WOMEN AND POLICE CULTURE IN VICTORIA

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Introduction

We detect four principal propositions in much of the literature on women in policing. First, women make good police officers; they are equal to their male colleagues in most conventional policing roles, and they are arguably better than those colleagues in conflict-resolution roles. Second, and despite the first, women have been discriminated against endurably in their attempts to enter policing, and to stay and flourish within policing; they have faced formidable structural impediments to equal selection, deployment and promotion, and they face hostility and sexist behaviour from male-dominated police culture. Third, women are forced to adapt to male-dominated culture in order to survive in policing; they do this by conforming to behaviours along a continuum of defeminisation at one end to deprofessionalisation at the other. Fourth, improvements to the lot of women in policing require a fundamental reformulation of the male-dominated culture of policing, now that the formal structural impediments to full integration have at least been recognised, if not totally eradicated.

The available evidence in support of aspects of the first two propositions above is powerful. Conventional performance assessments in policing and survey research appear to indicate that women perform equally with men in general (Cuadrado, 1995; James, 1993; Poole and Pogrebin, 1988); women's capacities in the problematic areas of confrontation and violence are similarly equal to those of male police (Sichel, 1978) or better (Grennan, 1987). Despite these findings, the reality of women's experiences in policing continues to constructed as remorselessly bleak. 'Breaking and entering' into policing (Martin, 1980) has been difficult historically for women. Denied formal equal opportunity as police officers until the 1970s, women in Australian, British and North American police departments have been under-represented in general, and in particular in traditional crime fighting areas (McCulloch and Schetzer, 1993; Jones, 1986; Martin, 1989). Women face difficulty being selected as police officers relative to men because of discriminatory selection tests (McCulloch and Schetzer, 1993; Prenzler, 1996). Once in the job, women police face structural and attitudinal obstacles in deployment and promotions, and persistently experience negativity and sexist sentiment and behaviour from male police (Sutton, 1992; Stratton, 1986).

While it is unsound to generalise the findings above to all women police and all police organisations, the consistency of the research regarding women's capacities and their experiences within police organisations leaves little doubt that the two propositions above are well-grounded. However, we think the remaining two propositions need to be treated more cautiously. Police Culture

The concept of a police occupational culture has become a popular explanation for a range of police behaviours, particularly those concerned with systematic deviance of one kind or another by police officers. The concept can be traced back to the seminal work of Jerome Skolnick (1966) in his formulation of the 'working personality' of police officers. For Skolnick, the interaction of the perceived dangerousness of the police working environment, the need to develop suspiciousness as an occupational trait, and the police officer's authority to use coercive force generates a distinctive set of values and attitudes. Amongst other
consequences, police develop a sense of social isolation and a strong intra-group solidarity. These values and attitudes constitute the informal police culture which operates as an influential framework for decision-making and action alongside, and at times in conflict with, formal organisational and legal governance of police behaviour.

Police culture is seen typically to operate on at least three levels with regard to police deviance. First, it provides a set of rationalisations for such deviance by drawing boundaries for 'acceptable' behaviour beyond or contrary to those established by formal legislation and regulation. Rule-breaking is seen as acceptable and indeed necessary because of the unique demands upon police to be effective in the face of the constraints of the rule of law. Second, it operates as a socialisation mechanism to inculcate new police members with the informal values and attitudes. Third, it acts to protect rule-breaking police from scrutiny and criticism through the code of loyalty. Thus, police culture justifies police rule-breaking, reproduces such rule-breaking in new cohorts of police, and protects rule-breaking police.

Police culture has been invoked predominantly to explain police misbehaviour in interactions with the community, in particular brutality (Skolnick and Fyfe, 1993), police corruption (Finnane, 1990), and discriminatory police practices (Chan, 1994). It has also been applied to discriminatory practices against fellow police officers such as whistleblowers, members of racial and ethnic minorities, and women (Skolnick and Fyfe, 1993; Sutton, 1992). It is this last invocation that we concern ourselves with here.

