

# A qualitative exploration into the transformational leadership flashcard



There has been much research and discussion stressing the need for organisational change within the police. Radical organisational restructure has become necessary to equip the police organisation to provide a modern and relevant service within the social, political and cultural climate that has evolved over past decades (Bayley and Shearing, 1996; Chan, 1996; Wright, 2000; Loader, 2000; Bowling and Foster, 2002; Reiner, 2000). Such researchers have suggested that organisational change is both inevitable and vital if the police service is to survive in our post-modern, globalised society.

Positive leadership has been identified as critical in effecting organisational change and researchers have long supported that the particular strength of transformational leadership is the ability to bring about successful organisational change (Alimo-Metcalfe, 1998; Bass and Riggio, 2006). Transformational leadership is characterised by the leader's ability to empower and entrust followers and to create a supportive and motivating environment whereby the followers are allowed the freedom of creativity. Such an environment acts to transfer the goals and objectives of the organisation to the employees of the organisation and this in turn nurtures a dedicated, enthusiastic workforce motivated to achieve for the benefit of the organisation.

Current research indicates that women are often particularly and naturally skilled at leading in a transformational way and are therefore able to bring about effective organisational change as required in the police service (Alban-Metcalfe and Alimo Metcalfe, 2000, 2005; Carless, 1998; Eagly et al, 2003; Rosner, 1990; Silvestri, 2003). Despite this evidence women remain

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under-represented in senior positions of leadership and even further under-represented in the macho-dominated domain of senior police leadership. Not only do women hold the potential to successfully implement change management, they also serve to act as role models and mentors and can assist in breaking through the glass ceiling and empowering and motivating more women to recognise such traits within themselves and therefore strive for senior management roles.

The police organisation must be able serve diverse communities and should therefore be representative of the population making up those diverse communities. Police leaders are responsible for decision making and developing policy and procedures effecting communities. These decisions should be made by diverse leaders with differing gender perspectives to truly meet the needs of women in the police organisation and in the communities the police organisation is designed to serve.

Despite the plethora of research literature into transformational leadership, research into transformational leadership styles of women becomes somewhat thinner. Research into transformational leadership styles of police women can be described as, at best, sparse. Silvestri (2003, 2007) conducted qualitative research and argues that senior police women are adopting transformational leadership styles and this is crucially needed to effect organisational change. However, Silvestri warns that police rank hierarchy and the hegemonic, masculine police identity prevents the adoption of transformational leadership.

Brown (2003) states that real change can only occur in the police service with a radical shift towards better leadership and an increase in women in senior ranks. Heidensohn (1992) also theorises that the employment of more senior police women will lead to a favouring of transformational leadership which will allow for organisational and cultural change.

It is important to further the drastically limited research into effective leadership styles adopted and favoured by senior police women. This research is a celebration and illustration of the positive transformational leadership styles adopted by such women. It is anticipated that the findings will provide encouragement and inspiration for other police women to find the confidence to lead in their own way. This research may also highlight to the police leaders responsible for assessing and promoting police leaders, the positive transactional leadership traits and the benefits these bring to the police organisation.

The aim of this research is to qualitatively explore the transformational leadership styles of senior police women. The research objectives are as follows;

- To explore how senior police women are 'doing leadership' and how this correlates to transformational leadership.
- To explore whether there is an emerging female advantage in the leadership domain.
- To explore the barriers to progression for police women due to masculine police culture.
- To explore the barriers to adopting transformational leadership within the police performance culture.
- To explore how senior police women are

breaking down barriers and effecting change through transformational leadership.

The above objectives will be explored utilising a framework of gender theory whereby gender is viewed as a form of control while applying a liberal feminist perspective as a framework to explore equality of sexes within an organisational context.

The structure begins with a literature review to contextualise the research within the wider debate of transformational leadership within organisations. The literature review focuses down to examine research on transformational leadership and gender. Finally the literature review critically analyses the limited research available focusing on police women and transformational leadership.

The following chapter describes the qualitative methodology employed, including the design of semi-structured research questions, the selection of the research samples, the conducting of in-depth interviews and the limitations, problems and ethical considerations.

