment behaviors.

Training interventions, such as sexual harassment training and diversity training, are often recommended as potential remedies for the problematic cultures that develop in policing organizations (Broderick, 2016; Government of South Australia EOC, 2016; RCMP, 2013), including by researchers and legal entities (McCann, 2005; Ganzel, 1998). However, recent research illustrates that conventional approaches to sexual harassment training have not been effective and can even backfire, leading to more harassment and discrimination (Rawski, 2016).

One reason that training is often ineffective is due to a lack of organizational support for the training's content or purpose (Kozlowski & Salas, 1997; Mathieu, Tannenbaum, & Salas, 1992; Colquitt, LePine, & Noe, 2000). In the case of MCCs, contexts that tend to devalue and exclude women and minorities serve to undermine any attempt to improve civility and inclusion through a training program. Consequently, organizations with MCCs are left with a paradox: those that need training interventions the most are the least likely to reap any benefits from those training interventions. This paradox represents a gap in the literature that needs to be urgently addressed: how can organizations implement training programs that are effective in unsupportive contexts? We propose a new, social interactionist paradigm that can improve training interventions and stimulate new research and public policy aimed at reducing the toxic effects of masculinity contest cultures in policing organizations.

The current paper has two main sections. The first section reviews prior research showing that policing organizations often demonstrate the four dimensions of MCCs (i.e., show no

weakness, strength and stamina, put work first, and dog-eat-dog; Berdahl et al. this issue). We conclude this section by presenting preliminary data assessing these four dimensions, using the MCC scale (MCC; Glick, Berdahl, & Alonso, this issue) within a Canadian policing organization. These data demonstrate how MCCs correlate with negative organizational and individual outcomes. The second section proposes a solution to this paradox, suggesting how social interactionism may offer new insights for how to effectively change MCCs with training interventions. We end this paper with a discussion of the implications for practice and public policy, and provide suggestions for future research.

Policing as a Masculinity Contest

Early research proposed that the police culture reflects the working-class backgrounds of police recruits who tended to view violence as legitimate and were preoccupied with maintaining self-respect, proving masculinity, and “not taking any crap” (Wilson, 1968). Job characteristics may also reinforce these gendered cultural values. The physical risks police face reinforces the perceived need for the ideal officer to be aggressive, competitive, brave and strong: traits stereotypically associated with men and not women. These cultural norms are consistent with the four masculinity contest dimensions.

First, the “strength and stamina” dimension can be observed in the value placed on physical strength, courage, and authority in police work. Officers are expected to constantly demonstrate these masculine attributes to fit in (Ely & Meyerson, 2010). Those who do live up to these norms are fully embraced by fellow officers and benefit from sharing in the solidarity or “brotherhood” that ensures colleagues will defend and back each other up in dangerous situations (Reus-Ianni, 1993). However, those who do not conform, or who are viewed as weak, may be the

targets of ridicule and isolation (Nolan, 2009). These negative consequences associated with norm violations fit with the “dog-eat-dog” dimension of masculinity contests. Indeed, a common concern raised in independent police culture reviews is the ostracism that can ensue for police officers who cannot or do not want to adhere to such masculine norms (Broderick, 2016; Government of South Australia EOC, 2016). For instance, female police personnel have highlighted the challenges they face working in MCCs, which often means changing their behavior to gain, or maintain, acceptance.

After one night shift the team I was in thought it would be good to have pizza and a beer and watch porn on the big screen in the conference room. I was the only woman in the team. I felt like I'd be ostracised if I didn't stay ... I felt awful, I wanted so badly to be accepted by the team, but the porn made me so uncomfortable and it is just not right in the workplace. (Government of South Australia EOC, 2016, p. 10)

Consistent with the “show no weakness” dimension, MCCs regard displaying emotion, other than anger, as a weakness; therefore, police officers may overemphasize their masculinity and repress emotions to avoid appearing vulnerable or feminine and being isolated by their peers (Addis & Cohane, 2005). Yet, both police officers and policing organizations suffer long-term costs. For instance, emergency first responders have exhibited poor health symptoms in relation to the long-term repression of emotional reactions (Wastell, 2002). By endorsing the “show no weakness” dimension, policing organizations prevent their officers from receiving the necessary support to deal with the pressures of the job, as described by one male officer below:

Bad things happen to all of us. Talking it out in a professional setting helps to deal with the issues. In my case, I have been branded with an alcohol problem when in fact it was simply the misuse of alcohol to deal with external factors with the issues that led to the misuse. But the stigma remains. Real help early on would have assisted me greatly. Instead, I was told to "suck it up". (Workman-Stark, 2017, p.22)