When culture is discussed in the context of women's experiences as police officers, it takes on dimensions in addition to those noted above. A constellation of personality characteristics associated with police culture is used to explain male police treatment of women police. These characteristics were drawn originally from the psychological literature on authoritarianism. Interest by psychologists in authoritarian personalities on policing began in the 1960s, and flowered for some two decades. Niederhoffer's (1967) work on anomie and cynicism in policing was the probable stimulus. The central characteristics of the alleged authoritarian personality - conservatism, authoritarian aggression, concern with power and toughness, destructiveness, cynicism and stereotypy - appeared to fit well with popular stereotypes of police behaviour (Balch, 1972; Brown and Willis, 1985). Although Lefkowitz's (1977) thorough review raised considerable doubt about the empirical credentials of a modal authoritarian personality among police, the attribution has endured, and has been grafted onto conceptualisations of police culture. Reiner (1992) writes of the core characteristics of police culture as action-orientation, cynicism, suspicion, conservatism, machismo, prejudice and pragmatism; the overlap with authoritarianism is obvious. These characteristics also stamp police culture with its most defining feature with regard to the discourse on women police: police culture is masculinist.

One of the essential tasks for women in policing, then, is to accommodate to the dictates and values of the masculinist police culture. Martin (1980) writes of POLICEwomen and policeWOMEN; the former assume many of the trappings of male behaviour and culture in an effort to gain professional recognition from male police, while the latter continue to emphasise femininity and seek out service-
oriented duties in policing away from confrontive crime-fighting. Stratton's (1986) description of 'competitive' and 'compliant' women police offers a similar taxonomy. Whether competitive or compliant, women face attitudinal problems, both from male police and their own sorority. Those that attempt to equal or better the performance of men at the 'hard end' of policing face accusations of unfeminine aggression, lesbianism and so forth. Those that conform to feminine stereotypes and prefer traditional service and welfare roles within policing confirm male beliefs that women are incapable of performing 'real' police work, and excite the ire of women trying to break into traditionally male-dominated areas of policing.

**Problems with Constructions of Police Culture**

The concept of police culture is a powerful explanatory tool in our understanding of police behaviours, and its development over the last three decades or so is to be welcomed. However, we have argued elsewhere (James and Warren, 1995) that there is a danger in applying culture indiscriminantly as a universalised explanation for those behaviours. There are several problems with such application. We first examine those relevant to police culture in general, and then apply these to the discourse on women in policing.

There have been at least two tendencies in writings on police culture which we believe are unsound. The first is summed up by Chan (1996: 111): "In spite of Reiner's acknowledgment that 'cop culture' is not 'monolithic, universal nor unchanging' (Reiner, 1992: 109), police culture is often described as though it is." Variations in the particular configurations of culture are likely to exist as functions of the different histories, formal structures and socio-political contexts across police departments, and as functions of occupational specialisations within policing. Thus, there are likely to be diversities between and within police departments in terms of cultural forms. As the contexts within which cultural forms develop change, so too will those forms and their interactions with the police occupational and organisational environments.