A detailed discussion follows which is structured into the five sections mirroring the research objectives as discussed above. This chapter includes an in-depth discussion of the interview data and critically analyses supporting and opposing research to move the debate forward. The discussion utilises a gender model framework to thoroughly explore the research subject. The research concludes by summarising the findings relating to the research objectives.

Transformational leadership is a process whereby leaders are able to transform their own goals into those of the organisation for the good of the organisation and the members within that organisation. Transformational leaders are able to engender higher levels of motivation and commitment among followers by creating feelings of trust and loyalty by empowering, consulting and delegating (Mullins, 2005). Burns (1978) was the first to conceptualise and develop leadership theory as either transformational or transactional.

Transformational leadership is often viewed in comparison and polarity to transactional leadership which is seen as autocratic and is based on the bureaucratic organisational structure and the legitimate authority that this creates. A transactional leader tells employees what to do and uses the organisational rewards and punishment system to achieve objectives (Mullins, 2005). Transformational leadership however, goes beyond this task-oriented rewards exchange and takes leadership to the next level.

Bass & Riggio argue that transformational leaders do much more with colleagues and followers than arrange a series of rewards for tasks; 'The leadership inspires followers with challenges and persuasion, providing both meaning and understanding. The leadership is intellectually stimulating, expanding the followers' use of their ability. Finally, the leadership is individually considerate, providing the follower with support, mentoring, and coaching.' (2006: 5)

Transformational leadership embodies positive leadership traits emphasising empowerment of followers. This concept fits well with contemporary

organisational change and management theory which highlights the need for organisations to become less bureaucratic and hierarchical in favour of participation, team orientation and flexibility (Kark, 2004). Transformational leadership is defined by qualities of participation, empowerment, consultation and inclusion and transcends the autocratic style of transactional leadership, although Bass (1985) does point out that transactional leadership, particularly contingent reward, does provide a broad basis for effective leadership.

Critics of transformational leadership such as Khurana (2002, University of Leicester, 2008) believe that too much praise is given to the charismatic powers of the transformational leader and this can raise the leaders' status to that of 'hero'. This enables the leader to reject limits to their authority, dismissing norms and rules and exploiting the followers and the organisation. Bass and Riggio (2006) provide examples of charismatic and inspirational leaders that have used their qualities to lead followers to destructive and evil outcomes such as Adolf Hitler and Osama Bin Laden. In defence of transformational leadership Bass & Riggio argue that although such leaders do exhibit many elements of transformational leadership they also possess personal, exploitative and self-aggrandising motives. They label this style of leadership as pseudo-transformational which is to be clearly defined from transformational leadership.

Transformational leadership has been well researched in the organisational setting and we are able to draw on evidence which tests the concept of this leadership style. Alimo-Metcalfe (1998) conducted extensive research with public sector workers and identified three clusters of leadership qualities in <https://assignbuster.com/a-qualitative-exploration-into-the-transformational-leadership-flashcard/>

fourteen dimensions of transformational leadership. Under the cluster of leading and developing others are dimensions of enabling staff to make decisions and encouraging creative and strategic thinking to bring about change.

The topic of transformational leadership has been explored deeper to investigate relationships with gender differences again within the organisational environment. Rosener (1990) completed qualitative research that compared women's and men's leadership styles and concluded that women were more likely to use their socialisation experiences to progress in their careers while men conformed to the traditional command and control, or transactional, leadership styles. The women in Rosener's study aimed to motivate others by transforming their self-interest into the objectives of the group whereas the men viewed their work performance as a series of transactions resulting in extrinsic rewards and punishments for positive and negative performance.

Alban-Metcalfe and Alimo-Metcalfe (2000) have developed a transformational leadership questionnaire (TLQ) and summarise some of their research findings as follows: generally women have been found to construe leadership more in transformational forms and men in more transactional terms, generally women are more likely to describe their style of leadership as transformational and men as transactional, generally women are more likely to be described by their direct reports as adopting a transformational style and men are more likely to be described as adopting a transactional style.



Rosener's research was supported by Carless (1998) who conducted research on employees within financial organisations exploring gender differences on transformational leadership styles. Carless found that the subject managers and their superiors rated female managers as more transformational than male managers. However, the research significantly found that subordinate employees reported no observational differences between the female and male leaders use of the transformational style.

