

**Women only networks:  
help or hindrance?  
A case study of a  
UK police constabulary**

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# Abstract

My case study provides a unique discussion on the experiences and perceptions of members of a UK constabulary women's formal in-house network, which includes an exploration of the organisational and occupational cultures of the Police Service and the women's experiences of informal networking and support within the constabulary. It also considers the women's perceptions of women's formal networks, their relationships and interactions with their own women's network and their views of the benefits that their network can bring to women in the constabulary. Theories on organisational networking predominantly come from academics and researchers, and formal women's networks and their successes are enthusiastically promoted on corporate websites by CEOs, HR managers and diversity practitioners. This qualitative, inductive study gives voice to the rank and file members of one of these networks within the environment of the UK Police Service, an organisation described as predominately heterosexist, white and male (Loftus 2008) and increasingly concerned that police budget cuts since 2010, along with associated police reforms, have had a negative effect for women and gender equality in policing.

This study contributes to the literature on women networking and the little researched area of women's formal in-house networks by researching the women's perceptions of and interactions with their network. It explores the ways in which macro, meso and micro environments can influence the way women perceive and interact with their formal network and how the social construction of women and contexts such as organisational cultures and sub-cultures ultimately influence the failure or success of these women-only networks. My research provides a valuable and unique insight into the ineffectiveness of a police constabulary formal women's in-house network which lacked support from members, colleagues and management, as it explores how society's gender stereotyping combined with police male hegemonic occupational and organisational cultures and sub-cultures have had a negative impact on the efficacy and influence of the women's network.

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# Glossary of Terms

<b>ACPO</b>	- Association of Chief Police Officers
<b>ACWN</b>	- Angleshire Constabulary Women's Formal Network (a pseudonym)
<b>BAWP</b>	- The British Association for Women in Policing
<b>BAM</b>	- The British Academy of Management
<b>CEO</b>	- Chief Executive Officer
<b>DCC</b>	- Deputy Chief Constable
<b>DCI</b>	- Detective Chief Inspector
<b>DS</b>	- Detective Sergeant
<b>HMIC</b>	- Her Majesty's Inspectorate of Constabulary
<b>HR</b>	- Human Resources department
<b>IPC</b>	- Independent Police Commission
<b>KIT</b>	- Keeping in Touch (days)
<b>PA</b>	- Personal Assistant
<b>PSU</b>	- Public Support Unit
<b>T&amp;D</b>	- Training & Development
<b>TRiM</b>	- Trauma Risk Management
<b>WIHN</b>	- Women's Formal In-house Network



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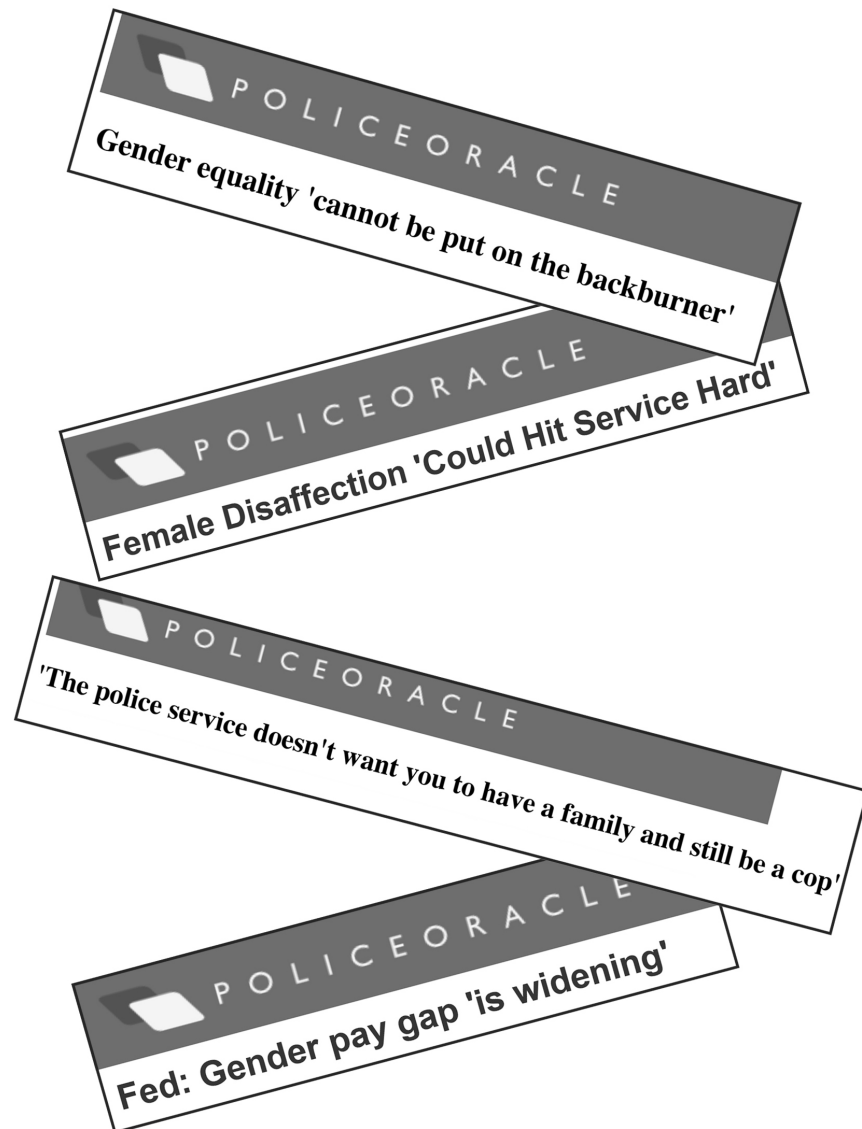
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# Women-only networks: help or hindrance? A case study of a UK police constabulary



# CHAPTER 1: Introduction to my research

## 1.1 Introduction

This research is currently pertinent and topical for three particular reasons. Firstly, it takes place at a time when membership of women's formal networks are flourishing<sup>1</sup> and are now recognised sources of social and human capital for women (Findnetworkingevents.com 2017).

Secondly, Bierema (2005) and Singh et al (2006) argue for the need for more research into corporate in-house women's networks (WIHNs), how these networks impact on women's experiences in the workplace and what is the motivation behind women's interaction with their networks. O'Neil et al (2011) maintained that studies of such networks, such as Singh et al (2006), Vinnicombe et al (2004) and Catalyst (1999) have predominantly been guides on how to create and develop WIHNs, while others have focused on techniques and relationships of network construction. They suggest that more research based on the impact women's networks have on women's workplace experiences is needed, and in particular, on how these formal women-only networks impact on women's career development. My research adds to the small number of studies in the field of women's formal networks and the impact of organisational cultures on network members' perceptions, experiences and expectations of their network.

Thirdly, Broadbridge (2008) proposes that the study of gender in the workplace is a "...mainstream academic topic..." (p.465). Furthermore, Mavin and Bryans (2002) argue that as, historically, men have dominated management and organisation research, there is a need for more research based on women's experiences and perceptions in the workplace and that "...women-only research is desirable and defensible, if only to redress the balance." (p.240). Likewise, Broadbridge and Simpson (2011), "...drawing on the methodologies

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<sup>1</sup> Findnetworkingevents.com (May 2017) advertised fifteen women's network meetings in Hertfordshire during the month of May 2017. (<http://www.findnetworkingevents.com/in/hertfordshire/>)

and epistemologies inherent with women's voice literature..." (p.477), promoted further academic research in gender in organisations.

Undertaking a qualitative study into women-only networks therefore helps to partly fulfil these calls for further research. This study goes further, however, as the empirical data is a unique exploration of the perceptions and experiences of women in a police women's formal in-house network at a critical time when the UK Police Service has been going through radical changes, including annual cuts in Government funding since 2010.

As a result of these changes and budget cuts, concerns have been voiced that the opportunities for more women to move up into police leadership were being eroded (Silvestri et al 2013) and that budget cuts and some of the Winsor Review (2012) recommendations were undoing years of gender equality gains (Brown and Bear 2012). Moreover, Laverick and Cain (2015) found that there was the perception that equality and diversity issues were being neglected at the top level of policing and that recent cuts to police funding had negatively impacted diversity resources and networks.

### **Formal women's networks in the context of policing**

My research of formal women's networks in the context of policing is relevant in this field of study as it takes the knowledge which exists in this area further at a time when there is concern that gender equality and women's issues in the Police Service are being given low priority (Brown and Bear 2012; Hickey 2015; Laverick and Cain 2015). This study, which provides a comprehensive portrayal of women in the Police Service with the main focus on women's networking experiences, promotes the construct that police women's perceptions and experiences of WIHNs are linked to their broader experiences as women in policing. In order therefore to provide an in-depth understanding of their interactions with Angleshire Constabulary Women's Network, the members' experiences and perceptions of other facets of the Police Service such as culture, promotion processes and negotiating work/life balances are discussed. The findings in the literature review on organisational culture in both the private sector and the Police Service highlight that women in private organisations as



well as in policing are frequently excluded from networking informally at work, often as a result of family and parental commitments. In focusing specifically on the women of Angleshire Constabulary and their perceptions of and interactions with the women's formal network, my research highlights the difficulties women in policing are likely to experience when attempting to juggle the demands of career and family responsibilities. This is exacerbated in certain areas of the profession which expect one hundred percent commitment at all times and where long hours and being on call are frequently required.

All forty-three police constabularies in England and Wales have established WIHNS and my research findings and conclusions will be of particular interest to network members and network committees alike as well as staff, officers, managers and other formal network stakeholders throughout the Police Service. Although the focus is on the experiences of the members of one constabulary women's network, my research will enhance the little knowledge there is in the field of women's in-house networks and network members in general. While the empirical data will contribute to an increased comprehension of the formal processes and practices of ACWN, many of the findings are equally relevant, not only in other police constabularies, but also in the private sector and other public organisations and will serve to increase our understanding of formal women's networks everywhere. By the same token, my research is likely to have resonance with not only women's network stakeholders but also other minority in-house network stakeholders in all areas of the Police Service, the public sector and the private sector.

This chapter continues with explanations on the research origins, aims and objectives, followed by my methodological choices. The study's contexts are discussed, which includes Angleshire Constabulary, organisational cultures and sub-cultures and police cultures and sub-cultures. The chapter concludes with a description of the structure of the dissertation.

## 1.2 Research origins

My background was initially in education in the predominantly female environment of 1970s primary education in Scotland, and subsequently in commercial accountancy for almost a decade in what I experienced as the highly gendered, male-dominated environments of construction, land development and telecommunications. Trochim (2006) writes “...no one lives in a vacuum...the ideas you come up with on your own are influenced by your background, culture, education and experiences.” (p.1), a perception which goes some way towards explaining my decision to focus on the experiences of women in the workplace.

Marshall and Rossman’s (1999) observation that “The researcher begins with interesting, curious, or anomalous phenomena that he [sic] observes, discovers, or stumbles across.” (p.22) best describes my interest in women’s formal, in-house networks which goes back to 2005, when I joined BT and was introduced via the intranet to the company’s two women’s formal in-house networks. Since one of the networks was exclusively for senior women in BT and access to this more exclusive BT Senior Women’s Network website was restricted, I could only access BT Women’s Network website, which was open to all permanent women employees. The network promoted the advancement of women in the work place, while the network’s home page consisted of a glamorous image of a young woman advertising discounts from a local hairdressing salon. This, in my opinion, did not accurately convey the network’s aim of developing and advancing women within the company, nor reliably reflect women’s reasons for joining business networks. In addition, the events advertised were inconveniently held in major cities in the UK (predominately London) which also did little to motivate me to join, since attending the nearest event would have involved a three to four hour round trip and a full day off work.

Although I decided not to join, this experience created an interest in women’s networks and two years later, when I started my own photography studio, I joined the ‘Women in Business Network’, a franchised network for business women in the area, as well as a mixed gender business network, ‘Berkhamsted

Business Leaders'. These experiences influenced my decision to focus my doctoral research on women's formal in-house networks.

Prior to commencing my DBA research, I viewed several corporate women's formal network websites and quickly realised that the majority of the websites reflected the views and values of senior executives and network managers. Grey (2011) suggests that many of the "...exciting business case studies which management courses urge upon their students...reflect what managers say about organisations, not – or not necessarily – the lived experience of those who work in them." (p.74), and the network websites I reviewed seemed to be doing just that. I therefore decided that my study of women's formal in-house networks would focus on the 'lived experiences' of the members (paraphrasing Grey 2011). My research therefore looks to give voice to the rank and file members of Angleshire Constabulary women's formal in-house network.

### **1.3 Research aims and objectives**

The objective of my study was to give voice to the rank and file members of ACWN and to provide them with an opportunity to talk about their perceptions, experiences and expectations of the network. The aims of my research were to 1) consider the women's histories and their impact upon the women's chosen careers in policing; 2) explore the women's informal and formal networking activities and the contexts within which the network and its members were embedded; 3) identify the role of the women's network within the constabulary; and finally 4) evaluate how these environments might impact on the interplay between the network and its members. Using Layder's (1996) research map as a guide, I developed my own research map (See Fig. 1, p.92) identifying the women's macro, meso and micro environments to be explored. Through the women's narratives I was able to investigate their life histories, experiences as police women, their networking activities and the complex cultures and influences that impacted upon the women's relationships with their network. Primarily, my study explored the following research questions:

1. How have the women's histories impacted upon their experiences as police women?
2. How have occupational and organisational cultures and behaviours influenced the women's networking experiences?
3. How has organisational culture impacted on the role of the formal women's network?
4. What are the influences that impact on the members' associations and activities with their formal women's network?

## **1.4 Methodologies and methods**

My aim of securing a sample of network members to talk to me, as an independent researcher, on their networking experiences within their constabulary governed the research methodological approaches and the methods of collecting the raw, empirical data. Guided by the aims of the research, I adopted aspects of both social constructionist and realist methodologies, since using the women's stories as a means of understanding their workplace experiences and perceptions is an approach that embodies aspects of both social constructionist and realist methodologies.

The 'women's voice' perspective was much more than simply a method of collecting data and was a crucial part of the research methodology. The exploration of the women's views and perceptions of their world and workplace dictated that the research would be: 1) qualitative, as the study seeks to consider the women's informal and formal networking experiences, focusing predominantly on their perceptions, experiences and expectations of their formal women's network; 2) interpretative, as the research analysis and conclusions are based on the women's and the researcher's interpretations of what is going on in their world; and 3) inductive, since there is no initial hypothesis or premise to prove and the research outcomes determined from my interpretation of the empirical data are not unambiguous, but rather presented as possible conclusions.

I was given the opportunity to focus my research solely on the members of ACWN. The research then became a case study (Yin 1994), investigating women's experiences and formal networking activities within the real life context of an English police constabulary. I interviewed twenty-five women using semi-structured, informal, face-to-face, recorded interviews, a data collection method well suited to qualitative case studies (Drever 2003).

## **1.5 Angleshire Constabulary Women's Network (ACWN)**

The UK Police Service is split into the three distinct divisions of England and Wales, Scotland and Northern Ireland. There are forty-three constabularies/services in England and Wales, one of which is Angleshire Constabulary<sup>2</sup>. The constabulary's women's network was launched in 2006 as part of Angleshire Constabulary's gender equality initiative and underpins the BAWP's five-year gender equality plan known as Gender Agenda 2, developed and launched in 2006. The network is advertised on ACWN website as a support network for all paid and voluntary female members of staff, with membership automatic for every female member of staff across Angleshire Constabulary. The website confirms that the network was set up in order to 1) utilise the experience and expertise of all women in the constabulary; 2) provide support; and 3) contribute to a changing culture.

The network is managed by a voluntary committee of twelve female staff and officers who attend quarterly network meetings held in the Constabulary's HQ. A3 size ACWN posters are displayed on notice boards in different locations throughout the Constabulary (Appendix 1) advising women that they are automatically network members. The poster also highlights the network's six aims and objectives, which are:

- To ensure the Police Service value women in policing
- To achieve a gender balance
- To have a women's voice in influential policy forums

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<sup>2</sup> Angleshire Constabulary is the pseudonym of the Police Constabulary involved in the research  
Angleshire Constabulary Women's Network (ACWN) is the pseudonym of this police constabulary's women's in-house network

- To develop and achieve a work/life balance
- The right working environment & equipment to enable women to do their jobs professionally
- To develop a better understanding of the service we provide to female members of the public

The poster provides the members with the names of ACWN committee members, an email address and a telephone contact number, under a heading inviting members to contact a member of the committee if they have any questions or would like to talk to someone. The chairperson and vice chairperson, who take on these voluntary responsibilities for approximately two to three years, are both members of the network committee and are required to carry out network duties in addition to their day to day workload. The other committee members are also volunteers who manage committee duties alongside their daily workloads.

ACWN had taken over the role of organising a four-day development programme that was advertised for women but was open to both men and women, and had previously been run by the training department for all employees. The network had also organised a 'Colour Me Beautiful'<sup>3</sup> morning for the women which took place one Saturday morning as well as a motivational event held at HQ when female motivational speakers from within and outside the constabulary came along to speak to the women attendees. In addition, ACWN committee members were working on various projects behind the scenes with other departments, such as reviewing maternity wear for uniformed officers with HR and working with female under-represented units such as Dog Handling, Firearms and PSU on initiatives to attract more women applicants.

This study allowed me, through conversation, to explore the women's workplace experiences and perceptions focusing on their working environments and gender issues, and consider how these relate to their perceptions of and interactions with their formal women's network.

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<sup>3</sup> 'Colour me Beautiful' is a fashion initiative that provides colour analysis in personal styling for women

## **1.6 Research in context**

In order to contextualise the women's network explored in the study it is important to provide a brief overview of the environment in which the network operates. This section therefore explores organisational cultures and sub-cultures and police cultures and sub-cultures.

### **A UK Police Service in flux**

The quality of policing and the need for far-reaching changes in the UK Police Service has been highly publicised in the media over the last two decades as a result of several high profile scandals, such as the inefficient handling of the murder of Stephen Lawrence and the subsequent enquiry and production of the damning Macpherson Report in 1999. In the aftermath of the Macpherson Report and in the wake of the Hillsborough, Jimmy Savile and Rotherham scandals, the Police Service has been dealing with wide-ranging, internal changes and ongoing, austere cuts to Central Government police funding since 2010 (Travis 2015; Beattie 2015), the effects of which continue to cause concern today (Casciani 2017; Grierson 2017). My research has been conducted over a period of time when the UK Police Service is experiencing a lack of credibility and annual reductions in funding and the number of police officers (Martis 2014; Travis and Dodd 2015; Harley 2017; Police Federation 2017a), as well as increased stress levels and low morale amongst employees (POLICE 2016/17; Buhagiar 2017; Martis 2017; Police Federation 2017b).

A Police Federation survey in 2012 of approximately three and a half thousand women found that, "...while 42% per cent had given serious thought about leaving, a staggering 76%, three quarters of all those surveyed are pessimistic about the future of the service." (Brown 2012 p.17). The future of women in policing was again raised a year later by Fran Jones of the Police Federation, who voiced concerns that "Progress over equal pay and conditions for female officers is being dragged back in time in the wake of sweeping government reforms." and that the Police Service was losing female experience to the private sector as a result (Caswell 2013). Three years on and a second Police Federation survey (2015) found that just under seventy percent of officers

would not recommend policing as a career, while more than half (fifty-six percent) admitted that their morale was low (POLICE 2016/17).

There are concerns that women are experiencing the brunt of the far reaching changes in the 2012 Winsor Review (Laverick and Cain 2014) and that the ongoing budget cuts are having a negative impact on existing gender equality support structures and initiatives (Brown and Bear 2012; Gender Agenda 3 2014; Hickey 2015; Laverick and Cain 2015; Loeb 2015). Likewise, in 2015, Jane Townsley, President of the International Association of Women in Policing, warned that the creation of a better work environment for women in policing has been set back ten years as a result of the current budget cuts (Loeb 2015), while Chief Superintendent Irene Curtis declared that the Police Service “...can’t treat gender equality as something we have achieved...” (Hickey 2015). With considerable budget cuts to diversity resources and support networks, there is evidence that the remnants of dedicated equality and diversity resources and units have been reduced (Laverick and Cain 2015).

Despite these concerns, there is recognition that gender equality policies and initiatives alone will not create a more gender equal and diverse Police Service. Deep-rooted changes to the white, sexist, male-dominated culture of policing are needed if negative attitudes and behaviour towards women in policing are going to change (HMIC 1995; Barton 2003; Silvestri 2007; Loftus 2008; Brown 2014a; Gender Agenda 3 2014). What follows therefore are brief discussions on organisational cultures and sub-cultures, followed by more detailed explorations of police culture and sub-cultures.

### **A consideration of organisational cultures and sub-cultures**

One of the most popular definitions of organisational culture is probably that of Schein (1984) who defines it as “...the pattern of basic assumptions that a given group has invented, discovered or developed in learning to cope with its problems of external adaptation and internal integration, and that have worked well enough to be considered valid...” (p.3). He maintains further that “Perhaps the most intriguing aspect of culture as a concept is that it points us to



phenomena that are below the surface, that are powerful in their impact but invisible and to a considerable degree unconscious.” (Schein 2004 p.8).

How organisational cultures are created, develop and change are nebulous concepts. Smircich (1983) discusses the perception of organisational culture as two separate concepts and questions if culture is a ‘critical variable’ and is something the organisation has which can be managed. On the other hand, is it a ‘root metaphor’, which means it is something the organisation is, and is spontaneous, unmanaged, and natural? There is much support in the literature for the concept of culture as Smircich’s root metaphor, and that an organisation is a culture, or rather a complex conglomeration of sub-cultures or networks of people (Krackhardt and Kilduff 1989; Evetts 2000; Stacey 2003). Krackhardt and Kilduff (1989) referred to the importance of people in influencing organisational culture and proposed that corporate behaviour and other facets of culture are determined “...through the informal networks of coworkers.” (p.1/2). Similarly, Stacey (2003), perceived organisational cultures and social structures as “...complex patterns of communicative interaction between interdependent people.” (p.7). Furthermore, it is argued that an organisation is not one large culture, but is made up of various sub-cultures (Krackhardt and Kilduff 1989; Jermier et al 1991; Ibarra 1993; Murphy and Davey 2002).

Jermier et al (1991) described organisational sub-cultures as the creation of “...groups of employees who share the same characteristics, such as...gender...” (p.171), and it is well documented that the existence of dominant male sub-cultures, sometimes referred to in the literature as old boys’ networks, serve to exclude women and thus sustain gendered organisational cultures (Brass 1985; Ibarra 1993; Mavin & Bryans 2002; Benschop 2009; Corby and Stanworth 2009). It has been suggested that many organisational sub-cultures are so strong and close-knit that they obstruct the progress of culture change initiatives. For example, Krackhardt and Kilduff (1989) found evidence that informal organisational networks “...are likely to strongly resist management attempts to initiate discrepant cultural values.” (p.107).