MCCs are also reflected in the language police officers use when interacting with others, and in organizational policies and practices. For example, the “put work first” dimension is

evident in a long-hours norm where presenteeism (i.e., 24-hour availability) and “being seen to be keen” are deemed essential demonstrations of job commitment (Davies & Thomas, 2003). Police officers are expected to have long, full-time, and uninterrupted career paths to demonstrate the appropriate commitment and credibility for advancement to senior leadership positions. Although both men and women are adversely affected by this “put work first” norm, female officers are more likely to find it challenging to demonstrate they are sufficiently committed to the job because women tend to have greater familial and homeplace responsibilities than men. The quote below exemplifies how societal gender roles for women (e.g., child care responsibilities) can clash with the expectation to put work first in policing organizations:

My husband would be gone for long periods and so I would be bringing my 3 kids into daycare. I would be on surveillance and inevitably at 5:30 I would be saying to my boss that the daycare is closing and I have to leave. I had no family in Montreal and no other contacts, and he would scream at me in front of the team, “You get paid like a man why can’t you be available like a man”. I never had an answer to that... There was an assumption that I wasn’t as committed as everyone else. (Workman-Stark, 2017, p. 74)

Similarly, a study of women in leadership positions in select police forces in England and Wales found that female officers feared that taking advantage of flexible work arrangements would leave them stigmatized (Silvestri, 2005). Those who took time off for family reasons often failed to advance in their careers due to the perception that they were not fully committed to the organization. Ultimately, “put work first” norms act as a barrier to inclusion, resulting in lost opportunities for career advancement (Workman-Stark, 2017).

Many of the independent reviews examining police culture have concluded that norms consistent with MCCs promote the acceptance and normalization of discriminatory and harassing behavior. Specifically, the enactment of these types of masculine norms, mainly by male

officers, promote excessive risk taking and use of force, fractured relationships with family and peers; and the downplaying or hiding of poor health (Ely & Meyerson, 2010). In addition, these behaviors often lead to the marginalization and discrimination of women and the sexual harassment of both women and men (Hassell & Brandl, 2009; Morash, Haarr, & Kwak, 2006; Seklecki & Paynich, 2007; Kabat-Farr & Cortina, 2014; Stockdale, Visio, & Batra, 1999).

In addition to creating problems within policing organizations, MCCs may also present a risk to the public. Research suggests that officers may strike back at threats to their masculinity through excessive use of force against members of the public, resulting in complaints and reduced police legitimacy. For instance, Workman-Stark (2017) highlighted the story of “Joe”, a straight male officer who was shunned and isolated by members of his platoon because he attended a gay social event with a lesbian colleague. Although Joe’s platoon knew he was straight, his affiliation with homosexuals clearly conflicted with heterosexual, masculine norms, leading the platoon to reject and isolate him. To reassert his masculinity, Joe became aggressive in his interactions with members of the public, leading to numerous public complaints about his actions. Another example comes from the fatal shooting of Michael Brown by an officer in Ferguson, Missouri. The US Department of Justice investigation of this incident uncovered that the Ferguson Police Department “tolerates sexual harassment by male officers, and has responded poorly to allegations of sexual harassment that have been made by female officers” (US DOJ, 2015, p. 89).

In sum, consistent with the findings of Glick, Berdahl, and Alonso (this issue), our review of the literature suggests that police organizations are likely to promote and endorse the four dimensions of MCCs, and that such cultures are harmful to both male and female police personnel, to police organizations themselves, and to the communities they serve.

Empirical Evidence for Masculinity Contest Norms Using the MCC Scale

The MCC scale has only recently been developed. Therefore, although prior research suggests that policing organizations tend to have masculinity contest cultures, they have not had the MCC scale as a research tool to verify this assertion. We administered the 8-item MMC scale in a medium-sized Canadian police organization in Canada with approximately representative gender composition (19.8% female) compared to the typical Canadian police force (in May 2016, women accounted for just over 21% of all sworn officers in Canada and 13% of senior officers; Greenland & Alam, 2017).

We aimed to determine whether MCC scores would predict negative outcomes for police organizations and their members. Thus, in addition to the MCC scale, we included organizational climate measures (e.g., inclusion, psychological safety), work-related outcomes (e.g., organizational identification, job satisfaction and turnover intentions), and individual outcomes (e.g., psychological well-being). Negative behaviors, such as bullying and harassment, were not assessed due to organizational restrictions.

