

POLICING WOMEN POLICE

Uniform Patrol, Promotion and Representation in the CID

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Using data from a survey conducted within a northern constabulary, women officers' experience of police employment is discussed. It is argued that it is necessary to take into account both wider structural, engendered inequalities and occupational cultural processes to explain differences between men and women officers' experience of employment. Evidence of women officers' apparent acceptance and reinforcement of views associated with the police occupational culture is presented. These views were not directly constrained by the ascendancy of men's definitions of police employment. It is also suggested, however, that men's views of the wider role of women, as parent, for example, constrained and engendered the ways in which women experienced police employment.

A considerable body of research evidence confirms the existence of differential employment opportunities for men and women (Crompton and Sanderson 1990). Drawing on this general research theme, and using data from a large questionnaire survey of a constabulary located in northern England, we explore the relationship of meanings of gender, originating beyond the organizational boundary of the constabulary, to women officers' experience of employment. Organizational and occupational cultural processes that moulded and articulated such meanings within the context of routine police work are also analysed.¹ It is argued that both wider structures of gender relations *and* the organizational and cultural contexts of police employment have to be taken into account if women officers' experience of employment is to be understood adequately.² A focus on the former limits an understanding of the ways in which women officers sustain particular meanings of police work they share with their male colleagues. An over-emphasis on the latter fails to explicate adequately the specific ways in which women officers' work is constrained by more widely drawn, engendered roles, those of parent and mother, for example.

Previous research about women police officers has to different degrees recognized the salience of wider structures of gender to police employment. Sandra Jones's early research on discrimination against women officers, contextualized the police implementation of the Sex Discrimination Act within a wider structure of engendered

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¹ We are more than grateful for the assistance given by many officers from the research constabulary, especially its equal opportunities officer and the members of the research reference group. By occupational culture we mean the beliefs, values and associated tactics and strategies of work that form a core of commonsense knowledge informing the practice of policing. Organizational culture is the values and beliefs and related actions implicit within formal organizational structures, stated objectives, policies and practices. The former is more concerned with what the rank and file and other groups of staff believe about the organization in which they work.

² To define women's experiences of police employment as distinct is at the same time to define men's employment experience as distinct. When men define women in a particular way they are invariably defining men as different. Majority and minority views within the workforce are thus related.

inequalities (Jones 1986: 11-23). Although it is more concerned with discrete aspects of equal opportunities for women officers, Jennifer Brown's research on career aspirations, on officers' skill and task levels, on deployment and on sexual harassment and discrimination also acknowledges a continuity between gender roles and women officers' experience of employment (Anderson *et al.* 1993; Brown *et al.* 1993; Coffey *et al.* 1992).³

Frances Heidensohn's and Sandra Walklate's research about women police has been based similarly on a prior sociological analysis of gender (Heidensohn 1992; Walklate 1992). Heidensohn, in particular, has placed an emphasis on the ways in which women officers' work is controlled by male colleagues. She suggests that research about women officers should not be overly concerned with the views of their male peers. Women officers' views have an intrinsic integrity. From this perspective, which resonates some assumptions of feminist theory and research methods, women officers are always accepted begrudgingly by their male colleagues (Gelsthorpe 1992; Hammersley 1992). Women who are more fully accepted demonstrate an exception to a normative rule of marginalization within the police workforce.⁴

Internal social processes, especially processes related to the occupational culture of the rank and file, have also been given attention in this research about women officers. Sandra Jones analysed 'informal controls' that differentiate women's and men's work within constabularies (Jones 1986). Frances Heidensohn acknowledges the importance of understanding the occupational culture as an engendered realm in which particular notions of masculinity remain in the ascendancy. Other studies have pointed similarly to a strong emphasis on masculinity within the occupational culture, which structures notions of femininity and related ideas about women officers (Fielding and Fielding 1992; Smith 1986; Reiner 1992).

Both internal and external processes of relevance to the occupational experience of women police officers are considered in this article, which is also a perspective found in Carol Martin's recently published research about the impact of equal opportunities policies on the work of women officers in Sussex Police (Martin 1996). Martin argues that, in his review of research about the police occupational culture, Simon Holdaway raised but failed to answer the question, 'why societal relationships of gender' should be 'amplified within the police' (Holdaway 1987: 511). Martin's answer to the question is to give attention to 'power/control discourses' . . . 'in outside society in general (with the very specific 'rights' to social control which defines the police) and the implications for women, who, by their very existence in the police, challenge this'.

Ironically, Martin also joins the ranks of those who have not answered this research question. Indeed, given the way she frames her argument, it is not at all clear if it could be answered. Martin presents us with a tautology—the exclusion of women within the police workforce is absolute evidence of their wider exclusion within a society, and women's wider exclusion within a society is absolute evidence of their exclusion within the police. If this tautology is to be untangled, and evidence to support it one way or another gathered and analysed, a less constraining theory of the relationship between

³ This paper is about the British police. A body of important American research is also of relevance but we are not concerned with a comparative analysis and therefore do no more than cite it. Susan Martin's research is probably the most important work (Martin 1980, 1979, 1990).

⁴ Young's study of police work in the 1960s and 70s contains a somewhat similar argument (Young 1991)

structure and action is required, together with a more dynamic conceptualization of relationships between men and women officers.

As far as her evidence is concerned, Martin provides qualitative data about male and female officers' perceptions of various aspects of police employment and equal opportunities, including aspects relevant to their internal and/or external contexts. The sample of women officers she interviewed, however, was very small (nine women and 18 men) and they were all from one mainly rural division within her research constabulary. This has restricted the scope of her findings, making it difficult to tackle the questions about power/discourse to which she rightly attributes importance.