The second concerns the characterisation of culture as a highly deterministic entity which impels police towards modal (usually negative) behaviours. Fitzgerald's representations of Queensland police culture in the 1980s exemplify this tendency. For Fitzgerald, that culture was a prescriptive structure for malpractice, in which young police were powerfully socialised into the bad habits of their superiors (see Finnane, 1990). This kind of 'cultural determinism' has been criticised by Shearing and Ericson (1991), who argue that it is at odds with the empirical evidence which demonstrates great diversity in police behaviours. Further, it assigns a passive status to police officers which is counter-intuitive; police are not "....cultural dopes, blindly following internalised rules but rather .... active participants in the construction of action." (Shearing and Ericson, 1991: 500). Chan (1996: 112) agrees: ".... a sound theory of police culture should recognize the interpretive and active role of officers in structuring their understanding of the organization and its environment." The ethicist Muscari (1984) argues that a deterministic conception of police culture denies police officers the capacity for rationality and accountability, and acts to (wrongly) absolve them from moral decision-making.
The reformulations of police culture which arise from the critiques sketched in above suggest a considerably more fluid and interactional construction of the processes which influence police behaviour than the conventional portraits of culture. For Shearing and Ericson (1991: 500), for instance, police culture is embodied and reproduced in the stories and metaphors told and retold within policing: "...police stories provide officers with the tools they can use to get them through the business of police work without minimising the fact that this still requires individual initiative and daring." Chan (1996) offers a reconceptualisation of police culture which draws upon the work of Bourdieu (1990). Chan argues that the practices of policing need to understood in terms of the interaction between cultural dispositions and structural positions. Cultural dispositions represent perceptual and attitudinal schemata formed from past experiences; these dispositions, like Shearing and Ericson's metaphors and stories, provide guidance for coping with the exigencies of police working life. Structural positions are settings in which individuals are located according to objectively derived relations based on the possession and distribution of power and resources (such locations relate both to positions within the organisation of policing, and to police positions relative to the community). Police practices emerge through the interaction between disposition and position; different positions will trigger different dispositional strategies, and both dispositions and positions are necessarily dynamic as new experiences are enjoyed and new relations of power established. As a consequence, in Chan's formulation, police organisations will necessarily experience multiple cultures as officers vary in their dispositions and positions.

The critiques and reformulations of popular notions of culture sketched in above do not repudiate the utility of cultural explanations of police behaviour and practice. Rather, they urge caution against the construction of culture as monolithic, static and deterministic; simplistic conceptions of culture are likely to obscure significant variations in those behaviours and practices, and to deny agency to individual police officers in their activities. Such caution, we believe, should be applied to the formulation of cultural explanations for the behaviour of police men towards police women and vice versa. At least three levels of caution occur to us. First, we need to be cautious in the degree to which we universalise the masculinist characteristics of police culture and render those characteristics static. Second, the precise influence of police culture upon male police attitudes and behaviours towards women police needs to be debated. Third, the adaptations by women to the organisational and occupational environments in which they exist may need to be vested with greater authenticity and autonomy than the traditional literature would suggest.

Besides these general caveats, there is arguably a further complication which arises in considering women police and police culture. Manning (1993) has drawn attention to the tension inherent in the complexities of police occupational culture, and this is evident in the apparent paradox which pervades women's experiences of culture within policing. Conventionally, women police are victims of police culture, which marginalises them in their adaptations as either compliant or competitive. Yet women are the 'beneficiaries' of police culture as well, if we accept that cultural dispositions are developed to help police officers to cope (appropriately or inappropriately) with the complexities of the police mandate. Women police within any one department are exposed generally to the same
occupational experiences, the same stories and metaphors, and the same structural positions relative to the community as their male colleagues; for at least the first few years, they share precisely the same deployments, status and duties within the organisation. Occupationally and organisationally, then, the initial dispositional and positional constituents of culture suggested by Chan are broadly common across men and women police.

Is this really a paradox? We are not sure, but it may be useful to identify two different police culture discourses. On the one hand, the conventional discourse on police culture in general is concerned primarily with occupational culture - dispositions which arise out of the constructed realities of doing police work within the broad socio-political environments within which police operate. On the other hand, the discourse on police women and police culture emphasises the organisational culture - in which the gendered attitudes of officers and the differential power distributions across men and women police serve to marginalise women. The organisational culture discriminates structurally and attitudinally against officers who are women; the occupational culture embraces women as police officers. If this analytical distinction has its analogue in the realities of women's experiences in policing, then women are faced with the need to adapt to (and make their creative choices about) two competing cultural environments.

The Victoria Police Workshops

The discussion above raises a number of points we would like to see pursued in the scholarship on women police and police culture. Here we will confine ourselves to a relative few. In particular, we wish to examine the extent to which women police describe their organisational and occupational experiences in conformity with the apparent paradox outlined above. We have available to us a body of data drawn from a series of workshops or focussed group discussions held with members of the Victoria Police in 1993 and 1994. Those workshops formed part of a larger project on police culture and violence. Included in the workshops were a number of women police of varying ranks, lengths of service and deployments.