It is evident from the literature that culture change programmes have a history of limited, if any, success and frequently come up against internal resistance and barriers to change (Wilmott 1993; Schein 1996; Lewis 1997; Liff and Cameron 1997; Argyris 1998; Ogbonna and Harris 2002; Durbin and Fleetwood 2010). The influence of external social cultures, values and attitudes has also been cited as a barrier to culture change programmes, and in particular gender equality measures (Liff and Cameron 1997; Lewis 1997; Mavin 2001; McCarthy 2004a), since the socially constructed idea of the ideal worker is male, with women taking on the majority of child care and other domestic responsibilities.

Harris and Ogbonna (1998) contended the two main influences that have an impact upon change programmes are the strength of the sub-cultures and peoples enthusiasm and readiness for change. Similarly, Butterfield et al (2004) highlighted the police 'canteen culture' as "...a strong incestuous culture that has been identified as a major impediment to change." (p.399). The following section provides a more detailed exploration of police culture and sub-cultures.

## **Understanding police cultures**

The Police Service has been described as a complex organisation with complex cultures and sub-cultures (Waddington 1999; Kiely and Peek 2002; Myhill and Bradford 2012; Cockcroft 2014). In addition, police constabularies have their "...own unique sets of demands and socio-economic conditions..." (Dick and Cassell 2004 p.53). The macho aspect of police culture has frequently been highlighted in the literature on gender in policing (Martin 1996; Waddington 1999; Dick and Jankowitz 2001; Gender Agenda 2 2006). Police culture has also been described as "...quasi military..." (Thomas and Davies 2002 p.183) and "...imperious, white heterosexist, male..." (Loftus 2008 p.756).

There is evidence of the perception within policing that being a police officer and catching criminals is a job more suited to men than women and it would seem that both male and female officers sustain the perception of policing as predominately catching criminals and keeping society crime free (Gaston and Alexander 1997; Holdaway and Parker 1998; Martin 1996; Dick and Cassell

2004; Archbold and Schultz 2008). Moreover, Dick and Cassell (2004) found that women both accept and promote this socially constructed image of police work, since conforming to the male perception of police work confers the advantage of acceptance by their male co-workers, despite the fact this definition of police work itself creates barriers for women in policing.

Women in policing, senior Police Service leaders, the Home Office and academics have acknowledged over the years that there are barriers women in policing face, and that there is a need to create a less gendered workplace (HMIC 1995; Dick and Jankowitz, 2001; Brown et al 2006; Hanson 2010; PolicingUK 2013; McDermott 2013; Laverick and Cain 2015). Thirteen years after the launch of the first initiative to combat female inequality, Gender Agenda 1 (2001), and in recognition that there is still work to be done in the Police Service to tackle the issue of gender equality, the BAWP launched Gender Agenda 3 in 2014.

Silvestri (2007) described the Police Service as “...deeply gendered at structural, cultural and individual levels...” (p.52) with police leadership values that are resistant to change. Other studies have cited the strength of police culture and sub-cultures as a barrier to real change within the Police Service (HMIC 1992; Holdaway and Parker 1998; Barton 2003; Butterfield et al 2004; Loftus 2008; Myhill and Bradford 2012). For example, Barton (2003) concluded, “...the most significant impediment to change within police organisations is police occupational (sub) culture...” (p.347). Moreover, he indicated that the failure of numerous Police Service change initiatives has been due to the continuous shortcomings of senior management and governments in recognising the strength of police sub-cultures.

### **The influences of police sub-cultures**

Police culture has been described as “...a near infinity of multiple sub-cultures...” (Waddington 1999 p.290), some of which have been accused by Julie Spence, former Chief Constable of Cambridgeshire, of being “...ever present pockets of cronyism and nepotism.” (PolicingUK 2013 p.49). This

suggests the existence of informal, deep-rooted networks that are exclusive, restrictive and extremely homophilous, only allowing access to social and human capital to similar others. Research in this field has provided evidence to support the existence of several police sub-cultures (Holdaway and Parker 1998; Dick and Cassell 2002; Loftus 2008; Myhill and Bradford 2012). Specialised police units, such as Firearm, PSU and CID have their own individual sub-cultures of behaviour, beliefs and informal networks, and it has been acknowledged that some of these specialised units can have "...discriminatory and exclusive practices..." (Holdaway and Parker 1998 p.59) that are shunned by women.

One of the most widely recognised sub-cultures associated with the police is the police 'canteen' culture, with references to the banter, behaviour and bravado often exhibited by both men and women in station canteens (Waddington, 1999; Brown, 2000; Loftus, 2008). Loftus (2008) described the police 'canteen culture' as the shared set of "...norms and values that were consistent with a dominant white, heterosexual, male composition [which] routinely manifested themselves in a particularly *male* form of banter..." (p.772). The 'canteen culture' has also been recognised by both the Government and the Police Service as a breeding ground for discriminatory behaviour (Macpherson 1999) and a "...culture of predominantly white male values, not deliberately harmful but nonetheless impacting on women and persons of ethnic minority origin and, indeed, others not conforming to the majority norms." (HMIC 1992 p.21).

Despite HMIC's acknowledgement that these canteen sub-cultures are homophilous networks of predominantly male police officers promoting white, male standards while prohibiting those who do not conform, portraying this type of behaviour and banter as not intentionally damaging is a comment which, in itself, could be construed as institutional racism and sexism. It is therefore not surprising attitudes do not change when HMIC fails to fully condemn discriminating behaviours or recognise the extent of the impact that they have on marginal groups. This type of humour and banter are often covert forms of discrimination that can hold back those who chose not to conform or cause feelings of distress, frustration and inadequacy for those who feel obliged to

conform in order to be part of the group (HMIC 1992; Brown 1998; Loftus 2008; IPC 2013). For example, Loftus (2008) found evidence of women officers putting up with what they viewed as disagreeable behaviour by male officers, when the women spoke about tolerating "...highly sexualized language..." which included "...explicit discussions about sexual encounters." (p.772). That women frequently tolerate the sexist behaviour of the canteen culture in order to 'fit in' and be part of the team acknowledges firstly, the strength of some organisational sub-cultures and secondly, that the 'canteen' culture is a 'root metaphor' and an intrinsic part of police culture overall, and not an easily manipulated 'critical variable' (Smircich 1983).

Notwithstanding the negative connotations linked to the canteen culture, there is the suggestion that it can also have a positive influence as it develops "...comradeship and team spirit..." (Martin 1996 p.523). Waddington (1999) also argued that the overtly macho behaviour and banter that goes on does not reflect the true nature of the Police Service. Rather, it is a way of dealing with the stresses and strains of the occupation with fellow colleagues who understand the nature of the work. While Kiely and Peek (2002) found that this particular sub-culture was perceived as the greatest influence in "...'tarnishing values' – particularly those of young recruits...[who are] influenced by 'old cynics'..." (p.174/175), Brown (2000) and Loftus (2008) challenged this view and maintained that younger officers who join the Police Service could be critical of the values and behaviours of their older, male colleagues. Moreover, while Butterfield et al (2004) highlighted the canteen culture as a major barrier to change, the women in Martin's (1996) study believed the gendered attitudes and gendered stereotyping by other departments within the constabulary and by members of the public to be considerably more pernicious.

### **Changing police cultures**

Jermier et al (1991) found that police senior management failed in their attempts to impose overall conformance with the organisation's espoused culture as a result of the strength of the sub-cultures, thus supporting the contention that organisations do not have cultures, but rather are a series of sub-cultures which, due to their complexity, are difficult to change. Arnold also

highlighted the increased antagonism towards diversity initiatives in policing as the result of "...the white male backlash..." (Dick and Cassell 2002 p.954, citing Arnold 1997) while Loftus (2008) suggested that internal resistance and resentment worked to undermine equality and diversity within the Police Service. She also noted complaints from officers about the "...apparent demise of workplace banter and restrictions on everyday language." (p.773), which suggests nostalgia and support for a sub-culture that sustains unacceptable behaviours and values that underpin the dominant male culture. This supports Dick and Cassell (2002), who proposed that any initiatives designed to promote the interests of specific groups within an organisation will be challenged by others, and that those who benefit will be discredited.

Although there is consensus that pockets of sexism in the Police Service do exist (HMIC 1992; Holdaway and Parker 1998; Brown 1998, Butterfield et al 2004; Myhill and Bradford 2012), Waddington (1999) argued gender discrimination in policing is more a product of "...patriarchal beliefs embedded in the wider culture" (p.291) and not solely as a result of macho cultures specific to the police or the work they do. That we need to look outside the Police Service and consider the way women are stereotyped in general was reiterated by Dick and Jankowitz (2001), who maintained that the perception of the Police Service as a macho culture is not so much to blame for the continuation of gender inequalities, as is the "...broader socio-cultural constructions of women's domestic roles." (p.181). Changing the strong police occupational culture will therefore be made even more arduous as it is also influenced by society's perceptions of policing as fighting crime (Dick and Cassell 2004; Blok and Brown 2005; Cockcroft 2005). It is within the context of these police cultures and sub-cultures that the women I interviewed carry out their work and ACWN exists as a gender diversity tool.

## **1.7 Research structure**

This chapter provides an overview of the origins and aims of the study. In order to impart the reader with a better understanding of the context of the research, I

include a description of Angleshire Women's In-House Network followed by discussions on organisational and police cultures. The research methodologies and methods are then considered, followed by an outline of the research dissertation structure, where profiles of chapters two to eight are provided.

Chapter two provides a critical discussion of the literature on networking. It begins with a description of five of the main principles of networking relevant to my research, which are: social capital; reciprocity; homophily; strong and weak ties; and human capital, and contributes towards an understanding of how these theories impact on women's experiences in the workplace. It then explores informal networking within organisations and the concept of formal women's in-house networks.

Chapter three begins with a consideration of the Police Service's gender equality initiatives over several decades aimed at improving the experiences of women in policing. This is followed by a review of the relevant literature in order to provide insights into the work experiences of women in what has been recognised as a Police Service with a dominant masculine culture. This includes discussions on gendered structures of employment, stereotyping, pregnancy, work/life balances and career development. The second half of the chapter continues with the theme of networking in policing and explores informal networking and constabulary women's in-house networks. The chapter concludes with a discussion on how the current climate of change and budget cuts in policing are impacting upon gender equality initiatives such as women's formal in-house networks.

Chapter four concerns my research methodologies and methods and sets out in detail to explain why I chose both realist and social constructionist methodologies to underpin this piece of qualitative research, which is also inductive and interpretive in nature. I explain why my research took place within the context of a UK police constabulary women's network, how I secured access to ACWN's members, and the processes I used to find twenty-five network members who volunteered to participate in my research. Finally I discuss my decision to use informal, semi-structured interviews as the main

method of collecting the raw data and thematic data analyses as my method for analysing the raw data collected.

Chapters five, six and seven explore the findings of the research data, broken down by the most relevant themes identified initially from the literature and subsequently added to from the fieldwork data. Chapter five puts the participants' accounts of their experiences and expectations into context by providing histories of past work experiences and, in some cases, family lives and I explore how the women accrued valuable social and human capital prior to joining the Police Service. The chapter provides insights into the women's individual perceptions of police cultures, past and present, and identifies today's Police Service as a culture and a working environment that is considerably less gendered than before. The women also discuss their perceptions of police work, and how they view the public's perception of police work, which is frequently based on society's gendered attitudes that police work, catching criminals and preventing crimes are not jobs for women.

Chapter six continues to explore the women's views of what it means to be a woman in policing today, with particular reference to perceived gender barriers such as role deployment and stereotyping, promotion and pregnancy. The chapter discusses the women's experiences and perceptions of juggling family and work commitments in a profession that often supposes, in some areas, one hundred percent commitment and availability.

Chapter seven moves on to the theme of networking and support, and explores the women's views on formal and informal support, informal and formal networking and the benefits and drawbacks of WIHNs. The chapter then moves the focus onto ACWN and explores the network's visibility within the constabulary, the women's activity with their network and their perceptions of future benefits, if any, the network might provide. Finally, the chapter explores the concerns amongst the women I interviewed that far-reaching changes to the UK Police Service and several years of budget cuts are having a negative



impact on their workplace experiences and are essentially diluting ACWN's ability to improve the workplace for women in the constabulary.

Chapter eight presents my findings and conclusions in line with the aims of the research, which was to explore member's perceptions, experiences and expectations of their formal in-house women's network. I proffer my explanations for the women's experiences of their network from key themes that have emerged from their stories and consider the role of ACWN within male-dominated occupation and constabulary cultures. This provides an original and unique insight into the functions of a police constabulary formal women's network as viewed by a sample of its members. My study's contribution to the literature in the fields of women networking in policing and my research's original contributions to the knowledge of women's formal in-house networks is reviewed. The chapter then concludes with a discussion on how my research can assist managers or diversity practitioners involved in setting up and running gender/ethnic/minority support groups and suggests implications for further research.

## **Chapter 2: Workplace networking and networks**

### **2.1 Introduction**

Borgatti and Foster (2003), writing about the radical increase in social network research in management, suggested that research in social capital, which is "...about the value of connections..." (p.993), was possibly the biggest growth area in this field. In this chapter, I review the literature in the field of social networking, which includes discussions on the theories of networking, organisational networks, women networking and corporate women-only in-house networks. I begin with a review of the theories of social capital, reciprocity, homophily, strong and weak ties and human capital in order to provide an understanding of the theoretical framework that underpins this study. This is followed by discussions on networking in organisations, the perceived benefits and limitations of workplace networking and the gendered practices and structures that frequently create barriers to women networking effectively. The chapter continues with an investigation into corporate women-only in-house networks, including the perceived pros and cons of women's network membership and how organisations justify the existence of such networks under the banner of gender diversity and equality. The chapter concludes with a synopsis of the findings and highlights women's networks as a contemporary area of study that has, to date, received little attention.

### **2.2 Principles of networking**

Katz et al (2004) proposed that, amongst the numerous schools of thought in network research, the theoretical roots of networking include "...theories of self interest [social capital], theories of social exchange or dependency [reciprocity]...and theories of homophily." (p.313). In this section, I review the literature on the theories of networking that are particularly relevant to my research. I begin by exploring the three central theories of networking mentioned above, which are social capital, reciprocity and homophily. This is

followed by a consideration of the theories of strong and weak ties and I finish with a discussion on the concept of human capital.

## **Social Capital**

Social capital is a term that is key in the influential works of Bourdieu (1986), Putnam (1995/2001), Portes 1998 and Lin (1999) and has been drawn upon across both social sciences and organisational studies. Lin (1999) proposed that the assumption behind the idea of social capital is "...rather simple and straightforward: Investment in social relations with expected return." (p.30), a broad definition which, he submitted, is consistent with these other scholars. Moreover, he identified two dimensions to the returns on social capital – relationships that bring about personal or individual benefits or profit and those that provide benefits at group level. This study focuses on relationships and network membership that bring about personal career and workplace benefits for the individual members of a police constabulary in-house women's network.

Putnam, in his prominent paper on the social decline of US public/civic life, 'Bowling Alone' (1995), discussed the returns on social capital as benefits at group level, describing social capital as social bonds within a group, with features "...such as networks, norms, and social trust that facilitate coordination and cooperation for mutual benefit." (p.66). Likewise, Bourdieu (1986), who explored the concepts of capital within the framework of social class, inequality and power, described social capital as "...the aggregate of the actual or potential resources which are linked to possession of a durable network of more or less institutionalised relationships of mutual acquaintance and recognition – in other words to membership in a group." (p.51). He highlighted the importance of social capital, arguing that as a result of the differing forms of capital, life is more than a game of chance, as the concepts of capital introduce a level of control into what he referred to as "...the games of society..." (p.1). Moreover, he contended that it is impossible to comprehend how societies function without understanding the various concepts of capital. Bourdieu also highlighted the more informal aspects of social capital, stating that the accrued profits or benefits are not always the conscious objectives of networking, while some

benefits are more symbolic than material, such as the prestige offered by being part of certain groups or networks. Furthermore, he stated that “The existence of a network of connections is not a natural given...it is the product of investment strategies, individual or collective, consciously or unconsciously, aimed at establishing or reproducing social relationships that are directly usable in the short or long term...” (p.10).

Portes (1998), who reviewed the definitions of capital and its applications in sociology, distinguished between material capital, such as money in peoples' bank accounts, and the more intangible forms of capital. For example, he described the concepts of human capital that is inside people's heads and social capital, when “...a person must be related to others, and it is those others, not himself, who are the actual source of his or her advantage.” (p.7). In addition, he referred to the invisible character of informal social capital which potentially makes these networks of relationships impossible to formally regulate, allowing network members to include and exclude individuals without the fear of retribution. Portes concluded that informal networks of individuals create barriers for those on the peripheral of or excluded from such groups, as barred outsiders will lack access to the reciprocal benefits and resources provided by membership of such informal groups. As discussed in Section 2.3, the exclusion of women from informal networks in organisations has been cited as the reason for the growth of women's in-house networks over the last decade (Maxwell et al 2007; Kumra and Vinnicombe 2010).

The receipt of these benefits that flow from network relationships is a recurring theme in the discussions on social capital. For example, Bourdieu (1986) wrote about mutual recognition, which is linked to the concept of reciprocal exchanges of benefits, while Plickert et al (2007) referred to the concept of reciprocity, or the mutual exchange of favours, as the ‘Golden Rule’ and a universal norm.

## **Reciprocity**

Gouldner (1960) maintained that, in sociology, there is no concept more vague and inconclusive than the concept of reciprocity. He proposed that there is a universal norm of reciprocity, which demands “...people should help those who

have helped them...” (p.170), although this raises questions as to when a favour is returned and in what form. He further suggested that there is a more general, less obligatory norm of reciprocity that “...simply requires that one return some (unspecified) benefits to the benefactors.” (p.171). Although reciprocity, or the Golden Rule, in Pilckert et al’s (2007) perception of network capital seems to be somewhat fortuitous, they argued that interchanging of privileges and favours is a key part of social networking, providing opportunities and resources we may not otherwise have access to. These descriptions of reciprocity through network capital best describe informal workplace networks, where benefits are to be had through membership of these unofficial networks with little or no commitment as to the nature and timing of the benefits.

There are several benefits to be had by accumulating social/network capital through membership of informal networks within an organisation (Brass 1985; Linehan 2001; Broadbridge 2004; Van Emmerik et al 2006). For example, Linehan (2001) stated “Networks usually involve contacts with a variety of colleagues for the purpose of mutual work benefits.” (p.823), two of which are greater visibility within the organisation for network members and informal access to those in more senior positions. These benefits are not normally the result of personal, two-way exchanges of favours between close individuals, but rather come through being part of an influential, informal group or network. Similarly, Bailey et al (2007) found recognition amongst the women they interviewed that networking relationships at work were “...mutually beneficial, with respondents enjoying the process of helping and guiding others, viewing it as an integral part of networking activity.” (p.25). In addition, there was a broad agreement amongst the participants that the network not only provided individual benefits, but also benefitted the group as a whole, which provides support for the two dimensional conception of networking, which brings benefits to both individual members and the group as a whole (Lin 1999; Putnam 2001).

Plickert et al’s (2007) study of reciprocity, although not within an organisational setting, found that gender could affect the type of reciprocity within a network, with women providing more emotional support. This supports Ibarra (1997), who found evidence of women in underrepresented areas of management reaching

out to other women for emotional support. However, in contrast, there were also indications that "...women's career and information ties were less homophilous than men's." (p.98). Homophily, which is believed to not only facilitate communications but also "...foster trust and reciprocity." (Brass et al 2004 p.796) is discussed in more detail below.

## **Homophily**

Homophily is explained by phrases '*like associates with like*' and '*birds of a feather flock together*', and has been described by McPherson et al (2001) as "...the principle that a contact between similar people occurs at a higher rate than among dissimilar people...that distance in terms of social characteristics translates into network distance..." (p.416). They also proposed that the case for homophily is one of the most robust in social science and is not restricted solely to gender. For example, they found evidence of homophilous relationships focusing on the characteristics of race and ethnicity, age, religion, education, occupation and gender. For the purpose of this study, only gender will be discussed, and in particular, gender at work.

The theory of homophily, or the tendency of individuals to interact with similar others, is based on the premise that associating with those similar to ourselves increases understanding and helps communication (Brass et al, 2004). Ibarra (1992), in her study of the nature of internal networking within an advertising firm, found that men were more likely to form same-sex ties across multiple networks and to have stronger homophilous ties than women. Furthermore, there was evidence that, while men had a variety of same-sex relationships across the board, women's relationships for instrumental benefits tended to include more men while their expressive or emotional support relationships were predominantly with other women. However, Ibarra questioned the suggestion that men purposely exclude women from their networks because of gender per se, but that "The dilemma for women, however, may lie in the men's reciprocation of their choices: if network contacts are chosen according to similarity and/or status, they [women] are less desirable network choices for men on both counts." (p.440). As men continue to dominate at senior management levels this would help explain the male domination in informal

networks and supports the contention that women are excluded from membership of these critical networks.

Ibarra's findings contradicted Brass (1985), whose study showed that women are as likely as men to form relationships and interact with other women, as men are with men. Rothstein & Davey (1995), in their study of gendered differences in networking relationships in academia, supported Brass' findings, that both women and men are equally homophilous, with both tending to interact more with members of the same sex. They also found that the women in their study recognised the importance of networking and social support more than the men. This, they suggested, was one of the reasons why these women in academia, unlike other private sector organisations, did not have to break into the male networks to obtain network benefits. These differences in each of the studies could be down to the differences in organisational and occupational structures and cultures, for example, in more feminised occupations.

Much of the research on gender in organisations suggests that access to male-dominated informal networks are necessary in order to get ahead, and that men purposely exclude women from these old boys' clubs (Ibarra, 1993; Brass 1985; Broadbridge 2004; Gregory 2009). Brass (1995) suggested that it was difficult to state whether women were actively excluded, or whether they excluded themselves, preferring to network informally with other women. Gregory (2009), in her study of masculine hegemonic culture in the advertising industry, provided support for the concept of gender homophily and referred to the practice of homosociability, or the clubbing together of male executives. She discussed both internal and external influences in the advertising industry that serve to exclude women, which included drinking after hours with clients in bars, "...clubs and strip joints..." (p.341).

This type of networking can exclude women on two levels as the nature of the socialising can undermine the women present, while many women are not able to join the men in out-of-hours socialising due to family responsibilities. As well as the natural trend for both men and women to socialise or network with the same sex, when men and women work together, problems can arise from the

differences. For example, Wood (2003) found evidence that women in the workplace put their reliance on hard work, getting tasks done and being competent, while men were more aware of the attributes of fitting in, team work and the need for trust and loyalty when team building. This suggests that men, more than women, put more value on and effort into developing social capital at work, which could account for the predominance of men in informal networks.

If men and women are more comfortable networking within same-sex groups, then the negative impact this has on women could increase as they move up the company hierarchy. Despite an increase in women in management over several decades, Ogden et al (2006) asserted, "...organisation and management...at best, can be described as andro-centric or male centred." (p.41), while, ten years on, Government statistics (emp08 February 2017) confirmed that, as at October 2016, almost twice as many men held management, director and senior official roles as women. This dominance of males in management can result in increased stress for women managers as same-sex network contacts for them decrease while same-sex contacts for men increase. Subsequently, women are required to network to a greater extent with male managers as the workplace becomes less comfortable and more alien for women, and becomes more comfortable and less alien for men. A report by Lord Davies of Abersoch, Women on Boards, published in February 2011, was critical of male-dominated UK boardrooms for having "...similar board members, with similar backgrounds, education and networks." (p.8), which indicates that the practice of homophily still continues to influence the numbers of men and women in organisational hierarchies today.