Participants and Procedure

Data from two different sites within a Canadian police organization were collected in the fall of 2017 as part of a broader workplace inclusion assessment. Site 1 ($n = 70$ 10.7% female) represented traditional police operations, and therefore, was dominated by sworn police personnel and men, whereas Site 2 ($n = 110$; 65.5% female) represented administrative support functions that are dominated by civilian personnel and women. The survey link was distributed to employees via email by each department head, who encouraged, but did not require, participation. Employees were assured anonymity in their responses and were not provided with

any incentive to participate. The combined response rate was approximately 65% ($N = 183$). The combined sample was also reflective of the total population for both sites (50.3% male; 49.2% sworn police officer).

Measures

Due to constraints on survey length, we used the eight-item MCC scale (Glick, Berdahl, & Alonso, this issue). Respondents indicated their agreement/disagreement with each item on a 1 (strongly disagree) to 7 (strongly agree) scale. Consistent with other studies in this issue (Glick et al., this issue; Matos, O'Neill, & Lei, this issue), the MCC scale was reliable, even with only eight items ($\alpha = .84$). Item-total correlations all exceeded .40, suggesting that the scale measures a unitary construct.

Table 1 lists the additional measures used to assess organizational climate, work-related outcomes, and individual outcomes. Gender and employee type were self-reported and included for analysis in this study.

INSERT TABLE 1

Results

Due to the relatively small sample size for Site 1 and the low percentage of women (10.7%), the data for Sites 1 and 2 are combined. Summary statistics for the combined study variables are reported in Table 2.

INSERT TABLE 2

A Pearson's correlation analysis was conducted to examine the relationships between the MCC scale and the climate and outcome variables. The results reveal that the MCC scores are correlated strongly with negative organizational climate measures and moderately with negative outcome measures. Specifically, the MCC was strongly associated with lower inclusion ($r = -.64$,

$p < .01$) and psychological safety ($r = -.69, p < .01$); and moderately correlated with low organizational identification ($r = -.48, p < .01$), job dissatisfaction ($r = -.44, p < .01$), turnover intentions ($r = -.35, p < .01$), and reduced psychological wellbeing ($r = -.46, p > .01$).

To examine gender differences in MCC scores, a one-way ANOVA was conducted. While men had higher MCC scores than women, the differences between men and women were not significant (i.e., men and women generally perceived similar workplace norms). A one-way ANOVA confirmed that sworn officers had higher mean scores ($M = 32.04, SD = 9.68$) than civilian staff ($M = 27.53, SD = 9.06$) and the difference between sworn and civilian was significant, $F(1, 172) = 10.01, p = .002$. When examining the interaction effect based on gender and employee type, there were no significant differences between gender and employee type even though female civilian staff and male police officers had slightly higher MCC scores.

In Table 3, gender and employee type are regressed with the MCC scale. The F test is statistically significant at the .01 level, indicating that the linear regression equation is significantly better in terms of explanatory power than what would be expected by chance alone ($F = 5.20, R^2 = .04$). The t -ratios are also significant for employee type. More specifically, the unstandardized coefficient beta indicates that sworn officers tend to have MCC scores that are about 5.07 units higher than the scores of civilian employees.

INSERT TABLE 3

Analyses

In keeping with other studies in this issue (Glick et al. this issue; Matos et al. this issue), our data suggest that organizational masculinity contest norms within policing promote poor organizational and individual outcomes for both men and women. Although limited by a relatively small sample size, particularly of sworn officers, our data also suggest that sworn

police officers are more likely to perceive their workplace as higher in MCC norms than civilian staff. These findings are not unexpected given the different tasks performed by sworn officers, including responding to calls for service over the course of 12-hour shifts. Research by Reid, O'Neill, and Blair-Loy (this issue), revealed similar findings, namely that masculinity contests are not experienced uniformly in male-dominated occupations, but rather they are shaped by three occupational features: the nature of teams, the temporal structure of work, and the core tasks associated with a specific occupation. Overall, our results provide the first empirical evidence that MCCs within policing are related to negative outcomes.

To combat the negative consequences of MCCs, policing organizations often administer training interventions, especially sexual harassment training and diversity training. In fact, preventative training programs are often advocated for by harassment researchers (McCann, 2005) and strongly incentivized by the legal system (Ganzel, 1998). Yet, typical training interventions have generally failed to reform police cultures or to reduce harassment and discrimination. The ineffectiveness of training interventions for policing organizations with MCCs is not surprising. A large body of research has indicated that training is only effective when the organizational context supports the purpose and content of that training program (Mathieu et al. 1992; Kozlowski & Sala, 1997; Baldwin & Ford, 1988; Taylor, 1992; Holton et al. 1997; Tracey et al. 1995; Facticeau et al. 1995; Tannenbaum et al. 1993). This result has been shown specifically for sexual harassment training and diversity training studies as well (Cheung et al., 2017; Walsh, Bauerle, & Magley, 2013; Perry et al. 2009; Johnson, 2001; Kalev, Dobbin, & Kelly, 2006). For instance, Walsh, and colleagues (2013) found that organizational contexts that tolerate sexual harassment negatively affects employees' motivation to learn during sexual harassment training. Another study found that diversity training effectiveness is predicated on

organizations' ability to send signals to employees that diversity is important (Johnson, 2001). Thus, in policing organizations, where sexual harassment and discrimination may be commonplace, training interventions designed to reduce and prevent harassment are likely to be ineffective.

