

# Research Article

## THE INCORPORATION OF OBEDIENCE TO AUTHORITY INTO NEW SOUTH WALES POLICE FORCE RECRUIT TRAINING

Ken Wooden<sup>‡</sup> and John Nixon

This article draws on a longitudinal study of Australian (New South Wales) (n=286), Canadian (n=116) and Chinese (n=91) police recruits to discuss participants' understandings of the concept of obedience to authority. Results for this study, which was conducted within the early stages of the recruits' training, indicate a significant degree of uncertainty amongst participants from all three jurisdictions when faced with varying situations involving obedience to authority issues. Policing researchers have long observed that recruits enter training with noble intentions and this is enhanced through elements of academy training, such as ethics education. In contrast, however, other researchers have found that once recruits commence their policing roles the negative aspects of police culture can impact adversely upon ethical decision making. In addition, the hierarchical nature of policing coupled with the authoritarian nature of academy training can instil in recruits obedience to authority attributes which can also erode ethical decisions. It is contended that understanding the perceptions of recruits and, in particular, those from New South Wales (NSW), concerning obedience to authority issues, may have implications for recruit training. By incorporating an understanding of obedience to authority along with associated practical scenarios within the academy training curriculum, inexperienced officers when faced with obedience to authority dilemmas in the field may be assisted.

**Keywords:** policing, obedience to authority, police ethics

### PURPOSE

This study examined the question whether obedience to authority is a possible factor in making it difficult for police to report minor misconduct. The study defines obedience to authority and looks specifically at its effect on ethical

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<sup>‡</sup> Corresponding author: kwooden@csu.edu.au

decision making by junior police. The study then describes the methodology used and then discusses the findings. Finally, the study makes several conclusions that led directly to recommendations for future actions that can be incorporated into police recruit training.

In brief, this study highlights the importance of ethics education, and in particular, the topic of obedience to authority in police recruit training. It does this by reporting on the findings of a longitudinal study involving police recruits from New South Wales, Australia, Canada, and China.

## INTRODUCTION

Research suggests that students enter their police training with selfless motives, such as serving the community (Van Maanen, 1973) and with intentions of performing good deeds for society (Sherman, 1991). Research conducted by Meagher and Yentes (1986) found that women and men choose a career in law enforcement for similar reasons "...to help people and the security of the job" (Meagher & Yentes, 1986, p. 324). Research also indicates that policing students' altruistic attitudes prior to the commencement of their training are in fact enhanced during their initial police training.

Wortley's (1992) study found that academy training did have a positive impact upon the attitudes of students. He found that academy training was quite successful in producing police who were not "stereotypically authoritarian" and, that upon completion of academy training, were more adaptable in their understanding of the causes of crime and in some regards less punitive. However, research also indicates that once recruits commence their duties as police officers there is a decline in their noble attitudes (Ellis, 1991; Chan, Devery & Doran, 1991; Christie, Petrie & Timmins, 1996; Haar, 2001; McConkey, Huon & Frank, 1996; Prenzler, 2009). Ellis's (1991) study of the socialisation of police recruits into the police culture showed that as recruits progressed in their policing career they developed a sense of alienation towards the general community. Ellis found that the number of recruits who disagreed with the statement, "I trust most members of the public" was eighteen percent, while the response of experienced constables to the same question was thirty four percent. The author concluded:

It is apparent that new police recruits bring a fairly consistent set of attitudes, beliefs and values concerning policing with them as they approach and enter a policing career. It is also apparent that these attitudes

undergo change in a consistent fashion - police develop a sense of alienation and cynicism concerning their role and place in society (Ellis, 1991, p. 116).

Ellis' study also found support in Australian research conducted by Christie et al., (1996). The latter surveyed 287 Queensland police recruits. The authors found that, "...it seems that exposure to policing renders new recruits more conservative irrespective of their pre-existing level of conservatism. This is so, despite the attempt to liberalise attitudes through education" (Christie et al., 1996, p. 312). Further study into the difference of attitudes between new recruits and experienced police officers was conducted by McConkey et al.,(1996). This study examined attitudes of recruits and police officers who were provided with scenarios involving breaches of ethical conduct. The study found that recruits rated serious breaches of ethical conduct far more seriously than did police officers. McConkey et al. (1996) concluded that most of an officers' training occurs on the street under the guidance of experienced officers. However, the attitudes and behaviours of the veterans can differ from or even contradict academy training. The authors commented, "Policing as an occupation might therefore be regarded as a subculture, the values, attitudes and ethos of which are reinforced by the socialisation of its recruits" (McConkey et al., 1996, p. 1).