The workshops arose out of a perceived need to examine the extent to which the conventional formulations of police culture, generated typically in British and North American contexts, have relevance to the experiences of Australian police. While popular discussion of the nature and impacts of police culture has grown locally in recent years, particularly since the Fitzgerald Inquiry in Queensland in 1989, there have been few systematic studies of Australian police cultures (see James and Warren, 1995). We were keen to gather Australian police data on the issues, and adopted a workshop format to enable participants to provide their own extended accounts of their experiences and their perspectives. The workshops were structured initially to gather responses from participants on a number of prominent propositions contained in Skolnick's original and more recent formulations of culture (Skolnick, 1966; Skolnick and Fyfe, 1993). These propositions concerned the existence and impact of the following elements in police work and life: exposure to danger; development of suspiciousness; social isolation; solidarity and loyalty; exercise of authority; and working within a disciplined, hierarchical organisational structure. Depending upon the responses to these issues, further
elements were explored: the characteristics of 'good cops'; the relevance of physical strength and courage; the handling of colleague rule-breaking; the policing of domestic disputes; and the policing of young people. Each workshop ran between two and three hours, and discussions were audio-recorded and transcribed by the first author.

A total of 33 men and 14 women police took part in nine separate workshops, each of which was anchored in a specific officer category identified a priori as likely to reflect a possible sub-culture. These comprised: general duties uniformed officers of five or less years of service (one woman, three men); Community Policing Squad officers (three women, two men); divisional Criminal Investigation Branch detectives (five men); Police Academy instructors (two women, four men); district middle management (one woman, five men); Internal Investigations Department officers (five men); divisional commissioned officers (four men); general duties women police (four women); and probationary constables two weeks out of the academy (three women, five men).

We make no claims for thorough representativeness, or for a comprehensive canvassing of all relevant issues. The narratives cannot be considered empirical 'proof' of anything; they certainly cannot be generalised. Rather they represent personal and selective accounts. Our primary concern has been to give voice to participants so that their constructions of the police worlds in which they live could be revealed to us.

**General Comments**

The workshops covered considerable ground, and it is impossible here to reproduce succinctly even the major elements revealed by the narratives. But generally, it was clear that the essential constituent elements proposed as the embodiment of police culture were recognised as relevant across the workshops. Thus, the perceived dangerousness of the police working environment, the development of suspiciousness as a crucial work tool, the need for strong intra-group solidarity and so forth were identified as significant features of occupational life. But the accounts from the various groups make it clear that cultural elements differ in their importance and their clarity across experience and specialisation dimensions. The most universal element was undoubtedly the strong endorsement of intra-group solidarity (both within a speciality or structural position and across the whole organisation), followed closely by suspiciousness as a developed characteristic (a characteristic which very few participants saw as problematic; many drew a distinction between their healthy suspiciousness and others' unhealthy cynicism).

On the other hand, perceptions of exposure to violence and the development of mechanisms to cope with it were distinguishable on at least two different levels. For junior general duties uniformed participants, exposure to violence was seen as a pervasive risk which demanded consistent vigilance and concern; uncertainties in predicting and coping with violence compounded the problems. For the detectives, however, violence was seen much more as a predictable and containable phenomenon, and they were quite sanguine about its existence and its impact upon them. Of all the groups, the detectives, all young males, demonstrated the most
consistent conformity to Reiner's action-oriented, machismo construction of police culture.