Ultimately, we are presented with a paradox for organizations with MCCs. On the one hand, harassment research and the courts recommend providing training to prevent and reduce the occurrence of sexual harassment and discrimination (McCann, 2005; Ganzel, 1998) that is often the result of MCCs. On the other hand, training research suggests that training interventions to reduce harassment and discrimination will fail in organizational contexts (e.g., MCCs) that promote or tolerate these behaviors (Kozlowski & Salas, 1997; Johnson, 2001; Walsh et al., 2013; Goldberg & Perry, 2009; Cheung et al., 2017).

To untangle this paradox, we suggest a new approach that takes into account the particularities of training on topics that can be considered "sensitive issues" (i.e., social issues that are often complex and emotion-evoking such as sexual harassment and discrimination). Current training paradigms have failed to consider the psychological and social implications of sensitive issues training and how these might undermine training effectiveness. To address this gap in the literature, we recommend a paradigmatic shift in our theoretical understanding of training. Specifically, we reconceptualize training as an organizational sensegiving mechanism (Rawski, 2016). The next section considers how this new theoretical viewpoint on training might lead to more effective interventions for policing organizations plagued by MCCs.

A Sensemaking Perspective on Training in Masculinity Contest Cultures

Social interactionism suggests that social participants co-create meaning through social interactions (Shalin, 1986; Stryker & Serpe, 1982). Within this theoretical paradigm,

interactional framing represents an important mechanism that creates social coordination and allows people to negotiate their social identities with each other (Goffman, 1974). Specifically, interactional framing represents a meta-communication whereby social participants negotiate for an interaction's meaning (e.g., this sexual comment is a joke vs. this sexual comment is harassment) and the roles each person plays within the interaction (e.g., the jokester vs. the harasser; the butt of the joke vs. the victim; Bateson, 1954; 1972; Goffman, 1974; Dewulf et al., 2009; Turner, 1988). If participants cannot form a mutual understanding on these points, the interaction will become uncoordinated and chaotic and social identities could be threatened or permanently lost (Goffman, 1974).

Sensemaking is a necessary aspect of the framing process. Through sensemaking, social participants interpret surprising, complex, or confusing events to fully participate in ongoing social activity (Cornelissen, 2012; Goffman, 1974) and avoid disorientation and confusion (i.e., "thrownness"; Wieck, 2004). Sensemaking is most important during ambiguous social interactions where the same social action can be interpreted in multiple ways. For example, social sexual behavior is one such complex and often ambiguous behavioral domain (Aquino, Sheppard, Watkins, O'Reilly, & Smith et al., 2014), because it can be interpreted within multiple interactional frames (e.g., workplace romance, playful joking, or harassment; Breaux-Soignet, Rawski, & O'Leary-Kelly, 2014; Rawski & O'Leary-Kelly, 2017). In fact, individuals often disagree about what behaviors constitute sexual harassment depending on their understanding of the law (Tinkler, 2008), their biological sex (Blumenthal, 1998; Rotundo, Nguyen, & Sackett, 2001; York, Barclay, & Zajack, 1997), and their race and citizenship (Welsh, Carr, MacQuarrie, & Huntley, 2006; Saguy, 2000, 2003), pointing to the differing potential conclusions of the sensemaking process.

A sensemaking perspective may explain why harassing and discriminating behaviors persist in masculinity contest cultures (MCCs). For instance, police personnel working in MCCs may frame behaviors that constitute illegal harassment (e.g., a long-term pattern of jokes that demean another officer based on sex, sexuality, or gender) as a means to demonstrate one's masculinity and increase group cohesion. Through this same "cohesion" frame, violations of these norms such as stating that a joke is sexist would likely be experienced by other police officers as going against the "brotherhood." By not playing along, those who do not conform will likely become the targets of more hostile forms of sexual or sex-based mistreatment.