Using evidence from a much larger and diverse sample of male and female officers from a constabulary covering rural and urban areas, we analyse evidence of some ways in which engendered, internal and external constraints provided a context for women officers' experience of employment. In contrast to Heidensohn's view, we argue that it is valuable and necessary to take both male and female officers' views into account when analysing the ways in which women officers' experience of employment is moulded and controlled. If male officers, who are numerically and in many other respects dominant in all constabularies, define the role of their female colleagues in particular ways, they are implicitly and explicitly defining themselves. To understand images of women is at the same time to learn about images of men. Secondly, women officers are not part of a zero-sum power game within the police. We agree that studies of the police that have dwelt upon the occupational culture have under-emphasized wider structures of power.⁵ Women officers, however, vie with and yield to their female and male colleagues, engendering work relationships in specific ways. The task of research is to tease out both general and specific structures and processes that mould the employment experience of women officers. Our analysis suggests that the relationship between occupational and wider, social structural factors is more complex than previous research has indicated.

Women officers have a distinct experience of police employment but they also share some of their male colleagues' views about preferred work and other subjects (Fielding and Fielding 1992). Many women officers in our research constabulary, for example, had a strong commitment to retaining key values of the occupational culture, taking a lead in their affirmation. Despite sustaining a consensus about these aspects of police work, their career and personal aspirations were frustrated by male colleagues. Further, conflicts between home and work hampered the fulfilment of women officers' endeavours. Social processes within and without the constabulary had the effect of policing women police.

In this paper we extend the published literature about women police officers, by analysing the distinct ways in which widely drawn gender roles and internal organizational and cultural processes combined to structure women officers' employment.⁶ Our focus is on women's experience of employment relevant to service in the CID and the general uniform branch, which illustrates the wider research themes we have described.

⁵ The reason for this is more concerned with the as yet unresolved theoretical problem of relating these levels to each other rather than an unwillingness to acknowledge them. See Layder (1996) for a recent review of this subject.

⁶ We use the notion of social process because we find this a more agreeable notion for discussions of the ways in which what is sometimes called the structure/action problematic is expressed. Again, see Layder *ibid.* for a discussion of this issue.

The Survey

The research on which this paper is based was conducted in July 1995, in a constabulary in northern England covering urban and rural areas. An HMIC inspection of the constabulary recommended that the chief constable should commission research about the reasons for women officers' under-representation in the promoted ranks, in the CID and in the Traffic Department. The authors were contracted to undertake the research, extending it to include a range of subjects relevant to employment experience.

Following a series of focus groups for men and women officers, and selective interviews with senior officers, a questionnaire about subjects relevant to equal opportunities and experiences of employment was posted to all women officers ($n=411$) serving in the constabulary and a stratified, random sample of male officers ($n=561$), with rank and job title as sampling criteria. The sample also comprised 20 per cent of male CID officers above and below the rank of sergeant; 20 per cent of male officers in the Traffic Department above and below the rank of sergeant; and 20 per cent of male officers serving in other posts, mainly uniform patrol.

Two hundred and sixty three women (64 per cent) and 320 men (57 per cent) respectively completed the questionnaire. All respondents were assured absolute confidentiality, reinforced by the return of completed questionnaires to the university in a pre-paid envelope. The women sampled were on average younger and had a shorter length of service than the men. There were proportionately more women than men at the probationer stage and less working in the rank of sergeant. Women were also less likely to be married, less likely to have children or dependent relatives, and more likely than men to have A levels and a degree. The mean age of men and women officers was 40 and 31 years respectively. The mean length of tenure for men was 17.5 years; for women it was nine years.⁷

Orientations to police work

First, we considered the most simple explanation of why women were not more substantially represented in the promoted ranks and the CID, which is that they did not aspire to these positions and lacked ambition. We asked all officers whether or not they would like to be promoted in the next five years. Forty four per cent of men and 61 per cent of women answered this question positively. When length of service was controlled, however, there was no significant difference between men's and women's aspirations for promotion.

Next, we considered whether or not men and women officers attributed different levels of importance to various possible material and other benefits of their work (Figure 1). When length of service was controlled, men rated more highly than women the importance of *high pay* and *job security*, which may well be associated with the perceived, traditional role of the man as bread winner and the mainstay of paid employment within a family. Women rated the opportunity for *advancement* and *challenging work* more highly than men, both of which are factors related directly to police work as a long-term career. No significant differences were expressed about the

⁷ This was also the same mean profile of age and tenure in Brown's study (Brown and Savage 1992).

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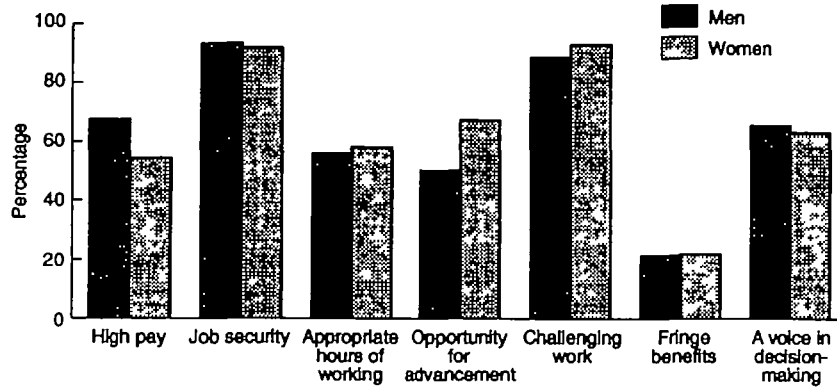


FIG. 1 Percentage of men and women officers who rate the factor as 'very' or 'extremely' important to them in a job

importance of *appropriate hours of working*, *fringe benefits* or *a voice in decision making*. Our conclusion is that women officers were as and, in some cases, more concerned than men about their career advancement and the challenges offered by police employment.

