RESEARCH REPORT: DIVERSITY WITHIN POLICE FORCES – A FRAMEWORK FOR COMPREHENSIVE POLICY ANALYSIS[1]

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Abstract

The police are a special public institution to study with regard to diversity. Although, in theory, every officer can become a police chief, empirical data on police forces in Europe shows that the level of diversity (in terms of gender, migrant background and sexual orientation) is not representative of society upon entry into the force, and diminishes as rank increases. Academic literature indicates internal factors as the cause, but also as the main obstacle to improving this situation. It is, therefore, important to study organisational diversity policies, but this field of study contains some serious omissions. First, comprehensive studies are scarce: most publications focus on only a few important policy areas (recruitment, promotion and retention). Second, comparative studies are rare, although these provide the necessary information to formulate new hypotheses. Therefore, in addition to diversity statistics for various police forces in Europe, this article presents a framework of policy areas, types and measures to study and compare diversity policies within police forces in a comprehensive way.

Key words: police, diversity, diversity policy, organisation.

Introduction

This article presents the police as a special organisation to study with respect to internal diversity. Although, in theory, any police officer can rise to the highest ranks, in practice the level of diversity within police forces in Europe is not representative of society to begin with and diminishes as ranks ascend. This is illustrated by empirical data on a variety of police forces in Europe, defining diversity as differences in gender, migrant background and sexual orientation. Unfortunately, not all desired data were available. Completing these data is beyond the scope of this article, although this observation is a plea for more attention for, and data-gathering on, these forms of diversity. Academic literature on the introduction of diversity within the police organisation always indicates internal factors as the root causes for this imbalance, as well as the most important obstacles for improving it. It is, therefore, important to study policies that aim to make the level of diversity within police forces more representative of society.

1 This is an abridged version of a paper , which has been published earlier as an MMG Working Paper by the Max Planck Institute for the Study of Religious and Ethnic Diversity (Göttingen, Germany, www.mmg.mpg.de). The full version with the complete references is also available from the CEPOL e-Library.

Academic literature on this specific topic presents many of these policies, which can be categorised in three organisational areas: recruitment, promotion and retention. However, no empirical study analyses policies in all of these areas at the same time, despite the fact that their effectiveness is likely to be influenced by the interaction between those areas. Furthermore, comparative research on the topic is scarce, although this would greatly enhance the possibility to formulate hypotheses, for example, on relations between contextual factors and types of policies, relations between policy areas, and so forth. Therefore, this article presents a framework that includes all three areas, summarising many of the policy measures mentioned in the literature in a comprehensive way. The article strives to answer two main questions. First, what is the relationship between the level of diversity among police officers and the hierarchical level of police officers? Second, which policies regarding recruitment, retention and promotion can be formulated to make the level of diversity among police officers more representative of society?

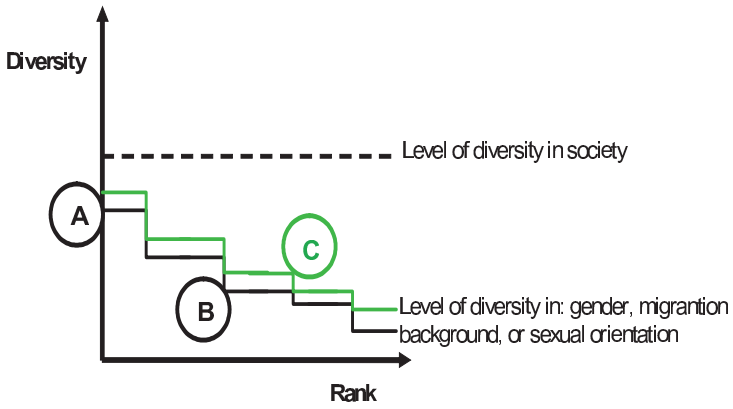

Figure 1. Relation between diversity and rank in the police organisation

1. Introducing diversity in the police as a public institution

In practice, at least in the European context, the level of diversity seems to be unrepresentative of the level of diversity in society upon entry into the organisation and this level diminishes as rank increases. This relationship is summarised in an abstract way in Figure 1 above, and is illustrated in three steps (A, B, C) with empirical data afterwards.