Although the theory of homophily suggests that people are inclined to network with similar others, which can constrain network possibilities and opportunities, network capital is not confined to one individual group and "People navigate nimbly through partial involvements in multiple networks..." (Plickert et al 2007 p.406). Plickert et al introduced the concept of network capital, making a distinction between social capital and network capital. They argued that social capital reciprocity, in practice, is variable and on occasion, favours and benefits between two people flow in one direction only. They further proposed,



“...exchanges can reciprocate between two persons or more indirectly through a larger network.” (p.406) and this is what creates network capital. These indirect relationships within larger, multiple networks are often referred to as ties, and much has been written about the strength of network relationships, which are often identified as strong ties and weak ties.

### **Strong and weak ties**

Some of the most cited work on strong and weak ties is by Granovetter (1973) who asserted, “...more people can be reached through weak ties.” (p.1369), thus suggesting that strong ties in a network are less effective in transmitting information to a greater number of people than weak ties. A further benefit of a network of weak ties is that they will tend to circulate in different circles than our strong ties and are therefore bridges to new information. Granovetter argued that the loss of a weak tie has a greater negative effect on the transmission of information probabilities than that of a strong tie, since weak ties may be the only bridge to information outside our own immediate circle. In support of Granovetter, Brass et al (2004) suggested that the “...effectiveness of weak ties rests in the diversity and non-redundancy of the information they provide.” (p.798). With reference to Brass’s previous study (1985), they maintained that weak ties are more effective than strong ties for career progression as they provide access to information outside our immediate working environment. Weak ties are therefore more likely to link people to the dominant networks that are influential and related to career development and promotions.

Formal women’s corporate networks espouse the benefits of network membership linked to promotion and career development and often host career development days when women can meet up with other women they would not normally come into contact with. This encourages and enables women to link up with weak ties with access to new and up-to-date information. In addition, these development and training events, by increasing the women’s skills and knowledge, augment personal human capital, described by Schultz (1961) as amorphous components such as “...skill, knowledge and similar attributes that affect particular human capabilities to do productive work.” (p.8).

## **Human capital**

The concept of human capital has been discussed frequently in the literature on capital and networking (Schultz 1961; Coleman 1988; Becker 1994; Burt 1998; Portes 1998; Hodigere and Bilimoria 2015). For example, Burt (1998) distinguished between social and human capital, proposing "...social capital is a quality created between people whereas human capital is a quality of individuals...While human capital refers to individual ability, social capital refers to opportunity." (p.7). Portes (1998) referred to the abstract attribute of human capital as being inside peoples' heads and compared the concept of human capital to that of Bourdieu's (1986) embodied cultural capital or "...long lasting dispositions of the mind..." (p.3), acquired over a prolonged period and related to education, knowledge and self-development. In addition, Coleman (1988) talked about changes to people that create and enhance skills and capabilities providing them with the tools to act in new ways.

While the above descriptions characterise the abstract nature of human capital, Schultz (1961) discussed the qualitative characteristics of human capital such as skills, knowledge and similar attributes that "...affect particular human capabilities to do productive work." (p.8). Similarly, Becker (1994) described aspects of human capital as schooling/education, training/health and personal values, arguing that they are human capital investments because "...you cannot separate a person from his or her knowledge, skills, health or values the way it is possible to move financial and physical assets." (p.16). Hodigere and Bilimoria (2015) also included age in their list of human capital when looking at women's corporate board directorships opportunities.

While Becker (1994) and Coleman (1988) looked at human capital through the lens of education and Schultz (1961) examined economic growth and human capital, Metz and Tharenou (2001) placed research in human and social capital within the field of organisational studies, and in particular women's career advancement. Their study looked at the influence of both social and human capital on women's career advancement in the banking profession in Australia, and found that progression at four levels of management (supervisor; junior manager; middle manager; senior management) was positively related to at

least one or more aspects of human capital. Education and training were the top facilitators to advancement with breakthroughs<sup>4</sup> and personality traits coming second and third. In addition, the main barrier to advancement cited by the women was gender, which was closely followed in third and fourth place by lack of knowledge or skills and personality traits (for example, lack of confidence) consecutively. Lin (1999) highlighted how investments in social capital and human capital are similar in that they both have expectations of benefits to the individual, proposing that these accumulations of personal capital not only advantage the individuals, but also the group as a whole. As my research focuses predominately on individuals, from the varied descriptions above, I have summarised descriptions of network/social capital and human capital for the purpose of this study as:

*Social/network capital: The building of individual social capital and networks of people, either consciously or unconsciously, by an individual for fortuitous and/or calculated benefits in order to enhance personal human capital, workplace experiences and career progression opportunities.*

*Human capital: An individual's skills and personal characteristics developed through education, training, professional development, experience and personal wellbeing, all of which enhance an individual's abilities in the workplace.*

## **2.3 Networking at work**

Van Emmerik et al (2006), who noted that the majority of research into networking activity in the workplace focused on the engagement in informal networking, suggested the main distinctions between formal and informal workplace networks are: firstly, formal networks have recognised membership and defined structures, informal networks do not, and secondly, employees excluded from informal networks can do little to remedy the situation since informal networks have no formal obligations and similarly exist with little interference. There is evidence that, although women are not always excluded

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<sup>4</sup> Breakthroughs referred to career opportunities, such as working on high profile project or managing a team

from informal networks at work, their membership is frequently restricted (Pini et al 2004; Broadbridge 2004; Cross and Linehan, 2006; Singh et al 2006; Gregory 2009), thus restricting their access not only to social and human capital, but to the more distant weak ties that provide up-to-date information and new links to those in the know. However, despite women's frequent exclusion from informal networks, Singh et al (2006) found that women recognised the importance of both social and human capital advantages of networking and the instrumental and expressive benefits to be gained through networks.

### **Women networking in the workplace**

Brass (1985) argued that women were as likely to form relationships and interact with other women, as men are with men, and concluded that, although both sexes are equally competent at building networks, both sexes were gender homophilous and inclined to interact with their own sex. Furthermore, due to the gender homophilous nature of the networks, women had less interaction with the dominant, male-dominated influential network that was materially linked to career advancement for all the participants. Ibarra (1992) confirmed Brass' earlier findings that men were more likely to network with other men, and compared to the women, seemed to "...reap greater network returns from similar individual and positional resources, as well as from homophilous relationships." (p.422). Both found that men's networks reaped more valuable benefits, while Ibarra argued further that men are more likely to form same-sex ties across multiple networks and have stronger network ties, and that women are often excluded from male-dominated informal networks. In support of both Brass and Ibarra's findings, Gregory's later study (2009) of masculine hegemonic culture in the advertising industry highlighted the practice of homosociability, or the clubbing together of male executives. In contrast, Van Emmerik et al (2006) found that, contrary to expectations, the women bankers in their study networked more than the men, however for the women, "...association with career satisfaction is smaller than holds for men...[and] men were able to use their networking activities more effectively" (p.62).

As indicated earlier, if men and women are prone to networking within same-sex groups, then the negative impact this has on women could increase as they

move up the company hierarchy, when the number of women starts to decrease considerably in most organisations (Broadbridge 2004; Mavin 2006; Dick and Metcalfe 2007; EMP08 2017). This suggests increased stress for women managers as their gender homophilous networks decrease and they are required to network to a greater extent with male managers. In essence, while the workplace becomes a more comfortable and less alien place for men, it becomes a less comfortable and more alien place for women as they have less social capital to draw upon.

Employees do not always acknowledge informal networks and processes at work, like the male managers in Broadbridge's study (2004), who attributed their career success to ability and did not talk openly or recognise the importance of informal networking processes in the development of their careers. This served to disregard the importance of social capital for career progression, while downplaying the negative experience for women as a result of exclusion from such networks. The crucial role of networking for promotion and development of the men's careers only emerged from Broadbridge's primary research. Nevertheless, despite the men in her study playing down the important role of networking, workplace networking is promoted by several high profile organisations such as Shell, GE, IBM, Lloyds-TSB and BT on their websites, while some of the benefits of networking identified in the literature are:

- The ability to know and impress "...the right people..." (Broadbridge 2004 p.554)
- The creation of a "...sense of collective identity..." (Pini et al 2004 p.289)
- "...increased exposure to other people within the organisation, which, for instance, may enhance understanding of organisational practices." (Van Emmerik et al 2006 p.55)
- "...visibility and access to informal discussions with senior management..." plus an increased understanding of the "...formal and informal norms of the organisation..." (Linehan 2001 p.829)

There is evidence from the literature that networking generally has a positive effect in the workplace by increasing and extending social capital. Network activity brings additional benefits, often from weak ties, to individuals, such as improving visibility, providing critical information and highlighting opportunities and career prospects. For example, Cross and Linehan (2006) reported that the women in their study believed "...organisation decisions are based on the access one has to information, which is gained not just through formal networks, such as meetings but also through informal networks within the organisation." (p.34). There was also evidence that exclusion from informal networks not only restricted access to human capital and those critical weak ties, but also had a negative effect on the women's human capital, in as much as it "...increased their feelings of exclusion, isolation and frustration..." (p.34).

Although the women in Cross and Linehan's (2006) study recognised the importance of networking informally, in line with other studies, Maxwell et al (2007) suggested the effect of networking on career might differ between the sexes and on the nature of the networking. They found that the gendered nature of out-of-hours informal networking, critical for career progression, frequently excluded women thus limiting their social capital while enhancing the men's. This leads us to consider the gendered nature of many of these networks, often referred to as old boys' networks.

### **Old boys' networks**

Tonge (2008), in her study of women and men networking in UK public relations, found seventeen different barriers to networking highlighted by the participants. The women identified with all seventeen barriers while the men identified with only seven, leading Tonge to suggest that, although there were ten gender related barriers specific to the women in her study, there were no gender related barriers seemingly experienced by the men. Some of the barriers that seemed to be gender related were age, gender and appearance, which, I suggest, could be industry linked. Other gender related barriers, in line with extant literature, were family responsibilities, tiredness and company culture. Several of the women experienced a lack of company support to

network, since they were "...neither included in networking activities nor encouraged to network." (p.499).

Gregory (2009) used the phrase "Inside the locker room" (p.326) to describe the existence of exclusionary, informal networks of male executives in the advertising industry that served to ostracise women and therefore maintain male power and dominance. Similarly Crompton and Lyonette (2011) found that both doctors and accountants also made references to the perceived existence of informal male networks or old boys' clubs. The dominance of male traditions in informal organisational networks, combined with the perceived lack of female members, has resulted in the labels, 'old boys' networks' or 'the boys' club' (Ehrich 1994; Linehan, 2001; Broadbridge, 2004; Pini et al, 2004; Singh et al 2006; Crompton and Lyonette 2011) to describe predominantly male, informal networks which are often closer to those in power than women's networks (Broadbridge 2004). This could be due to the fact that more men hold senior management positions than women, which benefits men in gender homophilous networks. Moreover, there is evidence that men's networks are likely to be more extensive than women's networks, which results in men having access to the those critical weak ties that women lack.

Linehan (2001) found the perception among the women in her study that men, in order to maintain their dominant status, might purposely set out to exclude women from informal networks, and that these exclusionary networks "...may be responsible for developing and nurturing negative attitudes and prejudices towards female managers." (p.828). Likewise, Broadbridge (2004) suggested that women are purposely excluded from these networks, and that "...informal networks can be quite (deliberately?) [sic] alien and exclusionary for women managers." (p.557) since conversations are often quite masculine in nature, which make it more difficult for women to feel included. One respondent in Broadbridge's study admitted to becoming good at discussing rugby, when referring to the male-dominated social conversation adopted during informal networking sessions. This was supported by Kottke and Agars (2005), who proposed that the threat to men's careers cause them to exclude women from both formal and informal networks.

As mentioned earlier, informal networking that frequently occurs after hours can create problems for women, as they often have more out-of-hours family and parenting commitments than men (Linehan 2001; Singh et al 2006; Gregory 2009, Lee 2011). For instance Linehan (2001), whose participants were aware of the out-of-hours male socialising "...during sports events, and in the clubs and bars, which they felt excluded from." (p.825), demonstrates how it is more difficult for women to develop social capital at work. This, in turn, helps create and perpetuate men's gender homophilous networks while restricting women's opportunities to extend their networks of weak ties. Likewise, Gregory (2009) confirmed the use of restaurants, bars, and late night clubs, which highlighted the men's gendered informal networking behaviour that frequently occurred in areas and at times which excluded women, suggesting that "...being a woman is highly problematic for the type of socializing and socialization required." (p.342). More recent studies that demonstrated examples of gendered networking practices and processes (Walsh 2012; Vongalis-Macrow 2013; Cahusac and Kanji 2014) also provided evidence that women are excluded from critical informal networks in the workplace. For example, Cahusac and Kanji (2014) found that, in some occupations, out-of-hours socialising was crucial for career progression but could be "...awkward for women, even more so for time-constrained mothers." (p.67), thus denying women access to the social capital and the reciprocal benefits that men accumulate and benefit from.

Linehan's (2001) study highlighted the disadvantages for women as a result of exclusion from these gender homophilous networks, which includes blocked opportunities for career development and promotion. Eighty-six percent of the women senior managers interviewed for Linehan's study believed that they were denied the chance to develop the same social capital as their male colleagues and that gender homophilous networks continue to exist, since "...quite an amount of business is discussed and useful contacts are made when male managers network informally but, as women, they are excluded access to these informal situations." (p.825). McTavish and Pyper (2006) found that the selection process to the boardroom in the Scottish Enterprise sector benefitted men more than women, since women were more inclined than men to rely on the formal processes rather than use their personal social capital,



while it was clear that men were inclined to turn to their personal social capital and that some companies "...were clearly fishing in a male-dominated pool, over relying on male-dominated networks." (p.228). Similarly, Pini et al (2004) proposed that it is from the "...male-dominated networks that managers are likely to be selected." (p.287).

These later studies support Ibarra (1992), in that men, more than women, looked on their network contacts as tools for progression and promotion. The literature therefore emphasises the importance of social capital and being included into informal networks and suggests that exclusion from these 'powerful' networks could be a key factor in the lack of women in positions of management since, according to Plickert et al (2007), the value of social capital is closely related to inclusion in multiple networks.

### **Networking for promotion**

The advantages to be gained from networking are often described as instrumental or expressive. Ibarra (1993) described instrumental benefits as relating to job requirements and career development and progression, while expressive benefits are linked to more psychosocial benefits such as emotional support and friendship. These are all attributes of human capital as they encompass knowledge, skills, health and wellbeing. In her later paper Ibarra (1997) suggested that men's networks provide more instrumental benefits than those of women because women "...are socialised to emphasise relational over instrumental concerns." (p.92), an approach which perhaps does not serve women well in the male-dominated world of management. A similar picture emerged from later studies. For example Broadbridge (2004), who concurred that informal structures can influence promotion opportunities and career development, found that self-promotion and informal networking were viewed by the men in her study considerably more so than the women as a route to promotion and fundamental to their careers. Broughton and Miller's subsequent report (2009) also found that both informal and formal networking can provide men with access to high-ranking positions, whereas, the scarcity of women at higher levels results in alliances between senior women lacking the instrumental efficacy of the men's networks.

In a study of electrical engineers, Gray et al (2007) found that most of the female participants had networks of peers, but that "...few of their networks contained powerful figures or "structural bridges" which could provide access to resources and other networks." (p.153). Due to the informality of the promotion system, those who lacked a powerful network of contacts were at a disadvantage, and many of the female engineers talked about being "...out of the loop..." (p.153), when it came to informal but critical lines of communication on career progression. This suggests that these women were aware they were denied access to the valuable network capital that the men were able to build up, and therefore were not able to take advantage of the reciprocal benefits provided by such networks.

There is evidence from previous studies that women recognise their exclusion from these networks. For example, Vinnicombe and Colwill (1995) proposed that women created women-only networks in "...an attempt to create for themselves the support generated for men by their informal same-sex grouping." (p.88), while Broadbridge (2004) submitted that women-only networks exist to "...counterbalance the exclusion they have from the powerful male-dominated networks." (p.557). The next section discusses the concept of women's formal in-house networks and the perceived advantages and disadvantages of membership of such networks, and explores their dual roles in organisations as part of gender diversity programmes and as business tools.

## **2.4 A critique of women's formal in-house networks**

Theoretical and empirical evidence show that there has been a growth in women's formal in-house networks (WIHNs) over the last few decades (McCarthy 2004a; Vinnicombe et al 2004; Gender Agenda 2 2006; Loftus 2008). Several authors have cited women's covert exclusion from often male-dominated informal networks as one of the key reasons for the existence of WIHNs (Ehrich 1994; Pini et al 2004; Bierema 2005; Singh et al 2006; Bailey et al 2007; Maxwell et al 2007; Kumra and Vinnicombe 2010). Similarly, Singh et al (2006) described women's networks as the direct action taken by women who

were aware that lack of access to the men's informal networks could be a barrier to career progression. In contrast, Ibarra (1997) proposed that women networking with other women is often more complex and dynamic than perceived, and can be seen as a critical, albeit less obvious, career management function which plays "...a key role in gaining advice from others who have faced similar obstacles" (p.99). This supports Scott (1996), who found that women's expressive ties were also instrumental in "...providing access to key people in business and government." (p.233), with participants in Scott's study describing their workplace ties with other women as both productive and valuable. There is therefore empirical evidence that women are adept at building up networks of social capital at work and that there are benefits to be had from women's gender homophilous networks. However, it can be argued that, if women's networks are restricted because of gender, then women have less access than men to weak ties which, it is asserted, provide more opportunities for promotion and career development as well as access to more up-to-date information (Granovetter 1973).

McCarthy (2004a) wrote that the movement towards women's formal networks started in the 1970s when women in business in the US and UK began meeting for breakfast or lunch and used these meetings to make new contacts, share experiences and devise strategies for succeeding in male-dominated work places. The growth of formal women's networks continued through the 1980s and 1990s and into the first decade of the 21<sup>st</sup> century, and many professional bodies, multinational organisations and UK public organizations, such as the Police Service, Shell, BT and UBS, have all established women's formal networks either instigated by CEOs and senior management as part of diversity programmes or as a result of action taken by women employees (Vinnicombe et al 2004). However, Bierema (2005) highlighted the importance of the context in which these networks are embedded, and noted her concern that women's formal networks "...are being uncritically adopted in many organisation settings to address issues of diversity." (pp. 220/221). She also found concern amongst the women in her study "...about being perceived as 'recipe swapping male-bashers' or appearing to 'need help'." (p.216), if they supported their network, both of which have been cited as concerns that discourage women from

participating in formal network activities (Bierema 2005; Ogden et al 2006). Furthermore, the nature of the language used highlighted an organisational culture that stereotyped and undermined women.

Recognition over several decades by successive UK governments of the need to change outdated and gendered social practices and attitudes has led to equality legislation such as the Equal Pay Act 1970, the Sex Discrimination Act 1975 and the Equality Acts of 2006 and 2010. As a result, many organisations have implemented equality and diversity strategies in acknowledgement of the need to be seen to be supporting diversity and equality in the workplace. One of the main vehicles for the exceptional growth in the number of women's in-house networks in recent years has been the launch of corporate diversity and equality strategies and agendas, with many gender and minority formal support groups or networks being formed under the banner of Diversity and Equality. Although women's networks continue to flourish, existing literature suggests that there are mixed views as to the benefits these networks provide. Negative perceptions of the networks and the stigma attached to network membership can be sustained by both men and women in organisations, while others recognise the benefits of membership to both women in an organisation and the organisation itself.

### **Recognising WIHNs as an asset**

O'Neil et al (2011) observed that there has been a lack of studies on women's formal networks, and that "...the research which has been completed has reported conflicting findings about the value of such networks." (p.737). This supports Pini et al (2004), who found that some of their participants expressed contradictory views, in line with the existing literature on women's networks. There were those who believed that their gender was no longer an issue at work or who had negative perceptions of such networks, while others believed that they have a positive impact by providing contact with more experienced, senior women. Reciprocal benefits such as exchanges of information and experiences have long been recognised as a fundamental part of social capital theory, and something that benefits both individuals and the group (Lin 1999; Putnam 2001). Moreover, individuals speaking to more experienced, senior

women have the opportunity to develop their human capital by acquiring greater knowledge of the processes and procedures within the organisation and how to deal with some of the barriers they might face in the future.

A purpose of women's formal networks is that women have the opportunity to talk to other women. The benefits to be gained by women's networks include the provision of a safe environment where women can share experiences and talk openly (Mavin and Bryans 2002; Pini et al 2004; Bailey et al 2007) and the provision of a sense of "...collective identity. Meeting and talking with other women about their experiences..." (Pini et al 2004 p.289). This helped the women in Pini et al's study to acknowledge and identify gendered and discriminatory structures and processes. Moreover, the women spoke about the benefits of "...being the same gender and going through the same things." (p.289). These gender homophilous relationships reinforced the women's recognition that other women were also experiencing sexism and discrimination, and were perceived by several of the women as "...educative and empowering." (p.291), an observation which supports Mavin and Bryans (2002), who wrote that "Through the emancipatory process..." (p.248) of sharing experiences, the members of their informal network of women academics were able to raise their awareness of the inequalities they faced.

McCarthy (2004a) found that eighty-seven percent of the women surveyed on behalf of DEMOS<sup>5</sup> believed the gender homophilous make-up of women's formal networks was a factor that encouraged them to join, since it provided opportunities to discuss things they would not discuss with men in the room. Vinnicombe et al (2004) also found that sharing experiences with other women and providing support were the most frequently stated reasons given for joining the women's networks and that discussing gender issues with other members was a valued role of the network. Similarly, Mavin and Bryans' (2002) informal network of women academics highlighted the benefits of women talking to women and sharing experiences as the methodological approach to their informal group, which joined together to challenge recurring patterns of gender

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<sup>5</sup> DEMOS: UK based cross-party independent think tank founded in 1993 (Demos 2017)

inequalities in their organisations. This network seemed to bridge the gap between the opportunistic nature of traditional, informal networks when the exchange of reciprocal benefits and development of network capital can be quite fortuitous, and the often highly managed and perceptible characteristics of membership of a formal women's network.

Opportunity Now<sup>6</sup> (2000) provided examples of several instrumental benefits implemented through the support of women's networks in UK universities, which highlighted the propensity for these networks to enhance women's social capital as well as human capital. For example, some networks were extended beyond their own departments and institutions thereby increasing access to more weak ties and additional promotion opportunities. Another women's network was instrumental in the provision of a university nursery, play scheme and baby-sitting service. Pini et al (2004) also referred to the more instrumental benefits that women's networks can provide, such as developing human capital through training and mentoring programmes, while increasing visibility within the organisation, since membership demonstrates to others a willingness to get involved in reciprocal relationships to share experiences and expertise (McCarthy 2004a). There is therefore evidence from the literature that women's formal networks not only provide emotional support and friendship, but can also support women's career paths, develop human capital in the form of additional skills and increase social capital by offering additional opportunities for networking (Mavin and Bryans 2002; Hersby et al 2009; O'Neil et al 2011). In addition, women's networks have a visibility and recognition within organisations that individual women advocating change often lack, since "...the network's very existence is a reminder of the gendered context..." of the organisation (Pini et al 2004 p.291).