Predictably, experience and length of service differentiated between accounts of a number of dimensions. For instance, probationers and junior general duties police expressed a good deal of uncertainty about dealing with colleague rule-breaking. While most participants favoured informal means (such as refusing to work with specific officers, ostracism, informal revelations to middle-management) of dealing with even the more egregious forms of deviance, the decision even to invoke informal means was clearly problematic. Formal academy instruction on the issue was minimal and confusing (recruits were often told that they would have to 'exercise their own judgement' in deciding what to do), and stories about the fate of whistleblowers were standard folklore. More experienced officers expressed little uncertainty about what to do (or not to do). Interestingly, more experienced officers were convinced that junior cohorts of police were less disciplined, more questioning and critical of their colleagues and superiors; junior officers, especially recruits, were equally adamant that a major distinguishing feature of policing was the high (and necessary) level of discipline of the service as a whole and of individual officers, compared with 'civilian' occupations.

Changes in cultural predispositions and perceived structural positions, to invoke Chan's formulations, were reflected in many of the accounts. A useful example of the relation between disposition and position emerged from the loyalty accounts. We noted above that loyalty was considered across the groups as a crucial element for the integrity of police working life. But this rhetorical status was tempered by perceptions of increasing scrutiny - organisational and public - of police practices. This may help explain why junior police expressed uncertainty about dealing with colleague deviance. For many of them, unqualified loyalty to a malpracticing colleague or superior was seen as a potentially hazardous action, if this involved them in adverse findings by Internal Investigations. Thus, while loyalty as an abstraction received ringing endorsement, its execution in the face of possible personal risk was seen as problematic. We may construe this as shifts generated by the interaction between disposition and position. Structurally, officers believed they were more vulnerable in general to investigation and criticism as a function of increasing accountability mechanisms. Dispositionally, the axiomatic quality of loyalty was proving to be something of a problem, and as a systematic guide for appropriate practice within the organisation, its flaws were becoming obvious.

Similar shifts in disposition and position were evident in constructions surrounding the use of force. Structurally, participants were essentially unanimous in their belief that they occupied a different position in terms of the distribution of force in the community compared to previous eras. While police in the past monopolised the use and resources of force, gross violence such as Melbourne's mass killings in the 1980s, the murder of the young constables in South Yarra, the Russell Street bombing, and a firm belief that police were increasingly the targets of specific assault, led the participants to believe that they were now structurally more vulnerable to violence (even two week-out probationers insisted on this, illustrating perhaps the power of police war stories). We detected in the participant accounts an increased cultural disposition towards the use of force primarily in assertive
defence of their safety, a shift from previous times when (according to older participants) force was used primarily to coerce respect and exercise kerb-side justice. The workshops took place before the public controversies of Victoria's police shootings came to a critical head, and before use of force training was overhauled under Project Beacon in 1995; we might expect further dispositional changes as a result of those developments.

The final point to be made in this general section is an important one, we think. While participants readily acknowledged the existence of the constituent elements of police culture, and recognised a general entity (or rather a series of entities) describable as police culture, their accounts consistently disaggregated the elements from the whole. That is, participants acknowledged culture as a concept, but spoke almost exclusively in terms of situations, responses, stories and events. If culture as a systematic and coherent set of values and attitudes was a binding and directional imperative in their lives, it was not obvious directly from their accounts. This of course does not mean that culture is not configured in this way, and has no governance of their lives. But the participants were telling us that for them, culture was an abstraction; their work lives were embedded in considerably more tangible phenomena, and if academics wanted to construct cultural edifices, then that was their business!

The Victorian Women Police

We conclude by reproducing some of the women's accounts of their experiences as police officers. It was only during the workshop in which all participants were women that there was a sustained discussion of women's perspectives and experiences, and we concentrate here primarily on their accounts. But it was in the workshop with mixed-sex probationers fresh from the academy that we heard the most explicit commentary on that most traditional of male harrassments, the female put-down: two women describe their responses to such harassment at the police academy: A: At the start, it really shits you; but after that, you just get used to it. B: Half the time they say it just to shit you. Initially it gets to you though because you start to feel: "Why am I here? No one wants to work with me. I'm inadequate. I'm female. I can't do the job as well as a male can." But once you start to know the job a bit more, you know you can and you get to know it.