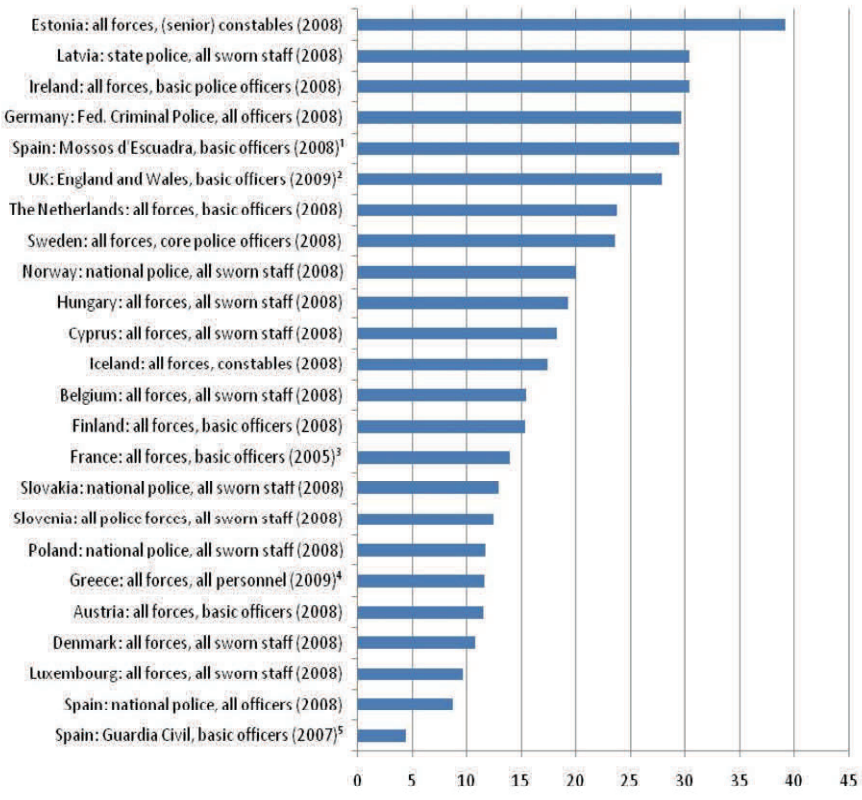

Figure 2. Percentage of female police officers in police forces in Europe

Observation A): Low level of diversity among police officers entering the organisation

There is considerably less data on police officers with a migrant background. In France, this information is officially unavailable, but the impression of politicians and academics is that the immigrant population is heavily underrepresented (Zauberman & Levy, 2003). The category only recently appeared in Catalonia (Spain), where in 2009 3.1 per cent of the new recruits in training for the Mossos d'Esquadra had at least one parent born abroad, of which 2.3 per cent had at least one parent born outside the European Union (ISPC, 2009). Despite the fact that the German government introduced a rule that allows non-nationals to become police officers when they are urgently needed, ethnic minorities made up around 1 per cent of the entire German police force in 1999 (Franzke, 1999). The United Kingdom and the Netherlands do offer recent statistics on ethnic minority representation within police forces. For example, in 2009, in police forces in England and Wales ethnic minority police officers at constable rank accounted for 4.8 per cent (Home Office, 2009); in the Netherlands in 2009, 6 per cent of the police officers had a migrant background (LECD, 2009).

Figures on sexual orientation are almost non-existent, although gay police officer associations have been increasing in various countries since the 1990s.

Observation B) The level of diversity among police officers diminishes as rank increases

Police force—Relation diversity and rank

Greece—In 2003 3 per cent of the higher ranks (superintendent to lieutenant general) were occupied by women, while the average percentage of women in the entire police organisation was 11.6 per cent.