In addition, as highlighted by Prenzler (2009), "...within a short time, personal moral standards are deeply compromised" (p. 25). Research conducted by Chan, Devery and Doran (2003) and Haar (2001) also alluded to the problem of the decline of recruits' ethical values once they commence working at police stations. In fact, Haar's (2001) study found that by the end of the first year of work, police recruits held more negative attitudes towards the areas of community policing and problem solving policing. The study found that attitudes of co-workers were a significant contributing factor in the formation of the attitudes of new police officers. Furthermore, field training experience and exposure to the policing environment did not reinforce the positive influence of academy training upon recruits (Haar, 2001).

Research suggests that one factor which may contribute to the decline in academy values is the informal socialisation of recruits into the negative aspects of the police culture. Chan (1997) conceptualised the police culture as "...a layer of informal occupational norms and values operating under the apparently rigid hierarchical structure of police organisations" (p. 43). It is contended though that certain elements of the police culture share both positive and negative

qualities. For instance, police solidarity, standing together in the face of adversity, is an important virtue for a police officer, so is loyalty which has been recognised as, "...an important moral virtue for police" (Richards, 2010, p. 221).

In contrast though, these same positive virtues can also be a negative aspect for the policing role. For example, in terms of solidarity, writers such as Chan (1997) and Crank (1998) have drawn a link between solidarity and "a code of silence" concerning the reporting of police corruption. Also, misplaced loyalty can involve police "turning a blind eye" to police misconduct matters of a non-serious nature (Richards, 2010, p. 231). In fact, indicators exist that the negative aspects of solidarity and loyalty can contribute to the failure of police to report the misconduct of colleagues. During the course of the Wood Royal Commission into corruption in the New South Wales Police, Justice Wood (1997) attributed the reluctance of some officers to report the misconduct of others to the influence of negative characteristics of the police occupational culture. His Justice observed, "...the code of silence ... leads to the closing of ranks and protection of the corrupt and wilfully incompetent" (Wood, 1997 p. 216).

It is also noted that during the Royal Commission, Justice Wood made particular reference to evidence deposited by a witness concerning the influence of the police culture and observed, "[i]t was of such a force that an experienced Internal Affairs investigator, said that he would not expect a probationary constable to ever speak out against a senior officer." (Wood, 1997, p. 406). Justice Wood's observations have also been supported through research, Ede and Legosz (2002) reported the findings of surveys administered to Queensland Police Service recruits, first year constables and experienced police. The participants were presented with hypothetical scenarios of unethical conduct and were asked to articulate their views concerning the perceived seriousness of the scenarios.

Ede and Legosz (2002) examined the results of the surveys in regards to participants' desire to pursue official action and their reluctance to act. Results indicated that recruits considered the ethical breaches depicted within the scenarios as far more serious than the first year constables, whereas the first year constables rated the scenarios more serious than the more experienced police participants. The authors stated, "The data presented here suggest that elements of a code of silence exist to least some extent in the QPS and that new members

of the Service may be quickly socialised into the informal code” (Ede & Legosz, 2002, p. 4).

### OBEDIENCE TO AUTHORITY AND POLICING

In addition to the adverse influences of misplaced loyalty and the negative aspects of solidarity, this current study sought to discover if another possible factor, namely; obedience to authority can make it difficult for police to report minor misconduct matters. It is conceded that it is crucial for subordinate staff to comply with the lawful instructions of superiors, however, obedience to authority deals with subordinate officers following without question the unlawful/unethical directions of senior officers. Milgram (1974) defines obedience to authority as occurring when an individual, “...defines himself in a social situation in a manner that renders him open to regulation by a person of higher status. In this condition the individual no longer views himself as responsible for his own actions but defines himself as an instrument for carrying out the wishes of others” (Milgram, 1974, p. 134).

In addition, Zimbardo (2007) argues that although Milgram’s seminal study involved violence, in modern society; obedience to authority does not necessarily consist of someone in authority facilitating physical violence through the actions of a subordinate. For instance, obedience to authority can involve a person in authority passing an order to a subordinate to undertake, “...verbal abuse that undercuts the self-esteem and dignity of the powerless” (2007, p. 278). Furthermore, as highlighted by Cunha, Rego and Clegg (2010) an important element of obedience to authority is not the, “authority figure’s style” (p. 298) as such, but rather the subordinate’s perception of the legitimacy of the person in authority.

The discussion now turns to the possible adverse influence of obedience to authority upon policing and in particular the ethical decision-making process of junior police. Writers such as Richards (2010) argue that although Milgram’s obedience to authority experiments involved individuals, it may also be applicable to organisations possessing certain characteristics. Such characteristics include; cohesiveness, insularity and subordinates, “subjected to legitimate authority” (Richards, 2010, p. 237). Furthermore, the author considered that police organisations possessed such characteristics which made subordinate staff vulnerable to obedience to authority influences. Additionally, a number of authors have identified various aspects of police organisational

structures and processes as providing opportunity for the facilitation of obedience to authority to occur. For instance, Conti (2009) considered that the police training process encourages new recruits to adopt obedience to authority attitudes. Chappell and Lanza-Kaduce (2010) expand upon Conti's proposition and argue that during police training recruits are required to defer to the hierarchical structure of the police organisation. In fact, Chappell and Lanza-Kaduce (2010) contend that early in their training, new recruits learn about deference to authority and higher rank (p. 194) and in doing so, are taught that deference is associated with rank rather than the police organisation.

