'Looking for a Man's Job?':
A Historiography of Policewomen's Experiences Throughout the Nineteen-Seventies, Eighties and Nineties

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*'RIDICULE IS NOTHING
TO BE SCARED OF'*

Acknowledgements

Ten years ago, in May 2014 to be exact, I left secondary school. I rejected education, and it rejected me in equal measure. And yet somehow, somewhere, something changed. To read for a PhD has been the greatest privilege of my life so far – and I truly mean that – but none of this would have been possible had it not been for the incredible people in my life. So, without further ado...

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Abstract

Over the last four decades, nineteen-eighties policing has been subject to intense sociological scrutiny and debate. Characterised by violent clashes with members of the public, instances such as the English Race riots and the Miners' Strike encapsulated fraught police-public relations. Academics have since argued that police officers' pursuit of violence was indicative of a wider 'cult of masculinity' embedded into police occupational culture. Owing to its overtly masculine ethos, policing was therefore widely regarded as a 'man's job'.

Scholarship pertaining to the decade has subsequently focused upon the experiences of male officers, particularly those of whom who served for the Metropolitan Police. However, a lesser explored aspect of nineteen-eighties policing is the experiences of policewomen. Indeed, much like the rest of society, policing was going through its own cultural shifts. Following the staggered closure of the Policewomen's Department towards the end of the nineteen-seventies, policewomen were slowly entering a male-dominated environment and challenging the patriarchal zeitgeist. By the end of the century, policewomen were equal in rank and status; but very little is known about the transitional period that led to this point.

The primary aim of this thesis is to contribute to this gap by examining how policewomen navigated an almost exclusively male-dominated occupation. Utilising the life course paradigm, this study draws upon thirty-five personal biographies from former policewomen and explores how they navigated one of the most turbulent times in twentieth century policing. Alongside life history interviewing, this thesis also utilises archival research as a storytelling technique to further illustrate participants' narratives.

The central argument of this thesis is that legislation such as the Equal Pay Act 1970 and Sex Discrimination Act 1975 were ineffective in achieving equality. Instead, a combination of timing, location in time and place, human agency, and linked lives, led to permanent socio-cultural delivered change. Forming part of its original contribution, this study explores a series of recollections of how participants arrived at the controversial decision to pursue a 'man's job' – and how the reactions of their loved ones shaped their career expectations and aspirations early on. Next, findings further expand on existing knowledge pertaining to canteen culture, offering a detailed insight into how women navigated initiation ceremonies such as 'station stamping', 'the mortuary', and 'wild goose chases'. Crucially, this study becomes one of the first studies to examine the role of policewomen in some of the most controversial moments in recent history. It is contended that the 1984/85 Miners' Strike acted as a catalyst for change. Policewomen were able to capitalise on the social upheavals of the epoch and prove themselves as capable to their colleagues, achieving a series of 'firsts' throughout the decade that followed. And finally, this thesis offers insight into post-policing pathways and the lifetime dedication policewomen showed to the communities they served.

Key Words: *Women's Studies; Police History; Life Course Approach; Archival Research.*

List of Research Outputs

Rigby, C. (2021) 'Policing the Pickets and Beyond: A Historiography of Women Police Officers' Experiences', paper presented at the British Crime Historians Symposium, University of Leeds, Online, 2nd September 2021.

Rigby, C. (2022) *Policewomen on Patrol: A Qualitative PhD Project*. [Poster]. Centre of Crime, Justice, and Security Launch Event, 6th April 2022, Staffordshire University.

Rigby, C. (2023) 'Policing the Pickets and Beyond: How Industrial Action Transformed the Role of Policewomen', paper presented at the British Sociological Association Annual Conference, University of Manchester, Manchester, 12-14 April 2023.

Rigby, C. (2024) '*Looking for a Man's Job?*' [Webinar] [Online] Arden University, 30th May 2024.

Rigby, C. & Temple-Malt, E. (2025) 'The Women's Department', in Hart, M., Lamb, J., Lynes, A., Treadwell, J., & Kelly, C. (Eds.) *50 Facts Everyone Should Know About the Police*. Bristol: Bristol University Press.

Rigby, C. (2025) 'Undertaking PhD Research Whilst Being a Full-time Lecturer', in Jones, S., Azad, M., Miles, L., & Lynes, A. (Eds.) *Embracing the Unknown: Chronicles of PhD Students Within the Social Sciences*. Bristol: Policy Press.

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Word Count – 73,014

List of Abbreviations

CC	Chief Constable
CI	Chief Inspector
CS	Chief Superintendent
E&W	England and Wales
EOC	Equal Opportunities Commission
EPA	Equal Pay Act 1970
IOPC	Independent Office for Police Conduct
Insp	Inspector
PACE	Police and Criminal Evidence Act 1984
PC	Police Constable
PS	Police Sergeant
PSU	Public Support Unit
PWD	Policewomen's Department
SDA	Sex Discrimination Act 1975
Supt	Superintendent
UK	United Kingdom
WPC	Woman Police Officer

Timeline of Key Events (1829-2024)

A History of Women in Policing in England and Wales

A timeline illustrating the history of women in policing in England and Wales. Key events shown:

- **1829** — The Metropolitan Police Act
- **1889** — Police Matrons
- **1915** — 1st WPC with Powers of Arrest (World War I 1914-1918)
- **1919** — Sex Disqualification Removal Act
- **1922** — Geddes 'Axe' Committee 'Welfare Work'
- **1928** — Representation of the People Act
- **1932** — 1st Chief Inspector
- **1945** — 246 WPCs > 1148 (World War II 1939-1945)
- **1967** — 1st Black WPC
- **1970** — Equal Pay Act
- **1975** — Sex Discrimination Act
- **1976** — EOC
- **1987** — BAWP
- **1995** — 1st Female Chief Constable
- **2017** — 1st Female Commissioner of the MPS
- **2023** — Casey Review

Years of Participants' Active Service (spanning from ~1970 to ~2017)

Chapter One –

Introduction

1.1 Introduction to the Thesis

The social history of post-war Britain is generally divided into two halves. The first half – the nineteen-fifties and sixties – is widely regarded as the 'golden age' because of the ubiquitous prosperity and social mobility on offer (Brooke, 2001; Cockcroft, 2015; Savage, 2016). This period of affluence, however, was short-lived. In contrast, Morgan (2017) argued that the nineteen-seventies and eighties epitomised Britain's 'un-finest' hour. Back-to-back economic crises such as recessions and stagflation, alongside unprecedented political challenges such as the Winter of Discontent and the Three-Day Week, meant that this era quickly became renowned for widespread instability (Hall and Jacques, 1983; Hilton *et al*., 2017). Later on in the decade, the closure of traditional manufacturing industries, mass unemployment and a shift towards a 'post-Fordist' epoch left Britain's national and collective identity feeling threatened (Hall and Jacques, 1983; Farrall *et al*., 2017). By 1984, copious amounts of strikes and riots had erupted across the country. In the West Midlands region, for example, the early eighties were dominated by race riots, union disputes, and ongoing strikes. The community cohesion and social contract that had emerged through the post-war consensus was, in no uncertain terms, dead.

Sociologists observed an interesting shift in social dynamics that emerged in response to the 'new' landscape of eighties Britain. In particular, a significant amount of sociological attention was directed towards changing gender relations in the home and workplace (Charles and James, 2005; Lemon, 2007; Roth and Dashper, 2016). Mass unemployment in the early eighties meant that a lot of men found themselves unemployed long-term and unable to fulfil the 'traditional' role of male breadwinner (Janssens, 1997; Charles and James, 2005; Gonalons-Pons and Gangl, 2021). This was particularly detrimental because men's identities had been synonymous with their ability to provide since the Industrial Revolution (McInnes, 1998; Roth and Daspher,

2016). Owing to this, masculinity subsequently entered a period of 'crisis' (Connell, 1987; 1995).

A lesser explored aspect of the decade, though, was the changing role of women. Whilst working-class men fought fiercely for their jobs and picketed for days on end, women sought employment in the newly emerging service sector (Anxo *et al.*, 2001; Charles and James, 2007). This, albeit inadvertently, led to the development of a dual-breadwinner model in which men and women contributed equally to the household income (MacInnes, 1998; Charles and James, 2007; Roth and Daspher, 2016).

Indeed, although the exact ramifications of the decline of the male breadwinner are widely contested amongst social scientists (McInnes, 1998; Charles and James, 2007), it had a significant impact in masculine spaces (Silvestri, 2018). In male-dominated industries such as policing, occupational culture – defined by Reiner (2010: 199) as a set of shared characteristics that promoted traits such as 'mission', 'action', 'cynicism', 'pessimism', 'suspicion' and 'solidarity' – acted as a defence mechanism that primarily aimed to preserve traditional gender roles (Loftus, 2008; Bikos, 2016; Angehrn *et al.*, 2021). Throughout the seventies, policing had undergone a series of changes that directly challenged the masculine ethos of the force. Legislation such as the Equal Pay Act 1970 and Sex Discrimination Act 1975, alongside the closure of the Women's Department, led to the amalgamation of men and women working alongside one another (Cunningham and Ramshaw, 2020; Cunningham, 2021; Rigby and Temple-Malt, 2025). Guidance was issued from senior officers to ensure that women were receiving equal opportunities (Becke, 1973). By the eighties, then, policing had developed a hypermasculine culture of its own that was, on average, thirty years behind the rest of society (Loftus, 2008; 2012; Silvestri, 2018).

Today, police forces across England and Wales boast record high numbers of women officers, who now make up 34% of the workforce (Home Office, 2024). In addition to this, just over a century since the first policewoman was given powers of arrest, a woman has now held every senior rank in the police force, with Dame Cressida Dick DBE QPM being the first female Commissioner of the Metropolitan Police (Dodd, 2017). However, to date, very little is known about how women reached this point. Women's

experiences of policing throughout the nineteen-seventies and eighties have, by and large, gone unrepresented in academic literature. In addition to this, very little is known about the realities of working in policing as a minority, the difficulties associated with marrying realities with expectations, and how they navigated barriers associated with the decade.

This thesis, then, is based upon a qualitative study that captured thirty-five policewomen's experiences of policing at its most pervasive in the nineteen-seventies, eighties and nineties. Using a life history approach, participants – who, at the time of data collection, had all retired from frontline policing – reflected upon their lives before, during and after the police service. Interview questions were shaped around the four major life course principles: linked lives, human agency, time and place, timing of lives (Giele and Elder, 1998: 11). To support participants in the recollection of memories, photographs from archive collections were used as a form of photo elicitation to enrichen the retelling of personal lives.

The remainder of this chapter will explore the motivations for the project, outline the aims and objectives, summarise the three key arguments, and provide an overview of the structure of this thesis.

1.2 Motivations for the Project

In May 2020, I was approached by the Criminology team at Staffordshire University about the possibility of undertaking doctoral research. The original proposal for the studentship pitched an investigation into policewomen's experiences throughout the nineteen-eighties, and the generational factors that influenced their decision to go ahead in their respective careers. To facilitate brainstorming for the project, a meeting was set up with two members of staff from the Institute of Policing – Jane Sawyers QPM and Juliet Prince – both of whom had first-hand experience of the barriers women faced in policing. This fleeting conversation provided me with a detailed insight into the difficulties women faced. An interesting suggestion from the conversation was the significance of the 1984/85 Miners' Strike, and the long-lasting impact it had on policing across England and Wales. Indeed, although I had studied the Miners' Strike as part of my Master's degree and had already familiarised myself with academic accounts of

policing conduct during the conflict (see Coulter *et al.*, 1984; Wallington, 1985; Loveday, 1986; Milne, 1994), scholarship seldom, if at all ever, considered the role of policewomen. Of course, that is not to say that academics were wrong for focusing on the role of men; I commend the efforts of scholars on both sides of the debate for capturing such a volatile period of the not-so-distant past. However, it alerted me to a significant portion of recent history that, for the most part, was unrepresented in the existing body of academic literature.

Studying the role of women in predominantly male-dominated industries was not new for me. As an A Level English Language and Linguistics student, my favourite article was Julie Burchill's (2004) 'Slimeballs Always Hate a Strong Woman', a feminist critique of the various ways in which men had attempted to discredit the achievements of Britain's first female Prime Minister, Margaret Thatcher. This, I recall, was my feminist awakening. When reading for my undergraduate degree, my option modules – delivered by Dr Em Temple-Malt – were always related to the broader issues of gender, sexuality and society. By the time it came to devising a project for my undergraduate dissertation, I knew it needed to be about pioneering women traversing through male-dominated environments. I interviewed Members of Parliament and local councillors about their experiences as women operating within a predominantly male workplace. During my research, I became familiar with the work of Rosabeth Kanter (1977) and the ways in which women 'survived' in male-dominated spaces. This doctoral thesis subsequently provided me with an opportunity to continue my scholarly interests in tokenism and exploring how policewomen had challenged the zeitgeist, all whilst remaining the 'token' group.

Without lived experience of the era, let alone a policing background, it was important that I took an interpretivist approach (see Chapter Four for more on the epistemological and ontological positioning of this thesis). In particular, Weber's (1947) concept of 'Verstehen' – literally meaning to put yourself in somebody else's shoes (Tucker, 1965) – was central to my understanding of participants' experiences. Louis Martin, a former police officer and now Senior Lecturer in Criminology at Staffordshire University, spent months talking to me about his time in the force and familiarised me with the hidden and somewhat unconventional subcultures. My uncle, who served for thirty years, was

also able to offer personal anecdotes pertaining to instances of sexism, misogyny and the 'cover up' culture. Both men took time to talk to me about academic theory and offer their critiques, as well as their appraisal. In that time, I consumed police-themed dramas, such as the *Life on Mars* (2006) and *Ashes to Ashes* (2008), Police Woman (1974) and Juliet Bravo (1980), and spent copious amounts of hours reading through old editions of the *Police Review* magazine. Understanding media portrayals of policing from the decades I was researching ensured that, during my data collection, I was able to resonate with my participants' cultural references. It also meant that I was aware of pertinent issues from the era, such as canteen culture, station stamping, and dark humour (Jewkes, 2004; Reiner, 2010). In turn, this deepened my understanding of police occupational culture and the significance of culture in relation to the life course (Giele and Elder, 1998).

In hindsight, I now recognise that no amount of preliminary reading and consumption of Gene Hunt-esque police themed dramas could have adequately prepared me for the themes that arose from this research. Rather, this PhD project is the culmination of different scholarly interests, many of which were acquired and nurtured throughout my academic journey. My ambition has always been to understand women's experiences and provide a platform for their voices to be heard, celebrated, and commemorated, as a core part of police history.

1.3 Research Questions and Aims

The aims of this study are to:

- To explore policewomen's experiences in a male-dominated police force.
- To examine how working in the police force shaped women's respective life courses, particularly during the mid and later life course.
- To investigate the impact of de-industrialisation on policewomen's experiences, and how this led to changes throughout the late twentieth century and early twenty-first century.

To allow for a more focused investigation of the overarching aims of this thesis, the following research questions were devised:

RQ1 – How did early socialisation, as well as family and friends' reactions to entering a 'man's job', shape women's experiences and perception of self when joining the police force?

RQ2 – To what extent did canteen culture shape women police officers' experiences? And how did women police officers navigate the challenges associated with working in a male-dominated environment?

RQ3 – How did social unrest in the nineteen-eighties impact women's police work? What were the short-term and, if any, long-term, effects on policewomen's duties?

RQ4 – How did early experiences in the job shape policewomen's careers and post-retirement plans later in life?

RQ1 is answered in Chapter Five, RQ2 is answered in Chapter Six, RQ3 is answered in Chapter Seven, and RQ4 is answered in Chapter Eight. The research questions have been designed to take the reader on a chronological journey throughout the nineteen-seventies, eighties, and nineties, and into the modern day. The purpose of this is to convey the extent to which policing and police culture changed over a short period of time, but to also provide a detailed analysis of how my participants' life courses changed alongside it.

1.4 Arguments

Throughout this thesis, there are three main arguments that aim to answer the above research questions.

1. The early life course set the tone for participants' later years. Socialisation from parents and peers – referred to as 'linked lives' (Giele and Elder, 1998) – shaped participants' life trajectories, serving as an informal gatekeeping mechanism when choosing careers.

In Chapter Five, I draw upon participants' reflections around socialisation in the home and at school, examining how these factors shaped their 'unconventional' careers in policing. Adding to the limited body of literature around working-class women's career

choices in male-dominated industries, my findings highlight that parental approval was a decisive factor when perusing a 'man's job'. I argue that this, in part, was because separate spheres – and, by extension, 'respectable' occupations for women – were still common (Rosaldo, 1974; Landes, 1984; Cunningham, 2021). Chapter Six continues this theme, arguing that participants adapted their presentation of 'self' to align with the gendered expectations of their male colleagues (Giele and Elder, 1998; Cunningham and Ramshaw, 2020; Hutchinson, 2024). Drawing upon the work of Kanter (1977) within a uniquely police-themed context, I subsequently argue that women continually reshaped their professional selves to conform to the wider gender order.

In contrast, Chapter Seven and Eight take place between ten and fifteen years into participants' careers. In an original contribution to knowledge, this chapter examines the long-lasting impact of parental and peer approval, and how this impacted their career progression in later life. Owing to stringent gender norms and restrictions to the domestic sphere in the early days, for example, participants often felt that they were restricted in terms of their career choices. However, participants were able to capitalise on the situation by widening their repertoire of skills through gender-specific training opportunities. Despite this, questions were raised about whether they *could* have achieved promotion, had it not been for the limitations of the wider gender order and pressure to minimise their achievements to appease their male colleagues and patriarchal values.

2. Despite legislative changes such as the Equal Pay Act 1970 and Sex Discrimination 1975, women did not receive equal opportunities – and, by extension, equal treatment – in the workplace. As such, they were continually navigating systemic barriers that limited the agency, mobility and professional legitimacy.

At the time of participants' active service, police occupational culture was at its most pervasive and highly resistant to change. Coinciding with this, masculinity was entering a period of 'crisis' (Connell, 1987), whilst the role of women was changing rapidly as more women were entering paid employment outside of the domestic sphere (Charles, 2007). This thesis provides a new insight into how policing reinforced these anxieties by

restricting women's career opportunities, despite broader societal and legislative changes. I conclude that, whilst policing *was* changing, it did so gradually, with police culture lagging significantly behind the law.

My findings also document the extent to which police culture prevented women from reporting instances of sex discrimination. Building upon the existing concept of the 'blue code of silence' (see Westmarland,2005; Westmarland and Conway, 2020), I argue that police officers were discouraged from breaking their silence – and were met with severe repercussions when they did.

3. Participants in this study recognised that they were limited in terms of how much difference they could make whilst employed as a serving police officer. Instead, they were able to use these experiences and feed them forwards into their post-policing pathways. In doing so, they were able to make a small but notable change for future cohorts of women.

As discussed above, linked lives and human agency had a significant impact on how women presented themselves in workplace scenarios (Giele and Elder, 1998). Policing was, however, significantly behind the rest of society in terms of social attitudes (Loftus, 2008). Adding to the limited body of literature, I argue that the interconnectedness of women's personal and professional lives – shaped by early socialisation and rigorous gender norms – presented a dichotomy. Participants recognised that there was a prominent and unavoidable cultural expectation for them to be subservient and go unnoticed as a means of survival (Cunningham and Ramshaw, 2020; Oakley, 2021), but often felt unsatisfied by this.

I argue that this collective feeling of dissatisfaction was a key motivator in shaping participants' post-policing pathways, strengthening sociological understanding of how career transitions can be influenced by lived experience. As explored in Chapter Eight, women's post-policing enabled them to make a 'difference' to people's lives that they could not do whilst employed as serving police officers. For some participants, this involved a continuation of policing to some degree, such as working in civilian roles that dealt with complaints and procedures. For others, this was branching out into another

sector of the Criminal Justice Sector or pursuing charity work. I argue that, for many, policing was not simply 'just' a day job. Rather, it was a lifelong vocation that shaped their life trajectories, fashioned professional identities, and influenced personal aspirations even after they left the force. This nuanced insight contributes to existing literature by showing that women's motivations were not *just* to escape the limitations of force but, instead, use their experiences to make a difference in areas policing could not reach.

1.5 Thesis Organisation

Now the original contributions of this thesis have been outlined, I will now introduce the reader to the overarching structure:

Chapter Two introduces the theoretical framework for this study: the life course paradigm (Giele and Elder, 1998: 11). The life course paradigm, as outlined by Giele and Elder (1998: 11), argues that a person's life trajectory is shaped by four key attributes: linked lives; human agency; location in time and place; and timing. The researcher explores each of the life course principles in depth, and outlines how this particular theoretical frame will shape the remainder of the thesis.

Chapter Three provides a critical overview of academic scholarship relevant to this thesis. Narrowing my scope, I then explore how certain cohorts (Mannheim, 1952 [1928]) – namely, women born in the 1960s – embarked on a series of 'firsts' (van Geert, 1994). It is contended that, whilst second wave feminism invertedly led to new opportunities being opened to young women, the effects of this were only observed in middle-class spaces (Skeggs, 1997; Carter, 2013). In typically working-class spaces, such as the Criminal Justice sector, cultural attitudes and expectations were still very much centred around a masculine ethos (Brown and Heidensohn, 2000; Jackson, 2006; Loftus, 2012; Cunningham and Ramshaw, 2019; Cunningham, 2022). I then explore the limited literature that attempts to capture how women in the 1970s and 1980s navigated the 'cult of masculinity' in England and Wales (Smith and Gray, 1983; Silvestri, 2017).

Chapter Four outlines the research design employed in this study. Here, I justify my use of the interpretivist epistemology. I argue that, in order to understand participants' recollections of the past, the application of 'verstehen' is essential (Weber, 1947; Tucker, 1965). I note that this was particularly important, especially when examining a period of history that pre-dates my birth. I explain how I managed recruitment and sampling, and how online recruitment proved somewhat problematic in a study into police culture. I then discuss my methodologies – archival research, life-history interviewing, and photo elicitation – and reflect upon the strengths and limitations of undertaking fieldwork during the COVID-19 pandemic. In addition to this, I describe my analytical approach – thematic analysis (Braun and Clarke, 2006) – and how I managed this with a large data set. Finally, I provide a reflexive account of the practicalities of doing police research, and how I mitigated some of the challenges that emerged because of the 'blue code of silence' (Chin and Wells, 1998; Westmarland and Conway, 2020). In particular, I discuss the importance of gaining participants' trust, especially when researching a controversial topic when perceived as a young, middle-class academic with no practical experiences of policing.

Chapter Five is the first empirical chapter of this thesis. Drawing upon the importance of linked lives and early socialisation (Giele and Elder, 1998; Hunt, 2005; Green; 2010), this chapter explores participants' formative years. Much like the girls in Sue Sharpe's (1976) '*Just Like a Girl'* study, participants were acutely aware of the pressure they felt to conform to typically 'feminine' roles when searching for employment after leaving school. Participants' decision to join the police force, rather than assume a caring role as expected (Graham, 1983), was met with a variety of different responses from family and friends (Sharpe, 1976), further reinforcing the 'absurdity' of their unconventional career choice. The chapter subsequently explores how the reactions of participants' loved ones shaped their perception of self, and set the tone for what was to come. In the latter half of this chapter, I explore how participants navigated the interview process and, revisit participants' perception of self when they became the 'token' woman in the room (Kanter, 1977). I argue that, although the Sex Discrimination Act 1975 had vowed to provide women with a new level of protection, it was not upheld during the interview panel. Biographical accounts of invasive questioning pertaining to women's marital

status, sexuality, and promiscuousness, are drawn upon to illustrate the tempestuous atmosphere of a post-policewomen's department interview panel.

Chapter Six is the second empirical chapter of this thesis. Following on from the significance of linked lives, this chapter focuses upon a second aspect of the life course paradigm: human agency (Giele and Elder, 1998). As was established at the end of the previous chapter, participants were acutely aware that existing legislation, such as the Sex Discrimination Act 1975, would not provide adequate protection in the workplace. Instead, policewomen needed to quickly adopt a new identity to 'survive' the masculine ethos of the police force (Skolnick, 1966; Waddington, 1998; Waddington, 1999; Reiner, 2010). Much like Kanter (1977), Brewer (1991), Anderson *et al*., (1993) and Brown (1999), I argue that women adapted a unique set of coping mechanisms to navigate canteen culture. Whilst some participants recalled adopting aspects of police culture by fully immersing themselves by binge drinking, casual misogyny and promiscuity, other women were able to avoid attracting what they perceived as 'negative' attention by attempting to blend into the background. And yet, despite their best efforts, women on both sides of the spectrum concluded that their 'likability' had very little to do with how they presented themselves in the workplace; rather, it was about their 'physical' currency. This, I contend, is the 'impossible dichotomy'. Once a nickname had been acquired, usually within the first few weeks of service, the nickname and what it symbolised became impossible to shake. In addition to this, this chapter delves deeper into some of the darker realities of sexism, including station stamping and initiation rituals – something which, contrary to popular belief, did exist outside of the Metropolitan Police.

Chapter Seven is the third empirical chapter of this thesis. Whilst it is generally agreed amongst social historians that the 1970s marked a period of equality (Heidensohn, 1992; Brown and Heidensohn, 2000; Jackson, 2006), it is ordinarily attributed to second-wave feminism and legislative changes. Earlier chapters, however, challenge this idea and suggest that, on the contrary, legislative changes did not cause a hegemonic shift as far as occupational culture was concerned. Despite the Equal Pay Act 1970 and Sex Discrimination Act 1975 promising equality in the workplace (Cunningham, 2022; Rigby, 2024), police culture was slow on uptake and policewomen

were confined to typically gendered policework with very little, if at all any, opportunity to progress. However, this underwent significant change in 1984 when a year-long Miners' Strike was declared. This chapter, then, draws upon the 'location in time and place' aspect of the life course (Giele and Elder, 1998: 11). After exploring the short-term and long-term effects of the dispute across the country, I argue that the Miners' Strike was responsible for policing as we know it today. Finally, I explore the significance of popular memory and how recollection of typically 'controversial' events act as an extension of canteen culture, forty years on.

Chapter Eight is the fourth and final empirical chapter of this thesis. This chapter looks at timing of lives (Giele and Elder, 1998) – not just in terms of chronological age, but also in terms of biological, psychological and spiritual age (Hutchison, 2010: 2). The first half of this chapter examines promotion in midlife, and the thought process behind this. For those who did not seek promotion, there was a sense of apathy. It was generally believed that promotion was earned on an 'unfair' basis, rather than merit, and very little could be achieved from a higher rank. Conversely, those who sought promotion minimised the significance of this and, instead, posited that it was 'accidental'. These biographical accounts reveal an interesting dynamic in which participants felt a great deal of pressure to be passive and disguise their personal motivations (Sharpe, 1976; Tinkler, 1995; Giele and Elder, 1998). In the second half of this chapter, the researcher explores narratives from participants whose careers were ended abruptly because of sexual harassment, bullying, and harassment. In the final section of this chapter, post-policing pathways are explored. Drawing upon the work of Giele (2002: 84), the researcher explores how mid-life drew upon 'feedback from [their] life careers to social contexts'. Participants' careers were often continuations of their policework. It was common for participants to pursue second careers in domestic abuse services, probation, lecturing, and museum work. From participants' biographies, it was evident that there was a great deal of catharsis derived from their 'second' careers. As this chapter evidences, participants' career choice provided them with a chance to improve circumstances for future cohorts of women either entering, or already working within, the criminal justice system. In essence, it allowed them to make the change that they

could not deliver whilst employed by the police service due to the constraints of canteen culture.

Chapter Nine acts as a concluding chapter to the thesis. In the first half of this chapter, I offer a summary of Chapter Two, Three, Four, Five, Six, Seven and Eight. I outline the theoretical and methodological originality of the thesis, and highlight how this study contributes to the overarching topic of police history. The latter half of this chapter focuses on the limitations of this study, such as navigating the 'blue wall of silence' and carrying out qualitative research during a global pandemic. It concludes with suggestions for future research.

Chapter Two –

From Cradle to Grave: The Life Course Paradigm as a Theoretical Framework

2.1 Introduction to the Chapter

As explored in Chapter One, this thesis is underpinned by the life course framework. It is therefore important that this thesis begins with an explanation of what the life course paradigm is, what it aims to achieve, and why it is relevant to this thesis.

Indeed, the life course perspective, as defined by Mayer (2003: 464), captures 'the sequence of activities or states and events in various life domains which span from birth to death'. In studying such events, scholars such as Hunt (2005), Green (2010) and Hutchinson and Charlesworth (2024: 10) recognise that the 'life journey' is multifaceted. Intricate life events, alongside the often complex social meaning given to them, means that there is no 'one size fits all' approach to a person's life trajectory. Instead, it is varied – and, according to Giele and Elder (1998: 11), can differ depending on four key elements: human agency, location in time and place, linked lives, and timing of lives. Over the last fifty years, the life course perspective has surged in popularity amongst social scientists. Owing to the broad scope of the perspective as a theoretical lens, it is now considered a distinguished school of thought amongst sociologists, criminologists and social historians, as well as psychologists, social workers and healthcare professionals (Green, 2010; Carpentieri *et al*., 2023; Hutchinson and Charlesworth, 2024).

This chapter, then, is the first of two literature reviews. Drawing upon Foucault's (1977) archaeology, the researcher argues that theoretical frameworks are often a melting pot of work that has gone before (Garland, 2014). Thus, this chapter subsequently begins by offering a history of the life course approach and positioning it within the field of sociology. Then, the researcher builds upon this by exploring some of the seminal work

of theorists that conceptualised and informed the life course perspective. Here, the researcher presents the contribution from Karl Mannheim (1952) and his work on 'generations'. Next, the researcher explores contemporary life course perspectives, particularly the work of Janet Giele (2002; 2008; 2009) and Glen Elder (1974; 1998). Following a series of reflections around the limitations of the approach, the researcher concludes by considering how the life course paradigm has informed the structure of this thesis.

2.2 A History of the Life Course Paradigm

As discussed in Chapter One, the life course framework underpins this project and has significant influence on the structure of this thesis. It is therefore imperative to understand the socio-historical context in which life course theory emerged, and what it originally aimed to achieve, before examining how it shapes research today. Indeed, the origins of the life course paradigm can be traced back to the development of life history as a biographical research method (Calhoun, 1998; Elder, 2003).

Throughout modernity, the social sciences had been dominated by metanarratives that attempted to explain society as a whole (Lyotard, 1984). This subsequently led to the formation of grand narratives that captured historical events. White (1973) posits that philosophical ideals such as Greek fatalism and Christian redemption, as well as bourgeois progressivism and Marxist utopianism, were prominent of examples of meta discourses within the modern period. However, as Lyotard (1984) observed, there was very little, if at all any, consideration of personal narratives. As such, the experiences of ordinary people were largely undocumented because there was very little appetite for micro-historical experiences (Calhoun, 1998).

By the twentieth century, a shift towards microsociology defined a new area of sociology. In 1918, William Thomas and Florian Znaniecki published the first study of its kind that attempted to capture the biographical accounts of Polish migrants in Europe and America. Thomas and Znaniecki analysed personal effects such as letters and diaries to gain an insight into thoughts, feelings and attitudes of immigrants

(Triandafyllidou, 1996). This was significant because, up until this point, very little had been written about immigrants and the 'adoption' of identity over time (Bulmer, 1984).

Bulmer (1984) noted that, alongside being the first study of its kind to invite 'peasants' to pen their own life histories, it also marked the start of narrative methodologies. By transferring power from the researcher to the participant, sociologists were able to capture biographical voices that, in other approaches, may be overlooked or ignored (Riessman, 2007). However, at the turn of the twentieth century, narrative methods were still very much in their infancy (Elder *et al*., 2003). Studies of this kind were few and far between. It was not until the late fifties that sociologists began to revisit the idea of 'life histories' and deliberated the most effective way to carry out this approach. Volkart (1951) called for the widespread adaptation of longitudinal methods, whilst Wright Mills (1959) postulated that the best way to understand social lives was through various life stages. In addition to this, there was a sense of uncertainty about how best to analyse and conceptualise life history data (Elder *et al*., 2003).

In the next section, the researcher outlines how seminal theorists created and inspired the life course paradigm widely used in sociological studies today.

2.3 The Early Thinkers of the Life Course Paradigm

A core principle of Thomas's work was the need for longitudinal analyses (Bulmer, 1984; Elder *et al*., 2003). Following the life course over a period of years, he argued, would provide scholars with a thorough understanding of how the life course was shaped in key stages (Bulmer, 1984). The lack of sociological research throughout the post-war period, however, slowed down progression in this field. As such, life course theorists revisited the work of early sociologists and formed two distinct approaches to the life course: the 'institutional' approach and the 'personological' approach.

The first approach – the 'institutional' model – views the life course through the lens of macrosociology. Here, it assumed that the life course is shaped by structural influences (Giele and Elder, 1998; Landes and Settersten, 2019). The most influential example of this was postulated by Hungarian sociologist, Karl Mannheim. In 1928, Mannheim penned 'Das Problem der Generationen' – or, as it later became known after undergoing

translation into English in 1952, 'The Problem of Generations'. Within this essay, Mannheim (1952) argued that members of societies were socially bonded to two types of groups. The first, he argued, was a 'concrete' social group consisting of family and wider community members (Mannheim, 1952: 165). Membership to this group was predetermined through kinship and the sharing of community spaces. The second group, however, was the antithesis of this because members did not necessarily know one another. Instead, members of the 'association' group were unknowingly unified by attributes found across their generation or cohort. Mannheim (1952: 165) summarises the social phenomenon as follows:

> But in this case, the groups are most often mere cliques, with the one distinguishing characteristic that group formation is based upon the consciousness of belonging to one generation, rather than upon definite objectives [...] it is possible in general to draw a distinction between generations as mere collective facts on the one hand, and concrete social groups on the other (Mannheim, 1952: 165).

Building upon this, Mannheim (1952: 176) argued that cohorts of young people were 'similarly located' through their year of birth and country of origin. It was common for members of the same generation to experience major life events at the same time, and live through periods of social upheaval as a result (Pilcher, 1994).

Mannheim's (1952) work had a fundamental impact on the early development of the life course paradigm. The legacy of Mannheim's (1952) work is still visible today. Across the field of sociology, the term 'generation' is used extensively to describe 'groupings' within society (Pilcher, 1994). The term 'Baby Boomer', for example, is largely associated with the generation of people born between 1946 and 1964 (Leach *et al.*, 2008). However, as McCourt (2012) notes, this theory fails to consider the overlap between generational identities. Elder *et al.*, (2003: 9) continued this critique, adding that 'generation-based models viewed individual lives in terms of the reproductive life cycle and intergenerational processes of socialisation'. This was problematic because it failed to consider how historical events affect people of different ages, despite being part of the same cohort. As such, Elder et al., (2003) recommended that life course theorists move away from the generation-based model and, instead, focus on a more nuanced approach that considered linked lives beyond the concept of generations.

In contrast, the second approach to the life course – the 'personological' model – examines the life course through the lens of microsociology. Building upon these foundational ideas, Elder (1974) brought Thomas's (1918) ideas to fruition when he conducted a longitudinal study that explored the generational experiences and identities of young people born during the Great Depression. This inspired multiple longitudinal studies into the lives of people living in unusual circumstances, such as a study into the lives of young people in the Soviet Union (Titma and Tuma, 1995), persistent offending in adolescence (Moffitt, 1997), and the age-graded theory of informal social control across childhood and into adulthood (Sampson and Laub, 1993).

The personological approach is not, of course, without its criticisms. Existing research assumes an 'age-normative' approach and views the life course through a series of obligatory stages and life events (Dannefer, 2003). In discussions around crucial stages of adulthood, for example, it was typically assumed that, once a person left school, they would seek employment, move out of the family home, and enter long-term relationships (Wood *et al.*, 2017). Individualism, particularly in Western culture, was considered an integral part of the life course as it often led to a series of self-realisations (Arnett, 1998). Ergo, it provided young people with an opportunity to undergo a series of self-discoveries in uncovering their identities. In an ever-changing society, though, these ideas – irrespective of the length of time in which they have been considered the dominant ideology – can easily become outdated. Today, life course theorists must consider the newly emerging 'boomerang' generation, which challenges prevailing ideals about emerging adulthood (Wu and Grundy, 2023). Nonetheless, it is difficult to capture a personological insight into every group. To the best of the researcher's knowledge, very little research was carried out into the life course of women entering male-dominated workforces in England and Wales in the nineteen-seventies, eighties and nineties. There is therefore a need to capture these experiences, albeit retrospectively, so that sociologists can begin to build an understanding of the challenges faced by this pioneering cohort of women.

In the next section, the researcher outlines the contemporary theoretical framework of the life course paradigm and critically examines how it can be used to incorporate the personological lens.

2.4 The Contemporary Life Course Paradigm

Although significant progress was made throughout the fifties to develop life course as a theoretical lens, it was still considered to be abstruse (Giele and Elder, 1998). The development of the contemporary life course paradigm subsequently emerged because there was a need for specific guidance around analysing longitudinal data and conceptualising the various stages that influence the life course (Giele and Elder, 1998: xiii). As part of this, Giele and Elder (1998: 11) combined their various studies and created the following illustration that depicts the four key elements of the life course paradigm:
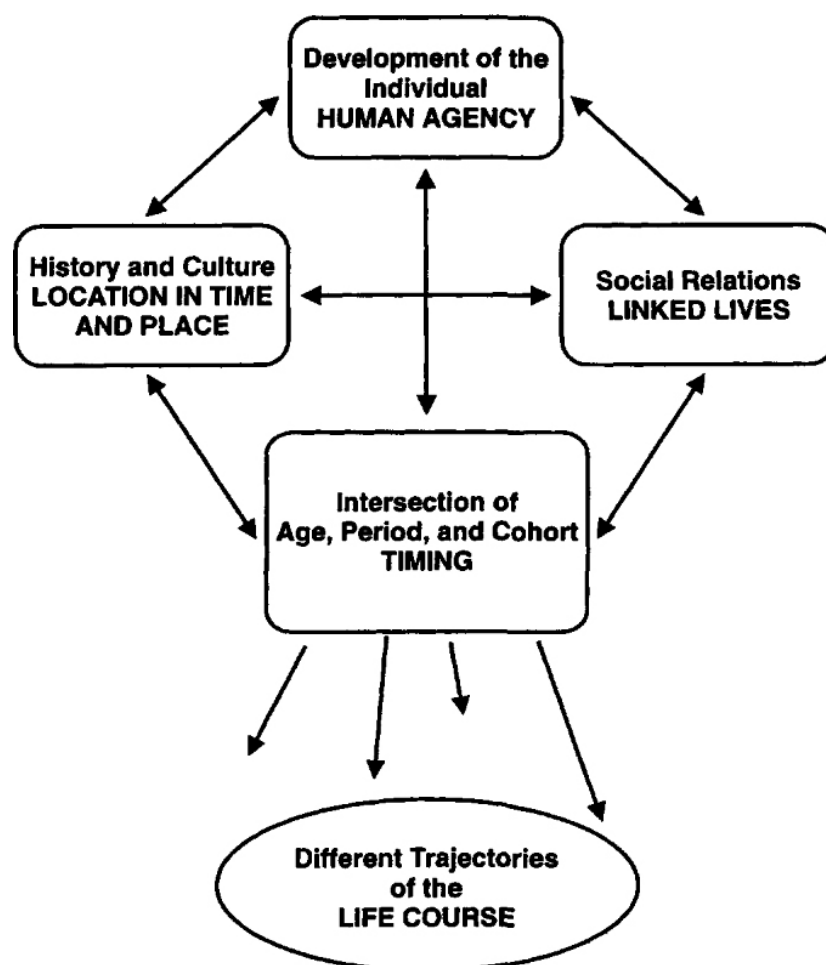
Figure 1 *'Four Key Elements of the Life Course Paradigm'* (cited in Giele and Elder, 1998: 11)

As per Figure 1, the first key principle of the life course paradigm is human agency. Human agency – or, as Giele and Elder (1998: 10) clarify, 'individual goal orientation' – assumes that individuals possess an ability to make independent decisions that shape their trajectories. Their unique trajectories, then, are shaped around meeting their self-imposed goals (Giele and Elder, 1998; Elder *et al*., 2003; Green, 2010). This element of the life course lends itself well to studies that seek to examine the impact of historical events on life trajectories. Giele's (1977) earlier work found that women who experienced loss were more inclined to devote their lives to charitable endeavours, whilst Elder (1974) found that children of the Depression pursued traditional roles in the family home. These studies provide an interesting snapshot into the past and invite scholars to consider the impact macro-structures may have on a person's agency (Hitlin and Johnson, 2015). In doing so, the life course approach encourages academics to explore an undetermined area of sociology – that is, 'the constraints of history and social circumstance' (Elder *et al*., 2003: 10). However, the notion of 'human agency' has been widely criticised. Hitlin and Elder (2007) note that the concept has often been misrepresented, particularly in recent years, because it is often assumed that people have total control over their life chances (see Giddens, 1991). As conflict theorists such as Willis (1977) observed, people have very little influence over their circumstances and opportunities provided to them. Indeed, some scholars argue that self-efficacy is not a shared goal (Mortimer, 2022) and, although individuals have some degree of control in the first instance, this tenacity will inevitably fade as circumstances become more arduous (Hitlin and Elder, 2007; Wolinsky *et al*., 2003). Instead, they argue that more attention should be given to the relationship between human agency and linked lives because the former is heavily shaped by social relations (Landes and Settersten, 2019). Glen Elder, co-author of the initial conceptual framework, revisited the idea of agency many years after their initial publication and described the concept as 'slippery' (Hitlin and Elder, 2007: 171). It is therefore imperative, then, that future research utilising the life course paradigm treads carefully around the idea of human agency as a 'given'; instead, it should consider the broader socio-historical context and the impact this has on the formation of self. As will be explored in more depth in Chapter Three, for women in particular, their agency has been predetermined by the wider gender order and social class (Connell, 1987; 1995).

The second principle of the life course paradigm is location in time and place – or, rather, 'cultural background' (Giele and Elder, 1998: 9). This concept encompasses the early ideas of conflict theorist C. Wright Mills (1959) who, three decades earlier, had claimed that there was a notable relationship between history and milieu. Mortimer (2022) expanded upon this, noting that life course theorists are encouraged to consider both the impact of both physical and social locations. In Elder's (1977) study, he observed that children born during the Depression experienced life differently from those that were born afterwards. This, Giele and Elder (1998: 9) argued, is indicative of the past being 'socially and individually patterned [...] through time'. The notion of cultural background is, of course, broad. Whilst some researchers, such as Gieryn (2000) and Black *et al.*, (2009) define culture as a 'specific moment in time', it is a subjective concept and very much down to the individual, as opposed to the researcher, to define. Turning to the sociology of personal life (Smart, 2007; May, 2011), a sub-discipline of life course research, the importance of cultural background is significant for various reasons. Skeggs (1997), for example, examined how working-class women adapted a working-class identity, whilst Tinkler (1995) explored how girlhood was constructed through consumption of popular magazines. As such, it is important that, when studying location in time and place, researchers are mindful that they do not speak over their participants when defining their culture. For lots of participants, taking part in research may be the first time they have felt 'seen' outside of the mundane (Tinkler, 2022). When researching time and place, then, researchers should consider the significance of resonance and the role of culture that may underpin it (Mason, 2018; Tinkler, 2022).

The third principle of the life course paradigm is linked lives. Giele and Elder (1998: 9) argue that all social interactions – defined as 'cultural, institutional, social, psychological and sociobiological' – culminate and have an impact on a person's life course. Much like Mannheim (1952), the life course paradigm postulates that social linkages go beyond kinship, and include neighbours, work colleagues, and friends (Black *et al.*, 2009). It is these social exchanges within the field of interaction that determine how a person may choose to interpret and respond to a life event (Giele and Elder, 1998; Dannefer *et al.*, 2016). Over the last few years, there has been a growth in

literature that aims to explore the role of linked lives within the police service, and how this has bred a problematic occupational culture (King, 2016; Pickering, 2021). Nonetheless, this is still very much an area that is in its infancy and needs further scholarly attention in order to fully understand the role of linked lives and reproduction of social ideals.

The fourth and final principle of the life course paradigm is timing of lives. Defined by Giele and Elder (1998: 10) as 'strategic adaption', this element refers to both biological, psychological, and social age. Biological age is, as Hutchinson *et al.,* (2024) argues, measured by physiological development. In contrast, psychological age refers to behavioural and cognitive age (Hutchinson *et al*., 2024). Social age, on the other hand, refers to age-graded milestones (Hutchinson *et al.,* 2024). Sharpe (1976) found that teenage girls in her study aspired to be married by twenty or, at the very latest, twenty-five. By not achieving this, it would render their achievements irrelevant because, above all, that was considered the 'age norm' (Hutchinson *et al*., 2024). Likewise, for women who did not marry by a certain age, Tinker (2007) notes that there was still an overarching sense of loyalty to the heterosexual career. This, both theorists concur, was an integral part of the age-graded life course. Today, it is widely accepted that there is more variation in the social age than there once was (Hutchinson *et al*., 2024). The rise of the boomerang generation (Wu and Grundy, 2023), as well as an extension on the working life and retirement age (Phillipson, 2018), has contributed to a hegemonic shift where age-related milestones are concerned. However, existing literature generally approaches the timing of lives through an institutional model. The personological approach – ergo, biographies pertaining to how individuals responded and progressed to these societal changes – are generally overlooked. In particular, the experiences of women in particular occupations, as well as women in mid-to-later life, go largely unrepresented in the literature.

To fully understand the complexity of an individual's trajectory, though, Giele and Elder (1998) recommend that each of the four principles of the life course paradigm are to be taken into consideration. This is because humans are, as one might expect, complex and multifaceted. In the next section, the researcher provides a justification for why this theoretical framework has been deemed suitable for this study.

2.5 Making the Argument for the Life Course Paradigm

As outlined in Chapter One, the researcher proposes to use Giele and Elder's (1998) theoretical framework to analyse the lives of women before, during and after their careers in the police service. Indeed, the life course paradigm offers a broad theoretical lens that can be used to explore four interconnected aspects. Giele and Elder (1998: 11) conceptualise these principles as: human agency; location in time and place; linked lives; timing of lives. As a result, the theoretical framework lends itself well to studies of this nature. In particular, it enables the researcher to examine the relationship the four principles have with the construction of 'self'. As will be discussed in more detail in the next chapter, the 'self' is reflexive and is often the result of external influences (Giddens, 1991). In the nineteen-eighties, there were various upheavals that disrupted the status quo and led to questions about identity, the wider gender order, and occupational culture of the police (Giddens, 1991; Connell, 1995; Cunningham and Ramshaw, 2020; Loftus, 2012). The life course paradigm allows the researcher to look at the broader role of the historical event, and examine biographies within this framework.

Here, though, it is important to note that this study does not take a longitudinal approach as recommended by Thomas (1918) and Mannheim (1952). In an ideal world, life course research would always take this approach because it would appear to be the most logical and unbiased interpretation of the social world (Giele and Elder, 1998). However, as will be discussed in the next chapter, women police officers were repeatedly overlooked and undermined throughout their service. As such, their biographies were seldom sought out and captured by researchers. Nonetheless, it is strongly felt that these narratives are integral to building an understanding of the broader role of women working within a 'man's world' (Marsh, 2019).

To account for this, participants were asked to reflect on their life course from the perspective of their current self. For a lot of participants, this period of reflection took place in midlife – or, as Jung (1933) describes it, the 'afternoon of life'. When working with the life course in a retrospective manner, hindsight inevitably plays a significant role (Neale, 2015). There is also the risk of recall bias because memories are primarily subjective (Jivraj et al., 2017). However, as Misztal (2003) notes, social remembering is

indicative of identity and the wider social processes around it. As such, this is particularly beneficial to this study which endeavours to analyse the changing role of women and their identities through a micro-sociology lens. This adapted version of the life course also uses archival research to facilitate storytelling during the interview process (Tinkler, 2014). Where appropriate, photographs have been used to supplement participants' biographies and will be used in Chapters Five to Eight respectively. The life course paradigm was also used to shape the interview schedule used by the researcher. An explanation of this is included in Chapter Four.

2.6 Conclusion

This chapter began with an overview of the historical origins of the life course. The researcher began with a description of sociology through modernity and the popular discourse created by a desire to contribute to grand narratives (Lyotard, 1984). Adherence to the dominant hegemony meant that, throughout history, personal experiences went largely undocumented. By the turn of the twentieth century, sociology underwent a hegemonic shift towards microsociology. Here, the predecessor to the life course paradigm – life histories – emerged. In this section, the researcher explored 'traditional' methods, such as analysing personal affects, and the importance of allowing participants to author their own biographies.

The second section of this chapter explored the early thinkers associated with life course theory, and the two major models: institutional and personological. The work of Karl Mannheim (1952) was explored in depth, detailing his groundbreaking study and the merits that were learnt from the conceptualisation of temporal cohorts. The researcher then offered a critique of this theory, and how this led to the development of Giele and Elder's (1998) life course paradigm.

The third section of this chapter explored the contemporary life course paradigm in detail. The key four elements – human agency, location in time and place, linked lives, and timing – were critically explored. And finally, the fourth section of this chapter explored why this theoretical lens was chosen, and how adaptations have been made to account for the fact that this study, contrary to theoretical guidance, is not longitudinal.

Instead, the researcher argues that there are merits within hindsight and retrospective storytelling.

In the next chapter, the researcher will provide a critical insight into the literature pertaining to the broader issue of women in policing (macro-sociology), as well as the role of women (micro-sociology), in the nineteen-seventies. Gaps in the literature will be highlighted, and links to the life course will be made apparent.