Sexual harassment and diversity training, aim to align employees understanding of and reactions to dysfunctional social interactions with the organization's policies and relevant employment laws (e.g., Title VII of the Civil Rights Act; Goldberg, 2007; Perry et al., 2010). From a social interactionist perspective, such organizational efforts to ensure meaning conformity constitute *sensebreaking-sensegiving* mechanisms (Ashforth et al. 2008).

Sensebreaking challenges how employees currently interpret the meaning of their behaviors (Pratt, 2001; Ashforth, Harrison, & Corley, 2008), while sensegiving attempts to instill a new framing of those same behaviors (Pratt, 2001; Gioia & Chittipeddi, 1991). In the case of sexual harassment or diversity training, the organization is challenging how employees may have positively framed certain past interactions (e.g., sexual or sex-based joking) and imposing a new, organizationally approved frame, typically involving a legal compliance-based harassment/discrimination perspective (Tinkler, 2008). In essence, the organization is stepping in to tell employees that they are interpreting their own social interactions incorrectly, and must change the way they make sense of their own behaviors.

Furthermore, the goal of sexual harassment and diversity training is often to change behaviors. So, through sexual harassment and diversity training, not only is the organization reframing employees' past sexual and sex-based behaviors as wrong, but it is also prohibiting those behaviors in the future. Since these are the very behaviors that police officers perceive as necessary to their work, the training program's attempt at sensebreaking-sensegiving is often met with cynicism and hostility (Tinkler, 2012; Rawski, 2016). These backlash, or "boomerang" effects, have also been observed in sexual assault training for high-risk men, who view such trainings as an infringement on their autonomy to act as they please (Malamuth, Huppin, & Linz, 2018); yet another example of how training interventions are ineffective for the populations that need them most.

In contrast to the current training literature, the sensegiving perspective on training offers the potential for new insights into how to make training more effective. For example, particular frame "jumps" might be more palatable to police personnel experiencing training in MCCs. Employees of policing organizations may find it easier to transition from framing social sexual behaviors as playful group cohesion to framing them as unprofessional (e.g., as distracting and unproductive), rather than as illegal harassment. To be sure, for those whose job and identity is about going after those who break the law, the message that they too are lawbreakers will likely be met with fierce resistance – even cognitive dissonance – making it difficult for them to accept that they are in the wrong and that their behavior needs to change. The unprofessional frame does not directly challenge and may even be consistent with other masculinity contest cultural norms (e.g., "put work first" suggests that "we shouldn't be horsing around"), unlike the illegal harassment frame. The frame jump from playful to unprofessional is not as drastic as the jump

from playful to morally wrong and illegal, and therefore, will be less likely to be met with trainee resistance.

Similarly, the roles defined for trainees during typical sexual harassment/diversity training sessions may inadvertently make police personnel feel that they can only fit into one of two undesirable roles: harasser or victim, the two roles defined in the legal definition of sexual harassment (Rawski, 2016). A sensegiving perspective suggests that offering more positive roles during training should result in increased trainee engagement and better training outcomes. Examples of potential positive roles to offer trainees include an “upstander” role (i.e., a bystander who intervenes to stop harassment), a “big enough to admit a mistake” role (i.e., someone who realizes that a comment was hurtful and makes amends), and a “stand up for yourself” role (i.e., a target of harassment who firmly but calmly confronts harassing behavior). This approach would provide more attractive alternatives, which do not contradict masculine norms and may even be consistent with them (e.g., emphasizing that it takes courage to be an upstander or self-confidence to admit a mistake), thereby reducing trainee resistance.

Finally, a sensegiving perspective suggests training would be more effective if it directly addressed “the elephant in the room” by acknowledging that harassment and discrimination are complex social phenomena. Because people may find the same behaviors enjoyable and fun in some contexts, but offensive and threatening in others (Rawski & O’Leary-Kelly, 2017; Breaux-Soignet et al., 2014; Berdahl & Aquino, 2009; Aquino et al., 2014), there will be frequent disagreements about whether a given behavior is harassment/discrimination or not. Bringing this complexity out in the open during training may help to engage trainees struggling with “gray area” behaviors such as sexual jokes or compliments to physical appearance in the workplace. Employees may be more receptive to the organization’s preferred frame if the organization

openly recognizes that the employees have (often without ill intentions) their own frames for social sexual behaviors and other ambiguous behaviors (e.g., race or gender-based jokes).

Organizations could then present reasons why their preferred frame is more desirable and build employees' conflict management skills to navigate the complex social interactions that inevitably arise as they and their coworkers sort out social norms for their work groups. These discussions may enhance employees' motivation to put into action what they learned in training (i.e., transfer of training) by increasing their perceptions that the training content is useful on the job (Noe, 1986).