Moreover, Clark (2005) argues that even beyond recruit training, police organisations have fostered, "...unquestioning obedience to directives handed down in a strong hierarchical system" (p. 647). The interplay between the concept of obedience to authority and hierarchical organisations such as the police is probably best described by Primeaux and Beckley (1999) who contend that:

Within the hierarchical organization leadership represents the primacy of subordination, of obedience, and of individual distinction because it is defined with respect to decision-making. It is also tied to maintenance, to preserving the central vision and mission of the organization. It promotes distinction and separation by reserving decision-making to itself, and by distinguishing leaders and followers from one another. Leaders make decisions; followers obey them (p. 128).

The problematic nature of obedience to authority for policing also appears to be supported by exploratory research conducted by Wooden (2004). This unpublished research involved qualitative interviews conducted with seven male and two female police recruits undertaking training at the New South Wales Police Academy.

Findings indicated that participants possessed good knowledge concerning accountability and police culture issues. However, when presented with ethical case studies which involved misconduct of senior officers a contradiction appeared in what participants articulated as their understandings and views concerning police culture and accountability and their responses concerning the ethical case studies. For instance, a degree of uncertainty appeared amongst participants as to what actions, if any, they should take regarding the unethical conduct of colleagues. These results from the participants indicated that as ethical scenarios became more difficult, in the sense

of the involvement of supervisors in the misconduct, the level of uncertainty in participants’ responses increased.

METHOD

During September 2012 a questionnaire to discover participants’ understandings of the problematic nature of “obedience to authority” was administered to 286 police recruits from the New South Wales Police Academy ( $m = 210, f = 76$ ), 116 recruits from the Ontario Police College ( $m = 87, f = 29$ ) and 91 policing students from the China Criminal Police University ( $m = 82, f = 9$ ). Students were presented with a number of statements pertaining to “obedience to authority” and were asked as to whether they agreed, disagreed, or were neutral. The demographic characteristics of male and female participants from each sample group are shown in table 1.

Table 1—Demographic Data

Demographics	Australia	Canada	China	Total
<b>Gender</b>				
Male	210	87	82	379
Female	76	29	9	114
<b>Age</b>				
18–25	178	45	88	311
26–30	52	38	3	93
31–35	29	24	0	53
36–40	14	8	0	22
41–45	8	2	0	10
46–50	5	1	0	6
<b>Marital Status</b>				
Single	187	52	91	330
Married	52	47	0	99
de facto /Common Law	40	15	0	55
Separated	4	2	0	6
Divorced	2	1	0	3
Other	0	1	0	1

This study followed a qualitative research methodology utilising a survey approach. The survey given to participants consisted of 14 demographic questions and nine scales measuring different aspects of new police recruits attitudes and experiences. Only one scale was of interest to the present study.

Other scales and questions were for related research. Participants' understanding of the problematic nature of obedience to authority was measured using a 12-item author-designed self-report questionnaire.

From this questionnaire four questions were selected to be analysed. These were deemed to be relevant to the issue of obedience to authority. The first question looked at whether students would always report the conduct of a senior officer if they ordered them to do something they knew was wrong. The second question asked them if they felt they had sufficient knowledge to handle any dilemmas that could arise regarding obedience to authority. The third question asked them if they believed they would be supported by police management if they reported the misconduct. Finally, they were asked whether they felt they would be subjected to bullying and ostracism if they reported this misconduct. Participants were asked to rate their responses on a Likert scale ranging from 1 (strongly disagree) to 5 (strongly agree).

As this research needed to consider the perceptions and attitudes of police recruits concerning the topic of obedience to authority, the selection of participants were chosen through purposive sampling (Walter 2006). In regards to the use of purposive sampling, Walter (2006), observed, "[i]n purposive sampling, the sample is selected in a systematic way based on what we know about the target population and the purpose of the study" (Walter, 2006, p. 199). This type of sampling is supported by Denzin and Lincoln (2000) who observe that purposive sampling is used when researchers, "...seek out groups, settings and individuals where and for whom the process being studied are most likely to occur" (Denzin & Lincoln, 2000, p. 370). However, the researchers undertaking this current study do recognise the limitations of such research methods.