So far individual benefits of women's networks have been discussed, however, there is another perceived benefit that focuses less on individuals' achievements and satisfaction and more on the organisation. Hersby et al

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<sup>6</sup> Opportunity Now is a division of Business in the Community, a registered charity, advertised as "The Prince's responsible business network". The network is part of The Prince's Charities, a group of not for profit organisations of which the Prince of Wales is president (BITC2017)

(2009) proposed that women's networks, in addition to providing benefits to individual women, could also be viewed as a "...collective strategy..." (p.416) for improving the status of women at work. This study found that the participants were more inclined to support their network if they believed that barriers to women's advancement existed and could be broken down along with the perception that the network was "...a viable scheme for making a difference and bringing about change." (p.425). Likewise, McCarthy (2004a) referred to the role of change agents that networks and network members can take on in addressing the wider issues around gender and equality by providing valuable intelligence and serving as "...a conduit allowing this sort of knowledge to flow up the hierarchy." (p.82). This flow of information can promote their case for gender equality using senior women (and men if senior management 'buy-in') as instruments for management involvement. Hersby et al (2009) promoted the involvement of senior women in supporting the network, since management endorsement can give credence to the network and encourage other women to join. They concluded that the level of network success depends on "...creating an environment that sends the message that change is under way and that the network is part of that change." (p.428).

Mavin and Bryans' (2002) informal group of academic women did not focus merely on enhancing their own personal career paths, but also set out to "...raise the visibility of academic women...and challenge gender blindness." (p.245), thus promoting the need for change in an organisation that supports and sustains a male homogeneous culture. They had no desire to mimic the dominant behaviours of many of the men and, in contrast, the women devised strategies that were designed to include participants, and implemented them at academic management meetings. This approach supports the women's network members in Tomlinson's study (1987) who did not view their women's networks as simply imitating the informal male networks, but rather had a broader remit to improve the position of women in general. Similarly, Bierema (2005) proposed that mimicking male power structures is not the perfect solution to improving the status of women and proposed that women should devise their own alternative strategies for promoting learning, sharing power and challenging the status quo.

Mavin and Bryans (2002) also found that their 'informal' network developed confidence in the women to speak out against unfair practices since "...it is easier to speak out when you know you are not alone." (p.246). This again emphasises how the development of social capital, while enhancing the individual's human capital, can also benefit the group as a whole. The view that the power of numbers working together can be more effective in raising gender issues was also promoted by McCarthy (2004a), who proposed that networks, as a collective body, can become "...internal pressure groups which keep the issue of women's under-representation a live one." (p.52).

The literature suggests, therefore, that although there is the view that diversity programmes and initiatives alone will not create a more fair and equal workplace and that cultures need to change in order to do this (Wilmott 1993; Schein 1996; Argyris 1998; Bradley et al 2007), gender diversity initiatives such as women's in-house networks can help to keep the spotlight on inequalities and unfairness in the workplace, and in various ways help improve women's work experiences as well as change attitudes, values and cultures. Nevertheless, despite the benefits discussed here, one survey of senior women in management found that only twelve percent of senior women believed women's employee networks to be either 'critical' or 'fairly important' (Opportunity Now 2000 p.56). While not all women view women's networks as beneficial, there is also the perception that membership of women's formal networks can have negative connotations.

### **Perceiving WIHNs as a liability**

In Bailey et al's (2005) study of women's networks in the North-East of Scotland, none of the women interviewed believed that women's formal networks assisted in gaining promotion, other than to provide information on career opportunities, and "...in general there was a feeling that strictly female networks could be potentially divisive." (p.8). This could be down to the fact that male informal networks in organisations are the norm, and therefore continue as an invisible source of gender discrimination, whereas, women's formal networks are not organic, but are artificially constructed and more visible. There is also the belief that women-only networks are less powerful since they lack



access to the critical internal politics and information (Broadbridge 2004; Van Emmerik et al 2006), a sentiment shared by several of the participants in Singh et al's (2006) study, who believed that their women's networks lacked the necessary power and influence to be of any value. This could be a reflection on the fact that the most senior levels of management continue to be dominated by men (emp08 2017), and it is therefore men who are perceived as holding the power within the organisations.

Some of the women in Pini et al's study (2004) argued that women's networks were "...discriminatory and divisive..." (p.290), while the perception of women's networks as separatist and exclusionary was cited in McCarthy's study (2004a p.42) as the top reason for not joining a women's network. Other common themes to emerge from the literature are that participating in women's networks indicated a lack of ability to communicate with male colleagues (Pini et al 2004), while some of the initiatives run by women's networks, such as women-only management training, promote women as lacking in critical skills and flawed or inferior (McCarthy 2004a), thereby reinforcing a common criticism of women's in-house development courses in general (Mallon and Cassell 1999; Mavin and Bryans 2002; Silvestri 2005). However, this ignores the fact that, while men often have an abundance of same-sex mentors and role models in senior management, women lack this form of homophilous social and human capital, and it can be argued that they miss out on the unofficial training and development handed down through the male informal networks.

Liff and Ward (2001) referred to these initiatives as part of a 'women's problem' approach to equality that often make women look inadequate and recipients of special treatment, which can create resentment among men and a belief by the women themselves that they have not succeeded on their own merit. Linked to these perceptions is the view by some women that associating with women's networks is "...potentially career damaging..." (Bierema 2005 p.2013) due to the perceived negative impact on their image, since "...No one wants to be thought of as someone who needs extra help..." (p.214). Several of the network members in Bierema's study, although recognising that gender inequalities

existed, indicated that they viewed the network as providing special treatment for women, which is something they did not endorse.

It is evident that some women want to progress and be seen to progress without what they view as additional assistance from a women's network. As one participant in Bailey et al's (2007) study put it, "...'If I am going to get it [the job] I would really rather just get it on my own merit.'..." (p.19). However, McCarthy (2004a) argued that although women do not lack the necessary business skills and qualities, they can lack an "...ability to identify and develop that talent in the interest of their careers." (p.59), perhaps failing to recognise the role that male informal networks play in organisations and indeed in society (Broadbridge 2004; McTavish and Pyper 2006).

The language frequently used in the workplace by both men and women to describe women's networks belittles and often misrepresents such networks. Labels used by some men include "...have-a-chat-club, hen's club, or recipe swapping group..." (Pini et al 2004 p.290), all of which are descriptions that demean and stereotype women. Likewise, some of the women interviewed by Bailey et al (2007) described their experiences of women's formal networks as "...predominantly women with shoulder pads talking about 'Colour Me Beautiful...' (p.21). Other labels included 'knitting circles' and 'the witches' coven' (McCarthy 2004a). McCarthy proposed that this ridiculing of networks indicates that workplace meetings that are exclusively women are frequently regarded as "...either something of a curiosity or something rather sinister." (p.62), a view supported by Bierema (2005), who found evidence that women getting together to network were looked on with suspicion by certain men.

Other issues influencing network activity are lack of interest and a lack of time, which affect both members and network leaders. Women frequently cite time restrictions, external commitments, distant locations, pressures of work and long working hours as limiting their ability to join in network activities (Bierema 2005; Singh et al 2006; Bailey et al 2007). Singh et al (2006) also found that commitment issues were the biggest challenge with network leaders, who

suffered from burnout as they tried to "...grapple with senior jobs and often have family responsibilities too." (p.470).

Finally, women often perceive women's networks as being redundant due to the fact that they believe their work environment to be gender neutral, even if gender inequalities do exist. Pini et al (2004) highlighted that just over twenty percent of the women mayors they interviewed believed their women's network to be redundant since gender had ceased to be an issue. 'Gender consciousness' or 'gender awareness' "...is a measure of the degree to which individuals and organisations recognise how gender differences create privilege for men and oppress women." (Bierema 2005 p.214). Bierema found very few women's network members in her study who publically acknowledged gender issues or routinely challenged the gendered culture, as well as women who had become so acclimatised to the male culture that they saw little value in having a women's network. She concluded therefore that a low level of gender consciousness in the organisation was one of the factors responsible for the demise of the network and that "...the social context surrounding the network..." (p.220) had a negative impact on the network. However, despite the criticism of women's formal networks in the workplace, Pini et al (2004) concluded that, for as long as women are not equally represented in positions of management and leadership, "...the crucial role they have to play in generating long-term transformation change will not diminish." (p.292).

That women's networks have a crucial role in promoting gender diversity in the workplace today is espoused by several large organisations who have established women-only networks over the last decade. However, more recently, it is the business benefits of women's networks that are being used as a reason for their continued existence. For example, by increasing the number of women in management and leadership, the women in O'Neil et al's (2011) study perceived their network as providing added-value for the organisation since the majority of customers were female and more women in the organisation could "...provide unique insights into the consumer behaviour of GFS customers." (p.741).

## **Corporate recognition of women's in-house networks**

Many corporate diversity programmes promote the business case for a more gender equal and diverse workforce (Thomas 2004; Singh et al 2006; Opportunity Now 2000). For example, in 2007, Royal Bank of Scotland launched their women's network to "...support the group in actively attracting, developing and retaining talented women at RBS." (Appendix 2c: Royal Bank of Scotland Group 2016). Like RBS, many companies' websites (Appendix 2 a/b/c/d), under the banner of equality and diversity, identify both human and social capital benefits of network membership, such as improving networking skills and enhancing career progression and promotion opportunities (GE Corporation 2014/17; Lloyds Bank 2016; Marks and Spencer 2015/17; The Royal Bank of Scotland 2017; Tesco 2014).

McCarthy (2004b) promoted the dual nature of women's in-house networks as they provide "...opportunities for women in organisations to lead their own professional development and contribute to the strengthening of gender diversity in the workplace." (p.119), while providing benefits to the organisations by furnishing critical information to management on their members' needs. Several researchers have also highlighted the synergy between equality, diversity and business objectives. For example, Maddock (1995) wrote that equality measures are not only a matter of social justice but are also essential for business, since diverse management teams create goodwill, show respect and take into account employees' interests, which, in a more indirect way, improves the organisation as a whole. Singh et al (2006) also found that, due to business pressures, most networks' leaders in her study focused on the network benefits that supported their companies' business objectives. For instance, when asked about the benefits provided by the networks, the women tended to discuss the benefits to the businesses and not the members, such as increased staff retention and greater commitment, which is consistent with the women network members highlighted by Bierema (2005), whose "...dominant network discourse was skewed toward company performance, not the individual women's benefit." (p.216/7).

Despite the view previously discussed that women's networks were created to counteract, or as an extension of, the male-dominated, informal organisational networks, there is ample evidence to suggest that these networks are now viewed by their organisations as a means of improving performance and growing the business. Many of the strategies linked to the business case for a more diverse workforce, such as attracting and retaining women, could resolve some of the gender issues and barriers women face. However, there is the danger that the original aims of women's networks, such as redressing gender inequalities and the creation of a more fair and equal environment, will be lost and that women's networks evolve into management rhetoric rather than helping to promote equality and fairness.

Nevertheless, business initiatives aimed at attracting and retaining women can have a positive impact on women's experiences, as increased numbers of women throughout an organisation can challenge everyday practices that are problematic for women, such as long-hours and sexist behaviour. For example, Dick et al (2013) promoted increased numbers of women in the Police Service "...as providing the impetus for problematising these practices simply because, as their numbers increase, they cannot maintain their careers within the existing institutional constraints." (p.143). Several other writers support increased numbers of women in organisations as a catalyst for change (Kanter 1977; Simpson 2000; Brown et al 2006; Powell et al 2009; Hanson 2010). Several women's networks also promote the recruitment and retention of women as part of their remit (UBS; Barclays; Deutsche Bank; Royal Bank of Scotland). For example, Thomas (2004) noted that one of the first recommendations of IBM's women's network, created in 1977 as part of the company's market-driven diversity strategy, was "...to rectify a shortage in the talent pipeline of women in technology." (p.4). In a similar way, GE women's network encourages the retention and promotion of women in technology and engineering by offering engineering, technology and finance scholarships and placements at STEM<sup>7</sup> day camps for girls in junior high school (Appendix 2a).

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<sup>7</sup> STEM: Science, technology, engineering and math

## 2.5 Conclusions

This chapter provides important insights into various aspects of networking and networks, with particular emphasis on networking theories, organisational networking, gender and formal women-only corporate networks. Five central principles of networking, discussed under the headings of social capital, reciprocity, homophily, strong and weak ties, and human capital, work in synergy to create benefits for those individuals who are members of the network. Network members can also benefit from advancing personal human capital through networking as they can learn about the business, develop necessary skills and gain confidence simultaneously.

Accumulating social capital, or networks of individuals, leads to reciprocity, which in turn provides access to resources and information that would otherwise be out of reach. An individual's choice of social capital is frequently linked to the principle of homophily, which states that individuals will bond with similar others. It is the concept of homophily that is often viewed as one of the reasons why women in organisations are frequently excluded from what is perceived as male-dominated, informal networks and it has been suggested that gender homophily forms the basis of formal women-only organisational networks.

The benefits provided by network or social capital are measured by the strength of the tie, and research shows that networks with close, strong ties, are less extensive than those with more remote, weak ties. The information passed between weak ties is frequently more contemporary and diverse than that of strong ties. In order to develop one's career, weak ties are therefore deemed to be more important since the benefits provided by these ties at work are likely to enhance the recipient's human capital, or skills, through the passing on of critical information and the provision of informal training and emotional support.

This chapter provides a comprehensive understanding of the complex issue of women networking at work, and has demonstrated the importance of social capital acquisition for advancement and career progression. By providing an understanding of the way in which social networks in organisations are

structured, created and re-created, it is possible to gain an insight into the critical nature of organisational networking and networks, and how and why women are frequently excluded from these informal networks. It is evident that women are frequently excluded from or have limited access to these informal or old boys' networks, which can lead to feelings of isolation for many women and restricted access to promotion opportunities, since there is evidence that managerial positions and high-level assignments are often offered to individuals through the informal network process.

Several decades of gender equality legislation have resulted in the launch of formal women's networks as part of many corporate diversity and equality programmes. Much of the literature in the field of women at work discusses formal women's networks as a small part of a larger study into other areas such as barriers to career development, gendered cultures and women in management. There are relatively few studies that focus on formal women's networks, the experiences of their members and the motivation of women who participate and/or organise them (for example, Burke et al 1995; McCarthy 2004a; Bierema 2005; Singh et al 2006; Hersby et al 2009; O'Neill et al 2011).

Many of the academic studies that have researched women's networks and the experiences and perceptions of their members focus on one particular group of women, such as chairs and managers of networks, or a specific industry and/or organisation, such as executive leaders in the food industry or women managers in local government. Although each study is influenced by elements unique to their particular professional and organisational environment, the literature provides valuable insights into the varied experiences of network members and highlights shared experiences. Other documents focusing specifically on women's networks were structured like 'how to' reports (McCarthy 2004a; Vinnicombe et al 2004), and developed in conjunction with organisations such as Demos and Opportunity Now.

Many women's formal networks promote the retention of women as one of their goals, and aim to help women reach their full potential through initiatives such as mentoring and women's career development programmes. Women's formal

networks are also seen to provide several other non-instrumental, or expressive, benefits that include women talking to other women openly and sharing similar experiences. However, the reality is that there is also a backlash against these networks, and they can be seen as lacking influence and power, being disruptive and separatist and viewing women as lacking in skills and in need of additional support. There is also the criticism amongst those who are involved in the networks that the original focus for launching these support groups, which was to enhance women's experiences at work and create a more fair and equal environment, has been lost and that the business case for their existence is now foremost in the minds of many network stakeholders.

The next chapter will focus on women in policing. Initiatives launched by the Police Service over several decades in an attempt to create a gender equal and diverse workplace for women are discussed. The literature on police women's experiences of gender stereotyping, negotiating work/life balances and gendered promotion processes is reviewed and I conclude the chapter with a discussion on the literature around networking and formal police women's networks at constabulary level.



## Chapter 3: Women in Policing

### 3.1 Introduction

The literature on police culture presented in Chapter 1 has painted a picture of the UK Police Service as a complex and divergent organisation that is male-dominated and macho. Within it, there is a diverse combination of cultures and sub-cultures, the most widely recognised of which is the police 'canteen' culture, with macho and sexist banter, behaviour and bravado often exhibited by police officers. The evidence points to a culture of sexism in the Police Service and a resistance to workplace diversity and equality initiatives, generated principally by certain police sub-cultures. However, we also need to look outside the Police Service to the way men and women are stereotyped by society. The literature also characterises a culture that supports the development of men's social and human capital, but less so for women, as men dominate specific areas of policing, with police processes and structures that support the traditional career paths and lifestyles of men more so than that of women.

Her Majesty's Inspectorate of Constabulary (HMIC 1992) acknowledged a police culture that is based on traditional white male values, while its later report into developing a diverse workforce recognised that diversity and change was "...proving slow to take root in a Service which has been noted for the strength of its hierarchic, task-orientated and predominately white male culture." (HMIC 1995 p.11). HMIC suggested that, without a change to current culture and a shift in attitudes from within, equality initiatives would in the long term be futile. For example, it was noted by the British Association of Women in Policing (Gender Agenda 2 Good Practice Database 2010) that, although positive action in the form of mentoring targeted at women and other minority officers had been initiated in some areas, several officers indicated their reluctance to seek help through their constabularies' mentoring schemes, due to what was referred to as a prevalent macho<sup>8</sup> culture. It would appear, therefore, that more than a

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<sup>8</sup> Macho - aggressively male, masculine, unpleasantly masculine, chauvinistic; sexist  
<https://en.oxforddictionaries.com/thesaurus/macho>

decade later, this macho culture still exists. This indicates that legislation and diversity and equality programmes alone are not enough to create a gender equal Police Service, and that beliefs and attitudes need to change concurrently. I therefore suggest that the Police Service does not have a culture, but rather, is a culture or, more accurately, a series of cultures which, as previously discussed in Chapter 1, makes the creation of a diverse and equal Police Service an immensely complex task.

This chapter sets out to illustrate how gendered cultures and sub-cultures in policing, resulting in gendered behaviours, attitudes and structures, have resulted in the gender equality reforms and initiatives that have encouraged the creation and development of constabulary women's networks. The beginning of the chapter provides a background to the UK Police Service and the Home Office's attempts to create a more diverse and gender equal police service since the 1990s. The literature considers how some aspects of police cultures, practices and processes have impacted on the working lives of women in policing. I will draw upon several recognised authors' work that are pertinent to the gendered experiences of women in policing, discussing the ways in which women's gendered experiences have a significant impact on their development and progression and on the career decisions they ultimately make.

By drawing on previous research, the experiences of women networking within the UK Police Service are explored, which include the ways in which women can be excluded from informal workplace networks and the perception by some that the existence of informal, gendered or old boys' networks still hold women back. The chapter moves on with a discussion on formal constabulary women's networks and their aims and objectives. The perceived benefits these networks offer are considered alongside the perceived drawbacks of membership. The chapter concludes with a discussion on the current support for women's formal networks in the Police Service, and provides evidence that cuts to police funding are negatively affecting the efficacy of these support groups and the future of gender equality and diversity within the UK Police Service. A summary

of the findings completes the chapter, and highlights key themes from the prevailing literature and areas for discussion that will be explored later in the empirical data chapters.

### **3.2 Moving towards a gender equal Police Service**

The Home Office and UK Police Service have been espousing diversity, equality and culture change within the UK Police Service for more than two decades, while communicating its diversity and equality policies and strategies through the circulation of various documents and reports, many of which are in the public domain (HMIC 1992; HMIC 1995; ACPO 2009; Hanson 2010). For example, in 1992, Her Majesty's Inspectorate of Constabulary found evidence that sexual harassment and covert barriers to advancement continued to negatively affect the work experiences of women in policing and declared its aim of ensuring that all constabularies "...have implemented, or are actively implementing effective equal opportunities policies..." (HMIC 1992 p.3). Move on more than two decades and Sir Hugh Orde, the then ACPO president, criticised the Police Service for failing to both develop a more diverse and representative Police Service and encourage more officers from ethnic backgrounds and women into the service (McDermott 2013). Likewise, Chief Superintendent Irene Curtis stated that good intentions over several years have still not delivered the gains in gender equality expected (McDermott 2013). More recently, Curtis reiterated that gender equality has still to be achieved and should remain a high priority objective within the Police Service (Hickey 2015). It is therefore evident that, despite the existence of internal organisations such as the BAWP and other gender equality initiatives, women in policing still experience inequalities and barriers that men do not.

The BAWP, a national organisation that embraces women of all ranks and grades of the Police Service, was formed in 1987 with the objective of enhancing the role of women and "...understanding of the specific needs of the women who are employed therein." (BAWP 2017a p.2). The aims of the BAWP are to raise awareness of issues affecting women and facilitate and contribute

to discussions on these issues, as well as develop a network of professional and social contacts, share information and contribute to the professional development of all members, thus acknowledging the benefits of developing both social and human capital (BAWP 2017b). The BAWP, which has issued 'guide to' leaflets in various areas, such as Networking and Flexible Working, has played an active part in developing three Gender Agendas initiatives between 2001 and 2014. It also worked with ACPO Women's Forum, to encourage senior women to extend their social capital outside of their immediate workplace in order to benefit from the information to be had from more distant, weak ties in their networks.

All three Gender Agendas (Appendix 3a/b) promote gender equality initiatives at both organisational and constabulary levels, such as the launching of and support for police constabulary women's formal networks. This is based on the belief that both mixed and single sex networking should be encouraged, since "Men only and mixed networking occurs automatically; the same is not true for women only. Opportunities must therefore be created for women to get together." (Gender Agendas 1&2 2001/2006 p.4). GA2 acknowledges the problems women face regarding equipment and a less than acceptable working environment, which can be particularly prevalent in specialist areas with a lower than average percentage of women officers. It also recognises that women are wearing uniforms more specifically designed for men, which are often ill-fitting and impractical for women, thus making it difficult for them to carry out their role. In addition, it highlights the difficulties that women sometimes have when they are expected to cope with inappropriate toilet and changing amenities. GA2 also identifies that women frequently have to deal with the competing demands of family life, parenting and having a successful career, and that the Police Service needs to take action to ensure that line managers develop a better understanding of the work/life challenges many women face. While GA1 and GA2 recognise the importance of social capital and actively promote the provision of women's networks, GA3 highlights concerns over the lack of financial support for both national and constabulary staff networks, as reductions in budgets plus increased workloads put added pressures onto these support groups and their management teams.

The Gender Agenda 2 Good Practice Database (2010), launched by the National Police Improvement Agency and the BAWP in 2010, is a directory of good practice drawn from work on gender equality carried out by various constabularies. This document provides several examples of existing women's networks and examples of 'good practice', such as West Mercia Constabulary's Maternity Support Network Training and South Yorkshire Constabulary's Positive Action Mentor Scheme. This database can be compared to a knowledgeable weak tie within a large network of constabularies' diversity resources, taking in and giving out information and assistance and connecting other weak ties within the network.