Chapter Three –

Little Girl Blue: Literature Review

3.1 Introduction to the Chapter

The previous chapter provided a critical overview of the theoretical framework used within this thesis. The chapter began by exploring the origins of the life course paradigm, and how a shift from macro-sociology to micro-sociology in the early nineteen-twenties led to the emergence of a life history approach. Next, the seminal work of Mannheim (1952) and Erikson (1959) was laid out. Although these works were both groundbreaking contributions to the developments of the life course paradigm, they were not without their faults in that they are still used as an institutional model. These faults were later addressed by Giele and Elder (1998: 11), who recommended that life course theorists examine four key principles: human agency; time and place; linked lives; timing of lives.

Building upon the groundwork of the previous chapter, this next literature review aims to put Giele and Elder's (1998) life course principles into practice by exploring the era in which women were operating and the issues that faced them. First, this chapter explores the history of women in policing in England and Wales. Policewomen – or WPCs, as they were formerly known – are a relatively new addition to the police force, having only 'existed' in an official capacity since 1918 (Brown and Heidensohn, 2000; Jackson, 2006). Prior to this, concerns were raised about their biological capabilities (Brown and Heidensohn, 2000; Cunningham, 2021). However, this success was short lived. Owing to the lack of progress made, the years that followed subsequently became known as the 'latency era' (Heidensohn, 1994; Rigby and Temple-Malt, 2025). Significant legislative changes in the late seventies, though, challenged the role of women. This section subsequently explores the difficulties and nuances women faced when working within the police force between 1918 and 1969.

The later portion of this chapter is structured using the key principles of Giele and Elder's (1998) life course paradigm to illustrate the significance of external influences

on the life trajectory. The researcher explores socialisation in the home and in school, the construction of 'self', and how this affected agency when choosing careers. The chapter also explores the limited literature available about how women navigated a man's job, the relationship with their colleagues (linked lives), and the impact this had on their agency.

3.2 A (Brief) History of Women in Policing

In 1990, Judith Butler famously argued that gender was a performance, rather than an innate response, because gender is a social construct. The acquisition of gender – and by extension, gender configurations – is derived from the wider gender order (Pilcher and Whelehan, 2016). Matthews (1984: 13) describes the gender order as follows:

> As systematic ways of creating social women and men, and of ordering
> and patterning relations between them, it is not logically necessary
> that gender orders should be hierarchical, inequitable or oppressive.

Whilst Connell's (1987) work around the social construction of gender generally agrees with Matthews's (1984) initial concept, Connell emphasises the importance of time and place – two concepts that link to the broader life course paradigm discussed in the previous chapter. To fully understand the significance of gender and power relations in policing, then, it is important to first explore the broader gender order that underpins policing as an occupational choice for women.

The Victorian Years (1837-1901)

With its origins dating back to the late Georgian and early Victorian period, the police force as it is known today is still 'new'. When Sir Robert Peel was appointed as Home Secretary in 1822, it quickly became apparent that the existing policing system, reminiscent of the law enforcement agency used in the Middle Ages, was unfit to deal with London's expanding population and growing crime rates (Emsley, 2009). Despite initial opposition from the public, Peel passed the Metropolitan Police Act 1829 in a defiant attempt to reform the English police force into a regulated, professional occupation (Hurd, 2007; Emsley, 2009). Officers – commonly referred to as 'bobbies' or 'peelers' – were given a universal dress code, a black, knee-length tailcoat, woollen top

hats and, of course, a signature wooden rattle that would be used to alarm residents in the event of any wrongdoings (Hurd, 2007; Emsley, 2009). For the first time in English history, applicants were also vetted prior to joining the police force, and only those who did not have a criminal record and were considered upstanding members of the community were accepted into Peel's revised attempt at maintaining law and order. Peel's newly appointed officers were largely from working-class communities, and were characterised by traits such as physical fitness, strength, and obedience (Chwast, 1965; Sparger and Giacopassi, 1986). In the years that followed, the number of police forces across England and Wales grew exponentially; and, by 1851, there were an estimated 13,000 police officers stationed across 178 towns in England alone (ibid).

Whilst Peel's reforms undoubtedly transformed the police force in the Anglosphere, it was not without its faults. Unsurprisingly, women were not part of Peel's wider vision for the Metropolitan Police or, indeed, any other force (Tobias, 1972). Across the several speeches Peel gave with regards to his plans for a modernised police force, he acknowledged the notion of women only once – to warn policemen of the dangers associated with 'women of the night', and how a Peelian police force pledged to see an end to their presence on the streets (Tobias, 1972: 218). Despite women's suffrage gaining a great deal of momentum towards the end of the century, women were only ever thought of to be victims of – or, in some rarer cases, causes of – crime (Zedner, 1991; Jackson, 2006; Wade, 2015; Turner, 2020). As such, women continued to be excluded from the political and public sphere, and restricted to the domestic sphere (Rosaldo, 1974; Landes, 1984; Cunningham, 2021).

The notion of separate spheres predates Peel's police service. As Rosaldo (1974) observed, Western history had been dominated by the segregation of genders at home and in the workplace. This 'universal asymmetry' led to men's roles, both in the home and in the workplace, being held with greater esteem (Rosaldo, 1974).[1] For an occupation still in its infancy, policing had the potential to be a tabula rasa. And yet, within the first few decades of its existence, policing quickly developed a reputation as

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[1] This concept feeds into Loftus's (2008) 'sense of crime hierarchy' – discussed in Section 3 of this chapter.

being the 'natural preserve' of men (Silvestri, 2017: 295). Emphasis was applied to the importance of physicality and typically masculine traits such as aggression, machismo. and physical strength (Manning, 1978; Smith and Gray, 1984; Fielding, 1994; Reiner, 2010; Silvestri, 2017; Cunningham and Ramshaw, 2019; Cunningham, 2021; Rigby and Temple-Malt, 2025). Women, on the other hand, were perceived as the antithesis of this. The dominant ideology at the time – biological determinism – meant that women were regarded as the genteel sex (de Beauvoir, 1949; Alaya, 1977; Cunningham, 2021). In addition to this, it was widely believed that anatomies 'determined' a person's destiny (Ferguson, 1992: 22) and that a man's physique made him a more suitable leader in most, if not all, walks of life (Cunningham, 2021). This stereotype was later depicted in Penny Dreadfuls. As seen in Figure 1, women officers were depicted as being biologically inferior and unable to police what appears to be a masculine brawl in the background.

EFFICIENCY OF FEMALE POLICE IN WHAT IS VULGARLY CALLED A "JOLLY ROW."

Figure 2 'The Efficiency of Female Police in What is Vulgarly Called a Jolly Row' (Illustrated Police News, 1852 cited in Brown and Heidensohn, 2000: 43).

Although this sentiment was criticised in sociological and historical literature for hindering the progression of women in the police force, it did – albeit inadvertently – lead to significant structural changes towards the end of the century. By the late eighteen-hundreds, England began to experience a small but noticeable shift in attitudes towards a female presence in the criminal justice system (Levine, 1994; Jackson, 2006). This was, in part, brought on by the introduction of the Contagious

Diseases Act 1864. The Act meant that, for the first time in history, police officers were permitted to arrest female prostitutes and, if necessary, incarcerate them in designated lock hospitals for three months (Walkowitz and Walkowitz, 1973; Vicinus, 1982; Levine, 1994). The issue of prostitution was seen as a problem for many early feminists, but their concerns did not lie with the Act itself; rather, they were concerned with the way in which the Act was enforced (Brown and Heidensohn, 2000). Early feminists were affiliated with the moral reform movement, and therefore believed prostitutes were better dealt with by other women for two reasons: firstly, because they were often driven by Puritanism; and secondly, because there was an assumption that women were biologically more equipped to deal with women's issues than their male counterparts (Walkowitz and Walkowitz, 1973; Levine, 1994). Suffragist and social reformer, Josephine Butler, captured a poignant quote from one female prostitute who, at the hands of male officers, was arrested:

> It is men, only men, from the first to the last we have to do with! To please a man I did wrong at first, then I was flung about from man to man. Men police lay hand on us. By men we are examined, handled, doctored, and messed with. In the hospital it is a man again who makes prayers and reads the Bible for us. We are up before magistrates who are men, and we never get out of the hands of men (Walkowitz and Walkowitz, 1973: 98).

Despite campaigns from suffragists, the prospect of women police officers was still met with firm reservations, with it being described as a 'war against nature' (Kimmel, 1987: 266). There was, however, a shift in attitudes regarding women within civilian roles. By the turn of the century, women had begun working as Police Matrons (Levine, 1994; Rigby and Temple-Malt, 2025).

Women's Work as War Work:

For some academics such as Heidensohn (1992) and Kelly (2009), it is argued that the hegemonic shift towards the acceptance of policewomen coincided with the outbreak of the Great War in 1914. Contrary to popular belief, though it is often thought that the absence of men was the initial reason for hiring policewomen, this is not necessarily true (Levine, 1994; Jackson, 2006). Instead, attitudes at the start of the war were still very much opposed to the idea of policewomen. When a reporter from the *Daily Express*

asked Scotland Yard about the possibility of employing a female police constable, senior officials promptly replied 'no, not even if the war lasts fifty years' (London Assembly Police and Crime Committee, 2019: 2).

What did pique interest in the inclusion of policewomen, though, was the need for specialist moral reform. As Heidensohn (1992) observed, the early twentieth century became a transitional period as policewomen alternated between specialist work and moral policing. In the unique circumstances of WPC Edith Smith's tenure, her only policing duties revolved around trying to prevent the emerging epidemic threatening the British Homefront: 'khaki fever' (Woollacott, 1994; Cree, 2016). As British soldiers were stationed across training camps across England, young women were besotted by their dark green uniforms (Woolacott, 1994). Middle-class moral reformers, many of whom were associated with Puritan groups and the Suffragists, assumed responsibility of policing other women's sexualities through the use of moral education (The Times, 1917; Woollacott, 1994; Jackson, 2006). Due to the lack of interest into the emergence of policewomen at the time, very little research captures details of what specific policing techniques were used, and how effective this level of policing was; however, newspapers from the era provide sociologists and police historians with a reliable indication of how women began to find a feminised role for themselves in a male-dominated occupation, without causing too much disturbance to wider patriarchal organisational structures.

Although employing women officers may have been a progressive first for the British police, it set a damaging precedent that meant policewomen's abilities were to be determined only by their biology and (perceived) innate drives for decades to come. Whilst legislative changes such as the 1919 Sex Disqualification Act meant that, for the first time in history, women could take up jobs in typically 'male' professions such as policing, social acceptance of women in these roles was slow (Jackson, 2006; Carton, 2015). Throughout the twenties, numerous debates were held amongst male members of the Police Federation of England and Wales (1924) to determine whether women had a place in the future of the police force, or whether they were a hindrance due to their lack of physical strength, unstable temperaments, and emotional vulnerability. Sir Nevil Macready, the Chief Commissioner of the Metropolitan Police, added that policewomen

were 'too educated' and would, instead, irritate the men, of whom their loyalties lied with (Boyd, 2014; Silverstri, 2019). Thus, policewomen were generally limited to dealing with the unappealing aspects of policing that policemen often avoided, namely crimes that affected women and children such as domestic abuse, sexual abuse, and child abuse (Fielding, 1994; Jackson, 2006).

Whilst Heidensohn (1994) described this period as the 'latency' era, often causing frustrating delays in the development of policewomen due to low numbers across the country, Jackson (2006) argued that, instead, this period was critical for creating a distinctive identity. Instead of walking away from an institution that overwhelmingly rejected female police officers, women were able to create an identity for themselves. Throughout the 1920s, policewomen were able to monopolise on their limited policework concerning women and children, leading to the creation of the 1933 Children and Young Persons Act. Whilst police historians argue that limiting women's policework to just young people was inherently misogynistic, Jackson (2006) vehemently rejects this claim and, instead, argues that caring for children was an integral part of women's policework then and, in some cases, now. Existing literature, though meaningful, overlooks the slow and steady nature of progress (Kanter, 1977; Acker, 1990). A shift in societal attitudes is not instantaneous; instead, it takes years, even decades, to internalise. As Kanter (1977) argues, token groups need to assimilate existing culture before they can create their own.

Post-War Britain:

Following the end of the Second World War, policewomen became somewhat the norm in England and Wales (Heidensohn, 1992). Between 1915 and 1969, policewomen climbed the ranks and achieved notable positions such as Superintendent in 1932, Chief Superintendent in 1949, and Chief Police Officer in 1969. In the nineteen-seventies, milestone legislative changes were sought such as the Equal Pay Act 1970 and Sex Discrimination Act 1975. Segregation came to an end when the 'Women's Department' – colloquially referred to as the 'fanny squad' – was closed, and policewomen were amalgamated into the regular police force (Burman and Lloyd, 1993).

However, as is often the case with historical studies, police historians tend to look at the past through rose-tinted glasses. Although Heidensohn (1992) argued that the seventies marked the start of a more accepting, inclusive period of history for policewomen, Martin (1980) rejected this claim, arguing that the latency period observed in the interwar years continued throughout the seventies. Indeed, building upon the work of Collinson (2012), Silverstri (2018) argued that, across the broader field of organisational leadership theory, overly positive narratives can often lead readers to believe alternative, post-truth narratives. However, as Jackson (2006) argued, there is a small yet convincing body of evidence to suggest that, rather than policewomen becoming a success story in post-war Britain, that the gender lines were, instead, redrawn to give the illusion that more had been done to help integrate women into the police force to avoid further criticisms. This literature review will now explore three key themes – identity, policework, and police culture – from 1970 onwards.

3.3 The Construction of Womanhood, Identity and (Gendered) Expectations.

In the previous section, the researcher took a macro-sociological approach and explored the history of women in the police service. It was argued that, whilst women were given more opportunities as time progressed, the broader social structure in which they operated within was opposed to the inclusion of women in the public sphere (Rosaldo, 1974; Landes, 1984; Cunningham, 2021). Building upon this, the next section takes a micro-sociological approach and considers the role of agency and linked lives on women's trajectories in the nineteen-seventies. As explored in Chapter Two, agency is socially situated (Giele and Elder, 1998). A major critique of this concept is that, whilst it is largely bound up with a person's wider social environment, the level of agency a person has, is dependent upon the support available to them (Marshall, 2005; Dannefer and Huang, 2017; Mortimer, 2022). Linked lives, such as parents' support and approval, played a significant role in shaping women's (Giele and Elder, 1998; Carvalho *et al*., 2023). This section subsequently examines the role of agency in relation to construction of womanhood, formation of identity, and marrying expectations with the reality.

The Construction of the 'Self'

The construction of 'self' is a complex sociological matter that has garnered much debate. In 1902, Charles Cooley argued that the 'self-concept' is reliant upon interaction with others (Cooley, 1902; Gecas and Schwalbe, 1983). The self-idea, Cooley (1902: 151) observed, is formed through the 'looking glass' into other people's perceptions. A self-evaluation, based on the evaluation of others, shapes to the self-concept (Gecas and Schwalbe, 1983). In other words, perception of self was inherently social and shaped by external influences.

George Herbert Mead, however, criticised this. He believed that, whilst the self was social, society does not unanimously shape the self-concept. Rather, Mead argued that Cooley failed to separate the 'social process from individual consciousness' (Jacobs, 2009: 129) and that the self was also constructed by agency (Dunn, 1997). Instead, Mead (1934) argued that the construction of self is dependent on two core components: the 'I' and the 'me'. In his functional analogy, the 'I' refers to the natural self. Mead (1934) argues that the 'I' parallels Freud's notion of a superego, whereby the 'I' is a source of freedom and creativity. Unlike the 'I', then, which is spontaneous and self-interested, the 'me' is reflexive as it is primarily reliant upon responding to societal expectations and attitudes (Mead, 1934; Dunn, 1997). Mead (1934: 136) concluded that the self is a 'reflective process' that 'distinguishes it[self] from [...] objects', and that it is therefore possible to have multiple versions of the self.

Whilst more recent scholarship generally agrees with Mead and Cooley's initial ideas, both scholars have been criticised for not developing the concept of reflexivity far enough (Giddens, 1991; Jacobs, 2009; Crossley, 2006). For Giddens (1991: 72), he argued that the 'reflexive self', especially in the late stages of modernity, is the result of 'autobiographical thinking', in which the individual continually reviews and adjusts in response to predominantly social factors. Indeed, much like Giele and Elder (1998), he argued that the self and broader concept of self-narrative was a 'trajectory' that would respond to various events in the life course. On the other hand, Athens (1994) and Crossley (2006) proposed the notion of the self as a soliloquy. In agreement with Giddens (1991), Crossley (2006: 89) rejected the notion that the self was 'static' as per

Cooley's suggestion, and, instead, theorised that the 'individual assumes the observational and judgemental positions of others. Similar to Giele and Elder's concept of 'linked lives', Crossley (2006: 86) argued that 'levers of control' – ergo, meaningful personal relationships – that had the biggest impact on the construction of self.

More appropriately for this thesis, the construction of 'self' can also be applied to gender. Just as Giddens (1991) and Crossley (2006) had argued regarding the formation of the social self, West and Zimmerman (1987) and Butler (1990) claimed that gender is also the result of a person's social environment. West and Zimmerman (1987) argued that gender was something that individuals 'do' on a daily basis. These behaviours, however, were not natural. Instead, West and Zimmerman (1987) argued that there was no biological reality to these behaviours at all:

> Doing gender means creating differences between girls and boys, and women and men, differences that are not natural, essential, or biological' (West and Zimmerman, 1987: 137).

Instead, they are socially reproduced based on social norms and attitudes. This means that 'doing' gender changes over time, often in response to cultural and legislative shifts, as well as through social interaction. Butler (1990), however, offered a slightly revised version of this theory, noting that gender was a performance that emerged from the repetition of perceived behaviours. Most notably, though, Butler (1990; 1993) considered the role of agency and argued that, whilst external influences did have some influence, individuals also possessed an ability to challenge gender performativity. Individuals do not repress gender performativity, though, because it is a crucial part of cultural and societal norms (Butler, 1993).

Gender Expectations in the Seventies and Eighties

Building upon the above, it can therefore be assumed that a person's identity and gender identity is socially constructed (Giddens, 1991; West and Zimmerman, 1987; Butler, 1990; Butler, 1993; Crossley, 2006). To understand the experiences of participants in this study, then, it is important to explore academic literature pertaining to gender expectations of the seventies, eighties and nineties, and the impact this had on the life course (Giele and Elder, 1998).

The primary socialisation of girls takes place in the home (Tisdall, 2021). Typically, the responsibility of childrearing falls to the female caregiver (Garcia, 2021). Through these linked lives in the home, young girls experience gender norms and expectations for the first time (Giele and Elder, 1998; Tisdall, 2021; Garcia, 2021). For Welter (1966: 152), who argued that women were traditionally socialised into a 'Cult of Womanhood', she noted that women were socialised to encompass 'submissiveness' and 'domesticity'. The first attribute, Welter (1966) explains, required women to be submissive and obedient to men. Oakley (1972: 100) concurred, noting that women were judged based on their 'receptiveness' – from their personality, right through to their sexuality – whilst Greer (1970: 17) argued that a woman's worth was based upon her use to men. Sharpe's (1976: 67) findings echoed this, noting that women were pressured to serve the men in their life by modelling their identity around being 'gentle, demure, sensitive [...] non-competitive, and sweet natured'. Welter's (1966) second attribute postulated that women needed to prioritise unpaid work in the domestic sphere, such as housework and childrearing. In a study of schoolgirls' priorities in the nineteen-seventies, Sharpe (1974: 132) found that their priorities were 'love, marriage, husbands and children' (Sharpe, 1974: 37). Careers, according to Sharpe (1974: 132), were widely regarded as 'time fillers' between leaving school and marriage. As such, young girls and women believed that their place was firmly within the domestic sphere (Sharpe, 1974; Sharpe, 1994).

However, as discussed in the previous section, gender is not static. As Butler (1990; 1993) notes, women did have a small degree of agency in which they could reject gender performativity. Jackson and Tinkler (2007) found that, throughout history, there have always been women – typically working-class women – who rejected this. The emergence of 'problematic' and 'troublesome' femininities was rife throughout Ireland in the nineteen-twenties (Jackson and Tinkler, 2007). It can therefore be argued, then, that 'separate spheres' were an attempt to civilise women. As Skeggs (1997: 41) notes, women's role in the domestic sphere was about respectability – not suitability. Restricting working-class women to the domestic sphere, then, was about control (Skeggs, 1997).

In addition to this, whilst separate spheres were true for middle-class women, it was not the case for *all* women (Giles, 1992; August, 1994). Working-class women were widely employed in industry at the turn of the century (Giles, 1992). Domestic services, such as pottery painting in Stoke-on-Trent (Squires, 2020) and sewing textiles in Manchester (Morgan, 2008), made up a significant portion of women's employment in the late-nineteenth and early-twentieth century (Tusan, 2004). This was not, however, without its own restrictions. The idea of separate spheres had significant impact on legislation (Skeggs, 1997), and factories, much like policing, were subject to occupational segregation and valuing the work of men over that of women (Burnette, 1996). Nonetheless, this critique shifts sociological focus from the separate sphere to women's 'segregated' belonging in the workplace.

3.4 Policewomen on Patrol: Policework and Gender Limitations

As discussed in the first two sections of this thesis, the twentieth century was entrenched by gender norms and expectations. Although women had been allowed to enter the police service, it was under the pretention: that women were to be separated from their male colleagues (Jackson, 2006). After several small but relatively successful recruitment campaigns throughout the fifties and sixties, the number of female police recruits across England and Wales grew steadily (Heidensohn and Brown, 2000; Jackson, 2006). Rising from 0.5% in 1945 to 3% in 1970, senior officers began to recognise the importance of having policewomen amongst their ranks (Jackson, 2006). However, as this next section will explore, the level of growth given to policewomen once in the force was restricted by the tight constraints of gender, broader gender expectations and occupational segregation. This, according to Kanter (1977) and Acker (1990), is best explained by the gendered organisation theory. At the core of this theory, scholars argue, that men unequivocally hold power and privilege in the workplace, something which is unattainable for women (Kanter, 1977; Acker, 1990; Butler, 2004). Whilst the nature of workplace roles is often synonymous with cultural values, it can also have a detrimental impact on those involved (Acker, 1990; Butler, 2004). As Kanter (1977) found, tokenism – the act in which a minority group is employed solely for symbolic effect – often hindered women's career progression, satisfaction levels, as well as their overall ability to self-actualise.

Policing was, of course, no exception to this rule. However, as Brown (1992: 80) noted, research pertaining to the experiences of policewomen was an 'aside', and only ever written about in passing. This section will review the limited body of literature pertaining to the gendered nature of women's policework, and how policewomen navigated the restraints of gender roles throughout the nineteen-seventies and eighties. In addition, this chapter also considers how timing and place – a core principle of the life course paradigm – shaped these experiences and responses.

The Allocation of Policework

In capitalist societies, the workplace is responsible for the systemic reproduction of gender norms, influencing how both men and women 'perform' gender and gender roles at work (Kanter, 1977; Lowe, 2006). Although the sixties had experienced a wave of feminist liberation, it did not reach occupations such as the police – who, as Loftus (2008) observed, were significantly behind the times in terms of their attitudes to gender. By the nineteen-seventies, occupational segregation was still apparent within the police force. The Women's Department – or the 'fanny squad' (Burman and Lloyd, 1993) – was usually situated in a separate building from their male counterparts (Jackson, 2006). As Brown (1998: 267) observed, the wider stereotype of women as mothers and wives was transferred to, and reinforced through, the workplace almost 'seamlessly' by creating roles that emphasised domestic and caretaking responsibilities (Berg and Budnick, 1986; Heidensohn, 1992; Brown and Heidensohn, 2000). In a study of twenty-three female officers' experiences, Cunningham and Ramshaw (2021) found that women were almost always allocated policework pertaining to children, even if they were not mothers themselves. The Women's Department also assumed responsibility for violent female offenders and vulnerable victims (Toch, 1976; Brown and Heidensohn, 2000). Much like the experiences of women in the early twentieth century, policewomen in the seventies were still expected to police other women's morality (Jackson, 2006). Whilst very little academic research has attempted to capture what a typical day for a policewoman in England and Wales looked like, journalistic evidence collated by Rees and Strange (2019) suggested that women seldom ventured out of policework pertaining to women and children. Policewomen in Liverpool, for example, recalled changing nappies at the scene of a

burglary whilst her male colleague took statements and searched for evidence, whilst another policewoman from inner-city Birmingham recalled chaperoning female prisoners to and from court daily (Rees and Strange, 2019).

Policemen, on the other hand, were immersed in a world of crime-fighting action (Reiner, 2010). Skolnick (1966) argued that policemen were expected to conform to what he coined the 'working personality'. He argued that officers were expected to present themselves to dangerous scenarios, without hesitation or fear (Skolnick, 1966; Reiner, 2010). He also believed that the 'ideal' working personality involved being authoritative (Skolnick, Reiner, 2010) – something which women were socialised against (Greer, 1970; Oakley, 1972). Building upon this, Reiner (2010: 199) argued that policemen valued 'mission', 'action', 'cynicism', 'pessimism', 'suspicion' and 'solidarity'. In practice, Loftus (2008: 92) observed that men's policework was based around a 'crime hierarchy', favouring policework that conformed to Skolnick's (1966) ideal working personality, such as robberies and assaults because this, in their opinion, was what made a real difference to society (Walklate, 1996). Domestics, on the other hand, had become synonymous with women's work and were subsequently labelled as 'bullshit jobs' (Walklate, 1996: 197). The ramifications of this were that, although society was changing, the constraints of gender roles in the police were, as Martin (1980) explained, unavoidable.

Whilst American scholarship pertaining to female officers suggests that women were, by and large, accepting of gendered policework and favoured its resemblance to social work (Kanter, 1977; Balkin, 1988), it remains unclear whether British policewomen had a similar attitude (Bell, 1982; Brown, 1998). The seventies were, of course, a period of significant change; gender roles in Britain were rapidly changing, with more women taking on full-time employment in male-dominated sectors than ever before (Joshi *et al.*, 1985). However, whilst Martin (1980) argues that the seventies was an extension of the latency period observed throughout interwar years, there is very little research focused on English policewomen to substantiate this claim because research from the era seldom focused on this demographic. As such, more research specifically centred around policewomen's biographical experiences is needed to establish how

policewomen personally felt about the prominence of gendered policework, and the effects this may have had on their long-term development as police officers.

Policing During Social Unrest

During the eighties, however, the nature of policework once again began to change. As Britain entered a period of deindustrialisation, Thatcher's Britain became socially and economically unstable. High levels of unemployment and concerns about the future of Britain's manufacturing sector meant that tensions were running high, and many workers took to the streets to convey their annoyance. This innocent display of frustration became heavily politicised and, before long, officers were ordered to keep the peace between striking miners and 'scabs'. Arguably, the biggest threat to social order came from the 1984/85 miners' strike (Coulter *et al*., 1984; Loveday, 1986; Milne, 2004). Led by Arthur Scargill, president of the National Union of Mineworkers, the miners' strikes were the largest industrial strikes ever seen on British soil – and, by some accounts, the bloodiest battle in the post-war years (Coulter et al., 1984; Milne, 2004). The police, many of whom were from working class backgrounds and had grown up alongside the miners, were required to contain the pickets, protect non-striking miners, and deal with any violence that occurred (Wallington, 1985; Reiner, 1992; Scottish Government, 2020).

Forty years on, and it is still difficult to locate unbiased accounts regarding the role of the police during the miners' strikes. Even today, tensions continue to exist between the police and former coalminers. However, both officers and miners generally agree that, during the strikes, the police used several new riot control tactics on the picket lines, many of which were considered inherently violent (Coulter *et al*., 1984; Milne, 2004). In collaboration with the mounted branch, Public Support Units (PSU) were advised to enter violent crowds on horseback as a way to de-escalate the situation. This tactic, according to representatives from the National Coal Board (NCB, 2017) and National Union for Mineworkers (Coulter *et al*., 1984; Williams and Francis, 1985) was abused, and police officers used this as an opportunity to engage in physical violence. One of the most infamous photographs taken at the Orgreave coking plant in South Yorkshire showed two policemen on horseback beating a young journalist, who was mistakenly

suspected to be a striking coalminer, with a truncheon (Harris, 1984). In addition, officers also employed the use of military-style policing tactics such as 'snatch squads'. Whilst the purpose of this technique was to remove particularly violent protestors from the crowd for the sake of maintaining public order, Stephens (1988) argued snatching protestors had the opposite effect and, instead, provoked a violent response from pickets, most of whom were peaceful. When fights inevitably broke out, police used physical force to beat miners. Campbell (1993), however, argued that the boys in blue were well equipped for such events, many of whom reportedly enjoyed the physical violence. By the end of the strikes in March 1985, it was estimated that 1,392 police officers were injured, 179 of which were seriously injured, and one picketer sadly died because of his injuries (Wallington, 1985).

To date, the role of women officers during the strikes is largely unrepresented in academic literature. One potential explanation for this is that women officers simply were not present at the pickets (Cunningham and Ramshaw, 2019; Rees and Strange, 2019). This argument is plausible for several reasons. Firstly, the miners' strikes were extremely violent – and, as Edwardian pseudo-science had argued, women were innately too weak to handle such conflicts (Fielding, 1994; Weinberger, 1995; Jackson, 2006). Secondly, their uniforms – tight fitting skirts, blazers, and Pathfinder hats – were impractical for picket lines, and in 1984, women officers were not equipped with a truncheon out of fear that it would hinder them, rather than help them, in violent situations. And thirdly, if women were on the picket lines, there would be nobody in the office that would be deemed capable of handling crimes that affected women and children.

Whilst this is likely true, existing scholarship overlooks the extent to which social unrest disrupted the hierarchal structures that existed within the police (Acker, 1990). Deindustrialisation posed one of the biggest challenges to British society since World War Two (Coulter, 1984; Loveday, 1986). As part of a newly introduced 'Mutual Aid' policy, male officers from across the country were required to support their colleagues on violent and rowdy picket lines (Coulter, 1984; Loveday, 1986). In academic literature, parallels are seldom drawn between the World Wars and deindustrialisation in fear of research being biased towards one side of the debate – but, for women, the parallels

were indisputable. Just as had happened during the War, in the absence of men, women were left to step out of their gendered roles that had hindered their progression and, instead, assume the roles of their male colleagues. In a recent qualitative study pertaining to women officers' experiences during the 1981 Toxteth riots, Cunningham and Ramshaw (2019) found that, although women officers were not allowed to attend the riots, women's policework changed considerably whilst the men were out of office. For the first time, women officers were trusted to run the office completely; alongside their usual policework, women also had opportunities to handle more 'masculine' crimes such as burglaries, robberies, and arson attacks (Cunningham and Ramshaw, 2019). Whether this led to long-term changes in the Merseyside Constabulary remains unclear and additional research would need to be undertaken to establish this, but regardless, woman officers in Cunningham and Ramshaw's (2019) study spoke positively of their experiences during the riots, and were seemingly grateful of the additional experience they acquired during this time.

Indeed, to date, no study has attempted to capture women's experiences during the miners' strikes of 1984/85. So, it would not be unreasonable to suggest that the experiences of women officers in Merseyside were likely to have been similar to that of women officers during the miners' strikes. However, the likelihood is that this was only the case at larger, more violent strikes. Photographs taken of the miners' strikes outside Littleton Colliery in Staffordshire, as well as photographs taken outside an unnamed colliery in Scotland, for instance, reveal that a small number of women officers were, in fact, present, at the pickets (Unsworth, 1984). This therefore contradicts the small amount of academic literature pertaining to the nature of women officers' policework during public order crises of the eighties and offers a plausible alternative perspective: whilst most women would have stayed in the office, some women were given the opportunity to attend the strikes and police the pickets. Walklate (1992) notes that, whilst women officers were considered to be inferior to men at policework, they were trusted to be morally pure, something which male officers were not; it could therefore be possible that women were sent to picket-lines to maintain peace, a decision which may have been influenced by perceived gendered abilities. However, as there are so few accounts of women's experiences during this period, it is impossible to determine the

extent to which women were deployed (Heidensohn, 1992). Thus, more research is needed to establish why women officers were sent to the picket lines, the frequency of such events and, where possible, what their experiences on the picket lines entailed.

3.5 Canteen Culture:

As explored above, gender identity was reinforced through gendered policework. Since the mid-eighties, sociologists have attempted to explore the inner working culture of the British police force (Martin, 1979; Brown and Campbell, 1991; Fielding, 1994; Waddington, 1999; Brown and Heidensohn, 2000; Loftus, 2012). Characterised by Manning (1989: 360) as a set of 'accepted practices, rules and principles of conduct that are situationally applied and generalised', and by Reiner (2000: 87) as 'a developed pattern of understandings and behaviour that help officers cope with and adjust to the pressures and tensions confronting the police', police subculture is thought to influence the behaviour of police officers through both legitimate and illegitimate means. However, although contemporary police history is now enriched with literature pertaining to canteen culture, it is still a relatively new concept, having only been researched and studied in academia for some forty years.

Indeed, before the 1990s, the phrase 'canteen culture' was used interchangeably with nouns such as 'masculinity', 'laddish' and 'macho', to describe the male-dominated culture of the police. Of the few academics who dared to explore the darker side of canteen culture, particularly in relation to sexism and misogyny, there were surplus accounts of the wider function of canteen culture (Martin, 1980; Morris, 1987; Hunt, 1990; Reiner, 1993; Reiner, 2000). In some instances, the term was used to celebrate police culture. In a debate concerning planned reforms to the police force in England and Wales, Michael Howard, the then Secretary of State for the Home Department, argued that canteen culture had been used derisively by his critics to ridicule the police for catching criminals in a 'traditional' manner (HC Deb 23rd November 1993). Howard was opposed to the calls for the 'softening' of the police force, and maintained that the police had every right to use whatever approach they saw fit when tackling crime. In essence, 'canteen culture' was a concept that needed Government protection, not condemnation.

By the mid-to-late nineties, academia began to experience a hegemonic shift. Following the murder of Stephen Lawrence, a public enquiry was commissioned by Jack Straw to establish the extent of police failures (Hall, 1999; Bourne, 2001). It quickly became apparent that police culture was, in part, guilty of perpetuating systemic racism. The Macpherson (1999) report acknowledged that canteen culture was at its most pervasive in the nineteen-seventies and eighties, and had often gone unchallenged. In turn, this contributed to a culture embedded with institutional racism. This led to a hegemonic shift in academia, and academics began to carry out ethnographic studies into policing through a critical lens, focusing on the harmful, and often hidden, side of policing culture (Loftus, 2006).

Since then, subsequent studies have produced damning findings of a similar calibre (see Logan, 2021). Whilst institutional racism is an integral part of canteen culture and should be treated as such, it has meant that, in some instances, the role of sexism and misogyny has been overlooked in academic research. In the absence of literature specifically centred around sexism and misogyny in the police force, this section will focus on two key debates – Orthodox and Revisionist – in relation to canteen culture and its impact on policewomen.

In Defence of Canteen Culture

In recent years, policing and police subculture has been portrayed in academic literature as an inherently problematic phenomenon (Martin, 1979; Chan, 1996; Brown and Campbell, 1991; Brown *et al*., 1992). Police historians of an Orthodox persuasion, however, have vehemently rejected these claims. Chan (1996: 110) argues that police subculture has become something of a scapegoat, used as a convenient label to condemn negative attitudes, values and practices, many of which can be found outside of the police force (Bucke, 1994). Waddington (1999: 291) continued, arguing that the negatives of police culture such as sexism are, instead, a societal issue – as opposed to a policing issue – and should be treated as such. By focusing only on the negatives of policing culture, academics' understanding of police culture runs the risk of potentially misrepresenting the social world in which police officers operate, as well as how they perceive their broader societal functions (Reiner, 1992). Instead, it is important to study

policing culture by looking at its broader functions. To demonstrate this, two aspects of police culture from an Orthodox account will be discussed: firstly, the way in which it validates masculinity, and secondly, the role dark humour plays in creating a sense of community and solidarity.

In the 1970s and 1980s, masculinity was at the forefront of men's identities and influenced how they behaved in society (Tolson, 1977; Connell, 1983; Kimmel, 1987). Drawing upon Connell's (1983) definition of hegemonic masculinity, working class men faced societal pressure to conform to masculine stereotypes by conveying traits such as emotional and physical toughness, stoicism, and athleticism (Donaldson, 1993; Waddington, 1999). The dominant ideology was, as Althusser (1970) observed, continually reinforced through ideological state apparatuses on familial, educational, and cultural levels. Failure to conform to dominant hegemonies would often result in an individual being ostracised from wider society (ibid). As such, working-class men often chose traditionally masculine jobs that epitomised what it meant to be a 'man' such as coalmining, steelworks, and ironworks. Although literature from the decade tends to focus on the role of these industries in reinforcing hegemonic masculinity, policing also relied on a predominantly male, working-class workforce (Brown and Heidensohn, 2000; Jackson, 2006). As Reiner (2000: 56) found, core characteristics of the ideal police officer were centred around '[an] action-oriented sense of mission, suspicion, machismo, conservatism, isolation, pragmatism [...] cynicism, danger, and solidarity', all of which are synonymous with Connell's (1983) definition of hegemonic masculinity.

One of the most compelling critiques of canteen culture is that, due to its masculine ethos, police officers became preoccupied with the desire to fight crime at any cost, even if that meant committing violent and deviant acts (Box, 1983; Skolnick and Fyfe, 1993; Loftus, 2012). Despite the aforementioned argument being widely accepted across sociological disciplines, the Orthodox account rejects this idea because it wrongly assumes that police officers committed deviant activities 'just because'. Although this may have been a factor for some individuals, this view overlooks the wider significance of hegemonic masculinity and ignores the societal function of canteen culture. Indeed, emanating back to childhood, Willis (1977) noted that working class boys had been raised to seek employment that fortified their masculine identities by

providing them with a sense of instant gratification. Jobs that provided delayed gratification, such as office jobs and managerial positions, were stigmatised amongst working class men for being 'feminised' and were therefore avoided at all costs. Indeed, this can be observed within police culture. The average day-to-day life of a police officer was often mundane and consisted of endless piles of paperwork and telephone calls (Waddington, 1999; Jackson, 2006; Loftus, 2012). And yet, despite this, conversations observed in workplace canteens were often centred around action packed 'war stories', with emphasis applied to violent and aggressive confrontations with disagreeable members of the public (Punch, 1979; Van Maanen, 1980; Smith and Gray, 1983; Waddington, 1999; Loftus, 2012).

At first glance, this may look as though police officers were simply engaging in acts of meaningless violence. However, the Orthodox account argues that actions serve a wider symbolic purpose (Reiner, 1993). Instead, police officers were able to gain status amongst their peers not only for their ability to fight crime, but for the way in which they did it. An emergency call out to a domestic issue, for example, was not worthy of an accolade in the canteen; but a high-speed chase through a crowded town centre, equipped with sirens and batons, to the scene of the domestic that required physical intervention, delivered enough job satisfaction for both the officer in question as well as his colleagues because it successfully epitomised the masculine ethos of the police force (Holdaway, 1983; Smith and Gray, 1983; Loftus, 2012). Thus, at its very core, police culture was driven by validating masculinity by rewarding masculine behaviours and allowing them to flourish. Whilst the role of women has not been explicitly stated in any of the aforementioned studies, it can be inferred from Kanter's (1977) study that token groups were likely to assist in validating the concept of masculinity in the workplace. How they did this, though, remains unclear.

Perhaps one of the lesser explored, but equally as consequential, aspects of canteen culture is police humour (Waddington, 1999; Loftus, 2012). Characterised as a series of 'wind-ups', humour is an integral part of a police officer's job and forms a core part of police officers' identities in the workplace (Powell, 1996; Waddington, 1999). Orthodox historians such as Chan (1996) and Waddington (1999) argue that, although the

academic debate has become oversaturated with the negative side of canteen culture, dark humour serves an almost entirely positive function in the police force.

To the uninitiated, the warped sense of humour observed in the police force can appear dangerous, cynical, and emotionless. In her seminal study, Loftus (2012) observed an incident whereby an officer reflected on a highly sensitive scene he had attended just weeks prior, involving a young boy who had been shot in the head by making a joke about it to his colleague. Similarly, Clisby (1990) recalled a similar scenario whereby a senior officer returned to the office eating a tin of spaghetti hoops after attending a graphic accident. Whilst this may cause shock to those outside of the police force, Waddington (1999) argues that the use of dark humour in these situations acted to make light of traumatic experiences. Menzies (1960) explains that, just like doctors and nurses, the police face unimaginable scenarios such as decomposing bodies and mangled corpses whilst at work. When wider societal expectations of men and masculinity throughout the twentieth century are taken into consideration, it is therefore unsurprising that police officers were unable to seek mental health support from external support services. As such, officers needed to find a way to desensitise and disassociate themselves from the horrors of the job, hence the reliance on dark humour. War stories and acts of masculine bravado, then, are not fuelled by toxic masculinity. Rather, they act as a legitimate response to difficult circumstances that, in some peculiar way, can only be understood as a coping mechanism.

Dark humour was also used to create a bond between officers. As it has been widely observed, the police are an insular group and often view society through an 'us vs them' lens (Holdaway, 1983; Reiner, 1993; Waddington, 1999; Loftus, 2012). This, as Sayer (2005: 163) argues, is because of a phenomenon known as 'class contempt'. Although police officers directly served the interests of the bourgeoise, they did not receive such status (Holdaway, 1983; Reiner, 1993). Instead, officers in the 70s and 80s were subjected to similar marginalisation as working-class men, sneered at by 'them' and were looked down upon by the rest of society (ibid). Likewise, police officers often found it difficult to connect with non-police friends because the complexities of the job could only be understood by men with similar experiences (McNamara, 1967; Cain, 1973). Dark humour, then, was used as a tool to create bonds between police officers,

reinforced the group mentality and strengthened ties. For many police officers, both male and female, police subculture was an integral part of their identity and survival in a job so isolated from the rest of society (Loftus, 2012).

The Orthodox account is regarded highly in academia, often forming the basis of police history textbooks used in contemporary policing studies across England and Wales (Robinson, 1970). Indeed, taking an ideological approach to policing is not always inherently bad, and many merits have been derived from this school of thought. For instance, the Orthodox historians rightly note that police culture serves a wider function, often uniting and uplifting officers' spirits in times of adversity (Reiner, 1992; Chan, 1996; Waddington, 1999; Loftus, 2012). In addition, the Orthodox account discusses the issues associated with the police being an insular community. Their methods, too, are also worthy of praise. Influential names such as Reiner (1993), Chan (1996) and Waddington (1999) to name but a few all worked directly with police officers, a notoriously hard group to access, and observed day-to-day interactions. Whilst the use of overt ethnography was certainly ground-breaking for the period and should be praised accordingly, it is not without its faults. The issue with ethnographic research, then, is the way in which it is interpreted by the researcher. Even when working directly alongside police officers, academics are only ever able to stand on the outside and 'look in'. As such, this means that the police only reveal what they are comfortable with academics seeing. As explored earlier on in this chapter, Orthodox historians certainly do acknowledge that policing communities are tight-knight and are suspicious of people on the outside. And yet, when forming their critiques, very few scholars address the notion that, due to the nature of their methodologies, it is almost impossible for them to get a true insight into the realities of canteen culture. Rather, they are seeing canteen culture on a scaled-back level because officers are loyal to the job and to one another, and want to protect their occupation from scrutiny. More research is therefore needed into the realities of canteen culture, using alternative methods to ethnographic observations.

Furthermore, the Orthodox position takes a one-size-fits-all approach, assuming that the extent to which solidarity prevailed amongst officers must have meant that both men and women shared similar experiences, and that behaviours such as humour

served the same wider purpose (Reiner, 1992; Chan, 1996; Waddington, 1999). In doing so, the Orthodox approach overlooks the significance of women's personal, biographical narratives and experience pertaining to dark humour and masculinity. What remains unclear from this perspective, then, is where policewomen fit into the equation. Due to the lack of research targeted towards uncovering women's experiences in the police force, it remains unclear as to whether dark humour had a similar effect amongst female officers. Whilst studying American women in male-dominated workplaces, Kanter (1977) found that token groups often attempted to assimilate dominant culture, even if that meant being the punchline to their jokes. However, in the long run, this meant that women were more likely to feel unwelcome, unequal, and behave discretely as to avoid unwanted attention (Kanter, 1977). Due to the methodologies favoured by the Orthodox group, unique stories and interpretations of how women navigated male-dominated environments are difficult to find. As such, more research is needed to establish how women felt about dark humour, and the wider effect this had on their experiences in and out of the workplace.

A Cult of Masculinity

Despite orthodox historians showing their support for the somewhat more rose-tinted view of policing and the culture within it, revisionists – and, more recently, post-revisionists – reject the idea that canteen culture is harmless. Popularised after the death of Stephen Lawrence, the revisionist school of thought offers a scathing critique of canteen culture, arguing that it harmed just as many men as it did women (Reiner, 2010). However, unlike the Orthodox account, Revisionists actively recognise the challenges faced by women working in the police force. This section of the literature review will now explore this compelling, albeit limited, academic argument.

Like Orthodox historians, revisionists understand that, in some cases, canteen culture performed a wider function. Towards the end of the 1970s and 1980s, what it meant to be a man had been thrown into crisis; commonly referred to the 'crisis of masculinity', de-industrialisation meant that working-class men were thrown into mass unemployment (Bednarik, 1970; Steinmann and Fox, 1974; Kimmel, 1986; Brod, 1987).

Whilst academics struggle to agree upon a universal definition for the term, it is generally agreed that men in this era felt the wrath of social change:

> The male is obviously in retreat, though not from the onslaught of emancipated woman or any 'coming matriarchy'. He is in retreat from what he himself has wrought from a world of over automatized over centralised controls that make him feel superfluous as a man (Bednark, 1970: 7).

Brod (1987) continued, adding that male identities in the 70s and 80s were centred around the desire to provide for their families and have power, both financially and socially, above women. However, due to de-industrialisation, what it meant to be a man was threatened, even in the home. The home has, traditionally, acted as a safe haven. Talcott Parsons (1956), a social action theorist, described the family home as a metaphorical 'warm bath'; once the breadwinner returned home after long, hard graft, he was able to relax, just as he would in a warm bath. During the crisis of masculinity, though, this was not possible; men had lost their power, often being replaced as the breadwinner by their wives, as men searched for employment. This manifested into the workplace as men began to display heightened and perverse displays of masculinity, with little regard for themselves or others. But not only was this harmful to women, but this was also inherently problematic for men. Recent research conducted on behalf of the police revealed that police officers in England and Wales are more likely to suffer from mental health issues such as Post Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD), depression and anxiety than any other profession (Irizar *et al.*, 2021). Police officers are also more likely to be dependent on alcohol because of binge drinking (ibid). Of course, research of this nature did not exist in the 1970s and 1980s because very little attention was paid to the harms of in-house drinking. However, from studies carried out in other typically 'masculine' industries, it can be assumed that policing was, and is, likely to have caused poor mental health and harmful habits as coping strategies (Roman, 1980; Ames, 1989)

A second explanation, however, is that policing was, and continues to be, a cult of masculinity (Smith and Gray, 1985). Described by Fielding (1994: 84) as 'an almost pure form of masculinity', police culture emphasises a much darker side of masculinity: hypermasculinity (Mosher and Sirkin, 1984). As defined by Mosher and Sirkin (1984),

hypermasculinity actively promotes exaggerated forms of male behaviour such as sexual harassment and physical aggression, often aimed towards women. In policing, hypermasculinity manifested in the workplace, often shaping men's' attitudes towards their female colleagues. Wexler and Logan (1983) found that, in a study of 25 female patrol officers in the Metropolitan Police, almost half their female participants had experienced stress because of male colleagues' attitudes. In one interview, a police officer informed the researchers that 'if you are sleeping with someone you are a slut; if you are not, you are a dyke' (Wexler and Logan, 1983: 15). Rees and Strange (2018: 56) echoed men's hostility towards women in their recent journalistic study of police officers from the Metropolitan Police, adding that initiation ceremonies such as station stamping, the act in which a woman has her breasts or bottom stamped, were often used to work out whether a policewoman was a 'bike or dyke'. Smith (1983) also found that, in the Metropolitan Police, male officers of varying ranks displayed negative attitudes towards their female colleagues, with fewer than 20% of policemen in one particular station supporting the integration of women into the regular force, almost ten years after amalgamation had taken place. Martin (1980: 219) added that policewomen were consequently held to impossible standards; not only did they have to work like dogs, but they also had to think like men and work like ladies, an impossible dichotomy whereby the lines were constantly redrawn depending on the mood in the station that day. Loftus (2008; 2012) argues that police culture in the nineteen-seventies and nineteen-eighties was, on average, thirty years behind the rest of society. Whilst the rest of the country moved away from traditional gender roles, the police force hung on tight, rejecting change and progress.

The Critique

Whilst the issue of policewomen's experiences has been brought to the forefront of academics' minds in recent years, very little research has attempted to capture the impact of sexism and misogyny. Of the few studies that were carried out in the 1980s (Martin, 1980; Smith, 1984; Wexler and Logan, 1983; Fielding, 1988), these studies relied on interviews. Whilst they still produced interesting and valid data that can be used to paint a picture of what policing was like for women in this era, it is unlikely they were able to reveal the true extent of their experiences due to the hypermasculine

culture. As Martin (1980) rightly notes, women were held to impossible standards; this, in turn, creates a culture whereby women are silenced and unable to speak about their experiences unless they wanted to lose their jobs or, worse, be subjected to further workplace bullying. It is therefore of the upmost importance that, if researchers are to accurately capture the extent of sexism and misogyny in the police force during the nineteen-seventies and nineteen-eighties, researchers should do this retrospectively, interviewing former (or retired) officers, so that women can speak freely, without fearing any repercussions. Furthermore, research of this calibre generally takes a London-centric approach. Whilst this is not an issue per se, it begs the question whether data found in the Metropolitan Police is generalisable to the rest of the country. Whilst the Met was, of course, the biggest police station, it required a very different type of policing found elsewhere in the country (Loftus, 2008; Loftus, 2012). Forces in the North of England, for example, often produce entirely different results (Chan, 1996; Waddington 1999) – but, as of yet, there is very little, if at all any, research pertaining to the experiences of policewomen north of the Watford Gap. And finally, Revisionists seldom aim to explore how women navigated the challenges associated with policing in this era. Although policing was, understandably, hard for women in this era, evidence suggests that they continued to forge a way through and reach senior ranks. More research is therefore needed to establish how – and why – women tolerated sexism and misogyny.

