

# Organisational Culture in the Police: Do perceptions mirror reality?

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## Acknowledgments:

Thanks to the Police officers and sixth form students who took part in both these areas of investigation.

## Biographical Details (if applicable):

Ian Hesketh is a Police Officer with Lancashire Constabulary. He has over 20yrs service and has carried out a number of specialist roles, including secondments with the United Nations to Bosnia & Herzegovina and Kosovo. Ian also works as a short term expert for the Ministry of Justice, and is currently working on the Twinning Project for Serbia's accession to the EU. He has an MBA from Lancaster University and is a Member of the Chartered Management Institute (CMgr) and the Institute for Learning (QTLs). In 2011 his article on *Transformational Leadership During Change* was voted one of the Top 5 Management Articles of the Year by the CMI. Ian is studying for a PhD in Management (part-time) at Lancaster University Management School, UK.

## Structured Abstract:

## Organisational Culture: Are the Police looking younger?

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## Abstract

**Purpose** – This paper aims to juxtapose how young people genuinely view the Police, and how this compares with the image the Police seek to portray; and the service it provides in reality.

**Design/methodology/approach** – This ethnography explores how the police see themselves, using the media of the cultural web (Johnson et al., 2008) to model *The Paradigm*. This is compared to the findings from primary research conducted with sixth form students ( $n=121$ ) in the same force area.

**Findings** - Research carried out in a Constabulary in the North of England concludes that the Police Service sees itself as a Performance and Service oriented organisation that is friendly and welcoming, with staff that have their customers' needs at heart. Viewed through the lens of Senior Managers the Police see themselves as diligent, diverse and understanding of the needs of the community. They concede a strong culture lies within the organisation at all levels. The findings from research conducted by a sixth form college show the police are generally well respected by young people, who think they provide a good service, but would 'like to see more officers on the streets.' Whilst in this study it is apparent that congruence exists, it is important that the police



build upon the status quo, whilst weathering significant organisational change (Hutton, 2011). This is vital if confidence and satisfaction levels are to remain high.

**Research limitations/implications** - The senior officers in this study had considerable knowledge of the subject area and the issues being explored. However this may not be representative of the Police as a whole (generalisability), and should not be interpreted as such. It would be for further ethnographies to explore if this is mirrored further down the organisational structure, to represent a fuller picture in supporting the proposition made within this research.

**Originality/value** - This work proposes that if the needs of the customer are closely aligned to the service provided, the relationship will prosper. To develop this further, one could posit that getting this right will naturally lead to higher levels of police confidence and satisfaction; one of the key aspirations of any Police Service. The strength of the argument is bolstered by the participative nature of the researcher, with the Police viewed through the lens of a *cultural insider* (Headland *et al.*, 1990).

**Keywords** – Police, Culture, Young People, Perceptions, Ethnography

**Paper Type** – Research paper

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**Running Heads:**