
Keep Calm and Carry on – There Is Nothing to See Here: A Study of Organisational Response Towards Racist Bullying and Harassment of BAME Women in Policing

Marina Hasan

Department of Arts, Design and Social Sciences Criminology and Policing, University of Northumbria, Newcastle, UK

Email address:

marina2.hasan@northumbria.ac.uk

To cite this article:

Marina Hasan. Keep Calm and Carry on – There Is Nothing to See Here: A Study of Organisational Response Towards Racist Bullying and Harassment of BAME Women in Policing. *Social Sciences*. Vol. 10, No. 6, 2021, pp. 269-278. doi: 10.11648/j.ss.20211006.13

Received: October 14, 2021; **Accepted:** November 3, 2021; **Published:** November 10, 2021

Abstract: This article explores the neglected and under-researched area of bullying and harassment of Black and Asian Ethnic Minority (BAME) women in the police service in England. Undertaken within the context of an observed and unique crisis stemming from the high-profile case of bullying by the Home Secretary Rt Hon. Priti Patel towards her former Permanent Secretary, Sir Philip Rutnam and the Prime Minister, Boris Johnson's reaction to it. This paper argues, that the turning of the tables by the Home Secretary and the fall-out from the investigation to it, could have adverse and unintended consequences for BAME women in UK policing. It is as this article argues a future mea-culpa moment waiting to happen underpinned by the political push back against the Black Lives Matters movement. A mixed method approach has been applied to this research including, interviews, data analysis of recently published figures, review of published literature and recent case studies. The article concludes that women of colour are one of the most vulnerable groups within the police. The challenges that they face within the organisation need to be recognised as they felt, their experiences were ignored and it undermined them as individuals. This was compounded by their negative experience of reporting instances of bullying and harassment.

Keywords: Bullying, Harassment, BAME Women, Police, Race, Gender, Power, Home Secretary

1. Introduction

The recent high-profile series of bullying claims by UK Government senior officials, Sir Philip Rutman (former Permanent Secretary of the Home Office) and the former UK Government special advisor, Sonia Khan who was 'frogmarched out of No 10 by a policeman' on the orders of Dominic Cummings, the former senior advisor to the UK Prime Minister, Boris Johnson, has raised the spectre of bullying and the response to it within the UK especially within the corridors of power. What makes these two cases fascinating and uniquely relevant to the scope of this article, are the reactions to them, from 'higher up within the food chain' and the potential for fall-out to them at the local policing level.

This is especially the case, given the deliberate 'roll back' of hard won race equality struggles in the UK and beyond via the ascendancy, mainstreaming and normalisation of populist far right thought [14] and the emergence of what can best be

described as a remodeled 'Black led' neo-colonialism which is trotted out by 'state agents' of the UK and US to silence the reality and experiences of racism on behalf of right wing and populist Governments and their media bedfellows. The net impact of which is the minimisation and marginalism of racism at the political level which has a knock-on effect at the organisational level. However, what described here as 'Patelgate' within the context of BAME women in UK policing, can be described as useful prism to look closely as what the present tells and what the future could potentially hold.

This is as a result of the fact that as Home Secretary, the Rt Hon. Priti Patel is responsible for UK policing. Therefore, her actions and the reaction to them by the UK Prime Minister, can further underscore and normalise bullying and harassment per se but in particular the bullying and harassment of BAME women in UK policing; for one simple reason. As a BAME woman in power, Patel, has in effect, turned the historic tables as the victim of her bullying was a

white male establishment figure and as previously mentioned, was the former Permanent Secretary of the Home Office. It is therefore legitimate to ask the question, 'Would Sir Philip Rutnam have resigned in the way he did, if Priti Patel was a white male?' But more pressing is the observation that Sir Philip's response to his Minister's conduct is rare. He publicly and at considerable cost to himself stood up to what he plainly called out as bullying. This article argues that it is this leadership which is lacking in the fight against bullying and harassment in UK policing. Yet it also contends, that there is the potential for either the further normalisation in the reactions towards bullying and harassment or the potential for an emboldened vitriolic reaction underpinned by the mainstreaming of populist, racist right-wing thought, which could further entrench and marginalise BAME women in policing. Given the above discussion, this is an appropriate moment to re-utilise the rich data collected as part of my doctoral research into the bullying and harassment of BAME women in UK policing (in particular, what experts in the fields of HR, discrimination law, occupational psychologist and Black Police Associations can inform us about the bullying and harassment of BAME women in UK policing).

Within the context of this 'unique crisis' reinvigorated by the new right, now deliberately and mischievously spearheaded by BAME figures utilising neo-colonialist approaches to race and race equality in both the UK and USA and who are 'trotted out' to give their view on emerging race related incidents. Thereby, legitimising governmental approaches as having the 'black seal of approval'. It is this trajectory which spells potential danger for BAME women in UK policing as it is underpinned by the official UK approaches towards race as outlined in the CRED report, the minimisation of the experiences of racism to the pathological.

2. Keep Calm and Carry on – There Is Nothing to See Here

As part of my 2019 doctoral research into the bullying and harassment of BAME women in UK policing I identified that one of the main issues facing BAME women was their lack of support in raising issues of bullying and harassment and the issue of accountability within the police which results in 'cultural resistance' [19] Furthermore, I argued that this was symptomatic of a culture, which is marked by a 'blue wall of silence,' which colludes to undermine internal investigations particularly into corruption or areas of discrimination [15] [24]. It is this which makes raising issues of bullying and harassment hard to challenge within the police service. Fundamentally, it is this 'blue wall of silence' which was present in 'Patelgate'.