A possible limitation is that results cannot be generalised to other situations (Hakim, 1987). In this present case, police recruits undertaking training in New South Wales, the Ontario Police College and China Criminal Police University was not representative of all police recruit populations and therefore, subsequent results do not allow for generalisations to be drawn concerning recruits training in other academies. Nonetheless, as the study was exploratory, it is considered that the participants from the aforementioned training facilities provided a snapshot of their understandings and attitudes concerning the concept of "obedience to authority" which in turn can help assist the formulation of curriculum design and delivery within those institutions.

The obedience to authority questionnaire was distributed to the entire class of recruits in each location. Each class was given the same verbal instructions. They were told that participation was voluntary and that they could leave the questionnaire blank if they did not wish to be involved. Each questionnaire was coded and no identifying information was included on the Form. This was done to ensure anonymity. Email addresses were collected to allow researchers to send out follow up surveys as this was the first stage of a longitudinal study. A frequency analysis was undertaken to allow for an in-depth look at the data. Here the data was collapsed down so that the response categories of *strongly disagree* and *disagree*, as well as *agree* and *strongly agree* were combined, resulting in a three-point Likert scale ranging from *disagree* to *agree*. Once the data was collapsed, clustered bar graphs were generated for the four items of particular interest to the researchers. These graphs were subsequently broken down by gender and country.

## FINDINGS

To explore students understanding of obedience to authority, participants were asked to respond to a series of questions. This report focuses on participants' responses to the following four questions: 1) I would always report the conduct of a senior officer if they ordered me to do something I knew was wrong; 2) I have sufficient knowledge to handle dilemmas that arise regarding obedience to authority; 3) I believe that I would be supported by Police Force management if I reported the unethical conduct of a senior officer; and 4) I would be subjected to bullying and ostracism if I reported misconduct by a superior officer.

*I would always report the conduct of a senior officer if they ordered me to do something I knew was wrong.*

- In terms of the New South Wales Police Force; 120 (57.1%) males agreed, although 68 (32.4%) males were neutral and 22 (10.5%) disagreed. Forty (52.6%) females agreed, however 30 (39.5%) were neutral and 6 (7.9%) disagreed.
- Regarding recruits from the Ontario Police College; 35 (40.2%) males agreed, conversely 38 (43.7%) were neutral and 14 (16.1%) disagreed. Twelve (42.9%) females agreed, however, 14 (50.0%) were neutral and 2 (7.1%) disagreed.

- Concerning recruits from the China Criminal Police University; 18 (22.0%) males agreed, although 45 (54.9%) were neutral and 19 (23.2%) disagreed. Four (44.4%) females agreed, however, 4 (44.4%) were neutral and 1 (11.1%) disagreed.