We next explored our data for any specific differences in the ranking of levels of interest in various aspects of police work, finding that women had more interest than men in *making arrests* and *interviewing suspects* (Table 1). Men and women showed similar, high levels of interest in *collecting evidence*. All these crime-oriented features of policing, however, were also the most interesting for men. The whole workforce was clearly more interested in crime work than other aspects of policing, which we know to be a view retained at the heart of the occupational culture of the rank and file, and a rather

TABLE 1 *Percentage of men and women who find each activity 'very' or 'extremely' interesting*

Activity	Women	Men (%)	Statistical difference
Making arrests	85 (1)	76 (1)	**
Interviewing suspects	82 (2)	68 (3)	***
Collecting evidence	74 (3)	70 (2)	ns
Dealing with motoring offences	13 (10)	23 (9)	**
Dealing with traffic accidents	14 (9)	24 (8)	*
Traffic management	7 (12)	13 (11)	+
Traffic patrol	2 (11)	25 (7)	***
General purpose motor patrol	32 (5)	29 (5)	+
Foot patrol	13 (10)	27 (6)	***
Intervening in domestic disputes	17 (8)	10 (12)	***
Working with juveniles	24 (6)	19 (10)	*
Giving advice and information to the public	43 (4)	54 (4)	*
Community liaison activities (e.g. talks)	23 (7)	27 (6)	ns
Inside station duties	6 (13)	8 (13)	ns

Rank order by percentage is shown in parentheses. The more stars the greater the level of statistical significance between the percentages (*** $p < 0.001$; ** $p < 0.01$; * $p < 0.005$; + $p < 0.10$; ns no significant difference).

selective orientation to police work, which is very diverse (Holdaway 1983; Manning 1977; Reiner 1992). A consensus about the most interesting features of police work was therefore shared by all officers, with women helping to sustain it.

The data also indicate that women officers were generally less interested than men in police work concerned with traffic, motoring offences and vehicle accidents. They were also less interested in foot patrol (and marginally more interested than men in car patrol) and in giving advice to the public. Women officers were more interested than men in intervening in domestic disputes, which they may have viewed as crime work, and in work with juveniles, which frequently also includes crime work, reinforcing the dominant definitions of interesting work within the constabulary.

The level of interest women showed in work with juveniles and in domestic disputes may, however, be the result of differential deployment practices. A view that women are more suited than men to dealing with 'domestics' and 'juveniles' and, therefore, more frequently allocated such work, could have prevailed in the research constabulary. We will return to this point.

The greater interest of women officers in crime work might also be interpreted as a rather predictable, engendered response to employment in an occupation dominated by men, who have traditionally asserted its dominance. If women officers were to avoid marginalization within the workforce they more or less had to accept men's definitions of police work. Such an explanation, however, is not persuasive. It is far too deterministic, presenting women as puppets, animated into thought and action by men. Further, it should have led women officers to an interest in traffic work, which was not the case.⁸

The history of the ascendancy of crime work within the police has certainly been formed in an occupation dominated, numerically and attitudinally, by male officers. To this extent, women officers' views about crime work have developed within an engendered context controlled by men. Women officers' relative lack of interest in traffic work and significant, greater interest in police work concerned with arrests, with crime and criminal investigation, however, also lead us in the direction of women officers' chosen acceptance and continuing affirmation of key features of the occupational culture. In this they were not overly constrained by their male colleagues' lead.

There was a consensus within the workforce about the interest and ascendancy of crime work. On this front, women officers were as enmeshed in the occupational culture as their male colleagues. This does not mean that they shared a consensus about all features of the occupational culture. Our point is that women's selection of crime work cannot be interpreted as a response determined straightforwardly by their male colleagues.

The fulfilment of aspirations

Despite their apparent enthusiasm for crime work, the aspirations of many women officers to be deployed in this area were frequently frustrated. Women officers in the lower ranks, and in relation to length of service, consistently said to a far greater extent

⁸ It would also be a tautological argument.

than men that to date they had not been deployed in their preferred areas of work. When we consider that these areas of work were concerned with crime and its investigation (and, remember, also with domestic disputes and juveniles), questions are raised about the extent to which dispatchers and supervisors were aware of women officers' interests and aspirations.

It may also be the case that dispatchers and supervisors assumed women are more suited to work with juveniles and domestic disputes than other tasks. They posted them to such work but not to other crime related tasks. Further evidence on this point is based on our respondents' self-reporting of their deployment during the preceding two months.⁹ Women officers reported more involvement than men in work with all victims of sex offences, victims of violence, work involving children and babies, alarm calls and domestic disputes (Figure 2).¹⁰ The data for deployment on work concerned with babies and children is particularly striking, as Figure 2 below indicates.

Women officers were certainly not uninterested in this type of work. They were not preoccupied with crime related work. Their frustration was that they were not routinely assigned to deal with a wider range of crime work.

Further, when we asked officers if they believed they were treated differently on the grounds of their gender, significant differences between male and female officers were clearly apparent. As Figure 3 shows, women reported that on the grounds of their

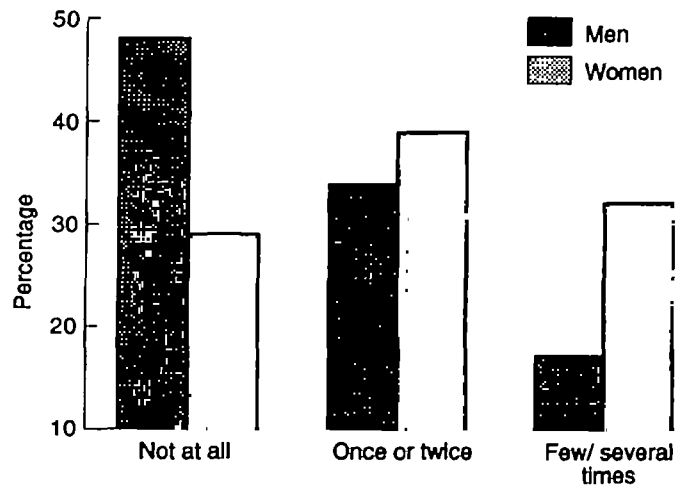


FIG. 2 Men's and women's responses to the question: 'How often in the last two months have you been involved in incidents involving children or babies?'