4.6 Conclusion

From this comprehensive literature review, then, it is evident that, above all, literature pertaining to policewomen's experiences is scarce. Since their introduction in 1915, policewomen have been treated as an afterthought, seldom worthy of being the centre of academic research. Whilst it is abundantly clear that the 1970s and 1980s was a challenging period for everybody, regardless of biological sex and occupation, policing presented a unique challenge for women in that it reflected societal values from by-gone generations (Waddington, 1999; Jacksons, 2006; Loftus, 2008; Loftus, 2012; Silverstri, 2018). Women were 'othered' in every way possible, from their uniforms right down to their assigned policework. By 1984, though, things began to change. Throughout the 1990s, women climbed the ranks and reached every senior position possible, with the 'WPC' title eventually being scrapped. Whilst this is a notable

achievement for women, it remains unclear how this change occurred. Existing research relies on ethnographic observation, and overlooks the significance of personal narratives told by policewomen themselves. This thesis therefore aims to offer a more detailed insight into the experiences of policewomen in England and Wales, moving away from a London-centric focus. Particular emphasis will be applied to the way in which women navigated the challenges associated with being a woman and how their tenacity and determination contributed to creating a more inclusive and meritocratic police force. In the next chapter, the methodological considerations of this thesis will be outlined.

Chapter Four –

Methods and Methodological Considerations.

4.1 Introduction to the Chapter

As explored in the previous chapter, academic discourse pertaining to policewomen is complex. Described as a 'cult of masculinity', policing has been embodied by a prominent masculine ethos since the nineteenth century (Martin, 1980; Smith and Gray, 1983; Fielding, 1994; Loftus, 2008). Despite the introduction of policewomen in 1915, women were restricted to policing duties within the rigorous constraints of their gender. This notion, often referred to as the 'latency' period, has caused some controversy amongst academics; whilst some argue that this ended shortly before the Second World War, others argue that it continued throughout the seventies and early eighties (Martin, 1980; Heidensohn, 1992; Brown, 1998; Jackson, 2006). Whilst the debate rages on, very little research has focused solely on policewomen's personal narratives of this era. As Brown (1998) observes, existing knowledge pertaining to the development of policewomen inadvertently stems from other research projects, most of which had no intention of uncovering policewomen's experiences in the first place.

This thesis, then, set out to put policewomen's narratives at the heart of its methodology through the use of a mixed-method approach. The first section outlines the aims and research questions that underpinned this project, as well as the epistemological approach that informed my research design. The second section contains details of the sampling and recruitment strategies used within this project, as well as a reflection on the recruitment in practice. Sections three, four and five offer a justification for the chosen methodologies (archival research, life history interviewing and photo elicitation), how they were carried out, and reflections on the practicalities of using these methods in an interpretivist study. Then, section six outlines how I adhered to the ethical guidelines outlined by Staffordshire University (2019) and the British Sociological Association (2017). And finally, section seven provides insight into how I analysed my data.

4.2 Aims, Objectives and Research Questions

The overarching aim of this project was to contribute to the limited body of literature pertaining to the historiography of policewomen's experiences throughout the seventies, eighties, and nineties. Broadly speaking, this meant I was interested in obtaining insight into various aspects of women's careers, ranging from motivations for joining and friends and families' reactions, to day-to-day experiences and navigating canteen culture in a male-dominated workplace. By listening to these stories, I was able to identify key moments that were crucial to participants' career development which, in turn, allowed me to analyse how women navigated policing and policing culture, as well as how a cultural shift began to occur.

To assist with capturing women's' narratives, a qualitative approach has been employed. Qualitative methodologies, as defined by Bryman (2021: 350), focuses primarily on 'words, images and objects'. The aim here is to generate detailed, and often subjective, insight into people's individual experiences and feelings pertaining to a chosen topic. As explored in Chapter Two, life course research particularly benefits from a qualitative approach because it is primarily interested in people's unique experiences, rather than the broader issues (Giele and Elder, 1998; Giele and Elder, 2009). Although several academics, such as Morris (1987) and Brown and Heidensohn (2000), have carried out quantitative research into policing more broadly, these studies have generally lacked specific details pertaining to women police officers' individual experiences and have, instead, offered a more generalised insight into their overall experiences through the use of ethnography. Quantitative data such as questionnaires, although useful, are limited in terms of how much they can reveal about the policing experience in the seventies and eighties (Anderson, 2007). For the most part, data produced by questionnaires covers generalised themes chosen by the researcher, and not the individual (Fogel, 1975; Anderson, 2007). As Fogel (1975) argued, historical research that aims to capture experiences unique to the individual should avoid taking overall control and, instead, should allow the participant to take the lead. Thus, the most suitable research strategy to use in this study was qualitative.

As explored in Chapter One, the project set out to answer the following research questions:

1. How did early socialisation, as well as family and friends' reactions to entering a 'man's job', shape women's experiences and perception of self when joining the police force?
2. To what extent did canteen culture shape women police officers' experiences? And how did women police officers navigate the challenges associated with working in a male-dominated environment?
3. How did social unrest in the nineteen-eighties impact women's police work? What were the short-term and, if any, long-term, effects on policewomen's duties?
4. How did early experiences in the job shape policewomen's careers and post-retirement plans later in life?

To answer these research questions, a list of aims were designed:

1. To explore former female police officers' experiences between the 1970s and 1990s, paying particular attention to participants' identity, backgrounds, their day-to-day police work, and their interactions with male colleagues.
2. To examine whether (and how) the social unrest of deindustrialisation across Britain affected women officers' experiences, both formally (the types of police work assigned, opportunities provided, and promotions offered) and informally (treatment from male colleagues, social experiences, perceptions of identity, and canteen culture).
3. To examine how their experiences during deindustrialisation may have contributed to a permanent, hegemonic shift in female policing practice
4. To identify the ways in which women police officers navigated a male-dominated culture, including the ways in which they responded to any potential instances of sexism, harassment, and misogyny.

And finally, the fulfil these aims, the objectives of this project were to:

1. To conduct archival research into the experiences of women police officers during the seventies and eighties. Photographs and newspaper clippings obtained through archival research will be used as an elicitation tool during the interview(s).
2. To carry out life history interviews with former women police officers who served throughout the nineteen-seventies, eighties and nineties in England and Wales.
3. To contribute to the historiography of women police officers throughout the twentieth century by producing a series of subjective accounts pertaining to officers' individual experiences.

To meet these aims and answer the research questions effectively, this project was underpinned by an interpretivist epistemology. Unlike positivism, interpretivism argues that sociology – and, more broadly, social science – is not akin to traditional scientific disciplines. The Italian philosopher, Giambattista Vico (1999 [1744]), was amongst the first to reject the Cartesian notion that the social world shared similarities with the natural world. Rather, as Weber (1947) argued, the goal of interpretivist research is not to establish a generalisable truth; instead, it is to provide an understanding of social phenomenon. This concept, otherwise known as 'Verstehen', requires sociologists to put themselves in the shoes of the participant they are interviewing to immerse themselves in, and subsequently understand, the multifaceted social world in which they occupy (Weber, 1947; Kraus, 2005). Moreover, interpretivist research aligns itself with a relativist ontology, whereby there is no universal truth. Instead, there are multiple realities, and it is down to sociologists to provide meaning to observed behaviours within these realities (Kraus, 2005; Denzin and Lincoln, 2005; Levers, 2013).

By utilising an interpretivist epistemological approach, I was able to gain a deeper insight into my participants, their social worlds, and the experiences that they felt shaped the overall direction of their careers. This approach also allowed me to gain an understanding of social interactions, and the wider meaning they have in the workplace (Kanter, 1977; Acker, 1990). Whilst this study was not designed to provide a generalisable insight into policewomen's experiences across the globe, it provides

insight into a variety of experiences, in various locations in England and Wales, across a period of forty years. This, in turn, will be used to construct a snapshot of what policing was like for women in the latter half of the twentieth century, focusing on experiences, identity and the rise and fall of gender roles.

4.3 Sampling and Recruitment

Sampling Strategy

When designing my sample, I wanted to capture policewomen's experiences in policing throughout the nineteen-seventies, eighties and nineties. By using a period that spanned over thirty years, I was able to capture insight into transitional behaviours throughout the life course, and explore how this shaped policewomen's experiences and identity over a period of thirty years (Elder, 1996; Giele and Elder, 1998). Women who joined the police force in the late nineteen-seventies/early eighties were the first to work under the Equal Pay Act 1970 and Sex Discrimination Act 1975, and were therefore more likely to observe and be in a position to comment on the immediate and longer lasting impacts of legal amendments. Women who joined in the eighties were also able to comment about the effects of the aforementioned legislation, as well as other changes to the police force, such as the introduction of PACE Act 1984 and periods of social unrest. Thus, the study was open to all females who served in England and Wales throughout this period.

I quickly learned that this theoretical sample was impractical. I received various queries from policewomen who served less than thirty years who were unsure if they could take part because they did not serve the full thirty years. It became apparent that, just as research carried out on WPCs who served in earlier decades had suggested, few women completed the full thirty years because of marriage, pregnancy, and childcare issues (Jackson, 2006; Rees and Strange, 2018; Cunningham and Ramshaw, 2020). Although legislation stated that women could keep their jobs after marriage, there was a societal and cultural expectation that women were to leave the force once they fell pregnant (Rees and Strange, 2019; Cunningham and Ramshaw, 2020). I made the final decision to include the experiences of policewomen with less than thirty years' service

because, although their time in the police may have been short, this still formed an important part of the generational life course and contributed to gaps in knowledge around why women ended their careers earlier than planned.

Recruitment Strategy

Qualitative researchers have frequently debated the 'ideal' number of interviews required in academic studies (Bryman, 2021). Bertaux (1981), for example, argues that fifteen should be considered the minimum sample size, whilst Creswell (1998) argues that the minimum sample size in phenomenological and grounded studies differ, ranging from 5-25 and 20-30 respectively. More recent scholarship, however, argues that the ideal sample size is dependent on whether saturation has been reached (Ryan and Bernard, 2004; Guest, 2006; Bub, 2014; Vasileiou *et al*., 2018). Of course, knowing when saturation has been reached is a complex process and, as such, no universal figure exists per se. Guest (2006: 76) warns that whilst twelve interviews is, in most cases, sufficient to produce detailed results, aiming for a 'quick and dirty' sample size will produce unreliable results, particularly if the researcher is looking to compare and contrast experiences. Thus, the 'ideal' number of interviews per study should therefore be judged on a case-by-case basis. To assist with identifying a desirable sample size, Ryan and Bernard (2004) suggest that a researcher looks out for two key factors: firstly, the complexity of findings being produced; and secondly, researcher fatigue.

Taking these factors into consideration, I initially planned to carry out between fifteen and twenty-five interviews. Although the overarching aim of this study was to explore the broader theme of policewomen's experiences, it was important to me to capture narratives from a variety of backgrounds, something that a sample size smaller than fifteen was unlikely to achieve (Bertaux, 1981; Riessman, 2008). I also felt that, in order to capture a more detailed insight into how policing affected the overall life course of participants, it was important to capture a range of narratives from a variety of ranks and geographical locations, whilst being mindful of not wanting to produce too much data (Bertaux, 1981; Giele and Elder, 1998; Bub, 2014). In total, I interviewed thirty-five participants from twelve forces across England and Wales.

Recruitment in Practice

Accessing police officers, or any hard-to-access group, can present the researcher with various challenges. Research pertaining to the police poses a unique challenge because most officers have a prominent 'us vs them' mentality, and lack of trust towards non-police (Reiner, 1992; Reiner, 2000; Heidensohn and Brown, 2000). It is therefore advisable to have multiple recruitment strategies (Atkinson and Flint, 2001; Cartwright, 2017). To recruit former police officers, then, I utilised a multi-modal approach, utilising social media strategies, museum networks and academic journals, to access my desired sample.

The first phase involved social media. In January 2022, I posted my study poster (Appendix A) and study synopsis (Appendix B) on social media platforms such as Facebook and Twitter. I targeted local community groups such as 'Old Photographs of Cannock Chase', 'Rugeley Rocks', 'Stoke-on-Trent Past and Present', and 'Burton Life', as well as police-specific groups such as 'Police History' and 'Serving and Ex Police Officers'. Posts on social media sites generated a small but significant amount of interest from people outside of my target demographic. Although not all commenters were in the police, they were able to notify their friends and family members who they thought would be more useful to the study (Gelinas *et al*., 2017). Participants who were interested were then able to contact me using the contact details provided on the poster. Once contact had been initiated, I sent across a copy of the information sheet (Appendix D) and consent form (Appendix E).

The second approach involved sending an email to police museums. In total, England has eight police museums, six of which were based outside of London. In April 2022, I sent an email (Appendix C) to each museum, along with a copy of the study poster (Appendix A) and study synopsis (Appendix B). Of the five museums that replied to my correspondence, they shared my study poster onto their websites and social media platforms, thus circulating the study amongst their museum networks. Participants were able to contact me using the email address provided, and an information sheet (Appendix D) and consent form (Appendix E) were sent out.

The third and final method of recruitment, then, came from the 'Police History Society'. Registered as a charity in 1985, the Police History Society operates as an academic journal and research group (Griffiths, 2022). The editor of the journal, Barry Walsh, saw my study advertised on social media, and offered to distribute my study poster and synopsis in the next edition of the society's newsletter which, coincidentally, was due to go out that day (April 2022). Within an hour of it being circulated, I was inundated with expressions of interest. In total, I received 80 emails from policewomen who were interested in taking part in the study. I replied to 20 emails, every two weeks. Interviews were scheduled to take place online, on the telephone, or in-person.

Reflections on Recruitment

When initially designing the study, I had planned to use a snowball sample. Broadly speaking, snowball sampling is the process whereby a researcher relies on an interviewee to forward the study to a friend (Bryman, 2021; Frey, 2018). However, in order to use a snowball sample effectively, it is often beneficial for the researcher to have 'knowledge of insiders' who can provide initial access (Atkinson and Flint, 2001). In the case of my project, it was particularly important to have these prior connections because police officers are often a challenging group to access (Reiner, 1992; Reiner, 2000; Loftus, 2008; Loftus, 2012). I therefore planned to use Staffordshire University's existing connections with the police to kickstart my research. My first interviewee was a senior ranking officer, having recently retired from the force. It was therefore intended that they would be able to put me in touch with a former colleague to interview, who would then send the study forwards to their former colleagues, and so forth. This, however, did not happen as planned. Likewise, when another member of my supervisory team contacted Staffordshire University's Institute of Policing on my behalf, former police officers did not express an interest to take part in the study, thus failing to initiate a chain referral.

Whilst this did initially cause some stress, it gave me a lot to consider about why snowball sampling did not work in this scenario. Whilst academics such as Reiner (1992; 2000), Waddington (2000) and Loftus (2008; 2012) have argued that the police have a strong sense of unity within the job, my experiences with recruitment suggest

that this loyalty runs further than employment and, instead, arguably lasts a lifetime. In turn, this may have deterred women, particularly those who still had strong connections to policing (e.g., lecturers of policing), from volunteering to take part in the study. As this extract from Janet captures, women with close affiliates to the police experienced an immense sense of guilt about taking part in the study:

> Even talking about it to someone who isn't a police officer, that makes me feel a little bit guilty because there's something about taking a pledge, swearing loyalty to the queen and there's something about that police training experience, those 14 weeks, and there's something about working together as a shift, as a team especially in really quite dangerous adverse situations that brings you together and I've done lots of police training both here and in Europe and it's always the same. That notion of honour, honour and loyalty to the police and I still have it to a certain extent, so to talk about some of the interesting times as a WPC with you, feels disloyal.

Janet's feelings echoed that of other participants, particularly those who had recently retired or were still attached to the police in some way (see Chapter Eight). This phenomenon is best explained as the 'Blue Code of Silence'. Building upon the idea of an 'us vs them' mentality promoted by occupational culture (discussed in Chapter Three), the blue code of silence – or 'blue curtain' – describes the culture of silence within the police (Westmarland, 2005). Officers show their solidarity to one another by being quiet about malpractice to avoid scrutiny (Westmarland and Conway, 2020). Going against this, then, was essentially going 'against' their internalised culture of being a police officer. In addition to this, the timing of this research – the first quarter of 2021 – coincided with the 'All Cops are Bastards' movement.[2] As such, there was an understandable amount of hesitation from participants who did not speak negatively about their job. On top of this, the researcher – a twenty-something-year-old PhD student with no experience of working for the police – may have added to their suspicion.

Instead of using a snowball sample, then, I used a self-selection sample (Bryman, 2021). Former policewomen who saw my study advertised on online spaces were able

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[2] The 'All Cops are Bastards' movement – or ACAB – emerged in response to the murder of George Floyd in America in May 2020. Floyd was of African American descent, and his death was caused by police brutality, spurred on by institutional racism.

to choose whether they wanted to take part in the study. However, relying on a self-selection sample is not without its faults. Participation bias was likely an influencing factor in this study (Costigan and Cox, 2001). Women who had positive experiences in the police were more likely to offer their time to the study, whereas women who had negative experiences were less likely to come forwards unless the poster had come from a reputable source such as the police museum network or the academic journal. At least two participants had taken part in other academic studies. This, in turn, may have shaped the types of narratives women were comfortable sharing with me. However, as Cheung *et al.*, (2017) argued, this does not necessarily create an unrepresentative sample; rather, it creates a snapshot into a particular cohort of former policewomen.

Advertising my study on social media also presented an array of challenges. Whilst my experience with using Facebook as a form of recruitment has been positive in previous research projects, I did not find this to be the case this time around. On one occasion, self-proclaimed serving officers commented on my post and asked if they could take part because they identified as 'saucepans'. This then generated a lengthy discussion about the poor quality of research produced by academics with no experience of policing. On another occasion, a well-established academic and museum director informed me that my study was 'pointless' because it neglected to consider male officers' experiences. In hindsight, though social media allows access to a wider population size, I would be hesitant to use this again because it was damaging for my morale at a time when recruitment was proving to be difficult.

Participant Demographics

In total, thirty-five participants were interviewed from across fifteen forces in England and Wales. The following forces were represented: Avon and Somerset Police; British Transport Police; City of London Police; Gloucestershire Police; Gwent Police; Hampshire Police; Kent Police; Greater Manchester Police; Metropolitan Police; Sussex Police; Staffordshire Police; Thames Valley Police; Warwickshire Police; West Midlands Police; Wiltshire Police. Some women served in multiple forces throughout the duration of their careers.

Table 1 Participants' Rank and Years of Service

Rank	Number of Participants	Years of Service
Constable	27	1960s-2020s
Sergeant	3	1970s-2010s
Inspector	3	1970s-2010s
Chief Superintendent	1	1980s-2020s
Chief Constable	1	1980s-2010s

Participants were mostly of White British descent, with only one interviewee identifying as Black British. Gaining access to women from minority backgrounds who served as policewomen in the seventies and eighties was a challenge. As Smith and Gray (1985: 388) observed, institutional racism was a serious issue in the police force throughout the eighties, adding that 'racial prejudice and racialist talk [were] pervasive, expected, and even fashionable'. Similarly, in the Scarman (1981) report, it was noted that the police had poor relationships with ethnic minority groups. Consequently, the socio-historical context of the era meant that only a small percentage of police officers were from minority backgrounds (Bowling and Phillips, 2003; Bhugowandeen, 2013). Out of 60 expressions of interest, only two were from women of colour. After reading the information sheet, one lady of Indian descent chose not to take part as 'some things are better left in the past'.

Diversity in this study, then, came from a different angle: social class. Contrary to existing literature (see Jackson, 2006), policewomen in this study were largely from working-class backgrounds. At least 22 of the participants identified as being from a 'working-class' background, with no prior connections to the police, four identified as being working-class but had prior connections to the police, and two identified as middle-class and were privately educated. Eighteen of the women in this study left

school at 16 after the completion of their O-Levels (now GCSEs), six women went onto complete GSEs (now A-levels), whilst only two women went onto university prior to joining the police. Some women did not declare their academic qualifications.

Capturing a range of narratives from women up-and-down the country was also integral to creating my sample. Existing literature is London-centric, and often focuses on the experiences of the Metropolitan Police (see Jackson, 2006; Rees and Strange, 2019). Whilst two interviewees were, indeed, from the Metropolitan Police, I was able to capture the experiences of women in Kent, Gloucestershire, Manchester, Hampshire, Staffordshire, Avon and Somerset, Thames Valley, Warwickshire, and the West Midlands. The British Transport Police were also central to this study, with all three interviewees from the BTP force being based in different locations of the country.

Finally, I was able to interview policewomen who achieved various ranks in the police force. As explored in my literature review chapter, academic literature generally focuses upon the experiences of senior ranking officers in London. In contrast, my captured experiences from women in a range of ranks, ranging from Constable to Chief Constable, over a period of thirty-five years. This, in turn, forms part of the original contribution of this thesis.

4.4 Archival Research

Why Archival Research?

Characterised by their signature dusty, grey boxes, the archives host a range of documents, ranging from photographs and letters to personal diaries and artefacts (Stanley, 2020; Tamboukou, 2020). Although archival research has traditionally been synonymous with historical studies, there has been an increase in its usage across the social sciences since the 1990s (Garland, 2014; Godfrey, 2017; Churchill, 2017; Moore *et al.*, 2020). As Churchill (2017) explains, historical sociology and criminology aims to centre the past – and, by extension, archival research – at the heart of its methodologies, to re-tell forgotten parts of our history.

Despite its newfound popularity, there has been some concern over the use of archive research in the social sciences. De Certeau (1998), for example, argued that archives do not represent the past, but instead those who lived in the past, whilst Foucault (1972: 130) explained that archives could never represent historical epochs in their entirety. Rather, archives are a collection of carefully selected photographs and images, often representing a period of history that the bourgeoise want its people to remember. This is a pertinent issue in archive collections pertaining to British imperialism, many of which represent colonialism as an inherently positive force, as opposed to its objective reality. Archives, and research using archives, present a 'social, political, and ideational' interpretation of historical events, often omitting the voice of people who lived through it (Stanley, 2020: 37). More recently, scholars such as Moore (2020) have criticised sociologists for using archive material to romanticise the past, and accused them of repeatedly philandering with nostalgia. It has therefore been suggested that, should social scientists insist on using archival research, it ought to be done through a positivist lens, as researchers are never the intended author of the archival source, doing so would avoid romanticised interpretations of the past (Moore *et al.*, 2020).

Whilst these criticisms are certainly applicable to archival research as a sole method, the same cannot be said for using archival research as a methodological counterpart (Guiney, 2018). When used in this way, archival research can illuminate forgotten parts of history (ibid). This study, then, combined archival research with two other approaches – narrative interviewing and photo elicitation – to create a fuller insight into policewomen's careers, some of which began over fifty years ago. Photographs, newspaper clippings and artefacts from the era were used as a way to craft research questions, as well as inform the direction of the study (Benzecry, Deener & Lara-Millan, 2020).

Doing Archive Research

Due to the COVID-19 pandemic, archive research took place slightly later than planned. Between September 2021 and May 2024, I booked into various archives across the country to carry out archival research. In total, I visited five archives in-person. These were: Staffordshire Record Office, Stafford; the Potteries Museum & Art Gallery, Stoke-

on-Trent; Cannock Library, Cannock; Greater Manchester Police Museum & the Wolfson Centre for Archive Research, Birmingham. I also utilised online archives from sites such as the National Archives, the Metropolitan Police History Society, and Greater Manchester Police Museum.

The process of selecting an archive centre was dependent on the content held within each collection. Before my arrival, I contacted local archive centres and requested a copy of their collection catalogues (if they were not already available on their websites). When scanning each catalogue, I searched for key phrases such as 'Women Police Officer', 'WPC', 'Miners' Strike', '1980s', 'Uniform', 'Control Rooms', 'Social Events', and 'Parades' and highlighted them accordingly (see Figure 3).

Figure 3 Sorting Archives

Whilst this was a successful search method to begin with, and certainly a recommended starting point for any archivist (see Moore *et al.*, 2020), I quickly discovered that the best material was often found in unlabelled boxes of assorted photographs, and that catalogues did not always give the best indication of what was inside a collection. As Stanley (2020: 34) warns, the archives are often 'dark, mundane

and voiceless', and it is the job of the researcher to bring the archival sources to life. In truth, the mystery and suspense of the archive is what makes this method so rewarding, particularly in this project.

Once I had identified the photographs I wanted, I photocopied them if there was a photocopier available, or took photographs using my iPhone, and loaded them onto my computer. Once I had collated all of my data (over five-hundred photographs), I was able to select the photographs I wanted to use as visual stimuli in my interviews. Chosen materials reflected the broader interview themes, and were categorised as the following: (i) recruitment posters, (ii) uniform, (iii) policework, (iv) sexism. For a more in-depth explanation on how I utilised these images in my interviews, see section 6 of this chapter.

Photographs were analysed, and temporal patterns amongst the datasets were observed (Giddens, 1979; Tinkler, 2012; Tomboukou, 2020). By observing recurring patterns and themes, I was able to construct an interview schedule that reflected these chronological changes. In the instance of policework, for example, photographs from the seventies showed policewomen working closely alongside women and children, whilst photographs of policemen displayed motorcyclists jumping through hoops of fire and taking part in physically demanding fitness challenges. Photographs taken towards the end of the eighties, however, showed policewomen attending murder scenes and driving lorries. I interpreted this to mean that policework began to change towards the late eighties, and tailored my interview schedule to reflect this.

Reflections on 'Doing' Archive Research

Since March 2020, the world has faced the ongoing, and seemingly never-ending, COVID-19 global pandemic (UK Government, 2020). This meant that, for the duration of 2020 and most of 2021, museums and archive centres were closed to members of the public. Staff were furloughed, and funding cuts meant many museums were unsure about what the future held for them. Even when England started to slowly return to 'normal' in May 2021, museums were amongst the last to re-open, with many unable to

open until September 2021 (UK Government, 2021). As a result of this, the archival research segment of my project was delayed by some months.

Consequently, I do feel that the archival research segment of this project was rushed. Whilst I would have loved to spend hours upon hours searching for the 'perfect' archive source, this was not possible due to time restraints. Perhaps, it might have been more effective had I tailored the selection of archive sources to each geographical area. For example, when I received an influx of interest from Kent Constabulary, photographs from their archive centres would have potentially been more appropriate and, thus would have reflected the demographics involved in the study more accurately. This is, of course, conjecture. In hindsight, visiting archives across the country might not have guaranteed me the sources I wanted to find because a great deal of archive collections are sporadic (Moore *et al*., 2020).

4.5 Life History Interviewing

Why Life History Interviews?

As outlined in the project aims and rationale, this thesis was primarily driven by the desire to make a worthy contribution to the historiography of policewomen towards the latter half of the twentieth century. Consequently, it was important to select a method that placed emphasis on the importance of personal reflection and storytelling. For this project, then, it was decided that life history interviewing was the most suitable approach.

Praised by feminists for bringing women's experiences to the forefront of sociological research (Harding, 1987), life history interview techniques seek to explore 'the inner experience of individuals, how they interpret, understand and define the world around them' (Faraday and Plummer, 1979: 776). Unlike traditional types of interviewing, the role of the researcher in life history interviews differs slightly to incorporate a more participant-focused approach. As Reissman (2008: 21) observes, 'the researcher does not find narratives but instead participates in their creation'. As the researcher takes a secondary role as a facilitator, narrators are given the opportunity to talk openly and freely about their experiences and reflect upon the impact these events may have had

on their overall life course (Anderson and Jack, 1991). Bornat and Walmsley (2004) have since described this technique as an emancipatory practice for its ability to empower marginalised groups by giving them a voice. Whilst discussions pertaining to the effects of imbalanced social structures can, of course, cause the participant some distress (Connell, 2005), Oakley (1981) observed that this can often be cathartic and provide the participant with an opportunity to reflect on their experiences from an angle that, until meeting the researcher, they may not have considered.

In the context of this study, capturing personal experiences is particularly important. As explored in the literature review, police history is dominated by male voices and experiences. Women's voices are frequently omitted and are at risk of being of lost entirely if not preserved by contemporary research. By exploring the biographical accounts of policewomen, the researcher can capture a detailed insight into the world of policing, power structures and, more importantly, how participants navigated potential barriers (Yow, 1994; Middleton and Hewitt, 2000; Hyn-Joo, 2011). As Weber (1947) noted, social research should seek to understand social words, and empathise with participants – and this is only possible through subjective accounts (Yow, 1994; Hyn-Joo, 2011).

As with any methodology, the life history interviewing technique is not without its faults. The use of oral history interviewing has been frequently criticised for its reliance on subjective recollections of events (Yow, 1994; Atkinson and Silverman, 1997; Gemigani, 2014; Bosnes, 2020). Memories are, as Gemigani (2014) and Bosnes (2020) note, highly subjective and unreliable. As a narrator ages, memories fade, and recollections can become either blurred or suffer from a psychological phenomenon known as rosy retrospection (Gardner, 2001; Gemigani, 2014). The retelling of memories is inherently subjective and largely influenced by group membership and identity (Misztal, 2003; Squire, 2008). This, in turn, makes the method much less favourable in research that aims to establish a historical truth. However, as Portelli (1981) argues, life history interviewing is not about establishing a universal truth. Rather, it is about exploring the narrator's interpretation of their own experiences. Certainly, in this study, it was never the aim to uncover a universal truth into the broader theme of policing in the seventies and eighties; rather, it was to gain an understanding of policewomen's unique and

individual experiences in the era, how they navigated the barriers on a personal level and, most importantly, how their time in the police force shaped their perception of self and overall life course (Elder, 1996; Giele and Elder, 1998).

'Doing' Life History Interviews

After using photographs acquired from archival research to construct my interview schedule, I conducted a pilot interview in December 2021. As a multitude of qualitative researchers have argued, the use of pilot studies can improve the quality of research significantly (Baker, 1994; van Teijlingen & Hundley, 2001; May, 2012; Bryman, 2021; Malmqvist *et al.*, 2019). Pilot studies allow for the researcher to trial-run their interviews and identify any issues (Bryman, 2021). Although my pilot study went well, I was cautious of time restraints. An hour did not seem to provide enough time to cover a person's life history, so I made sure I changed the running time of my interviews to one-and-a-half to two-hours.

After amendments were made to my interview schedule (Appendix I), there were six key themes covered in my interviews. These were: before the police, early career, later career, social, personal, and reflections. This, as outlined by Giddens (1979) and Tomboukou (2020), is known as a temporal rhythm, and can often help the participant tell their narrative in a more natural, organic way.

Each interview began with a briefing of what the interview was about, what was expected of the participant, and an opportunity to answer any questions the participant may have. Participants were also reminded of their right to withdraw, and what to do if they wanted to skip certain questions. A lot of questions I received from my participants during the briefing stage were around why I chose my PhD topic, where in Birmingham I was from (despite not actually being from Birmingham!), and whether I had watched the BBC's popular police dramas, *Ashes to Ashes* and *Life on Mars*. Once it was established that I had viewed these programmes, it often meant that we would spend some time discussing our thoughts and feelings towards the protagonist, Gene Hunt. Whilst I initially observed that this was a good ice breaker and an effective way to build up a rapport with the participant, I soon realised it served a secondary purpose as a

reference point. Throughout various interviews, if participants were unsure how to describe a scenario, they would refer to these programmes. 'Gene Hunt' was often used as a metaphor for a particularly problematic male officer, 'Ray Carling' was used to describe a sexist officer, and 'Sam Tyler' was used to describe an officer who held particularly progressive views for the era. Referring to these fictional characters supported them with their life histories and storytelling when they did not have the words to articulate a particular incident.

Building upon Giele and Elder's (1998) concept of linked lives, the first stage of the interview required participants to reflect on why they wanted to join the police, their family and friends' reactions, and how these reactions made them feel. This gave them an opportunity to reflect on what the attraction was towards policing for women, and how their family and friends' responses may have impacted their decisions. Data produced in this section corresponded to research questions one and four.

The second and third stage of the interview reflected 'human agency' and 'timing and place' (Giele and Elder, 1998). Participants were invited to reflect upon their careers in the early stages, as well as the end stages, and compare the two together. Questions in this section were tailored towards answering research question one and three, and provided women with an opportunity to explore the extent to which policework and day-to-duty duties had changed over the duration of their careers. Narrators also used this as an opportunity to reflect on how the prevalence of misogyny and sexism also changed. Some women recalled instances where their abusers had climbed the ranks in the latter years, and discussed in-depth how this made them feel. Others told stories about how their early years had empowered them to navigate the male-dominated environment by climbing the ranks and delivering change in their later years, and discussed how these changes were brought about.

Shaped by Giele and Elder's (1998) life course paradigm, the fourth and fifth phase of my interview schedule was concerned with 'agency' and 'timing and place', and the effects policing had on their social and personal lives. Questions in this section were tailored towards research questions one, two and four, and encouraged participants to consider the ways in which policing had shaped their overall trajectories. Data from this

section was not used in this thesis, but was presented at the British Sociological Association conference in April 2023.

The sixth phase was, in my opinion, the most important stage. This gave participants an opportunity to reflect on their experiences and discuss their most and least favourite memories from the force, and why their chosen memory was significant to them. Participants used this as an opportunity to reflect on the friendships they had made, whilst others said that their careers in the police were integral to shaping their next career steps in the National Health Service, domestic abuse provisions, and so on.

To conclude each interview, I de-briefed participants and provided them with a copy of the debrief sheet (Appendix J). Participants were once again reminded of their right to withdraw, as well as their right to access a copy of the final transcript. Over the course of my data collection, I received multiple 'thank you' emails from participants thanking me for providing them with an opportunity to reflect and discuss a part of their lives that they would otherwise not been able to. From this, I was able to confidently assume that, despite potentially difficult and uncomfortable themes, my research had provided some degree of catharsis for participants (Oakley, 1981; Connell, 2005).

Reflections on 'Doing' Life History Interviews

When I submitted my ethics application in June 2021, I included an outline of where I planned to conduct my research. Feminist scholars suggest that, when researching 'difficult' topics such as experiences of sexual harassment, assault and abuse, the researcher needs to ensure that any potential research site is considered a 'safe' space by the interviewee (Ellwood and Martin, 2000; Fahie, 2014; Marwick, and Blackwell, 2016). Fahie (2014) warned that there is also the possibility that the researchers' perceived social class, as well as their education level, may create a power imbalance. If this was to occur, the quality of the research would be significantly impacted because the interviewee would not feel comfortable sharing their experiences. Thus, Krueger (1994) advises that, to minimise the likelihood of a power imbalance and to ensure participants feel safe and comfortable, interviews should be held in neutral, mutually agreed locations.

Taking this into account, I planned to hold interviews at interviewees' homes. Qualitative researchers note that, when 'difficult' interviews are carried out at the participant's home, participants feel more comfortable showing their vulnerable side (Elmir *et al.*, 2011; Johnson and Clarke, 2003; Temple-Malt, 2014). Carrying out interviews at participants' home can also benefit the researcher, in that it creates a much more personal and less intimidating environment, and allows for a rapport to be built with the participant (Dickson-Swift *et al.*, 2006; Downey *et al.*, 2007). In turn, this could result in the participant feeling more able to share potentially difficult experiences that they may have experienced whilst on active duty as a police officer in the seventies and eighties.

However, owing to the COVID-19 pandemic, face-to-face interviews were not possible. Many of the participants in this study were categorised as 'vulnerable' during the pandemic and, although lockdown had ended by this point, there were valid concerns about participants' health. Instead, the bulk of my interviews were conducted using Microsoft Teams and Zoom. For the most part, this worked well. Participants were able to connect and have candid conversations, all whilst joining from their 'safe space' at home. However, this does not negate the impersonal feel of online interviewing. In contrast, of the four interviews were carried out in-person, they were much more fruitful and provided the researcher with an opportunity to build a strong rapport with the participant prior to the interview take place. I also felt that the quality of in-person interviews was much richer. Nonetheless, online interviews did allow me to expand my study to incorporate participants from across the country.

4.6 Photo Elicitation

Why Photo Elicitation?

Although this study took place in the current day, it required participants to reflect upon their past careers, some of which ended over fifty years ago. To assist with storytelling, then, it was important to choose a method that could assist with 'unlocking' memories from the past. As discussed in section 4 of this chapter, archival research was used as a tool to select photographs and newspaper clippings that captured policewomen's role

in the police force. These were also used to shape interview prompts (Benzecry, Deener & Lara-Millan, 2020). However, as this was a historical project, I recognised that the archival sources could have another, more effective purpose in narrative research through photo elicitation.

The origins of photo elicitation in social research can be traced back to the 1950s. When researching familial experiences amongst ethnic minorities, Collier (1957) found that in-depth interviews and questionnaires were generally limited in terms of what they could produce, especially when recalling memories from decades ago. When the study was repeated, only this time with photographs, Collier (1967) observed that interviews were longer, more detailed, and memories were more easily recalled. The effectiveness of photo elicitation has been praised across sociology, particularly amongst narrative researchers (Reissman, 1993; Holloway and Wheeler, 1996; Marsh *et al*., 2016). Described as '[the] simple idea of inserting a photograph into a research interview' (Harper, 2002: 24), photographs, newspaper clippings and memorabilia have been noted by Reissman (1993; 2008) and Tinkler (2013) to be an effective way to provoke forgotten or repressed memories from the human psyche. Archival sources can be used to fill gaps in participants' memories (Deegan, 2011). This approach is particularly advantageous when conducting narrative research, as participants are able to use photographs as a way to tell their stories and explain to the researcher why a particular photograph brings back memories. For interpretivist researchers, this level of engagement is paramount to provides the researcher with an opportunity to understand why photographs evoke the memories that they do, and to establish meaningful understandings of the participants' experiences (Webster and Mertova, 2007; Andrews, Squire and Tomboukou, 2008).

In this study, it was particularly important to be able to understand policing photographs. As explained in section 4 of this chapter, archive collections are selected by the bourgeoise to preserve a favourable impression of a historical epoch (Moore *et al*., 2020). Whilst this is mostly commonly seen in archive collections pertaining to the British empire, whereby the evils of colonialism are omitted from history, it also happens in women's history collections (Stanley, 2020; Moore *et al*., 2020; Tomboukou, 2020). To make a valid and worthy contribution to the historiography of policewomen,

then, it was integral that my research positioned itself as an enquiry into all aspects of participants' past careers. As Rose (2016) notes, photo elicitation encourages participants to speak about the mundane as much as the profane, thus providing the researcher with a much more accurate insight into a participants' experiences.

'Doing' Photo Elicitation

During the interviews, participants were shown sets of photographs relevant to the topic being discussed. In total, there were thirty photographs, all of which depicted prominent themes within policing literature. These included: recruitment posters, uniform and equipment, day-to-day duties, specialist duties, training opportunities, social events, sporting events, and cartoons taken from the *Police Review*.

Throughout the interview, photographs were used to guide conversation and 'unlock' hidden memories (Reissman, 2008; Tinkler, 2013; Rose, 2016). When discussing uniform, for example, participants were given a selection of photographs containing uniforms throughout the seventies and eighties used by Staffordshire and Manchester constabularies. This generated interesting discussions and, as Rose (2016) rightly noted, encouraged participants to talk about aspects of their careers that, previously, they had considered irrelevant to the narrative they thought they were going to tell. After seeing a photograph of police uniform from the nineteen-seventies, a participant responded with the following:

> You know, I'd completely forgot about that [...] yes, we had to wear nylons or stockings with a suspender belt and thinking about it, actually we got an allowance every month because they always got damaged [...] thinking about it, it must've bothered me because I never wore nylons, even after I left the police, I always went out without them and my ex-husband always complained about it because he quite liked a pair of nylons, but because I joined before trousers were a thing, I just really bloody hated them [...]

Narratives were not always linear, so it was useful to be able to flick back and forth throughout the interview to these photographs to assist with storytelling.

Photo elicitation also made approaching sensitive topics such as sexual harassment and misogyny feel more natural for both the researcher and participant (Padgett *et al.*,

2013; Marsh *et al*., 2016). Cartoons taken from the popular *Police Review* Magazine[3], usually depicting a sexualised illustration of a policewoman called 'Doris', were shown to participants towards the end of each interview. As Becker (1979: 101) outlined, photo elicitation works best when researchers do not ask participants general questions about what is happening in the photo; instead, they should ask the participant 'what question it might be answering'. This, in turn, allows participants to apply their own unique interpretation of the events being depicted in the photograph, and incorporate this into their own narrative (Becker, 1979; Tinkler, 2013).

Reflections on 'Doing' Photo Elicitation

As many sociologists and criminologists have reported over the last twenty-four months, COVID-19 has completely transformed the way researchers approach research (Matthewman, 2020; Sawert and Keil, 2021; Briggs *et a*l., 2021). In this project, my data collection took place mostly online. As such, traditional recommendations of how to carry out photo elicitation – print off photographs onto an A5 card and pass them to the participant at relevant points in the interview – were somewhat redundant because there was no in-person interaction with the interviewee.

To mitigate this, I had to completely redesign my approach to photo elicitation. At first, I considered emailing the photographs to the participants. However, the file would have been too big, and mobile devices would not have supported this approach. My second idea was to create a PowerPoint slide (Appendix G) that contained the photographs. Although this was an unorthodox approach to photo elicitation, it still met the core principle of Harper's (2002) definition of photo elicitation, whereby photographs were shown during an interview. However, the issue then arose of how participants were going to access the slideshow. Judging by the age of the participants, and the inaccessibility of Microsoft Office packages, I felt that it was unreasonable of me to request that participants downloaded the PowerPoint software and look at the photographs on their computer screens as-and-when I directed them to. Instead, I

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[3] The 'Police Review' magazine was a weekly publication circulated across stations in the United Kingdom. Although the magazine covered 'serious' issues such as pay disputes and legislative changes, it was best known for its salacious gossip and tongue-in-cheek illustrations (Fraser, 2019).

decided that the most suitable way for me to show participants the photographs was for me to share my screen during the videocall. I was fortunate enough to have a strong and stable internet connection that would allow me to do this with ease, as well as access to a variety of software and devices.

Upon reflection, I do feel that this innovative approach to photo elicitation supported the overall quality of my narrative inquiry. Compared with my experiences of doing photo elicitation in-person, the quality of photo elicitation in an online setting did not deplete the potential impact of the method. As the participant was in the comfort of their own home during the interview, they were able to reach for their own photographs depicting similar content. Throughout the course of my data collection, I have been shown photographs, diary entries, personal letters of recommendation written by senior ranking male officers, epaulettes, and warrant cards, all of which were responses to showing them photographs on a PowerPoint slide.

4.7 Ethical Considerations

As a sociologist and PhD researcher, I have a wider responsibility to ensure that my research is ethically sound and justified. To ensure this was the case, I submitted a full ethical application to Staffordshire University's Board of Ethics in June 2021. Approval was awarded in July 2021 (Appendix F). Though the study went smoothly, and very few ethical considerations arose, I will now explain how I adhered to the British Sociological Association (2017) guidelines and mitigated potential issues.

Informed Consent

The British Sociological Association (2017: 5) requests that, prior to any research being carried out, researchers must obtain informed consent from their participants. Prior to signing consent forms, my participants were provided with a copy of the study synopsis (Appendix B) and information sheet (Appendix D). Once they had read through the information pack, they were then asked if they had any questions. Some participants (N=3) requested a copy of the interview schedule prior to making their decision, whilst others requested a short phone call. Once participants were satisfied, they were able to

return a signed copy of the consent form. Signed consent forms were kept in a locked cabinet or saved onto a password protected computer.

However, whilst participants are able to consent to taking part in an interview, there is no way of them consenting to what they might share during the interview (Lawton, 2001; May, 2012; Bryman, 2021). As Lawton (2001) found, interviewees can often say things 'in the moment' and reveal details that they would have preferred to keep to themselves, or have second thoughts about sharing certain experiences. To mitigate this, participants were provided with an opportunity to review their transcripts after the interview and omit any details or anecdotes they did not want to be used for research purposes. In total, two participants requested to review a copy of their final transcript, whilst three participants requested that I omit certain anecdotes as they felt it was 'too risky' to include them in this research project.

Anonymity and Confidentiality

Providing a participant with anonymity is of the upmost importance in social research (May, 2012; Bryman, 2021; British Sociological Association, 2017; Staffordshire University, 2019: 3). Details that could potentially lead to a participant's identification, such as names, epaulette numbers, and nicknames, were omitted from the final transcripts (Scott, 2005; Saunders *et al*., 2015).

Despite these provisions, the extent to which confidentiality can be provided has its limits. As Van den Hoonaard (2003: 141) notes, it is sometimes 'unachievable' to protect a person's identity entirely. Whilst personal details have been omitted, this study could potentially put a participant's 'internal confidentiality' at risk (Tolich, 2004; Saunders *et al*., 2015). Earlier on in this chapter, I included a breakdown of my participants' demographics, including force, rank, and years of service. Readers who worked in the same force, for example, may recognise narratives from women of a certain rank. However, had these details been removed, it would have had a detrimental impact on my data analysis and findings chapters because rank and geographical location are salient to a narrator's life history (Nespor, 2000: 549). Completely protecting their identity from identification is therefore 'impossible', and removal of such details may

have resulted in draining the study of its meaning (Tolich, 2004; Parry and Mauthner, 2004; Walford, 2005). To mitigate this, I have retracted as many personal details as possible – which includes exact dates of service – and provided participants with an opportunity to review their transcripts to ensure that they are happy with their narratives before I began my analyses and write-up. After transcription, pseudonyms were assigned to each participant, and I was unaware of which transcript belonged to each individual.

One participant informed me that, when she joined the police, she was the first black policewoman in a particular force and featured heavily in newspapers from the era because of this. One quick Google search of the first black police officer in 'X' force would, indeed, bring up many details, right up to the present day. When we discussed the issue of anonymity, she expressed that her stories were easily recognisable to her colleagues, many of whom had bullied her relentlessly. In this instance, I chose to omit her force and, instead, offer a more generalised overview of her geographical location instead.

Right to Withdraw

In social research, the right to withdraw is synonymous with participant autonomy (Markman and Markman, 2007; Gertz, 2008). Set as the 'basic standard' of research following the Nuremburg Trials in 1948, it is important that participants understand that their involvement in the study is a choice that only they can make (Melham *et al*., 2014; Markman and Markman, 2007 Gertz, 2008). When signing up to the study, interviewees were reminded that their participation in the study was voluntary, and that they could withdraw at any given point during the interview. Following the interview, participants were debriefed again about their right to withdraw and were given 28 days from the day of the interview to change their mind. Debrief sheets (Appendix J) contained step-by-step details on how to do withdraw consent, and participants were reassured that this decision would not be challenged by the researcher. As of June 2022, no participants have withdrawn from this study.

Sensitive Issues

As part of this study, I knew I would be researching potentially upsetting themes of sexual harassment and assault. To ensure that my participants understood this, I outlined this in the study poster (Appendix A), study synopsis (Appendix B) and information sheets (Appendix D). Although I informed participants of the interview content, and told them that they could skip specific themes if they were not comfortable, I was acutely aware that not all participants would want to tell me this (May, 2012; Bryman, 2021) As such, I looked out for physical signs that my participants were uncomfortable (Williamson and Burns, 2014). When participants displayed signs of distress, I offered to pause the interview and continue only when they were ready to do so. No participants chose to pause or terminate the interview. On one occasion, a participant cried but insisted we continue with the interview as she felt it was important to her life history and demonstrated to me the extent to which her experiences had shaped her, even thirty years on. Williams and Burns (2014) argue that, although this can be distressing for the researcher to witness, it is important that emotions are observed within interpretivist research as it provides the researcher with a deeper understanding of the participant's experiences and the impact this had on their life course. At the end of each interview, I provided participants with a debrief sheet (Appendix J) that contained details of support services that were reachable 24/7.

Although I ensured my participants were protected from harm and supported throughout the interview as best I could, I did not necessarily do the same for myself at the beginning of my data collection. On a few occasions, I cried with my participants as they shared their experiences. Understandably, some interviews did have a noticeable impact on my responses and made me feel a whole range of emotions on my participants' behalf. This, in part, was because I had experienced similar traumas, and was 'triggered' because I felt I was inadvertently re-living it when listening to their narratives. Towards the end of my data collection, I made sure that I set boundaries and did not explore topics that I felt would be too uncomfortable to hear (Draucker *et al*., 2009; May, 2012; Williamson and Burns, 2014). I also reduced the frequency of my interviews to ensure that I was no longer overwhelming myself daily with upsetting themes (Draucker *et al*., 2009; Williamson and Burns, 2014). Over the Easter break, for example, I was doing multiple interviews a day, daily. This, I decided, was bad for my

mental health, and could soon start affecting the integrity of my research, so I took a brief step back. Whilst this did prolong my data collection period, it gave me the breathing space needed to conduct professional research with realistic boundaries.

4.8 Data Analysis

Analytical Strategy

After I had manually transcribed thirty-five life history interviews, the next stage was to analyse my data. Choosing an analytical strategy suitable for the breadth of information that I had gathered during data collection was important. This, in turn, meant departing from my usual approach. As an undergraduate and Master's student, I had always opted for thematic analysis. Defined by Braun and Clarke (2006: 79) as a 'method for identifying, analysing and reporting patterns (themes) within data', thematic analysis is often a desirable method due to its straightforward approach. It allows the researcher to follow six simple phases to produce a detailed range of potential themes within the researcher's datasets (Braun and Clarke, 2006; Braun and Clarke, 2021). However, whilst this approach is deemed useful for identifying patterns, thematic analysis only provides an insight into 'what' happened (Bryman, 2021: 532). This, I felt, would be reductive given the scope of my data (Finlay, 2021. Indeed, as discussed earlier on in this chapter, the complexities of social remembering and the prominence of the blue code of silence in participants narratives meant that analysis was not necessarily centred around what had happened but, rather how participants 'made sense' of these events (Bryman, 2021: 542).