In his resignation statement of 29 February 2020, Sir Philip Rutnam stated the following [27],

'My experience has been extreme but I consider that there is evidence that it is part of a wider pattern of behaviour.'

One of my duties as permanent secretary was to protect the health, safety and well-being of our 35,000 people. This created tension with the home secretary, and I have encouraged her to change her behaviours. I have received allegations that her conduct has included shouting and swearing, belittling people, making unreasonable and repeated demands - behaviour that created fear and that needed some bravery to call out'¹.

However, whilst the subsequent investigation by Sir Alex Allan (Prime Minister's former Ministerial Standards Advisor) identified the following [1],

"The Ministerial Code says that "Harassing, bullying or other inappropriate or discriminating behaviour wherever it takes place is not consistent with the Ministerial Code...". Definitions of harassment concern comments or actions relating to personal characteristics and there is no evidence from the Cabinet Office's work of any such behaviour by the Home Secretary. The definition of bullying adopted by the Civil Service accepts that legitimate, reasonable and constructive criticism of a worker's performance will not amount to bullying. It defines bullying as intimidating or insulting behaviour that makes an individual feel uncomfortable, frightened, less respected or put down. Instances of the behaviour reported to the Cabinet Office would meet such a definition. "My advice is that the Home Secretary has not consistently met the high standards required by the Ministerial Code of treating her civil servants with consideration and respect. Her approach on occasions has amounted to behaviour that can be described as bullying in terms of the impact felt by individuals. To that extent her behaviour has been in breach of the Ministerial Code, even if unintentionally"².

The Prime Minister, Boris Johnson, decided ironically at the end of anti-bullying week that Priti Patel had not breached the Ministerial Code and should not resign whilst also questioning whether the Ministerial Code is fit for purpose. This resulted in Sir Alex Allan's resignation with the following statement,

'I recognise that it is for the prime minister to make a judgement on whether actions by a minister amount to a breach of the ministerial code.'³[7]

What makes 'Patelgate' so important for BAME women in policing, is the way in which the actions of a Minister with responsibility for UK policing is called out publicly for her bullying behaviour to her senior official. An investigation by the Government's Head of Ministerial Standards into the incident which results in the Prime Minister deciding that she had not breached the code and so should not resign. This is a dangerous precedent, in that it creates the perception that the Prime Minister condones and sanctions bullying and harassment by one of his Minister's.

So what hope is there for BAME women in policing after 'Patelgate' and is it a green light for the continuance of their

1 Resignation statement of Sir Philip Rutnam, 29 February 2020.

2 Findings of the Independent Advisor – Sir Alex Allan.

3 Alex Allan: the veteran windsurfing mandarin who quit over Patel row; Simon Murphy, 20 November 2020, the Guardian Newspaper.

bullying and harassment? Or is there a possibility that this may take on a nefarious twist - part of the mainstreaming of right-wing populism within the UK and in particular within Government. The 'resignations' of two high profile establishment figures standing up against bullying and the 'literal' interpretation of the Ministerial Code could have dangerous implications. As they are clear signal to 'calm down and carry on- there is nothing to see here' from the Prime Minister of the UK.

3. A Primer – Learning Lessons from High Profile Cases

In this section of the article, It is suggested that the Home Secretary and UK policing should use this incident to make a volte-face and focus on the troubling issue of the bullying and harassment of BAME women in policing. For the simple reason, that, as the Home Office Minister in charge of UK policing, 'the buck stops with her'.

Furthermore, in the light of the Black Lives Matters Movement, and the demographic changes within the UK and within policing. UK policing needs to be more responsible to issues of intersectionality. This article is therefore a 'primer' for UK policing leaders to understand the issues faced by BAME women in UK policing and in particular to understand and acknowledge the consequences faced by the perpetrators of bullying and harassment and the optics it projects to victims. It will do this, by exploring the high-profile cases of the former Police and Crime Commissioner for North Yorkshire, Julia Mulligan and that of the Head of Metropolitan Police Professional Standards, Matthew Horne. Secondly, the issues which underpin the bullying and harassment of BAME women in policing will be reexamined through the role and consequences of the perpetrators vis-à-vis the views of five experts in the field from the following disciplines, Discrimination Law; Human Resources, Police Associations, and Occupational Psychology.

This article argues that a continued failure to grasp the issue of bullying and harassment of BAME women within police services in England is due to lack of effective leadership, driven by a 'crisis management' culture particularly around issues of race and gender [25]. Furthermore, the situation is compounded by a paucity of research in this area, which contributes to intensifying the perceived and actual invisibility of BAME women within policing.

In 2018, the former, Police and Crime Commissioner for North Yorkshire, Julia Mulligan was found by a Police and Crime Panel to have exhibited 'bullying behaviour' towards four members of staff, the panel found that,

*'the behaviours as perceived both by (the complainant) and the supporting individuals exemplify characteristics of bullying behaviour'*⁴.