⁹ This method of documentation may be somewhat inaccurate. We had no other available means of documenting deployment patterns.

¹⁰ The deployment to work with sex offenders, including their victims of sex offences, is mostly explained by Home Office guidance.

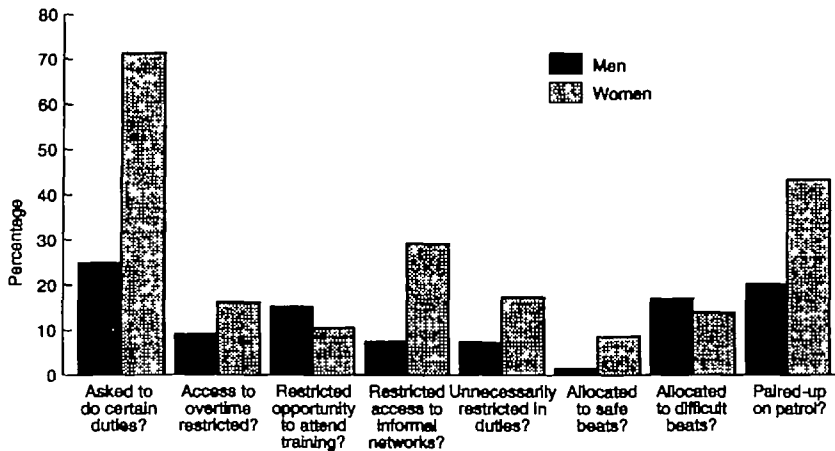


FIG. 3 The percentage of men and women indicating that they are 'sometimes', 'often', or 'very often' treated differently on the grounds of gender

gender they believed they were deployed differently, were unnecessarily restricted in their duties, allocated to safe/less busy beats and were more frequently paired-up on patrol than men. Men believed that women were sent on training courses more frequently. Indeed, we found that 17 per cent of men and 48 per cent of women in the sample reported they had attended training about equal opportunities, which is remarkable given the dominance of men within the constabulary.

The implication of these data is that dispatchers and supervisors, who were predominantly male, were not perceived to be treating men and women officers in similar, equitable ways. Engendered stereotypes of women and the type of police work they should undertake, originating beyond the organizational boundaries of the constabulary, informed routine decisions about deployment. Their main effect was the restriction of women officers' work, not least the range of crime work to which women were deployed, despite their demonstrable commitment to the ascendancy of such work. Male colleagues policed and prevented women officers from embracing central aspects of the occupational culture more fully.

The CID

Just 7.5 per cent of the CID workforce was comprised of women. Male officers' views about the type of work their female colleagues should undertake might be expected to influence and explain in part the reasons for their under-representation within the CID and, therefore, to be a major source of frustration for women officers. Men's stereotypical views about women's physical capacity for police work and their vulnerability determine their deployment. They do, partially, but to explain women's relative absence from the CID it is again necessary to take into account occupational cultural features that structured the views and employment experience of men and women officers.

Officers who had not applied to work in the CID within the last three years were asked to indicate their reasons for not applying to join the branch (Table 2).¹¹ As might be expected, *being content with current position or undecided about the future* were the most common factors associated with not applying for a CID position. Seventy one per cent of men and 43 per cent of women cited these reasons. Women officers were certainly more prepared than men to consider a career in the CID and were less content than men with their current position. It was striking, moreover, that more men (50 per cent) than women (39 per cent) said they had not applied to join the CID because they disliked its culture.

Differences between men and women officers' views about entry into the CID were not polarized or capable of satisfactory explanation by appeal to the wholly engendered, negative culture of the CID. On the other hand, is it possible that women were less troubled than men about the culture of the CID because they experienced a generally more negative context in all spheres of police employment?

Many women officers, however, expressed without doubt their dislike of the culture of the CID. For some women, exclusion from membership of and, for others, the experience of working within the CID was marked by an experience of engendered

TABLE 2 *Reasons for not having applied for the CID in the last three years^a*

Influencing factor	Men (%)	Women (%)	Test of difference
Content with current position/Undecided on future	71	43	***
Dislike CID culture	50	39	+
Not interested in CID work	44	20	***
Too many more experienced people already wanting to go into CID	4	11	*
Not enough posts available	2	7	*
Lack of experience	7	22	***
Lack of skills/abilities	6	4	ns
Insufficient length of service	6	33	***
Difficulties in working the hours required/expected	14	21	ns
Potential conflict with domestic commitments	20	21	ns
Discouraged/blocked by immediate supervisor	2	4	ns
Not supported by (or unlikely to get support from) immediate supervisor	1	9	***
Fear of negative comments about being selected for equal opportunity reasons rather than merit	0	4	*
Feeling that I won't fit in	9	10	ns

^a Based on those who had not already worked in CID.

More than one factor could be ticked. Factors rated less than 3% by both genders are excluded. Chi-squared statistical tests were used to compare frequencies for men and women.

Significance levels are as follows: ***p<0.001; **p<0.01, *p<0.05, + p<0.10.

No significant difference is indicated by ns.

¹¹ The numbers of men and women who had not applied to join the CID were comparable. Eighty four per cent of men reported that they had not applied and 79 per cent of women reported they had not applied. The reasons men and women had not applied, however, were different

inequality. The CID within the research constabulary, however, was mostly perceived by significant proportions of men *and* women officers as a distinct organizational and cultural territory, separated from the terrain occupied by the main workforce.