Eagly, Johannesen-Smith and Van Engen (2003) conducted a meta-analysis of 45 studies of transformational, transactional and laissez-faire leadership. This research supported the hypothesis that female leaders were more transformational than male leaders. Although the differences in the findings between men and women were small Eagly et al claim that the research provides evidence to support that women have superior leadership skills than men. The researchers use this evidence to stress that women must be given equal access to leadership positions to enable organisations to fully benefit from enhanced leadership skills. Eagly and Johnson (1990) conducted research that found that in laboratory experiments and assessment studies, women tended to adopt a more democratic or participatory style of leadership and a less autocratic or directive style than men.

Rather more limiting is the availability of research focussing on transformational leadership within the police organisation. Dobby, Anscombe and Tuffin (2004) explored leadership within the police by asking police, police staff and Police Authority members what they considered to be positive leadership traits. Their research identified that effective leadership could be categorised into four groups; ' being committed to achieving a high <https://assignbuster.com/a-qualitative-exploration-into-the-transformational-leadership-flashcard/>

quality service to the community and supporting staff to achieve this; displaying high personal and professional standards and challenging poor behaviour; enabling, valuing and developing staff; having relevant knowledge and skills' (2004: 25). The behaviours identified within these categories closely matched those defined within transformational leadership.

Villiers (2003) claims that the majority of senior police leaders remain autocratic and that the culture of the police organisation must change before entrenched practices are changed. Never before has ethics been so important to police leadership (Mitchell, 2003). Society has asserted democratic values and subsequently demands police leaders that give citizens their say and also stand for the values that those citizens honour. Mitchell argues that the most effective police leader will be the leader that rejects elitist and hierarchical notions of leadership based on power and status and is committed to teaching their followers to become leaders.

Several researchers have commented on the positive role that transformational leadership could play in the reform of police and police culture. Transformational leadership has the ability to change the police culture and move it towards a 'quality of service culture' (Adlam, 2003). Wood, Flemming and Marks (2008) believe that police officers from all ranks have the potential to challenge cultural beliefs and meaning which inform their working practices when innovative methods and ideas are introduced. They also argue that rank and file officers have the potential to play an important role as change agents due to the expert knowledge and experience they possess. If such knowledge and ideas are nurtured through transformational leadership the capacity for change is more likely.

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The transformational style of leadership also embodies the qualities of ethical leadership as discussed by Villiers (2003) and Price (2000) which are seen as necessary to create an effective doctrine of leadership in the police organisation, particularly in the wake of labels of institutional racism and police corruption.

Dobby, Anscombe and Tuffin (2004) have undertaken research to evidence links between particular styles of police leadership and police effectiveness. Dobby et al discuss how a lack of evidence of police leadership theory has prevented police forces from specifying preferred leadership styles and also prevent forces from understanding how police leadership should change to effect organisational change and performance. This study found that police officers wanted their leaders to make them feel proud of their contribution and the service they provide. Effective leadership was categorised into the following four groups of delivering a high quality service to the public, displaying high levels of personal and professional standards, empowering and developing staff, and possessing relevant knowledge and skills.

Despite research identifying transformational leadership as a positive and beneficial leadership style there have been barriers of resistance to this style. Foster (2003: 766, quoted in Rowe, 2006) comments that the people relied on to provide transformational leadership are too deeply immersed in the internal cultures and 'imbued with the prevailing ethos of the organisation'. This view presents police culture as a clear barrier to organisational change. Dobby et al (2004) also argue that there are factors within the dominant police culture that impedes progress of embracing transformational leadership.

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Such research suggests that direct entry recruitment into police leadership roles from other organisations may permeate and change this dominant and stubborn police culture. Sir Ian Blair has been vocal in his beliefs that leadership within the police organisation is no different to leadership within other organisations (2003). It would appear that rank and file officers may disagree with this view as Rowe's evidence suggests that respect from rank and file officers is only owed to those senior leaders that have operational policing experience and are seen to understand police work (2006).