Taking this into consideration, I opted to use narrative analysis as my primary analytical strategy. Bryman (2021: 543) defines the technique as follows:

> [Narrative analysis] is an approach to analysing qualitative data that emphasises the stories that people tell to explain events.

Narrative analysis, as noted by Riessman (2008: 11), is a useful tool for interpreting texts – including 'oral, written and visual sources' – in the 'storied' form. Whilst thematic analysis as a standalone approach takes a broader approach to identifying themes across wider data sets, this analytical strategy favours a micro-approach in which

individual cases are analysed closely (Riessman, 2008). In the case of life history interviews, it is important to note that individual recollections of the past are 'entwined' with interpersonal meanings (Smart, 2011: 543). The researcher's role, however, is not to 'find' these narratives and arrange them thematically (Riessman, 2008: 21). Rather, it is their job to facilitate their creation (Riessman, 2008: 21). Narrative analysis therefore supports the researcher in piecing together fragments of narrators' recollection to create an insight into their social world. Crucially, the analytical strategy provides space to explore 'what' and 'how' (Riessman, 2008: 11). Whilst the former is significant to immerse oneself into participants' social world and explore events through their personal lens, the latter gives researchers the freedom to consider why a narrative has been constructed in a particular way (Coffey and Atkinson, 1996).

In the context of this study, it was important to consider the structural decisions that underpin the construction of narratives. The blue code of silence, for instance, produces an intense culture of loyalty amongst police officers (Westmarland, 2005; Westmarland and Conway, 2020). In turn, this instils a culture of silence that prevents 'insiders' from speaking openly and honestly about their experiences in the police force (Loftus, 2012). It was therefore common for participants in this study to construct their arguments in a way that avoided explicitly criticising the police. Throughout Chapters Four to Eight, for example, participants repeatedly showed signs of 'emotion work' and consciously downplayed their emotions pertaining to inequalities and disparities in the workplace (Hochschild, 1979). Using narrative analysis, I was able to dedicate more attention to unpacking why participants had chosen to construct their biographies in this way.

Doing Data Analysis

I initially began by analysing five transcripts using thematic narrative analysis. This, Riessman (2008: 53) notes, is an effective way for researchers to familiarise themselves with key patterns across datasets. As my interviews had been designed in a way to complement Giele and Elder's (1998) life course paradigm, this formed the initial basis of my codes and formed the basis of my headings in an Excel sheet (see Figure X). These early codes were titled: 'life before policing', 'early career', 'mid-career', 'end of career',

'life after the police'. After highlighting transcripts in accordance with these codes and inputting them into my Excel sheet, I was then able to narrow it down further and name these themes. Under the broader theme of 'life before policing', for example, was: 'background of participant', 'motivation for joining', 'family and friends' responses', and 'other (experiences)'. Following the advice of my supervisor, I kept a research diary to record any decisions or dilemmas that I encountered during this stage (Riessman, 2008).

Once the initial themes had been identified, I then employed structural narrative analysis (Riessman, 2008: 77). This next stage was primarily concerned with exploring why participants' narratives had been constructed in this way (Riessman, 2008; Bryman, 2021). This permitted me to examine narratives much more closely than thematic narrative analysis had previously allowed, and enabled me to draw connections with the broader theoretical framework that underpinned this project (Riessman, 2008; Smart, 2011). Chapter Five, which corresponds to the first research question, draws upon Giele and Elder's (1998: 11) concept of 'linked lives'. Here, I explore the significance of the family and other ideological state apparatus in shaping participants' personal aspirations in life. To enhance the depth of this analysis, Crossley's (2006: 89) concepts of 'levers of control' and 'dialogical tools' are explored in relation to narrators' career choices after leaving school and what led them to join the police service at age eighteen and beyond. Chapter Six, which corresponds with the second research question, draws upon Giele and Elder's (1998: 11) concept of 'agency'. I examine narrators' recollections of their first few months in the job and how they acclimatised themselves to a job that harboured outdated and archaic attitudes (Loftus, 2012; Cunningham and Ramshaw, 2020). Comparisons are drawn with 'survival' techniques found in male-dominated offices in corporate America (Kanter, 1977) and amongst victims of domestic violence (Brown, 1999). Chapter Seven, which corresponds with the third research question, draws upon Giele and Elder's (1998: 11) concept of 'time and place'. In this chapter, I explore the 'forgotten' side of the miners' strike and how this transformed policewomen's role on a permanent basis. And finally, Chapter Eight – which corresponds with the final research question presented in Chapter One and Four respectively – focuses on Giele and Elder's (1998: 11) concept of

'timing of lives'. Particular attention is given to post-policing careers and how experiences in the early life course had shaped women's perception of self and purpose in later life.

Once I was confident with this two-stage narrative analysis, I then repeated the process on the remaining datasets. I momentarily experimented with larger data sets but felt that, whilst it worked well for thematic narrative analysis, it was too overwhelming when carrying out structural narrative analysis. To mitigate this, I completed the bulk of my data analysis on data sets comprising of five transcripts. So, in essence, there was five iterations of data analysis. My Excel sheet enabled me to manage my thematic analysis, whilst my research diary supported me with structural analysis.

The final stage of my data analysis was centred around making connections with scholarship presented in Chapter Two. The results of the aforementioned analytical strategy will now be presented across Chapters Five, Six, Seven and Eight respectively.

Chapter Five –

'Looking for a Man's Job?': Aspirations, Realities and the Male-Dominated Sphere of Policing.

5.1 Introduction

Although women had officially been allowed to work as police officers in England and Wales since 1915, policing continued to be perceived as a 'man's job' throughout the mid-to-late twentieth century (Brown and Heidensohn, 2000; Jackson, 2006; Silvestri, 2017). It was therefore unusual for women to aspire to be police officers because women's work was predominantly positioned within the private and domestic sphere (Rosaldo, 1974; Landes, 1984; Cunningham, 2021). The nineteen-seventies, however, directly challenged the wider gender order that had confined women to separate spheres (Connell, 1987; 1995). Legislative changes such as the Equal Pay Act 1970 and Sex Discrimination Act 1975, alongside second-wave feminism and the sexual revolution, arguably liberated women from restrictive gender norms and empowered them to pursue employment in male dominated industries (Kanter, 1977; Acker, 1990). Despite these changes, though, sociologists now argue that the 'second wave' did not liberate *all* women (Rosenfelt and Stacey, 1987; Thornham, 2001). For many working-class women, they were still defined and restricted by their gender (Skeggs, 1997). Arriving at the decision to enter a 'man's job' therefore had the potential to be controversial.

Drawing upon the life course principle of 'linked lives' (Giele and Elder, 1998), this chapter explores how participants married together 'unusual' career aspirations with the reality of being a woman in nineteen-seventies Britain. First, the researcher explores what sorts of careers participants were encouraged to pursue. As part of the original contribution to knowledge, the researcher examines how parents' expectations, alongside the process of canalisation, shaped early career prospects and the broader topic of social identities. The second original contribution to knowledge is presented

through family and friends' reactions to participants announcing their intentions to join the police force. As explored in Chapter Three, interpersonal relationships acted as 'levers of control' and had significant influence on whether a person felt able to pursue atypical career opportunities (Crossley, 2006: 86). And finally, attention is given to how participants navigated recruitment, the latter of which expands on the work of Jackson (2006).

5.2 Recap of Literature

First explored in Chapter Two of this thesis, the concept of 'linked lives' is a core principle of the life course paradigm (Giele and Elder, 1998: 11). According to theorists such as Elder (1994; 2003) and Giele (2003; 2008), the term 'linked lives' specifically refers to the ways in which people's life trajectories are shaped and influenced by their family members. Through socialisation in the home, individuals' personal motivations are moulded by their parents', grandparents', and caregivers' expectations (Hunt, 2005; Green, 2010). Individual trajectories can also be influenced by wider social structures such as generational cohorts and social class (Mannheim, 1952; Skeggs, 1997).

Life course theorists are not the first sociologists to identify the significance of linked lives. Throughout the nineteen-sixties and seventies, researchers at the Centre for Contemporary Cultural Studies at the University of Birmingham explored the formation of working-class identity. Hall and Jefferson (1976) argued that subcultures in post-war Britain were, by and large, the result of social class. Much like Giele and Elder (1998), Schwartz (1978) noted that Hall and Jefferson (1976) were amongst the first cultural sociologists to recognise the role of the family and wider community in reproducing these values. Willis's (1977) seminal study, *Learning to Labour*, observed a cohort of working-class boys in the 'Hammertown' region of the West Midlands and examined how working-class boys entered working-class jobs. He noted that the boys valued their forebearers' careers and adopted their attitudes towards employment (Willis, 1977). Although some industries in Hammertown permanently closed before the boys left school, Willis noted that their trajectories were still similar in that the pursuit of instant gratification was lifelong (Willis, 1977).

For young girls, linked lives had heightened significance on the construction of identity because socialisation occurred primarily in the home. Chodorow (1978) argued that women's position in the domestic sphere was solidified through 'double identification' between mothers and daughters. Sharpe (1994: 75) concurred, noting that young girls replicated the behaviour of their mothers, whilst mothers invested into their 'daughter's past and present'. In return, both women receive emotional gratification (Chodorow, 1978; Sharpe, 1994). Outside of the domestic sphere, though, very few academics had attempted to explore how teenage girls' identities were shaped. Owing to this, McRobbie and Garber (1976; 1991), also from the Birmingham School for Cultural Studies, were critical of literature pertaining to the construction of young women's identities:

> The important question may not be the absence or presence of girls in the male sub-cultures, but the complementary ways in which girls interact among themselves and with each other to form a distinctive culture of their own (1976: 219).

Whilst McRobbie and Garber (1976; 1991) agreed with Chodorow (1978) and Sharpe (1976; 1994) that girls spent more time in the domestic sphere than their male counterparts, they argued that this did not void them of an identity of their own (James, 2001; Kearney, 2007). Instead, they argued that secondary socialisation of young girls happened through 'bedroom culture' (McRobbie and Garber, 1976; 1991). Unlike the boys in Willis's (1977) study, James (2001: 72) argued that teenage girls experienced a series of self-discoveries in a 'passive space' with 'minimal [street] activity' such as their bedrooms. Here, they read a wide array of literature, completed homework tasks, pursued hobbies, and consume fictitious television programmes (Sharpe, 1976; McRobbie and Garber, 1976; McRobbie and Garber, 1991; Tinkler, 1995; Skeggs, 1997; Kearney, 2007). A central aspect of female-oriented media was, of course, teaching young girls how to behave respectably and morally righteous manner (Skeggs, 1997). And as Sharpe (1976) observed, young women belonging to this cohort still favoured being a homemaker over careers. However, on occasion, a small selection of material provided women with a small glimpse into a world outside of the domestic sphere (Tinkler, 1995; Skeggs, 1997).

Despite the gendered nature of socialisation, the nineteen-seventies marked the start of an era in which women began to move away from gendered spheres and, instead, enter male-dominated spaces such as policing (Kanter, 1977; Acker, 1990; Charles and James, 2005; Giele, 2008; Cunningham and Ramshaw, 2020; Cunningham, 2021). However, very little is known about how women practically made this jump from 'passive' bedroom culture to antithetical 'active' careers. This remainder of this chapter, then, draws upon participants' recollections of their teenage years and the build up to their entry into the police force. Particular attention is given to the significance of linked lives and their parents' and friends' responses to this unusual career choice, and the impact this had on their perception of self.

5.3 Early Socialisation in the Home, at School, and Career Expectations

At the start of each interview, participants were encouraged to consider how – and more importantly, why – they made the decision to join the police service. Beginning an interview in this way has the potential to be 'risky'. Robert Reiner, a leading academic in the field of policing, argued that inviting police officers to reflect upon why they joined the police can be problematic because recollections of the past are highly subjective (Reiner, 1978; Misztal, 2003). As Misztal (2003) later noted, social remembering often distorts historical recollections by encompassing group identity and contemporary values. This, Reiner (1978: 158) concluded, often leads to 'redefinitions' of true motivations. Whilst the researcher acknowledges this critique, the need to understand why women in the nineteen-seventies and eighties pursued a male-dominated career is essential given the limited body of research on this topic. To enrich this data further, narrators were also prompted to contemplate their lives before joining the police. As a result, stimulating conversations emerged about narrators' upbringings and school experiences, and how this led to a series of expectations they needed to fulfil once they left school.

Participants' early reflections revealed a common theme when choosing an occupation: the prominence of social class. As discussed in Chapter Four, participants largely self-identified as being from working-class backgrounds. Although second-wave feminism

had alleviated *some* of the societal pressures experienced by women in their formative years, this was largely exclusive to the middle-classes (Giele and Elder, 1998; Giele, 2006). Unlike their middle-class counterparts, working-class women had not been liberated to 'explore' their social identities by taking gap years and travelling across Europe (Hart, 1989; Skeggs, 1997). Instead, working-class school leavers' career aspirations were moulded by traditional cultural expectations instilled in them by their immediate families. For Janet, Lucy, Ruby and Violet, there was an increasing level of pressure to circumvent further study, and instead, secure employment at the earliest opportunity in a localised industry:

> **Janet (West Midlands Police, 1980s-1990s)**: It was either going to be the biscuit factory or shop work.

> **Lucy (City of London Police, 1970s-2000s):** When I left school all my mates were either going into the banks – [...] working in the banks was a big thing, and that was *not* me – but the banks was the main draw. My dad was in the fire brigade and I although err, well, they didn't have female firefighters, so it was either working in the control room, you know, or joining the fire brigade as an administrator, so I didn't wanna do that.

> **Ruby (Staffordshire Police, 1980s-1990s)**: I'd spent enough time in school doing me [my] O Levels, and my parents had always worked, so I knew I needed to find a job quickly.

> **Violet (Gwent Police, 1970s):** My dad, bless his heart, always assumed I'd be a secretary, y'know what I mean? It was one of those.

The jobs ascribed to participants, such as 'factories', 'shop work' 'administrators' and 'secretaries', were all in accordance with working in the domestic and private spheres. For Oakley (1972), canalisation in the early life course was instrumental in constructing appropriate work identities for women, and aligning them with the labour market throughout the later life course. As the service industry expanded throughout the decade, as did the need for an equipped female workforce (Giele, 2008). Schools therefore trained women to fulfil these roles through subject choice. Florence, who attended a secondary modern, felt that her school 'pushed girl-y careers' through the

likes of 'home economics'[4], 'needle work'[5], and 'typing'[6]. Nancy, who attended a Grammar school, shared similar sentiments, and felt that her future was 'already' mapped out in typically feminine routes such as nursing, teaching, or social work. Subject choice at school subsequently shaped women's extra-curricular activities such as babysitting, further reinforcing the notion of 'bedroom culture' (McRobbie and Garber, 1976; 1991).

Participants were aware of the occupations made readily available to them, as well as jobs that were prohibited on the grounds of their sex. When Janet reminisced about her schooldays at a state-run comprehensive in the West Midlands, she recalled that 'uniformed services' were, in no uncertain terms, 'not for working class girls' like herself and her peers. At a careers day hosted at her secondary school, she recollected seeing stands for various universities and public services, but remarked that she knew events like this were not meant for the likes of her:

> No one I knew was a [gestures air quotes] 'someone'. No one I knew had joined the police or any of the uniformed services at school. Nobody had gone to university. Well, that wasn't for the likes of me either when I had my career day. I had two options: it was either going to the biscuit factory or shop work.

Similar findings were echoed amongst male recruits in a study by Reiner (1978: 158). He noted that, because the working-classes did not always have complete freedom of the labour market, working-class job seekers were 'constrained' by a lack of formal academic qualifications and work experience outside of menial jobs (Reiner, 1978: 158). This, in turn, made it more difficult to secure employment outside of their social class. For women, though, the chances

Figure 4 'Hefty Girls Wanted for Police Force!' (c. 1943)

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[4] Owen-Jackson and Rutland (2016) note that Home Economics – or 'domestic science' – was initially only available to female pupils. As part of the Sex Discrimination Act 1975, the subject was made available to both sexes, but recollections of this vary between regions.

[5] Needlework, sewing, and embroidery were taught in schools until 1995 (Buchanan, 2013).

[6] Typing – or 'typewriting' – lessons were taught to schoolgirls until the introduction of the National Curriculum in 1988 (British Educational Research Association, 2018).

of finding employment outside of their social class was worsened by the wider gender order and the 'classing gaze' (Finch, 1993; Skeggs, 1997). As explored in Chapter Three, women's entry into the police force had typically been reserved for the middle-classes because they were perceived as 'respectable' (Brown and Heidensohn, 2000; Jackson, 2006; Cunningham, 2021). Police recruitment posters from the 1940s called for 'respectable' women who were 'unmarried', 'hefty' and 'good physique' to join the force (see Figure 4). Although attitudes had started to change by the nineteen-seventies, there was still an assumption that working-class women like Janet needed to 'prove' themselves (Jackson, 2006).

Moreover, whilst the Equal Pay Act 1970 and Sex Discrimination Act 1975 had been introduced a decade prior to Janet's entry into the force, the effects of legislative changes were slow and did not revolutionise societal attitudes overnight. Rather, the uptake of such legislation was slow, and took time to permeate into everyday life. Policing was, unsurprisingly, no exception. As seen in police recruitment posters from the era, policing was still marketed as being the antithesis of what women had been socialised to expect from a career. Language used in Figure 5 promoted a career of 'action' and 'responsibility', whilst Figure 6 explicitly labelled policing as a 'man's job'. From these posters, it was evident that women were not only discouraged from joining

Figure 6 'Join Manchester City Police For a Career of Action and Responsibility' (Greater Manchester Police Archives, c.1950s)

Figure 5 'Looking for a Man's Job?' (Greater Manchester Police Archives, c.1960s)

the police force by their families and friends, but were outright excluded by the very institution they would eventually join.

Post-School Occupations

Once the participants in this study left school at 16, they were tasked with forging an identity for themselves outside of a structured pathway. The years that followed, then, were undoubtedly swamped with uncertainty, excitement, and a great deal of relying on one's own volition to navigate their newfound freedom (Erikson, 1968; Levinson, 1978; Arnett, 2000). As discussed earlier on in this chapter, there was an expectation for women to continue bedroom culture into adulthood by joining passive occupations (McRobbie and Garber, 1976; Sharpe, 1994; Tinkler, 1995). It was therefore common for working-class girls to secure employment in retail or clerical roles (Tinkler, 1995: 34). Unsurprisingly, the findings in this study echo that of Tinkler (1996). Alex, Nancy, Janet and Suzie all acquired jobs of this nature:

> **Alex (Gloucestershire Constabulary, 1970s-1980s):** I worked for Weights and Measures – which would be Trading Standards now – when I left school. I was working in admin.

> **Nancy (Metropolitan Police, 1980s-2000s):** By the time I turned 18, I'd done a lot of market work, shop work, and I'd worked with abnormal kids 'cos my mum was the head of a special school, and this was the days where people lived in institutions. I did voluntary work with people with mental health problems, and I worked in a pub. Oh, and I travelled largely on my own, so I wasn't too provincial – but especially working in a pub, I wasn't blind to people and human nature.

> **Janet (West Midlands Police, 1980s-1990s):** After I left school, I spent 18 months working as a CID (Criminal Investigation Department) administrator in one of the first civilian roles in a brand new civilisation process in 1985. It was an interesting experience going from a market town to the big bad city of Birmingham to work with predominantly men.

> **Suzie (Greater Manchester Police, 1970s-1980s):** I left school and got a job straight away, which you did in those days, at a bank as a clerk [...] there was a lot of women employed at the bank, such as admins and typists that sort of thing.

Although the above narrators willingly conformed to the wider gender order by acquiring traditionally feminine roles, the industries in which these jobs were situated were,

unusually for the time, male dominated. Janet noted that her time in CID was 'interesting' as it opened her eyes to masculine humour and pursuits. Nancy also noted that her experience working in pubs, markets and shops meant that she 'wasn't blind to people and human nature'. Women's occupations during this time therefore provide an interesting insight into the cultural shifts that were occurring at the time. Although women were still operating within the remits of gender norms and expectations, they were gradually moving their way into atypical occupations outside of the private and domestic spheres.

Working within male-dominated environments therefore meant that, unlike earlier cohorts of women, participants saw how their male colleagues' roles differed to theirs. This subsequently led to a feeling of dissatisfaction. Violet, who had fulfilled her dad's wish of becoming a secretary, described her role as 'boring', 'repetitive' and 'monotonous'. Whilst her colleagues got to do 'fun' stuff, Violet felt 'chained' to her desk as a typist. Alex and Tilly shared a similar sentiment, noting that their mental state suffered as a result:

> **Alex (Gloucestershire Police, 1970s-1980s):** I was working in admin, and I was very frustrated because they [managers] wouldn't let me do anything like the fuel dipping or anything like that. I was grumpy about it and felt a little stuck, I suppose. I knew I needed something different.

> **Tilly (Kent, 1970s):** I went and got myself locally doing some typing which I'd learnt whilst at school, but I absolutely hated it. I did it, but I was really down and thought to myself 'there's absolutely no way I am ever going to be working indoors all the time'. It just wasn't right, it wasn't for me.

Maggie concurred. She observed that, despite being a senior member of her team, she was undermined and not treated seriously by her colleagues. This led to her being denied opportunities, such as key holder positions:

> **Maggie (Greater Manchester Police, 1970s-1980s):** My manager [at the bank] was a prat and we had a bit of a fall out because there was a set of keys, like door keys or safe keys. There was only about six of us who worked there. There was a manager and sub-manager and then the next one down in seniority which happened to be me service wise, but the next one after me was a young lad and he gave him the keys when the third person transferred somewhere else so I was livid

because I should've got the keys not that it made any difference but it was just I was annoyed at the fact he hadn't asked me so I queried it with him and he said 'but you're a girl' – so, in other words, you don't count so I thought to myself well we'll see about that. It was well known […] women in the 70s, you worked 'til you had babies and then you finished. I didn't want that at all. When I was 16, I was pushing prams, but that was me [my] sister, I knew I wanted something more. A career.

Participants' narratives on this matter presented an interesting discussion. As discussed in Chapter Two and Three respectively, women were socialised to be demure, considerate and mindful from a young age (West and Zimmerman, 1987; Butler, 1990). Ansley (1972, cited in Bernard, 1976: 233) argued that women were socialised to become 'takers of shit' and absorbed their husband's anger in the home. In the workplace, a similar sentiment applied. Through a phenomenon known as emotion work, women were expected to adopt a 'shut up and put up' attitude and minimise their emotions as a means to adhere to the wider social structure of the workplace (Hochschild, 1979).

Rather than accept their position in the workplace, as had traditionally been the norm, participants were prepared to challenge it by looking for work elsewhere. The emergence of this counterculture and separation from bedroom culture in its entirety signifies the tenacity of this cohort of women (McRobbie and Garber, 1976; Gatlin, 1987; Skeggs, 1997). These findings therefore casts doubt over the reputation of work amongst working-class girls. Whilst Sharpe (1976), Tinkler (1996) and Jackson (2006) argued that, for working-class women, work was simply a stopgap between leaving school and marriage, the findings from this study suggest that work was taken more seriously by women who reached their formative years by the mid-to-late seventies. Instead, women actively sought a career that could provide financial stability, as well as a varied array of experiences whilst at work. This can be seen in the following quotes:

Maggie (Greater Manchester Police, 1970s-1980s): It was well known […] women in the 70s, you worked 'til you had babies and then you finished. I didn't want that at all. When I was 16, I was pushing prams, but that was me [my] sister, I knew I wanted something more. A career.

Janet (West Midlands Police, 1980s-1990s): Fundamentally, the reason why I wanted to join the police was the financial aspect of it. I wanted to leave home, and I didn't have much in the way of qualifications. I left school

with very little actually, and I could see that the pay in being a police officer would allow me to get a mortgage and leave home. [...] I knew I had to do a man's job to get the finances, to make myself independent. I didn't want to have to be in a relationship where I had to depend on dual incomes. I wanted to be independent. I needed to be.

Weeks *et al.,* (2001) observed that this new generation of women were embarking on a series of new life experiments. Rather than following conventional life trajectories, they carved out their own by postponing motherhood and, instead, pursuing careers. Nonetheless, the police service was still considered a predominantly masculine occupation. As seen in Figure 7, an information pack issued to prospective recruits in 1984, the main attributes of policing were 'discipline', 'responsibility', and being at the 'sharp end of fighting crime and disorder'. Imagery included captured the violent
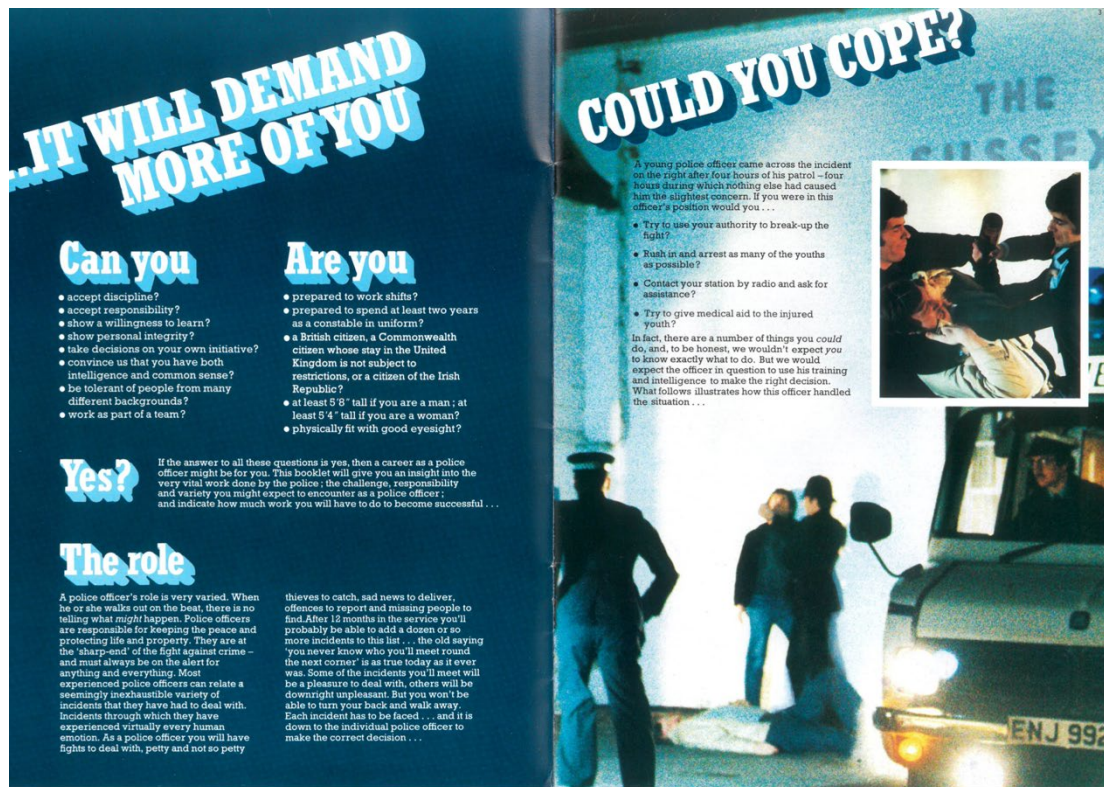
Figure 7 'It Will Demand More of You - Could You Cope?' Police Recruitment Pack. (Personal Archive of Jon Wright)

encounters with rogue members of the public. Indeed, the language choices and imagery reflected the masculine ethos of the force and 'ideal' working personality of police officers, both of which inadvertently excluded women (Skolnick, 1966). As such, the next barrier for narrators was to convince their parents that pursuing an active career was a risk worth taking. In the next section of this chapter, the researcher

explores parents' and friends' reactions – and, more importantly, the impact this had on narrators.

5.4 Parents' and Friends' Reactions

For Elder et al., (2007), individual lives are dependent upon one another within the family unit. Relationships between parents and children are central to the formation of identity in a person's early years, and provide insight into cultural norms and values (Mortimer, 2021). However, as Elder et al, (2003) argued, individuals are also capable of constructing their own life course separate from that of their parents. For young women, this was challenging because there was an expectation for them to stay close to the family home until they wed (McRobbie and Garber, 1976; Sharpe, 1976; Jackson, 2006; August, 2009). And whilst the nineteen-seventies provided *some* women with an opportunity to explore life beyond what was expected of them, working-class women were unable to do so with equal freedom because they were conscious of the impact this decision might have on their families (August, 2009; Skeggs, 1997; Crossley, 2006). These interpersonal relationships, Crossley (2006: 86) observed, acted as 'levers of control'. It was their parents' and friends' reactions to key life events that provided them with an insight into how they were being perceived by others.

A Family Affair

For some participants, announcing their intention to pursue a career in policing was made easier by existing familial ties to the police. Historically, women's entry into civilian police roles was owed to their family connections (Levine, 1994; Jackson, 2006). Close family associations meant that patriarchal institutions such as the police could be confident that the women who were entering the force were reputable and socially pure, something Levine (1994: 36) noted as being important during the recruitment process in the late nineteenth century. Some years later, and familial connections were still deemed important when choosing a career in the police. In Jackson's (2006: 67) study of policewomen that joined prior to 1975, forty-three per-cent of women reported having close family members working in the police. This was also apparent amongst men, albeit to a lesser degree, with fourteen per-cent of men describing their background as 'police centric' (Reiner, 1978: 150).

In contrast, the findings of this study appear to echo that of Reiner (1978) rather than Jackson (2006). Indeed, whilst family ties were helpful, they did not guarantee a positive response. In the following quotes, Gemma, Ruby and Clara discuss their ties to the police and the mixed responses from their parents and loved ones:

> **Gemma (Wiltshire Police, 1980s-2020s):** It must have been in my genes, I think. My granddad had been a police officer in the City of Birmingham Police, and my dad had spent most of his time in the army in the Royal Military Police – actually, he was in the mounted troop of the Royal Military Police and I did in fact initially think that I was going to apply to the Royal Military Police, but at that time in the mid-eighties, they said during your first two years you're going to have to do a tour of Northern Ireland. And then I thought, 'ohh no, I don't wanna go there' [laughter] and so I bottled that. Also, I think my mum probably put pressure on me, 'no, you're not going to Northern Ireland, can't you just join normal police?' [...] it was no place for a girl.

> **Tilly (Kent Police, 1970s-1980s**): I didn't tell my dad [about applying] to begin with, he was averse to police officers – traffic police specifically, he always said he thought they came out of the sun – but once he got over the initial shock, he was with me all the way. In fact, he took me to Kent Police HQ the morning I joined. He was interested right from the get-go, really, once he got over that shock.

> **Clara (Warwickshire Police, 1970s-1990s):** I was 27 and married when I joined. My husband, who was working in a factory at the time, said it was fine. As long as I was bringing money home to pay the bills and putting food on the table, it was fine. My mum and dad were very proud, dad more so because he was ex-police and ex-army, so he was used to the institution if you like.

Gemma, who was 19 when she applied to join the police, recalled that, whilst she believed public service was in her 'genes', her mum was in opposition to her joining the military police. At the time of her application, the Royal Military Police were embroiled in conflict in Northern Ireland, and were exposed to extreme levels of combat violence on a daily basis (Mulcahy, 2005). This, her mum concluded, was 'no place for a girl'. In contrast, Tilly concealed her application to join the police service from her dad because he was 'adverse to traffic officers' and feared how he might have reacted. And whilst Clara gained her dad's support by continuing his legacy in the uniformed services, her husband's reaction was apathetic. She noted that, as long as her new job would 'pay the bills' and 'put food on the table', he would have given his approval regardless.

Although choosing a career in a male-dominated industry was made easier by their prior connections to the police, participants presented a great deal of emphasis on their parents' thoughts pertaining to their desired careers. This, Gadamer (1989: 383) explains, is because 'nobody knows in advance what will come out of a conversation'. In other words, their personal afflictions with the police did not guarantee support.

Nonetheless, the support of participants' parents and loved ones – or levers of control (Crossley, 2006: 86) – was integral to their acceptance in the family unit. And whilst there had been a degree of separation from the 'stay-at-home daughter' typecast promoted through bedroom culture, the need for parental approval was still very much ingrained into participants (McRobbie and Graber, 1976; Sharpe, 1976). To muster support, then, participants were able to provide justifications for their career choices by emphasising the 'feminine' aspects of policework. Indeed, as discussed in Chapter Three, typical duties assigned to policewomen were centred around sexual offences such as rape and sexual assault, arresting and managing prostitutes, and any cases pertaining to young children (Brown and Heidensohn, 2000; Jackson, 2006; Cunningham and Ramshaw, 2020). After Jessica graduated with a degree in Sociology from a Russell Group university, commented that such reassurance gave her parents a sense of 'relief' and, much like Gemma's parents, were comforted by the lack of danger she would be exposed to. Her parents also felt that, unlike nursing, policework was

Figure 9 'Concern for the Community' Police Recruitment Pamphlet (Personal Archive of Jon Wright, 1985).
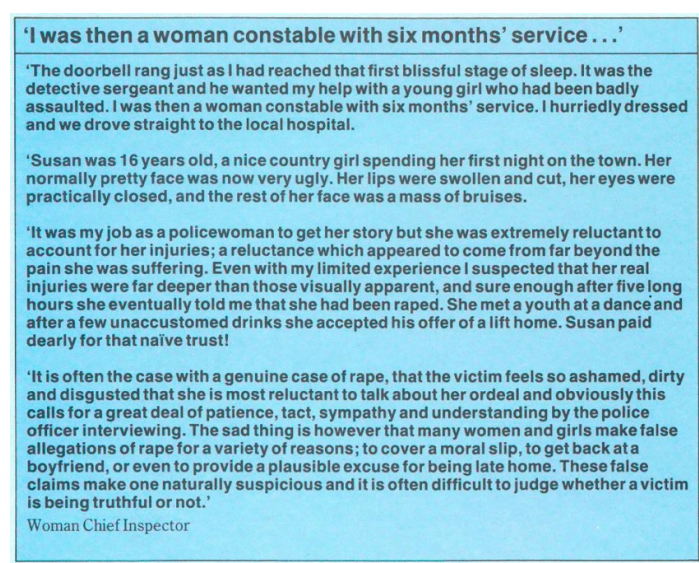
Figure 9 'I was then a woman constable with six months' service' Police Recruitment Pamphlet (Personal Archive of Jon Wright, 1985)

much more 'meaningful' as it offered 'prospects' to progress. Archive sources from the decade seemingly support this assertion. As seen in the 1985 Police Service Graduate pamphlet, Figure 8 depicts the role of policewomen in keeping the wider community safe, whilst Figure 9 provides an insight into the duties of a policewoman in maintaining law and order amongst other women. Jessica shared that her true desire to join the police was driven by a stint leading an adult literacy programme in Brixton during the riots and wanted to devote more of her time to working with 'broken' communities. Such a revelation, though, would have resulted in her parents withdrawing their support.

From participants' narratives, it is evident that the self is reflexive. As Giddens (1991) argued, the self is socially constructed. This means that individuals are aware of who they are in relation to others (Falk and Miller, 2010). The external pressure from education and wider society meant that the women in this study experienced inescapable pressure to be subservient women, or 'useful individuals' (Foucault, 1995: 211), which led to participants concealing aspects of their identities and aspirations. Focusing specifically on the impacts of self-surveillance on women, O'Grady (2005: 115) argued that self-policing 'tends to give rise to a strict overseer type of relation to the self which precludes spontaneity and keeps individuals tied to prescribed identities' (O'Grady, 2005: 112). Women, particularly in the seventies and eighties, were vulnerable to the effects of self-policing because failure to conform and gain the approval of others was detrimental to their social positions (O'Grady, 2005; Brady, 2008). For women like Gemma, Tilly and Jessica, sacrificing a part of their identity in favour of conformity was, at least to begin with, worth the consequences that subsequently followed (O'Grady, 2005: 19).

On Their Own

For some participants, though, no amount of self-policing could alleviate their parents' dissatisfaction. Two participants – Sharon and Janet – were ostracised by their families when they joined the force:

> **Sharon (British Transport Police, 1970s-1980s):** I joined the police when I was 19. I tried to join when I was 16, but my dad wouldn't let me go. So, when I did join, my dad was *so* angry I had to leave home. I was

homeless at the time, living in a hostel […] he just didn't think it was a job for a girl. I only had brothers, so it was a big thing. I did four months at Hendon [training centre] and if I'd got sick, I had nowhere to go, I couldn't go home because he didn't want me there. So, it was a good job I didn't get sick, really!

Janet (West Midlands Police, 1980s-1990s): When I applied, my father always said all 'you wouldn't know her proper day's work if you it fell on it because you're a woman'. He said, 'don't join the police. It's for men. They don't want silly little pop sticks like you. You're as soft as grease'. 'You cry it every opportunity. If an animal gets squashed or hurt', he said. And then he said, 'they don't want people like you […] It's for, it's for men'.

Sharon and Janet, who were both 18 at the time of applying to the police, recalled their dads being dismayed at their chosen careers. There was an assumption amongst both men that policing was not for teenage girls. Janet later attributed her father's anger to the fact that she had 'taken a man's job':

Janet (West Midlands Police, 1980s-1990s): What I was doing was taking a man's job I was taking a police job away from a man who would be useful […] and he just didn't like that at all and throughout the time I lived at home, he made my life hell.

Here, narrators' recollections of their parents' disapproval reaffirmed the risk associated with deviating from societal norms. Although second-wave feminism had, albeit to varying degrees of success, provided women with additional autonomy over their life trajectories, there was still an expectation to follow a traditional pathway (Giele, 2002; Newton and Stewart, 2013). Failure to conform was subsequently met with severe repercussions (Newton and Stewart, 2013).

Irrespective of whether their parents' response was positive or negative, the reactions of participants' loved ones fulfilled an important role. This, Crossley (2006: 89) argued, was because humans are primarily 'dialogical beings' and require interactions with others to develop social awareness of cultural norms. The cohort of women involved in this study had been socialised to conform to rigid gender norms, and had likely had very few opportunities to deviate from them (McRobbie and Graber, 1976; Sharpe, 1976). Experiencing a variety of reactions, then, helped to 'sow the seeds of new cultural

forms' (Crossley, 2006: 90) as they sought to create an identity separate from what had previously been expected of them.

Indeed, as the final section of this chapter will explore, the formation of 'dialogical' tools at this stage was essential in preparing them to navigate the first stages of police recruitment (Crossley, 2006: 89).

5.5 Securing the Job: Marrying Realities and Expectations.

Equipped with a dialogical toolbox, the next barrier for women to navigate was securing employment (Crossley, 2006: 89). Indeed, in an era that predated the internet and home computers, women applied to join the police in the old-fashioned way: by post. The application form required aspiring recruits to answer a series of basic questions pertaining to their education, health, and wellbeing. Application forms could be collected from the front desk of police stations and sent back to their respective force headquarters (Rees and Strange, 2018). Ruby and Maggie commented that it took 'just a few weeks' to hear back from their force of choice, and all correspondence was sent through the post.

As is often the case in oral history research that spans across a considerable period of the life course, most interviewees in this study were unable to remember the exact wordings of the paper application forms they were required to fill in. Indeed, very few, if at all any, archive centres in Staffordshire and the West Midlands preserved copies of paper application forms from the seventies and eighties. As so few changes took place in relation to women's status in the police, records maintained by the National Archives from the 1920s can be used to gain insight into the types of questions that were asked (see Fig.4). Firstly, women were required to be five feet four inches – approximately two inches taller than the average height for women in England at the time (Jackson, 2006). Secondly, a requirement to be 'generally intelligent' and 'physically fit' was enforced, though the mode of assessment was down to 'officers' judgement'. Thirdly, women past a certain age were considered to have a use-by date. And finally, women with children were deemed as ineligible to apply. Whilst things had changed slightly by the seventies – for example, women with children were now eligible to apply – attitudes held by officers were, as Loftus (2008; 2012) explained, roughly thirty years behind the rest of society.

Some efforts had been made by police forces in England and Wales to create a more inclusive interview panel. A multitude of the women who took part in this study recalled their interview panels being comprised of two male Sergeants and a female inspector. It was generally thought that, by having women on the interview panel, women applicants would be treated more fairly (Kanter, 1977). In practice, though, this was seldom the case (Kanter, 1977). As Loftus (2008; 2012) rightly theorised, such archaic attitudes were apparent amongst both men and women. Sarah, who applied to Staffordshire Police in 1984, reminisced on a series of inappropriate questions that were posed to her throughout her interview process. Here, she recalled being asked if she had a boyfriend, and whether she could commit at least five years of service before she left to have a family:

> I got asked sexist and what would be considered very inappropriate things on my interview - but my level of awareness as a teenager was low, and I never batted an eyelid. To give you some examples: I was asked if I had a boyfriend; I was asked if I would play hockey for the force; I was asked if I would commit to giving five years' service before I left to get married and have a family. I mean those sorts of things just would not get asked these days, but they were just normal, and I never raised an eyebrow.

Sarah attributed her young age, and perhaps naivety, as to why she felt inclined to tolerate sexism in her interview. Women who applied to join the police in this era were, at least in theory, protected by legislation such as the Sex Discrimination Act 1975 – but, as discussed earlier in this chapter, women were socialised from a young age to be subservient and not challenge authority, particularly male authority, in later life (Oakley, 1982; O'Grady, 2005). This meant that women were less likely to challenge positions of authority, irrespective of how it made them feel. This had inexplicable effects on women's social identities because, contrary to Crossley's (2006: 97) theory of those within an individual's social networks possessing the power, those leading the interviews became the levers of control. Sarah therefore felt obliged to accept questions that she considered to be inappropriate and provide satisfactory answers.

Questions about women's relationship status were immutable. Although the marriage bar had been removed in England and Wales in 1949, and women's marital status was a protected characteristic under the Sex Discrimination Act 1975, there was still a

cultural expectation that women would leave employment once they married (Jackson, 2006). This, coupled alongside the fact many women still aspired to be housewives over workers (Sharpe, 1976), meant that young women were treated with a great deal of suspicion by employers. It was thought that women saw employment as a stopgap between leaving school and, as such, were uncommitted (Giele, 2008). Some women, such as Sarah and Ruby, were open and honest about their boyfriends and accepted that this may have derailed their applications. For other women, though, they made a conscious effort to conceal the details of their private life. Eleanor, who joined Manchester and Salford police towards the end of the seventies, revealed that when her recruitment panel asked if she had a boyfriend, she said no. Eleanor was, however, dating somebody – but this somebody was a woman, and felt that 'confessing' to this would result in 'buggering up' her chances of getting into the force at a time where she was still 'figuring out' her sexuality (Plummer, 2004). Likewise, for Nancy, who joined the Metropolitan Police in 1981, she chose to conceal her boyfriend because she was 'genuinely frightened' of what their response might have been had they found out he was a black man.

Eleanor and Nancy both went to great lengths to supress elements of their private lives, and disclosed to the researcher their fears of what might have happened if their interview panel had found out. In essence, they felt unable to present an authentic version of themselves and, instead, adapted their portrayal of self to meet the perceived needs of their interview panel. Indeed, as discussed earlier on in this chapter, the formation of social identity is dependent upon the social environment in which a person finds themselves in (Mead, 1934; Crossley, 2006). To reiterate, the 'me', according to Mead (1934), relies upon a series of interactions and observations, and continually changes. As a form of self-protection, then, some level of self-policing is integral for women defending their social identities (Foucault, 1992; O'Grady, 2005). But in the context of police interview panels, responding to environmental stimuli was impossible for recruits. Whilst applicants arrived at their interviews acutely aware that some level of self-policing needed to occur, and that the police would not want to hire hyperfeminine caricatures, they were also explicitly aware that the police did not want to hire masculine or 'butch' women (Brewer, 1991; Brown, 1998; Jackson, 2006). In any

case, being labelled as one or the other was harmful – but behaviours that contributed towards women receiving such a label were unclear and varied between stations. This phenomenon, coined by the researcher (and henceforth referred to) as the 'Impossible Dichotomy', frequently occurred in women's narratives, and caused a great deal of conflict with regards to their social identity as policewomen.

Navigating the impossible dichotomy was, indeed, challenging. For many women, this was the first time they had faced interview panels made up of men and were aware of the enormity of the situation; one wrong move, and their future as a policewoman was over. To demonstrate the impossible dichotomy in practice, then, two narratives about rejections have been selected. Following Gemma's first interview – a gruelling three day extended interview some seventy-five miles away from home – she was rejected for being 'too young' and 'lacking in life experience'. She recalled feeling 'bitter' because, as far as she was aware, she had gained sufficient life experience – and, as discussed earlier on in this chapter, Gemma felt that policing was in her DNA. She pleaded with her interview panel and tried to convince them that she was 'worth the risk'. She noted that she directed the conversation away from her future marital plans and back to her hobbies:

> I linked it back to my swimming because the police did a lot of sporting activities and I was a competitive swimmer throughout my childhood, and I worked as a lifeguard, so I wouldn't cost them extra in training.

Despite this, though, she felt that she may have 'over done it' and presented herself as too 'desperate' for the job. Janet, on the other hand, felt she had 'nothing to lose' when it came to arguing back. When the panel told her she was too short to be a police officer and insisted that she 'buggered off' and 'stopped wasting their time', she attempted to rally the other rejected women, and insisted that they 'stayed and sorted the issue'. The other women left, but Janet stayed as an act of defiance. This impressed her panel, and she was escorted to the exam hall to sit her proficiency test. Under those circumstances, both women displayed that they were not subservient in nature, and were prepared to fight for what they felt was theirs, but received different responses. Gemma was rejected and sent away, whilst Janet's one-woman coup earnt her the attention of her male superiors. This therefore demonstrates the unpredictability of the

impossible dichotomy. The constriction of self in this period is therefore complex, beyond that of reflexivity. In any case, though, it was made clear to women from the very first interactions with the police that they were not equal to their male colleagues and, in turn, resulted in lower self-esteem throughout their careers (Veldman, 2017).

Physical Fitness and Medical Examinations

Having encountered the impossible dichotomy for the first time during the interview process, women were subsequently more conscious of their behaviours and, more importantly, what was expected of them. Whilst the interview process had provided women with an opportunity to prove themselves as mentally capable, a series of medical examinations and fitness tests offered applicants a chance to demonstrate their physical capabilities. This, according to Martin (1980: 219), was a golden opportunity for women to prove that they could 'work like dogs' – but there was still mounting pressure for women to retain their femininity throughout this process, despite the two being paradoxical.

As a perquisite to joining the force, successful candidates were subjected to medical examinations. Women were invited into a medical room at headquarters and were weighed and measured accordingly. Other health checks were carried out, too, such as examining the health of their hearts, lungs, and eyesight (Rees and Strange, 2018). Nancy described being taken aback when she was asked to 'strip to her knickers' so that the police physician could get a more accurate measurement of her weight. A dressing gown was generously provided, but this was promptly removed:

> I can remember bits of it clearly, particularly we had to strip to our knickers and stand where the scales were [...] they said 'show us your hands' so I started to walk towards them, and they were like 'NO! STAY WHERE YOU ARE!'. We also had to bend over, presumably to show skeletal movement and what not, but at least we didn't have to drop and cough like the boys did.

Another interviewee, whose pseudonym has been retracted to further protect their identity, remembered her medical involving a vaginal examination. This, she explained, was something she had kept to herself for some forty years – but, through informal conversations with colleagues after retiring from the force, she had later learnt that the

physician who carried out her examination had 'form' for conducting such examinations without so much as a word spoken on the matter. When asked why she did not challenge or report the incident, she replied with 'because that's not something you did […] but it never left me, not once'. Instances like this, though rare, had detrimental effects on the trajectory of an individual life's course (Elder, 1994; Giele and Elder, 1998; Draucker and Martsolf, 2009). Whilst various typologies have been created to understand collective responses (see Draucker and Martsolf, 2009), none of these accurately capture the realities of being a victim of sexual violence whilst simultaneously working within an occupation that actively encouraged a 'blue' code of silence that discouraged victims to speak out (see Waddington, 1999). Existing typologies also fail to consider how being a victim in a male-dominated industry can affect perceptions of self, and how victim-blaming would be pushed onto the token to protect the wider status quo of the occupation (Kanter, 1977). During our interview, the participant reassured me that, whilst she had struggled to trust her colleagues as a direct consequence, she spent the remaining thirty years of her career sitting in, on as many interview panels as possible to prevent this from happening to others. Whilst this was not why she had joined the police, this, in her eyes, was the only way she could deliver effective occupational change. Indeed, re-identification of the self as seen here can, in some instances, release distress, though the problem never resolves fully (Boyle and McKinzie, 2015; Boyle, 2017). The notion of using lived experience to deliver change will be explored further in Chapter Eight.

The fitness test, on the other hand, took place in an old-fashioned gymnasium in front of yet another panel of interviewers. Eleanor, who had vague memories of the fitness test, described fitness tests as being a 'shock' to the system when she was asked to run over one mile in under twelve minutes. Winnie, too, recalled being 'shattered and exhausted' at the end of the day, but recognised that she had to give it her all because she did not want to 'embarrass' herself in front of the panel of assessors. Masculinity has long been understood as an influencing factor in the recruitment process (Reiner, 1978; Jackson, 2006; Crank, 2014). Physical fitness tests were, in essence, a tool for male officers to preserve the masculine ethos of the police force (Reiner, 1978; Martin and Jurik, 2007). Physical fitness tests, as explained by Reiner (1977), relied heavily upon militaristic

exercises that required high levels of endurance. The decision to put women through intense fitness examinations, despite their policework being the antithesis of men's, appears to have been intentional; women were, in essence, being set up to fail.