The bullying behaviour exhibited by Ms Mulligan was

described as subjecting staff to constant criticism, disrespect, negative comments, humiliation and interruptions⁵. [10] Furthermore, the Panel, highlighted that the response of Ms Mulligan to the complaints was to challenge the competency of the main complainant and two people who submitted supporting statements⁶. The panel recommended that the PCC should be given a mentor to support her in undertaking her 'challenging and difficult role,'⁷ undertake a regular survey of staff regarding bullying and undertake a management development course. In February 2019, Ms Mulligan announced that she would not stand for re-election as North Yorkshire⁸, PCC and in May 2019, it was reported that Ms Mulligan did not respond to the recommendations made by the Police and Crime Panel⁹.

However, in April 2021, Ms Mulligan was appointed as Independent Chair of the Police Advisory Board for England and Wales, in accepting the role, she stated, 'I'd like to thank the Home Secretary for placing her confidence in me'¹⁰ and in May 2021 she was appointed as Senior Independent Director for the Independent Office for Police Conduct [11]. Ms Mulligan was appointed to two high profile roles 2 years after been found by the Police and Crime Panel of bullying and a year after 'Patelgate'. Appointments made with the oversight of the Home Secretary. The optics of this is that there are little to no consequences for perpetrators of bullying and harassment and that in results in promotion.

In 2018, the former Deputy Chief Constable of Essex Police, Matthew Horne was found guilty of 3 counts of misconduct [26]. The misconduct included the following acts of bullying and harassment. Pushing a chief Superintendent into a desk, throwing a stress ball to his throat and repeatedly swearing at a colleague with his fists clenched¹¹. Despite this ruling, in February 2019, he was appointed to the Metropolitan Police as Deputy Assistant Commissioner - Head of Professional Standards – the police department responsible for investigating bullying and harassment claims.

Furthermore, in February 2019, he was accused of illegally accessing confidential information in order to undermine the bullying investigation¹², the matter was reviewed by the Independent Office for Police Complaints, and a file sent to the Crown Prosecution Service for a charging decision.

However, in August 2021, the Metropolitan Police

5 North Yorkshire, police and crime commissioner Julia Mulligan hit with criticism over lack of 'bullying' measures, Stuart Minting, Yorkshire Post, 17th May 2019.

6 IPCC Julia Mulligan bullying complaint upheld after inquiry, BBC News, 25 October 2018.

7 Ibid.

8 North Yorkshire, police and crime commissioner Julia Mulligan hit with criticism over lack of 'bullying' measures, Stuart Minting, Yorkshire Post, 17th May 2019.

9 Ibid.

10 Julia Mulligan appointed as Chair of the Police Advisory Board for England and Wales, 22 April 2021, Home Office.

11 Scotland Yard standards chief who was found guilty of misconduct over bullying allegations gets moved to 'backroom job' MailOnline, Glen Keogh and Steven Wright, 1 April 2021.

12 'Cressida Dick referred to police watchdog over support for senior officer in bullying probe', Martin Evans, The Telegraph, 20 August 2021.

4 PCC Julia Mulligan bullying complaint upheld after inquiry, BBC News, 25 October 2018.

Commissioner, Cressida Dick was referred to the Independent Office for Police Conduct as she made public comments about Deputy Commissioner, Matthew Horne to the Home Affairs Select Committee in which she said stated that the decision to appoint him as Head of Professional Standards, was made by her, with her *'eyes absolutely open'¹³*, adding that, *'I stand by it and I stand by him'* [6].

Both of these examples illustrate that tackling bullying and harassment and in particular dealing with perpetrators is let down by poor leadership decisions higher up in the command chain. The impact of which is to confirm to victims that tackling bullying and harassment and dealing with perpetrators is not a priority and instead perpetrators are not only supported but actively promoted.

4. Methodological Approach of Doctoral Research

This part of the article, will set out the methodology used in the doctoral research into the harassment and bullying of BAME women in policing.

The research was underpinned by a qualitative methods approach supported by quantitative analysis into the published figures. The following data collection methods were used: (a) in-depth interviews; (b) secondary sources; (c) published literature; and (d) illustrative cases. In addition, quantitative analysis into relevant data available in the public domain and through freedom of information (FOI) requests was also carried out. The variety of data collection methods supported triangulation, resulting in a stronger research design and more valid and reliable research findings. As part of the study, interview questions were developed and aimed at BAME women (both officers and staff) working within police services in England. All participants identified themselves as victims of workplace bullying. Following successful presentation of the research proposal to the executive committee of the NBPA, access to participants was negotiated with active support from NBPA who disseminated information about the research to all BAME women police officers and staff in all 43 forces. It was agreed with the president of the NBPA that their involvement would stop at this stage, and participants were requested to contact the researcher directly and confidentially. Protecting the anonymity of participants was the utmost priority. Even though providing a brief introduction for each participant is a popular practice in conducting qualitative interviews, deliberate attempts have been made not to disclose such information due to sensitive nature of the research.

In total, 13 serving police officers and civilian staff were interviewed: nine were police officers, one was a police community support officer (PCSO), two were police staff and one was a former police officer. Participants were from five police forces, the Metropolitan Police, Bedfordshire, Greater Manchester, Merseyside and Hertfordshire. In terms of

ethnicity, one participant identified as Chinese, one as Sikh, seven as Black British and four as Asian British. Interviewees were able to provide a very clear understanding of the reality of race and gender within policing and the operation of police culture [30]. The diverse experience of these police officers and staff was made very stark during the interview process. This provided a rich understanding of the complexities behind their perceived impeded progression. My previous article (<https://journals.sagepub.com/doi/10.1177/14613557211004619>) highlights the findings from the victims.