Although the initiatives discussed above are aimed at improving the workplace experiences of women, the Police Service (HMIC 1992) not only promoted their equal opportunities strategy with the aim of establishing equal treatment of and opportunities for all members of the Service, but also to "...enhance the external quality of service delivered to the public." (p.4). This combines the issue of equality and fairness with the business case for increased quality of service. Likewise, HMIC (1995) put the business case first and foremost when it stated that "For the Inspectorate, equal opportunities does not relate to measures taken to further the advance of women, ethnic minorities or any other group." (Section 2.6 p.11), but rather relates its foundation to the development of a sound business case drafted to make the best use of potential in the Police Service and increase the quality of service to the public. Similarly, ACPO's 2009 Equality Strategy provided "...the framework for improving performance and delivering specific equality results at every level of the police service." (p.9), which in turn, will lead to a more cost-effective service, providing business benefits such as improved decision making, reduced waste and sustainable development. Hence, the UK Police Service joins many of the organisations in the private sector in using the business case of improving the quality of the service they provide to justify promoting equality and diversity.

However, there is concern that, in promoting the business case for a more equal and diverse police service, the concept of fairness and 'the right thing to do' has disappeared and that "The police service has lost sight of the more

legitimate basis from which to campaign for gender diversity...”, (Silvestri 2015 p.62) i.e. the promotion of equality as ethical good practice, and not as good business practice. Amid recognition that the quality of policing needs to be addressed, consequential reforms, described as “...a seismic shift to the foundations of the U.K. police model.” (Orde 2012 p.72), have dominated the policing agenda, all of which are taking place against a backdrop of annual cuts in central government police funding and reductions in police numbers since 2010<sup>9</sup>. Moreover, with several more years of austerity, there are concerns that the diversity challenges facing the Police Service will be compounded, and that there could be “...another period of retraction within the history of female employment within the service...” (Laverick and Cain 2015 p.14).

### **3.3 Police women and policing**

In the 1970s, when women clothes workers in Leeds went on strike for equal pay, Bernadette Devlin was the youngest MP to be elected to the British Cabinet, Barbara Castle served in Labour’s Cabinet and Shadow Cabinet and the Equal Pay Act 1970 prohibited discriminatory treatment for women in terms of pay and conditions, the UK Police Service held their own version of the Miss World competition. The competition, which was “...basically a battle – held in the pages of a magazine *Police Review* – to find the best looking WPC in the country...” (Martis 2013) was won by a young police constable from Suffolk Constabulary, who was allowed to be pictured by a newspaper in a swimsuit. Although it can be argued that the role of women in the UK Police Service has moved forward since the days of the ‘Prettiest WPC competition’ in the 1970s, the following facts and figures put the work environment of women in policing into context. They provide evidence of a Police Service today, which, despite years of gender diversity initiatives, is still male-dominated at higher ranks, with practices and procedures that continue to create barriers for women:

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<sup>9</sup> Government statistics show that the number of police officers in England and Wales decreased by just under twenty thousand over the six year period from 2010 to 2016 (SN/SG/2615 2016).

- As at March 2016, in the Police Service in England and Wales, although women accounted for 57.6% of civilian support staff, only 28.6% of officers in the Police Service in England and Wales were women (Home Office March 2016).
- As at January 2017, of the forty-three constabularies in England and Wales, 13 senior management teams were made up entirely of men. In addition, only 16.3% of chief constables and 22.7% of deputy chief constables were women. Out of a total of one hundred and seventy six officers in senior management teams, only 26.7% were women (Data taken from individual constabulary websites - January 2017).
- Several reports over the last five years have depicted the Police Service as a less than equal workplace for women. The Winsor Review (2012) reported, “Female police officers (averaged across constables and sergeants) on average earn 10-15% less than male police officers.” (Vol.2 p.653), while there is the perception that the gender pay gap between police women and police men is widening (Caswell 2013).
- In 2013 the IPC reported “...24% of women police officers experienced harassment at work on the grounds of gender.” (p.103), 11% of which related to pregnancy or maternity issues, while female police staff also reported harassment on the grounds of gender. (IPC 2013).

The above statistics demonstrate that women continue to be under-represented in the Police Service today and work in an organisation predominately run by men where the ratio of women to men declines steeply as women move up the police hierarchy. This supports Holdaway and Parker (1998), who found that women and men in the same constabulary worked in very different environments, where internal and external factors combined “...to create a highly differentiated, engendered structure of employment.” (p.53). This

exposes a work environment where men have more opportunity than women to develop gender homophilous social capital in more senior ranks, thus providing more opportunities to develop human capital, both of which can open doors to progression and promotion opportunities that are not available to women.

### **Gendered structures of employment in policing**

An overview by Brown (2000) of existing studies of women in policing in several countries including India, the United States, England and Australia indicated "...universal resistance to women's entry into policing, widespread occurrence of sexual harassment, differential deployment and blocked career progression." (p.92). More than a decade on, Brown (2014a) contended that harassment and discrimination remains a continuous feature of police women's work experiences, is difficult to stop in male-dominated organisations, and that studies indicate work environment as a factor in these complex situations. Several other studies of UK police culture and sub-cultures carried out over the years (Holdaway & Parker, 1998; Waddington, 1999; Dick & Jankowitz, 2001; Kiely & Peek, 2002; Loftus, 2008; Hanson 2010) support Brown, in that police culture and sub-cultures have had a negative effect on women's work experiences. For example, Hanson (2010) reported that, in the UK Police Service, "...there is still work to be done to ensure that institutional and cultural barriers to achieving full equality in the workplace are removed." (p.1).

In support of the above, Brown (2014b) submitted that women in policing, despite improvements and the launch of several gender equality initiatives over the last decade, are still facing problems relating to issues such as flexible working practices, harassment and levels of violence. Some of the barriers that women in policing experience also relate to women in the private sector, such as exclusion from informal networks, long hours cultures, a perceived lack of commitment to the job due to external domestic responsibilities and having to fit in with male models of work (Cross and Linehan 2006; Davey 2008; Kumra and Vinnicombe 2008; Tatli 2010; Cahusac and Kanji 2014). However, some aspects of police culture can create additional barriers for women wanting to develop a long-term career in policing, such as the ratio of men to women in



some areas, the high number of roles at all levels requiring shift work, linear promotion processes based on the traditional career paths of men and the gendered perception of the construction of police work as a full-time job requiring availability at all times and one hundred percent commitment (Holdaway and Parker 1998; Dick 2015). In addition to the barriers discussed, there is also evidence that the gendered nature of role deployment in policing (Brown 1998; Hanson 2010; Dick et al 2013) influences the roles allocated to both men and women, with women being allocated the 'softer' more nurturing roles such as child protection and domestic violence, and men the more valued 'specialisms' such as Firearms and Public Order.

### **Stereotyping of police women**

Role stereotyping is the result of a strong occupational culture that defines police work as crime fighting and dangerous (Brown 1998; Dick et al 2013) and the social construction that such work is unsuitable for women – perceptions that are also often supported by members of the public (Dick and Cassell 2004; Blok and Brown 2005; Cockcroft 2005).

Dick et al (2013) highlighted earlier studies that suggest women police officers are viewed as being different from men and are frequently regarded within the police service as being "...best suited to roles dealing with domestic violence, sexual offences and children..." (p.139). In support, Brown (1998) identified police environments where there were "...clearly identifiable male and female duties, with men allocated to driving, public order and outside duties: and the women to communications, work with children and young persons, and inside duties." (p.275). A situation, Brown concluded, which is created by a powerful police culture resistant to change, and that sustains gendered practices and structures that determine "...the working styles and practices of men and the obstacles this creates for women in the police service." (p.280).

We need to go outside of the Police Service to understand these gendered role allocations, which are consistent with the broader traditional expectations of the roles of women in society as mothers and carers (Dick and Jankowitz 2001). For example, Blok and Brown (2005) found the perception that men displayed

more assertiveness and physical presence and had greater physical strength than women, which resulted in the public expressing "...a preference for male officers to deal with fights involving either males and females and disorder at football matches." (p.28). On the other hand, women were perceived as possessing superior emotional skills than men and were therefore viewed as being considerably more able to deal with accusations of child abuse and female sexual offence or domestic violence victims that called for empathy, sensitivity and compassion. The BAWP is aware of this gendered view the public have of policing, in that "...men deal with violence; women with sexual offences." (Gender Agenda 2 2006 p.7) and recognises the need for action to market women's multiple capabilities to break down these stereotypical barriers.

Hanson (2010) supported Brown's (1998) findings in suggesting that the high concentration of women officers in Child, Sex and Domestic categories "...raises questions over whether female officers are being deployed on the basis of gender stereotypes." (p.12). Similarly, the Independent Police Commission (2013) reported more recently that women are under-represented in areas such as Special Branch, Firearms, Dog Handling, Drugs and Surveillance units, but are over-represented in Public Protection units which deal with safeguarding issues and child protection. However, it has been argued that it is experience and skills in the higher valued specialisms and roles, and not in the softer, supportive roles, that are required for advancement and promotion (Gaston and Alexander 1997), hence women's career opportunities are, de facto, more limited.

While Gaston and Alexander found evidence to suggest, "...female officers are less attracted than their male counterparts to specialisms such as traffic and operational support and more attracted to family support." (p.49), they also found evidence that the reason for this lack of interest in operational support seemed to be linked to the perception that these specialisms have a macho/sexist image. This suggests that the gendered bias of role allocation could be, in part, down to the decisions the women themselves make within these constraining structures. However, it can be argued that the decisions women make about roles in specialist units are restricted as they are influenced

by the existence of masculine sub-cultures and behaviours. Conversely, the survey showed that many more males were interested in traffic and uniform patrol work, but none of the males showed an interest in family support, again partly due to the perceived macho view by some that family support was a female job. Consequently, working in family support was looked upon as "...somewhat low status in the dominant culture." (p.51), as was working in computer-aided functions such as criminal records and resource allocation – all positions which have an over-representation of women.

As highlighted earlier, the social construction of gender roles results in societal expectations that influence workplace behaviour, sustain gender inequalities in the workplace and influence the career paths people choose (Schein 1984; Evetts 2000; Vinnicombe and Singh 2002; Durbin and Fleetwood 2010). It can be questioned, therefore, whether the above preferences and choices are linked to the nature of the work, or whether both sexes are simply adhering to dominant, gendered norms and the "Conceptualisations of police work which draws on masculinist characteristic and qualities that defines policing as a job not suitable for women." (Metcalfe and Dick 2002 p.400). The social construction of the roles of women also results in the perception that female officers are less committed to the job due of their dual commitments between work and family (Holdaway and Parker 1998; Metcalfe and Dick 2002; Silvestri 2005; Dick and Metcalfe 2007). In an organisation where full-time working equates with one hundred percent commitment to the job, women (and men) who choose to work part-time or flexible hours are further stereotyped as being less committed than their full-time colleagues.

The perception of commitment as a finite resource that needs to be split between work and family responsibilities supports Hakim's (2002) preference theory, in that 'work-centred' women who are fully committed to work have little time or inclination for parenting, while 'adaptive' women who combine work and family are not fully committed to their careers. This suggests that childless women are better human capital investments than those with children, as they are, per se, more committed. Holdaway and Parker (1998) found that gendered views linking parenting, motherhood and commitment in a UK police

constabulary had negative impacts with regards to equality of opportunity by creating "...a framework of constraints around women officers' experience of employment and opportunities for advancement." (p.56) that reinforced and sustained unequal opportunities within the constabulary. Therefore, based on the stereotypical construction of the nature of police work that officers need to be available at all times, policing is a job that requires one hundred percent dedication and should take precedence over external commitments.

This 'male model' of commitment supposes that people have a limited capacity for commitment that needs to be shared out pro rata. There is evidence that this attitude creates stress for women as their commitment to work often competes with their commitment to external family responsibilities. For example, Dick (2015) highlighted the self-reproach experienced by police women in part-time work who felt that they were being judged by full-time colleagues. She also found that participants in her study, who were often given more menial jobs on going part-time, were reluctant to apply for roles that would enhance their career opportunities as they looked upon themselves as a nuisance. For example, one of the women in her study stated, "...I won't take the chance of going anywhere else and being more of a hassle to them'..." (p.28). These feelings are likely to have a negative effect on women's potential as they begin to lack confidence in their own abilities and feel isolated from the dominant group at a time in their careers when opportunities to extend their own social capital in the workplace are limited. Because women still bear the brunt of family responsibilities, if they are being viewed as being less committed than men as a result of their external commitments, then it could be argued that men are less likely to view women as important social capital with access to critical information and thus more likely to exclude them from their informal networks.

Dick and Metcalfe (2007) highlighted several studies that found evidence of equal levels of commitment from women and men, that commitment was not a gender issue while job variables impacted upon commitment levels for both men and women. Furthermore, Dick and Metcalfe's (2007) own research found similar levels of commitment in both female and male officers within two UK constabularies. The Police Service has acknowledged that part-time or flexible

workers are made to feel part committed and there is the need to encourage managers to be adaptable and supportive in this area (Gender Agenda 2 2006).

As part of an action plan to break down these barriers, Gender Agenda 2 promotes a "...campaign to change myth, stereotype and perception of those who choose to work differently." (p.19) by providing greater encouragement and support to help supervisors make decisions and balance the needs of the individual against those of the organisation. Eight years on and Gender Agenda 3 (2014) once again highlights the need to take positive action to ensure that those who have flexible and part-time contracts feel valued, suggesting that chief officers openly express their commitment to flexible working through their constabularies and that the BAWP continues to work on developing a national framework for flexible working. Furthermore, Dick et al (2013) highlighted the need for the UK Police Service to continue to promote requests for part-time and flexible working contracts, not as evidence of an individual's lack of commitment, but more as an affirmation of their ongoing commitment to the job.

### **Pregnancy and policing**

The discussion above highlights the stereotyping of women in policing who split their time between work and family responsibilities. However, women often start to experience changes in their work life when they are pregnant, and policing is one of those occupations where this is particularly prevalent due to the nature of the job (Martin 1996). In Martin's (1996) study of equal opportunities in an English police constabulary, one participant believed that policing "...is the hardest job [for women] to come back to. They treat you as if you've got a disease as soon as you are pregnant." (p.518).

Hanson (2010) similarly linked pregnancy with disability and illness by grouping it under the heading of 'Disability' along with injury and illness (p.20), and also highlighted examples of women in policing failing to report they are pregnant due to a lack of support from line managers. Another concern evident from Martin's (1996) study was the uncertainty women experienced during pregnancy since there was no guarantee, on returning to work, that you would return to the same division or the same job. This was supported by Silvestri

(2005) who found that, as well as planning for a new addition to the family, many women have the added task of trying to manage careers by “...assiduously planning their movements in and out of part-time work during maternity leave.” (p.275).

Brown and Woolfenden (2011b) highlighted a lack of support throughout pregnancy as a concern for many women, and recommended “...a more proactive maternity policy whereby constabularies keep in touch with their women officers...and managing their return to work effectively.” (p.24). The UK Police Service recognises this need to support women during pregnancy and, under the banner of good practice (Gender Agenda 2 Good Practice Database 2010), highlighted several initiatives launched throughout the organisation that are aimed at supporting women through their pregnancies. For example, South Wales Police Constabulary promotes its Pregnancy Champion initiative, where colleagues voluntarily support fellow colleagues who are pregnant and West Mercia Constabulary launched their ‘Maternity Support Network’ in 2006 to assist and support women during and after pregnancy and maternity leave. In addition, ‘Maternity Matters’, a study conducted by Surrey Constabulary, resulted in the adoption of keep in touch days throughout the Police Service, when women on maternity leave can come into their workplace and catch up with colleagues and work issues.

The literature suggests both women who are pregnant and those with children still experience difficulty in negotiating suitable work/life contracts. For example, Dick and Jankowitz (2001) found that most of the officers interviewed believed that motherhood and police work were not readily compatible, and for that reason women were making personal choices to leave once they had children, thus hampering the Police Service’s objective of achieving increased representation of females above the rank of constable. Notwithstanding attempts to support women during pregnancy, Hanson (2010) voiced his concern that the UK Police Service is still losing many more women than men for domestic reasons, and that “...further work needs to be done to embed flexible working...” (p.15), in order to help stem the loss of women for domestic reasons and promote the UK Police Service as a family-friendly employer.

## **Negotiating a work/life balance**

The high level of women in policing who juggle their careers with caring for family was evident from a survey conducted in 2012<sup>10</sup> when two-thirds of women police officers that responded confirmed they had domestic responsibilities. These included caring for children and other dependents such as ageing parents, with approximately twenty-two percent working part-time (Brown & Bear 2012; Brown 2012). While Brown and Bear (2012) maintained that women in policing need more flexibility in order to combine the needs of family life, the demands of the job and personal career, they also found that, despite the introduction of family friendly working practices (which, it appeared, had not been fully embraced by the organisation), some of the women believed that their career ambitions were not being supported. Moreover, Brown (2012) highlighted that eighteen percent of those surveyed were of the perception that flexible working was discouraged or not tolerated in their constabulary, half said it was tolerated and only seven percent believed it was positively encouraged.

These findings provide support for earlier studies, which found that in spite of the large numbers of women who carry the dual burdens of work and family responsibilities, for many female officers with children and other dependents aligning work with their external commitments can be an arduous process and certain disadvantages related to part-time working are acknowledged (Dick and Hyde 2005; Dick 2009; Laverick and Cain 2015). For example, Dick and Hyde (2005) found that many of the women in policing they interviewed who had managed to negotiate part-time working claimed that, despite working shorter hours, their workloads were not reduced correspondingly. Furthermore, some of the women were reluctant to take any action since they believed that "...they needed to "prove their salt" to their colleagues." (p.13). There is also concern that the positions identified as compatible with part-time work could marginalise part-timers by placing them in roles that are less valued. Many of the roles that are compatible to reduced-hours agreements are in support or administration, and therefore may not meet the part-timer's career needs (Dick 2004; Dick

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<sup>10</sup> Survey of police women in England and Wales carried out in May 2012 by Dr Jennifer Brown on behalf of the Police Federation and the Independent Police Commission headed by Lord Stevens

2009), while leading to an increase in gender stereotyping as most part-time employees are female.

It has been argued that, although line managers play a critical role in the career development of part-time staff, deeply embedded, gendered organisational practices also influence attitudes towards flexible working (Dick and Hyde 2006; Carson 2009). It has also been acknowledged within the Police Service that negative perceptions of flexible working are frequently linked to "...old fashioned attitudes and misconceptions about alternative work patterns..." (BAWP guide to Flexible Working v3, 2006 p.2) while the current "...one package fits all' approach..." (p.3) fails to take into account the different aspects of police work. On the other hand, Dick (2010) found that several of the managers in her study believed that the problems of accommodating those who require flexible hours contracts were predominantly down to "...the fuzziness of the policy on part-time working." (p.522). Likewise, Laverick and Cain (2015) found evidence that line managers had little confidence when applying flexible, part-time working, maternity and dual police family policies due to a lack of knowledge and inadequate HR support.

The rules and regulations surrounding part-time working in the Police Service seem to be negotiable and depend on the individual actors involved (Dick 2010; Laverick and Cain 2015). For example, from a management perspective, if managers do not comply with part-time requests, then they face being accused of sexism, discrimination or non-compliance with diversity and equality strategies. However, if they do comply with flexible-working and part-time requests and in doing so compromise the capabilities of the team, full-time colleagues could be required to work more of the undesirable shifts and become resentful since all officers' pay, including part-timers, reflect the fact that they work unsociable hours (Dick 2004). Dick concluded that reconciling the differing needs of part-timers and their managers could be problematic due to the demand-led nature of operational policing. It would seem as though the "...managers are between a "rock and a hard place"..." (p.316) as they try to meet the needs of the job while trying to meet the often divergent needs of individuals and those of the organisation's Equal Opportunities requirements.



It is evident that the success of initial negotiations for a work/life balance can be dependent on the extent to which individual needs fit in with those of the department. Although some managers are flexible and recognise the benefits of keeping good staff, others accept part-timers reluctantly and stress the problems of briefing, monitoring and supervising when they have staff that work reduced hours (Dick 2006; Dick 2009).

Brown and Woolfenden (2011b) highlighted the negative effect of the recent police cuts on the Police Service's ambition for a more gender-balanced workforce, suggesting, "In the current climate aspiration for gender balance and work-life balance potentially is competing with the financial realities and pragmatics of maintaining levels and quality of service to the public." (p.8). More recently, Laverick and Cain (2015) reiterated similar concerns over cuts in police funding, suggesting that progress for women spanning three decades is under threat as the challenges facing the Police Service are creating consequential difficulties for women with caring responsibilities.

This discussion highlights an organisation that tolerates, rather than supports, those who choose to work differently. It also establishes that, with continued resistance in some areas of the Police Service to accept and fully support part-time and flexible working patterns, women still struggle to manage job and home responsibilities. Furthermore, since many of the line managers and the majority of senior officers making the decisions are men, it can be argued that they are less likely than women to experience or understand the pressures of divided responsibilities between family and work, or empathise with those who do. Moreover, there is the view that negotiating a work/life balance, which affects women more than men, has now become more difficult as a result of the cuts in budgets and decreasing police numbers, and that line managers are now being less accommodating when negotiating flexible work/life contracts (Clemence 2013; Laverick and Cain 2015).

There is evidence that recent police reforms and several years of budget cuts, combined with the persistence of traditional ideas about the nature of work and employment, are having a negative affect on women's careers. This could go

some way towards explaining why, despite continuous support for the numerous gender equality and diversity initiatives that have been launched over the years, the number of women promoted into senior posts within the UK police service has not increased substantially.

### **Promotion and career development**

The IPC (2013) drew attention to the lack of women in constabulary senior management teams at ACPO level, which supported the then Home Secretary, Theresa May's contention that "...the current police leadership model has not delivered a diversity of backgrounds and experience at the most senior levels of the service." (p.103). Move forward several years and we find that the Police Service still acknowledges the lack of senior women (Hickey 2015). More recently, of the forty-three police constabularies in England and Wales in January 2017, just over seventy-three percent are men while thirteen constabularies currently have no women in their senior leadership team.

Both Gaston and Alexander (1997) and Holdaway and Parker (1998) found that women have similar levels of human capital as men with regards to motivation and confidence, and they are equally likely to aspire to higher ranks as men, particularly among new recruits. This suggests that it is not gender per se that is holding women back, but rather we need to look further afield to understand this dearth of women in police leadership. For example, in both studies, the women believed that they had been treated less positively than the men and cited barriers to advancement such as a gendered, hostile culture, lack of support from partners, colleagues, line managers and other supervisors and a lack of role models at higher levels, which indicates that support is a critical aspect of career progression and promotion. Similarly, Marchant (2010) highlighted common barriers to promotion that many women in policing face, such as the existence of an organisational culture biased against women, isolation in a predominately male environment, pressure to 'fit-in', lack of female role models, juggling the demands of both family and career, poor relations with line managers and the existence of and exclusion from the old boys' network.