The hierarchical rank structure and power aligned to this rigid structure has been criticised by researchers as a barrier to police reform and also as a barrier preventing leaders adopting transformational styles within the police organisation. Skogan (2008) discusses that police managers are typically command and control oriented and struggle with devolving freedom to rank and file officers. Skogan states that terms such as 'employee empowerment' makes senior police leaders nervous as they... 'worry about laziness, corruption, racial profiling, and excessive force...' (2008: 24).

Toch (2008) argues that this hierarchical, classical management process is a barrier to improving police performance and enhancing morale through leadership. It is the top-down decision making process that can make rank and file officers feel as though their views are ignored. Toch debates how officers can be enlisted as change agents by harnessing their experiences and involving them in the design and implementation of change. Bayley (2008: 14) supports this view and stresses that,

Police organizations must learn that involving patrol officers and sergeants in diagnosis and planning of both strategic and managerial programs is not incompatible with maintaining necessary discipline in carrying out decisions once made... Increasing their involvement in setting organizational plans... would ensure that directives and goals were more closely connected, with both serving the interests of public safety.

Sklansky and Marks (2008) also question the rank and file structure and suggest this has been a clear barrier to improved service and performance within the police organisation. Instead they argue that adopting a bottom up approach to police reform heightens morale and commitment, develops democratic skills and enables better decisions to be made. Despite these benefits bottom-up approaches are rare in the police partly, Sklansky and Marks argue, due to police occupational culture and largely due to the law enforcement power structure.

Densten (2003) conducted research to explore whether rank matters in terms of police leadership styles. Densten argues the need to examine leadership from a multilevel perspective that recognises and considers the different tasks and characteristics associated with each rank. The application of leadership theories to police leadership therefore cannot be generalised as the roles and requirements differ depending on the rank

Further research by Boerner, Eisenbiess and Griesser (2007) found that transformational leaders boost follower performance and enhance follower innovation by triggering discussions of tasks. Conversely there was no such relationship between transactional leadership and follower performance and

innovation. Brunetto and Farr-Wharton (2003) conducted research and concluded that police officers feel most committed when they are included in decision making processes and when they receive support and performance feedback from their supervisors. Schwarzwald, Koslowsky and Agassi (2001) explored the follower compliance and commitment to their police leaders during situations of conflict.

The research found that followers were compliant towards highly transformational leaders even when they resorted to harsh power tactics and orders. In these circumstances the followers did not view the leader negatively but attributed the harsh approach to the leaders pressing needs. As Schwarzwald et al point out, these findings are consistent with the concept that the leader / follower relationship is one that develops over time, allowing followers to make sense of their leaders' behaviour and expectancies.

Possibly the biggest challenge the police organisation faces is how to apply transformational leadership styles in an environment that demands and dictates hard and fast performance targets. Brown and Neville (1996) refer to the prevailing performance culture within the police organisation which values the achievement of quantitative performance such as numbers of arrests and stop searches. This world of fast changing and hard driven performance indicators still engulfs the police organisation and is in many ways in conflict with transformational leadership styles. This point is reinforced by Currie and Locket (2007) who argue that the traditional means of hierarchy through firm central government control makes it difficult to adopt transformational rhetoric.

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They argue that ' leadership of public sector organizations in England appears less about transforming circumstances...and more about embedding change that others, policy-makers, have initiated' (2007: 365). Currie and Locket argue that public service managers are constrained by having to work within legal, regulatory and policy rules. They argue that those leaders that work within organisations and perform roles where they are held accountable to government ministers in a highly visible way, may be reluctant to distribute leadership thereby conflicting with transformational leadership.

McLaughlin (2007) describes how a tight managerialist regime was implemented by New Labour as part of their commitment to modernising the public sector. Government prescribed a suite of performance indicators and authorised inspections from Her Majesty's Inspectorate of Constabulary to ensure continual improvements were being made. The Police Standards Unit (PSU) was formed in 2001 to intervene in police forces considered to be failing against their performance targets. McLaughlin explains how in 2002 then Home Secretary David Blunkett threatened to send a PSU hit squad in to deal with the high levels of street crime in London. Blunkett also brought William Bratton (former commissioner of NYPD and one of the key instigators of the Compstat system as discussed below) to London to give Chief Constables a talk on how to turn around crime rates.