Spain (Guardia Civil) — In 2007 0.2 per cent of the officials and 2.7 per cent of the superior officials (the highest rank) were women, versus around 4 per cent female police officers at the base.

Spain (Mossos d'Escuadra) — In 2008 none of the 9 commissioners was female, 10.3 per cent of the 'intendentes' (second highest rank) were female, and 7.6 per cent of the inspectors (third highest rank) were female, versus 29.5 per cent of female police officers in the police force in general.

Spain (Policia Nacional) — In 2008 8.7 per cent of the constables were female, and 11.4 per cent of the sub-inspectors were female, versus 1.6 per cent of the (chief) inspectors, and 1.9 per cent of the (chief) superintendents.

The Netherlands — In 2008 the percentage of women in the higher-ranking positions of all 26 Dutch police forces (from strategic leadership positions to direction) was 18.9 per cent, versus 22.1 per cent of female police officers in general. Also, the percentage of police officers with a migrant background was 4.1 per cent, versus 5.6 per cent at the base.

Austria — In 2008 11.5 per cent of the basic police officers were female, versus 3.1 per cent of the middle management and 2.1 per cent of the senior management positions.

Belgium—In 2008 15.5 per cent of the basic police officers were female, versus 7.5 per cent of the middle management and 6.8 per cent of the senior management positions.

Estonia — In 2008 although 39.2 per cent of the basic police officers were female, only 28.9 per cent of the management positions were occupied by women and only 4.5 per cent of the senior management positions.

Finland — In 2008 15.4 per cent of the basic police officers were female, versus 6.8 per cent of the senior police officers, 5.1 per cent of the commanding police officers and 2.8 per cent of the high command positions.

Iceland—In 2008 17.4 per cent of the constables were female, versus 0 per cent of the sergeants, 7.8 per cent of the (chief) inspectors and 2 per cent of the (chief) superintendents.

Sweden — In 2008 23.6 per cent of the core police officers were female, versus 13.9 per cent of the managerial officers.

UK (England and Wales) — In 2009 the proportion of women in the more senior ranks (chief inspector and above) was 13.0 per cent, versus 27.9 per cent of female police officers in general, while minority ethnic officers accounted for 2.8 per cent, versus 6.3 per cent of minority ethnic police officers at the base.

Denmark—In 2010 2 out of 12 police directors are female. None seem to have a migrant background, as their skin colour is white and their last names are Danish.

Policy area	Policy types	Policy measures
Recruitment	A. Publicity	• Target groups (Casey, 2000; Metz & Kulik, 2008), • Media channels (Blay, 2008; EPPHR, 2001; Wilson & Grammich, 2009; Wrench, 2007), language (Bennet, 1995), • Relation of content to diversity (EPPHR, 2001; Wrench, 2007), • Job descriptions (Johnston, 2006)
	B. Preparation	• Preparatory programmes • Target groups (Bennet, 1995; Bland *et al*, 1999; Blay, 2008; EPPHR, 2001; Metz & Kulik, 2008; Wrench, 2007)
	C. Selection process	• Selection criteria (Blay, 2008; Casey, 2002; Metz & Kulik, 2008; Wrench, 2007), • Special criteria (Johnston, 2006), • Value of special skills (Johnston, 2006), • Tests (EPPHR, 2001), • Positive discrimination (Blay, 2008; Lewis & Ramakrishnan, 2007), • Profile evaluators and professors (Martínez, 2007), • Education and training of evaluators (Wrench, 2007)
	D. Profile new recruits (all levels)	• Monitoring/registration profiles students (EPPHR, 2001), • Average profile (Jain & Agocs, 2008; Thériault, 2008), • Recruitment targets (Blay, 2008; Johnston, 2006; Metz & Kulik, 2008; Phillips, 2005), • Status recruitment targets (Van der Lippe *et al*, 2004)