In many ways, men also used the fitness test to exercise their dominance over the female recruits. Winnie recalled being asked to touch her toes 'over and over' as the men responsible for her examination laughed and made comments. Likewise, for Nancy, she shook her head as she recalled doing a set of 'jumping jacks' as her panel stared on in amusement. Whilst these peculiar requests may be understood as an example of dark humour, something which Waddington (1999) defends as being crucial to police camaraderie, women were being used as the subject of the joke. This, for many women, was when their dreams and expectations of a flourishing career in the police began to shatter; there was no escaping being a 'token' in a male-dominated workplace (Kanter, 1977). This realisation had profound psychological consequences, and affected the trajectory of the life course, particularly socially (Elder, 1994; Macmillan, 2001). Here, many women became aware for the first time that whilst they could adapt their social identities and disguise their femininity, when necessary, there was no escaping the physicality of being a woman. Indeed, very few, if at all any, studies reviewed the success rates of fitness tests in the seventies and eighties. However, in a recent review of police recruitment programmes conducted by the Home Office, it was declared that fitness tests were 'unfit for purpose', with women reportedly being held to harsher standards and subjected to sexist remarks and unnecessary tasks (Delmar-Morgan, 2013). Whilst contemporary fitness tests have undoubtedly undergone significant change since the eighties, the report provides sufficient evidence to support the existence of an impossible dichotomy whereby women were intentionally tasked with activities designed for their male colleagues so that they would fail.

Home Visits and Character References

Once women had passed the physical examinations and fitness tests, they were left with the final hurdle: character tests. As explored earlier on in this chapter, there was significant pressure on young women to prove, in some way or another, that they were 'respectable' (Jones, 1986; Jackson, 2006). Whilst there was no official guidance that

stipulated what police forces meant by 'respectable', retrospective studies have since revealed that Chief Inspectors required evidence of 'good families', 'good homes', and 'good education', the majority of which could be obtained through visiting an applicant's home (Jones, 1986; Jackson, 2006: 61). Indeed, to recruiters, it was of the upmost importance that women kept 'good character' and were always 'honest and responsible' (Jackson, 2006: 62). This meant that every aspect of their personal lives – ranging from their postcode and décor of their parents' home, to their neighbours and cousins' lives – were under intense scrutiny (Jones, 1986). Whilst Reiner (1977) observed that men, too, were subjected to similar levels of surveillance as part of the compulsory vetting process, Jackson (2006) argued that standards were not consistently upheld, and that female applicants faced harsher scrutiny.

The most common way to prove a young recruit's respectability was to carry out a home visit (Jackson, 2006; Rees and Strange, 2018). When Janet applied to join the police in the mid-eighties, her father refused to support her decision because he strongly believed policing was for men, not women. This made the possibility of a home visit tough, particularly as the police were more likely to want to hear from her father. Janet and her mother, however, colluded with one another. Instead of admitting defeat, they scheduled the home visit to take place whilst her father was at work. Gemma and Daisy also ensured that their fathers were out when their home visits took place for similar reasons, whilst Eleanor – who, at the time, was sharing a bedroom with six siblings – removed all evidence of their hobbies and passions to impress the visiting officer.

The gendered nature of the visits, then, made it almost impossible for women to lead independent lives without some level of self-surveillance (Jackson, 2006). However, whilst it was within their control to police their own social identities and respond to their environment accordingly (Mead, 1934; O'Grady, 2005; Crossley, 2006), it was impossible for them to police the behaviour of others within their close social networks. For women with family members with criminal records, then, matters were much more complex. Maggie revealed that, once the interviewer announced he would be doing background checks, she doubted whether she would still be accepted as her cousin had spent a couple of years at Borstal (young offenders' institute). Chloe, on the other hand, had 'Gypsy' ancestry, and whilst she had 'got rid' of her accent, she was worried

that this would be uncovered by the police. Despite this, though, both Chloe and Maggie were offered jobs in the force. Whilst Jackson (2006) was right when she asserted that female recruits were held to more stringent standards, and other studies have supported this since (see Rees and Strange, 2018; Cunningham and Ramshaw, 2019), it is possible that Chloe and Maggie simply applied at a time when the number of female officers was low and were desperately needed to take on typically feminine policework pertaining to women and children.

Whilst only younger recruits were subjected to home visits, all recruits, regardless of age, were required to provide character references. The purpose of this, as Jackson (2006) explains, was to prove the applicant's good character over a five-year period. For many women, this meant that their schoolteachers and previous employer(s) were contacted (Rees and Strange, 2018). Very few women in this study felt that contacting referees had caused them any distress, or that it shaped their experiences in any way. For Janet, though, her relationship with her chosen career changed significantly from this point forwards. As discussed earlier on this chapter, Janet was already working for the police as an administrator in CID when she applied to become officer. Having worked for the same force since she left school, she initially felt that asking for a reference would be straightforward – but this changed soon after her Detective Chief Superintendent (DCS) asked to see her in his office, privately. It was here that her superior officer offered her an ultimatum: in exchange for a positive reference, she needed to perform oral sex:

> When I was applying, I asked for a reference from the Detective Chief Superintendent (DCS) because I was the CID administrator for his department. He said that he would give me a reference if I went to see him in his office privately. And when I got there, I was told that if I gave him a blowjob, he would then give me a positive reference. I did *not*, and I still got a really positive reference from him, but I could have done it. If that was my *absolute* aim to join the police and the reference depended on sexual favours, I could have done – but I just passed it off. I said to him 'no. You're very naughty. Of course, I'm not going to do that, and I know you're gonna do the right thing, how very naughty of you' and it eventually went away. So, I had ways of sort of diffusing that, but it was very, very predatory.

Although Janet had worked in the police force and had experienced the predatory culture of the force first-hand, it was the first time she had been sexually propositioned. Whilst the trauma of this event did not occur to Janet until years later, she knew that if she had been visibly upset by his behaviour, she would have ruined her chances in the police altogether. Instead, she recognised that she needed to protect herself by engaging with the perverse and predatory humour of the force. It continued to be a pivotal moment in her career trajectory that led to a great deal of hypervigilance and advocacy for equal treatment in the workplace.

5.6 Conclusion

To reiterate, this chapter began by exploring the significance of linked lives in shaping participants' life trajectories (Giele and Elder, 1998: 11). Unlike teenage boys, who were encouraged to leave the family home and become streetwise from a young age, girls experienced the world from their bedrooms (Sharpe, 1976; McRobbie and Garber, 1976; Tinkler, 1995). This phenomenon, also known as 'bedroom culture', reinforced stringent gender norms and a culture of passivity amongst women (McRobbie and Garber, 1976; Connell, 1985; Sharpe, 1994; Tinkler, 1995). Post-sixteen career pathways were subsequently influenced by their parents' expectations and school subjects (Oakley, 1972; Sharpe, 1976). Forming part of the original contribution of this chapter, this section includes details of participants' occupational pursuits between the ages of sixteen and eighteen. Careers ranged between retail assistants and babysitters, to typists and administrator assistants in male-dominated industries. Indeed, whilst the jobs at face-value were 'typical' for the era, the landscape in which these jobs were situated indicated that, by the late nineteen-seventies/early nineteen-eighties, the nature of the male-dominated workplace was beginning to shift somewhat. This, in turn, created feelings of dissatisfaction amongst participants – many of whom admitting to wanting 'more' from a job. Expanding on the work of Reiner (1977) and Jackson (2006), the remainder of this section captures some of the reasons women were drawn to a 'man's job'.

The next section of this chapter explored parents' and friends' reactions to their new occupations. Owing to the heightened importance of linked lives at this stage of their

lives, participants needed to secure their parents' approval. In this context, Crossley (2006: 89) notes, parents acted as 'levers of control'. Without their approval, participants would be reluctant to pursue their desired career. To secure their support, narrators underwent a series of 'self-policing (O'Grady, 2005) and emphasised the significance of domestic work. By conforming to wider gender norms and expectations, most participants were able to gain their parents' backing. However, for some, this was not possible. Their parents' adverse reactions were a punitive reminder of the consequences for deviating too far from the traditional life course trajectory (Giele, 2008). Gender norms, though somewhat laxed in some circles, were still held with high regard across society. Nonetheless, their parents' reactions equipped participants with a series of dialogical tools that could be used to navigate uncomfortable scenarios in the workplace (Crossley, 2006: 89-90).

The final section of this chapter discusses the reality of securing a man's job. Drawing upon the life course principle of linked lives for the final time, this section captures participants' recollections of the recruitment process. Expanding on the limited body of literature, it is maintained that policewomen's experiences during the interview process laden with unjust sexism and invasive questioning. Furthermore, narrators' biographical accounts highlighted the weaknesses in equality legislation at the time which, seemingly, did not protect women from

In conclusion, it is evident that securing a man's job was a complicated process entwined with a series of barriers and challenges. Nonetheless, this was crucial to participants' acquisition of dialogical tools – which, in turn, allowed them to navigate incongruous scenarios. In the next chapter, the researcher explores the next stage of participants' career and the role of agency (or lack thereof) when entering a male-dominated occupation.

Chapter Six –

'It's a Man's World': Navigating Sexism, Harassment and Occupational Culture in Policing

6.1 Introduction to the Chapter

In the previous chapter, the researcher outlined the ways in which women arrived at the decision to join the police force. Examining the life course principle of 'linked lives' (Giele and Elder, 1998: 11), it was argued that participants' separation from bedroom culture was, in essence, dependent upon their parents' support. Parents, or 'levers of control' (Crossley, 2006: 89), had significant influence on their daughters' career prospects. To garner this support, narrators underwent a process of 'self-policing' (O'Grady, 2005) and emphasised the conventionally feminine roles within the police service. However, not all reactions were positive, and this acted as a firm reminder that deviating from the traditional life trajectory still incurred risks (Giele, 2002; Giele, 2008).

The focus of this next chapter, then, is to explore the next steps of interviewee's careers and how newly attested policewomen immersed themselves into a man's world. Drawing upon the life course paradigm (Giele and Elder, 1998: 11), this chapter specifically focuses on the role of women's 'agency' – or lack thereof – when navigating canteen culture. In the first half of this chapter, participants' experiences of 'initiation ceremonies' are explored. Particular attention is given to the ways in which police culture presented itself in the form of initiation ceremonies and first day rituals, and how women practically managed these encounters.

6.2 Recap of Literature

Agency, as defined by Giele and Elder (1998: 11), is a term used to capture the level of autonomy a person has in their social environment. Giele and Elder (1998) argued that individuals are driven by personal goals. Similarities here can be drawn with Maslow's (1943) 'Hierarchy of Needs'. Amongst the desire to fulfil basic needs such as hunger and security, individuals also aspire to satisfy their self-esteem needs, such as feelings of accomplishment (Maslow, 1943: 389). The overarching goal for all individuals, however,

is to reach their full potential – a state Maslow (1943: 382) identified as 'self-actualisation'. The pursuit of self-fulfilment, though, must take into consideration the social environment (Maslow, 1943; Giele and Elder, 1998). As such, it is typical for participants to 'adapt their behaviour' to meet the needs of the environment in which they are operating within (Giele and Elder, 1998: 10).

As explored in Chapter Three, policing had its own unique social conditions. Police occupational culture, or 'cop' culture, has gained considerable interest from sociologists and historians over the last five decades (Punch, 1979; Chan, 1991; Waddington, 1999; Brown and Heidensohn, 2000; Loftus, 2008; Loftus, 2010; Cunningham and Ramshaw, 2019). Reiner (2000: 87) observed that, whilst police culture inadvertently preserves the masculine ethos of the police, its primary function is to create a culture of 'understandings and behaviours' amongst officers to 'reduce the pressures and tensions' that are attached to policing as an occupation.

Occupational culture therefore serves as an effective way to introduce new recruits to the unique cultural expectations of the police force (Manning, 1989). For experienced officers already acquainted with police occupational culture, humour forms an integral part of the camaraderie (Mitchell, 1996; Waddington, 1999; Loftus, 2012) as it serves to not only strengthen ties between colleagues, but to also lessen the psychological impact of trauma associated with policework (Clisby, 1990; Young, 1995). It is therefore integral that new recruits are acclimatised to the cultural expectations of the force from early on in their careers (Waddington, 1999).

However, the ability for women to reach a state of 'self-actualisation' is inhibited by their wider social position in the police. Although policewomen had been in the police force officially since 1915, there had always been a degree of occupational segregation that kept men separate from their female colleagues (Jackson, 2006). When it came to police culture, women were considered 'outsiders' until proven otherwise (Morris, 1987; Cunningham and Ramshaw, 2020). To gain the approval of their male colleagues, then, women were under pressure to conform to men's demands (Cunningham and Ramshaw, 2020).

Nonetheless, as West and Zimmerman (1987), Butler (1990) and Giddens (1991) argued, though, the 'self' is reflexive and therefore adaptive. Women therefore had *some* control over whether they wanted to embrace the difficulties presented to them by occupational culture or, alternatively, challenge it. However, given the intense and pervasive nature of canteen culture, women's agency was limited. In the next section, the researcher explores narratives from participants who experienced initiation ceremonies.

6.3 Initiation Ceremonies and 'Other' Rites of Passage.

Initiation ceremonies, defined by Waddington (1999: 114) as a series of 'pranks' and 'wind ups', have been considered a rite of passage by police officers for a number of years. In this study, eleven participants in total experienced 'humorous' initiation ceremonies. Whilst participants were often stationed over one-hundred miles from one another, their experiences with initiation ceremonies were similar in nature and overlapped. Echoing the findings of Reiner and Newburn (2000) and Cunningham and Ramshaw (2019), narrators reported that most initiation ceremonies were small and revolved around drinking games, inappropriate poker games, and painting disused police boxes in the incorrect colour. However, a small minority of initiation procedures were larger and more elaborate. To illustrate the latter, two examples of the more complicated iterations of initiation ceremonies have been selected: 'the wild goose chase' and 'the mortuary incident'.

Breaking Them In

Sarah, who joined Staffordshire Police in 1984, remembered her initiation ceremony taking place just a few weeks into the duration of her thirty-year career. Whilst on duty, Sarah's male colleagues radioed her to attend what she thought to be a legitimate incident on her patch. When she arrived, her colleagues promptly sent her elsewhere, and repeated the cycle for their own amusement:

> Mine was a game. They just arranged to send me all over the place and, when I got to somewhere, they'd just send me somewhere else without any real purpose. But yeah, there was always an initiation ceremony of some sort. It was just a bit of fun, and I suppose it meant my new

colleagues got to know me a bit better and vice versa. I didn't mind it. We were on shift together a lot in my uniformed years, so we became good friends, friends for life.

Although Sarah's initiation task meant that she was distracted from her duties, she asserted that she 'didn't mind' because it was designed to be a 'bit of fun' that would, in time, bring her closer to her colleagues. From early on, then, the dynamic between Sarah and her colleagues was overtly imbalanced and contributed to her engagement with the menial tasks. Indeed, as discussed in Chapter Five, aspiring policewomen were treated with a great deal of suspicion by their predominantly male interview panels. Once they had been attested, very little changed with regards to policewomen's status (or lack thereof). Sarah observed that at the start of her career, female recruits were deliberately 'left out' from social outings to the police bar (usually housed within the police station or next door) and were left without with an obvious way to join the group dynamics. This process, identified as 'informal isolation' by Kanter (1977: 226), was a common occurrence in male-dominated workplaces; the dominant group became cautious around the token group, often censoring their conversations when in their presence until women could prove themselves as worthy recipients of group membership. Historically, policing has frequently been seen as an isolated occupation. Various academics, such as Holdaway (1983), Reiner (1993), Waddington (1999) and Loftus (2008; 2012), observed that, in response to the 'insular' nature of policing, officers divided society into two distinctive categories: us (the police) vs them (everybody else). However, contrary to current understandings of police culture, membership was not sought upon initial entry; rather, policewomen were othered until they could prove themselves worthy of their colleagues' trust.

Nonetheless, informal isolation was not, in Sarah's case, permanent. Through a series of strategic initiation ceremonies such as 'wind ups' and 'bad jokes', police officers were able to extend an invitation to new recruits to be integrated into their isolated world (Powell, 1996; Waddington, 1999; Loftus, 2012). Sarah's prior experience as a police cadet (VPS) meant that she was familiar with 'the craic' in policing circles, and emerged herself into a menial task, or 'the game', because she recognised the gravitas of this exchange: group acceptance. Humorous initiation ceremonies therefore acted as a bout of 'informal training', led by the dominant group, in the hope that the token group

would become conscious of their newly acquired social network (Kanter, 1977: 227). Once the initiation ceremony had taken place, both policemen and policewomen acquired a better understanding of the types of behaviours deemed acceptable in the force (Reiner, 2000) which, in turn, contributed to Sarah internalising an important part of police culture – 'the craic' – and proving to her peers that she was, in fact, worthy of their trust.

Sarah's determination to earn her peers' trust influenced the extent to which she engaged with her initiation ceremony. Similar sentiments were shared by Siân, who joined Gwent Police shortly after the disbandment of the Women's Department in the mid-seventies. In her biographical account, she recalled being subjected to an initiation ceremony after a few months whilst on her first night shift. Her colleagues, Lewis and Tom, had requested that she accompany them to the mortuary on 'official police business'. As a new recruit, Siân was eager to prove herself to the boys, and obliged – only to get the fright of her life:

> In [town], we had to visit the mortuary. It was a very unpleasant task seeing dead bodies, especially at that age [19] because I'd never seen a dead body before, only dead animals, but I'd mentally prepared myself for it because I had to prove to the boys and myself that I wasn't a total wimp [laughter] so I gets down into the mortuary, I approach the body, and out jumps Dave from underneath a white sheet used to go over bodies. Charlotte, I jumped out of my bloody skin there and then I did – it was horrible! As for Lewis and Tom, they was [were] laughing for weeks at me because I squealed. But I must admit, they did look after me from that day.

Like Sarah, Siân also stressed the importance of humour and peer acceptance. However, whilst she accepted the humour, she noted that she experienced a great deal of pressure to conceal how she truly felt about police humour. This lack of agency, Anderson *et al.*, (193) and Brown (1999) noted, led to women minimising their true feelings towards occupational culture. Indeed, although the Women's Department in Gwent Police had closed a few years prior to Siân's arrival, its legacy still lived on, meaning that policewomen were few and far between. Contrary to Sarah's experience in Staffordshire where the total number of policewomen was larger, in Siân's small rural force she recalled there being five women in total, but described their working

relationship as 'fleeting' and were seldom, if at all ever, placed on the same shift. As the number of policewomen on any given shift was continuously below the critical mass of thirty-three per-cent, then, women were unable to challenge the dominant masculine culture of the force (Kanter, 1977; Zimmer, 1988). Policewomen in Gwent were therefore under more pressure to prove themselves as capable and 'worthy' of employment (Jackson, 2006). This, Martin (1980: 219) concluded, contributed to a harmful culture in which policewomen were expected to 'think like men, work like dogs, and act like ladies'. When Siân was put through her initiation ceremony and was, in essence, the source of her colleagues' entertainment for a number of weeks, she laughed along because she knew she had to prove herself to her male colleagues if she wanted to secure a future in the police force.

Hindsight, however, is a powerful process. When Siân recollected how she felt, she noted that she contemplated 'emptying my locker and never returning', but quickly added that she 'soon saw the funny side […] it could have been worse' and that the event, regardless of how traumatic it was at the time, earnt her the 'respect' of her peers. The possibility of acceptance, then, meant that Siân's initial reaction, one of anger and bitterness, was quickly redacted. And yet, forty years on, she vividly recalled how the incident had made her feel. Here, it became apparent that humorous initiation ceremonies serve a secondary purpose in police culture: role encapsulation (Kanter, 1977). Indeed, as explored in Chapter Two and Five, scholarship from the life course argues that, from a very early age, women are socialised by their close social networks – latterly known as 'levers of control' – to be subservient in nature (Giele and Elder, 1998; O'Grady, 2005; Crossley, 2006). When immersed into unfamiliar territory, such as an insular policing culture, policewomen were forced to navigate their new environment using the attitudes taught to them in the early life course (Giele and Elder, 1996; Giele, 2008). Subsequently, though an element of humour was involved, initiation ceremonies were deliberately designed to strengthen pressure for women to be subservient and well-behaved by reproducing similar attitudes and beliefs. This, in turn, led to the token group assimilating to the dominant culture, even if they felt it was unjust (Kanter, 1977). Siân found a way to justify what had happened by concluding that the events 'could have been worse' and, instead, found comfort in her newly found acceptance of 'a

woman's place' within occupational culture (Kanter, 1977). This, to her, was better than being an 'outsider' because some acceptance was better than none.

Breaking Them Down

Whilst occupational culture can, as evidenced above, be exhibited as a series of 'wind ups' and 'pranks' (Waddington, 1999: 114), this has been widely contested amongst academics. Since the eighties, the inner workings of the police force have been scrutinised by way of operating exclusively as a boys' club, akin to a 'cult of masculinity' (Smith and Gray, 1985). Fielding (1994: 84) expanded on that of Smith and Gray (1985), adding that police occupation culture is 'an almost pure form of hegemonic masculinity' that largely goes unchallenged by the masses. Parallels between the occupational culture of the police and Connell's (1987; 1995) conceptual framework of hegemonic masculinity are frequently drawn out to illustrate the obstinate nature of police culture. Loftus (2008; 2012) subsequently concluded that police culture reflects attitudes that predate contemporary society by *at least* thirty years.

The extent to which police officers' pursuits of hypermasculinity influenced initiation ceremonies, however, remains unclear (Mosher and Sirkin, 1984). Scholarship pertaining to the topic is scarce in nature, yet appears to be commonplace in investigative journalism. As discussed in Chapter Four, the 'blue code of silence', also synonymous with police culture, prevents policewomen from feeling able to speak out about their negative experiences (Skolnick, 2002; Westmarland, 2020). Of the minimal studies that were able to uncover this (see Chapter Three), then, a small but significant portion of reported initiation ceremonies involved some degree of sexual deviance. Cunningham and Ramshaw (2020: 6) found that instances of 'station stamping' (the act in which the station stamp is placed onto a policewoman's bottom to claim her as the property of [station name]) was 'not unusual', whilst Rees and Strange (2018) observed that policewomen were accosted by their male colleagues' wandering hands. More recently, Davis *et al.* (2023) argued that both former and present policewomen frequently received misogynistic abuse because of occupational culture. In this study, a total of four initiation ceremonies have been categorised as being of a 'sexual' nature. However, an additional eight interviewees reportedly knew of, or worked with, a

policewoman who had been subjected to an overtly sexualised initiation ritual. To illustrate this, two narratives have been selected: 'the photocopier' and the 'station stamp'.

Janet, who previously worked in the CID department for two years, had already experienced sexual harassment during the recruitment process (see Chapter Four). When she was initiated by her colleagues, her 'task' was to photocopy her breasts:

> I had my boobs photocopied on the photocopier, but they allowed me to keep my bra on, so that's okay, *isn't* it? [sarcasm] but after two years in CID as an admin clerk, I was well aware of what to look for and how to look after myself in that predatory environment.

Like Sarah, Janet was largely apathetic towards initiation ceremonies because her experiences in CID had already acclimatised her to the masculine ethos of police culture. Janet knew 'how to look after' herself in what she described as a 'predatory' environment, and believed that resistance to their requests would have inevitably made matters worse for herself long-term. Contrary to her own feelings, though, Janet went along with the request to entertain her male colleagues. This, Kanter (1977: 228) describes, is a typical survival technique for token women. Shared laughter also meant that women quickly adapted to their prescribed role of being a 'source of humour' for the group (Kanter, 1977: 229).

Janet's willingness to tolerate 'predatory' behaviours was not, however, the result of a tolerance to the group's humour. Instead, her response was shaped by her earlier experiences in CID when she witnessed what had happened to women who did not conform to group dynamics (Giele and Elder, 1998). For Drauckner and Marsolf (2010), women who had encountered sexual violence in the early life course often responded by adapting their interactions with others to 'take control' of various outcomes. In Janet's account of adhering to the demands of her colleagues, it is apparent that her decision to put aside her own feelings in favour of theirs was an act of survival, rather than an act of assimilation as Kanter had initially argued (Kanter, 1977; Clausen, 1998; Drauckner and Marsolf, 2010). Janet's prior knowledge of cultural expectations meant that she knew, at least to some degree, how to 'survive' in a male dominated environment. Her colleagues responded to her compliance by making an exception to

their demands and allowing her to 'keep' her bra on, to which Janet quipped was 'kind of them'. Whilst this gesture may, on the surface, appear to be 'kind', the intentions of the dominant group was aligned with serving the interests of reproducing occupational culture (Kanter, 1977: 228).

For other interviewees, though, survival was synonymous with resistance. Millie, who joined West Midlands Police in 1985, noted that her initiation ceremony took place whilst she was still attached to a tutor constable. The role of the tutor constable today, as explained by the College of Policing (2022: 1), is to support new recruits 'through their first few weeks' as they 'put their learning into practice'. Millie concurred, adding that her tutor constable had 'shown her the ropes' for the first six weeks and had become somebody she held in high esteem. In the eighties, though, the role of the tutor constable was very much new and, as such, largely unregulated (Fielding, 1988; Punch, 1990). This meant that tutor constables were, in essence, free to train their recruits in any way they saw fit (Fielding, 1988). Whilst tutors had the freedom to incorporate their own experiences into their training programmes, they were also in a position to abuse their power. Millie recalled her tutor constable who was 'much older' and 'married' attempting to station stamp her:

> My tutor constable, who must've been in his forties at the time, had been crossing boundaries for a while with touching and flirting and all that kind of stuff. Nothing I couldn't handle because as I say, I'd worked in my parents' pub for a few years and I had all this experience with salt of the Earth folk and it was part of the job, really [...] if you told them to piss off, they would, or a slap on the hand and they'd get fed up. But one morning, he [tutor constable] pulled me into his office and said I needed to be initiated. I'd heard about it, I knew it was gonna happen, but I expected it to happen in front of others – yet here I was, in a married man's office, being asked to drop my knickers and bend over. I tried to talk him out of it because that's what I always did in the pub when I was a barmaid, but he was forceful [pause] very forceful. I kicked him where it hurt and ran down the road to my parents and I sobbed, I just couldn't believe it. And after that, the other chaps on shift wouldn't speak to me. Even the women wouldn't. I put in a request to move, and I transferred over to a different part of [town] to get away from it [...] but it was the same everywhere I went.

Like Sarah and Janet, Millie had attempted to draw on encounters from the early life course to navigate the situation (Giele and Elder, 1998). When Millie left school and began working as a barmaid in her parents' pub, she recalled that being surrounded by working-class men meant she became familiar with unwanted bouts of 'touching and flirting' from a young age, and came to accept it was 'part of the job'. Likewise, Millie anticipated a similar atmosphere in policing, a job that also encompassed an exaggerated masculine ethos (Brown and Heidensohn, 2000; Jackson, 2006; Loftus, 2012). In the eighties, men making unwanted

Figure 10 Police Review Magazine, 1981 (Greater Manchester Police Museum)

advancements was not new, nor was it unexpected. Indeed, for many women who came of age in the eighties, sexual harassment was the norm which, in part, was the result of the sexual revolution that had replaced typically prudish attitudes towards sex with a more liberal approach (Connell, 1997; Duschinsky, 2013). Through a growth in television and media, women became increasingly more sexualised through a male gaze (Mulvey, 1975). The effects of the male gaze throughout the eighties were particularly poignant. The music videos for Duran Duran's *Girls on Film* (1981), as well as Frankie Goes to Hollywood's *Relax* (1983), personified the male gaze, and were subsequently banned by the British Broadcasting Corporation for being lewd and sexually explicit (BBC, 2004). Policing also subsumed these attitudes, albeit to a more histrionic degree (Loftus 2008; 2012). *The Police Review* magazine, circulated weekly to officers up and down the United Kingdom, echoed similar sentiments. By the eighties, cartoon depictions of female officers had also begun to become increasingly more sexual (*see Figure 10*) and, as such, were frequently reduced to 'objects of sexual interest' (Brown and Heidensohn, 2000: 64).

As Foucault (1995: 105) noted, sex is a 'dense transfer point for relations of power'. As society became increasingly more enthralled with patriarchal depictions of sex and gender, power imbalances between men and women became more apparent (see Chapter 6 for how this impacted policework). Millie's narrative alluded to the existence

of a continuous power imbalance between herself and her male colleagues. To counteract this in her new role as a policewoman, she emphasised the importance of her prior work experience, and how it had imparted valuable life lessons pertaining to 'handling' herself in difficult situations. This, she noted, involved adopting stereotypically masculine traits, such as the use of profanities and physical force, to reject unwanted attention. Indeed, in Millie's experience, assertiveness, a trait synonymous with Connell's (1987; 1995) definition of hegemonic masculinity, had worked with a great deal of success elsewhere. In policing, though, it was rejected because it contradicted the role policemen expected women to take when working in their space. The ramifications of this, then, were immediately apparent. When she resisted her tutor constable's advances by 'kicking him where it hurts', he ensured that peer approval and subsequent membership of the group – which, until this point, thought she had – was blocked. Her colleagues, including other policewomen, also followed suit, ensuring that she was isolated from the wider group dynamic at all costs. Kanter (1977) found similar results in her study, noting that further ostracisation from the dominant group was inevitable for tokens who 'broke' the informal values. This acted as a warning to other tokens who considered challenging what they perceived to be the status quo (Kanter, 1977). The ostracisation of assertiveness, however, also served a secondary purpose: to warn women against breaking away from stereotypical femininity. Whilst this characteristic would, and often was, praised amongst policing circles, this only applied to men (Reiner, 2000; Jackson, 2006). Drawing upon Martin's (1980: 219) idea of 'think like men, work like dogs, act like ladies', adopting masculine traits was frowned upon, even in instances of survival; rather, there was still an expectation that women would be subservient in nature and do as they were told by senior male officers.

Breaking Even

A recurring debate amongst participants was not necessarily *what* type of initiation ceremony they were subjected to, but *why*. Some policewomen, particularly those who were not put through an initiation ceremony, believed that the possession of certain characteristics made women more susceptible. Three participants surmised this succinctly:

> **Alex (Gloucestershire Constabulary, 1970s-1980s):** What they did to you, I think, depended on who you were. They didn't do anything to me, and I think they chose their battles. If they had, it wouldn't have been a giggly session or anything like that.

> **Lucy (City of London, 1970s-2010s):** If you could hold your own and you could give it back, they wouldn't bother with you. It was about finding your weaknesses, and grinding you down. If you were particularly girly, you'd get it because they knew you couldn't fight back. You became the target, y'see.

> **Clara (Warwickshire Police, 1970s-1990s):** When it came to station stamping, it was the little pretty ones that got it. I was taller than most of the men on my shift, so I didn't get it.

The above excerpts hight that explicit displays of femininity, such as being 'giggly', 'girly', 'little', or 'pretty', was an overt indication of weakness. To mitigate this, some participants described attempting to disguise their femininity from colleagues. This often meant that policewomen turned a blind eye to unfair initiation rituals, particularly those of a sexual nature, or became complicit with organising ceremonies for new recruits. In defence of this, Clara noted that, whilst it often felt 'uncomfortable' to put new recruits through traumatic experiences, it was 'humiliation, but with a small H'. In essence, assimilation of occupation culture was an additional form of survival, and her feelings were not as important as her commitment to male appeasement.

Indeed, in accordance with Hochschild's (1979) study of emotion work and feeling rules in the workplace, Alex, Lucy, and Clara's responses were all akin to that of surface acting. Surface acting, Hochschild (1979) identified, is the process in which women actively alter their outward display of emotions to meet the needs of others in the workplace. In this case, there was a rejection of femininity, at least externally, to aid them in their pursuit to go unnoticed by their male colleagues. Alex, Lucy, and Clara all acknowledged that their presentations of self, the antithesis of what they perceived to be feminine, was enough to deter unwanted attention from men.

Finding the correct balance between femininity and masculinity, however, was often a challenge. As Martin (1980) notes, women were held to unequal and, at times, impossible standards whilst in policing; not only did women have to work twice as hard, but they also had to retain desirable aspects of femininity in doing so. The issue, then,

arose in obtaining this. This phenomenon, coined the 'double bind' by Hochschild (1979), meant that women were expected to conform to femininity and display emotions, but also be able to conceal their heightened emotions when it was necessarily.

A failure to display the correct level of femininity aroused suspicion, and evoked negative consequences. Unsurprisingly, surface acting did not omit unwanted attention. In this study, policewomen that were not invited to take part in an initiation ceremony were still under close surveillance from their colleagues with regards to their character (Reiner, 1978; Loftus, 2010). Instead, they were subjected to a secondary expression of occupational culture: nicknames. In wider sociological scholarship, nicknames are often regarded as affectionate symbols of group membership (Leslie and Skipper, 1990; Holland, 1990). In working-class cultures, nicknames are recognised as being particularly poignant to identity (Holland, 1990). Policing was no exception and, as Brown and Heidensohn (2000) observed, nicknames played an integral role in policing dynamics throughout the twentieth century. Despite this, though, nicknames were not always positive and served a wider purpose to segregate women based on stereotypes (Kanter, 1977; Burman and Lloyd, 1993; Young, 1996; Brown and Heidensohn, 2000).

Of the thirty-five women in this study, almost half reported that they had been assigned an unpleasant nickname. This, Janet commented, was mostly 'for camaraderie', whilst Violet noted it was pacification of the boys 'school playground' humour. Whilst interviewees were not explicitly asked to share their nicknames, the majority of those who were assigned a nickname felt comfortable to share it with me. However, a large portion of these nicknames were highly unique to the individual, and any reference to these may lead to the identification of participants. To ensure this is not the case precise nicknames will not be included in this doctoral thesis, or any subsequent publication.

The first category of nicknames pertained to policewomen in need of protection. Here, policewomen's nicknames were 'cutesy', and often made fun of their short stature, good looks, and other stereotypically feminine attributes. A core principle of police training in

the twentieth century, as well as today, is to protect the vulnerable (Reiner, 2000). This mentality, though often seen as progressive and largely productive, reinforces the notion of women being the weaker sex (Brown and Heidensohn, 2000; Ffrench and Waugh, 2005). In police occupational culture, where attitudes were thirty years behind the rest of society, attitudes were heightened. Whilst not harmful on the surface, in practice, this meant that policemen saw policewomen as 'damsels in distress' in need of their protection. The implication here, though, is that they believed policewomen to be weak, and therefore inferior to themselves (Brown and Heidensohn, 2000; Jackson, 2006). Indeed, parallels here can be drawn with Christie's (1986) theory of the ideal victim whereby the victim's identity aligns with a 'stereotypical' feminine demeanour (Collins, 2004). When Siân 'squealed' in fear after her initiation ceremony in the mortuary, word spread about her demeanour. As a young woman who, on one occasion (and through no fault of her own) was fearful, she personified the damsel in distress archetype in need of a knight in shining armour to rescue her. Her response led to her colleagues, Adam and Tom, 'looking after' her for the remainder of her career. Parallels here can be cast between Siân and Kanter's (1977) 'pet' token stereotype. The pet, Kanter (1977: 235) observed, was excessively 'fussed over', with her every move celebrated as a 'look-what-she-did-and-she's-only-a-woman' attitude. Policemen appointed themselves as Siân's protector, and fought hard to protect her from harm's way. However, as I will explore throughout this chapter, her nickname (and reputation) had harsh ramifications on her treatment elsewhere.

The second category of nicknames, and the most common in this thesis, categorised women as promiscuous. Here, women were typically depicted as 'sirens'. Nicknames assigned to women in this category were of a derogatory nature, and frequently sexualised them by referring to the number of boyfriends they had had, whether they were single or married, and how 'easy' they were when it came to casual sex. This phenomenon is not unique to this study, nor time period. Despite a thirty-year age-gap between the two studies, Young (1996) and Davis *et al.,* (2023) both found that policewomen were frequently called 'slappers', 'tarts' and 'slags'. Janet, who had obliged to her colleagues' request of photocopying her breasts, initially believed that her actions would prove to her colleagues that she could be a good sport. Instead, it led to

her being labelled as promiscuous. For others placed in this category, such as Violet, the ramifications were heavy as it meant that policemen on her shift often sought to take advantage.

Building on this, then, it was evident that no amount of embracing – or rejecting – canteen culture was enough to deter unwanted male attention in its entirety. The researcher has coined this phenomenon as the 'impossible dichotomy'.

6.4 Navigating Occupational Culture.

Following on from initiation ceremonies and nicknames, policewomen became aware of the gravitas attached to their day-to-day interactions. Indeed, as discussed earlier on in this chapter, policewomen's emotional work was integral to their survival in a male-dominated working environment (Hochschild, 1979). Surface acting was, as the title might suggest, superficial in nature; but when emotion work was successful, this changed the outcome entirely (Hochschild, 1979: 561). For the participants in this study, particularly those that had demonstrated that they could conform to the expectations of the dominant occupational culture, they received a level of protection from their male colleagues. This phenomenon, although few and far between, served an interesting purpose amongst participants.

Lucy, who was not subjected to an initiation ceremony but took part in various other rites of passage during her probationary period, recalled an 'unusual' event whereby she was approached by her Chief Superintendent once her male colleagues had been dismissed:

> There was me and this guy, Owen, that joined at the same time, and we had an interview with our Chief Super [intendent] to discuss how things were going. He sat us down, chatted through our tasks, what groups we were in, who our inspector was, who our Sergeants were, blah blah blah. After Owen left, our Super said 'Lucy, can I have a word with you?'. I'll never forget what he said to me, but he said, 'Can I give you a word of advice?' and I said 'yes, Sir, anything', and he said, 'in order for you to be considered the same as Owen, you've gotta be ten times better'. He was trying to be really nice, probably because I was female. There were very few of us and if you made a cock up, they'd know – but if you were good, they'd also know [...] but that bit of advice really stood out to me and put me in good stead for my future.

In the exchange that took place between herself and the Chief Superintendent, he imparted memorable advice that she believed placed her in 'good stead' for the remainder of her career. Whilst other women on her shift were left to 'sink or swim', her Chief Superintendent had selected Lucy specifically to help. This decision, she felt, was the result of her 'no nonsense' approach to policework and police culture. From her first day on shift, she had not let herself become a 'victim', nor had she acted 'out of line'; rather, she had identified a way to fit into the group dynamics by immersing herself into occupational culture at the first opportunity presented to her. From this, Lucy concluded that she must have been recognised as having potential to be 'one of the boys'. Being one of the guys was, undeniably, the ultimate token of respect (Laws, 1975; Kanter, 1977). Ruby concurred, adding that 'we wanted to be one of the lads', whilst Millie noted that women who received this treatment were branded 'the lucky bitches' on her shift because they generally experienced an easier time. Being labelled as such meant that participants were no longer 'othered' and had gained access into the insular world of policing, a rarity for those considered tokens within the dominant culture (Waddington, 1999; Jackson, 2006; Loftus, 2012).

For Lucy's Chief Superintendent to specifically select her to offer advice to, then, this was rare, but ultimately indicated group acceptance. This occurrence, first identified as 'exceptionalism' by Laws (1975), was the act in which women were recognised by the dominant group as possessing traits that separated her from the other tokens. Kanter (1977) expanded on this, adding that those who were treated as 'exceptions' possessed desirable characteristics. By highlighting policewomen such as Lucy, then, other women were encouraged to follow suit by adopting characteristics that were neither explicitly feminine nor masculine (Martin, 1980). According to both Laws (1975) and Kanter (1977), exceptions found it easier to seek promotion because of the support they received from the dominants who, ordinarily, would be opposed to such career advancements. Whilst Lucy never pursued promotion, this was not due to lack of opportunity. Rather, she 'enjoyed' the position she was in, and believed she could 'make a noticeable difference' from the rank of constable by dedicating her time to teaching other policewomen how to adapt similar characteristics to ensure that they were also seen as exceptions. In essence, Lucy saw herself as a role model to other policewomen.

Whether she was successful at this, however, remained unclear, as she stressed a 'reluctance' from new recruits to fully commit themselves to adapting to occupation culture.

The prominence of occupational culture also rewarded successful policewomen in other distinguishable ways. Protectionism, defined by Kanter (1977) as the role in which the dominant group take it upon themselves to take care of tokens, was the ultimate symbol of acceptance. In insular communities such as policing, protectionism was rare. As a general rule, Brown and Heidensohn (2000) and Jackson (2006) observed, policemen were staunchly opposed to taking care of policewomen. Integration of the sexes had left a sour taste in a lot of officers' mouths, and the zeitgeist of policing culture during this epoch was one of hostility and resentment. Protectionism, then, was rare, but highly sought after, nonetheless. Victoria – who, unlike Lucy, had been put through an initiation ceremony – received a notable level of protection from her male colleagues. To illustrate this, she cited two examples: the first example pertained to officers actively looking out for her whilst she was on shift with a predatory individual, and the second example concerned extending their protection to dangerous instances with known offenders:

> I've gotta be *really* sensitive about this, but I had a Sergeant who had problems with his hands [raises eyebrows] and he eventually ended up in a tribunal. And what happened was the section *actually* turned on him because they realised what he was doing and, actually, they looked after me. So, if he picked me up in the car and he tried it on, he'd say he wasn't being serious. Actually, it was. He just thought he could touch people […] and there was […] a villain called Rob, and I would call up in the area and say I've just seen Rob and they'd say, 'where are you?' And I said I'm in blah blah area, and they come rushing over to make sure I was okay. So, yeah, they became very protective of me.

Similarly, for Siân, whose narrative pertaining to her initiation experiences was discussed at length earlier on in this chapter, also benefitted from a similar level of protection after her initiation ceremony:

> As for Lewis and Tom, they was [sic] laughing for weeks at me because I squealed. But I must admit, they did look after me from that day.

Both participants' experiences during their respective initiation ceremonies had influenced the ways in which their colleagues treated them, as both women acknowledged that their reactions were potentially perceived as 'expressive', with Siân reluctantly confessing to 'squealing' in fear. Victoria's colleagues, for example, responded by actively seeking to protect her when she entered dangerous scenarios, both internally (concerning predatory officers) and externally (dangerous miscreants), whilst Siân's colleagues attempted to do the same by 'looking after' her. The notion of keeping tokens safe is commonplace in occupational literature. Kanter (1977) argued that tokens that appeared weak became known as 'pets'. The pet, Kanter (1977: 235) observed, was excessively 'fussed over', with her every move celebrated as a 'look-what-she-did-and-she's-only-a-woman' attitude. Some concerns have since been expressed about whether obtaining 'pet' status hindered women's progression in the force (Kanter, 1977). Whilst Victoria argued that it only enhanced her commitment to the job and made it easier for her to progress (she was later promoted to Chief Superintendent), Siân noted that, at times, this could be 'suffocating' and prevented her from entering 'dangerous' situations. Other participants, such as Clara and Suzie, agreed with this. They alluded to the ways in which some policewomen were pandered to which, in turn, made them 'worse off' as they were unable to 'defend' themselves. For other participants such as Janet and Violet who had, to some degree, benefited from being treated as 'a pet', they noted that they received accusations of 'shagging' their way to the top. This, in turn, led to them being taken less seriously by their colleagues and making it harder to seek promotion.

Indeed, whilst the dominant culture was, by all accounts, a form of hegemonic masculinity (Fielding, 1994), not all men believed that women were inferior in policing and treated them as sex objections. The chivalry thesis argues that, in any case, male servants of the criminal justice system were socialised to be protective towards women (Pollak, 1961; Anderson, 1976). In a policing context, then, this is where matters become somewhat contradictory because women were perceived as both women and women in the workplace (Kanter, 1977; Martin, 1980). Policemen were subsequently left with a dilemma: to see their female colleagues as police-WOMEN or POLICE-women (Martin, 1980). Proving themselves to be the latter was rare, and relied heavily upon

exceptionalism (see above). As a result, most policewomen were seen as women before their job title (Martin, 1980). The experiences of Siân and Lucy align with Martin's (1980) analysis. However, in hindsight, this may be an oversimplification of matters. Men, too, were victims of occupational culture (Chan, 1996; Waddington, 1999; Loftus, 2010; Loftus, 2012; Davis *et al*., 2023). Indeed, due to the constraints of the dominant culture, policemen who disagreed with the treatment of women were unable to challenge the status quo accordingly. As such, they extended their protection to policewomen. Of course, this does not absolve men of their misogyny; rather, it enhances academics' understanding of why men chose to protect, as opposed to challenge, occupational culture.

For women on the outside of police culture, there was a great deal of scepticism surrounding officers' true intentions when it came to instances of exceptionalism and protection. Nancy shared that, whilst she had not been on the inside of policing culture, she had watched her colleagues 'fall into the trap' of compliance with group conventions:

> There were some females that fell into the trap and were compliant, and they would be picked up by a bloke and kind of shown round, but it was – again – more to do with sex than career.

Violet, who had built up a 'lush' relationship with the policemen on her shift, experienced exactly this. In her narrative, she described 'chasing' her colleagues 'playfully' whilst on shift, but reiterated that there was 'nothing sexual' about it. The negative comments she received were, at least at the start, from other women. In this situation, exceptionalism served a secondary role to reinforce barriers and worsen divisions between tokens (Laws, 1975; Kanter, 1977). To have policewomen pitted against one another, instead of targeting their displeasure at the dominant group, meant that occupational culture went unaddressed (Laws, 1975; Kanter, 1977). However, before long, Violet noted that 'things got quite bad for me'. This, she noted, was the result of a patrol sergeant making sexual passes at her:

> Our patrol sergeant, Ryan, fancied me. He picked me up in the middle of a beat and he tried to make a pass at me. Several passes, all in one night. I wanted nothing to do with it, so then he shunned me and made

it very difficult for me. He put me on what was known as punishment
duty where I couldn't get any cups of tea or refreshments. I was just
out, on my own, walking the beat.

Indeed, although being an exception and receiving some degree of protection from colleagues was an honour, it was not always permanent. could be taken away as quickly as it was awarded. Even those who were accepted by the group were still under pressure to continue upholding the dominant group's norms and values (Laws, 1975; Kanter, 1977). In this instance, Violet's loyalty to the group was being tested. Failure to conform meant that she was, in her own words, 'shunned' from the group dynamics, and subsequently lacked agency and autonomy over the situation (Giele, 2002).

From this point forwards, Violet's time in the police force became a challenge as her relationship with colleagues broke down. Instead of continuing their friendship, the policemen on her shift began to treat her with suspicion. This therefore reinforces the idea that policewomen were, by and large, always defined by their sex status and availability to policemen (Martin, 1980; Fielding, 1994; Brown and Heidensohn, 2000; Jackson, 2006; Cunningham and Ramshaw, 2019). Acceptance based on merit was rare and, at least in this study, was not apparent amongst those who joined the police in the nineteen-seventies and eighties.

Isolation and Humiliation

As discussed above, displays of exceptionalism and protectionism were rare amongst participants. This, in part, was because policemen were reluctant to allow policewomen into their insular culture and, instead, opted to treat them with suspicion (Kanter, 1977; Martin, 1980; Waddington, 1999; Brown and Heidensohn, 2000). Indeed, whilst Chan (1996) and Waddington (1999) had asserted that instances of 'dark humour' widely observed in initiation ceremonies did not influence officers' behaviour and practice elsewhere, findings from this study suggest otherwise. For most participants, relationships with colleagues of the opposite sex were turbulent and, on occasion, dehumanising.

For participants who had engaged with initiation ceremonies, they believed that if they were successful and obliged without causing a 'fuss' or 'stir', policemen would

appreciate this by providing them with access into the 'insular' occupational culture. In return, group acceptance would allow policewomen to carry on with their jobs without interruption. This often meant that policewomen would attempt to go 'unnoticed' by only interacting with officers when it was deemed appropriate. Voluntary isolation, Kanter (1977) observed, was a common defence mechanism adapted by tokens. This, they believed, would deflect all attention, both good and bad, and would give them space to exist in a male-dominated world without being intensely scrutinised (Laws, 1975; Kanter, 1977). Whilst this approach was adapted by a number of participants at the start of their careers, it quickly became apparent that it was not going to be successful because, as is often the case with tokens, they attract attention from dominants irrespective of their behaviour (Kanter, 1977). Ruby, who had attempted to go 'under the radar' by avoiding spending too much time with her tutor constable or going on patrol with married men, echoed with these sentiments. One of the earliest lessons she learnt, she noted, was that it was impossible to avoid attention as a WPC:

> No matter how much you wanted to interact with your tutor constable, it was always seen as suspicious. It was always 'oh, he's knocking her off'. New recruits, fresh faced teenagers like me, or perhaps they joined a little bit older, you'd always draw attention to yourself. Not purposely, but the attention would be on you. Some policemen wouldn't go out with policewomen in a car in case their wives would say something. It was a sexualised nature for no reason because you were done up to here [gestures at her neck] in uniform. You were hardly sexualised in *that* way; you weren't wearing stilettos, and the skirts were knee length.

Establishing whether a policewoman was a 'seductress' (Kanter, 1977) was central to police officers' endeavours because, as discussed above, women were heavily sexualised amongst men and seen through a male gaze Martin, 1980; Smith and Gray, 1983; Fielding, 1990; Reiner, 1992; Brown and Heidensohn, 2000). Policing was, in essence, a 'cult of masculinity' in which policemen were free to push and test policewomen however they saw fit. So much so, this study found that policemen continued to test women's character, integrity, and loyalty to the force long after their probationary periods had ended. On Nancy's first day, she recalled being confronted by a male officer and being asked, outright, 'are you a bike or a dyke?'. Similarly, Georgia observed that policemen were 'hellbent' on finding out whether she was a 'goer or a

lesbian' for several months after she started working at her first station. To test this hypothesis, policemen resorted to ongoing shenanigans such as:

> **Janet (West Midlands Police, 1980s-1990s):** [Detective Sergeant] pushed files onto the floor and asked me to pick them up [...] when I bent down, he put his hand up his skirt and tried to put his fingers through my pants'.