As a part of this research, also interviewed were five experts in the field by using a separate and carefully designed open ended questionnaire to understand the organisational response towards reported episodes of bullying and harassment cases through their long-standing experience. The experts in the field are, a senior HR professional with more than 12 years of experience within a large urban force dealing with discrimination cases. A solicitor with more than 20 years of experience of dealing with discrimination high profile cases within policing. A clinical psychologist working within occupational health service for one of the largest forces with over 10 years of experience. Finally, A staff association leader with more than 22 years of service experience of handling bullying, harassment and discrimination cases within multiple constabularies. In this article, I have focused on the findings from the experts and how their opinion has widely supported the findings from the victims.

5. A Primer: Experts in the Field - The Harassment and Bullying of BAME Women in Policing

In this research, I argued that as the organisational cultural make-up of the Police Service is still dominated by white men¹⁴ it makes it harder for the organization to understand the issues of bullying and harassment affecting BAME women. This is as a result of the historical tradition around race and gender in policing and also as a result of police culture [29]. This point was saliently articulated by a HR policing professional with 12 years, experience within an urban police force in the UK who described what they understood as police culture,

'I think it's a lack of diversity, around the influencers, the people at the very top of the organisation. There is an organisational message there. The message is that this will not be tolerated and harsh sanctions will be given. But the reality of the experience is not that the organisation actually gets what that means. When you have black women who are complainants or women who are complainants or black people on their own who are

¹³ Cressida Dick referred to police watchdog over 'defence of officer facing criminal trial' Liam James, *Independent* 21st August 2021.

¹⁴By the end of 2017 only 29 percent of police officers in England and Wales is white female, numbered 33770 and BAME female numbered 2572. (source: Office of National Statistics).

complainants. The organisation doesn't get the sort of nuances and the interaction between the departments and therefore put in place appropriate things to try and combat that, with regards to peoples' attitudes and behaviour' (Interviewee 1).

Within the context of police culture and in acknowledging the issues of race are at the heart of the negative experiences of BAME officers and staff in the police service. Interviewee 3 with more than 20 years as a solicitor specialising in discrimination and harassment cases of BAME employees in the police stressed that whilst bullying is not illegal and is often found within hierarchical and bureaucratic organisations like the police. It is often used as a legitimate tool to manage staff through processes such as micromanagement (this corroborates the findings identified in my previous article – interviews with victims of bullying and harassment).

Furthermore, the challenges of raising claims of bullying and discrimination are significant and compounded by the stark reality of being a BAME person in the Police which presents an unfair starting point of vulnerability from the outset, which requires a deliberate course of action.

It's made clear to you that you are not quite one of the gang and you are always given the worst jobs. You are never given credit so you can be marginalised or isolated a little bit. It is not too overt as obviously they don't want too much of a reaction. [...] So it happens and of course bullying is not illegal, and bullying is used in many organisations as a legitimate tool of management. It's the culture [...] vast majority of people police officers don't complain about it and they don't want to be victimised [...] we have had so many people been arrested over bogus misconduct stuff and then professional standards just run with it. (Interviewee 3).

Whilst Interviewee 3 acknowledged the existence of race and gender discrimination in the Police Services, they made clear their view, that there was in operation a 'sort of hierarchy of discrimination' (Interviewee 3). Whilst they argued that discrimination was underpinned by patriarchy, they stressed, that the treatment of BAME workers and BAME women was worse. This cultural aspect should be seen as historic in nature and therefore as a consequence engrained within the fabric of the organisation. This made the situation facing BAME people and in particular BAME women in the police, very stark.

The problem of black people in the police is it's like being given a membership card. While you are a member you are in theory equal to other officers, but you will encounter quite engrained racism in police stations across [...]. Newer recruits coming through who are more at ease with a multicultural society are more educated, degree based. That doesn't necessarily follow but sometimes having a slightly broader mindset can help (Interviewee 3).

Whilst Interviewee 3 acknowledged that it was possible for BAME women in the police to progress without encountering racism or bullying and harassment. They believed that this could only be achieved when the individual had the support

of an influential /senior male or female white person within the organisation who was their mentor and viewed them as their protégé (please see previous article for the benefits of positive mentoring, article link can be provided on request). Often, the mentor and/or protector provides opportunities for the protégé to break the glass ceiling. There was an acknowledgement of the difficulty of progression for female police officers, in general, but BAME female officers, in particular, without an insider mentor/protector.

That would put Black females at an additional disadvantage and generally black people get worse treatment than women. You see more obstacles. For white women, there are fewer obstacles going through the ranks, they are less dependent on the freemason connections now, and by their progression, for black women there is very little progress unless they are adopted by a male of female colleague who is white [...] with that type of support it can help break that particular type of glass ceiling (Interviewee 3).

For interviewee 4, a clinical psychologist working within occupational health in a large urban force for over ten years, highlighted that BAME women in the police specifically African Caribbean women were stereotyped as being 'negative, aggressive, intimidating and confrontational'.

As such, she believed that this contributed to them being viewed as 'fair game'. She went on to observe that when the issue of bullying and harassment was in relation to women and black women it often resulted in a dismissive reaction from peers and managers. On the grounds that they were stereotyped as, 'the neurotic woman or the hypersensitive black'¹⁵, Interviewee 2, a high ranked staff association leader with over 22 years of experience articulated that the result of stereotyping made it much harder for the BAME women to have the bullying and harassment they suffered taken seriously¹⁶.