The three suggestions for training interventions that we have discussed are just a start to conceiving of training as an organizational sensegiving mechanism. But we argue that the sensegiving perspective offers promising new avenues for interventions for workplaces with MCCs, in which current training has had a notoriously bad track record. This perspective offers a path through the paradoxical dead end that has resulted from past training research. Given the pressing need to address ways of reducing the ill effects of MCCs in policing organizations, both for the health and safety of officers and the communities they serve, we hope that practitioners and researchers will pursue sensegiving as a promising new direction in training effectiveness research.

Discussion

The hyper masculine and hostile work environments characteristic of masculinity contest cultures (MCCs), often found within policing, raise many questions about effective interventions that are currently unanswered. We know that training is only effective when the organizational context supports the training program content (Kozlowski & Salas, 1997; Kozlowski, Chao, & Jensen, 2010; Bezrukova et al. 2016; Perry et al., 2009; Walsh et al., 2013), but MCCs are likely

to contradict most existing preventative training programs. Given the myriad reports flagging sexual harassment and discrimination as frequent occurrences in policing organizations, putting employees at risk, creating frustrations that can be taken out on members of the public, and leading to costly legal and reputational damage, there is an urgent need for effective interventions.

Police administrators tasked with responding to these issues continue to use sexual harassment and diversity training methods that research suggests are ineffective in MCCs. We propose an alternative viewpoint informed by social interactionism to understand how to reduce employees' resistance to training: training as a sensegiving mechanism (Rawski, 2016). From this perspective, training fails when it disrupts how employees frame their workplace social interactions in ways that threaten pre-established frames and roles that employees use to make sense of sexual and sex-based workplace interactions (Rawski, 2016). By contrast, the sensegiving perspective offers new insights for training interventions, inspiring new ways to frame trainings to avoid resistance. For instance, the sensegiving perspective on training promotes the use of frames and roles that are less antagonistic to the underlying masculinity contest culture than the legal compliance frame and associated victim/harasser roles. Example of potentially more effective frames and roles include, a professionalism frame and an upstander role. The sensegiving perspective on training also suggests addressing the inherent complexity of sensitive issues like harassment and discrimination. By acknowledging that different people may view the same behaviors differently and developing trainees' conflict management skills to address these inevitable disagreements, training sessions can avoid the backlash that comes from forcing a grey area into a black and white framework. These suggestions may lead to greater

buy-in from police officers and ultimately to training sessions that are better able to reduce potentially harassing and discriminatory behaviors.

The sensegiving perspective may also lead to research on new types of interventions to compare training effectiveness to past approaches. We suggest three key areas for future study to assess: (a) the benefits of frame shifting (e.g., transitioning from a play frame to an unprofessional frame), (b) the effectiveness of offering positive (as compared to negative) social roles to employees during training; and (c) whether training is more effective when it intentionally and directly addresses the complexity of sexual harassment and discrimination, acknowledging the different frames people may apply to social sexual behaviors in the workplace. These social interactionism-inspired research questions have the potential to create new best practices for training interventions in masculinity contest cultures.

Policy Implications

Our perspective also offers suggestions for practice and public policy. Although policing organizations should be cautious about implementing new and unproven training interventions, they should evaluate current training interventions with measures informed by social interactionism. For instance, past research has shown that employees who feel threatened by the sensebreaking attempts during training are more likely to exhibit negative training outcomes (Rawski, 2016). Evaluating potential threat reactions and other related variables (e.g., identity affirmation) during training could help organizations understand *why* their training programs are more or less effective. Policing organizations could specifically evaluate whether training interventions elicit threats to the police officer identity or masculine identity more generally. These specific identities could play a key role in determining training effectiveness within

organizations characterized by MCCs, necessitating that organizations take the time to evaluate these factors during training sessions.

From a public policy perspective, federal case law in the US strongly encourages organizations to administer sexual harassment training and many state laws (e.g., California) require mandatory sexual harassment training. Yet, these policies do not require or even encourage organizations to assess training effectiveness. As a result, many organizations may be administering training merely to comply with legal requirements, even when the training does not decrease harassment/discrimination or, even worse, motivates resistance that increases harassment/discrimination (Tinkler, 2012; Rawski, 2016). In policing organizations, these effects have even more reverberations because the internal policing organization culture ripples outward into the communities they serve. Thus, we suggest a key public policy implication: new laws and standards that demand accountability for harassment and discrimination training via empirical research establishing its effects on organizational climate and employee behaviors.