While these obstacles to promotion specifically expressed by women in the Police Service are all comparable to those experienced by women in the private sector (Liff and Ward 2001; Bryans and Mavin 2003; Gray et al 2007; Davey 2008; Broadbridge 2010; Cahusac and Kanji 2014), several theories have emerged from the literature in the area of women in policing. For example, the traditional police promotion process has been described as a series of steps that are biased against women. It is more aligned to the work experiences of men (Dick and Jankowitz 2001; Gibling and Hirst 2006; Silvestri et al 2013) as it is “Governed by a strict linear path...achieved through climbing a highly structured ladder...requiring a series of methodical, systematic and well-timed promotions.” (Silvestri et al 2013 p.65) which is based on an uninterrupted and full-time career. In addition, Dick and Jankowitz (2001) highlighted that “...enthusiasm about certain working practices, such as long hours and staying behind after a shift finishes, are construed as signs of high levels of commitment.” (p.193) and are consequently valued by the Police Service, which supports social expectations and lifestyles of men, but not women.

A police leader is perceived as someone with a long and uninterrupted service record and reflects the work experiences of men over women (Silvestri 2005), while Schein (1984) highlighted policing as one of the careers where the demands of the job take precedence over family life. Since, as previously noted, it is predominantly women who take on the major burden of domestic responsibilities in our society, it can be argued that it is not only the “...dominant constructions of the role per se, but the way such constructions intersect with broader socio-cultural constructions of women’s domestic roles.” (Dick and Jankowitz 2001 p.181) that impedes female officers’ progression and promotion in the Police Service.

In an evaluation of the career advancement of women police officers, Gibling and Hirst (2006) found that women with families were facing “...very real constraints in meeting mobility criteria relating to role or job moves for promotion.” (p.11). Laverick and Cain (2014) supported this view, with their ‘parent and carer’ focus groups emphasising that many training requirements were not compatible with childcare obligations. Parental commitments often

made it difficult to attend residential courses, thus restricting women's opportunities to expand their human capital through T&D events. Likewise, Silvestri et al (2013) described the opposing requirements of the police leadership process and the working lives of many women as an "...'irresolvable conflict' that exists between balancing family commitments and a career in policing." (p.66). This continues to be a major contention within policing as it views women who are attempting to juggle the demands of the job with family responsibilities as less suitable candidates for promotion. It is therefore evident that many of the requirements for promotion discussed above are implicitly biased against women (and men) who have, at some stage in their career, deviated from the traditional career path.

A further issue highlighted by one of the participants in Gibling and Hirst's (2006) study was lack of 'know how' in that she didn't have a clue "...'what they are looking for at the next rank; it's a bit of a lottery; we are working to unknown criteria'..." (p.11). This is the kind of human capital passed on through informal ties and networking, and it is possible that, in male-dominated environments, men have an advantage over women when it comes to informally networking and benefitting from the subsequent benefits. As discussed in Chapter 2, there is a general consensus in the literature that networking in an organisation is a critical part of the informal promotion process (Brass, 1985; Ehrich, 1994; Linehan, 2001; Maxwell et al 2007; Gregory, 2009). Furthermore, the perception that women's career progression is negatively affected partly as a result of exclusion from the critical, informal networks that exist within organisations is reported frequently (1997; Cross and Linehan, 2006; Gray et al, 2007; Davey, 2008; Kumra 2010).

The issue of police promotion is a topical one, and there have been recent proposals for a process that allows for multiple entry points as opposed to the rigid, linear, lengthy process currently in existence (the Winsor Review 2012). However, attempts to dismantle this strict linear promotion process, such as the Accelerated Promotion Course and the Fast Track Programme, have come up against some resistance, as they "...left lingering resentment of blocked promotion opportunities for others and confirmed the belief that operational

police officers should have had appropriate field experience.” (IPC 2013 p.95). This serves to reinforce the gendered perception of the ideal senior police officer as one who has adhered to the strict linear promotion process and worked their way up through the ranks. However, there is evidence that police constabularies are acutely aware of the need for a more transparent and equal promotion process (for example, West Midland Constabulary Programme Paragon, Marchant 2010).

While there is agreement in the literature that gendered structures and processes need to be addressed in the UK Police Service, there is also consensus in the literature that changing current structures and processes within organisations needs to happen in conjunction with cultural changes in values, behaviours and expectations (Dick and Jankowitz, 2001; Ogden et al 2006; Neal-Smith & Cockburn, 2008; Powell, Bagilhole and Dainty, 2009; Dick et al 2013; Ainsworth et al, 2014). For instance, Spence<sup>11</sup> cites “...existing pockets of racism, sexism, homophobia, ageism, religious and disability discrimination.” (POLICINGUK 2013 p.49) as barriers to promotion for talented men and women in policing, and promotes the need for both a transparent promotion process and constant monitoring of behaviours.

Nonetheless, despite the need for far-reaching changes in order to create a more diverse and equal Police Service, gender diversity programmes and initiatives viewed as assisting the careers and promotion prospects of women can often have a negative effect by making women feel like tokens. In Archbold and Schulz’s (2008) study of a US Midwest police agency, several of the women officers, despite being encouraged by their male supervisors to enrol in the promotion process, did not apply as their male supervisors were giving them the impression that they would be promoted, not as a result of their skills and experience, but because they were women. Sixty-four percent of female officers interviewed believed they had been treated like a token by male officers due to the administration actively encouraging the hiring and promoting of females, and the gendered perception the public held of women police officers.

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<sup>11</sup> Julie Spence – formr Chief Constable of Cambridgeshire and BAWP president

Archbold et al's (2010) later paper reported that male officers cited lack of confidence while women officers cited tokenism as influencing their decisions not to take part in the promotion process. However, they contend that, although changes in the process could encourage more male officers to seek promotion, "...the bad news is that serious changes to the working climate are required to change the issues that relate to tokenism." (p.300). Similarly, Silvestri (2005) expressed her concern that the escalating number of management and development initiatives for women, under the banner of equality and diversity, is part of a "...somewhat retrograde step in reinforcing the idea that women's lack of progression can be better explained as something that resides with women themselves rather than with any obstacles posed by the organisation." (pp.266/7). This reinforces the initial proposition at the beginning of this section, that the lack of women in senior management roles is a far more complex issue and cannot be attributed to women's own ineptitude or free choice, but rather is the result of gendered cultures, beliefs and behaviours that restrict women's choices and opportunities for career advancement.

The next section discusses women networking at constabulary level, exploring the networking experiences of WIHN members, the growth and support for such networks and the stigmas associated with network membership.

### **3.4 Police women networking**

Brown et al (2006) highlighted women's sense of social isolation as one aspect of police occupational culture, as they are excluded from male-dominated informal police networks, which are difficult to undermine since "...internal solidarity is achieved through recognition of similar outlook and values of the dominant norm of white males." (p.23). Gender Agenda 2 (2006) recognised this, highlighting as a future issue, the "Need to establish and maintain effective support and network groups for women...to prevent sense of isolation and exclusion." (p.11). This section explores police women's informal and formal networking experiences and provides an insight into constabulary based women's formal networks.

## **Informal networks and networking at constabulary level**

Kiely and Peek (2002) found that a lack of communication from the top down was viewed as partly to blame for the strength of the informal networks within the Police Service, and that the informal networks, known as “The 'grapevine', 'canteen culture', 'Serious Rumour Squad' or ‘certain people in the know’ were how the majority of respondents kept in touch with what was going on.” (p.177). This suggests that it is the informal networks that women need to turn to for both social and human capital. Butterfield et al (2004) also highlighted the importance of informal police networks, in as much as they found that “Informal networks became the primary means of getting things done.” (p.413) and proved to be very important sources in development and support between constables and sergeants.

Marchant (2010) drew attention to the perceived existence of male-dominated informal networks, or old boys’ networks, in the Police Service. This supports Carson (2009), who found that one female participant believed the biggest challenge she faced was “...‘dealing with older white male police officers by far’...” (p.59). Similarly, in Brown’s (2000) study of discriminatory experiences of police women, one participant commented that she could not approach the majority of her senior officers to report harassment at work because of the old boys’ network, while another believed that, although there had been a significant change of attitude towards equal opportunities policies, older male members maintained the old culture which continued to create barriers for women at work. Likewise, Laverick and Cain (2014) found perceptions of senior leaders in particular as “...having ‘old fashioned’ ideas and perspectives...” as well as being “...paternalistic towards female colleagues, or sexist in their language and demeanour.” (p.44). Both male and female participants in their study voiced concerns that these traditional and old fashioned attitudes held by elements within senior ranks hold back culture changes, thereby sustaining gendered aspects of police culture and undermining equality, diversity and human rights responsibilities.

Other police researchers have also provided evidence that these networks still exist in some areas of policing (Brown 2000; Loftus 2008; Carson 2009;

Laverick and Cain 2014). For example, although these informal networks seem to be diminishing as older officers retire and new recruits take over, Loftus (2008) found that there was the perception that there are still pockets of these networks in the Police Service, creating a "...subversive culture, a feeling: people generally don't feel part of...(Female Chief Inspector July 2004)" (p.769). However, she concluded on a more positive note by suggesting "The police organisation is an environment in which alternative cultures are emerging to challenge old ones." (pp.772/773), and that these challenges to established discriminatory practices and cultures are coming from, not only minority and women officers, but also the younger generation of white, heterosexual male officers. Loftus also promoted the development of women's support groups, on the grounds that "The establishment of internal support associations organised around ethnicity, gender and sexuality symbolizes one of the foremost changes to the arrangements for mainstreaming diversity." (p.760).

### **Constabulary women's formal in-house networks**

There is recognition by the UK Police Service of a need to create a more gender diverse workforce and, as part of an on-going gender equality strategy, most constabularies have launched their own formal women's network (Gender Agenda 2 2006). As at May 2017, there were forty-three women's formal in-house networks throughout England and Wales at constabulary level. The Police Service has promoted the benefits of women's support networks continuously over the years (HMIC 1995; Gender Agenda 2 2006; Grapevine 2009; Hanson 2010; Gender Agenda 3 2014). Indeed, over twenty years ago, HMIC (1995) encouraged "...all forces to monitor the demand for such networks, to give open support to those that already exist and to help with establishing others as appropriate." (p.62), thus acknowledging that official recognition and support are essential if support networks are to flourish. Similarly, the now disbanded ACPO's 2009 equality, diversity and human rights strategy included support for the advancement of a comprehensive range of diversity staff support networks.

Dick et al (2013) contended that, from a practice-based perspective, increasing the number of policewomen is an essential aspect of police reform "...which



sees women as having a fundamental impact on dominant taken-for-granted work practices which, we will argue, are the chief carriers of some of the more problematic and troublesome aspects of contemporary policing...” (p.135). Government reports, the UK Police Service and other academic researchers also promote attracting and retaining more women for the creation of more gender equal and flexible workplace environments where women can develop and flourish (HMIC 1995; Hanson 2010; Brown & Woolfenden 2011a). Similarly, several constabulary formal women’s networks support the need to attract and retain women. For example, Leicester Constabulary women’s network; South Wales Constabulary women’s network; and Staffordshire Constabulary women’s network all promote attracting and retaining women in their respective constabularies. For instance, Leicestershire women’s network supports Leicestershire Police “...in its recruiting policies to encourage greater representation of women throughout the organisation.” (Leicestershire Constabulary website 2017).

West Mercia Constabulary’s Gender Equality Scheme aims to ensure the constabulary has more representative gender ratios at all levels and in all areas of work. In addition, the constabulary women’s network promotes support for women by assisting them in developing their full potential while raising awareness of issues that women face surrounding gender within the constabulary. Similarly, Nottinghamshire women’s network “...offers courses to raise women’s confidence and improve their career development, and also provides mentoring and networking opportunities.” (Nottinghamshire Police Support Networks 2017). Other networks reviewed include objectives that focus on career progression, promoting work/life balances and generally improving the workplace for women.

### **Network repercussions and drawbacks**

Despite the fact that most UK police constabularies have formal women’s networks, there is evidence that there can be negative connotations linked to network membership of these groups and that they are not fully accepted or supported throughout the service. One somewhat extreme reaction to the promotion of the women’s network occurred in North Wales in April 2005, when

the Daily Post reported that “Posters promoting the Woman’s Association of North Wales Police (WANWP) have been ripped down...and members were accused of many things, including positive discrimination, nepotism and being “anti-men”...” (North Wales Daily Post 20 April 2013).

Loftus (2008), in her study of diversity within a northern police constabulary, found evidence of substantial acrimony towards internal support organisations and that membership can be stigmatised as being ‘anti-men’, due to “...the pervasive sentiment that the associations were serving to marginalise white, heterosexual, males...” (p.771). This, she believed, highlighted the hostility towards initiatives aimed at changing and extending power and status to minority officers within the constabulary. She also referred to the abundance of “...silent members...” (p.771) in police support associations who do not participate in network activities for various reasons, such as concern over their colleagues’ negative reactions to network involvement. In support, the Gender Agenda 2 (2006) recognised the reluctance of some individuals to use support services due to concern over colleagues’ reactions as well as the stigma of being viewed as less able or skilled than their colleagues.

It would seem that network attendance is not solely a problem women face, as one male staff support group representative highlighted negative responses from line managers and colleagues, who often suggested that he was going “...knitting [or] going for a sing song...” (Laverick and Cain 2014 p.55), which is an example of the banter that reinforces the macho image of the Police Service. Again, this supports similar findings in the private sector, where the language around women’s networks belittled and stereotyped women (McCarthy 2004a; Pini et al 2004; Bailey et al 2007). As previously discussed, past studies have indicated that women’s networks in the private sector also experienced similar issues, such as the negative perceptions by colleagues that they were exclusionary and discriminated against men as they provided special treatment for women (Liff and Ward 2001; McCarthy 2004a; Pini et al 2004; Bierema 2005; Bailey et al 2007).

Besides the issues discussed above, Laverick and Cain (2014/15) also highlighted a lack of commitment and support for women's networks from managers. This was supported by Loftus (2008) who found that several of the 'silent members' in her study were not active as they believed that "...their colleagues, and some supervisors, resented the occasions on which they were required to leave their shift early to fulfil an association commitment." (p.771). This discouraged them to request time off to attend network events, thus restricting the women's opportunities to extend their social capital. Finding time to actively support the network is not an issue unique to its members, as those who run networks frequently face the problem of juggling their own work and network responsibilities. Laverick and Cain (2014) also found evidence from their research on police reform and gender that many support groups and networks "...increasingly feel pressure resulting from workforce reductions, institutional restructures and increased workloads of members." (p.55).

In addition to encountering financial and workload pressures, Laverick and Cain's (2014) study provided evidence that the need for women's networks was being questioned as "...several of the network representatives also reported difficulties communicating the rationale behind the formulation of their support associations to both the female workforce themselves and in addition to senior leaders and middle management." (p.53/54). For example, one of the support organisation representatives talked about battling for ten years or more to try to persuade people in the constabulary of the need for their Women's Forum. It would seem as though there is the perception amongst some that gender diversity and equality are no longer issues and that women compete on an equal playing field with regards to career progression and promotion, which therefore negates the need for a women's support group. Laverick and Cain also found evidence that many women only recognise gendered inequalities within the workplace when they personally experience barriers, for example, when they become a parent, which could help explain this perception.

A lack of organisational commitment was highlighted as an issue some years earlier in the Gender Agenda 2 (2006), when it was submitted that encouraging network initiatives was not happening nationwide, and that some networks in

existence at that time did not have "...the full support or understanding of the organisation." (p.10). Eight years later Laverick and Cain (2014) reiterated concerns that variations in network funding and internal support exist between constabularies, leading to differences in networks objectives, levels of support and network activities, causing one to question whether these initiatives are taken seriously from the top down. A lack of support for constabulary formal networks affects women in policing nationwide by restricting their opportunities for developing social and human capital, while undermining the gender issues that women in policing continue to face in the workplace.

### **The future for constabulary WIHNs**

It has been argued that, at a time when minority groups and women are being negatively impacted by direct structural and financial changes to the Police Service, the indirect effects of the cuts are diluting the effectiveness of their diversity support groups. For example, network management will have less time to spend on their network commitments and there will be less in the budgets to fund such initiatives. Consequently, with a reduction in the size of dedicated resources, equality and diversity are being merged with other departments such as human resources, leading to "...the systematic dismantling of national and force level diversity and equality support structures and dedicated force-level resource." (Gender Agenda 3 2014 p.12). Similarly, Laverick and Cain (2014) voiced concern that, due to cuts in funding, national and constabulary diversity and support networks "...have experienced a reduction in capacity to fulfil their remit ..." (p.46), concluding that, as workforce reductions to dedicated equality and diversity resources are made, there is the possibility that gender equality issues will "...fall off the radar within many forces..." (p.173). This was reiterated in their study of the Gender Agenda in times of austerity (Laverick and Cain 2015), when participants voiced their concerns that diversity and support organisations at national and constabulary levels, such as equality and diversity units and constabulary level support networks, would be cut.

Within this environment of radical changes and concerns that diversity and equality in policing has lost ground, there is evidence that equality and diversity units within the Police Service are starting to disappear in some constabularies,

with some being merged with other departments due to budget constraints (Laverick and Cain 2015; Silvestri 2015). Furthermore Laverick and Cain (2015) highlight the concern that the original role and remit of women's networks are disappearing as a result of the police budget cuts, and that the networks are now being used to provide functions and support roles which previously had been the responsibility of other departments.

### **3.5 Conclusions**

This chapter began with an exploration of gender diversity and equality within the UK Police Service, highlighting the different ways in which the service has attempted to enhance and promote the role of women in policing, for example through the establishment of WIHNs throughout every constabulary in England and Wales. There is no doubt that the UK Police Service recognises the issues that women in policing face and several gender diversity/equality strategies and initiatives have been introduced over the several decades. These include the BAWP's three Gender Agenda initiatives and the launch of formal women's networks in the majority of police constabularies.

There are several factors that create obstacles for women's advancement and create barriers to promotion, sustained by a police culture that values the traditional career paths of men. There are aspects of policing that suggest women in policing might experience these barriers earlier than women in the private sector due to the perceived nature of policing and demands on the Police Service to provide a round-the-clock service to the public. Gendered views linking parenting, motherhood and commitment and based on the perception that much of police work calls for availability at all times, create issues for many women seeking a balanced work/life arrangement. Moreover, a linear police promotion process that is based on a full-time and uninterrupted career path is biased against those who do not fit this profile. This seems to lead to the perception amongst some that motherhood and police work are not readily compatible. For that reason many women are putting family life before their career in policing and deciding to leave the police service once they have

children, which suggests gendered cultures and structures are influencing and restricting the choices women make.

Gender issues in the UK Police Service are often exacerbated due to a police force characterised as a complex organisation with complex cultures and sub-cultures and which is "...a hierarchic, task-orientated and predominately white male culture." (HMIC 1995, 2.10) and a general public that often views policing as a male-only preserve. Research has drawn attention to the fact that women and men who work in the same UK police constabulary work in very different environments, where internal and external factors combine "...to create a highly differentiated, engendered structure of employment." (Holdaway and Parker 1998 p.53). However, there is recognition by the Government, the UK Police Service, police associations and researchers (Dick 2010; IPC 2013; McDermott 2013; Brown 2014a; Gender Agenda 2 2014; Hickey 2015; Loeb 2015) that there is still work to be done to create a fully gender diverse and equal police service that supports both men and women equally.

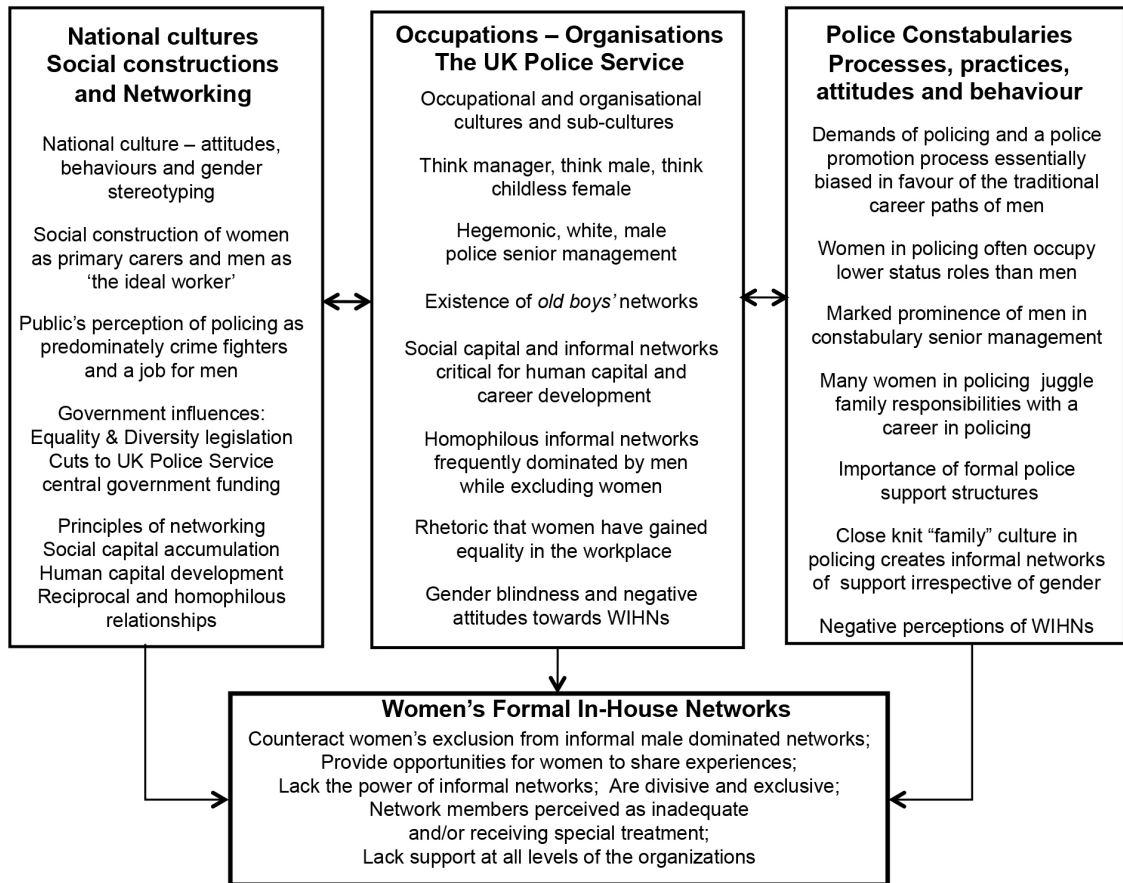
The requisite social and human capital are indispensable assets in policing, and networking and access to informal networks in the Police Service are important sources of information and career development as well as emotional support. The dominance of men in some critical areas of policing combined with the perception that policing is not a job for a women encourages male homophilous networking and the exclusion of women from these informal groups. In addition, a shortage of same-sex peers and an inability to socialise with colleagues and managers after work also restrict women's membership of such groups. One theme that emerges repeatedly from the literature is the existence of a sub-culture of older, white male officers, many of whom hold senior ranks, who sustain sexist values and language and also foster gendered sub-cultures and informal, gendered, networks within policing. However, there is the view that, as these older officers leave, they are being replaced by both men and women who will challenge discriminatory cultures and sexist behaviours, and that the strength of these informal, male-only networks are being diminished.