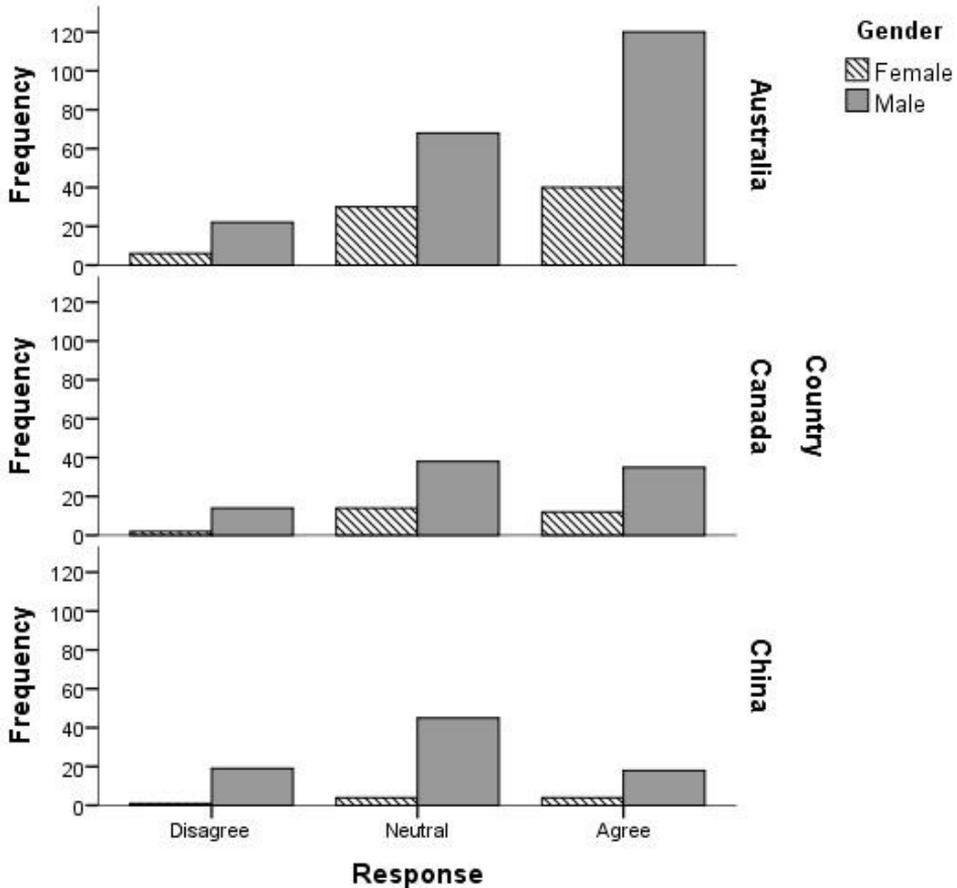


Figure 1—Distribution of responses to question (*I would always report the conduct of a senior officer if they ordered me to do something I knew was wrong*) by gender and country. Valid responses (*n*) from Australia = 286, Canada = 115, China = 91.

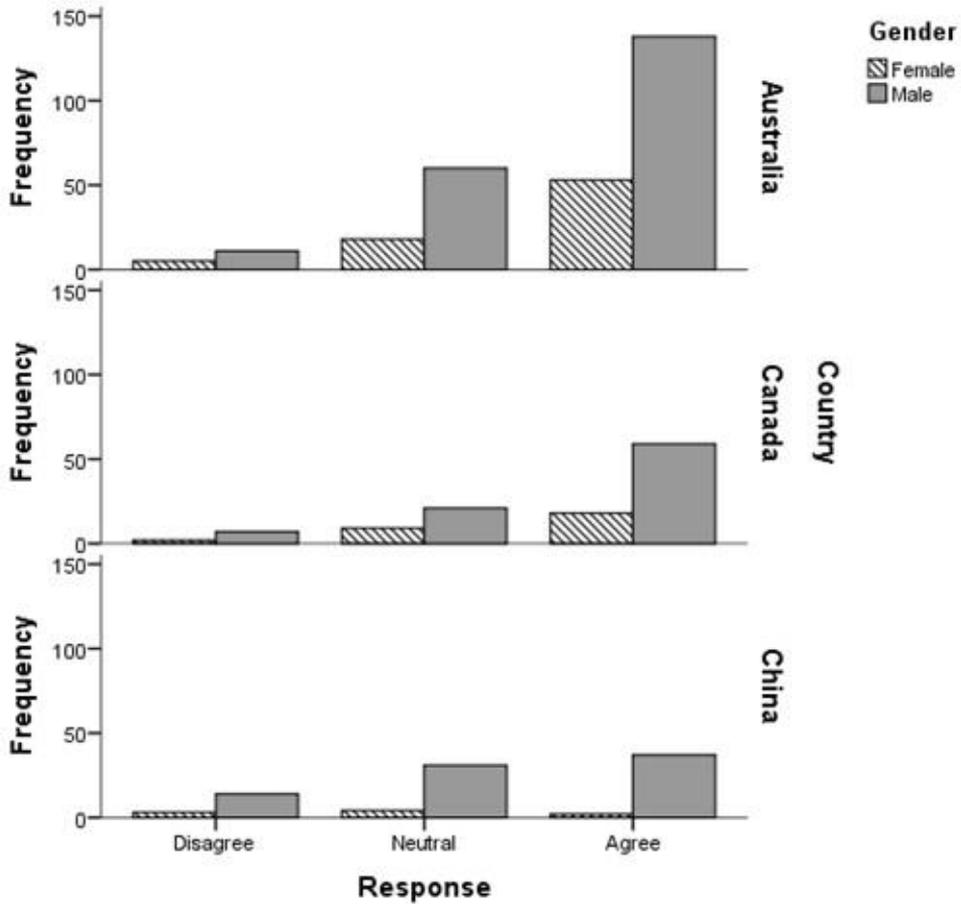


Figure 2—Distribution of responses to question (*I have sufficient knowledge to handle dilemmas that arise regarding obedience to authority*) by gender and country. Valid responses (*n*) from Australia = 285, Canada = 116, China = 91.

*I have sufficient knowledge to handle dilemmas that arise regarding obedience to authority.*

- Regarding recruits from the New South Wales Police Force; 138 (66.0%) males agreed, although 60 (28.7%) males were neutral and 11 (5.3%) disagreed. Fifty three (69.7%) females agreed, conversely, 18 (23.7%) were neutral and 5 (6.6%) disagreed.

- Concerning Ontario Police College recruits; 59 (67.8%) males agreed, however, 21 (24.1%) were neutral and 7 (8.0%) disagreed. Eighteen (62.1%) females agreed although 9 (31.0%) were neutral and 2 (6.9%) disagreed.
- Regarding China Criminal Police University recruits; 37 (45.1%) males agreed, conversely, 31 (37.8%) were neutral and 14 (17.1%) disagreed. Two (22.2%) females agreed, however, 4 (44.4%) were neutral and 3 (33.3%) disagreed.