> **Sarah (Staffordshire Police, 1980s-2010s):** He'd [Station Sergeant] ask, and then insist I sat on his knee whenever I walked past his office.

> **Ruby (Staffordshire Police, 1970s-1990s):** They'd wait until I leaned over the reception desk to collect my paperwork, and then chucking [me] through the hatch so next week's washing was on view.

> **Violet (Gwent Police, 1970s):** He waited until we were on night shift together and then he grabbed me and kissed me.

> **Lisa (Warwickshire, 1970s-1980s):** 'unwanted touching, especially when it was just the two of us in a car [...] just being nuisances' (Lisa).

Wexler and Logan (1983: 15) echoed similar findings, adding that policewomen often felt immense levels of pressure to sleep with their superior officers in hope that their time in the force would be made easier.

Just as the narratives earlier on in this chapter had been constructed, participants' accounts detailing the ongoing sexual pursuits of male colleagues were centred around survival, as opposed to internal feelings. War stories are integral to police officers' survival in occupational culture (Waddington, 1999; Loftus, 2012). To date, police-centric scholarship tends to focus upon the role of war stories in policemen's narratives (Waddington, 1999; Loftus, 2012). In this study, it was clear that policewomen also had their own version of war stories where they, too, relied on exaggeration as a means of telling stories from the front line. However, in doing so, they utilised hyperbole as a tool to masquerade their inner-most feelings. For Plummer (2004), he noted that stories, particularly those of a sexual nature, are often entrenched with a myriad of socio-historical and cultural factors. In turn, this influences the ways in which stories are told. For participants in this study, then, being identified as 'tokens' in a male-dominated workplace meant that there was significant pressure to moderate their emotions to avoid further attention and criticism (Laws, 1975; Kanter, 1977). As discussed above,

this process is referred to as surface acting (Hochschild, 1979). Deep acting, however, required women to internalise these emotions (Hochschild, 1979). Whilst participants in this study made a noble effort to do this, as is apparent within their narratives, this had a detrimental impact on their mental health. Nancy acknowledged that she worked with many women who experienced 'psychiatric breakdowns' as a result of the continuous social ramifications of occupational culture, whilst Millie and Siân both concurred that navigating police culture was 'tiring' and 'relentless'.

The participants in this study were working and living in an interesting period of social history for various reasons, but namely because they were the first to be protected by law from sex discrimination (Brophy and Smart, 1985; Atkins, 1986). In 1975, after much deliberation, the Sex Discrimination Act was introduced across the United Kingdom. Whilst the Act is explored in more depth in Chapter Three, the general premise was to provide a degree of legal protection to women on the grounds of their biological sex. It was hoped that, in doing so, workplaces would recognise the government's commitment to equality. In theory, then, this meant that women could challenge those who contravened the Act. And yet, despite this, women in this study seldom did. Rather, acts of misogyny and harassment, with the end goal of humiliation, were the norm. To illustrate workplace bullying and harassment, as well as the longevity of it, Ruby's narrative has been selected. Ruby, who was working as a Detective Constable (DC) in Staffordshire Police's Criminal Investigation Department (CID), recalled a humiliating instance of harassment:

> In CID, you'd have your own desk. You'd have your in-tray, your out-tray, and other things like your pen pot and what not. Well, before my friend got married, she was very horsey, and on her desk was a 6x4 photograph of her two horses. But she came in one day to see that the photograph had been taken out and a picture of a vagina had been put in its place. She had to accept it. It would've been to get a reaction, whether that was to make her blush or to make her embarrassed or angry. This was the norm – but you had to accept it. If she'd spoke out, her career would've been finished there and then. But no doubt she would've wanted to leave after that, it was a personal attack.

Acts like this were not standalone instances, nor were they finished within a matter of days. Perpetrators were aware that very few women felt able to speak out about what

was happening and took advantage of this by choosing one or two tokens to torment and traumatise over the course of weeks, months, and years (Laws, 1975; Kanter, 1977; Jackson, 2006). For those on the outside of the 'us vs them' mentality, police officers were ruthless in their approach to reinforcing what would happen to tokens if they opted for this pathway. Nonetheless, Ruby noted that her friends' reaction was as 'close to polite' as you could imagine, and did not cause any fuss to minimise the risk of worsening the situation. Instead, she simply replaced the photograph and continued with her job. A few months later, though, the same officers struck again:

> She was in a police bar one evening and a PC, who'd had a drink, asked her how long her fanny hair was. He went on to say he imagined it to be very long, so long that she'd have to plait it.

The police bar was, at least in theory, a place where officers could relax and unwind in an environment that was safe from judgement (Chan, 1996; Waddington, 1999). It also served a wider purpose to strengthen friendships, acceptance, and group dynamics. However, in the case of Staffordshire Police, the police bar also became a breeding ground for occupational culture. From a Durkheimian perspective, interactions such as this allowed officers to differentiate between the profane (policework, day-to-day matters), and the sacred (feeling worthwhile). Bullying and harassment, then, fell into the latter category, providing a swift confidence boost following each exchange (Brown and Heidensohn, 2000; Jackson, 2006). This was further reinforced as the dominants knew that the tokens were in a position that prevented them from complaining or rallying for change (Kanter, 1977). Consequently, this led to prolific and ongoing bullying in the workplace and strengthening of the dominant 'us vs them' mentality. Suzie, Maggie, Janet, Violet, Siân and Millie all acknowledged that, for those who did complain, it seldom ended well. Male officers were protected, and policewomen were, in essence, forced into leaving the job.

6.5 Conclusion

The purpose of this chapter was to consider the prominence of canteen culture and the role it played in shaping participants' life trajectories. Whilst scholarship has captured *some* insight into women's experiences of canteen culture, it is limited in availability (Jackson, 2006; Cunningham and Ramshaw, 2020). Furthermore, existing literature is

'Met-centric' as it focuses overwhelmingly on the experiences of officers within the Metropolitan Police. To contribute to this gap in knowledge, participants' biographical accounts of canteen culture were presented in two halves.

The first half of this chapter explored initiation ceremonies and 'other' rites of passage. Here, it was argued that although women had some degree of agency, the pressure to conform to occupational norms often outweighed their abilities to control the situations. This subsequently led to the emergence of survival techniques (Brown, 1999). This section also explored the acquisition of nicknames and how this ultimately shaped how women were treated by their colleagues. In contrast, women had no agency on how these identities were formed.

Building on these initial findings, the second half of this chapter explored participants' experiences of sexual harassment perpetrated by their male colleagues. Participants' agency in these scenarios was restricted (Giele, 2002). Although legislation had been introduced to protect women from predatory behaviour, the prominence of canteen culture meant that they were unable to pursue it without undermining their chances of career progression. The remainder of this chapter explores how they navigated these encounters whilst maintaining the wider gender order (Connell, 1985). Findings in this section expand on existing literature by Brown (1999), Jackson (2006) and Cunningham and Ramshaw (2020), whilst also offering a new perspective on women's experiences outside of the Metropolitan Police. In the next chapter, the life course principle of 'timing and place' – and the role this played in delivering much needed cultural change – will be explored.

Chapter Seven – 'Panic on the Streets of Birmingham': Social Unrest, Deindustrialisation and the Changing Role of (Police)Women

7.1 Introduction

Thus far, this thesis has explored how 'linked lives' and 'human agency' impacted the early life course of retired and ex-policewomen. Chapter Five explored how, after a prolonged period of latency (Brown and Heidensohn, 2000), the demography of female recruits changed fundamentally in the nineteen-seventies. Unlike recruits of the early-to-mid twentieth century, women that made the decision to join the police force in the nineteen-seventies and nineteen-eighties were not degree educated, did not have prior experience of social work and nursing, and were not from typically 'respectable' middle-class homes (Jackson, 2006). Instead, they were single, childless, fresh-faced school-leavers in pursuit of an active career. Having specific hobbies, such as swimming and cadets, provided women with a viable entry into the fast paced 'mission action' police force (Reiner, 1978). For women without an impressive list of extra-curricular activities, they were able to secure employment through another avenue: family connections. Fathers, uncles, and brothers were able to vouch for their character, assuring senior officers that they were suited to the job. Perceptions of women's identities, and how they constructed an ideal 'self' during the application, process was also considered.

Chapter Six latterly examined how the existence of the 'right' sort of policewoman created what the author of this thesis has coined the 'impossible dichotomy'. Drawing comparisons against Van Maanen's (1973) study of the 'Observations of a Policeman' and Reiner's (1978) 'Blue Coated Worker', this chapter explored how policewomen were socialised into the force in the first two years of their careers. Narratives from the era provide an insight into how women navigated the adverse social structure, as well as hostile canteen culture, and 'survived'. Instances of station stamping and sexual harassment, alongside the acquisition of nicknames assigned within the first few

weeks, challenged women's perception of self and had significant impact on their behaviours. A lack of agency and inability to pursue their personal goals and sense of self meant that, for a lot of women in this study, their only focus during this stage of their careers was survival. And yet, as Chapter Six presents, women were still able to find career satisfaction by adhering to the strict gender norms imposed on them.

In this chapter, the researcher draws upon another aspect of life course theory – this time, 'location in time and place' – to explore how interviewees underwent a series of 'strategic adaptations' during an era of political and social instability (Giele and Elder, 1998: 10). To support this analysis, three key events – the Miners' Strike (March 1984-March 1985), the Handsworth Riots (September 1985), and the funeral of Diana, Princess of Wales (September 1997) – will be explored. Forming part of the original contribution of this thesis, the following chapter contends that the Miners' Strike saw gender norms suspended which, in turn, acted as a pivotal catalyst for change for subsequent mass policing events. Once women passed this inadvertent litmus test, they were able to capitalise on aspects of canteen culture and venture into typically 'male' policework. However, contrary to popular memory, this was not an easy feat; although permission had been sought to venture into male-dominated policework, women were still required to 'do' gender. And yet, despite these barriers, participants were able to achieve a plethora of 'firsts' by the start of the millennium.

7.2 Recap of Literature

Time and place, as defined by Giele and Elder (1998: 9), refers to the 'cultural background' of the decade and individual location in which participants are situated in. Despite individuals living separate lives, their experiences are 'socially and individually patterned' and, thus, parallel one another.

Indeed, the nineteen-seventies and early nineteen-eighties were, by all accounts, an era that reflected traditional values. As discussed in Chapter Three and Five respectively, mid-to-late twentieth century Britain had been dominated by the domestic-public dichotomy (Kerber, 1988; Levine, 1994; Cordea, 2012). The prominence of biological essentialism amongst the natural sciences, as well as unwavering sex roles across all corners of society, meant that the existence of a separate sphere had been deeply

embedded into the British cultural landscape since *at least* the Industrial Revolution (Brown and Heidensohn, 2000; Jackson, 2006; Cordea, 2012). This inevitably had an influence on societal attitudes (Brown and Heidensohn, 2000; Cunningham, 2022). The British Social Attitudes Survey of 1984, for example, revealed that just under half of those surveyed believed that a woman's job was in the home whilst a man's role was believed to be the sole breadwinner and provider (British Social Attitudes, 2013). Cultural attitudes and expectations had a significant impact on women's life course, too. In 1972, Sue Sharpe (1976: 210) observed that London schoolgirls' priorities were 'love, marriage, husbands and children'. Young girls were subsequently nonchalant towards education, and saw paid work as a temporary period between adolescence and marriage (Sharpe, 1976; Kanter, 1977). For women that disobeyed society's expectations and, instead, displayed attributes of confidence and independence away from the domestic sphere, they were subsequently shunned from society (Mead, 1949; Maccoby, 1963).

What makes the temporality of the nineteen-eighties unique, however, is that it was in this decade that the dominant patriarchal ideology began to crumble (Strangleman and Rhodes, 2014). Defined by Bluestone and Harrison (1982: 6) as the 'widespread, systematic disinvestment in the nation's basic productivity', deindustrialisation marked the 'end' of British industry as society knew it. The post-war economic boom of the nineteen-fifties, sixties and seventies bore witness to noticeable changes in the labour market; manufacturing sectors, such as coalmining and steelmaking, declined steadily over thirty years (Rubinstein, 1993; Tomlinson, 2016). However, by the start of Margaret Thatcher's premiership, the process of deindustrialisation was accelerated. Between 1979 and 1983, four million jobs were lost across the industry and manufacturing sectors (Tomlinson, 2021: 620). In a period of widespread job insecurity and financial instability, it was argued that the nineteen-eighties marked the decline of the male breadwinner (MacInnes, 1998; Charles and James, 2005). This distinctive period of British social history provided women with a new opportunity to capitalise upon Britain's shift towards the newly emerging service sector and take advantage of opportunities that would otherwise be denied (Giele and Elder, 1998; Rees, 1999; Charles and James, 2005; Green, 2010). Charles and James (2005) later noted that the

chaos of the era opened new opportunities for women already working in male-dominated environments by encouraging women to stray away from restrictive gender norms and forcing them to 'step up' during adversity, just as they had done in the First and Second World Wars.

Indeed, as has been argued throughout this thesis thus far, policing has typically been perceived as 'behind' the rest of society with regards to social attitudes (Loftus, 2008; Reiner, 2010; Loftus, 2012; Cunningham and Ramshaw, 2020; Cunningham, 2022; Rigby, 2023). Despite this, very little has been documented about how de-industrialisation affected gender norms and sex roles within policing during this era. The remainder of this chapter will therefore examine how de-industrialisation, and the temporary suspension of gender norms changed women's experiences of policing.

7.3 The Miners' Strikes (1984-85)

Following the closure of the Women's Department (Rigby and Temple-Malt, 2025), the first major event to affect newly integrated police forces was the 1984/85 Miners' Strike. The twelve-month strike was orchestrated by the National Union of Mineworkers (henceforth abbreviated to NUM) in response to stagnant wages, poor working conditions, and fears surrounding the future of British coal (Williams and Francis, 1985). At the peak of the dispute, 142,000 coalminers went on strike, making it the most disruptive walkout since the General Strike of 1926 (ONS, 2015). Owing to its size and strength, press coverage of the strike was akin to that of a war, rather than an industrial dispute (Coulter, 1985; Fairclough, 1989; Hart, 2019; House of Commons Debate, 2022). By using divisive language such as 'the bloodiest battle' (Milne, 2004: 19), Fairclough (1989: 24) argued that the origins of such conflicts become obfuscated, and discourse became ideological, rather than objective. It is estimated that, on average, 942 coalminers were arrested per day for public order offences such as breach of the peace and violent disorder (Buckley, 2015: 422). In South Yorkshire, a picket outside a coking plant saw vicious clashes between police officers and coalminers, leading to the acquisition of the nickname 'Battle of Orgreave' (Hunt, 2006; Hart, 2019). In so-called quieter areas, such

Figure 11 Express and Star (1984) Cannock Chase Archives

as Littleton Colliery in Cannock Chase, archival sources from the *Express and Star* collection (see Figure 11) reveal that comparisons to 'civil war' were made from as early as March 1984. This divisive, war-like narrative furthered divisions between police-public relations (Milne, 2004), contributed to a 'campaign of mass criminalisation' against working-class men (Coulter *et al*., 1984: 24), and solidified the 'us vs them' mentality as previously discussed in Chapters Three, Five and Six.

Discontentment amongst coalminers was not new. In the decade prior, the NUM had organised two strikes – the first taking place in 1972, and the second in 1974 – which led to severe power shortages across the country (Martin, 2009). The introduction of the 'Three-Day Week' to conserve energy, shortly followed by the Winter of Discontent of 1978/9, saw the country enter a permanent state of instability and uncertainty (Morgan, 2017). By the eighties, the situation had worsened as traditional 'jobs for life' disappeared at an alarming rate, leading to mass unemployment and job insecurity amongst working-class boys and men (Yeandle, 1999; Goodman, 1985). For the

affected men, this meant that the jobs they had spent their entire lives working towards were no longer attainable, and their life trajectories were permanently altered (Giele and Elder, 1998). As seen in Figure 12, campaigns for monetary donations during the miners' strike stressed the significance of what was at stake, and how pit closures would affect generations of boys and men. As men tackled unemployment and job insecurity, women were able to capitalise on new full-time employment opportunities opening outside of the domestic sphere (Creighton, 1999; Charles and James, 2005). Remarkably, policing appeared to be ahead of the curve, as integration of women into the regular force had already begun some years

Figure 12 Miners' Strike, Box 2 (1984) People's History Museum, Manchester

prior (see *Chapter 5)*. The miners' strike, then, acted as the first litmus test for women

officers to prove their worth, as well as their credibility, in the face of a rapidly changing Britain.

Arguably, one of the biggest shortfalls of the 1972 and 1974 strikes was a lack of readily available police resources (Morgan, 2017). To avoid political annihilation, the Home Secretary, Leon Brittan, maintained strong relationships with the Association of Chief Police Officers (ACPO) and National Representative Committee (NRC), the latter of which was responsible for co-ordinating any potential operations that occurred in the coalfields (Goodman, 1985). To support police operations, 'mutual aid' was rolled out across the country to ensure that, if additional manpower was needed, constabularies could draw upon support from neighbouring forces (Loveday, 1986; College of Policing, 2023). Participants recalled that, because of mutual aid, officers from the Metropolitan Police had been deployed in affected areas. This, in turn, had contributed to popular memory being 'Met-centric', which was centred around a disparaging and inaccurate portrayal of policing (Halbwachs, 1992) – or, as one participant succinctly put it, 'a load of bollocks'. Interviewees generally felt that the story of the miners' strike was one-sided, and focused on 'reimagining' the conflict. This resulted in a version of events that served to primarily demonise police officers. In an email exchange, the same participant had remarked that she was 'surprised' to see research being carried out about the policing of the strikes and was eager to use the project as an opportunity to 'put the record straight' about police conduct and challenge the narrative that officers elsewhere in the country had been unreasonably violent. To demonstrate the extent to which forces outside of the Metropolitan Police supported the miners' strikes through mutual aid, six quotes have been selected, spanning from as North as Manchester, as Easterly as Thames Valley, and as Western as Avon and Somerset:

> **Lucy (City of London, 1970s-2010s):** Our station was emptied to go up North, and so was the Met. I'd never seen anything like it – but when they got the call to go, they left, and we didn't see them for another twelve months'

> **Lisa (Warwickshire, 1970s-1980s):** 'My brother-in-law was a police officer in Warwickshire, and he got sent up to the North to protect the men [miners] going back to work. They called those [non-striking

miners] 'scabs', and there was a lot of violence targeted at them, so they needed the protection'

Mandy (Avon and Somerset Police, 1970s-2020s): My husband went up north once a month and did duty up there.

Maggie: (Greater Manchester Police, 1960s-1980s): A lot of our bobbies had to go and give mutual aid in Wales and Yorkshire.

Suzie (Greater Manchester Police, 1970s-1980s): Ours went to Agecroft Colliery in Salford. That needed a lot of police attention because there was quite a lot of skirmishes going on there, especially when Arthur Scargill turned up one day with flying pickets.

Paula (Thames Valley, 1970s-2010s): The Miners' Strikes were massive because all of the men in our station were sent up to Orgreave in Nottingham.

Participants were invited to reflect upon their individual experiences of the miners' strikes. In their respective interviews, Maggie, Paula, Suzie, Mandy, Lucy, and Lisa discussed the extensive impact mutual aid had on their male colleagues during the miners' strikes. They described their colleagues' duties as 'brave' and commended them for the tough interactions they had with the public, as well as their ability to 'protect' scabs from violence as they crossed 'unpredictable' picket lines into work. The researcher found the direction of interviews during this segment stimulating. Although participants had been asked to reflect on themselves, they praised their male colleagues firstly and foremost in what was arguably the most controversial period of twentieth century policing. The tone of participants during this portion of interviewing was interesting, too; interviewees appeared to feel a need to be defensive and protective of their colleagues. When it was suggested that perhaps *some* police officers had gone out of their way for a fight (see Figure 13),

Figure 13 Miners' Strike, Box 2 (1984) People's History Museum, Manchester

Janet, who joined the police force after the miners' strike, commented that she 'did not get that impression' and that her colleagues had opted to attend the strikes because of 'ching' [overtime]. Similar sentiments were shared in other interviews, with Gemma adding that her colleagues were 'doing their job [...] in difficult circumstances'.

It was evident that participants felt strongly about 'putting the record straight' and did this by prefacing discussions of the miners' strike with a defence of their colleagues. Indeed, as Reiner (1977; 2010) and Loftus (2008; 2012) observed, the need to defend and protect is synonymous with police culture. As discussed in Chapter Two, canteen culture requires officers to immerse themselves in an 'us vs them' mentality (Waddington, 1999). And despite participants retiring from the force over ten years ago, they still felt an overwhelming sense of loyalty to the police (see *Chapter 3*). Memories of the conflict in this context, then, served a function to reaffirm group identity (Halbwachs, 1992; Misztal, 2003). First-hand accounts from the Miners' Strike, such as that of Milne (2004), Coulter *et al*., (1984) and Williams *et al*., (1995), reveal that there was recorded instances of police violence and brutality towards the miners. However, as collective memory precedes memory, social identity has the potential to shape and influence collective memory (Misztal, 2003: 52). This means that, whilst memories are 'images of the past', they are often 'in accord with the predominant thoughts of that group' (Halbwachs, 1992: 86). For policewomen that served in the 1980s, group integration was of the upmost importance (*see Chapter 4*). Furthermore, women that served in this era were aware that their role was that of a supportive and submissive one. The need to be defensive and protective of their male colleagues, then, is synonymous of the role women were typically expected to have in this epoch. This, in turn, may have shaped how they remember, and retell, stories from this era.

Figure 14 Box 2 Miners' Strike (1984) People's History Museum, Manchester

The need to initially 'defend' the actions of their colleagues may have occurred in response to a potential power imbalance between the interviewee and researcher. Although the researcher is from a working-class background, there is a perception that university-educated researchers are from middle-class backgrounds and do not thoroughly understand working-class matters such as policing (Crew, 2021; Rigby, 2025). The fieldwork for this study also took place shortly after the 'All Cops are Bastards' (ACAB) movement which arose when George Floyd was murdered by a police officer in the United States. When

approaching controversial topics such as the miners' strike, participants were subsequently guarded about the stories they shared because the issue of police brutality was questioned in the media at the time. This response is synonymous with attributes of canteen culture (Loftus, 2008; 2012) and is known as the 'blue code of silence' (Westmarland, 2005; 2020). However, as Plummer (1995) and Holstein and Gubrium (1995) noted in their respective life histories research, specific conditions are needed in order for authentic stories to be told. It was therefore important to mitigate this power imbalance early in the interviews. The researcher did so by sharing personal experiences about her family during the miners' strike. Some participants seemed to relax somewhat and felt more comfortable sharing candid memories of the strike. Lisa added that violence was 'targeted at them' on a daily basis, whilst another participant, whose name has not been included in this chapter due to fears of being identified, recalled that her husband needed 'twelve stitches' after a 'house brick' was thrown at a group of police officers for being 'traitors'. Archive sources from the era support this narrative, too. Figure 14 shows a collection of photographs depicting violence directed at police officers. A miner is pictured wearing a 'fake' custodial helmet, seemingly goading two officers on duty, whilst pictures three and four show wounded police officers being attended to. This, as the participants in this study rightly noted, is seldom covered in media coverage and supports the belief that, in hindsight, police officers were also victimised as a result of the miners' strike and perhaps violence was not as one sided as popular memory currently proposes. Nonetheless, a handful of participants were candid about the miners' strike, and revealed that officers from other forces (namely the Metropolitan Police) had been seen burning pound notes in front of miners as a way to goad a reaction from them.

The removal of such barriers also led to discussions around 'flying pickets'. Suzie noted that, in the North of England, flying pickets were particularly troublesome and were often deployed to quieter areas as 'rabble-rousers'. This has been disputed by journalists, many of whom argued that violence was solely perpetuated by police officers (Milne, 2004). And whilst the prominence of a blue code of silence may prevent police officers from divulging too much information to an academic, archive sources seemingly support participants' accounts. As per the *Express and Star* archive collection (see Figure 15), at Littleton and Lea Hall Collieries, a policeman was seriously injured after being 'pushed into the path of a lorry', whilst Ollerton Colliery in Nottinghamshire saw five officers 'hurt' after a 'clash' with pickets. In addition to this, children as young as six sent letters to Staffordshire Police thanking them for keeping their daddies safe. This therefore supports participants' arguments that policemen were, in most cases, doing their jobs correctly, and that violence was rife on both sides.

Figure 15 Express and Star, March 1984

One obvious omission from participants' recollections, however, was their own roles during the strike. Just a decade earlier, Shirley Becke (1973) had advised policewomen that the Equal Pay Act 1970, as well as forthcoming legislation such as the eventual Sex Discrimination Act 1975 and closure of the Women's Department, would mean that women could no longer have their own version of policing (Rigby and Temple-Malt, 2025). Evidence from the archives also supports this, with newspapers reporting upon the mass exoduses of policewomen who left the occupation when faced with the prospect of integration (Diddens, 1976). And yet, in 1984, women were still experiencing different roles from their male colleagues. In response to this, participants were invited to reflect on why policewomen were not invited to participate in the miners' strikes. Some interviewees felt that this was because they were not suitably trained. Tilly (Kent Police, 1970s-2010s), recalled that, in her first lot of service, she did not receive Public Support Unit (PSU) training. When asked why she thought this was, she added that 'it was for the men'. Tilly was not alone in thinking this. Ottilie (Kent Police, 1970s-2000s),

remarked in her interview that 'the hierarchy [...] it hadn't even occurred to them to offer it to women', whilst Suzie and Maggie concurred, adding that PSU training was primarily for 'the blokes'.

Despite this widespread assumption amongst participants, there was no official requirement for policemen to be PSU trained in order to attend picket lines (Coulter, 1985; College of Policing, 2023). As Mandy highlighted, for the first six months, policemen were equipped with only 'milkcrates, dustbin lids [...] and common sense' to defend themselves. Excluding women on this basis, then, would have been a breach of the Sex Discrimination Act. Lucy, who was stationed in the City of London, acknowledged this in her interview. Instead of men receiving enhanced training, Lucy believed that men were chosen to police the strikes because of distinct gender differences:

> The biggest thing they had against us going was the accommodation. I mean some of the accommodation [shakes head] some of the accommodation was awful, you truly wouldn't put your dog in it. [...] we [WPCs] had no protective gear, but neither did the blokes. [...] If you want my opinion, and this is only my opinion, it was because our officers were 5ft 11 minimum. The Met and other forces had a minimum height of 5ft 8, so ours were a lot (.) well, it was intimidating, wasn't it?

Lucy raised two important points in her interview. First and foremost, policewomen were portrayed as fragile. Male colleagues took on a paternalistic role by preventing women from 'awful' accommodation such as sleeping in 'vans and village halls' in makeshift beds. Secondly, men were assumed to have innate prowess over women when it came to policing violence. Lucy attributed this to their height being perceived as 'intimidating', but the likelihood of other men finding this threatening is improbable.

Lucy's narrative, as well as that of Suzie, Maggie, Tilly and Ottilie, support the existence of an 'ideal police officer' stereotype. It was assumed that men's physical strength and machismo, as well as their innate thirst for danger and action, created the ideal working personality to protect and serve the wider community (Skolnick, 1966; Reiner, 1985). Much like policewomen were assumed to have an innate ability to police other women and children, policemen were assumed to have similar levels of knowledge and insight

on how to police violent outbursts. This view is, of course, synonymous with masculinity. But rather than challenging the gender norms perpetuated by the 'cult of masculinity' (Fielding, 1994), participants were accepting and did not feel anger or resentment towards not being able to attend the picket lines. Instead, it would appear that, at least in 1984/5, gender norms were tolerated. This, Kanter (1977) explains, is a common survival technique in male-dominated environments. Tokens develop an awareness of their 'slot' (Kanter 1977: 232), and accept it unquestionably. This, coupled with earlier occupational socialisation teaching policewomen that they should be passive (Cunningham and Ramshaw, 2020), subsequently created a cohort of women that internalised their position, as well as the position of the dominant group (Kanter, 1977).

But whilst tokenism was arguably one of the strongest proponents as to why women accepted their lack of visibility on the picket lines, it did not hinder their progression elsewhere. In the absence of their male colleagues, women were left to run the police stations by themselves. This was, as Mandy highlighted, similar to that of the Second World War. She drew comparisons with the 'land girls' flying planes to 'deliver them' to army bases, adding that 'you don't hear about women doing that, do you?'. Indeed, despite the unprecedented nature of this instance, participants in this study recollected positive memories. Paula described the newly established police force as follows:

> The girls were left behind to do everything else. Tell a lie, there were some men as well, but they were the ones who'd been injured in some way that wouldn't have been able to go, but it was a really, really busy time because you had to do deal with everything, absolutely everything. From burglaries and drunken fights to really awful things like murders and arson, but we just had to do it, there was no choice in the matter. We didn't usually do things like IRU (incident response units) because you want people to be of a similar size in an IRU and there was too much variation among the girls, but after the strikes they started up a woman's IRU.

For the first time since the nineteen-forties, policewomen were left to man the stations by themselves. Jackson (2006) asserts that policewomen's war effort was a remarkable era in which women were able to prove themselves as capable in a variety of different aspects of policework, all of which was outside of typical gender roles. The miners'

strike provided almost identical conditions for women to monopolise on the absence of men. Whilst Paula noted that policing in Oxfordshire was a 'really busy time' during the strikes because women were doing 'absolutely everything', Lucy added that 'in charge of the whole city [of London]', were given 'longer shifts', and were given 'overtime' which, ordinarily, was given to policemen. Duties changed, too. Lisa noted that she had to 'get used to dealing with the things [I] hadn't dealt with before [...]' and 'putting into practice' aspects of policing she had only had the opportunity to learn about in 'training college'. Examples of this included 'fascist and BNP marches', 'Provisional Irish Republican Army attacks', 'arson', 'murder', 'drugs raids', 'political events', and 'football rivalries'. Mandy, who had just over ten years' service at this point, recalled the moment she realised opportunities were beginning to 'open up' when she led a team of women on what would become a murder investigation:

> During the miners' dispute, I remember we had a little child go missing, he was about three years of age, and there was the possibility that an older boy with learning difficulties had drowned him in a stream and this was in the centre of Bristol, and we were looking for this lad for a couple of days and found him and arrested him because he was suspected of it. It was fascinating, really, because it was only women dealing with it. I had a team of women working on this case and I can still see it now, just a team of women finding this body there and that was quite moving, really.

Mandy's account was delivered with a sense of emotion and pride, but also a degree of hesitancy to celebrate her own success. The researcher notes that this was a common theme, and all participants were hesitant to recognise the significance and merit of their own roles during the miners' strikes. Instead, participants described it as a case of 'doing what was expected' and 'keeping things ticking over' until the men returned. This was, in many ways, disheartening for the researcher to hear, particularly as interviewees were so keen to describe their male colleagues as courageous and brave. Greer (1970) argued that, owing to women's perception of self in the domestic sphere, they are socialised to evade being the centre of attention and, instead, must portray a typically 'genteel' account of their own actions. Kanter (1977) builds on this, adding that tokens are acutely aware of the social repercussions of potentially breaking the status quo, and subsequently devise tactics to uphold it. Amidst police culture, and this sense of awareness is much more apparent, with Loftus (2008; 2012) noting that attitudes in the

police force are, on average, thirty years behind the rest of society. 1980s attitudes, then, were more aligned with that of the nineteen-forties – and if women wanted to avoid breaking status quo, they needed to be passive and genteel, and avoid calling for revolution by suggesting that women were capable of equal work to that of men. Even after retirement, this thought pattern was still prominent and women still wanted to maintain social order in a force that they had long since retired from. This flaw in women's personalities, Greer (1970: 12) described, had 'prepared the way for the failure of emancipation' – but in the context of 1980s policing, it was not a flaw per se. In the next section of this chapter, the researcher explores how women's passivity led to permanent changes in policework.

7.4 The Immediate Aftermath of the Miners' Strike

The absence of policemen during the miners' dispute led to a notable shift in the dynamics of police stations. The temporary suspension of stringent gender norms saw policewomen presented with novel opportunities such as 'longer shifts' and 'overtime', and were first on the scene to address typically masculine areas of policework such as 'drug raids' and 'murders'. This led participants to draw comparisons to the Second World War whereby women were 'left behind to do everything'. And whilst this comparison was certainly accurate on the surface (Jackson, 2006), the period that followed the miners' dispute was starkly different. Unlike the Second World War, policewomen did not immediately revert to traditional duties (Brown and Heidensohn, 2000; Cunningham and Ramshaw, 2019). Indeed, as women enjoyed new levels of visibility in the force, there was minimal pressure to scale back on this to avoid attracting negative attention (Greer, 1970; Kanter, 1977). Instead, women were allowed to continue working alongside their male colleagues in new operations. The next portion of this chapter argues that, once women had passed the litmus test set by the miners' dispute, the next challenge they faced concerned proving their capabilities beyond traditional roles in an era of political and social instability.

Following the conclusion of the miners' dispute in March 1985, police forces in England and Wales regarded the conflict as a 'lucky accident' (Buckley, 2015: 422). It was generally felt that, whilst mutual aid had been effective, large numbers of officers were

unprepared for conflicts of a similar nature (Buckley, 2015). Unorganised policing and problematic riot control tactics such as kettling had been perceived as threatening and provocative, and had damaged police-public relations as a result (Waddington, 2011). To prepare for future clashes and reduce the level of disorganisation, police forces across the country began rolling out new training opportunities to all officers. Sarah, who joined Staffordshire Police during the strike in 1984, recalled being enrolled on a driving course. This, she noted, was 'unusual', because it was procedure to wait 'at least two years' before being offered the course. When asked why she thought she was offered it, she responded 'I think it was because of the miners' strike, maybe'. In a unique set of circumstances, Sarah had been able to police the miners' wives on the picket lines in Staffordshire. This had impressed her senior male colleagues so much, that they were eager to allocate Sarah a 'bigger patch' in the community to fix faltering relations. In addition to this, Public Order Training was offered to all officers (HC Deb 16 May 1985). Two participants described their Public Order Training experiences as follows:

> **Suzie (Greater Manchester Police, 1970s-1980s):** It was regular for all the staff eventually. We'd beat the shit out of another, practised throwing bricks at each other and all that business.

> **Janet (West Midlands Police, 1980s-1990s):** We used to go to the Black Country, to the old disused factories, and we'd have firebombs thrown at us and all sorts' (Janet, West Midlands Police.

Owing to its masculine nature, there was a heightened sense of importance attached to Public Order Training. This, in part, was because exposure to such levels of violence was a first for many female police officers. Mandy noted that, after the miners' strike, she 'immediately volunteered before it [PSU training] became mandatory' because she felt that her 'rank' – now 'Sergeant' – provided her with an opportunity to demonstrate to other women in her team that she was 'prepared' to do it. This was significant because, as noted by Smith and Gray (1985) and Fielding (1994), policing in the nineteen-eighties was comparable with that of an impenetrable cult of 'pure masculinity'. And yet, despite this, participants such as Mandy were acutely aware of the gravitas of such opportunities and were keen to monopolise on them. True to the period, however, 'doing gender' was still important (West and Zimmerman, 1987: 125). Mandy recognised that,

whilst her male colleagues were somewhat more receptive of women taking on new roles, it was important that women were gentle in their new approach and caused as 'little fuss' as possible. In doing so, Mandy was able to position herself as a role model to the rest of her team. This small act was a way for Mandy to challenge the zeitgeist, and ensure that future cohorts of policewomen were not haunted or held back by the legacy of sex segregation in the police force (Giele and Elder, 1998).

Before long, police officers were required to put their new training regimes into action. In September 1985, just six months after the end of the miners' dispute, a second wave of 'race riots' broke out across England. Toxteth, Brixton, Tottenham, and Handsworth experienced riots within weeks of one another because of deteriorating relations between the police and the black community (Hall, 1999; Jefferson, 2012). Although race relations had been an ongoing problem in Britain for two decades, they worsened during deindustrialisation as politicians blamed a lack of jobs on the country's increasing migrant population (Gilroy, 1987). Enoch Powell's (1968) infamous 'Rivers of Blood' speech, as well as Margaret Thatcher (1978) famously describing the country as 'rather swamped', set the tone for what was to become an increasingly bigoted decade. Eleanor, the only black policewoman to take part in this study, noted that, whilst she was frequently on the receiving end of comments such as 'fucking n***er' and 'go back home, w*g' from white people, she was also called 'traitor' and 'scum' by black people. Nancy, who served with the Metropolitan Police, suggested that there was an 'assumption' that the 'predominantly white' police force 'protected' those with racist views due to the ways in which British National Party and National Front marches were policed. This is confirmed through academic scholarship. Notable scholars, such as Hall *et al.*, (1978), Gilroy, (1987), and Hall (1999) reported that the police – including black officers – behaved discriminately and frequently misused stop and search powers to target young black men. And whilst Lord Scarman's (1981) enquiry into the police confirmed these suspicions, he affirmed that the police were 'not' institutionally racist.

Nonetheless, the race riots presented a new set of challenges for policewoman and acted as the first litmus test post-miners' strike. As argued by Kanter (1977: 232), token women typically assumed a feminine 'slot' in male-dominated workforce. For Janet, who had previously worked in CID as a clerk (see Chapter Five), she was very much aware of the gendered role she needed to fulfil. But when she joined the police after the miners' dispute in 1985, one of the first 'major' incidents she attended was the Handsworth Riots. Characterised by looting and violence (see Figure 16), it was estimated that at least 1,500 police officers were temporarily stationed in the area over a three-day period (Jefferson, 2012; ITV, 2015). Traditionally, policewomen had been protected from volatile landscapes, as was the case in the miners' strike six months prior. The same level of protection did not, however, exist in the Handsworth riots. Contrary to Kanter's (1977) observation of women being forced into feminine 'slots', Janet described her experiences policing the riots as being 'smack bang in the middle of it all' with policewomen

Figure 16 Handsworth Riots (Birmingham Mail, 2015)

'at the end of the road[s]' and policemen 'in the middle' with their cars:

> They [West Midlands Police] closed the road off. It was a great big, long road near Aston Villa football ground, and I stopped a man – a male member of the public – and I said to him 'if you go through that tape, I'll have to arrest you because it's a major incident'. Anyway, he *laughed* at me [eyes widened] he laughed at me he did, so I put him on the ground and said on the radio 'if any of you little boys want to leave your cars and come and assist me with wanting custody for public order', and I could see a couple of them start running down the road. After that, my gaffer [boss] said he was so impressed because he'd never had a policewoman making an arrest on her own before, especially not for public order. He came from a public order van which was really quite macho, so to gain his approval meant a lot.

Janet, who had initially been rejected from the police for being 'too short' (see *Chapter Four*), found herself in a precarious position. Arresting a male, especially for a public order offence, was out of the ordinary for policewomen (Jackson, 2006). However, as

Elder (1975) argued, significant historical events allowed for the temporary suspension of the life course and its prescribed trajectories. Owing to the unique conditions of the race riots, Janet was provided with a unique opportunity to carry out an arrest (Elder, 1975; Giele and Elder, 1998). And whilst women certainly made arrests during the miners' strike, very few were provided with an opportunity to do this in the middle of a 'major incident'.

Janet was certainly not alone in this. Elsewhere in the country, other participants also found themselves with new opportunities to immerse themselves in typically 'macho' policework. Mandy, who supported her colleagues in an adjacent race riot in the West of England, echoed similar sentiments as she obtained injury when 'rocks and things' were thrown at officers, despite wearing 'bloke's boiler suits and helmets'. One month later, Lucy was covered in 'paint and all sorts of horrible things' as things 'kicked off spectacularly' at an Anti-Apartheid protest in Trafalgar Square, November 1985:

> I can remember being in many protests. I think the biggest one was a big demonstration at Trafalgar Square, it was all to do with South Africa and South Africa House, obviously (November 1985). We got the intelligence that it was gonna be a reasonable day – and then, all of a sudden, it did kick off. Spectacularly, actually. I got covered in paint and all sorts of horrible things. But the trouble was when we were all holding arms and pushing against the crowd, because I was shorter, when I got pressed up against, I got shunted up to the same height as the officers either side of me. And I was worried 'cos the male officers either side of me was making sure I was okay, and I just kept telling them to look forward and focus on what was coming at us, 'cos I was fine. I mean I wasn't, but you didn't admit that. So, in the end, I couldn't push back against the crowd because my feet weren't on the ground. In the end, I shouted for some of the other female officers to get back so that if anything was chucked over, we'd pick it up and chuck it down the tube entrance so it couldn't be thrown again. But yeah, you did feel like you were a liability at times – but not because you were weak, but because the men were more worried about you being hit than what was coming towards them.

In contrast to recollections of the miners' dispute discussed earlier in this chapter, memories of this decade were not used to reinforce group membership (Halbwachs, 1992; Misztal, 2003). Participants did not undermine the significance of their respective roles in the race riots, nor did they focus on defending their male colleagues. Instead,

Janet, Mandy, and Lucy proudly shared with the researcher how they were amongst some of the first in their respective forces to experience such events, and reflected upon how they personally policed 'macho' conflicts. Janet, for example, was proud that she was able to arrest a man for a public order offence, whilst Lucy was able to prevent other policewomen from being hurt. This symbolises a shift in gender dynamics amongst officers. Up until 1984, the legacy of the Policewomen's Department had required 'good' women officers to behave passively and cause as little fuss as possible (Giele and Elder, 1998; Jackson, 2006). By late 1985, however, they were at the forefront of policework. The retelling of memories implies that they were unapologetic in this, too. The consequences of this, as will be discussed in the third and final part of this chapter, symbolised a wider shift in status for women officers (Prenzler and Sinclair, 2013).

Approval from their male colleagues was still seemingly weighted, but the prominence of the 'impossible dichotomy' (see Chapter Six) meant that the criterion needed to gain men's approval had shifted once more. Although Janet, Lucy and Mandy had been in dangerous situations, their struggle was kept private. This was likely because they were conscious of the need to 'prove' themselves as capable at any given time, especially in front of their male colleagues, because they were aware of the social ramifications of being too weak (Hochschild, 1979; Brown, 1999; Brown and Heidensohn, 2000; Cunningham and Ramshaw, 2020). Instead, participants chose to emphasise aspects of bravery and machismo to prove their worth. This implies that, after passing the litmus test laid out by the miners' strike, policewomen were becoming noticeably emboldened by adapting attributes of canteen culture, such as 'action-oriented sense of mission, machismo, danger and solidarity' (Reiner, 2000: 56). The rewards were priceless, and came in the form of acceptance and integration. Janet's 'gaffer [boss]' was 'impressed', adding that his approval 'meant a lot'. Mandy concluded this segment of the interview with a bold statement that attributed the bravery of women officers during this specific event as the reason for policewomen 'being on the front line of all violent conflict[s]'.

The immediate impact of the miners' strike, as displayed above, suggests that women's policework changed considerably. Women were able to adapt aspects of canteen culture to embolden their position in the force and increase their status, and received recognition for their bravery. This directly contradicts Greer (1970) and Kanter (1977)

who, one decade earlier, had argued that women needed to be 'genteel' in the workplace to avoid attracting attention. And whilst the findings above are indicative of change, it is important to note that policewomen were not entirely liberated from the wider gender order in its entirety. Janet, Mandy, and Lucy recollected life-or-death situations; and yet, despite these vindicated concerns, concealed their fear from their male colleagues. This phenomenon, described by Hochschild (1979), is known as 'emotion work'. As outlined earlier on in this thesis, emotion work in the workplace is referred to as emotional labour and sees women, particularly those of whom working in the service sector, regulate their emotions in front of colleagues (Hochschild, 1979; Klimczuk *et al.*, 2016). When Lucy was asked why she did not want to let her colleagues know her life was in danger, she replied that 'you didn't admit that' unless you wanted to be perceived as 'weak' and a 'liability'. In her opinion, keeping her struggle private was crucial for the sake of her predominantly male team. Similar thoughts were echoed in Mandy and Janet's respective interviews. Interestingly, participants did not immediately identify that there was anything wrong with this approach. Rather, it was continually seen as the 'right thing to do'. This, in part, is indicative of the wider socialisation process. In the domestic sphere, of which women still operated within, women were 'takers of shit' (Ansley, 1972). Ansley (1972) and Finch (1989) observed, women's roles in the home were centred around peacekeeping to the point that many mothers, grandmothers, and daughters saw it as their 'duty'. However, whilst second-wave feminism signified an end to these values, it did not occur over night. Women's emotion work in the domestic sphere translated into the workplace through emotional labour (Hochschild, 1979, and the prominence of canteen culture and institutional values meant that emotional labour – and, by extension, the removal of 'unwanted' emotions – was more important than ever to policewomen's survival. This contribution therefore expands upon the work of Loftus (2008; 2012) and argues that, whilst policework developed significantly following the miners' strike, attitudes were still outdated and indicative of wider structural inequalities. A change in policework alone was not enough to challenge the zeitgeist of occupational culture.

7.5 The Long-Lasting Effects of the Miners' Strike

As this chapter has demonstrated thus far, policing was firmly recognised as a man's job on both a cultural, social, and institutional level. And as Loftus (2008; 2012) rightly argued, patriarchal attitudes promoted by an internal occupational culture meant that internal attitudes and practices were outdated. One might therefore assume that policing rejected wider societal changes to the status of women. On the contrary, the number of women entering the police force had increased from 1984 onwards. In the Metropolitan Police Service, for example, the number of policewomen in 1984 equalled 2,484 – or 9% of the overall force. Over a ten-year period, this increased to 14%. And by 2004, this had increased to 19%. Comparisons with other forces are difficult because it was not a requirement for police forces to keep track of their employees' characteristics as part of their Equality, Diversity, and Inclusion (EDI) strategy. Anecdotally, however, it was felt that the demography of the police force changed significantly throughout the nineteen-nineties. Below, participants reflected on how the demographics of their respective forces outside of the Metropolitan Police had changed:

> **Sarah (Staffordshire Police, 1980s-2010s)**: I noticed more women joining in the 1990s, certainly.

> **Ottilie (Kent Police, 1970s-2000s)**: Lots of young girls began to realise that there was more to life than being a mother or a housewife. The police provided them with that opportunity because it was something new, something exciting, no two days were the same and I noticed that it became priority for lots of our fresh recruits in the 1990s.

> **Winnie (Hampshire Constabulary, 1980s-2010s)**: There was an expectation that, once you got married and got pregnant, you'd pack up and leave. When I went back after maternity, I remember my inspector ranting about how awful it was that he had a team of women who'd go off and get pregnant and how he shouldn't have to deal with it. He said 'you shouldn't be here, you're a mother. Call yourself a mother? You should be at home'. Part time working came in not long after and attitudes changed eventually, but it was hard. It felt like we [policewomen] didn't have much choice but to leave once we became mothers, the two were seen as incompatible and it stayed that way until the mid-nineties, possibly a little later.

> **Gemma (Wiltshire Police, 1980s–2020s):** It was normal in the 1980s for women to join the force, meet a husband, get pregnant, and then

bugger off and leave. It changed in the 1990s, there were more opportunities to stay on.

Potential explanations for this sudden shift in the zeitgeist vary. As discussed earlier on in this chapter, the decline of the male breadwinner coincided with a growth in the number of women taking up employment in the service industry (Elder, 1998). The impact of this was not instantaneous; rather, it was gradual, and took at least a decade for the social effects on young girls' trajectories to become visible. This is explained by Sue Sharpe (1976; 1994) in her longitudinal '*Just Like a Girl'* study. In the nineteen-seventies, Sharpe found cohorts of school-aged girls prioritised domestic and stereotypical duties, such as love, marriage, husbands, and children. When Sharpe repeated her study in the nineteen-nineties, she found that attitudes had shifted amongst young girls, who were now prioritising education, careers and being independent over the typically gendered trajectory of marriage and motherhood. This had a noticeable impact on the girls' presentation of self too, with Sharpe (1994) observing that young women were more confident, assertive, and ambitious than earlier generations, making them more equipped for leadership roles.

Similar attitudes were echoed by participants in this study. Ottilie noted that new recruits, most of whom were between the ages of 18 and 21, were pursuing a life outside of the domestic sphere and actively sought jobs that provided a sense of 'excitement'. Gemma concurred, noting that it was 'normal […] to meet a husband, get pregnant, and then bugger off and leave'. Winnie agreed, adding that after a tough conversation with her Inspector, she became aware after she had given birth to her first child, that policing and motherhood were seen as 'incompatible'. Across the 35 interviews, the nineteen-nineties were consistently recognised as an epoch in which cultural expectations of women changed significantly. Sarah observed that there were 'more women joining [the force]', whilst Gemma noted that there were 'more opportunities to stay on' for those who pursued motherhood. This move towards retention was, in many regards, a first for policing. The creation of 'The British Association for Women in Policing' (BAWP) in 1987, followed by the introduction of part-time work and career breaks in the early-to-mid nineteen-nineties, meant that the police were, as one participant put it, 'forced' into the millennium. As discussed earlier

in this chapter, legislative changes had previously taken at least a decade to come into effect – but when part-time working hours was proposed by John Major's Conservative Party in 1994, police forces were quick to adapt this as a way to retain policewomen, particularly those who were considered 'good'.

For Paula, who left the force after giving birth to her first child some years prior, this meant that she was 'personally invited to re-apply' in the late nineties. Upon her return, Paula noticed that there were more women constables – but interestingly, this did not alleviate any of the pressures she experienced. She observed that, whilst women were no longer restricted to tea-making and minding children, it was now a 'much more pressurised' environment in which she needed to 'prove herself' on three accounts: as a returning policewoman, as a mother, and as a potential role model to younger female recruits. Remarkably, Paula's first opportunity to do this was on the 6th of September 1997 during the ceremonial funeral of Diana, Princess of Wales:

> The second time round, and it always confuses me because I re-joined after I had my children, that was Princess Diana's funeral. I was on the route for that. It was an experience, it was. And I wasn't in London, I was up on the motorway towards Milton Keynes.