We learn from the literature that police women's formal networks and their members have similar experiences to those in the private sector. Formal women's networks have been established in order to counteract women's exclusion from male-dominated informal networks. These networks seek to provide women with increased access to social capital and the resultant benefits that informal networks provide, such as the opportunity to share experiences with other women and encouragement from women role models. On the other hand, there exists a backlash against such networks that stereotypes and belittles women who associate with them. Furthermore, there is reluctance by some women to be seen receiving the benefits their network offers as this suggests that they are lacking in the necessary skills to move forward. Members and representatives often have difficulty in finding the time to become involved or actively organise and run the networks due of lack of time, lack of support from constabulary management and the demands of juggling the responsibilities of careers, carers and parents. There is also concern that recent Police Service budget cuts are affecting the role of women's networks and other diversity and equality units, and that the networks are being used to take on board support functions that have previously been the responsibility of departments such as HR and training. This indicates a police organisational culture that looks on gender equality as something that is given low priority when times get difficult.

### **Contexts and concepts impacting on WIHNs**

The literature has established several distinct but interlinked concepts, all of which contribute to the discourse surrounding WIHNs. The diagram below (Figure 1) identifies these concepts in the macro environment of national cultures and social constructions; the meso environment of occupational and organisational cultures and the UK Police Service; and the micro environment of UK police constabularies. The discussion that follows explains how the various contexts impact upon women's workplace and networking experiences, their perceptions of and relationships with their women's networks and ultimately, the success or failure of these network.

**Figure 1: Women's Formal In-house Networks in Context**



The literature review provides evidence that there are mixed perceptions of WIHNs, and while some women support and promote these formal support groups as sources of social and human capital that men frequently acquire through their informal networks, others view them as unnecessary, divisive and lacking the necessary power to make a difference. There are no simple explanations for these mixed perceptions and experiences and the inconsistent outcomes from these networks. My research therefore adopts a stratified approach to social research that incorporates the complex and far-reaching interactions between the macro, meso and micro levels of society (Layder 1996). Drawing on the concept of Layder's (1996) research map, the model above (Figure 1) shows the various forces in the macro, meso and micro contexts of WIHNs that can impact on the success of a network. For example, despite widespread changes in attitudes towards women in society and in the workplace since the middle of the last century, there still exists the social construction of women as the primary carer and men as the ideal worker with



few family commitments. This 'think manager, think male' attitude continues in organisations, with gendered career paths and promotion processes in evidence in many workplaces. This social stereotyping of women and men in society continues to create gendered organisational cultures, sub-cultures and work practices, which is why women's work experiences often differ to those of men. In addition, external family commitments frequently exclude women from after hours, critical networking and meetings while gender homophilous networking and the existence of old boys' networks within organisations also exclude women from these beneficial, informal networks. This exclusion, combined with the dominance of men in many senior positions, can have a negative influence on women's access to mentors and role models and limit their opportunities to network and to acquire and extend their human and social capital. It can be argued therefore that the social construction of women as the primary carer and men as the ideal worker has ultimately resulted in the development and growth of WIHNs in the workplace.

As a result of several decades of government gender equality legislation and the widespread perception in society that men and women are now treated equally, some view the workplace as a fair and equal place for women despite evidence to the contrary. This, in turn, results in gender blindness and antagonism towards WIHNs, as some perceive them to be redundant, unnecessary and anti-men. We thus find that women sometimes reject network membership and activities because of the negative connotations linked to such groups, as they are perceived as unwarranted and even inappropriate. That some women recognise and acknowledge the benefits of WIHN membership and activity while others do not can be explained in part, therefore, by looking at the varied experiences of women in and out of the workplace. Furthermore, while numerous professions, occupations and organisations outwardly promote WIHNs and espouse the benefits to be had, often to conform to expectations, this does not always follow through in the workplace. Many organisations, ignoring the case for gender equality, have lost sight of the original objectives of WIHNs and promote the business case for gender diversity in order to justify the existence of their women's network. In turn, equality initiatives such as formal support groups are often the first to be affected by changes in the economic

climate of the nation. The chances of success for WIHNs are therefore tenuous as many suffer from a pervasive lack of real support at all levels within organisations who pay nothing more than token support for gender equality and diversity. WIHNs are also adversely affected by what is happening at the macro level as society experiences economic downturns. This is particularly obvious in the case of police constabulary women's networks, as recent government policies have resulted in year on year cuts in police central funding. The subsequent cuts to constabulary budgets have diminished the roles of constabulary WIHNs as they suffer from a lack of resources and commitment and therefore lack the power needed to make a difference to the working lives of the women they represent. To summarise, therefore, I maintain that by taking this broad perspective to my literature review I have been able to provide vertical depth to my research, and by doing so impart a better understanding of the far-reaching influences that impact upon and determine the successes and failures of women's formal in-house networks.

The next chapter discusses my research methodologies and methods and includes discussions of the research origins and the research participants, including myself as researcher, and concludes with a consideration of the fieldwork and data analyses.

# Chapter 4: Through Different Eyes

## 4.1 Introduction

This study was centred around the police women's voices to give credence to their workplace experiences, perceptions and expectations, with particular focus on networking and their constabulary women's network. In this chapter, I intend to demonstrate that, through the use of the women's voice perspective to explore the stories and narratives of members of Angleshire Constabulary women's network, the study drew on aspects of both social constructionist and realist methodologies.

Layder (1996) promotes qualitative, information gathering approaches to data collection as ones that are frequently used "...with a view to filling in gaps in knowledge about social processes...or to investigating a social problem." (p.47). This study, through the use of qualitative data collected using informal, semi-structured interviews, used both realist and social constructionist approaches to give voice to network members in order to investigate their perceptions of and participation with their network. An inductive approach provided me with rich, qualitative data that was explored in order to make sense of the women's workplace experiences, relationships and interaction with their network. These approaches are discussed in Section 4.2 along with the methodology of the 'women's voice perspective'.

A discussion on the development of the study's theoretical and contextual frameworks follows. At the outset of my research process, I was given the invaluable advice from my supervisors to "...just start reading...". By doing so, I was able to gain an initial theoretical and practical understanding of what was out there, what was going on and why. This was to provide the basis for my contextual and theoretical frameworks. In order to develop this framework, I drew upon Layder's (1996) Research Map.

Grey (2011) proposed that behind the abstract concepts explored in the study of organisations "...are the lived experiences of people." (p.2). This study is all about the 'lived experiences' of the research participants, as the women and their stories are the mainstay of my research. Section 4.3 considers the research participants, which include the network members I interviewed, the gatekeepers who allowed me access to the network members and myself, as the researcher. It begins with my own story of how I secured access to the women's network, my initial encounters with the gatekeepers and the methods I used to communicate with ACWN members and secure my final twenty-five interviewees. The additional benefits gained by women talking to women, as highlighted in Chapter 2, are then discussed alongside an exploration of peoples' motivations for volunteering to be interviewed and the benefits they might experience by talking to a stranger. This section closes with a reflexive discussion of my approach to meeting and interviewing the women.

**Chapter 4 title: 'Through Different Eyes' (Woolf V., 1938)**

This title was borrowed from the website of Te Kete Ipurangi Communities School, which launched a project to support the New Zealand Curriculum Exemplars for Learners with Special Education Needs focusing on the development of narrative assessment for use by specialist education providers and teachers. I found the website while I was doing some research for the director of the Orkney Folklore and Storytelling Centre, who has, over several decades, been researching ancient Orkney, Celtic and Nordic myths, legends and dances while working with and developing programmes for special needs and rehabilitating adults and children, focusing on movement, drama, dance and storytelling. The TKI project, the Orkney Islands storyteller and my doctoral thesis all have something in common, in that stories and narratives are major constituents of all three. The phrase, "Though we see the same world, we see it through different eyes." (p.16), is from Virginia Woolf's 1938 non-fiction essays, 'Three Guineas', demonstrating Woolf's views on war and women.

Section 4.4 describes the fieldwork and includes discussions on the interview processes and experiences, researcher observation within Angleshire

Constabulary and how the raw data was analysed using thematic analysis. The final section of the chapter, Section 4.5, provides the researcher's conclusions.

## **4.2 Methodologies**

Saunders et al's (2009) Research Onion model (p.108) divides the research sequence into distinct steps or layers, placing the research philosophy as the first step in the sequence, since this contains "...important assumptions about the way in which you view the world... [which] will underpin your research strategy and the methods you choose as part of the strategy." (p.108). My research philosophy from its inception was to put the emphasis on the women's narratives, thus drawing on elements of both social constructionist and realist methodologies in order to provide a way of investigating their perceptions and expectations, and was an integral part of my methodology. The collection of field data using informal, semi-structured interviews was one of the first decisions I made and my methodology, at that time, had not yet been considered. It seemed to me, therefore, that I had started at the core of Saunders' Research Onion as I followed my own logical sequence of decisions that worked for my particular study, in line with Gill and Johnson's (2010) observation that the research process is not a clearly defined succession of processes but rather a tangled series of actions involving both conceptual and empirical perspectives. I was to realise later that, contrary to my initial belief that my research methodologies were decided at a later stage in the research design, the methodological approaches were the first, albeit unconscious, decisions I made.

Bluestein et al (2004) promote "...the increased use of narratives, stories, and conversation as representations of current discourses and a means of understanding career life." (p.424), an approach that fits with elements of social constructionist and realist approaches. Reality, or what has been socially constructed and is perceived as reality, varies between cultures and the people embedded in these cultures take their reality and knowledge for granted (Berger and Luckman 1966). Berger and Luckman propose that not only is day-to-day

life accepted as reality, but also “It is a world that originates in their thoughts and actions, and is maintained as real by these.” (p.33). Similarly, Johnson and Duberley (2000) wrote that, in organisation and management research “...different people may apprehend different realities.” (p.55), and argue from a realist stance that through human agency, these social conditions are not only created and reproduced, but also deconstructed and transformed in daily life. This study draws on these methodological approaches to explore the experiences of the interviewees that range from stories of their childhood and previous jobs through to accounts of their current home, social and work lives. The following section, whilst recognising that there is a wider academic and philosophical debate on the nature of reality and knowledge, explains the concepts of both social constructionist and realist ideologies and how they are employed within this research.

### **The same world...through different eyes**

Gergen (1985) defines social constructionist enquiry as “...principally concerned with explicating the processes by which people come to describe, explain, or otherwise account for the world (including themselves) in which they live.” (p.266), while Cohen et al (2004) promote social constructionism as a methodology that “...facilitates analyses of the relationship between careers and the social contexts in which they are embedded.” (p.407). Fernando (2012), in support of Cohen et al, suggests that by examining how individuals and their societies are closely interwoven, we gain an understanding of how social values, perceptions and expectations influence the way women experience and react to gender inequalities at work. This approach also helps identify how people’s behaviours help maintain or transform existing gender inequalities within their multi-level social contexts. The social construction of the roles of men and women in society can have a negative influence on women’s workplace experiences, while key aspects in organisations such as networking, promotion processes and work/life balance can be socially constructed in ways which limit opportunities and influence career choices (see for instance Lewis 2001; Maddock 2002; Mavin and Bryans 2002; Vinnicombe and Singh 2002; Dick and Cassell 2004; Wood 2008; Gregory 2009; Fisher and Kinsey 2104). This study seeks to consider women’s past experiences by employing a social

constructionist methodological approach that has allowed insights into the participants' experiences, perceptions and beliefs.

As well as taking a social constructionist approach, this study, following Layder (1996), also takes a realist stance. There is no consensus in the definition of realism, which Johnson and Duberley (2000) contend has several different interpretations and positions. Nevertheless, there is broad agreement that realism rejects scientific study as the only measurement of truth and knowledge and is "...critical of our ability to know reality with certainty." (Trochim 2006). Bhaskar (1999) maintained that there is no conflict between accepting the objectivity and positivism of scientific study whilst acknowledging that beliefs, attitudes and interpretations are impacted upon by past experiences and other influences. By talking to the women about both past and present experiences, this study recognises that what they believe is "...shaped by their assumptions and prior experiences as well as by the reality that they interact with." (Maxwell 2012 p.43). Using Layder's (1996) research map as a guide, this study examines the participants macro, meso and micro working and social environments using social constructionist and realist approaches, both of which convey the "...interwoven nature of different levels and dimensions of social reality." (p.7). Through the women's historical and current narratives of various aspects of their lives, I was therefore able to explore and understand in greater depth the different realities and perceptions that the women brought to this research through their voices...a methodology highlighted by Bryans and Mavin (2003) as "...the women's voice perspective..." (p.111).

### **The women's voices**

In their study of women learning to become managers Bryans and Mavin (2003), by bringing six women together to share their day-to-day experiences, looked to redress an issue highlighted earlier by Mallon and Cassell (1999). They identified that much research was focused on women in senior management positions, while there was a lack of literature on the "...more day to day stories and views of the 'average' woman manager." (p.138). My research looked to go some way towards filling this gap by exploring the day-to-day experiences and perceptions of a broad cross section of 'average' women's

formal network members through their stories. Through the women's voices, I was therefore "...seeking out the experience of people who are on the front lines of an issue." (Bluestein et al 2004 p.434). For several decades, women's stories and narratives have been providing new perspectives and the women's voices approach, which is "...grounded in the recognition of (largely stable) gender differences and the need to listen to women's accounts and experiences..." (Broadbridge and Simpson 2011 p.472) has become prevalent in much of the research on gender and work. For example, Bryans and Mavin (2003) used women's narratives in their study of women learning to become managers to move away from the customary comparisons between men and women, since it was about giving prominence to the women's experiences.

The women's voice perspective determined that the research would be both qualitative and interpretive, which "...better reflects the uniqueness of humans compared to the subject matter of the sciences." (Bryman 2008 p.161). This allowed me to explore the interviewees' perceptions of their careers in policing and expound their views of their work environments and workplace support. Walsham (2001) wrote "Interpretive methods of research adopt the position that our knowledge of reality is a social construction by human actors." (p.376). This highlights the subjective nature of the data, which is influenced by the preconceptions of both the researcher and the participants of the research. I was aware that I could not carry out my research without influencing the outcomes, and this is discussed in Section 4.3. The women, through the use of semi-structured interviews, were able to deliver detailed descriptions of the varied contexts in which they lived and had lived. This method of data collection provided rich, highly personal background information that would have been otherwise lost using more restrictive methods, such as questionnaires.

## **Research frameworks**

Maxwell (2012) describes the conceptual framework of a study as "...primarily a conception or model of what is out there that you plan to study, and of what is going on with these things and why." (p.39). He highlights experience, prior research and theories as important sources and stresses the importance of integrating these elements with the focus and goals of the research.



Layder's Research Map (1996) helped me develop these frameworks for my research, and I extended my literature search and subsequent data analyses to include the macro, meso and micro environments that the women inhabited. By researching the women's past and present experiences and their lives both in and out of work, I was able to clearly identify the scope of my research and determine areas for examination, which I can summarise as:

A consideration of the women's current and past family and workplace experiences and how these have influenced and continue to influence their current workplace perceptions and experiences of being a woman, in what has frequently been viewed as the macho culture of policing.

An exploration of their perceptions of women's in-house networks and their motivations for participating (or not) in their own network.

An exploration of their expectations of network membership, and their views of the future for their network and their careers in policing.

### **Research contexts**

Layder's (1996) realist approach, which stresses the importance of looking at the complex interaction between "...a layered or 'stratified' model of society...which includes macro (structural, institutional) phenomena as well as the more micro phenomena of interaction and behaviour." (pp.7/8), influenced this study's contextual framework and encouraged me to expand my literature review. I was able to explore elements of Layder's vertical and horizontal dimensions and incorporate the layers identified in Layder's map, which, by then had been modified and fine-tuned into my own research map (See Figure 2 below, p.102).

**Figure 2: Research Map**

	Research Focus	Research Methods	Theoretical Considerations
Macro Environment	National culture; Society's stereotyping of the roles of men and women; Government policies and legislation	Literature review; Media & Government reports; Academic papers; Semi-structured interviews with WIHN members	Culture; Gender; Gender equality & diversity
Meso Environment	Occupations; Organizations; The UK Police Service	Literature review; Media & Government reports; Academic papers; Semi-structured interviews with WIHN members	Gender equality & diversity; Organizational and occupational cultures & sub-cultures; Structure & Agency; Networking
Micro Environment	Angleshire Constabulary; ACWN - Angleshire Constabulary Women's Network	Literature review; Constabulary documents; ACWN documents; Observation at ACWN committee meetings; Semi-structured interviews with WIHN members	Gender in the workplace; Gender equality & diversity; Networking; Structure & Agency; Organizational cultures & sub-cultures
Self	Women's histories re work & family; Experiences in policing; Networking perceptions, experiences & expectations	Semi-structured interviews with WIHN members	Gender equality; Society, cultures & sub-cultures; Gender stereotyping; Networking

*Adapted from Layder (1996)*

For the benefit of my own research, I identify three elements or levels of analysis, which have some semblance to Layder's, but overlap in places:

- 1) Macro environment: This level explores society and gender and how cultures, social attitudes and behaviours impact on the women's experiences in the workplace.
- 2) Meso environment: This refers to the bigger picture of policing as an occupation and the UK Police Service as an organisation.

3) Micro environment: This level focuses on the immediate environments, the women's daily, face-to-face interactions and experiences both in and out of work, and how processes, practices and behaviours within their constabulary influence the women's perceptions of their current situation.

Each of these three levels incorporates the literature and the women's biographical experiences and social involvements in both historical and current dimensions in time. This approach highlights the impact of history and power relations both in and out of the workplace, while the women's interaction with their network can be seen as part of the dynamics of their day-to-day interaction in the workplace.

### **Macro, meso and micro environments**

In chapter 1, I reviewed gender in organisations and discussed how inequalities at work can have their roots in, and continue to be influenced by, complex macro environments of the social, political, economic and cultural composition of the surrounding society (Alvesson and Due Billing 1997; Durbin and Fleetwood 2010). The literature indicates that the sometimes overt sexism women experience at work and the roles women are offered are often linked back to societal attitudes, values and expectations (see for instance Dick and Jankowitz 2001; Kumra and Vinnicombe 2008; Neal-Smith and Cockburn 2008; Powell et al 2009; Crompton and Lyonette 2011; Ainsworth 2014).

It has been identified from the literature reviews in chapters 2 and 3 how the public's gendered perception of policing and their stereotypical views of the roles men and women have in society can influence the meso environment of the UK Police Service, and act as a barrier to women's progression. The literature also highlights an internal police culture described as sexist, macho and male-dominated which is resistant to diversity initiatives and change (Jermier et al 1991; Brown 1998; HMIC 1995; Waddington 1999; Brown 2000; Dick and Cassell 2002; Thomas and Davies 2002; Silvestri 2007; BAWP Gender Agenda 2 Good Practice Database 2010; Loftus 2008). However, despite the contention that the Police Service is an organisation resistant to

change, the whole of the UK Police Service has been going through a decade of fundamental changes and budget cuts. It is within this continuous state of flux that internal equality and diversity initiatives to promote women, such as the Gender Agenda 1 (2001), Gender Agenda 2 (2006) and Gender Agenda 3 (2014) have been developed.

Due to the nature of policing, many of the functions and activities carried out by police officers take place both inside and outside of the immediate workplace as they interact daily with members of the public as well as colleagues. However, the importance of the current micro environment should not be understated, as individuals interact with and respond to everyday situations and activities in the workplace. We learn from previous studies that it is within the immediate environment of the constabulary that women in policing interact with what Waddington (1999) refers to as a near infinity of sub-cultures and encounter male-biased promotion processes, stereotypical role allocation and gendered values (Brown 1998; Waddington 1999; Loftus 2008; Carson 2009; Hanson 2010). It is also in this environment that the women come into contact with and are influenced by gender equality initiatives such as their women's formal network. Finally, it is important that we do not ignore people's micro environments of home and social life, as these can also influence and be influenced by work, a situation Layder (1996) refers to as "...the problem of intrusion of occupational demands into the private lives (and selves)." (p.86).

Layder (1996) stressed the importance of understanding both dimensions of the research map; the vertical dimension, which links the different layers of social action and interaction and often includes elements which overlap from one layer into another, and the horizontal dimension, which seeks to understand social processes and influences over time. We can see how context, both vertical and horizontal, is relevant to this study as it became clear from the literature that the research participants' wider social environments would have influenced and would still have an influence on their immediate family and working environments and hence their views of women's only networks. The research participants were given the opportunity to "...define the significance of events in their lives." (p.117), going as far back as some of the women's earliest

experiences as children in what some referred to as police families through to their current experiences as women in policing in Angleshire Constabulary.

### **4.3 The research participants**

This section focuses on the research participants. It includes discussions on gaining entry to ACWN and the network gatekeepers, the women who volunteered to be interviewed, myself as the researcher and how my research turned into a case study of a UK police constabulary women's network.

#### **Opportunity knocks**

As my original research plan was to conduct interviews with members of five or six corporate women's networks, I initially contacted BT as I had previously worked for the company and was aware they had two women's networks. I did not receive a reply from BT Senior Women's Network chair, but did receive an email from the outgoing chairperson of BT Women's Network, confirming that she had just given up the position but had passed my email on to the current incumbent. However, despite two further attempts to contact each of the current chairs of both networks, I received no responses. It was shortly after this, at a BAM seminar in London and still disappointed by my lack of success with BT, that I met a woman who had previously worked for a Northern England police constabulary. She suggested I contact the British Association of Women in Policing (BAWP), since many of the constabularies in England and Wales had recently launched their own women's networks.

I contacted the BAWP, who subsequently informed all the constabularies in England via their intranet that I was looking for research participants. Four English constabularies (West Midlands, Cheshire, Stafford and West Mercia) contacted me to say they would consider my request. Considering that England and Wales has forty-three individual police constabularies, I was again disappointed with the lack of response, although I was later to find out that Police intranet mail, if it is not recognised as relevant or marked urgent, is frequently deemed to be junk mail and deleted without being read. Given the

relatively large number of face-to-face interviews planned and the potential travelling time involved, I decided to take things into my own hands. I engaged in a bit of personal networking by speaking to a close friend who was a special constable with Angleshire Constabulary. He provided me with the email address of the woman who was Angleshire Constabulary's newly appointed Deputy Chief Constable. Without delay, I introduced my research and myself via my university email (Appendix 4) to Angleshire's DCC. On receipt of my email she phoned me to let me know she was very enthusiastic about my research, that I would have her full support and that she would now speak to ACWN's chairperson and vice chairperson on my behalf. In research, a gatekeeper is someone who has the authority to grant or deny access at a specific site (Buchanan and Bryman 2007; Silverman 2006). The first gatekeeper had just granted me access to Angleshire Constabulary Women's Network and I now had to negotiate access to the network members via two more gatekeepers. Within two weeks I had arranged a meeting with the network chairperson and the vice-chairperson, and fortunately both were equally enthusiastic.