Limitations

Although the empirical data presented in this paper are the first evidence that MCCs within policing are related to negative outcomes, our findings are limited by the small sample size, the higher percentage of civilian versus sworn police officers, and the low percentage of female officers in Site 1 (10.7%), which was significantly below both the organizational and national averages for female sworn representation (19.8% and 21%, respectively). Further, much of the literature on police culture pertains to sworn officers and operational policing functions (e.g., patrol, detective work, emergency response); therefore, it would be expected that MCCs would be higher within these functions. Our findings are consistent with these expectations as

sworn officers were more likely to report higher MCC scores than civilian personnel (MCC scale mean of 4.0 versus 3.4).

Future research would benefit from a larger (and more representative) sample of sworn police officers to test the hypothesis that policing is particularly disposed to MCCs (mainly among sworn officers) given the nature of the work. Glick, Berdahl, and Alonso (this issue) identified statistically significant (though modest) relationships with: (a) few women in senior leadership roles and (b) blue collar (versus white collar) work – both characteristics of typical police services. Additional research on job characteristics that predict MCCs should be conducted.

In addition to our empirical limitations, our theoretical perspective also has limits that must be considered. Our discussion of social interactionism and the insights it provides for training interventions in MCCs, results in another paradox, a moral paradox. Specifically, our recommendations have suggested that in order to change the harmful behavioral manifestations of MCCs (e.g., sexual harassment, discrimination), we must offer trainees a non-threatening frame that often downplays the harm caused by their actions. As previous training research has revealed, offering frames that directly address the harmful nature of sexual and sex-based behaviors in the workplace will lead threatened trainees to engage in even more of these harmful behaviors in order to protect their positive sense of self and “prove the training wrong” (Tinkler, 2012; Rawski, 2016). So as organizational change makers, we are left with the moral paradox of providing a frame that potentially denies harm to prevent harm or offering a frame that recognizes harm and motivates more harm. Practically speaking, we find that the theories and perspectives that help researchers explain why harmful behaviors occur (e.g., sexual harassment as an abuse of power and oppression of women by patriarchal societies) do not help reduce

harmful behaviors when shared with the perpetrators of those harms. This result has been observed in domestic violence treatment programs for convicted offenders. Specifically, treatments based on feminist theories that explain domestic violence as men's violent oppression of women lead to more recidivism than treatment programs that frame domestic violence as a suboptimal conflict resolution tactic (Cotti et al. *Working Paper*). It may very well be that sexism and the oppression of women are so ubiquitous in our society that when they are challenged or called out for what they are, those who benefit from them will almost always reject the narrative as illegitimate. So, in order to produce tangible changes in society, we must do so covertly, in a way that makes the oppressors want to change without realizing the role they have played in perpetuating harm and unfairness in the current social order.

Besides the moral paradox discussed above, there is also a more practical issue of potential unfairness to those who disagree with an MCC's frame for sexual and sex-based behaviors. We have suggested that training should recognize that people will often disagree with the framings of these actions so trainees should learn conflict management skills to address these inevitable disagreements. This recommendation implicitly places the perpetrators' framing on equal footing with the targets' framing, resulting in an additional burden for targets. Based on our recommendation, targets would be encouraged to go through a potentially lengthy and intense conflict resolution process after already experiencing the harm of the initial sexual or sex-based behaviors. While this is far from an ideal outcome, the alternative would be to not impart conflict resolution skills on trainees, leaving targets without the skills to raise their concerns with their coworkers or supervisors, leaving perpetrators without the self-control to contain their knee jerk reactions to accusations, leaving bystanders without tools to deescalate conflict, and leaving employees in general, afraid of open conversations about their workplace

culture. Conflict resolution skills would also help those who experience unwanted sexual and sex-based behaviors, but do not identify themselves as victims. Rather, they simply want the behaviors to stop and would prefer to manage the situation themselves rather than involve a formal complaint process with their manager or HR. No person ever deserves to be the target of abuse in the workplace, but should a person find themselves in that situation, it is advantageous to have interpersonal skills that help facilitate an end to that abuse. Despite the extra burden this advice may place on the targets of unwanted sexual and sex-based behaviors, we contend that the alternative to our advice results in less effective trainings that will be more likely to perpetuate long-term harm in the workplace.