Further evidence pertinent to the relative absence of women officers from the CID also emerged from women who formerly or, at the time of the research, worked in the CID. They stressed an experience of considerable discrimination on the grounds of their gender. Compared with their male colleagues, women officers in the CID reported a significantly lower level of acceptance by their fellow officers (Figure 4) and believed their work performance to be less fairly assessed (Figure 5). The incidence of adverse behaviour within the CID, including sexual harassment, was also higher than in the uniform branch. Further, significantly fewer women officers (22 per cent) compared with men officers (33 per cent) agreed that 'selection procedures for CID are fair'.

The CID was an organizational domain in which women officers had a distinct, engendered experience of employment, despite the general dislike of the CID culture by many of their male colleagues. The work experience of both men and women officers was policed by CID personnel, but women officers' experience was policed in common and distinct ways.

There was one unit in which women worked on criminal investigation but, importantly, was not perceived to have the same status as the CID and, organizationally, was not a part of it. This was the Sexual Offences and Child Abuse Unit, staffed mainly by women, although not in supervisory positions, with the function of investigating allegations of relevant crime.¹² The officers working in the unit, however, were not given the title of detective constable; were not afforded a permanent status; and their service was not formally recognized as a training for permanent posting to the CID. The differentiation of this unit as a specialism for women officers reinforced a view within the research constabulary that its staff had a specialist function, somehow related to criminal investigation but, in organizational terms, not a detective function. Although the women officers working in the unit undertook investigative activities that were very similar, if not identical to those of CID officers, their work with children and women victims was not defined in similar terms. They were regarded as specialists, distinct from the CID, working in an area particularly suited to women officers.¹³

In summary, internal social processes related to dominant ideas about who should be employed on different types of police work, and about the role and status of women within a constabulary, were perceived to exclude women officers from the CID and, we infer, from some crime work dealt with by uniformed officers. This did not mean that male officers particularly embraced ideas associated with the culture of the CID. Indeed, they expressed a dislike of that culture. Women's experience was not absolute. Within the workforce, women officers were nevertheless policed by their male colleagues and excluded from the fulfilment of their aspirations.

¹² Home Office regulations require women officers to be employed in this area of work. This, however, is not a direction that necessarily affects the status of the officers working within it.

¹³ Carol Martin found a similar arrangement in Sussex police (*ibid.* 516).

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FIG 4 Responses to the question: 'When in CID, I am (was) accepted by fellow officers' by officers who have worked in or are working in CID

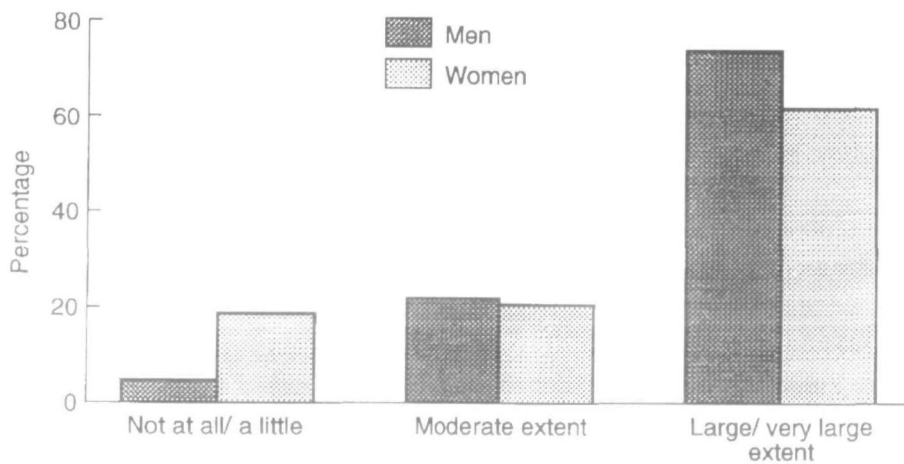


FIG. 5 Responses to the question: 'When in CID, my performance is/was fairly assessed' by officers who have worked in or are working in CID

Promotion

A section of our questionnaire was concerned with the relative absence of women from the promoted ranks. Seventy two per cent of men and 78 per cent of women said that they had not applied for promotion in the last three years ($n=491$).¹⁴ The fact that similar numbers of men and women officers had applied for promotion indicates that women were not overly deterred by the context within which they worked. Their reasons for not applying for promotion are listed in Table 3 below.

Important differences between men and women's employment experience associated with internal, organizational and external, home-related constraints became apparent when these and other data were considered. As might be expected, the most common factor indicated by both men and women was '*content with position/undecided on the future*'. Both groups also said that they '*haven't time to study for exams/do training necessary*'.

There were also significant, key differences in men's and women's responses to questions about promotion. Nearly one third of women (32 per cent) reported that they felt they had an *insufficient length of service* to apply for promotion and many indicated that they had a *lack of experience* (24 per cent) or a *lack of skills/abilities* (11 per cent), which could be an accurate view, although partly dependent on the selective patterns of work deployment we have documented. Women officers had not been adequately exposed to crime work. Their opportunity to enter the CID and/or to seek promotion was thereby restricted.

TABLE 3 *Percentage of men and women indicating why they have not applied for promotion in the last three years*

Influencing factor	Men (%)	Women (%)	Statistical difference
Content with current position/undecided about future	69	60	*
Too many more experienced people already wanting promotion	8	5	ns
Not enough posts available	4	4	ns
Lack of experience	7	24	***
Lack of skills/abilities	5	11	*
Insufficient length of service	7	32	***
Difficulties in working the hours required/expected	2	13	***
Unsure where I'll end up working if promoted	23	24	ns
Potential conflict with domestic commitments	5	17	***
Do not want to go back to uniform	4	9	*
Unable to work full-time	0	4	*
Haven't time to study for exams/do training	32	34	ns
Discouraged/blocked by immediate supervisor	1	4	*
Not supported by (or unlikely to get support from) immediate supervisor	3	6	ns
Fear of negative comments about being selected for equal opportunity reasons rather than merit	2	10	***

More than one factor could be ticked. No significant difference is indicated by ns.