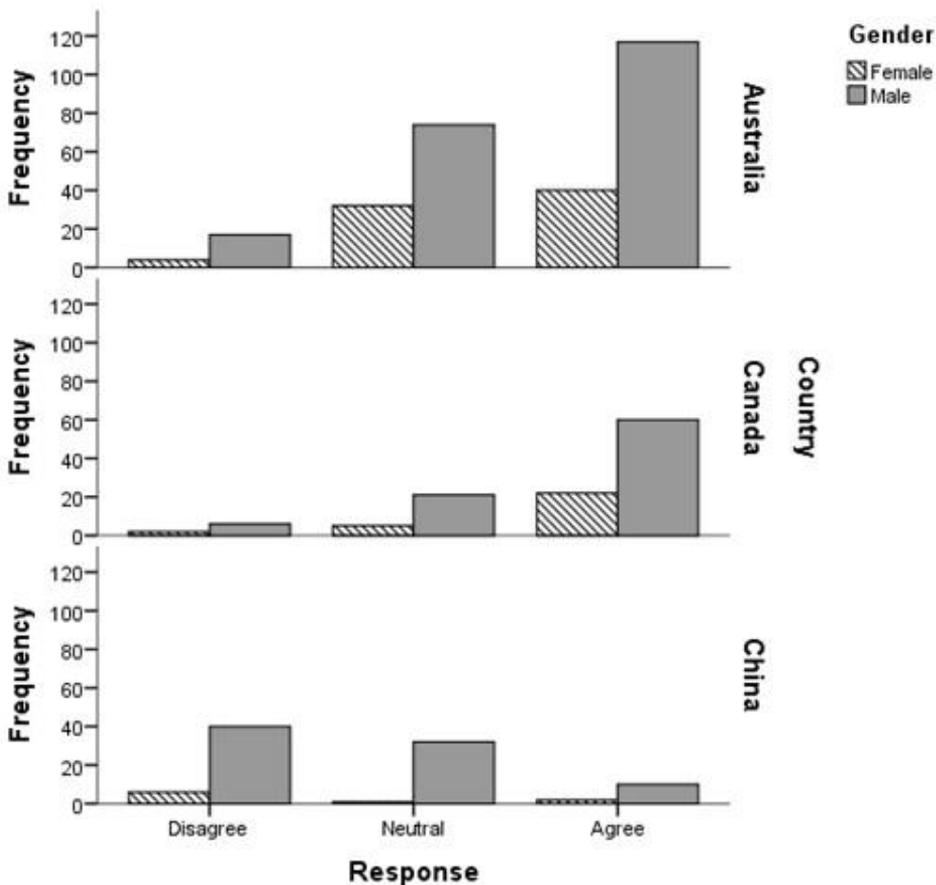


Figure 3—Distribution of responses to question (*I believe that I would be supported by Police Force management if I reported the unethical conduct of a senior officer*) by gender and country. Valid responses (*n*) from Australia =286, Canada = 116, China = 91.

*I believe that I would be supported by Police Force management if I reported the unethical conduct of a senior officer.*

- Concerning New South Wales Police Force recruits; 117 (55.7%) males agreed, although 74 (35.2%) were neutral and 19 (9.0%) disagreed. Forty (52.6%) females agreed, however 32 (42.1%) were neutral and 4 (5.3%) disagreed.
- Results from the Ontario Police College indicated that; 60 (69.0%) males agreed, conversely, 21 (24.1%) were neutral and 6 (6.9%) disagreed. Twenty two (75.9%) females agreed, however, 5 (17.2%) were neutral and 2 (6.9%) disagreed.
- Regarding the China Criminal Police University recruits; 10 (12.2%) males agreed, although 32 (39.0%) were neutral and 40 (48.8%) disagreed. Two (22.2%) females agreed, conversely, 1 (11.1%) were neutral and 6 (66.7%) disagreed.

*I would be subjected to bullying and ostracism if I reported misconduct by a superior officer.*

- Results from the New South Wales Police Force indicated that; 40 (19.0%) males agreed, 109 (51.9%) were neutral and 61 (29.0%) disagreed. Thirteen (17.1%) females agreed, 41 (53.9%) were neutral and 22 (28.9%) disagreed.
- Regarding Ontario Police College recruits; 26 (30.6%) males agreed, 33 (38.8%) were neutral and 26 (30.6%) disagreed. Six (20.7%) females agreed, 14 (48.3%) were neutral and 9 (31.0%) disagreed.
- Concerning China Criminal Police University recruits; 33 (40.2%) males agreed, 33 (40.2%) were neutral and 16 (19.5%) disagreed. Four (44.4%) females agreed, 2 (22.2%) were neutral and 3 (33.3%) disagreed.