So, you are having to fight right from the beginning from naming something that you are experiencing as real. You have to fight the sort of view about what you are dealing with as your fault. That's why I use the word melody, as it's seen as your problem and it's in you and it's your stuff and it's nothing to do with us (Interviewee 2).

The reality of being a BAME woman in the police and how to cope with working for the Police was made stark by Interviewee 1:

When it comes to policing you are different, that's why it's taken them so long to deal with this [...] It's a them and us situation, so black, white, if you are part of the crew, then you have to think and behave like them. You assimilate to the majority culture for survival.

What became apparent through the interviews with all five experts, was that 'race' was not on the agenda post the Macpherson Inquiry [13]. Furthermore, they all contended that race only became problematic when it was associated

¹⁵ Interviewee 2.

¹⁶ A phenomena also evident in the statements of several interviewees (victims of bullying) in my previous article.

with a high-profile issue or case. This led the experts to contend that as race was not a natural consideration within the thought processes of decision makers in the Police its handling in bullying and harassment cases had a detrimental effect as race issues were not sufficiently embedded within organizational policing culture. For example, The high-profile case of former *top Asian woman police officer* Nusrit Mehtab of *Scotland Yard* came to public attention when *she* made a *racism* claim *against* the Metropolitan Police in 2020 [3].

Furthermore, a Black woman's experience of sexism is different to that of a white woman [8] in that for a white man, 'a black woman is forbidden fruit' and her Blackness is sexualized¹⁷. This places them in a premeditated arena of subconscious/unconscious biases where an 'ownership perception' prevails which can be linked back to the 'master and slave dynamic' which plays into pre-built experience and thought processes. This creates the conditions for a domino effect of patriarchy and racism within the police service with regards to how the organisation views complaints and complainants of bullying and harassment such as BAME women. Furthermore, the adoption of the terminology 'bullying and harassment' undermines the seriousness of the issue. This is then coupled with the fact that the issue tends to be associated only with those with protected characteristics (BAME, disabled, LGBTQ). This point is elegantly made through the following,

Once the individual feels that what's happening to them is harassment or any other kind of bullying or any other kind of experiences, the individual starts to experience trauma, whether we want to talk about trauma with a small T, big T or a middle T, it is trauma and I think if harassment viewed as trauma I think that we will respond to it quite differently. There are sorts of misconceptions about trauma about harassment happening only to weak people for example harassment happens to unassertive people harassment only men harass and that is a misnomer women do harass as well harassment only happens to the politically correct who can't take a joke harassment only happens to people who speak up and point out, who says the unsayable, for example harassment only happens to people have a chip on their shoulder, all of these things those are the common misnomers about harassment (Interviewee 4).

What is important to note that we look at the Police Services as a service which provides critical support to a number of vulnerable groups e.g. victims of domestic violence and race and religiously aggravated crime. As such, in providing the service and more crucially in gathering evidence to bring forward a criminal case, they must identify a pattern of cumulative behavior of which a major part of the criminal case is the impact of the 'abuse, race or religiously aggravated violence or domestic violence on the victim, trauma, anxiety, etc'. It is therefore critical that in delivering their public duty, they do it effectively and are also acutely

mindful and proactive when it comes to their own staff as a failure to do so, undermines public trust and confidence in the police, especially from diverse communities.

However, in recent years there has been a push towards a greater recognition of bullying and harassment which has led to the adoption of national bullying awareness week in the UK. It has, for the reasons outlined above been significantly damaged by 'Patelgate'. As such policy makers, employment lawyers and police support organisations should carefully monitor whether 'Patelgate' leads to a reduction in the number of complaints with a bullying nature or leads to a backlash against BAME women.

6. Organisational Response – Power and Control

As outlined in 'Patelgate' whilst an organisation may take action to deal with allegations of bullying and harassment the dynamics of power and control can undermine best efforts to identify and address the issue. Within this research I have identified the unique role which two key functions within policing organisations play – Human Resources and Professional Standards Departments. The reality of police culture and the operationality of what [23] describes as 'in-group loyalty, 'us' against 'them' mentality and backing up one another', results in people being deterred from pursuing cases of bullying and harassment. This is candidly described as follows,

Incidents like a black policeman may walk into a police station and be racially abused by a white officer who is near to retirement. And then that officer protests and then the moment they protest the police force, and the department of professional standards operates what I would call a cover up and what they would call to protect the reputation of the force and they think that to do this by getting rid of a problem rather than addressing it and normally in the cover up getting rid of a problem there is usually corruption as they tend to retaliate to get the officer up for misconduct or to arrest the officer. The closing the ranks occurs and you are in a very vulnerable position. (Interviewee 3).

As such, the actual mechanics of the handling of bullying and harassment cases by the police can be perceived as part of a 'corrupt process' as what is at stake is the preservation of the organisation as in the case of 'Patelgate'. It is therefore the response towards cases of bullying and harassment of BAME women which the expert in the field discrimination lawyer found as one of 'cover up' and develop processes whereby the case can be 'subverted' through processes designed to bring in an element of quality assurance to deal effectively with cases rooted in race discrimination.

There were numerous reports which said the investigation into race complaints in the [...] have often been sabotaged by management and so they had a quality assurance process in it so someone in DPS would check that the investigator had done the job properly and that there was

¹⁷ See previous article regarding the reciprocation of the experiences of victims of bullying).

no cover up. That's quite a good idea. But the way that the DPS subverts the process is if you put a complaint in as [...] did the new slightly more (inaudible) investigator finds in her favour and finds that she has been discriminated against but then the QA system operated by HR and DPS order the investigator to re-write it so that [...] loses on everything (Interviewee 3).