In the remaining workshops, besides the all-women one, gender issues were scarcely raised at all (although the three women Community Policing Squad officers complained, after the two males had left the group for appointments, that they were overloaded in their work compared with the men: "It's not that men are not up to the work; it's just that the victims don't want to talk to them!"). We think it likely that some of the women who were on their own or in a distinct minority in their groups were reluctant to raise spontaneously gender issues, and we draw no conclusions that such issues were not of concern to them.

We proceed with a series of questions and answers which arose in the workshop with the four women general duties officers. One of the women was a senior constable with five years of service, while the remaining three were constables with
between four and five years of service; in each case almost all of the service years had been spent in uniformed general duties. The participants have been assigned letters of the alphabet as identification; the accounts which follow have been edited for relevance and narrative flow. An answer not associated with a particular individual means that the audio tape was unable to distinguish between participants.

**Organisational Equality?**

Are there any formal organisations for police women (within the Victoria Police)?

A: Yes....the police association or something...they had the 75th anniversary just recently.

D: I don't think there is a real lot of organisations for police women...

C: But who wants it?

D: I think if you speak to a lot of police women...

C: Maybe a few of the older ones because they are used to being the odd one out...they've had it tough and they presume that we are finding it the same way, so now they're in a position where they can do something about it.

A: Now you can just go to the normal dos and stuff...

So you don't have it as tough don't you think as some of your predecessors?

C: They were doing mundane tasks.

D: They were treated more as a low life, whereas now we do everything equal to the guys.

C: It would have been tougher back then; I wouldn't have joined.

So you all joined to do straight police work, you weren't particularly interested in doing welfare work? Any ambitions to join CPS (the Community Policing Squad which specialises in violence associated with women and children)?

No

One of the things about women policing (it has been argued) is that there were women police of two sorts, one sort were those who had to compete and out-men the men versus those that joined for the welfare components of the job.

A: Like it used to be the butch police woman or the woosy police woman...whereas now it's just general.

D: I don't think they have those categories any more...they used to but not any more.

C: Maybe with some of the older people.

D: The thing is now, when you get into the police force you have to do general duties first off. So no matter if I'm in the police force now and I want to go to the Community Policing Squad, I mean you have to do general duties before you can do that, you know. So it's a matter of you cope with this bit or that's it, you won't make it.
Do you think women in the police force have certain interests or needs which distinguish them from men, or are the needs the same?

D: I reckon we're equal, I really do.
C: The only needs we have, we work out.

A: If I was going to talk about it I'd go to my family or something like that, I'm not going to go to some big knob women's organisation.

What about informal networking amongst women?

A: I don't think at the station you are going to talk to the women more than the blokes.

D: I don't think a station could run without a mixture....I tend not to hang around with police; as soon as I've finished work that's it. I mean it's a fine line if you're going to have to go to functions and start socialising with the people that you work with; but because I'm there for eight hours a day and because I live so far away I just don't want to be there after work. So I mean each to his own, some like to go out with the girls from work whereas I just want to go home. I don't want to be around you!

Would you want to work as the only police woman in an area?

A: Well up until a month ago I was the only woman; there were six of us at our police station and I was the only girl and I thought it was great just because there's no bitchiness. I'm not saying all girls bitch but some girls can be bitchy. We're lucky that we don't have that. But you must admit that at a lot of stations you do get that. But when it came down to it like you said before they will protect you so I thought it was great, it didn't worry me at all. There's another girl there (now) and that doesn't worry me either; it's great having her there. You can say comments and that sort of thing. I can't believe that I'm the only girl there and I have to put up with this and that sort of thing...

D: Yeah because when something like that happens at work, all the girls shuffle over, and it's the guys and we stick up for ourselves, and he says it's five down and one of you, ok you're outnumbered.

A: When I was the only girl it was like look at this and great, I'm really excited, and they forget that we're not interested.

D: Yeah and all the posters up and that.

A: But it wasn't that bad, it didn't worry me because they forgot that you were a female, and it wasn't horrible; I thought it was great, and now there's another girl that's great, so it doesn't matter.