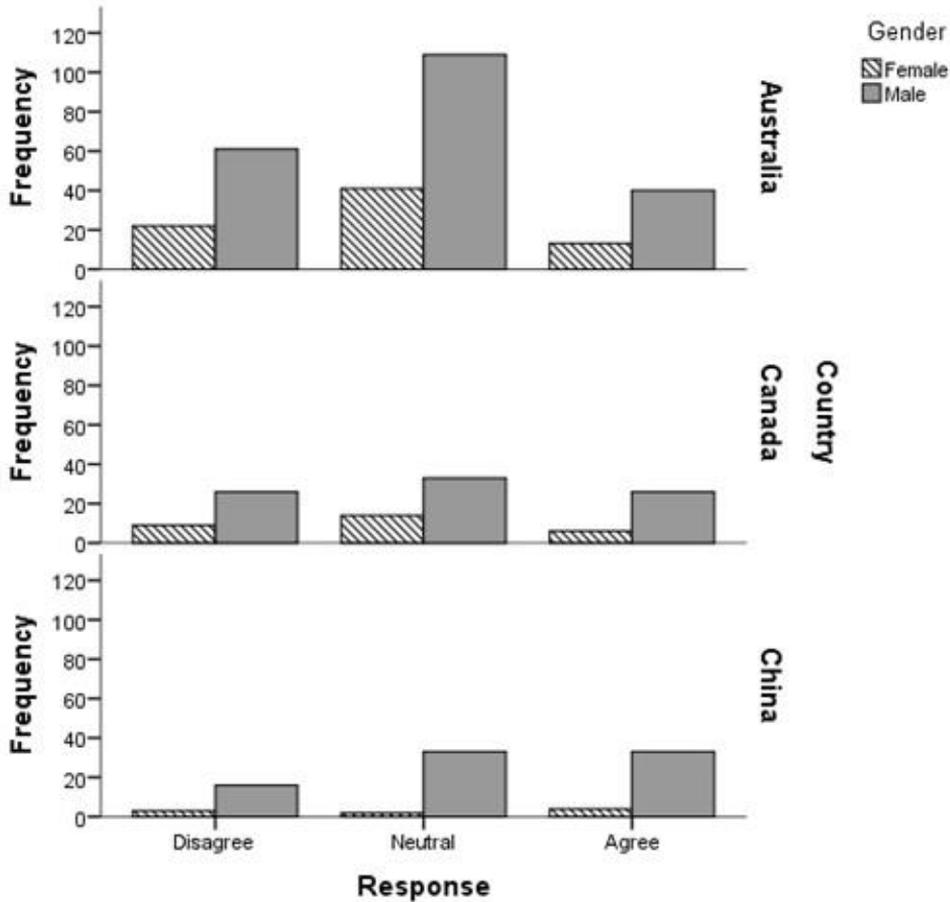


Figure 4—Distribution of responses to question (*I would be subjected to bullying and ostracism if I reported misconduct by a superior officer*) by gender and country. Valid responses (*n*) from Australia = 286, Canada = 114, China = 91.

### DISCUSSION

This discussion, in light of theoretical literature, addresses the following themes identified from the findings of this study; 1) reporting misconduct of senior officers; 2) knowledge to handle obedience to authority dilemmas; 3) confidence in support afforded by police management; and 4) perceptions of bullying and ostracism.

Overall, in terms of the themes “reporting misconduct of senior officers”; “knowledge to handle obedience to authority dilemmas” and “confidence in

support afforded by police management”, participants from all three jurisdictions responded with a significant degree of uncertainty. Similarly, there was a significant degree of agreement amongst New South Wales, Canadian and Chinese participants that they would be subjected to “bullying and ostracism” following the reporting of misconduct of a senior officer. It is contended that these findings indicate perceptions of a lack of “control” and “confidence” amongst a large number of participants in dealing with obedience to authority issues. This would appear to support the theoretical literature pertaining to the problematic nature of obedience to authority. For instance in terms of lack of “control,” Milgram (1974) considered that obedience to authority involved an individual being, “open to regulation by a person of higher status” (p. 134) and in doing so, “...the individual no longer views himself as responsible for his own actions but defines himself as an instrument for carrying out the wishes of others” (Milgram, 1974, p. 134).

Furthermore, it is argued that in regards to policing, and in particular, police training there is a requirement that subordinates, especially recruits, defer to the hierarchical structure within the police organisation (Chappell & Lanza-Kaduce, 2010; Conti, 2009; Richards, 2010) and in doing so, this perpetuates obedience to authority attitudes amongst subordinates (Conti, 2009) which in turn, fosters perceptions of lack of “control” and “confidence” in dealing with obedience to authority dilemmas. In fact, as highlighted by Primeaux and Beckley (1999) the hierarchical nature of policing allocates decision making to senior staff and the following of directions to subordinates.