¹⁴ Approximately 5 per cent of women served in the rank of sergeant or above

Another possibility is that women may have had adequate work experience but lacked the confidence to put themselves forward for promotion and/or underestimated their skill level. Evidence of the relative levels of encouragement for career development received by men and women officers will be discussed later. These points, however, should be placed within the context of the research constabulary's promotion policy, which states that length of service and tenure are not the key determinants of promotion. Despite this policy and efforts to assert it, the dominant view within the constabulary was of tenure being the most important qualification for promotion. One consequence of this view was a sustaining of engendered inequalities within the workforce, not least the under-representation of women within the promoted ranks.

Both home and work roles are relevant to women's decisions to seek promotion.¹⁵ Seventeen per cent of women (but just 5 per cent of men) indicated a *potential conflict with domestic commitments* as a factor influencing why they had not applied for promotion. Thirteen per cent of women (but just 2 per cent of men) indicated *difficulties in working the hours required of them*. Nine per cent of women working in posts that did not require shift work indicated that they *did not want to return to uniform* and 4 per cent (0 per cent of men) indicated that they *could not work full-time*.

More particularly, women officers said that the expectations of their male colleagues were inappropriate and related clearly to their gender (Figure 6). They felt they had to work harder than men to achieve a parity of acceptance and had to avoid mistakes in their work for fear of criticism that women are not as able as male officers. And for similar reasons they felt a much greater need than their male colleagues to accept the



FIG. 6 Percentage of responses to questions concerning how officers feel they need to behave in order to be accepted by their colleagues or to advance within the service

¹⁵ The issue of home/work conflict is discussed in detail later. We show this is particularly an issue for women with children.

work allocated to them, which is a factor also related to the ways in which women were deployed in restricted areas of police work. Indeed, our data indicate that in these respects men and women officers worked in very different environments within the one constabulary, with internal and external factors combining to create a highly differentiated, engendered structure of employment.

Externally defined roles which had a impact on experiences of employment were also relevant here. Significantly more women than men, for example, said they denied being a parent when at work. They believed that if they mentioned that child care commitments made it difficult or impossible to work overtime, or on particular shifts, their colleagues would interpret this as evidence of unsuitability for police employment. Further, women said that they needed to act more aggressively than they would like and needed to play down their gender; to work twice as hard as many of their male colleagues; were constantly having to prove themselves; and were more prone to worry about mistakes.

These findings reflect women officers' engendered, minority status within a work environment where many of their male colleagues, including those in managerial positions, underrated their performance. Importantly, the reasons underlying different levels of worry about performance are resistant to change and remain in the organizational memory. Sixty seven per cent of women and 21 per cent of men agreed that, 'the mistakes of a woman are noticed more and remembered longer than those made by a man'.

The net result of these distinct pressures upon women officers was to increase their worry about aspects of their performance, which in turn affected their perception of possibilities for advancement within their constabulary. Put starkly, women officers perceived that they had to behave in unwanted ways to secure acceptance by their male colleagues or to advance within the service (Figure 7).

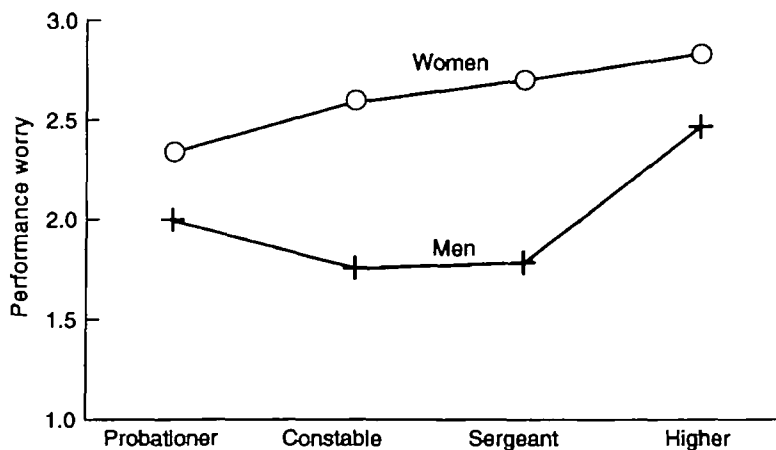


FIG. 7 Worry about aspects of their performance (e.g. feeling the need to work twice as hard; worrying about mistakes; feeling obliged to say 'yes' to work requests)

Greater levels of worry about performance between men and women of all ranks were apparent. Figure 7 presents data combining items cited as differentially affecting performance worry and it indicates that, as rank increased, women experienced even greater worry about performance than their male colleagues. It would not be unreasonable to interpret this and related evidence as indicative of a disincentive for women to stretch their abilities at work for fear of risking a mistake, though a small number might have adopted such a strategy. In the round, women officers worked in an environment that created unwanted pressures affecting their performance at work and opportunities to develop the skills and knowledge required for career advancement.

Career encouragement and equal opportunities

In the work setting we describe, women officers could have benefited from a positive, encouraging approach to their career development by their supervisors and more senior officers. In a range of questions, we asked officers about the extent to which they were encouraged, discouraged or hindered by their immediate supervisor, more senior officers, colleagues and, if applicable, their domestic partners.

Women officers reported significantly less encouragement than men from their immediate supervisor, senior officers and colleagues. This remained the case when length of service was controlled. Figures 8 and 9 illustrate these findings showing, respectively, results for men's and women's responses to perceived encouragement from their immediate supervisors and from senior officers.