Has the attitude of men towards women changed a lot over the last 15 years?

A: As in respecting (us) more? Yes. I think so.
B: There's people that have been in the job for that many years that are not going to change, it's just the way they are.

A: I think that anyone in the last 8-10 years has been pretty good. I think that if you've got people with problems with women that they have been in the job for longer than 10 years.
So your (male) peers who came through the academy are different?
A: Yeah they're great. You've done exactly the same stuff as them from the word go...
C: Going through the academy has probably changed their attitudes.
So the kinds of influences solidarity and so forth have had upon you have been no different (to those upon males)?
D: I think that we're equal, I really do. Unless they see it in a different way but that doesn't matter!
Occupational Equality?
(Following from a discussion about exposure to danger)...danger therefore gives you a balanced sense of awareness. What about your capacity to use force? Does it make you different from other occupations and what effect does it have on you?
D: You've got it there and you know you've got it there but I think we all approach people as an equal first and really don't use it unless (necessary). If you need someone to do something you know that you can do it if you need it.
A: There's only a few people that get the big power kick. But there is that view out there that gives us the bad name. Whereas it's confidence, you know that you can use it if you have to, it's not something you want to use but you know you can if you have to. So you're sort of more in control of situations. I wouldn't say many people are into that power thing.
C: A lot of the time you can just use your voice without going into swearing or that because they know just how far they can go with you anyway.
D: I'd listen to a woman!
C: It's funny, isn't it, because some say, oh, she's a woman, it's all right; we can get out of this. And some of them think, oh, I can't give her a hard time. Different people think in different ways It's strange, you might get a really big guy who's really giving a male (police) person a really hard time.
A: And then again there's those who don't want to be told what to do by a woman, but as soon as the guy comes out they're fine.
How do you learn to do that?
C: You find out!
Is it like a school teacher learning how to control a class?
C: I suppose...
A: You can't really do it like: this one I'm going to be like this or I'm going to be like that. You have to suss them out and then know how to treat them.
C: And then if one way doesn't work then you've got to try another.
Is the world more or less dangerous for you than it would be for a male police officer?
B: In a situation where it's strength-type fighting, I think women maybe have the tendency to be able to talk their way out of things, because we need to be able to be
confident about our talking, because we're lacking in strength and in ability to overpower someone. So we can talk and talk and talk. Whereas if a guy knows straight on that I can do this.

C: I've been in situations with some big blokes. They might not have the confidence to go in there and use it if they have to. Some women are better than a bloke.

B: You can't really sum it up because everyone's different.

A: I don't think it's any more dangerous for a female than a male because you're doing exactly the same job and going to the same calls and things like that. It's only that bit about the strength part but I think that females are much better about being able to talk their way out of things. So you have an advantage where they have a disadvantage and they have an advantage in something else: strength.

C: If someone has a big hate for women but then you're going to get the opposite anyway where you're not in any more danger.

Do the men agree with you?

A: No, because they can look after themselves. Some might say no (to) working with a sheila.

D: I find that but usually when it comes down to a situation where something usually happens...

C: I think being a woman has its good points but you have to prove yourself.

A: If something happens, I'm not going to lock myself in the car and sit in here and then after you've done that they think, yeah, she's not bad, but it takes that, I think. Some think women are not like that but that's unfortunately what some guys have in the back of their minds, that you're going to run or you're not going to want this to happen.

Are policewomen less likely to need to use force if they are better at talking than men?

C: Yes, we would think more, probably.

D: Yes, because we know we haven't got the strength to.....we might have but it's a last resort because we could lose; whereas if we're doing what we do best and that's talking...

It's sometimes said about men police that there's a confrontationalist ethic there and that talking is a bit of a 'sheila's' way out.

C: Yes

So men will defend this thing called machismo, you'll see that happen?

Yes

Is there an equivalent amongst women, is there something that you uniquely want to defend?

C: I just think we want to defend the same thing, but we want to go about it differently.