In addition, this substantial degree of uncertainty amongst participants in this present study appears to support exploratory research conducted by Wooden (2004) which discovered that when participants were presented with case studies involving the misconduct of senior officers, participants’ levels of uncertainty as to the reporting of misconduct increased. Finally, it is instructive to note that in terms of these aforementioned themes, results across all three jurisdictions indicated a significant degree of uncertainty amongst participants when dealing with obedience to authority issues. Although it is acknowledged that this present study was exploratory and as a result findings cannot be generalised to all police training institutions it can be argued that these findings do possess some potentially important implications for New South Wales, Canadian, and Chinese recruit training.

What was striking in this research was the universality of the uncertainty amongst respondents across all three jurisdictions. This was especially important amongst the Chinese participants where there is a great difference in culture and police practice in comparison with western police recruit participants. This would appear to clearly point to the importance of addressing this issue.

This issue appears to be consistent with the observations of Blass (2012) that, "...people's tendency to obey authority may be one of the universals of social behaviour" (p. 203). When faced with this uncertainty in a strong hierarchical organisation and with co-worker pressure it would seem less difficult to just default to a course of action where the person simply obeys the more powerful and assumed experienced authority.

To help prevent this default, a more comprehensive understanding of obedience to authority and case study practice could perhaps create a more confident approach to these situations. In regards to implications for recruit training within the New South Wales Police Force, recruits as part of an integrated case study focused approach in Session 1 of the Associate Degree in Policing Practice, undertake the subject PPP131 "Ethical Practice and Decision Making 1." In Session 2 students undertake subject PPP136 "Ethical Practice and Decision Making 2." Topics addressed within these subjects include: doctrine of original authority; discretion; ethical decision-making; corruption and moral vulnerability; corruption resistance; reporting misconduct and loyalty and conflicts of interest. Recruits are also taught that they are not permitted to obey unlawful directions from superiors and that they must report corruption or other misconduct by another NSW employee.

Furthermore, students learn about the negative aspects of the police culture such as the code of silence and misplaced loyalty and the adverse impact these can have upon the reporting of misconduct. It is argued that potential exists for obedience to authority to have the same detrimental impact upon the reporting of misconduct as these two previously mentioned negative police cultural elements and therefore should be incorporated into recruit training to address a potential gap in the ethical education currently provided to New South Wales recruits.

## CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Results from this study provide an indication that obedience to authority issues appear to be problematic for police recruits across the New South Wales,

Canadian, and Chinese police jurisdictions. Arising from this present study's findings it is suggested that recruit training within the New South Wales Police Force would benefit from obedience to authority being incorporated in the curriculum for new police.

Police recruit training in New South Wales is comprised of five fourteen week sessions. The first two sessions are undertaken by police recruits prior to them being sworn in as probationary constables (Charles Sturt University, 2011). Sessions three to five are undertaken after the recruits have been appointed as probationary constables and are performing duties at a police station, during their first year of employment as police. It is suggested that the positioning of the obedience to authority topic should occur while recruits are in their early stages of training at the police academy. It is further suggested that obedience to authority training for recruits should be conducted prior to recruits undertaking their probationary constable training. In doing so, this reduces the possible negative impact of the police culture upon their learning.

Although students learn about the problematic potential of loyalty in policing and reporting misconduct they are not exposed to obedience to authority and its inherent problems. This maybe a significant omission in recruit training when one considers the findings of this current study as well as the views of Cunha, Rego and Clegg (2010) who state:

It is necessary, through appropriate corporate ethics programs, to help leaders and organizational members in general to understand how the features of the situation may capture their ethical reasoning—thus making them more aware of the situations conducive to the banalization of evil (p. 306).

It is contended that by not being aware of obedience to authority and its associated dilemmas recruits do not have an understanding of the potential adverse influence this concept can have upon the conduct of subordinate staff. By incorporating the topic of obedience to authority into New South Wales recruit training and providing students with practical scenarios relating to obedience to authority dilemmas this may assist junior police when faced with obedience to authority issues in the field.

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#### ABOUT THE AUTHORS

**Dr Ken Wooden** Bpol, GradCertUnivTeach&Learn, MSocSc(Crim), PhD, is a lecturer with Charles Sturt University. He previously worked for the New South Wales Police Force for twenty years performing general duties, as well as working in the Anti-Theft Squad and Legal Services. Dr Wooden's area of research focuses on police perceptions of accountability and community policing.

**John Nixon**, BA(Adult Education), MA(Adult Education) has extensive experience at all levels of teaching—from primary through to university. He is a lecturer at the School of Policing Studies, Charles Sturt University. His particular area of interest is communication (frontline communication). He has been involved in developing, coordinating, and teaching communication courses for the School of Policing Studies, the Centre for Investigative Studies and Crime Reduction and the New South Wales Police Force. Mr Nixon has been involved in research on obedience to authority and innovative teaching practices.

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