Although we did not investigate the issue in our survey, members of women officers' focus groups who helped us develop the questionnaire suggested that a view underlying this lack of encouragement for women officers was, as one put it, 'they will just have

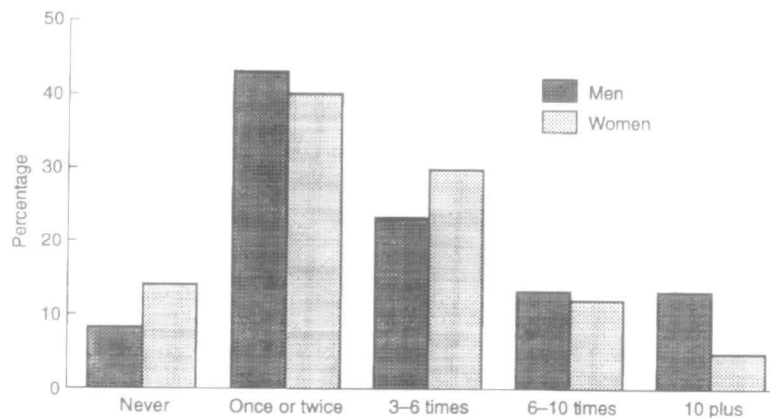


FIG. 8 Percentage of responses to the question 'to what extent has an immediate supervisor encouraged you in your career development' by gender

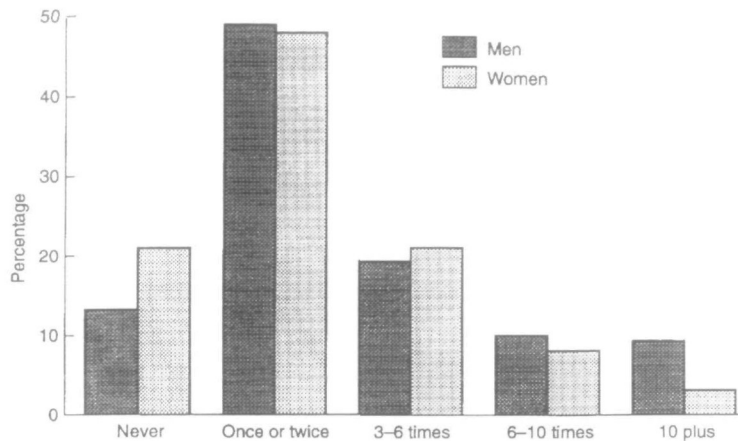


FIG. 9 Percentage of responses to the question 'to what extent has a high ranking officer (more senior than you) encouraged you in your career development' by gender

children and leave'. The corollary of the view, which is supported by our evidence, is that it is preferable to put investment into a man's career. As another woman officer put it, 'Most of my male colleagues have mentors or at least someone who takes a positive interest in their careers. This does not happen with women, who have to push themselves forward if they want something and then are described as "pushy, prima donna" etc.'

Of further relevance to this point is that in answer to questions about attitudes towards women and careers, including part-time working, 40 per cent of men (compared to 17 per cent of women) agreed that 'if a child is sick, no one is really an adequate substitute for its mother' and 39 per cent of men agreed that 'if there is a choice, it's economically more sensible to choose a man for a job rather than a woman'. These results suggest a significant number of male officers (which, in turn, means a large proportion of the constabulary) accepted traditional values about men's and women's careers. Such attitudes are likely to result in behaviours such as a lack of career encouragement, deployment of women to stereotypically female roles, and failure to support equal opportunities practices.

Regarding this latter issue, 27 per cent of men (compared to 7 per cent of women), agreed that 'part-time working should be discouraged by senior officers to avoid the organizational problems it might create'. Indeed, many officers perceived a lack of on-the-ground support and, at times, active discouragement for policies such as part-time working. Further, the widely held view among men that 'most women leave the service in order to get married and have a baby' (54 per cent and 34 per cent women) could act as a justification for some male officers to regard women's careers less seriously than men's careers.

Our findings about a lack of career encouragement provide an important part of an explanation of why women officers perceived they were less readily transferred into

specialist departments or promoted to the higher ranks than their male counterparts. Their immediate supervisors and more senior officers did not regard them as contracted and employed in the same way as male officers, which meant a life-long career. Ideas about motherhood, parenting, commitment to a career and so on were enacted within the constabulary, to sustain and police a framework of constraints around women officers' experience of employment and opportunities for advancement. They strengthened and sustained unequal opportunities within the research constabulary.

Conflict between home and work

Conflict between home and work is one of the most frequently reported factors causing stress among women in all occupations (Frone *et al.* 1992). Indeed, it was one of the most commonly mentioned issues raised in our focus groups. There are two basic types of conflict between home and work life, both of which were assessed in the research. Home/work conflict is where home responsibilities affect work negatively. Home life interferes with getting to work on time, being able to work overtime, and so on. Work/home conflicts, which formed the basis of another question, are concerned with work responsibilities negatively affecting home life, interfering with child care, housework, and so on.

An initial analysis of our data about these subjects indicated that there were no simple, consistent differences between men's and women's experience of conflict between home and work. Indeed, male officers reported slightly more conflict between home and work than women. This comparison, however, did not take into account that many more men than women were parents. The demands of parenthood affected both men and women, though to very different degrees.

All officers shared a common and, as the members of engendered groups, a distinct experience of employment. When the data about home/work conflicts were controlled for being a parent, clear differences between the occupational experience of men and women officers became apparent (Figure 10). 16.2 per cent of women but just 4.0 per cent of men with children reported that *home duties often or very often interfere* with work, which suggests that many more women were taking the lion's share of child care and work related to it.

As far as work/home conflict was concerned, 7 per cent of men and 19 per cent of women without children reported experiencing such conflict often or very often (Figure 11). Twenty three per cent of men and 39 per cent of women officers with children, however, reported that *work often or very often interfered with home*. This is evidence of the ways in which the work lives of women with and without children were constrained.

Finally, when asked if women officers worry that their colleagues think home interferes with work, those with children indicated that they worried very much more than men with children (Figure 12).

As Figure 12 illustrates, our evidence points directly to a substantially different experience of employment between men and women officers, a difference that brought the role of parenting into the everyday work of women officers in a way that male officers failed to appreciate.