After the news broke about Diana's death, the British public lay over one million bouquets of flowers outside the gates of Royal Residences in a very public display of grief (Walters, 1999). And in a heartfelt speech later that day, the then Prime Minister, Tony Blair, described Diana as the 'people's princess', signifying her popularity to the British population (BBC, 1997). It was clear early on that the funeral of Diana was expected to be of equal size and significance of King George VI and Sir Winston Churchill. And whilst Royal ceremonials are often given codenames and rehearsed extensively by the emergency services, Diana's death was unprecedented and, as such, no 'formal' plans were in place (Laidlaw and Waddington, 1999). This, Laidlaw and Waddington (1999) argued, had the potential for disaster and embarrassment as the country only had a matter of days to prepare for what would become one of the biggest events of the decade. Paula recognised this, too. Although she was given a clear set of instructions to keep funeral-goers away from a particular bridge, the sheer number of mourners wanting to catch a glimpse of the funeral cortège was unparalleled. As such,

Paula and her team were under pressure to stay away from protocol and keep the mourners safe:

> We were told not to let anyone go on a certain bridge because the bridge wouldn't have been strong enough for hundreds of people who all wanted to see the car with her coffin. And that was okay, I displaced them and they went to go across the fields and into the ditch and onto the motorway. I remember people on my team – including the blokes – panicking and being like 'oh my god, what do we do?!

Conscious of the fact that the funeral was being broadcast live on television to an estimated two-and-a-half billion people across the globe (Shome, 2001), Paula knew she had to make a quick judgement. Important decision making had, traditionally, been left to police*men* because it was synonymous with the 'cult of masculinity' that had dominated policing since its inception (Smith and Gray, 1985; Fielding, 1994; Brown and Heidensohn, 2000). Policemen were seen as efficient leaders who thrived in fast-paced scenarios, whilst women were seen as overly 'sensitive' to make such assessments (Reiner, 1997; Brown and Jackson, 2006). Such views had led to segregation of the sexes for the best part of sixty years (Rigby and Temple-Malt, 2025), and were still visible during the miners' dispute. Despite this, though, policewomen had collectively 'passed'

Figure 17 Funeral Cortege, M1 (Stephens, 1997)

the litmus test in the mid-eighties, and had been awarded a degree of autonomy to make their own decisions. Paula recognised this in her account, describing her conduct in the scenario as 'calm' as she gave orders to 'dispatch' members of the public onto the motorway (see Figure 17). In stark contrast to the prevailing view of the early-to-mid twentieth century, Paula's newfound responsibility denotes the extent to which women had progressed in just a short period of time, and captures how women were given opportunities to demonstrate pragmatism, assertiveness and leadership skills through high-stake judgements.

As discussed in Chapter Five, policewomen were wary of their behaviour and monitored their interactions with their colleagues closely to ensure that they did not attract the

'wrong' type of attention. This, as Kanter (1977) observed, was a typical survival technique adapted by tokens in male-dominated workplaces. Paula's service was split into two parts – and whilst she noted that the second time round was more 'pressurised', she did not adhere to passivity or meekness (Sharpe, 1994). Instead, she was defiant – and although her decision to allow mourners to stand on the motorway eventually got her in trouble with her superiors, she stood by her decision:

> I calmly said 'well we've got to go with them, otherwise somebody's going to get hurt' and we ended up watching the car literally from the central reservation. And once she'd gone past, I literally herded everyone back up the slip-road and they just got back into their cars and they drove off [thoughtful pause] it was quite surreal. We got told off afterwards for letting it happen but that was quite okay because I didn't care, I don't know what else was the right thing to do other than let people stand and watch and pay their respects in a safe way.

Paula was not fearful of the repercussions from her senior officers, nor from her colleagues. She was confident that she had made the right call. This particular narrative struck the researcher as a pivotal moment. As discussed earlier on in this chapter, previous recollections of women's role in the miners' strike were shared in a way that inadvertently undermined the achievements of policewomen to deliberately preserve and maintain group solidarity (Halbwachs, 1992; Misztal, 2003). In contrast, the recollection of policewomen's roles in the nineties, as exemplified by Paula, reflected a time when women began to assert their authority in public-facing, high-stake moments – marking a clear break from their former, passive roles. This, admittedly, coincides with societal trends, and perhaps contradicts the arguments of Loftus (2008; 2012) whereby canteen culture was perceived to be 'behind' the rest of society. The work of Loftus is not disputed by the author of this thesis; but, rather, it is suggested that the nineteen-nineties marked the start of policewomen adapting traits typically promoted amongst canteen culture, such as pragmatism and machismo, and using it for their own advantage (Reiner, 1985: 115). By taking charge in moments of crisis, women were no longer content with passively following orders; rather, they were comfortable with taking leadership.

By the end of the 1990s, women officers were no longer distinguishable from their male colleagues. The 'WPC' title that was originally awarded to policewomen in the 1910s

was removed, and women were now referred to as regular Police Constables. Similar changes occurred to their collar numbers. When asked why she felt that this change had been introduced, Ottilie aptly noted that it was 'agreed […] it was no longer needed'. Some thirty years after the introduction of the Sex Discrimination Act and closure of the Policewomen's Department, female recruits had finally proven themselves as equally capable to their male colleagues.

7.6 Conclusion

Drawing upon the 'time and place' principle of the life course paradigm (Elder, 1975; Giele and Elder, 1998), the purpose of this chapter was to explore how unique historical events of the nineteen-eighties altered the trajectory of policewomen's careers. Although it is widely acknowledged that the nineteen-eighties and nineteen-nineties were an era of change for women more broadly, very little research has been conducted into the impact this had on the role of policewomen. As such, this chapter aimed to provide insight into three specific events – the miners' strike, the race riots, and the death of Princess Diana – and examine the impact this had on policewomen.

The first theme explored participants' memories of the miners' strike and experiences of mutual aid. As police stations across the country were emptied, the onus fell on policewomen to undertake traditionally 'masculine' policework until men returned. In addition to attending drug raids and leading murder investigations, participants also worked longer shifts and overtime – or 'ching' – for the first time in their careers. Participants were also keen to challenge the dominant view of police brutality and argued that, although the miners' strike was violent, police officers were also attacked. Archival evidence was used to support this side, as well as the opposing side, of the debate. It was therefore contended that memories pertaining to controversial aspects of policing were likely an extension of group solidarity, a common trait of occupational culture. The second theme explored the immediate aftereffects of the miners' strike. Following the conclusion of the miners' dispute, a series of 'copycat' disturbances – now known as the English Race Riots – occurred within close succession of one another. Unlike the miners' strike, which saw a deliberate attempt to protect policewomen from the violence, participants recalled being at the centre of conflict.

This theme explored how women adapted aspects of canteen culture, such as bravery and machoism, to gain the approval of their male colleagues. In practice, this saw a huge change in the types of policework they undertook, with some participants experiencing life or death situations. This level of willingness was essential for women to pass the litmus test set by their colleagues. However, despite these obvious changes to policework, women were experiencing more pressure than ever before to carry out emotion work. It is concluded that, whilst change was undoubtedly occurring, it was gradual, and that a change in police duties alone was not enough to change the cultural pressure faced by women. The third and final theme explored the long-term effects of the miners' strike by examining the role of policewomen during the largest policing operation of 1997: the unprecedented death of Diana, Princess of Wales. Over a decade later, women were now in leadership positions. The latter half of this chapter explored women's experiences in leadership and how attitudes had caught up with practices to some degree. This led to the removal of the WPC acronym, as well as the introduction of part-time work and flexible hours, and a wider attempt to retain police officers.

In conclusion, the original contribution of knowledge presented in this chapter is that the miners' strike acted as a catalyst for short-term and long-term change. Change was not, of course, instantaneous. Women battled stringent gender norms and experienced a great deal of physical hardship to prove their worth. Despite this, they were emboldened by adapting aspects of canteen culture – such as bravery and machismo – and leading the way for new cohorts of policewomen to follow in their lead.

Chapter Eight –

'And the Beat Goes On': Promotion, Retirement and the

Later Life Course

8.1 Introduction

In the previous chapter, it was argued that the 1984 Miners' Strike acted as a catalyst for structural change within the police force. The gender order of policing and wider society meant that, when violence broke out on the picket lines, male police officers were required to provide physical strength to keep the peace (Connell, 1987; Cunningham and Ramshaw, 2020). Whilst popular accounts of the Miners' Strike suggest that the police behaved in a violent and provocative manner towards unsuspecting members of the public, participants in this study were reluctant to openly speak about this. This was partly explained by the 'blue code of silence' (Westmarland and Conway, 2020). Findings presented in the previous chapter add a new layer to Westmarland's (2005; 2020) concept of the Blue Code of Silence, highlighting that loyalty to the job goes beyond active service and, instead, remains with female officers even after they have left the force. Whilst their male colleagues were providing mutual aid across the country, policewomen were left to run the stations. And although parallels can be drawn here with policewomen's experiences in the intra-war years, policewomen's duties did not revert to 'normal'. The latter half of the previous chapter then began to explore the short-term effects of the Miners' Strike and how it transformed the role of policewomen long-term.

This final chapter shifts the focus to the mid and later life course. Drawing upon 'timing of lives' (Giele and Elder, 1998: 11), the researcher explores how participants – who were now in their forties and fifties – navigated an atypical life course. During this period of 'middle age', it is common for individuals to reach the peak of their careers. For police officers, however, they were preparing to navigate retirement – a life event that, in an ordinary life course trajectory, would occur much later in life. Forming part of the original contribution of this thesis, the researcher examines how participants engaged with this non-normative trajectory on a personal and professional level. Thus, this

chapter explores how participants interacted with the 'new' era of twenty-first century policing – and how this shaped their decision to pursue promotion and training opportunities. Attention is also given to participants whose careers came to an unexpected end through ill health, workplace bullying, and the culmination of adverse experiences resulting from canteen culture. Finally, post-retirement careers are examined. It is argued that the experiences discussed in Chapters Four, Six and Seven ultimately informed the decisions they made about post-retirement career choices.

8.2 Recap of Literature

The timing of lives, or 'strategic adaption', is a term commonly used by life course theorists to refer to a period of life that combines 'personal, group and historical markers' (Giele and Elder, 1998: 2). Building upon the groundwork laid by Giele and Elder (1998), Price *et al*., (2000) later argued that this stage of the life course could be further divided into three distinctive categories: generational (see Chapter Four), individual (see *Chapter* Five) and historical (see Chapter Six). Bengston *et al*., (2005; 2012) argued that, whilst timing of lives traditionally focused on early lives – for example, Penny Tinkler's seminal studies of 'Women in Nineteen-Fifties Britain' (2018) and 'Constructing Girlhood' (1996), and Sue Sharpe's (1994) 'Just Like a Girl' – there has been a recent shift in the study of sociology to address women's experiences in the mid and later life course.

Midlife, or the 'afternoon of life' (Jung, 1933), refers to the period in which early experiences marry together with later life experiences (Lachman *et al*., 2015). As Erikson (1963) later concurred, the pivotal nature of middle-life is to make connections between experiences, and to construct a meaningful sense of self and identity. This period, then, is often characterised by a sense of calamity and has been attributed to the stage in life whereby self-belief – confidence in themselves, their role, and their capabilities – fell into place (Hunt, 2010). For Neugarten and Datan (1974: 98), midlife symbolised an era in which individuals were 'no longer driven, but now the drivers'. The problem with literature surrounding the 'actualisation' stage of midlife, however, is that it largely focuses upon the experiences of middle-class men (Lachman, 2004). For women, evidence suggests that they experience 'role loss' and struggle to find their

place in the larger social sphere (Levy, 1981). Issues such as motherhood, menopause and a perceived decline in physical currency are believed to affect women negatively, often resulting in them feeling 'unwanted' (Green, 2010). Conversely, men's physical currently is thought to increase with age (Green, 2010). Furthermore, the exact point at which mid-life starts and ends is uncertain. Whilst some scholars postulate that midlife is between the ages of 40 and 65, there is a great deal of disparity (Lachman *et al*., 2015). For some theorists, such as Dingemans and Möhring (2019), the exact point at which midlife ends is retirement.

Retirement – and, by extension, the later life course – is defined by physiological and biological realities (Moen, 1996). Historically, it was believed that retirement could offer a series of health benefits for people in physically demanding jobs (Di Gessa *et al*., 2017; Phillipson and Lain, 2019). However, following Britain's shift towards a welfare approach at the beginning of the twentieth century, retirement emerged as a mass experience for people of a certain age. The 'old age pension' was first introduced in 1909, and worked as a means tested benefit to anyone over the age of 70 (Foster, 2018). By the nineteen-forties, the retirement age was lowered to 60 for women, and 65 for men (ibid). Whilst well intentioned, the effects of this change meant that ageing had been institutionalised through state legislation and led to a period of social disengagement (Hunt, 2005). As Chapters Five, Six and Seven of this thesis have already demonstrated, employment acts as a marker of status and identity. Removal from this environment subsequently, and inadvertently, led to a generation of older people being 'cut off' from important financial and social stability (Friedmann and Havighurst, 1954; Reisman, 1958). The latter half of the twentieth century saw debates around retirement age, particularly in relation to an increase in life expectancy (Blaikie, 1999; 2008). This led to the implementation of policy intended to extend the working life (Phillipson, 2018: 2). Today, it is generally believed that there is now a greater emphasis around agency when it comes to retirement and later life, with more people choosing to postpone retirement until they feel physically and mentally ready (Phillipson, 2018; Phillipson and Lain, 2019). However, this assumption often overlooks the prominence of inequalities in later life. As Kuitto et al., (2021) argued, working-class women who had taken career

breaks to raise children often experience pension disparities, thus increasing the need to work beyond the state retirement age.

For participants in this study, the ambiguity between midlife – which occurs between 45 and 64 – and later life – 65 and older – creates a dichotomy because the retirement age for police officers coincided with midlife (Erikson, 1950). As part of the Police Pension Scheme 1987, police officers were typically required to serve for anywhere between twenty-five and thirty years to receive a full pension at the age of 50 (Home Office, 2015: 6). For most participants in this study, their policing careers began when they were aged 19 or 20. This therefore meant that retirement happened at a much earlier age than the rest of their age cohort in different occupations. According to Section 4.1 of the Police Pension Scheme 1987, officers with 25 years' service could retire at the age of 50, whilst officers with 30 years' service could retire before 50 (Home Office, 2006). Some forces and ranks required officers to retire at a compulsory retirement age because their retention 'would not be in the general interests of efficiency' (Home Office, 2006: 6). This therefore suggests that participants' time as police officers was restricted by their biological age.

Life course theory seldom, if at all ever, addresses the experiences of early retirees, and the somewhat conflicting identity that emerges because of retiring at an early age. As an original contribution to knowledge, the remainder of this chapter examines how participants in this study navigated midlife and later life course – and, more importantly, how they used their position and influence to transform the relational nature of policing for future cohorts. This chapter also discusses some of the more 'taboo' corners of policing, and how participants' careers ended in an untimely manner.

8.3 Room at the Top: The Route to Promotion

As per life course theory, seeking promotion is thought to be a natural part of the career trajectory (Giele, 2002; Hutchinson, 2024). For women in male dominated workspaces, though, such a move can be perceived as controversial (Kanter, 1977). Literature pertaining to police officers' motivations for seeking promotion is plentiful, particularly in American journals (see Gaines *et al.*, 1994; Gau *et al.*, 2012; Somers, *et al.*, 2024). However, very little has been written around police officers' experiences obtaining

promotion in England and Wales. As part of the original contribution of this thesis, this section explores how participants earnt promotion, and the barriers associated with it.

Of the 35 participants in this study, only a small handful of participants were promoted above the rank of Sergeant. To be considered for promotion, police officers were required to complete two steps. Gemma noted that the first part of the procedure – the Objective Structured Performance Related Examination (OSPRE) – was a 'written' examination. Lasting up to three hours, the first part of the question paper consisted of 150 multiple-choice questions (Barron, 1999). The second half of the examination – summarised by Gemma as a series of 'scenarios' – required candidates to demonstrate their suitability for the position by responding to various roleplay exercises (Home Office, 2012). The following quotes capture participants' recollections of the process:

> **Gemma (Wiltshire Police, 1980s–2020s):** I passed the written part of the OSPRE exam, but I never passed the second part which was scenarios [...] you got two other attempts [at the exam] if you failed.

> **Janet (West Midlands Police, 1980s–1990s**): There was an entrance exam [...] I didn't and still don't like revising.

> **Georgia (British Transport Police, 1970s-2010s):** It was the old OSPRE national exams, so we did a written paper and then scenarios. It was a big commitment at the time, I hadn't long been married. So, I wrote off nine months to prepare. I didn't read a book; I didn't read a newspaper. The only thing I would let myself pick up would be the codes of practice or flash cards. There were certain things like firearms, for example. Working in the BTP, I didn't have any exposure to it, so my husband would bring home paperwork, and we'd practice that as well.

Once officers had passed the OSPRE exam, they were then invited to a promotion board. The process was, as one might expect, a competitive process. True to occupational culture, promotion boards invited a sense of rivalry between officers – fittingly described by Victoria as 'willy waving'. Although promotion panels had traditionally been male dominated, the breadth of applicants became more diverse towards the late eighties and early nineties. Winnie observed that, although she was the same age and had a similar length of service to her competitors, her colleagues were 'shocked' to see a woman there.

Male-dominated promotion panels also brought with them outdated and as-yet-unchallenged masculine standards. Parallels can be drawn here with Chapter Five. During participants' initial interviews, it was clear that the recruiting officers were looking for the 'ideal' candidate (Skolnick, 1966). This, in turn, led to inappropriate questions about women's sexualities, marital status, and sex lives. Participants recalled their experiences of promotion panels in the nineties and finding themselves in a very similar situation as they had done ten years prior, when they initially sought employment in the police:

> **Georgia (British Transport Police, 1970s-2010s)**: I did the first part of my Inspectors exam when I was six months pregnant with my first, and the second part when I had literally just given birth. I breastfed the baby, handed him over to my husband, and then did my exam. I passed both with flying colours – but I couldn't get past the bloody board for love nor money.

> **Victoria (Sussex Police, 1980s-2020s)**: I did my first [Sergeant] promotion board when I was pregnant with my first child. I clearly hadn't had a very good day, the interview wasn't great, but I got on with it. I was then told in the interview 'why don't you just go off and have your children? I'm sure you'll get more satisfaction out of that'. It wasn't maliciously said, but it was very condescending.

> **Mandy (Avon and Somerset Police, 1980s-2010s)**: I went for promotion and passed, but I was recently divorced. I was told that I was obviously not up to it because I'd been through a traumatic divorce and my mind wasn't right for it. So, they made me wait another year and they said I had to do a different role just to prove I was okay. I did it, hated it, and then finally got my promotion the following year. I very much doubt my ex-husband was held back.

The above quotes demonstrate significant challenges pertaining to their sex. It was, Georgia described 'hard', to navigate these challenges when women only had 'one day' to prove their suitability for promotion. However, in contrast to this, two participants – one Chief Constable (CC) and one Chief Inspector (CI) – suggested that promotion was never something they had intentionally worked towards. As women serving at this rank are so few and far between, the decision has been made by the researcher to remove pseudonyms for the following discussion. Instead, they will be referred to by their rank to ensure that their identities are protected. CC and CI offered the following insights into how they obtained promotion:

> **CC:** As I got older, I was progressing through the ranks and obviously I did get more confident, but it was never something I thought about or aspired to do. It was more of a natural progression.

> **CI:** The older I got, the more I realised I *could* get promoted. And I did, I eventually reached Chief Inspector.

Both CC and CI downplayed the significance of their promotions and work ethic behind it. This is partly explained by experiences in the earlier life course. As discussed in Chapter Four, women were socialised from an early age to be passive (West and Zimmerman, 1987; Sharpe, 1996). Career aspirations and ambitions were perceived as typically masculine traits (Baraitser, 2023). Even in the 1990s, the decade in which CC and CI were beginning to move through the ranks, the 'Girl Power' movement was still dominated by women's subordination to men and appeasement of the broader gender order (Zaslow, 2009). This, coupled with the complexities associated with 'surviving' police culture by attracting as little attention as possible, therefore explains why participants avoided being brazen about their remarkable achievements. In both cases, participants were the 'first' women in their forces to achieve rank – and yet, despite this, women were reluctant to centre their biographies around this because of the pressure around 'doing' gender correctly (West and Zimmerman, 1987).

Instead, CC and CI attribute that their age had led to them to achieving this promotion. At this stage in their lives, both participants were 'settled'. As identified by Thomas *et al*., (2018), the aforementioned 'stressors' of early adulthood were more likely to have been reduced by midlife. The shift from a 'transitional' phase of the life course is, in most circumstances, synonymous with the start of a more stable personal life (Giele and Elder, 1998; Thomas *et al*., 2018).

This newfound confidence was evident in the way that women interacted with their peers. As discussed in Chapter Seven protect their male colleagues' egos by avoiding acting in a way that could overshadow them. By the nineties, there was still considerable demand for participants to conceal their individual successes. Participants, however, reported a more emboldened approach to gender-based criticism. CI, whose husband was also a serving police officer, reflected that the pressure on men to outperform women was also rife. When she and her husband

attended the same promotion panel, only she passed. This event, she noted, led to her husband's colleagues making unpleasant comments – all in the hope of emasculating him:

> **CI:** My husband and I went to the same Inspector's board [promotion panel]. I got through, whereas he didn't. And a lot of people said to him 'you must be embarrassed'. And he said 'no, why would I be?'.

According to her colleagues, the onus was on CI – rather than her husband – to consider how her promotion may have caused embarrassment. Indeed, despite progress made in the eighties, it was still considered to be a woman's responsibility to ensure that she did not emasculate her husband (Kanter, 1977; Ballakrishnen *et al*., 2018). Women who outshone their male colleagues were, in effect, rescinding their invisibility in the workforce (Ballakrishnen, 2018). And whilst the repercussions were not as intense as they were in Chapter Five of this thesis, it had the potential to make the job unpleasant unless women had thick skins.

CC's promotion also attracted negative attention from her colleagues – which, incidentally, involved scathing attacks around her personal life. After she was promoted in the mid-nineties, rumours suggested that this was the result of her husband being a Black man:

> **CC:** This makes it sound bad, and no one says it to your face, but other people would tell me there were comments like who I must be sleeping with to get these promotions. My husband's black and when I married him, a rumour went round that the then Chief Constable had said if I married him 'cos he was black – cos it was around the time of the Stephen Lawrence murder and investigation [7]– I'd get promoted to Inspector not long after I got married. I think it [the promotion] was a year after, and the two were completely unconnected, but yeah it went round anyway that if I married him I'd get promoted to Inspector and that he'd promised me this promotion cos he liked the idea [...] I mean yeah, it's absolutely pathetic, but those were the sorts of levels people would go to.

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[7] Stephen Lawrence, an eighteen-year-old black male from London, was murdered in a racially motivated attack in 1993 (Macpherson, 1999). In February 1999, the Macpherson Report found that the initial investigation into Stephen Lawrence's murder had been inadequate. Investigating officers were found to have held racially prejudiced views, and the MPS were accused of institutional racism (ibid). Subsequent efforts were carried out by police forces across the country to tackle institutional racism, such as creating a more 'diverse' police service (Home Office, 2004: 25).

Owing to women's heightened visibility, there was a common belief held amongst male officers that women were unable to obtain promotion through legitimate means. Throughout the 1990s, a conscious effort was made by the Government and the public sector to deconstruct masculine spaces. The Civil Service was encouraged to hire people from under-represented groups, such as women and ethnic minorities (Frost, 2015), in the hope that this would provide them with equal opportunities and challenge the gender order long-term (Frost, 2015). The legacy of this, however, was tainted by the media's response. Nicknames such as 'Blair's Babes' in 1997, 'Cameron's Cuties' in 2009, and 'Gordon's Gals' in 2010 emerged in the mainstream media to mock female politicians and cast doubt over their achievements (Mavin *et al.*, 2010). This subsequently had a notable impact on an already male-dominated police force. When Janet was asked by her Sergeant to go for promotion, she asked him why – to which he responded 'they need women Sergeants'. Although this was meant as a complement, Janet was taken aback by the suggestion that she might apply for a post *because* she was a woman:

> I said there's no way I want to be a Sergeant and have people nudge and say either a) she only got that job because she shagged the inspector or b) she's only got promoted because they only want to recruit minorities. So, I refused. I refused to go on riot duty until they got me proper uniform, and I refused to go for promotion because it was discriminatory.

The idea that women 'shagged' their way to promotion was a prominent stereotype amongst police officers (Kanter, 1977). As conveyed in Chapter Five and Six of this thesis respectively, women were under a great deal of pressure to find the right balance between overtly feminine and masculine – a concept that the author of this thesis has coined 'the impossible dichotomy'. This archaic attitude did not disappear, and was still prominent into the nineties. Georgia noted that, although it was 'so hard' to gain promotion, it was often undermined by comments insinuating that women had only obtained promotion because they were 'a woman', 'black', or 'gay'. Lucy also noted that, because of this, there was a perceived culture of 'over promotion' – even if that was not borne out of reality.

Due to the risk associated with promotion, participants in this study were largely apathetic about it. Lucy recalled that, despite her mother's encouragement, she did not pursue promotion. Instead, she believed that there were 'more opportunities' at lower rank' and that entering the higher rank could be 'restrictive':

> When it came to promotion, there was still an expectation that women were pregnant, bare foot and tied to the sink. It affected the older officers, but the younger officers saw that and adopted that attitude very quickly. Promotion [...] it was jobs for the boys, bit of nepotism, that sort of thing.

It is clear from the above quote that the sense of apathy amongst participants was largely the result of the glass ceiling being firmly in place. Although police culture had become more welcoming of women at PC and DC level, things remained relatively unchanged at higher rank. By the turn of the millennium, it was still apparent that the appointment of women to senior positions had made very little difference to the overall culture. However, participants in this study were still eager for some degree of social change. As they got older, they recognised that they had the power to make small but impactful differences for women starting their policing careers. Winnie, for example, recognised that older policewomen felt uncomfortable approaching their managers with requests to accommodate perimenopausal symptoms such as hot flushes. She believed that small allowances to the uniform, such as being able to 'remove ties' during a hot flush, would make women feel more comfortable in their roles. Janet, on the other hand, took new female recruits under her wing. When she realised that she was on the receiving end of harassment and assault, she pressured management to arrange a transfer. It was these 'small' acts of selflessness that participants such as Winnie believed made the biggest difference for younger policewomen. And as will be discussed later in this chapter, these life events were significant in shaping their post-policing pathways.

8.4 Bullying, Canteen Culture and Resignations

For a small handful of participants, though, the dilemma of whether to seek promotion –
– was beyond their grasp. Instead, they grappled with a much more challenging problem: walking away from their chosen career in its entirety.

As highlighted in Chapter Four, the decision to join the police force was no easy feat. Participants had been met with disapproval from their parents and friends, a lack of support from their significant others, and encountered challenges during the recruitment process. However, as discussed in Chapter Six, police occupational culture presented a serious problem. Once policewomen had been assigned a nickname or label, that was difficult to shake off. She recalled how she came to develop a reputation that was influenced her 'no nonsense approach' to the childish, practical jokes played by her colleagues – which she said continued to follow her around 'like a bad smell' for the remainder of her career. This next section, then, focuses on participants' narratives and how they arrived at the difficult decision to 'walk away' from the careers they had sacrificed so much for. Although there were at least six early resignations, this chapter will focus on three narratives that are illustrative of the 'main' reasons for leaving the force across my sample: sexual harassment, bullying, and ill health.

Sexual harassment – a broader and more contested aspect of canteen culture (Loftus, 2012; Cunningham and Ramshaw, 2020) – was, albeit to varying degrees, a common theme across all participants' careers. After a few years' service, Violet, whose experiences were discussed in Chapter Five and Six, was confronted by her superintendent for her 'reputation' amongst her colleagues:

> He [Superintendent] said to me, 'you're getting a bit of a reputation with the boys'. And I replied 'Sir, if I was anything like the reputation you're saying, I'd be something of a sexual athlete – and that's simply not the case!'. This was the same guy who, when I called in to say I couldn't come into work because I was sick, said to me 'I could come and rub your chest with boot grease'.

As per expectations, Violet was able to respond with a humorous comment about being a 'sexual athlete', something which she knew to be untrue. Minimising her emotions through the adoption of humour – or 'surface acting' (Hochschild, 1979) – aided Violet to mask her true feelings, but noted that it was 'the little things' that 'added up'. Whilst she knew that something was wrong, she recognised that there was an expectation for her to tolerate it because challenging it, particularly as the only woman on her team, was 'out of the question'. The final straw for Violet occurred just a few months later when the enormity of what was happening in her station hit her. A colleague who, up until this

point, she had considered a friend, kissed her. She described feeling paralysed – 'I did nothing, I couldn't do anything' – and reflected on how his abuse of power made her feel now, as a middle-aged woman:

> There were times that were a bit tricky because I was down in the cells once with this man who I really liked - I mean, liked as a friend, y'know he was a sweet guy - and he just grabbed me and kissed me. I did nothing, I couldn't do anything. Once he stopped, I went on about my business and he went about his and we didn't speak about it again. He was a nice guy, and he was a much older fella, but you do sort of wonder what is it that makes people do those things? But I was young, y'know. But when I think back on it now, I think what a strange thing to do. He abused his power because I was young.

Although Violet had previously been able to appease her colleagues through banter (Anderson *et al.*, 1993; Brown, 1999), she knew that, at this point, she could no longer continue working in an environment in which she was sworn to secrecy about her mistreatment. It was at this point that she confided in her then-boyfriend that she wanted to leave the force to focus on their future together.

Ruby, who first made an appearance in this thesis in Chapter Five, felt 'trapped' by the culture of silence she found herself in. Researchers such as Mezey and Rubenstein (1992), Anderson *et al.*, (1993) and Brown (1999) have likened this to domestic violence in the home in which women fear further victimisation and a lack of sympathy from senior officers or the IOPC. For Ruby, this was true – but a culture of bullying and cover-ups meant that her career ended much earlier than anticipated. After a spinal injury incurred at work, Ruby was sent to a convalescence home – which she noted was '[...] like a country retreat, it had a private room, hydrotherapy, physiotherapy, and meditation' – for a period of seven days. When officers were sent to convalescence homes, there was an expectation that their respective forces would respect the needs of their colleagues and allow them space and time to recuperate. Ruby, however, said this was not the case. For the duration of her stay, she received a barrage of phone calls from senior officers with menial requests about paperwork and reports. When she requested that they leave her alone, this led to her being described as a 'bitch' – something that she noted 'exacerbated' her work relationships:

Nobody can contact you, nobody can ask you for reports, they leave you alone to convalesce. The clue is in the title sort of thing. But I was rang every day. People wanted to know where certain paperwork was, whether I could attend court dates, where my sicknote was – and at this point I didn't need a sicknote because I was due to go back to work. And If I didn't answer, there'd be a message asking me to call our headquarters. I was harassed, daily, by my force. It got to about day 6 and someone rang me, and I didn't really know him, but he asked me about the whereabouts of something or other. I politely asked him not to contact me, and for others not to contact me. I didn't know at the time, but he'd taken the phone call in an office with others, and it got back to me from a policewoman who was there at the time that he and the others had called me a 'right bitch' and other horrible things, the language was awful. When I came back from there [the convalescence home], I ended up having to get another sick note. I'd exacerbated the issues with my health, as well as with the guys at the station.

From Ruby's account, it is evident that the colleagues responsible for interrupting her sick leave and causing further distress were, by and large, male. This is significant because a core aspect of canteen culture, as outlined by Reiner (2010), is machismo. Machismo emphasises the importance of masculine strength, and inadvertently trivialises taking sick leave as a weakness (Mastekaasa, 2004; Körlin *et al*., 2009; Elliott *et al*. 2015). Today, contemporary evidence suggests that policewomen are now more comfortable to take sick leave (Cartwright and Roach, 2020); but in the nineteen-seventies, a perceived culture of absenteeism made women more 'visible' as the token group (Kanter, 1977), which ultimately reignited the age-old debate about their suitability to the force and job (Brown and Heidensohn, 2000; Cunningham and Ramshaw, 2020; Rigby and Temple-Malt, 2025).

When her sick leave was extended to six weeks, Ruby noted that her male colleagues continued to behave in a hostile and callous manner. In an emotional exchange, she informed the researcher about the internal practices of her force, and that it was common courtesy for a senior colleague to carry out a welfare check. For women, colleagues would bring a basket of fruit or bunch of flowers – which usually required a trip into the town centre – but for Ruby, she received a bottle of whiskey straight from the police bar:

Now, whilst you're off, you're supposed to [receive] what's called a welfare visit – just someone from your shift, usually a Sergeant, to

come and see how you're doing at the six-week point. It sounds old fashioned but if you were a lady, you'd get a bunch of flowers or a basket of fruit as a little gift to say, 'we hope you get better soon'. If you were a man, you'd get a bottle of whiskey. With the basket of fruit or bunch of flowers, the Sergeant would have to go into town and place an order or go into the green grocers. For a bottle of whiskey, he'd go into the police bar. So, for the fruit or flowers, it took a little more effort [...] and lo and behold, during my welfare visit, they bought me a bottle of whiskey from the police bar. My husband – who's also a serving officer – had already told him I didn't drink alcohol at the time. It was just the easiest thing for them to do, just grab it from the police bar upstairs. And the welfare meeting lasted all of three minutes, there was no care.

This, she believed, set the tone for the remainder of her career. Within a month, she was sat opposite a police surgeon – '[he] was in charge of deciding whether you were fit to return to work' – who, without any medical consultation, declared her unfit for work and gave her a months' notice. Standard protocols, such as phased and staggered returns, were not implemented:

> After that, everything all happened very quickly. I went to see the police surgeon – he was in charge of deciding whether you were fit to return – and I just remember sitting across the table from him, there was no medical examination, and he gave me a months' notice. That was it, my career was over. I'd given everything for this career, I'd followed my older sister, and my dad and my aunties had all been uniform, but there he was telling me my career was over. I was dazed by it. I wasn't allowed to try to go back to the job through a phased return, it was taken out of my hands.

Ruby noted that, at her station, it was not uncommon for injured police officers to be offered desk-based jobs. Indeed, as observed by scholarship, the 'us vs them' mentality of the police often meant that police officers would be rewarded for their loyalty through sideways moves (Waddington, 1999; Reiner, 2010). What the scholarship fails to capture, however, is way in which long-serving officers were treated when they were considered an 'outsider' of police culture. For Ruby, this reality was bleak, and left her feeling 'gobsmacked' and 'bereft':

> I had almost seventeen years' worth of knowledge, they'd spent thousands on training me. I might not have been able to haul equipment around, but I could have done speeding fines. There was lots of officers who'd finished before their time that had returned on desk jobs on the same pay and still able to draw their pension. But I

> couldn't do that, it just wasn't made available to me and I was bereft
> [...] I had an Inspector come out to my house as a formality before my
> months' notice period was up, and I was wearing a foam collar at the
> time to help take the pressure off my vertebrae but I'd taken it off and
> left it on the sofa, and he said something along the lines of 'well if you
> think that's going to impress me, you're wrong'. I was totally
> gobsmacked, there was no concern or interest in how I was doing. And
> usually when you left, there'd be a small gathering in the bar and
> everyone signs a nice card, the usual thing that happens. But the
> Inspector just said to me 'I take it you'll want to go quietly' – and that
> wasn't a question, it was a matter of fact.

Ruby believed that her treatment stemmed from pension inequalities. When she retired, she was just a month shy of seventeen years' service in the police– at which point, she should have received an enhancement to her pension (Home Office, 1987: 18).[8] The lack of medical evidence and failure to implement the correct protocol, coupled with the way in which she was treated by senior colleagues, Ruby felt that it was an 'intentional' decision to get rid of her. Despite this, she knew she could not prove it. And despite twenty-six years of emotional and psychological hurt, Ruby never reported it to the IOPC.

Both Ruby and Violet present an interesting dichotomy surrounding police culture and the blue code of silence (Westmarland, 2005; 2020). From the moment Ruby and Violet joined their respective police forces in the nineteen-seventies, they had adopted the 'shut up and put up' mentality of the police force. Whilst some theorists have described this as 'appeasement' of canteen culture (Anderson *et al.*, 2013), it was apparent from participants in this study that it was an intricate mode of survival. Indeed, as discussed in the previous chapter, the nineteen-eighties provided radical change to the role of policewomen. However, this was *only* in the form of formal opportunities. Despite wider investments into Human Resources and Complaints Procedures, canteen culture remained as pervasive and as harmful as it had been in the seventies (Loftus, 2012). For Ruby and Violet, then, breaking the blue code of silence and pursuing their grievances was unimaginable because they were acutely aware of the culture of cover-ups to

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[8] Section 6.2 of the Police Pension Scheme (1987: 18) states that an 'ill-health pension is calculated in a similar way to an ordinary pension and is then enhanced to compensate lost opportunity or serving until normal retirement'. After thirteen years of pensionable service, the maximum ill-health pension will be 7/60 plus 1/60 for each year thereafter, up to twenty years' pensionable service.

protect senior officers. It was considered more honourable – and arguably, more lady-like – to walk away with minimal fuss (Westmarland, 2020; Cunningham and Ramshaw, 2020).

Only one participant in this study – Janet – dared to break the 'blue code of silence'. After falling pregnant, she experienced a period of ill health and needed to take sick leave. When this was refused, she pursued the case with the Equal Opportunities Commission (EOC):[9]

> I became really ill with high blood pressure and my doctor signed me off quite early in my pregnancy. I said, 'I'm perfectly fine', but she said 'no more work - if you do, you'll either lose the baby or yourself and the baby'. So, I presented that at work and my force said 'you start your maternity leave now, today'. We worked it out and that meant I would use all my maternity leave the week before my baby was born. I said, 'that's not right, it's sick leave - not maternity leave' and they refused. I went to the Police Federation, and they were no help at all. So, I contacted the Equal Opportunities Commission up in Manchester and I explained the situation, and they said, 'it's illegal - shall we take them to court?'. I said to them I hadn't got the funds, but then they said, 'we'll do it, we're pursuing in Ireland case at the moment, so we'll provide all the legal representation, you just provide the evidence'.

Janet's male colleagues, many of whom had been her closest friends, were callous towards her upon hearing of the legal battle. Much like Ruby, Janet received sinister phone calls from 'senior' colleagues warning her that her career was 'on the line' and that 'they were watching' her every move. Subsequent communication revealed that her house was being watched, and that if she 'so much as put the bin out or picked a dandelion', photographic evidence would be taken to prove that she was 'swinging the lead'.[10] Some of these phone calls came from Lloyd House – the headquarters of West Midlands Police – but steps had been taken to ensure that there was no recorded evidence of the threats made against her. And whilst the events did not deter Janet from pursuing the case with the EOC, she knew that her career 'was over':

> The month before the court case [...] my force changed their tune. The Northern Ireland case had just been heard and they found in that

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[9] The EOC was introduced under the Sex Discrimination Act 1975 to uphold and enforce legislation pertaining to equality of the sexes (Sacks, 1986; Home Office, 2008).

[10] 'Swinging the Lead' is an idiom used to describe somebody who is 'slacking off' or 'wagging' work.

> WPC's favour, they were told it's illegal what you're doing, so West Midlands Police – knowing that and knowing that their case was coming up with me – decided they would drop it and they would allow me to have had sick leave and my maternity leave would start just before I was due to have the baby. I had *really* bad delivery and I wrecked all my back doing that, so I stayed on sick leave two years afterwards, and they never questioned it – but I knew that I couldn't go back to policing. I'd been told that, y'know, my career is over because I dared to challenge it with the Equal Opportunities Commission. So, after my second child, I resigned.

Narratives presented in this section demonstrate the pervasive nature of canteen culture, and the severe repercussions for those who broke the blue code of silence (Skolnick, 2002; Westmarland, 2020). Occupational culture dictated that, above all else, a credible officer needed to demonstrate physical and emotional strength (Reiner, 2010; Loftus, 2012). Sickness, weakness and frailty – incurred in the line of duty or otherwise – was firmly on the outside of that, and approaching external organisations immediately revoked their membership of the 'us vs them' gang mentality (Waddington, 1999).

8.5 Later Life, Post-Policing Careers and Advocates for Institutional Change

Irrespective of whether participants' careers ended on a high or low, there was a noticeable motivation to dedicate the remainder of their working lives to delivering some form of social. This next section will explore what, exactly, these variations looked like – and how women actively sought to implement this.[11] The following discussion forms part of a series of original contributions from this thesis because, to date, very little research has centred around women's post-policing careers.

Janet noted that, although she knew she needed to leave the police force, she felt it difficult to step away because her whole identity was 'wrapped up' in the uniform:

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[11] Here, it is important to highlight that the sampling and recruitment methods used in this study have had significant impact upon career choices after the police. Many participants were actively involved in an academic journal and police museums (see Chapter Three), therefore capturing a larger-than-average range of officers-cum-academics. As such, findings presented in the following section may be unrepresentative of the wider cohort of women police officers between the 1970s and 2010s.

> They [West Midlands Police] made me feel *really* bad about being a police officer [...] and I didn't want any part of it. I'd done my bit to make things better for other women coming up the ranks in terms of how they treat them over maternity leave and sickness, but I didn't ever want to be a policewoman again and I never did. So, I left, and it was *really* hard. And even though I've only been in the place sort of the 10 year slot or really felt that my whole identity was wrapped up in that uniform and it was *really* hard for me to change career and to find fulfilment occupationally.

Lucy and Victoria also noted that leaving their respective forces was hard, and repeatedly extended their careers past the required length of service for similar reasons. Indeed, as discussed in Chapter Two and Four respectively, the 'us vs them' mentality of policing promoted an insular culture amongst police officers (Reiner, 1978; Chan, 1997; Waddington, 1999; Loftus, 2009; Wolfe *et al.*, 2024). Whilst literature fails to account for how, or why, it started (Boivin, 2020), life course theorists such as Giele (2002: 81) argue that 'membership in various communities' has a significant impact on identity. For participants like Janet, their identities had been shaped by years of searching for acceptance and approval. This rang true for other participants, too. Jane, Gemma and Georgia had successful careers that lasted over thirty years. And whilst they had intended to take long periods of retirement before seeking pastures new, participants noted that their retirement lasted a small number of months. This, Gemma remarked, had led her to believe that she would 'bleed blue blood'.

The entwinement of identity and career choice meant that navigating a post-policing world was challenging. As Janet noted, it was 'hard' to find a career that provided 'fulfilment occupationally'. But for the participants in this study, the adoption of canteen culture – synonymous with a need to always be on the move (Reiner, 2000) – meant that there was a great deal of pressure to continue working. Subsequent career choices, then, were often illustrative of participants' broader life experiences – or, as Giele (2002: 84) succinctly summarised, 'feedback from [their] life careers to social contexts'.

To fully appreciate the extent to which participants' life courses had been shaped by their life careers, it is important to recap why they joined the police in the first place. Although very little research has attempted to capture women's motivations for joining the police force in England and Wales, international studies from China (Shen, 2022)

and America (Lester, 1983; Raganella and White, 2004; Clinkinbeard *et al*., 2021) suggest that a common theme for female officers was altruism. Similar findings were presented in Chapter Four of this thesis. It was also argued that participants were socialised to be altruistic from an early age, too; subject choice, as well as extra-curricular activities, contributed to the formation of this identity in participants' formative years. According to life course theory, then, it was only natural that participants' post-police careers reflected this desire to support the wider community (Giele and Elder, 1998; Hutchinson, 2024). Participants offered a summary of their 'next careers below:

> **Janet (West Midlands Police, 1980s-1990s)**: I now lead an organisation for women who've experienced abuse, in either childhood or adulthood. Many of us are disabled, physically or with mental health issues. We've got women who've been involved in crime, been to prison, battled addictions.

> **Mandy (Avon and Somerset Police, 1970s-2010s)**: I now volunteer for a domestic abuse charity. I love it, it's great. It's not that I love other people's misery, but I love supporting women and trying to resolve issues for them.

> **Winnie (Hampshire Police, 1980s-2010s)**: I worked with my local authority and set up four Street Pastor initiatives in my local area. Street Pastors is an initiative between the Church, the police and the local authority. The church puts volunteers out, usually on a Friday or a Saturday night, in town centres to support the public. So, they'll do things like [...] typically in a town where there's nightclubs, they'll look after women who've come out of nightclubs drunk and can't walk home and give it out flipflops because they've worn silly shoes or warm blankets or help people get home and help people who've been abandoned and supervise taxi lines to protect vulnerable people. Those sorts of roles [...] really impressive statistics for reducing violent crime.

> **Eleanor (Greater Manchester Police, 1970s)**: Once I left the police, I emigrated. I retrained and became a beautician. I like having that positive impact, making a small but noticeable difference to people's day. We're like therapists, really.

At face value, these career choices initially appear to be the antithesis of one another. Upon closer inspection, though, these post-policing careers were unified in their aspirations to provide emotional support. Being emotional had, incidentally, been presented as a 'weakness' in the police force and, as discussed in Chapter Seven, had

led to women undertaking emotion work to disguise their compassion (Hochschild, 1979; Brown and Heidensohn, 2000; Jackson, 2006; Cunningham and Ramshaw, 2020). Outside of the police, though, participants felt able to embrace what they considered to be valuable skills. Eleanor, who had left the police following frustrations towards restricted opportunities, compared her new job to that of a therapist. Janet and Mandy, on the other hand, had both been inspired by their own policework. Mandy's last shift involved handling a sensitive domestic violence case, whilst Janet had challenged systemic abuse within her force. This, in turn, led to both participants dedicating their post-policing careers to supporting women, many of whom had been the victims of abuse. Winnie, too, was interested in widening a support network for women. Rather than working directly with victims, Winnie coordinated various organisations to ensure that, where the police service alone had failed, there was alternative support. Indeed, whilst their approach may have differed, all three participants' post-policing pathways were defined by becoming a fully realised version of themselves. Without the restrictions of occupational culture, they were able to reach out and make a difference to women and girls lives in a way that had been impossible when they worked for the police.

Another popular post-policing pathway was a sideways move into civilian roles. As Ruby highlighted earlier on in this chapter, it was commonplace for retired police officers to continue working for the police in a more relaxed capacity after retirement. These roles ranged from paid to voluntary and include a wide scope of opportunities within the civil service (MoD Police, 2024).

> **Janet (West Midlands Police, 1980s-1990s)**: I spent twelve years as a probation officer, semi-specialist in violent and high-risk custodial cases and lifers.

> **Georgia (British Transport Police, 1970s-2010s):** I ended up doing more police work. I'd just retired and heard there were some jobs in, and I shouldn't use this word because it's not very 'woke', but I went into a 'civvie' role. I took three months off but then I heard about these jobs, and I went back into the Fatality Investigation Team [British Transport Police]. For the BTP, people getting killed on the railways is quite a big part of their work. I've been to some horrendous ones, but before I put my application in, I'd only ever been to one and that was the week before I retired after thirty-three years of service. So, I worked there for a bit, dealing with next of kin

statements, putting files in for the coroner, going to inquests, that sort of thing, and then an opportunity came up to do a mutual swap with somebody in professional standards – and here I still am today.

Lucy (City of London Police, 1970s-2010s): Most people left at thirty years. They did that 'cos they could, but I stayed on for thirty-four. After that, I enjoyed a bit of a break and raised my children, and now I do a bit of volunteering for museums and speak to some of the public about what it was like to be a police officer.

Victoria (Sussex Police, 1980s-2020s): I was coming up to retirement and I ummed and ahhed, ummed and ahhed, but I thought I have to go, I can't stay here forever. And that's when I made the decision, April last year, to retire. When I left [Spring 2021, COVID], I didn't have a leaving do which was weird because, traditionally, you do have all this stuff going on and I couldn't do that [rolls eyes] but, actually, it was okay. Since then, I did a little bit of work for the College of Policing working as an Associate, but I'm also working with UK Road Offender Education (UKROEd)[12] which is like the driving kind of side of it, just using stuff I've learned from my career, and it's only one day a week, but I do it and I enjoy it. I'm also a trustee for the police museum and I do tours around it in Brighton.

Much like participants in the above section, Janet, Georgia, Lucy and Victoria used skills acquired during their time in the police. However, whilst their colleagues opted for typically more feminine duties, Georgia, Lucy, Victoria and initially Janet opted for more masculine roles that were typically out of bounds to them during their careers. Working with violent offenders in probation and assisting fatality investigations, for example, were typically considered to be man's work because these roles required physical and emotional strength – something that women were considered to lack (Martin, 1980; Brown and Heidensohn, 2000; Reiner, 2010; Loftus, 2012). Although the glass ceiling was never smashed during their time as police officers, they were able to chip away at it from the perspective of civil service roles instead.

However, whilst Mandy, Winnie and Eleanor dedicated their post-policing lives to vulnerable groups outside of the police, Georgia, Lucy and Victoria strived to make a difference within their own policing communities. This, in part, is indicative of the strength of canteen culture. Maggie and Suzie, who volunteered together at a police

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[12] UKROEd is a not-for-profit organisation that is 'responsible for the management and administration of the National Driver Offender Retraining Scheme (NDORS) on behalf of the Road Safety Trust' (UKROEd, 2024: 4). The main purpose is to reduce reoffending amongst motorists caught committing traffic offences (UKROEd, 2024: 3).

museum, noted that the 'humour' was something that a lot of officers missed when they left; but when Maggie returned to the museum, she noted that she 'fell straight back into it', whilst Suzie added that it was like she had 'never left'. This, Waddington (1999) argues, is because canteen culture is comparable to that of a 'repair shop' for officers. In essence, occupational culture acted as a restorative process and brought together officers from all walks of life. And whilst literature largely documents the role of canteen culture during active service (Chan, 1997; Waddington, 1999), it seldom captures the pertinence of canteen culture in post-policing careers. For participants in this study, continuing their police careers in some capacity meant that they were able to 'pay back' to the institution that had served them well. For many participants, policing continued to be a core part of their social identities long after full retirement. Siân – who did not continue working for the police after she left – noted that she still attended the police bar with her husband and enjoyed attending parties and other social events with her former colleagues. Of course, that is not to say that canteen culture is unharmful; as this thesis has continually conveyed, it was pervasive at the best of times, and inescapable at the worst of times. Rather, that canteen culture requires a nuanced discussion when examining it through a life course perspective because not all experiences were the same. Instead, it was dependent on the intersectionality of time and place, linked lives, human agency, and timing (Giele and Elder, 1998: 11).