The UK Governments policy of financial austerity 2010 – present has resulted in job/budget cuts in the name of organisational restructuring. This has had an adverse impact on race issues [28]. This has made it much more difficult for individuals to challenge their employers and bring forward cases of harassment and racial discrimination in the employment tribunals [28] as individuals are more fearful for their jobs. Furthermore, individuals must exhaust the internal procedures before they go to employment tribunal [28]. This ‘restrictive’ climate ushered in by the current Conservative Government is creating the conditions for greater numbers of people to tolerate bullying and harassment instead of challenging it. This will have a damaging effect on the numbers of people taking time off work for stress related conditions and puts a strain on General Practitioner and healthcare services.

With the recent activities for greater acknowledgment of the impact of societal racial discrimination in the UK [28] there is a need for those groups such as the National Black Police Association and the Police Federation to encourage for greater action in this area. In recognising that the business case for equality has taken precedence over the moral case for equality. It would be welcomed for cross departmental research to financially quantify the impact of racial bullying, discrimination and harassment of BAME women in the police service. It is argued that a focus on the financial costs of bullying and harassment would potentially have more traction in gaining action than the moral arguments on equality have done. The broader aspects and consequences of a rise in bullying incidents in terms of economic and health impact was not an area of expertise for the victims to focus on.

7. Response to Bullying and Harassment – Health

One of the most disturbing features of this research has been listening to the psychological and physical impact of bullying and harassment of BAME women in the Police Service. My previous article highlighted that two of the victims one PCSO and one police officer had made suicide attempts due to the pressure of the bullying and harassment they endured. Most of the victims also reported stress and anxiety disorders, sleep and eating disorders, hair loss, escalating disability, etc.

In the recent years there has been a raised focus on issues of mental health which has involved members of the British Royal family, with the Duke of Sussex highlighting his struggles with mental health and the Duchess of Cornwall's involvement as editor of a special Radio 4 series about

mental health (broadcasted on 29 April 2018). However, what has not been made apparent is the impact of racial bullying and harassment on BAME people in the workplace, which is resulting in a further marginalisation of race issues, which was articulated in the following way;

I refer to it as causing invisible injuries. That people don't see very easily, a white counterpart who is very very stressed might look visibly very stressed, they might look very red as they are flushed with their stress, they may look more visibly distressed as it shows on more easily on their face and their whole persona. So, you have the invisible injuries, you have the grinding down, you have the disease, morphing into disease and then you have the somatisation and the trauma, I would call it with a big capital T trauma. It's a big T trauma, just because it goes on for months and years. The use of language and the terms bullying and harassment are not as harsh as trauma and this and the impact and effect of bullying and harassment is then negated. Whereas the usage of the term trauma is very different. Bullying and harassment trivialises [sic] but the word trauma gives it a clinical connotation. It immediately negates it and then you have to fight to survive. It gives it a clinical grounding. In mental health they used to use the term quite reluctantly and dismissively. People made jokes about it, but have you noticed quite recently that mental health is the flavour of the month (Interviewee 5 an occupational psychologist).

8. There Is Something to Do Here

What ‘Patelgate’ has shown us, is that leadership is key. But most importantly follow through is essential. The harm that the handling of this incident will have on bullying and harassment cases and in particular on BAME women police officers and staff is as yet unknown but likely to be significant as it has been successful in marginalising the issue and victims of bullying - A not unknown outcome in the field of bullying and harassment.

Whilst the majority of the experts in the field had what could be termed achievable solutions, Interviewee 3 proposed what can only be described as a radical and potentially unachievable solution. However, their solution was based on their experience that the handling of cases of bullying and harassment were steeped in what they termed ‘corruption’ and issues of power and control of the Department for Professional Standards and Human Resources. As such they believed that only a radical solution could deal with the engrained nature of the problem.

In their opinion, an allegation of discrimination should not be viewed as gross misconduct until proven. Therefore, when a black female puts in a complaint under ‘fairness at work’ the fairness at work investigator needs to be independent and outside of the police for the following reason,

Independent Office of Police Conduct (IOPC) that's an utter and complete waste of space they are not going to prosecute corrupt officers successfully. We have a case where it looks like someone who is accused of

discrimination one of the reasons why they turned down the person, is that they wanted the person to go for a senior position in the IOPC on retirement (laughs), you have your own man in there then who is grateful for you who is found to be a racist. But who may be involved in a death in custody or so that's how it works and that's the network it's the historical thing that you have to either work on it incrementally or you have to rip up the structure and say it doesn't work. (Interviewee 3).

Interviewee 3's proposal whilst it could seem radical, makes sense when you consider a number of recent high-profile cases which involve the deliberate targeting and bullying of Black women who are involved in investigating cases of racism in the Police Services in England. The case of PC Carol Howard in 2014 [5][16] and Jennifer Izekor, a former Commissioner of the Independent Police Complaints Commission who was faced with criminal misconduct charges whilst she investigated assault and racism cases against three Metropolitan Police Officers. Have laid bare the extent of 'corruption', specifically in the professional standards department. Furthermore, this can be classed as a deliberate hounding and strategy to break down an individual to ensure that they stop their investigation (as in the case of Jennifer Izekor) or the complaint they have made victims of bullying and harassment in the Police Services.