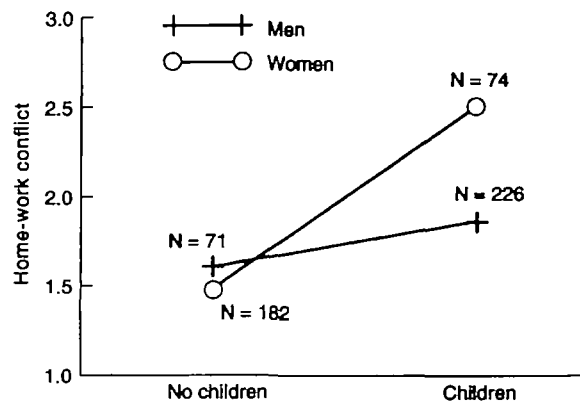


FIG. 10 Levels of home/work conflict (i.e. home responsibilities negatively affecting work) for men and women with and without children

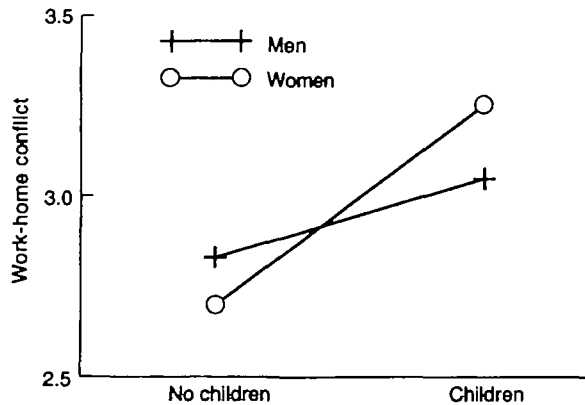


FIG. 11 Levels of work/home conflict (i.e. work responsibilities negatively affecting home life) for men and women with and without children

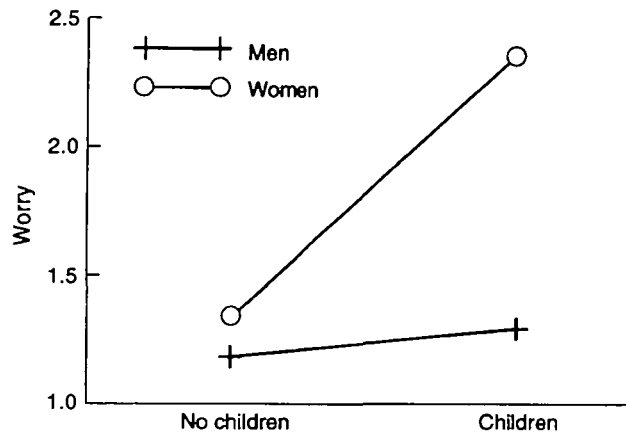


FIG. 12 Levels of 'worry about whether people at work think home-life interferes with job' for men and women with and without children

Conclusion

Our data from a large survey of men and women officers serving in a northern constabulary provide much evidence to support the view that the work of women officers is constrained by societal structures of engendered inequalities. We have been able to identify specific roles, pertinent to women's lives in households, that structured their experience of police employment. Further, we have elucidated some of their consequences for routine police employment.

Being a parent, for example, had very different consequences for women and men employed in the constabulary. Conflicts between home and work were generally sharper for women officers. Francis Heidensohn's argument that women per se are excluded from full membership of the police has been found to have more than a little credibility. Engendered inequalities located within a wider, societal structure of beliefs, attitudes and related actions permeated the organizational structure and culture of the constabulary we researched. Women officers' employment was constrained and policed in distinct ways.

Our findings, however, also lead us in a rather different direction. There are aspects of women officers' views about employment and police work that sustained a consensus of occupational values among men and women. Many features of the occupational culture of the rank and file have been shown to be discriminatory for women. We have nevertheless found women officers sustaining key features of that culture, mostly by placing and retaining aspects of crime work in the ascendancy. We do not know precisely why this was so, except that we can say it was not an acceptance and reflection of men's definitions of the importance of crime work relative to other tasks the police perform. Women officers were not seeking the acceptance of their male colleagues by a demonstrable commitment to similar, albeit highly partial values.

The CID was found to be a particular enclave of discriminatory and exclusionary practices that were disliked by women officers. Significantly more men than women, however, had not applied to join the CID because they disliked its culture. There is no suggestion here that the women who were not overly deterred from considering a CID career were somehow condoning or approving of the CID culture, far from it. Despite its potential and actual shortcomings, however, many women officers chose to consider or pursue further an application to join the CID. Their response cannot be wholly divorced from an awareness that in many respects it would be difficult to work with their male CID colleagues; that they would labour against the grain of the dominant CID culture if appointed to its ranks. Conversely, it is reasonable to infer that male officers who expressed a dislike of CID culture and were deterred from applying for membership of the branch, were also rejecting many of its features that disadvantaged women.

A taking into account of such disadvantages by women officers, however, does not amount to an over-determination of choice. Many women officers placed crime work in the ascendancy and wished to pursue their interest in it within the context of the CID—which was their decision. As they worked with CID colleagues, whether as members of the department or as uniform staff, they negotiated the ways in which their work was engendered (Weick 1969, 1979, 1982). Within this and other research settings, the notion of power is most adequately conceptualized as a negotiated process rather than a zero-sum game (Mason 1990, 1992, 1994). There is no evidence of the absolute exceptionalism', as Carol Martin has put it, when women police officers vie with and yield to particular, engendered stereotypes and associated roles.

We have documented internal and external constraints playing upon the employment experiences of women officers. Women officers, however, were not passive in the wake of these constraints. In some ways they reinforced the dominant assumptions about police employment their male colleagues espoused. In other ways they rejected their marginalization within the workforce. Women officers were policed by their male colleagues but, as with the policing of all people, there were demonstrable limits to the capacity to control.

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