At the heart of all participants' post-policing careers, participants were determined to make some degree of difference to the communities they had once served. As a researcher, it was cathartic to hear how their early experiences had shaped the remainder of their working careers. Some of these exchanges were emotional, whilst others were told with a sense of courage and determination. In any case, though, it was clear that early experiences growing up and joining the force as an eager eighteen-year-old had significant impact on the values they took forwards into their later lives.

8.6 Conclusion

The purpose of this chapter was to consider how experiences from the early life course shaped participants' post-retirement careers. Indeed, by utilising a life course perspective (Giele and Elder, 1998; Giele, 2002), this chapter captured participants'

later careers and presented them in three key themes: promotions, resignations, and post-policing pathways. Building upon the fieldwork presented in Chapter Seven, this chapter began by discussing how participants' navigated promotion in a man's world. Slowly but surely, policing was beginning to change, and more opportunities were made available to some women – but only where their faces fit. However, as this chapter argued, these opportunities were limited to women 'on the ground'. The higher the rank, the more barriers there were preventing women from influencing change. Participants reflected upon their colleague's responses to their promotions, and how this created a challenging environment. For some participants, the hostility shown towards women of higher rank deterred them from ever seeking promotion themselves. Instead, they sought to widen their repertoire of skills at PC or DC rank instead. This, they argued, was more rewarding. The researcher argues that this is reminiscent of the 'impossible dichotomy' and a need for women to go under the radar to avoid attracting negative attention from their male peers.

The second portion of this chapter explored a selection of narratives from participants whose careers ended abruptly or unexpectedly. Three narratives were presented in-depth: sexual harassment, workplace bullying, and institutional harassment. It was argued that acceptance into police canteen culture was largely honorary, and as illustrated by no means permanent. Sickness, for example, was a reminder of women's frailty. Reaching out to organisations for support, whether that be a charity convalescence home or the Equality Commission, was met with hostility by colleagues. Once the blue code of silence had been broken, colleagues would make sure that there was no return. Narratives in this section captured the extent to which officers would go to ensure that colleagues did not return to work through intense harassment and bullying.

The final portion of this chapter explored promotion and post-policing careers. It was first argued that female officers were still under a great deal of pressure to go 'under the radar' to avoid attracting negative attention (Kanter, 1977; Jackson, 2006; Cunningham and Ramshaw, 2020). For those that bravely put their heads above the parapet, there were repercussions. Participants recalled malicious rumours regarding their personal lives, alongside verbal attacks on their husbands. As a consequence of these turbulent

conditions, there was a sense of apathy amongst participants. Whilst narrators recalled that their families and friends had encouraged them to pursue promotion, they declined seeking promotion because they felt that they could influence change from a position in a lower rank. Instead, participants dedicated the remainder of their careers to making a difference and improving standards for new female recruits. In the latter half of this section, this chapter explored post-policing pathways. Life course theory assumes that retirement happens around the age of mid-sixties (Giele, 2002; Green, 2010). For participants in this study, though, it happened a decade earlier at the age of 50. As such, it was common practice for women to pursue a second career in mid-life. Narratives presented in this chapter demonstrated that participants were still determined to continue their commitment to public service. For some narrators, they continued their work for women and girls by working alongside domestic abuse charities. This was largely informed by their experiences in the force, and wanting to make up for the inadequacy of the police. For others, they chose to continue their police work in civilian roles. In any case, though, it was common across both groups to still be connected to the police service in some way or another. This, it was argued, is symbolic of the strength of canteen culture and the notion of 'police family' (Skolnick, 2002; Waddington, 1999).

Chapter Nine –

'There She Goes': A Series of Reflections and Conclusions

9.1 Introduction

Since the nineteen-seventies, the role of policewomen has changed considerably. The introduction of the Equal Pay Act 1970 and Sex Discrimination Act 1975 marked the demise of workplace segregation in the police service. Integration into the regular force, Becke (1971) cautioned, would lead to women no longer being able to 'have their cake and eat it' and instead, would be expected to do their 'fair share' of policework. Despite these legislative and structural changes, though, the duties of policewomen were still gendered. Whilst male colleagues were given 'proper' policework, such as high-speed car chases and punch ups, women were given 'bullshit' jobs akin to social work (Loftus, 2008; Silvestri, 2018; Cunningham and Ramshaw, 2020). Indeed, the masculine ethos of the police throughout the seventies and eighties has since been described as a 'pure form' of masculinity (Fielding, 1994: 84), and comparisons were made against cults (Smith and Gray, 1985). It was therefore unclear how policewomen navigated the male-dominated environment of policing and paved the way for parity between the sexes as can be observed in the force today. Thus, to contribute to this gap in knowledge, this thesis had three aims: first, to examine how participants arrived at the decision to join a man's job; next, to explore their experiences in a male-dominated job and, in particular, how they navigated canteen culture at its most pervasive; and finally, to investigate any crucial events in participants' life trajectories that led to cultural and structural change.

Using Giele and Elder's (1998) life course paradigm as an analytical framework, this study examined how policewomen's experiences in the nineteen-seventies, eighties and nineties shaped their life trajectories. Drawing upon principles from the life course (Giele and Elder, 1998: 11), each data chapter was centred around linked lives (Chapter Five), human agency (Chapter Six), time and place (Chapter Seven), and timing of lives (Chapter Eight).

In total, thirty-five life history interviews were conducted with former policewomen who served for any length of time throughout the nineteen-seventies and eighties. Within this sample, narratives from thirteen police forces across England and Wales were captured. These findings provided a rich insight into the changes that occurred over three decades, and how these events shaped personal life trajectories as well as the broader field of policing.

The final chapter of this thesis, then, begins with a chapter-by-chapter summation of the central arguments presented in this thesis. In doing so, the aim is to explicitly capture how this thesis is theoretically and methodologically original. Each synopsis offers a precise overview of the themes discussed within each chapter, and then explores the contribution to existing scholarship. Next, I offer a summary of the three main findings of this study. Thereafter, the limitations of this study are explicitly outlined. In particular, the barriers associated with COVID-19 and the 'blue code of silence' (Westmarland, 2005) as a non-serving officer are discussed. And finally, to close this thesis, I highlight areas for future sociological research.

9.2 Summation of Key Findings and Statement of Theoretical and Methodological Originality

First and foremost, the research presented in this thesis is theoretically innovative. At the time of writing (August 2024), it is the first study to use the life course paradigm as a theoretical framework to analyse policewomen's experiences in the police service throughout the nineteen-seventies, eighties and nineties. In the absence of any longitudinal data, I was able to capture life events of personal significance retrospectively and examine how they shaped women's life trajectories over a period of forty years (Chapters Five to Eight). In doing so, I was able to offer new knowledge pertaining to the Miners' Strike as a catalyst for occupational change (Chapter Seven). Additionally, I have also contributed to existing bodies of literature around women's experiences regarding canteen culture, initiation ceremonies and station stamping (Chapter Five).

Next, I will consider the ways in which this study is methodologically original. Research into policewomen's experiences throughout the nineteen-seventies, eighties and nineties is rare. More recently, Cunningham and Ramshaw's (2020) study into twenty-three policewomen's experiences relied upon a feminist epistemology. To build upon their contributions, I employed a life history approach. In doing so, I was able to gain insight into policewomen's lives before and after the police to gauge further insight into the significance of events on participants' life trajectories.

And finally, this study was also methodologically unique because I used archival research as an elicitation technique. As soon as COVID-19 restrictions eased, I requested access to archive centres across England to locate sources that could be used in interviews to 'unlock' memories amongst participants. This included excerpts from the *Police Review* magazine, policing equipment, and a selection of photographs from Staffordshire, West Midlands and Greater Manchester's archive collections. Owing to the third (and receptiveness to a possible fourth) wave of COVID-19, I was able to adapt this method to work in an online space, thus devising a 'new' approach to elicitation techniques.

I will now present a synopsis of each chapter, and the ways in which they are both theoretically and methodologically original.

From Cradle to Grave (Chapter Two)

As the first of two literature reviews, the purpose of this chapter was to provide the reader with an overview of the theoretical framework that underpins this project. Drawing inspiration from Foucault's (1972) archaeology of knowledge, this chapter began by providing a historical overview of the life history method, the aims of this approach, and why it developed. I then explored the critiques of this approach, the emergence of the life course paradigm, and how it looks in practice today. Crucially, this chapter acted as a justification for why the life course paradigm had been chosen as a theoretical framework for this thesis. The relevance of individual life course principles was made explicitly clear, and the benefits of using the framework as a methodological tool to unpack the experiences of this pioneering cohort of women were drawn out.

Little Girl Blue (Chapter Three)

In contrast, the aim of the second literature review was to critically review existing literature pertaining to women's experiences in policing. It quickly became apparent that very few studies had specifically focused on the experiences of policewomen in this era. Instead, the focus had been on policing more generally (Reiner, 1978; Reiner, 2010), alongside related issues such as police brutality and institutional racism (Hall et al.,1978; Gilroy, 1987; Hall, 1999). Debates surrounding the functional role of canteen culture were enlightening. Whilst scholars deliberated whether canteen culture was inherently good or bad, I made the argument that women's voices were, by and large, omitted from this discussion. Innovative research by Brown and Heidensohn (2000), Jackson (2006), Rees and Strange (2019) and Cunningham and Ramshaw (2020) had contributed to this small body of literature, but there were still areas that had been unexplored. In addition, there was very little insight into how these experiences of sexism and misogyny had shaped women's life trajectories in later life (Giele and Elder, 1998).

Methods and Methodological Considerations (Chapter Four)

In this chapter, I provide an overview of the methodological considerations taken when designing this study. In response to the gaps in literature highlighted in the previous chapter, I reiterated the aims, objectives and research questions in this study. Then, I discuss sampling and recruit. As part of my original contribution to knowledge, I incorporated reflexivity around the complications I encountered because of the 'blue code of silence' (Westmarland, 2005; Westmarland and Conway, 2020), and how carrying police-themed research as a seemingly middle-class academic[13] with limited experience of the police led to difficulties with recruitment. I also reflected upon the challenges that had emerged due to the global 'All Cops are Bastards' (ACAB) movement that exacerbated prospective participants' reluctance to take part. Forming part of the methodological originality of this chapter, I included commentary around how I mitigated recruitment challenges by adjusting my sample and changing my

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[13] As explained in Chapter Four, I am not middle-class. However, there is an assumption that, in order to work in academia, one must be of a middle-class disposition.

recruitment strategy. In the latter half of this chapter, I provide a justification for my methods – archival research, life history interviewing, and photo elicitation – and comment on the strengths, weaknesses, and practicalities of doing this type of research. As this study was conducted between successive COVID-19 lockdowns, I discussed what it was like 'doing' this type of research in unprecedented times and include additional reflections around how I adapted traditional methods such as photo elicitation to work in an online setting. At the end of this chapter, I provided an overview of my analytical strategy – narrative analysis – and justified why this was appropriate, particularly when navigating the obstructions that emerged through the prominence of blue code of silence.

'Just a Girl': Aspirations, Realities and the Male-Dominated Sphere of Policing (Chapter Five)

'Just a Girl' is the first of four empirical data chapters. The aim of this chapter was to explore how socialisation in the early life course shaped women's perception of self and influenced their experiences when pursuing a career in the police force.

Underpinned by Giele and Elder's (1998: 11) 'linked lives', this chapter begins by exploring the broader significance of interpersonal relationships and the influence this has on shaping individual life trajectories. In the absence of specific life course literature pertaining to formation of female identities in the nineteen-seventies, comparisons were then made with the Birmingham School of Cultural Studies. Drawing upon McRobbie's (1976) theory of 'bedroom culture', I examined how young girls were typically socialised of the nineteen-seventies and the significance of these experiences in their formative years in shaping personal goals and lifetime aspirations (Sharpe, 1976; Tinkler, 1996).

Unsurprisingly, participants in this study did not immediately aspire to be police officers. Narrators discussed their career goals and what they 'thought' was expected of them. Similar to that of Sharpe (1976) and Tinkler (1996), the findings presented in this chapter demonstrated that career goals were primarily influenced by school and their parents' expectations. Although the Sex Discrimination Act 1975 had been passed in

this decade, it was evident that it had not yet permeated into young women's lives; attitudes were still very much defined by stringent gender norms of the era. Participants 'first jobs' primarily involved working within the newly emerging service sector (Charles and James, 2005), as well as traditionally feminine jobs such as childcare, admin assistants, and typists. In contrast, policing was situated as a man's job. To supplement this discussion, police recruitment posters from the era were included.

Forming part of the original contribution of this thesis, the next section presented in this chapter examines parents' and friends' reactions to participants pursuing a job in a typically masculine industry. As Crossley (2006: 89) notes, the family acts as a 'lever of control'. It was natural for young women, who had typically been raised to be obedient and submissive, to conform to parental expectations. In order to deviate from these norms, participants subsequently sought the approval of their families. This discussion highlighted participants' need to 'self-police' their personal career goals, with many participants narrators choosing to emphasise the domestic nature of policing to generate support. However, as later recollections reveal, not all responses were encouraging. For some participants, there were severe social repercussions for going against the natural gender order. Nonetheless, loved ones' reactions formed 'dialogical tool' that could later be used to navigate dialogues with others (Crossley, 2006: 89-90).

The final contribution of this chapter offers insight into the recruitment process. Whilst Jackson (2006) offers some insight into what the recruitment process was like for women, this generally reflects the experiences of women in an era of segregated departments. This section, then, examined women's experiences following the Equal Pay Act 1970 and Sex Discrimination Act 1975. I argued that, despite this legislation, women were subject to invasive questioning – even by nineteen-seventies standards – and breached the law. For many participants, though, their experiences during the interview process set the tone for what was to follow.

'It's a Man's World': Sexism, Harassment and Navigating the Cult of Masculinity (Chapter Six)

The second empirical chapter of this thesis focused upon Giele and Elder's (1998: 11) concept of 'agency'. The purpose of this chapter was to examine the extent at which canteen culture impacted policewomen's experiences in the force, and to examine how women navigated the challenges associated with working in a male-dominated environment.

I asserted that a job offer did not automatically result in women being accepted by their (male) colleagues. Expanding upon Waddington's (1999: 89) concept of 'us vs them', I note that female recruits were firmly on the 'outside' of police culture, despite wearing the same uniform, and were subsequently treated with a great deal of suspicion by their male colleagues.

I later argued the first few months of participants' policing careers were by their willingness to 'prove' their loyalty to the force. As an original contribution to knowledge, this chapter explores the prominence of initiation ceremonies outside of the Metropolitan Police. Within the first few months of their jobs, women were invited to demonstrate their loyalty by partaking in a one-off incident. For some officers, their initiation ceremonies were humorous and were centred around painting police boxes the wrong colour or going on a wild goose chase. For others, there was a more perverse nature to their initiation ceremonies, such as station stamping and photocopying body parts on the office Xerox machine.

A second contribution to knowledge is through the way in which women navigated overt displays of sexism and harassment in the workforce. Scholarship pertaining to this topic is limited because the 'blue code of silence' pressures police officers into staying silent about abuses of power. Nonetheless, some participants spoke candidly about their experiences, and reflected upon how they navigated them in the absence of any meaningful agency or control.

'Panic on the Streets of Birmingham': Social Unrest, Deindustrialisation and the Changing Role of (Police)Women (Chapter Seven)

The third empirical chapter set out to explore the impact of social unrest on women's policework. Drawing upon Giele and Elder's (1998: 11) life course principle of 'timing

and place', I argued that, whilst the legacy of the nineteen-eighties policing is generally overshadowed by police violence and brutality, it inadvertently transformed the role of policewomen.

Forming part of my original contribution to knowledge, I provided a unique perspective of the 1984/85 Miners' Strike. Owing to the development of mutual aid, policemen from unaffected areas in the South of England were relocated 'up north' for long periods of time to support colleagues in policing public disorder. Policewomen were, unsurprisingly, denied the opportunity to support their male colleagues in the North. Participants suggested that this was because they had not been suitably trained. However, as it later transpired, neither had their colleagues. Up until this point, PSU training was optional for most forces, with the vast majority of officers being untrained. The exclusion of policewomen from mutual aid provision was therefore indicative of the prominence of gender norms.

An unintended consequence of policemen's deployment was that, much like the First and Second World Wars, women were left behind to man the stations (Levine, 1994). In the absence of their male colleagues, policewomen were able to experience 'masculine' policework that had previously been denied to them, such as leading murder investigations.

However, unlike women's war effort forty years prior, policewomen did not revert to their previous roles. The latter half of this chapter explores participants' biographical accounts of their roles in the immediate aftermath of the Miners' Strike, such as the Handsworth Riots and Apartheid Protests, and the opportunities that followed throughout the late-eighties and nineties. This is a significant contribution to existing scholarship because it provides insight into how women paved the way for equality as we know it today. Thus, a key contribution of this chapter is that the miners' strike acted as a catalyst for change and was more effective in challenging disparities than legislation that had been introduced almost a decade prior.

'And the Beat Goes On': Promotion, Retirement and the Later Life Course (Chapter Eight)

And finally, Chapter Eight aimed to explore how experiences in participants' earlier life trajectories had shaped and influenced their post-policing pathways. Drawing upon Giele and Elder's (1998: 11) life course paradigm, this chapter focused upon the significance of 'timing of lives'.

The first issue discussed in this chapter was in relation with promotion. Expanding on existing literature by Reiner (1978; 2010) and Jackson (2006), very few participants in this study pursued promotion. I argued that this was the result of experiences at the start of their career, and the pressure to go 'under the radar' to avoid detection. Participants concurred, noting that they had more 'opportunities' at lower rank. Owing to my broad sample size, though, I was able to capture the experiences of two officers who had reached Chief Constable and Chief Inspector. Thus, in an addition to my previous original contributions to knowledge, I was able to offer some insight into what policing was like for women who had acquired rank. The findings here echo that of Loftus (2008; 2012) in that, whilst this was a huge achievement for this cohort of women, attitudes were less progressive.

The next section of this chapter explored how women arrived at the decision to leave the police. Here, I drew upon two biographical accounts from participants who went against occupational culture and suffered the consequences. Participants' emotional recollections revealed relentless bullying and harassment that left them feeling 'bereft'. This original contribution to knowledge once again captures the severity of occupational culture and the consequences of deviating from culturally accepted norms.

And finally, building upon existing scholarship, the latter half of this chapter explored the 'new' era of retirement. Today, it is common for people in later life to be more flexible around retirement. Not reflected in scholarship, however, is the dilemma faced by police officers in England and Wales who retire after thirty years' service. As an original contribution to knowledge, this chapter explored participants' post-policing pathways. Here, I argued that narrators' careers were often a continuation of their policework. In essence, participants' dedication to the communities they served was more than just a 9-5 job; rather, it was a life-long commitment.

9.3 Limitations and Reflections

Of course, no study is without its faults. As discussed in Chapter Four, I started reading for my PhD in September 2020 amidst the COVID-19 pandemic. For the first two years of my research, there was a lot of uncertainty about the 'new normal' and when, if at all ever, things would go back to normal. As such, this created a lot of barriers regarding the practicalities of my data collection. In addition to this, the prominence of the blue code of silence meant that, whilst my findings were significant, they were likely only the tip of the iceberg.

In this next section, I will highlight the limitations within this study. In particular, I will focus upon the gaps in knowledge that, whilst I had every intention of exploring, were 'out of bounds' to a non-serving police officer.

Doing Qualitative Research During a Global Pandemic

As discussed above, my PhD commenced in September 2020, with data collection initially scheduled to take place the following year. From the start, my plan had always been to carry out in-person interviews. Inspired by Temple-Malt's (2014) innovative approach to photo elicitation, I initially wanted to visit participants in their homes and invite them to tell me about their careers using photographs and memorabilia from their personal collections. This 'active' approach to interviewing, Holstein and Gubrium (2009: 42) argued, evokes deeper recollections, thus producing more fruitful data. The COVID-19 pandemic, however, meant that it was not possible to visit participants in their homes. Although the last lockdown in England was lifted in July 2021, I was conscious of the risk to my participants' health. The imminent threat of a possible fourth wave had been reported in the press, and participants were rightly concerned about contracting the virus.

In order for the study to go ahead, I made the decision to carry out interviews online. However, this decision was not without implications. Online interviews, as argued by Adams-Hutceson and Longhurst (2016), are superficial and lack the personal touch required for candid conversations. Moreover, the demographics of my participants –

retired women in their fifties and sixties – were not necessarily technologically adept. That is not to undermine the participants that did take part in this study; rather, recognises that this decision to move interviews online potentially excluded potential participants who perhaps lacked confidence with their technical skills. Comparatively, of the handful of interviews that did take place in-person (at the participants' request), the data was generally a lot richer. Being able to speak candidly over a brew and a Garibaldi, helped to create a trusting rapport between the researcher and participant.

Thus, whilst the data collected in this project was theoretically and methodologically original, the use of online methods was potentially problematic because it lacked personal depth.

The Blue Code of Silence

As discussed in Chapter Four, undertaking research pertaining to occupational culture is difficult because police officers are sworn to a culture of secrecy (Waddington, 1999; Marshall, 2019). Canteen culture, alongside the Blue Code of Silence, deters officers from speaking out about their experiences to non-serving police officers (Westmarland, 2005; Westmarland and Conway, 2020). The timing of the research – towards the end of the most recent iteration of the 'All Cops Are Bastards' (ACAB) movement – meant that police officers were particularly closed-rank about their experiences and, as such, held their cards close to their chest. Owing to this, it was always going to be challenging for narrators to speak candidly about their experiences in the police. It was a traumatic period for women, particularly as their acceptance in the wider force was dependent upon their tolerance of overt displays of sexism and misogyny, and reluctance to 'grass' their colleagues up for malpractice.

An additional layer of complexity, then, was the researcher's personal demographic. At the time of my data collection, I was twenty-four. I am now twenty-six years old and have a lot more experience working with police officers in my current job as a full-time academic. I now recognise that, whilst I tried emphatically to build a rapport, this was not going to happen within a sixty-to-ninety-minute online interview. To gain the trust of participants, it takes time. That is not to say that my data is invalid. Rather, I thoroughly

believe that it is only the tip of the iceberg, and policewomen experienced a wider deal of hardship to gain the levels of equality and acceptance we see today.

9.4 Future Directions

As a cultural sociologist and social historian, I encourage future scholars to consider the significance of the past and how this has shaped women's role in the police force. Women who served in the force throughout the nineteen-seventies and eighties were part of a pioneering cohort, both in the police force and outside of it, and yet so very little is known about these triumphs. Police archives in particular are severely underutilised in police research, despite holding valuable insight into bygone eras.

The pervasiveness of police occupational culture has, in recent years, gained more scholarly attention. In 2023, Baroness Casey published the findings from her investigation into standards of behaviour and internal culture of the Metropolitan Police Service. Within this report, she presented a series of detrimental findings, capturing the predatory and frankly, disturbing, inner working culture of the Met (Casey, 2023). Alongside accusations of bullying, the police were evidenced as being homophobic, racist, sexist and misogynistic (Casey, 2023: 4). 33% of respondents had personally experienced sexism, whilst 12% had been the victim of sexual harassment and assault (Casey, 2023: 267).

For those of us who have spent any discernible amount of time researching these issues, though, the findings of Baroness Casey's review (2023) did not come as a shock. Indeed, just as my findings suggest, these issues go back *at least* three decades. More research is therefore needed into the blue code of silence, with particular attention being paid to the possible ways in which police services across the country can challenge this mentality. It is evident that, despite an increase in the number of women in the police force, women's experiences are still blemished by rampant levels of sexism and misogyny.

And finally, there is a greater need to document policewomen's experiences outside of the Metropolitan Police Service. Whilst the Met is, of course, the biggest police force in the country, there are forty-three territorial police services elsewhere that are largely

under-researched. By gathering experiences from elsewhere, police forces in England and Wales can build a better picture of the trials and tribulations of policewomen throughout the nineteen-seventies and eighties, and into the modern day.

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Appendix

Item A – Study Poster

Item B – Study Synopsis

This PhD study, carried out by Miss Charlotte Rigby, aims to explore the experiences of policewomen during one of Britain's most turbulent eras: de-industrialisation.

In theory, there had never a better time to be a policewoman. Segregation in the workplace ceased to exist in 1973 when the **Women's Department** was abolished, whilst the introduction of Parliamentary Acts such as the **Equal Pay Act 1970** and **Sex Discrimination Act 1975**. Uniforms were improved. For the first time in history, women were issued work trousers, truncheons, and handcuffs.

Aside from these practical changes, very little is known about how these acts impacted policewomen's experiences in the workplace. What we do know, though, is that, by the 1990s, the 'WPC' title had been dropped and policewomen were (almost) always given equal training opportunities and routes to promotion. Somewhere along the way, change happened – and it's our job to fill the gaps and preserve a piece of police history.

This study invites **policewomen who started their careers in the 1970s and 1980s** to take part in a **life history interview**. Lasting between **60 and 90 minutes**, women will be able to explore various aspects of their career. Suggestions include:
- **Pre-Police**: why you chose the career, family and friends' reactions, how you applied, the interview process.
- **Early Career**: Day-to-day policework, assigned tasks, relationship with colleagues/public, initiation rituals, uniform.
- **Later Career**: Training opportunities, route to promotion (if applicable), specialisation, how policing changed during the duration of your career
- **Social**: Extracurricular activities such as sports, work outings, relationship with colleagues, dark humour, canteen culture.
- **Personal**: How marriage and children affected your career, career highlights (and lowlights), why you chose to leave the police (if applicable)

If this sounds like something you'd be interested in, please drop me an email:
Email: R015246G@student.staffs.ac.uk
LinkedIn: Charlotte-Rigby
Twitter: @Charrrl23

Interviews will be carried out using **Microsoft Teams** or **Zoom**. Interviews will be anonymised and may be used for my PhD thesis, titled "Policewomen on Patrol: A Historiography of WPC Experiences Throughout the 70s and 80s", and any future academic publications.

THANK YOU FOR READING

Item C – Email Invite

RC

RIGBY Charlotte
To: info@visitnesm.org.uk

Tue 05/04/2022 11:03

| 📄 Study Synopsis.docx | ∨ | 📄 Study Poster March 2022.pdf | ∨ |
| 18 KB | | 1 MB | |

2 attachments (1 MB) ☁ Save all to OneDrive - Staffordshire University ⬇ Download all

Dear ==National Emergency Services== Museum,

I hope this email finds you well! My name's Charlotte, I'm a PhD researcher at Staffordshire University, and I'm currently undertaking some research around policing in the 70s and 80s. In particular, I'm interested in **policewomen's experiences** in a male-dominated environment, how they navigated this, and how their role in the workplace changed over the years.

I was wondering if you could perhaps forward this email (as well as the study poster and study synopsis) to volunteers, staff, and anybody else you might know that started their careers as WPCs in the 70s & 80s? Length of service, and region of service, is not an issue - I'd be interested in hearing from a variety of former policewomen. Interviews will last between 60-90 minutes and will take place over Microsoft Teams. Suggested talking points are mentioned on the study synopsis, but policewomen are free to discuss anything they would like to in relation to their careers.

If you have any further questions, please do feel free to ask 🙂

Best wishes,
Charlotte

↩ Reply   ↪ Forward

[An identical email was sent to: National Emergency Services Museum, Sheffield; West Midlands Police Museum, Birmingham; Kent Police Museum, Kent; Thames Valley Police Museum, Oxfordshire; Greater Manchester Police Museum, Manchester]

Item D – Information Sheet

Information Sheet – Policewomen on Patrol: A Historiography of Women Police Officers' Experiences in the English Coalfields Throughout the Seventies and Eighties.

Invitation to Study:

Hello! My name's Charlotte Rigby and I am a PhD researcher within the School of Law, Policing and Forensics at Staffordshire University. I am a sociologist, criminologist and social historian, with a passion for archive research, oral histories and narrative interviewing.

I would like to invite you to participate in this research project which forms part of my PhD research. Before you decide whether you want to take part, it is important for you to understand why the research is being done and what your participation will involve. Please take time to read the following information carefully and discuss it with others if you wish. Ask me if there is anything that is not clear or if you would like more information.

What is the purpose of the study?

Women police officers (WPCs) have a relatively short history in England and Wales, spanning just over one-hundred years. The first WPCs in Britain were employed by the Metropolitan Police to tackle the growing epidemic affecting the home front in wartime Britain: women's sexualities. Although WPCs were praised for their wartime effort, politicians, scientists and even the Police Federation of England and Wales discussed at great length whether women were capable of policing, with many fearing that they were too frail and emotional to handle such a physically demanding job. Studies suggest that this 'debate' continued throughout the thirties, forties, fifties, and even the sixties. However, very few academics have attempted to explore whether attitudes of this nature were still apparent in the seventies and eighties.

By 1973, attitudes had changed somewhat, as women officers finally became fully integrated members of the police force. However, to date, very little literature exists detailing womens' experiences following the merger. Of the small amount of literature that does exist, it generally focuses on the experiences of middle-class women working in the Metropolitan Police, London. Whilst all WPCs' experiences are equally as important, there is currently a gap with regards to the experiences of WPCs from working-class backgrounds, as well as those working outside of London. There is therefore a need to diversify the narrative and make the historiography of women police officers more representative.

Why have I been invited to take part?

You have been invited to take part in my project because you previously expressed an interest in this study, and meet the following criteria:

- You were employed as a 'WPC'
- You served as a police officer in an area of England
- You were on active service at some point during the 1970s, 1980s and/or 1990s

What will happen if I take part?

If you choose to participate in this study, you will be invited to take part in a one-on-one interview with me (the researcher). I would like you to treat your interview as a chance for you to tell **your** personal story – it is entirely up to you what you discuss. I will also bring

along some photographs and newspaper cuttings that I have found in archive centres across the country that will potentially generate some discussion and bring back particular memories. Suggested topics include:

- Why you joined the force
- How your family and friends reacted to you joining the force
- What the interview process was like (inc., fitness tests, medical examinations, interview panel, interview questions)
- Policework and duties
- How your male colleagues treated you (this could include sexual harassment and initiation rituals such as station stamping, but you <u>do not</u> have to talk about this if you are uncomfortable in doing so)
- How the public responded to you
- How your job changed when you got married, during pregnancy, as a mother, etc.
- What the social aspect of policing was like
- How your job impacted you outside of work

The interview is expected to last between approximately sixty and ninety minutes. Ideally, your interview will take place in a comfortable environment (i.e., at your home). However, if you have any reservations about this, we can arrange for the interview to take place online via Microsoft Teams, Skype or Zoom.

Interviews will be recorded using a digital device, transferred to a password protected computer and transcribed at the earliest opportunity. Once they have been transcribed, the digital recordings will be deleted. Any personal information that could potentially lead to your identification will be omitted, and a pseudonym chosen by myself will be allocated to your transcript. If you would like to request a copy of your transcript, you can do so. Data produced in this study will be analysed in relation to existing literature, and used as part of my PhD thesis. It may also be used in academic papers, conferences, book chapters and teaching material.

Do I have to take part?
No. Your participation in this study is entirely voluntary. You should only take part if you want to – and choosing not to take part will not disadvantage you in anyway. Once you have read the information sheet, please contact me if you have any questions that will help you make a decision about taking part. If you decide to take part, I will ask you to sign a consent form and you will be given a copy of this consent form to keep.

What are the possible risks of taking part?
Although this project has been designed to have minimal risk to you as a participant, there will be discussions about sensitive topics such as misogyny, sexism and discrimination. This may cause you to feel uncomfortable, upset or even angry. If this does happen, you will be encouraged to take a comfort break. During the debrief, I will provide you with a list of professional support services you can contact after the interview. Alternatively, you can withdraw from the study at any point.

What are the possible benefits of taking part?
As it currently stands, there is very little literature pertaining to WPCs experiences in the seventies and eighties. By taking part in this study, you will be ensuring that WPCs' voices

from this time period are heard and that their stories are told for generations to come

Data handling and confidentiality
Your data will be processed in accordance with the data protection law and will comply with the General Data Protection Regulation 2016 (GDPR). No data from this study will be shared with any third parties, nor will it be shared outside of the EU.

Digital data such as audio recordings will be kept on a password-protected computer that only I have access to. It will be deleted as soon as the interview has been transcribed by myself at the earliest given opportunity (usually within 14 days). Any contributions made to this study will be entirely confidential. To protect your identity, I will assign your transcript a pseudonym and any data that could potentially lead to your identification will be omitted from the final transcript. To ensure that you are happy with this, you may request a copy of your transcript. Transcripts will be kept for up to 10 years as per Staffordshire University's guidelines.

Data Protection Statement
Your data will be processed in accordance with the General Data Protection Regulation 2016 (GDPR).

The data controller for this project will be Staffordshire University. The university will process your personal data for the purpose of the research outlined above. The legal basis for processing your personal data for research purposes under the GDPR is a 'task in the public interest'. You can provide your consent for the use of your personal data in this study by completing the consent form that has been provided to you.

You have the right to access information held about you. Your right of access can be exercised in accordance with the GDPR. You also have other rights including rights of correction, erasure, objection, and data portability. Questions, comments and requests about your personal data can also be sent to the Staffordshire University Data Protection Officer. If you wish to lodge a complaint with the Information Commissioner's Office, please visit www.ico.org.uk.

What if I change my mind about taking part?
You are free withdraw at any point of the study, without having to give a reason. Withdrawing from the study will not affect you in any way. You are able to withdraw your data from the study up until 28 days after your interview date (the exact date will be confirmed via e-email), after which withdrawal of your data will no longer be possible due to the fact it may have already been used to form part of my analysis. If you choose to withdraw from the study we will not retain any information that you have provided us as a part of this study and your transcript will be deleted.

What will happen to the results of the study?
Findings gathered during interviews will be used to form part of my analysis. Excerpts from transcripts will be included in my PhD thesis, as well as future publications in academic journals, books and teaching materials.

Who should I contact for further information?
If you have any questions or require more information about this study, please contact me using the following contact details:

3

Charlotte Rigby (PhD Researcher)
Email: R015246G@student.staffs.ac.uk
Twitter: @Charrrl23
LinkedIn: Charlotte-Rigby

If you wish to make a complaint about the conduct of the study, you can contact the study supervisor (Dr Emma Temple-Malt) or the Chair of the Staffordshire University Ethics Committee for further advice and information.

Dr Emma Temple-Malt (Supervisor)
E-Mail: emma.temple-malt@staffs.ac.uk
Telephone: 01782295906

Thank you for reading this information sheet and for considering taking part in this research!

Item E – Consent Form

RESEARCH PROJECT CONSENT FORM

Title of Project: Policewomen on Patrol: A Historiography of Women Police Officers' Experiences Throughout the Seventies and Eighties

Researcher: Miss Charlotte Rigby

I have read and understood the information sheet.	Yes ☐	No ☐
I have been given the opportunity to ask questions about this PhD project, and I have had any questions answered satisfactorily.	Yes ☐	No ☐
I understand that my participation in this study is entirely voluntary and that I can withdraw at any time without having to give an explanation.	Yes ☐	No ☐
I understand that the interview will be audio recorded and will be deleted once it has been transcribed at the earliest opportunity.	Yes ☐	No ☐
I consent that data collected could potentially be used in academic journals, book chapters, papers and teaching materials, and understand that all data will be presented anonymously.	Yes ☐	No ☐
I understand that I can request a copy of my transcript to ensure I am happy with the level of anonymity given, as well as add/retract any information I am not comfortable being in the public domain.	Yes ☐	No ☐
I understand that my transcript will be stored on a password protected computer for 10 years before being destroyed.	Yes ☐	No ☐
I understand that I can withdraw my data from the project <u>within 28 days</u> of the interview taking place, without having to give an explanation	Yes ☐	No ☐
I hereby give consent to take part in this study	Yes ☐	No ☐

_____   _____   _____
Name Participant (print)   Date   Signature

_____   _____   _____
Name Researcher (print)   Date   Signature

Item F – Ethics Approval

School of Law, Policing and Forensics

ETHICAL APPROVAL FEEDBACK

Researcher name:	Charlotte Rigby
Title of Study:	SU_20_186 Policing the Pickets and Beyond: A Historiography of Women Police Officers' Experiences Before, During and After the 1984-85 Miners' Strikes.
Award Pathway:	PhD
Status of approval:	Approved

Your project ***proposal has been approved*** by the Ethics Panel and you may commence the implementation phase of your study. You should note that any divergence from the approved procedures and research method will invalidate any insurance and liability cover from the University. You should, therefore, notify the Panel of any significant divergence from this approved proposal.

You should arrange to meet with your supervisor for support during the process of completing your study and writing your dissertation.

When your study is complete, please send the ethics committee an end of study report. A template can be found on the ethics BlackBoard site.

The Ethics Committee wish you well with your research.

Signed: **Date: 20th August 2021**

Dr. Kayleigh Denyer
Chair of the LPF Ethics Panel

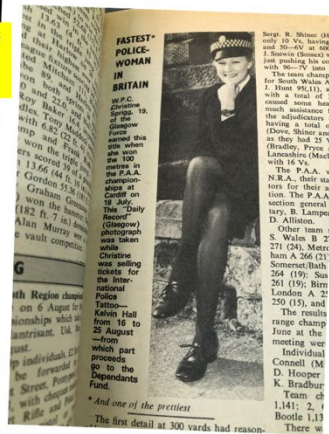**Item G & H – Photo Elicitation**

Life History Interviews

Charlotte Rigby, PhD Researcher @ School of Justice, Security and Sustainability

Outside of Policing

Photo 1: "FASTEST POLICE WOMAN IN BRITAIN […] and one of the prettiest!"

Photo 2: Sports competition, Staffs Police, 1985

What Made You Join the Police?

WPC Uniforms

Day-to-Day Duties
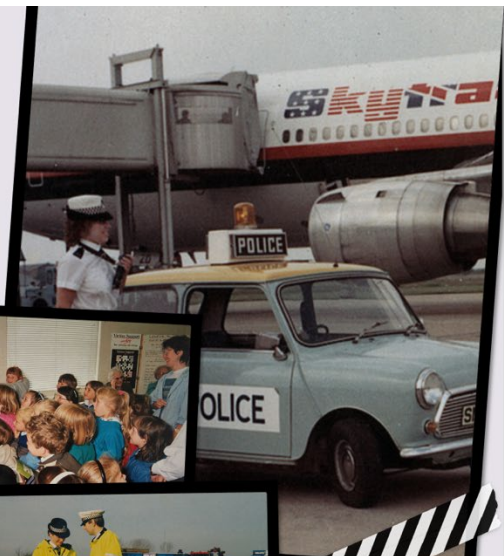
- Office Work
- School Crossings
- Transport Control

WPC Equipment

- Handcuffs and whistle
- Handbag, tape measure
- Torch

Day-to-Day Duties

- School Visits
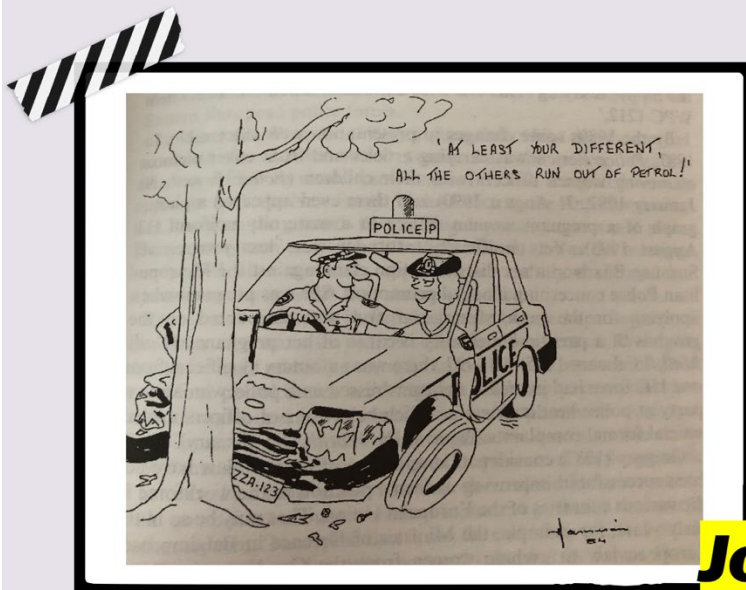- Driving the Car
- Transport Police

Training Opportunities

During Industrial Action
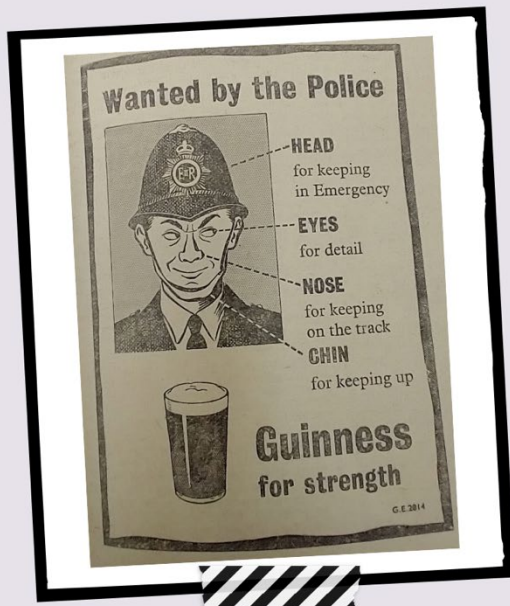
Police Review Magazine, 1985

- WANTED BY THE POLICE
- HEAD for keeping in emergency
- EYES for detail
- NOSE for keeping on the track
- CHIN for keeping up
- GUINNESS for strength

"At least you're different. All the others run out of petrol"
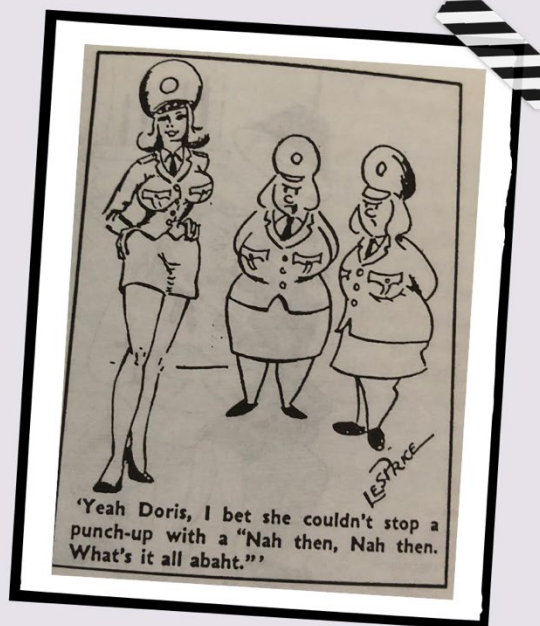
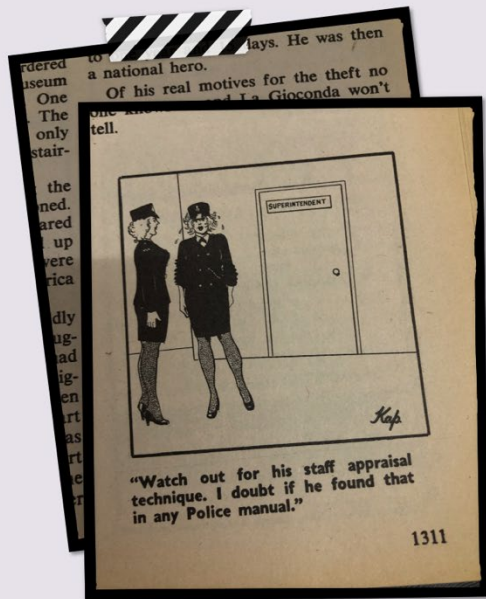## Federal Police Journal, 1984

Police Review Magazine, 1994

- "If she wants to call it a BATON, who are we to argue?!"

- "Yeah Doris, I bet she couldn't stop a punch-up with a 'nah then nah then what's it all abaht'"

Police Review Magazine, 1971

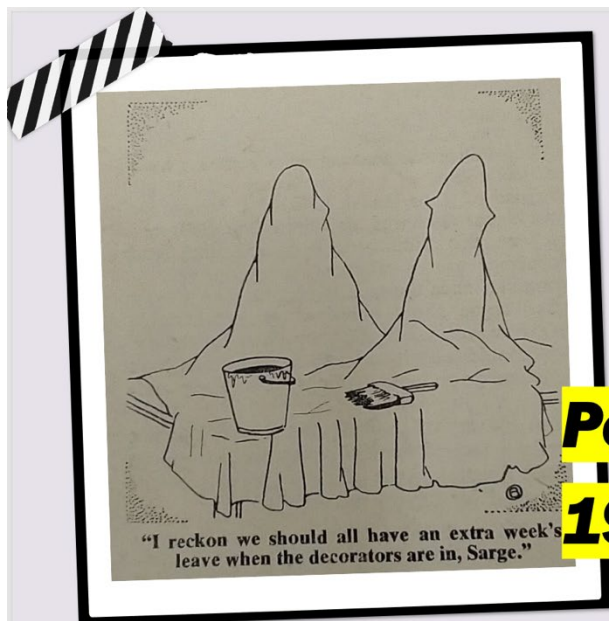'Yeah Doris, I bet she couldn't stop a punch-up with a "Nah then, Nah then. What's it all abaht."'

Police Review Magazine, 1971

- "Watch out for his staff appraisal technique. I doubt if he found that in any police manual"

Police Review, 1984

- "I reckon we should all have an extra week's leave when the decorators are in, Sarge"

Police Review, 1981

Item I – Interview Schedule

Part One - Before the Police
1. How old were you when you first joined?
2. Which force were you apart of? (WMP, GMP, etc)
3. Why did you join the police?
4. How did your friends and family react?
5. What was the interview process like? And how did this make you feel?

Part Two - Early Career
1. When you started the job, were you subjected to an 'initiation ceremony'? If so, what was it? And how did this make you feel?
2. What was your uniform like? Did you like it, was it impractical? Were you allowed to wear trousers?
3. What were your duties like at the start of your career? And <u>Why</u> do you think you were assigned these duties?
4. How did your colleagues respond to you as a <u>WPC</u>
5. How did the public respond to you as a WPC?
6. How did the Sex Discrimination Act 1975 change things in the <u>workplace</u>

Part Three - Later Career
1. What sorts of training opportunities were you given?
2. Were you ever promoted? If so, how did you acquire promotion? And how did this affect your policework?
3. Do you think your gender hindered your progression?
4. Did your role change during certain events? E.g., the 84/85 miners' strikes, football matches, industrial strikes, political marches, etc
5. How did the removal of the 'WPC' title in the 90s affect your career?

Part Four - Social
1. What was your relationship with your male colleagues like?
2. What was your relationship with your female colleagues like?
3. Was having 'status' important in the workplace? If so, how did you gain it?
4. When we talk about the police, we often hear about a 'dark humour' - what were your experiences with this like?
5. We also hear a lot about misogyny and sexism in the police, especially during the 70s & 80s. What are your thoughts on this? [If this is too upsetting, please don't feel like you <u>have to</u> talk about this]

Part Five - Personal
1. How did marriage affect your career/treatment in the workplace? [If applicable]
2. How did having children affect your career/treatment in the workplace? [If applicable]
3. What is your best career highlight?
4. What is your worst career lowlight?
5. Looking back on your career, is there anything you wish you could change?

Part Six - Reflections
1. Over the course of your career, what changed the most in policing?
2. Over the course of your career, what changed the least in policing?

Item J – Debrief Sheet

Debrief Sheet – Policewomen on Patrol: A Historiography of Policewomen's Experiences Throughout the 70s & 80s

A Message from the Researcher:
Firstly, I would just like to say a huge thank you for taking part in my PhD study! If you would like to request a copy of your transcript, please e-mail me on the details provided below and I will arrange for this to take place. Alternatively, if you would like to withdraw your consent, please e-mail me within 28 days [9th June 2022] and I will remove all of your contributions from the study, no explanation necessary.

Support Services:
If you have been affected by any of the topics raised in today's interview, please contact one of the following helplines for specialised support.

For specific police related concerns, please contact:
Police Care UK
Website: https://www.policecare.org.uk/get-help/people/emotional/counselling/
Telephone: 03000120030 (Monday – Friday, 9-5pm)

Police Mutual
Website: https://www.policemutual.co.uk
Telephone: 08000281708 (24/7)

For mental distress, please contact:
Shout
Website: https://giveusashout.org
Telephone: Text 'Shout' to 85258 for confidential, 24-hour support.

NHS
Website: https://www.nhs.uk/service-search/mental-health/find-an-urgent-mental-health-helpline
Telephone: Type your postcode into the NHS tool and it will give you the number for your localised, 24-hour mental health support service.

If you have been the victim of a crime and would like to report it, please contact 101.

Lodging a Complaint:
If you have any concerns, questions, or complaints about the research, please contact me or my supervisor, Dr Emma Temple-Malt.

Charlotte Rigby (PhD Researcher)	Dr Emma Temple-Malt (Supervisor)
E-Mail: R015246G@student.staffs.ac.uk	**E-Mail:** emma.temple-malt@staffs.ac.uk
Telephone: 07908893089	**Telephone**: 01782295906

Once again, thank you for taking part in my research!

The cut off point (in red) to withdraw from the study was always customised for each participant.