Interviewees 1, 4 and 5 all agreed that a key solution to tackling bullying and harassment for BAME women in the police was to ensure that people were brought to account for their actions, greater levels of transparency in fairness at work processes and greater support for victims. Greater levels of accountability and transparency were seen as important as the issue was they argued linked to overall staff confidence. Confident staff are more able to take forward cases of bullying and harassment, whereas the findings in the previous article from interviews with victims of bullying and the available literature illustrate that people have very little confidence in the organisation's ability to deal with issues of this nature. This can be seen as the rationale for interviewee 3 advocating the use of external investigators. Furthermore, the findings have shown that there is widespread mistrust of the fairness/dignity at work procedures with a number of those interviewed stating and being advised that going through the formal route will have no outcome. Therefore, the individual is faced with a stark choice; fight or fly. Either way the consequences require the individual to have strong support networks either or both work and family.

This article has drawn on the interviews of five experts in the field to examine the bullying and harassment of BAME women in the Policing within the context of what we have called here 'Patelgate'. It has asserted that the experiences of BAME women in the police services in England are a result of patriarchy and racism; which are difficult to challenge in bureaucratic and hierarchical organisations like the police service which facilitates bullying and harassment even though the UK government has signalled its intent to significantly reform the political accountability structures of

policing [22]. The impact of the wider marginalisation and stereotyping of BAME women is acknowledged here as a key problem. It is the implementation of the policies and procedures and the way in which certain sections of the organisation handle them Department of Professional Standards (DPS) and Human Resources (HR); which is problematic. As the departments responsible for handling cases of bullying and harassment of BAME women; do not have many BAME people working within them [9]. It is argued here that this makes implementation of bullying and harassment policies difficult, as these individuals do not truly understand the nature of racism which is essential to be able to tackle the bullying and harassment of BAME women. Furthermore, the forceful police culture, does its utmost to maintain and protect the organisation from those BAME women who would expose it both internally and externally for bullying and harassment. This triggers a range of acts; aimed at undermining, discrediting and isolating the victim through drawn out investigative processes These acts are aimed at maintaining power and order and are enabled through the operation of police culture. Which by its very nature facilitates 'corruption' of processes in the handling of bullying and harassment cases. These are all reflective of the underlying discourses that nurtures the prevailing police culture.

9. Policy Recommendations for Further Action

Whilst this study did not commence as applied research, its findings point out the inevitability of a brief discussion of its potential practical outcomes due to its humane subject matter. The research findings can be used to develop solutions to the problem of bullying and harassment in the Police Services. The next section offers an inventory of recommendations for action, aimed at dealing with the issue of bullying and harassment within policing.

This research has identified that it is extremely difficult to eliminate patriarchal and racist practices within bureaucratic and hierarchical organisations like the Police. However, a number of new cases, such as that of Julia Mulligan [17] [21], and Matthew Horne [26], Carol Howard [16] [20], Jennifer Izekor,[18] and Parm Sandhu highlight the engrained nature of the issue and the established social structures which keep them in place. As the Police Services is part of the UK establishment, it requires root and branch change to be able to deal effectively with bullying and harassment. This means it must acknowledge the intersectionality of race and gender and also the impact of racism and patriarchy.

BAME police officers and staff are subject to disproportionate treatment in disciplinary procedures and struggle to integrate into a predominantly white police culture [15]. However, BAME women are the most vulnerable gender within the Police Services. This article advocates that the unique experiences of BAME women

within policing need to be recognised and acknowledged particularly the nature of the bullying and harassment which they suffer. Through the concept of ‘Undoing gender’ [2]¹⁸, there is an opportunity to tackle race equality within the Police in terms of reactionary democracy [14]. This requires the replacement of gender-neutral mechanisms, which have contributed to the development of a masculine approach to organisational change. To address gender-based inequality, the Police Services should not only increase the number of BAME women serving as police officers but more importantly address their concerns on an equal basis with those of BAME men and their male and female white counterparts. Introduction of regular oversight mechanisms, such as specialised training on how to deal with bullying and discrimination would provide an effective means to ease the complaints and grievances of BAME women police officers and staff.

10. Conclusion

This article has argued that ‘Patelgate’ and the reaction to it is a useful prism within which to view the importance of bullying and harassment within the Police Service. Furthermore, it has identified that the handling of reported episodes of bullying cases has the real potential to further undermine the position of BAME women in policing due to the fact that two of the casualties of ‘Patelgate’ were white establishment males, which has turned the tables on traditional notions of victims and perpetrators of bullying and harassment.

This could have future consequences for BAME women in policing, given the normalization of the populist right wing [14] and an organisational culture which places ‘strong value’ in group loyalty [23] which makes BAME women in Police Services susceptible to become victims of racial discrimination and bullying [4]. Police forces need to consider and bring in some positive changes in terms of policy and procedures, such as, introducing zero tolerance for racism, sexism, homophobia or ableism. For example, fast tracking the grievance or complaint procedures. It can take up to 18 months to two years to go through the various stages of the internal grievance resolution, which is long enough to ruin an individual’s sickness record, work performance, family life and financial position and not to mention the impact on their physical and mental health. This leads to a vicious cycle of someone feeling trapped into the system and makes it twice as hard to progress or move to a different position or a different department or even leave the organisation and find another job. The need for a strong support network for the victims and active allyship / positive mentoring from white colleagues and senior officers are therefore also crucial.

