

**RESPONDING TO CHANGE?
A CULTURAL ANALYSIS OF GARDA PERCEPTIONS
OF POLICE REFORM AGENDAS WITHIN THE
REPUBLIC OF IRELAND**

TO THOSE WHO TAUGHT ME THAT:

A single conversation with a wise man is better than ten years study.

Brendan Purcell

Love many, trust few, always paddle your own canoe.

Denis P. Corcoran

You never lose by loving.

Louise M. Corcoran

A mother is the truest friend we have.

Mary B. Corcoran

No other answer could I make but, thanks, and thanks again.

My Friends in the Operations Office

A great teacher inspires

Phil Clements

There is immense wisdom in praising the green field and the ripe corn in equal measure.

Sarah Charman

In this Father, a child is hidden that wants to play again.

Sean T. Corcoran

It was never who I was that held me back, it was who I thought I wasn't.

Steve Savage

Conscience warns before it reproaches.

The Research Participants

DECLARATION

I confirm that, except where indicated through the proper use of citations and references, this is my own original work. While registered as a candidate for the above degree, I have not been registered for any other research award. The results and conclusions embodied in this thesis are the work of the named candidate and have not been submitted for any other academic award.

Signed:

Donal P. Corcoran

Date:

Abstract

In October 2008, Mr Justice Morris published the final of his eight reports concerned with police corruption in An Garda Síochána, the national police service of the Republic of Ireland. This thesis draws upon research conducted with Irish police officers to offer an operational-level cultural analysis of their perceptions of the post-scandal reform agendas introduced. It begins with an overview of the misconduct that happened in one Irish policing division and its related wider application. The focus then turns to the nature and detail of the reforms initiated to bring about change. It proposes a theoretical framework adapted from Lonergan's (1972) cognitional process and a Kohlbergian (1978) model of moral reasoning to gauge individual officer integrity. Then, a critical evaluation of the literature concerning the resistance 'conventional' police cultures may present, is discussed. Next, the narrative vignettes of our research participants, which were obtained from the thirty-eight interviews conducted are exhibited. The findings and analysis of this research confirm that the necessity for the Morris Tribunal has been broadly accepted by interviewees. Further, it delivers a review of those reforms that have had the greatest impact on the perceptions of operational police officers and those that may have made less of an impression. It conveys an interpretive appraisal of the key features of An Garda Síochána's 'new' operational-level organisational culture, as they may be, which conveys a shared outlook that views formal rules as self-serving legitimate normative orders designed to guide professional conduct. Garda culture may be currently demarcated by its appreciation of the need for, deliberative trust based initiatives primarily focused on peace keeping and crime prevention goals. There may also be cultural acceptance of pluralistic relations which seek to progressively develop mutual respect between parties and develop partnership. Irish police officers appear to understand the importance of social justice through inclusion and the need to protect against human rights violations. Conventional police solidarity has perhaps been affected by external oversight mechanisms. Finally, an assessment of what may have worked best to achieve this change is presented.

KEY WORDS: An Garda Síochána, The Morris Tribunal, Reform, Kohlberg, Integrity, Culture

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