B: I'd say it's an individual thing.
A: You want to defend but you don't want people to think that police women can't do it, you don't want to give them, or police men, that impression.

If there is (aggression) in a pub, would people stop for a male not only for their authority as a police officer but their authority as men?

Yes

And you don't share that?

B: We don't care as much about the ego. You get called everything under the sun anyway, so a few more things won't matter.

A: It's also because they're with other men and they have to prove something to them.

D: But then again, you get the guys who are out there and someone will say something to you and they say don't you talk to her like that, like a big brother...and you just think that they do care in their own way.

Are there any situations in assignment where they will say that they will send a man out on this one?

Sure.

Why is that?

D: In case you get into a situation...

A: And the power play; if you've got crooks or something you don't think, oh two women police, let's beat them up.

D: But because you're a woman, that's right, that's a situation.

C: You can call for back up; I don't agree with that attitude.

A: It doesn't worry me.

C: I've worked a night shift where the roster was drawn up and there was two women and another one that was working the van. And they think they're doing the right thing when they're not and I don't know...I don't like going out with a woman.

D: They do jack up, but it doesn't bother us when they do it.

If there is a(n armed) hold-up or something...

D: They will not swap who you're working with; they're not going to say we want two blokes to go there, you come off. But if you were all in the station and there was a big brawl somewhere, then it would be different. You'd still go out but they'd partner you up with a bloke each or something. But that's natural; I don't see anything wrong with that.

C: Even if you get called and you say that there's two females on the van and they might say, we've got two men in a van, can you head that way anyway?

A: You get strong women, you get everything like that.

C: But some women are not getting the opportunity to work the van; every now and again, like I don't think they should do it all the time.

Do you approach domestic disputes in the same way as your male colleagues?
C: It depends on what kind of domestic situation it is.

D: Are you meaning getting personally involved?

There are a number of ways of dealing with it; you can exercise your discretion to treat it just as a dispute, or you can criminalise it. Are you more likely to go (one) way?

A: We all try and treat it the same...you never try and take credit ... because one always ends up backing out, so you always give them the option. If you still want to complain about it, because often you'll take the action for an assault or something, and they say no no. You'll see them walking hand in hand at a restaurant.

Is it the case that women would instinctively treat domestic violence more seriously than men?

No

A: The only reason it gets treated a little bit different is because, usually if it is an assault in a pub it was someone who didn't know someone or they were going to go ahead with it; anyway whereas with domestics they make up the next day.

D: But no one ever says, you've just called the police, you've done 80 hours paper work for that, and yet there is a domestic situation when they get back together...they don't worry about it and we're constantly doing the same work for the same people with the same results every time, for what?

Selected accounts from selected (and tiny) samples of women police are hardly definitive testaments to the issues we have raised in this paper. At the same time, we do not wish to construct any rigid interpretations of the accounts in reference to those issues. Rather, we wish to finish by posing a number of questions, and offering tentative answers, which we hope will stimulate debate and research.

First, are the women's accounts indicative of a monolithic and deterministic culture which pervades their working life and enforces conformity? We think not. Second, do the women emphasise the masculinist character of the cultural dispositions of policing over the other constituent parts? No. Third, do the accounts suggest reflectiveness and creative adaptations by the women to the exigencies of their organisation and their occupation? Yes. Fourth, are the cultural dispositions and structural positions of women, such as they are revealed by the accounts, fixed and static, or fluid and dynamic? We believe the latter. Fifth, do the women express the same dispositions and positions as their male colleagues? Yes and no: yes in most of those constitutive elements which arise from the occupation of policing; and no in some of those elements arising from the organisation of policing. Sixth, as a consequence of Five, do women do policing differently to men? Yes and no again: when the dispositions and positions are shared, the practices are arguably the same; when they are not shared, the practices are arguably different. The former is the more routine occurrence, we believe. Seventh, and finally, would an amelioration of the masculinist character of policing, if it were possible, alleviate the problems faced by women in policing? We don't know!

**BIBLIOGRAPHY**