Retention	A. Organisational structure	• Diversity in vision and strategy (Metz & Kulik, 2008), • Diversity in organisational structure: diversity department or diversity manager (Casey, 2002; Dick & Cassell, 2002), • Diversity budget (Van der Lippe *et al*, 2004; Wilson & Grammich, 2009), • Complaint procedures/anti-discrimination institutions (Radford *et al*, 2006; Van der Lippe *et* al, 2004; Wrench, 2007)
	B. Internal communication	• Internal awareness campaigns (Dick & Cassell, 2002; Radford *et al*, 2006), • Symbolic events (Metz & Kulik, 2008), • Behavioural/language guides (Martínez, 2007)
	C. Working environment	• Neutral working environment (Coleman & Cheurprakobkit, 2009; EPPHR, 2001), • Special physical arrangements (Jain & Agocs, 2008), • Shift hours (Colvin, 2009; Martínez, 2007), • Shift composition (Colvin, 2009; Martínez, 2007), • Mentor/tutor/coach programme (Bennet, 1995), • Flexibility in working experiences (Wilson & Grammich, 2009)
	D. Associations of minority police officers	• Type of associations, organisational support, role (Holdaway, 1998; Phillips, 2005; Radford *et al*, 2006)
	E. Content of courses	• Themes in curriculum, all levels (Bennet, 1995; Coleman & Cheurprakobkit, 2009; EPPHR, 2001; Holdaway, 1998; Lewis & Ramakrishnan, 2007; Metz & Kulik, 2008), • Role (Ungerleider & McGregor, 2008), • Objectives (Bennet, 1995), • Role of civilians in design and implementation (EPPHR, 2001)
	F. Profile unnatural outflow	• Monitoring/registration profiles unnatural outflow (Blay, 2008; Casey, 2000), • Average profile outflow (Bland *et al*, 1999), • Exit interviews (Martínez, 2007), • Motivational checks among those who stay (Wilson & Grammich, 2009)
Promotion	A. Publicity	• Media, channels (Bland *et* al, 1999; Metz & Kulik, 2008), • Specific channels for specific groups (Martínez, 2007), • Talent programmes (Bland *et al*, 1999)
	B. Evaluation job performance	• Evaluation criteria, profile evaluators (Johnston, 2006; Phillips, 2005; Thériault, 2008)
	C. Selection process	• Selection criteria (Blay, 2008; Casey, 2002; Metz & Kulik, 2008; Wrench, 2007), • Special criteria (Johnston, 2006), • Value of special skills (Johnston, 2006), • Tests (EPPHR, 2001), • Positive discrimination (Blay, 2008; Lewis & Ramakrishnan, 2007), • Profile evaluators and professors (Martínez, 2007), • Education and training of evaluators (Wrench, 2007) • Compatibility of working hours and other obligations (Van der Lippe et al, 2004; Martínez, 2007),
	D. Practical access to courses/ positions	• Compatibility of new responsibilities and other obligations (Van der Lippe et al, 2004)
	E. Profile per level	• Monitoring/registration profiles per level (EPPHR, 2001), • Average profile (Blay, 2008; Dick & Cassell, 2002; Lewis & Ramakrishnan, 2007), • Targets for specific groups (Blay, 2008), • Status of targets (Van der Lippe et al, 2004)

Concluding remarks

Using the comprehensive view, by taking into account policies from all policy areas (recruitment, promotion and retention), will improve researchers' understanding of the internal dynamics of the police force in relation to diversity: they will then be better able to take all relevant variables into account when explaining or evaluating the effectiveness of certain policies. Using the comprehensive view will also assist practitioners to determine which successful policies can be incorporated into their organisational practices straight away, and which will require a more profound change in the organisation.

This article provides a framework to facilitate the study and comparison of diversity policies within police forces in a structured way. In conclusion it invites others to use it. After all, *"reflecting upon institutional actions in specific contexts could deepen our understanding of the mechanics behind conceptual issues in a way that abstract discussion does not"* (Weick, 1979: 164).

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