¹⁸ As stated by Butler, ‘If gender is a kind of a doing, an incessant activity performed, in part, without one’s knowing and without one’s willing, it is not for that reason automatic or mechanical. ... it is a practice of improvisation within a scene of constraint’ (2004, 2).

References

- [1] Alex Allan: the veteran windsurfing mandarin who quit over Patel row, Simon Murphy, 20 November 2020, the Guardian Newspaper.
- [2] Butler, J. (2004) *Undoing Gender*, London: Routledge.
- [3] Camber, R (2020) Top Asian police officer launches £500k lawsuit against Scotland Yard after alleging she was told to keep quiet about a swastika at work. Daily Mail, 24 June. Available at: <https://www.dailymail.co.uk/news/article-8457049/Top-female-Asian-police-officer-launches-500k-racism-lawsuit-against-Scotland-Yard.html> (accessed 20 January 2021). Google Scholar.
- [4] Cockroft, T (2013) *Police Culture, Themes and Concepts*, Oxon, Routledge.
- [5] Commissioner of the Police of the Metropolis v Ms C Howard (2014) Employment Tribunals Case no 2200184/2013& 2202916/2013. <https://www.judiciary.uk/wp-content/uploads/2014/09/et-howard.pdf> (accessed 24 March 2021). Google Scholar.
- [6] Cressida Dick referred to police watchdog over support for senior officer in bullying probe’, Martin Evans, The Telegraph, 20 August 2021.
- [7] Findings of the Independent Advisor – Sir Alex Allan, 2020.
- [8] Hill Collins, P (1990) *Black Feminist Thought: knowledge consciousness and the politics of empowerment*, Boston: Unwin Hyman 1990.
- [9] House of Commons, Home Affairs Select Committee, House of Commons (2016) *Police Diversity, First Report of Session HC27*.
- [10] IPCC Julia Mulligan bullying complaint upheld after inquiry, BBC News, 25 October 2018.
- [11] Julia Mulligan appointed as Chair of the Police Advisory Board for England and Wales, 22 April 2021, Home Office.
- [12] Lusher, A (2014) Black police officer wins her discrimination case against Metropolitan Police. The Independent, 2 July. Available at: <https://www.independent.co.uk/news/uk/crime/black-police-officer-wins-her-discrimination-case-against-metropolitan-police-9577648.html> (accessed 24 March 2021). Google Scholar.
- [13] MacPherson of Cluny, Sir William (1999) *The Stephen Lawrence Inquiry: Report of an Inquiry by Sir William MacPherson of Cluny*. London: The Stationery Office.
- [14] Mondon, A and Winter, A (2020) *Reactionary democracy – How racism and the populist far right became mainstream*, London, Verso.
- [15] Morris, W., Burden, A. & Weekes, A. (2004) *The Report of the Morris Inquiry. An independent inquiry into professional standards and employment matters*, The Morris Inquiry, London.
- [16] Ms C Howard v The Commissioner of the Police of the Metropolis (1st September 2014) Employment Tribunals Case no 2200184/2013& 2202916/2013.

- [17] North Yorkshire, police and crime commissioner Julia Mulligan hit with criticism over lack of ‘bullying’ measures, Stuart Minting, Yorkshire Post, 17th May 2019.
- [18] Police watchdog Jennifer Izeke framed by Met officers’ for investigating racism, Tom Harper, The Sunday Times Harper, T. (3 March 2019).
- [19] Paoline, E. A. (2003) Taking stock: towards a richer understanding of police culture’ *journal of criminal justice*, 31 (3): 199-214.
- [20] PC Howard Employment Tribunal Judgement (2014) <https://www.judiciary.uk/wp-content/uploads/2014/09/et-howard.pdf> (accessed 24 March 2021). Google Scholar.
- [21] PCC Julia Mulligan bullying complaint upheld after inquiry, BBC News, 25 October 2018.
- [22] Reiner, R. (2010) *The politics of the police*, Fourth Edition, Oxford, Oxford University Press.
- [23] Rollock, N (2009) *The Stephen Lawrence Inquiry 10 Years On: An Analysis of the Literature*. London: The Runnymede Trust. Google Scholar.
- [24] Silverman, E. (1999) *NYPD Battle Crime: Innovative Strategies in Policing*. Boston, MA: Northeastern University Press.
- [25] Sklansy, D. A. (2007) Seeing Blue: Police Reform, Occupational Culture, and Cognitive Burn-in, in Megan O’Neill, Monique Marks, Anne-Marie Singh (ed.) *Police Occupational Culture (Sociology of Crime, Law and Deviance, Volume 8)* Emerald Group Publishing Limited, pp. 19 – 45.
- [26] Scotland Yard standards chief who was found guilty of misconduct over bullying allegations gets moved to ‘backroom job’ MailOnline, Glen Keogh and Steven Wright, 1 April 2021.
- [27] Resignation statement of Sir Philip Rutnam, 29 February 2020.
- [28] The Runnymede Trust (June 2016) UK NGOs’ Alternative Report: Submission to the UN Committee on the Elimination of Racial Discrimination with regard to the UK Government’s 21st to 23rd Periodic Reports.
- [29] Waddington, PAJ (2008) *Policing: A Journal of Policy and Practice* 3 (1), 2-4. <http://doi.org/10.1093/police/pan076> (Accessed 1 January 2009).
- [30] www.sagepub.com/sites/default/files/upm-binaries/38432_4.pdf