Conclusion

Police organizations tend to embrace masculinity contest cultures that lead to significant problems for officers and the communities they serve. We presented new findings showing that the measure developed for this special issue, the MMC scale, predicted negative consequences (e.g., reduced inclusion, psychological safety, organizational identification, job satisfaction, and well-being, along with increased turnover intentions) in a specific policing organization. Although training interventions have been hailed as the answer, past harassment and diversity trainings have had a poor track record and, we argue, are especially likely to fail in masculinity contest cultures in policing organizations. We suggest the training as sensegiving approach as a way to resolve the paradox that the policing organizations that need training the most, are the least likely to benefit from current training interventions. Incorporating frames that are not inherently incompatible with or threatening to employees' own sensemaking, that offer positive (rather than negative) identities and roles, and frankly acknowledge the ambiguity of social sexual and sex-based behaviors, has the potential to revolutionize approaches to harassment and

discrimination training. Importantly, we strongly recommend evaluating training effectiveness – which many organizations currently fail to do – and suggest that public policy makers require organizations to do so. It is our hope that the approach to harassment and discrimination training, as well as research into their effectiveness can be reinvigorated, helping police administrators to implement best practices for training interventions in unsupportive contexts.

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Table 1

Measures

Organizational Climate	Scale	Example items	α
Inclusion	7 items adapted on a scale of 1 (strongly disagree) to 7 (strongly agree) (O'Reilly et al., 2014)	“My unique skills and talents are valued” “I feel included by my co-workers”	.86
Psychological safety	7 items adapted on a scale from 1 (strongly disagree) to 7 (strongly agree) (Edmondson, 1999)	“When people make a mistake it is often held against them” (RS). “People are able to bring up problems and tough issues”	.83
Work-Related Outcomes			
Organizational identification	8 items adapted on a scale from 1 (strongly disagree) to 6 (strongly agree) (Mael & Ashforth, 1992)	“I find that my values and the XXX values are similar” “I would describe the XXX as a large family in which most members feel a sense of belonging.”	.89
Job satisfaction	3 items. 1 on a scale from 1 (very dissatisfied) to 7 (very satisfied); 2 on a scale from 1 (very unlikely) to 7 (very likely)	“How satisfied are you with your current job in the XXX?” “Knowing what you know now, how likely would you take this same job?”	.89
Turnover intentions	1 item on a scale from 1 (very unlikely) to 7 (very likely)	“Taking everything into consideration, how likely is it that you will make a genuine effort to find a new job with another Service/employer within the next year?”	N/A
Individual Outcomes			
Psychological wellbeing	3 items adapted on a scale from 1 (all of the time) to 4 (none of the time) (Stewart, Hays, & Ware, 1988)	”How much of the time during the last month have you been a happy person at work? (RS) “How much of the time during the last month have you been a very nervous or anxious person at work?”	.76

Note. “XXX” refers to the name of the organization, which is not publicly identified.

Table 2

Summary Statistics for Study Variables

Variable	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>	<i>N</i>	Min	Max
Masculinity Contest	29.72	9.61	173	8.00	52.00
Inclusion	33.05	9.11	177	7.00	49.00
Psychological Safety	25.78	7.60	176	6.00	42.00
Org. Identification	37.93	10.43	165	8.00	55.00
Job Satisfaction	14.34	4.83	163	3.00	21.00
Turnover Intentions	2.34	1.89	163	1.00	7.00
Psychological Wellbeing	12.62	1.88	162	6.00	15.00
Gender	1.51	.50	180	1.00	2.00
Employee Type	1.49	.50	180	1.00	2.00

Note. Participants who did not identify gender ($n = 3$) were excluded from these analyses. Missing variables were excluded listwise. Valid $N = 162$.

Table 3

Masculinity Contest Culture Linear Regression Model

Model Summary	
Independent Variables	<i>B</i> (SE)
Constant	23.83**(2.56)
Employee type	5.07**(1.67)
Gender	-1.09 (1.66)
<i>F</i> (df)	5.20**(2, 173)
Adj. R^2	.05

Note. $N = 173$. Participants who did not gender ($n = 1$), were excluded from these analyses. Beta values are reported unstandardized, standard errors are reported unstandardized; standard errors are in parentheses.

† < .10, * $p < 0.05$, ** $p < 0.01$, *** $p < 0.001$

Author Biographies

Shannon L. Rawski is an assistant professor in the College of Business at the University of Wisconsin Oshkosh. She earned her Ph.D. in Management from the University of Arkansas in 2016. Her research focuses on sexual harassment, sexual harassment training, and other diversity and gender issues in organizations. Dr. Rawski's research has been published in peer-reviewed outlets such as the Journal of Organizational Behavior Management and Research in Occupational Stress and Well-Being.

Angela L. Workman-Stark is an associate professor (term) in the Faculty of Business at Athabasca University where her research interests are primarily focused on the role of gender in male-dominated organizations and creating inclusive workplaces. Dr. Workman-Stark is also a former Chief Superintendent with the Royal Canadian Mounted Police, and continues to work extensively with police services in Canada and internationally to address issues of sex-based discrimination and harassment.