The meeting was a very informal affair that took place over coffee in Angleshire's HQ canteen, lasted for almost two hours and had a positive outcome. It was evident after the initial meeting that, with a membership of just under two thousand women and the enthusiastic support of the Deputy Chief Constable and the network chairperson, this was a unique opportunity to gain access to the members of Angleshire's Constabulary women's formal network and focus my study solely on them. During the meeting, this possibility was discussed and was met with enthusiasm from both the chairperson and the vice-chairperson. It was this serendipitous opportunity that meant my research would now be based on a single case study in a UK police constabulary with Angleshire formal women's network members.

Silverman and Marvasti (2008) write that "Very often, a case will be chosen simply because it allows access." (p.163), and this certainly describes my situation. Nevertheless, I did not take this single case study strategy on board without considering the pros and cons of focusing my research on one organisation. Although I recognised I would be relying on having continuous

access to this particular organisation over a period of more than a year, I believed that the possibility of losing access was slight as both the Deputy Chief Constable and the women's network chairperson were equally enthusiastic about my research. Despite having very little knowledge of the UK Police Service, I was confident that with some effort this could be easily resolved. I decided therefore that the positive benefits of carrying out an in-depth study of women who would share similar experiences working for one organisation within the confines of one profession outweighed the negative issues.

Buchanan and Bryman (2007) highlight the problem of what they refer to as "...negotiated objectives." (p.489), where contingent conditional access is granted and "...the spirit of free inquiry is jeopardized when certain themes and topics are discouraged and others welcomed." (p.490). After my initial meeting and having gained confirmation that I could base my case study on the members of ACWN, I was faced with a situation that could have constrained my research in terms of the questions asked and the themes and issues investigated. Shortly after confirming the way ahead with the chairperson and vice-chairperson I received a long, detailed email from the latter, who outlined in great detail how she thought my research should proceed. I read the email with some trepidation and quickly decided that my reply would need to be immediate and unequivocal, even if it meant upsetting one of the gatekeepers, that it would not be possible to take on board her extensive recommendations. I copied in the chairperson when I replied to ensure that, once the problem was resolved it would not become an issue at a later date, and I was fortunate that the crisis disappeared as quickly as it had appeared.

The woman in question subsequently declined to be interviewed as a research participant on the basis that she had passed on her role in ACWN to somebody else. The above process, from beginning to end, reminds me of Walsham's (2006) perception that the two main characteristics needed when carrying out qualitative and interpretive research as a field researcher are good social skills and "...a willingness to accept 'no' for an answer but the persistence to try elsewhere." (p.322).

Although I had changed strategy from a study spread over four or five organisations within various industries and professions to a more in-depth study of network members in one organisation within the context of the UK Police Service, I could still proceed as planned. I had already decided that the main data collection method would be semi-structured interviews. This is a method supported by Drever (2003) as being well-suited to case studies, since the researcher's objective is not to cover a whole population and explore commonalities, but rather focus on a smaller number of participants when "The researcher can adapt the main question to suit people's complementary roles, and can explore their different perspectives in depth." (p.7). Yin (1981) also promotes face-to-face interviews as a relevant source of evidence in case studies, as well as on-site observations and materials such as newsletters and other explanatory and illustrative organisational publications. These methods of data collection were relevant to my study as I was able to carry out one-to-one interviews with twenty-five members of ACWN. I also had access to constabulary and ACWN materials such as posters, network meeting minutes and constabulary and Police Service websites and publications, and could also make observations during my attendance at four ACWN committee meetings.

Yin (1994) promotes case studies as a research vehicle when an empirical inquiry "...investigates a contemporary phenomenon within its real life context." (p.13), and when the researcher believes contextual conditions are relevant to the phenomenon being studied. Walsham (1995) supported in-depth case studies as a suitable vehicle for interpretative research, when the researcher can make frequent visits to the case study site over an extended period. In this particular case study, I was an outside researcher making frequent visits over an eighteen-month period. As I was not embedded in the field organisation, the women interviewees would view me as an outsider and not one of them. However I believe that this was beneficial, since, as Walsham put it "The merit of this approach is that the researcher is seen as not having a direct personal stake in various interpretations and outcomes, and thus personnel will often be relatively frank in expressing their views." (p.77). Walsham's perceptions proved to be accurate, and my experiences of this are discussed further in Section 4.4.



Yin (1981; 1994) divides research into three categories: exploratory, descriptive and explanatory, and argues that case studies may be used for all three categories. I viewed my research as descriptive, as it describes the circumstances of a women's network and the real-life context in which it occurs. It is exploratory, since it explores members' experiences and perceptions of their network with the purpose identifying what benefits they believe their network currently provides and what benefits, if any, it could provide in the future. Finally, it is explanatory as it helps explain why the women choose to either interact or disengage with their network and how they construct their perceptions of the network. He also refers to units and sub-units of analysis that define a case study as a single, an embedded single, or a multiple case study. Although I interviewed a relatively small number of women, they were part of a much larger group of network members and the focus of my study, and as such, these women were the individual units that made up the group of participants in my single case study. The next sections provide a detailed discussions on the women interviewed, the process of finding the women and the perceived benefits of women talking to women, and finishes with a reflexive section on myself as the researcher.

## **The women**

The element of 'Self' in Layder's Research Map (1996) is described as "...an individual's sense of identity, personality and perception of the social world as these things are influenced by her or his experience." (p.74). I now had the task of finding twenty or more women who would be willing to share their sense of identities, experiences and perceptions with an unknown research student. Cassell (2005) referred to research interviews as "...'a series of discrete but demanding forays into the lives of strangers'..." (p.176). One of my biggest concerns, albeit unfounded, was that none of the strangers I approached would be interested enough in my research, nor have the time to give one or two hours from their busy schedule to share their stories with an unknown academic research student and a stranger.

When members actively choose to join a network, it can be assumed that the members have varying degrees of interest in their network. Since ACWN membership was automatic an interest in the network could not be assumed and the data I would be collecting took on an additional perspective. I originally believed I would be interviewing women who had made a choice to join their women's network. I now had the opportunity to interview women who had not actively chosen to join ACWN, some of whom would possibly have had little or no interaction with their support network.

An initial email introducing my research to prospective interviewees would need to be instigated via Angleshire Constabulary and it was suggested that the women's network secretary, who was also the chairperson's PA, could help me with this task. I drafted the email that was subsequently sent around to all network members, outlining my research and confirming that I would shortly be looking for participants to interview. The email did not ask for volunteers at this stage, as I was a bit concerned that I would end up with over a thousand volunteers. What I learned was that the chance of receiving over a thousand volunteers was highly unlikely as ACWN emails are included in a daily information process called 'General Orders', where all manner of communications are sent out. I was advised later by several of the women interviewed that unfortunately the common response to 'General Orders' is to pick those emails which are job related or marked urgent, and delete all the others. Five methods of communication were subsequently used. These were:

- Targeted emails to a specific group of interested individuals (9 interviewees)
- Randomly selected emails (3 interviewees)
- Personal networking within the constabulary (5 interviewees)
- Snowballing (4 interviewees)
- Targeted emails to specific individuals (4 interviewees)

#### Targeted emails to a specific group:

Clark (2010) suggests that, where not all of the potential members of a research sample might identify with the focus of the research, it may be necessary to look for those individuals who would be more likely to engage. My first approach

at securing interviewees was targeted at a group of women who had recently attended a self-development workshop run by ACWN. I hoped that, as attendance might indicate some level of interest in self-progression and/or ACWN, some of the women from this group would volunteer to be interviewed. I received eleven positive responses, and ended up with my first batch of nine interviewees, as two of the original eleven women who volunteered subsequently cancelled due to work commitments.

#### Randomly selected emails:

My next step was to personally select thirty HR reference numbers at random, without any prior knowledge of names, ages, roles etc. Again similar emails were sent to these women, however, I received only three positive responses, which was somewhat disappointing.

#### Personal networking:

Silverman and Marvasti (2008) wrote, "Qualitative methods incorporate chance into the research process" (p.122). During the interview process I became a 'chancer', exploiting any opportunity through my own personal networking within the constabulary, and was thus able to secure another four participants, which included the constabulary's diversity manager.

#### Snowballing:

What I had not expected during the interview process was to find five volunteers through the women I had already interviewed. Brown (2000) refers to this as a 'snowball sampling strategy', when one respondent passes on details of a colleague willing to take part in the study, and highlights this as a solution to the problem of access to women in previous studies of women in policing. I was fortunate that work friends and team members, on finding out that their colleagues had spoken to me, voiced an interest in being interviewed. After speaking to several experienced researchers and referring to other studies (see for instance Rabe-Hemp 2007; Neergaard 2007; Kelan 2010; Cahusac and Kanji 2014; Randle et al 2014) I was assured that securing prospective interviewees by means of snowballing is an accepted practice.

### Targeted emails to specific individuals:

The selection of these particular four women was certainly subjective, in as much as I personally decided to seek out these four women and ask if I could interview them. However, to interview the Assistant Chief Constable, the outgoing ACWN chairperson, the incoming ACWN chairperson and finally the senior officer who had initially instigated and launched ACWN some years earlier were opportunities I could not ignore, and I believe my study has benefitted from their inclusion. This 'target group' I liken to Neergaard's (2007) "...key informants [who are] experts in the particular topic under investigation." (p.266). I would be talking to these women from three perspectives, firstly as women in policing, secondly as network members and thirdly as key ACWN individuals or as a member of the constabulary's senior management team.

My eventual group of interviewees was made up of a varied selection of women/network members. Appendix 5 provides a detailed list of the participants' roles, employment statuses and age groups, although names are omitted for the benefit of confidentiality.

### **Women talking to women**

There is evidence from the literature on women networking that many women recognise the benefits to be had from talking to other women (see for instance Mavin and Bryans 2002; McCarthy 2004a; Pini et al 2004; Vinnicombe et al 2004; Singh et al 2006; Bailey et al 2007). Finch (1984) writes that the participants in her research enjoyed the opportunity of "...having someone to talk to'..." (pp. 73/74) and concluded that there is evidence "...where a woman researcher is interviewing other women, this is a situation with special characteristics conducive to the easy flow of information." (p.74). Finch further suggests an advantage women interviewers have over men when interviewing other women is that there is already, by virtue of their gender, a shared identity between the interviewer and the interviewee and an expectation that the interviewer will understand what is being said simply because she is a woman. Padfield and Procter (1996) added to the discussion on the impact of gender in interviews when they found that, in their study, there appeared to be no difference between the male and female interviewers in response to questions

asked. Nonetheless, there had been a noticeable difference in the sensitive information volunteered by the interviewees. The women interviewed who had gone through an abortion confided in the female interviewer. In contrast, the women who initially talked to the male interviewer did not disclose at that time if they had had an abortion, however did disclose their abortion to the female interviewer at a later session.

Like Finch (1984), who admits to being "...startled at the readiness with which women talked to me." (p.72), the ease and enthusiasm with which the women I interviewed shared their stories and anecdotes, perceptions and experiences still surprises me. I look at the data collected in this study, and think of some of the intimate stories related to me with ease, such as a case of physical sexual assault, the death of a partner and the confession from one of the women that she had a troubled marriage. As a result, I can easily relate to Finch's conclusion that the ease with which a woman interviewer can get women to talk has less to do with interview skills and expertise as a sociologist, and is rather linked to "...one's identity as a woman." (p.78).

### **Talking to a stranger**

In addition to examining the phenomenon of women talking to women, I questioned why the women I interviewed would want to participate in my particular piece of research. Some of the motivators suggested, relating to participating in qualitative research interviews, are altruism, self-interest, material and economic interest, the therapeutic aspects and curiosity (Peel et al 2006; Clark 2010). For example, Clark (2010) writes that people might find "...satisfaction in sharing important events associated with their lives with a sympathetic listener." while this type of interaction with a third party "...can produce a cathartic response in speaking about negative events." (p.401).

Several of the women in this study were motivated by an interest in what ACWN was currently involved in or in finding out what ACWN could do for them. Others, and in particular some of the older, more senior officers, believed that voicing their perceptions and experiences might help their younger colleagues. Three of the women with babies and toddlers, and who were experiencing the

task of juggling careers and family life, specifically asked if they could participate in my study after talking to colleagues and friends who had already been interviewed. During their interviews, these women stressed the difficulties they had experienced during pregnancy, maternity leave and returning to work. I believe one of the reasons they volunteered was to highlight these difficulties to an unofficial but interested third party. The participants could also use the interview as an opportunity for self-expression and to talk to an outsider during a time of widespread change in the UK Police Service, when they could informally and unofficially criticise police processes without having to go through any of the official channels.

I have already noted my recognition that I would not be an objective observer and like the women, I would be a participant in this research as well. The following section therefore discusses the researcher and how the researcher can influence various aspects of the study.

### **The researcher**

Gill and Johnson (2010) observed that management researchers are not neutral observers but rather should "...accept their (albeit fallible) role as that of partisan participant in interest-laden dispute." (p.206). I have already identified my own personal reasons for choosing to research women in formal women's networks and was aware that, as a participant in my own research, the women I met in the course of this research would be making socially constructed judgments about me. Cassell (2005) argues that "We use identity as a tool to present ourselves in a way that is appropriate to the interview process, managing impressions of those factors we have some control over...and accommodating those we have not control over." (p.175). I was conscious that I wanted to create an identity that would best serve my purposes of gaining the women's trust, developing a rapport during the interviews, and in the short time I had in each interview, creating a relationship, albeit brief and fleeting in nature.

Regarding initial impressions, for me the "...salient, demographic factors..." (Cassell 2005 p.170) that would influence how I am construed by the interviewees were being female, having a Scottish accent and being a

university student. Although I had little control over the first two, the third factor I believed I could manipulate to a certain extent. Stead (2004) maintained that the way in which dress is interpreted is socially constructed and that, in an interview situation, wearing the wrong shirt or the right dress "...can send numerous messages." (p.394). The interviewer identity I wanted to convey through dress was one of a mature research student/professional woman, as I believed that women in policing would relate to another professional woman. I approached the construction of my visible identity based on descriptions of the Police Service as traditional, old fashioned, authoritative and conservative (Waddington 1999 p.297; Kiely and Peek 2002; Laverick and Cain 2014), and ensured that my interview outfits, which were smart/casual, erred on what I viewed as the conservative side. This cautious approach extended to removing my nose stud and four of my six earrings, since McElroy et al's (2014) study found that there was still bias against those in the workplace with facial piercings and that "...working adults rated applicants with piercings as less conscientious, of lower moral character, less sociable, and less trust-worthy than those without facial piercings." (p.35).

Cassell (2005) talked about the necessity of managing one's identity, which suggests that the researcher has some control over how they "...are going to position themselves within an interview." (pp.176). I was aware that an interviewer identity would be created during the interviews, and in order to "...decrease the ambiguity of the interview situation..." (p.176), I confirmed that I was an independent, self-funded doctoral researcher and not an agent for ACWN, Angleshire Constabulary or any third party and that the interview data would be used and published as part of my doctoral thesis. I worked at identifying shared experiences with the women during the interviews in order to promote shared identities as a fellow woman and also as a fellow professional. However, Cassell questions to what extent, if any, we can influence or even know how other people perceive us, which reminded me of the quote from a poem written by a Scottish poet on seeing a cattle louse creep out of a rich lady's bonnet in church:

*“O wad some Power the giftie gie us,  
To see oursel as ithers see us”<sup>12</sup>*  
(To a Louse by Robert Burns 1786)

The interview process and my experiences are discussed in Section 4.4. However, it is worth noting here that, as well as recognising that my appearance and presence would have an influence on the interviews and data collected, I was also particularly aware that the way in which I conducted the interviews, the questions I asked and how I directed the conversations in order to keep a broad focus on the key themes of the research would influence the data collection. The ways in which I informally prompted and probed during each interviewee meant that questions were asked in different forms in each of the interviews. Themes were discussed at different length depending on the interviewee’s experiences, age and background. In order to give as much freedom as possible to the interviewee, the interviews were semi-structured, and I believed that recording the interviews would result in more fluent conversations and allow the women to talk with the minimum of interference from myself. It also allowed me to listen to the women’s stories without concerning myself on the matter of manually recording the conversations, resulting in fewer interruptions and a more confident, relaxed interviewer/researcher. Whilst I avoided using leading or closed questions and used probing, open questions when possible to encourage the women talk about their own experiences, as time was limited, it was necessary to informally guide the conversations in order to keep the interviews on track.

#### **4.4 The fieldwork**

Due to the “...non-standardised and complex nature...” (Saunders 2009 p.482) of the data required, I decided that the collection of qualitative data in the form of the participants’ narratives and stories would be the best information gathering approach that would provide me with rich data based on the experiences and perceptions of the participants expressed through their own

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<sup>12</sup> Translated as “O would some power give us the gift to see ourselves as others see us”



words. I decided that the use of informal, semi-structured interviews would give voice to a limited but broad sample of network members when the participants would be able to describe their experiences and perceptions of their lives and their worlds (Silverman and Marvasti 2008). This method would also yield a varied range of information in one interview on the interviewee's preferences, perceptions, experiences and motivations as well as factual information about the interviewee (Drever 2003).

Since my philosophical approach presupposes that beliefs, attitudes and values are socially constructed, I was interested in collecting information during the one-to-one interviews on the participants' life experiences both before and after joining the UK Police Service. This included the way in which they currently experience their work environments and workplace support processes, and perceptions of their career paths and futures as women in policing. In addition to collecting data from twenty-five interviews, I was also invited by the chair to attend ACWN's quarterly meetings throughout the eighteen months I was interviewing. This was an unexpected bonus, since my attendance as an observer at four of the six ACWN committee meetings resulted in additional data that provided me with an understanding of the formal structure of the network as well as its activities behind the scenes and some of the issues experienced by those who managed the network.

Although there are issues related to the validity of qualitative data in research due to the interpretative nature of the information, it has been argued that there is a place in research for varied interpretations and perspectives (Morgan and Smircich 1980; Grey 2011). Saunders et al (2009) also highlighted, when collecting qualitative data in the form of verbal narratives or stories through unstructured or semi-structured interviews, "...requirements for accuracy are often less important than the points that are made." (p.514), since they offer more varied accounts and interpretations of the phenomena being researched. The in-depth accounts of the interviewees' work experiences over long periods, their perceptions of organisational support and network membership and their views of a future as women in policing was data that highly structured questionnaires and surveys would not have adequately provided. In addition,

talking to the women directly opened up new areas to explore, while questionnaires would have been rigid, with very little control over the content once distributed, since "...you never learn anything you didn't ask!" (Drever 2003 p.3). Therefore, the interviews not only included themes highlighted by the literature, such as police cultures, work allocation and promotion, work/life balances, networking and networks, but also allowed the women to "...expand on issues or raise themes that had not been anticipated." (Pini et al. 2004 p.289), such as recent changes to policing, budget cuts in police funding and the issues involved in being pregnant and being on maternity leave. This method also allowed the interviewees the latitude to respond with few restrictions and expand more freely on the themes under discussion, when their own interpretations and meanings would be allowed to emerge and develop in the interview data (Layder 1996).

### **The interview process**

I had decided from the outset to carry out face-to-face interviews, as I believed this would be a more personal and informal approach than telephone interviewing. This method would create a closer bond between interviewer and interviewee and thus encourage the women to 'open up' to a greater extent. I would also be able to watch the participants' body language, which would help me when interpreting the data (Drever 2003), as I could identify statements I thought were made, for example, in jest. With the permission of the women, all the interviews were digitally recorded, as I was aware of my own limitations, and knew that I was not skilled at, nor experienced in interviewing and taking in-depth notes simultaneously. By recording all the conversations, which took place over an eighteen-month period, I could also be confident that all of the rich data in its original form would be available at any time. The interviews, which lasted between sixty to ninety minutes, were recorded using a digital recorder the size of a small mobile phone placed in an unobtrusive position.

The participants chose the location, which, apart from two, took place at their place of work. One senior officer had recently moved to another constabulary, but was happy to travel to Angleshire HQ to meet with me and the other interview took place in the participant's house as she was on sick leave at the

time and had a young toddler to look after. Some of the interviews in the workplace were held in quiet corners of staff restaurants, which created a relaxed and informal atmosphere, and others in the participants' own office or in a room booked for the occasion. All of the women were given assurances of anonymity before the interviews began to ensure that they could discuss their opinions and experiences without fear of exposure or recrimination. I also confirmed that, if I became aware during the interview of a criminal offence towards a child or vulnerable adult that had not been reported or that was about to be committed, I would have a duty of care to report the incident to the police. This resulted in nods of acknowledgement and smiles as I added each time that I felt I was 'teaching my granny to suck eggs' whenever I said this.

All the women had previously been advised of the broad focus of my research only, but were not given any guide as to the questions I would be asking, as I did not want the women's responses to be pre-rehearsed. I developed an interview aid for myself (see Appendix 6), which was a list of headings I had already identified from the literature as relevant topics for discussion, as follows: life/work experiences; police culture; women in policing; workplace support/women's networks; ACWN. This list was later expanded to include additional topics raised in earlier interviews, such as the influence of several years of police budget cuts. I decided that it would not be necessary to go back to earlier interviewees to discuss one or two additional topics, since these were added very early on in the process. At the beginning of each interview, I began with informal questions related to previous careers and how their move into policing came about, which helped break the ice and easily led into discussions on previous and current police cultures and being women in male-dominated environments such as factories and investment banking. The conversations usually flowed seamlessly from one subject onto another, frequently jumped back and forward between topics and sometimes strayed off the beaten track. However I very quickly became an expert at subtly turning conversations around as and when required.

## **My interview experiences**

My very first interview was with an experienced, mid-ranking officer in her forties and took place at one of the larger county police stations. This was my first interview as an academic researcher and I can only liken the pre-interview nerves to the way I felt just before my driving test when I was nineteen. I sat in reception for no more than a couple of minutes, resisting the urge to tell everyone who came through the door that I had not committed a crime and was only there in the role as a researcher (an interesting social construction of policing from a 'baby boomer' in her late fifties, born and brought up in a small market town in the Central Lowlands of Scotland). The officer I was interviewing came through personally to collect me from reception and had booked a small, comfortable interview room with a computer, as she thought I might like to have a look at the ACWN website. I found my nerves quickly disappeared as I became engrossed in my first interview. I was also able to interview two younger officers from her team on the same day, as they had asked her who the visitor was while she was in the kitchen making tea for us and enquired whether it would be possible to talk to me about their own experiences. This was a very positive start to my interviewing process and the fact that this first officer was happy to set up additional interviews for me with two of her team, I took as recognition that my research was viewed as having some value. She also respected the confidential nature of the interviews and left the two younger officers with me while she returned to her own office.

Although my initial interview nerves did not return it took me slightly longer to become accustomed to sitting in police station receptions. All of the women interviewed offered me refreshments and had taken time to ensure that we had a quiet, private area where we could conduct our interview. A couple of the younger women also confirmed that their line manager had booked a room for us, all of which, I believe, indicated support for my research. I was never left sitting in reception for more than a few minutes, and whenever the interviews came to an end, the women always walked me back through to reception – an act I viewed as extremely polite until I found out that it is a requirement that all police visitors, for security reasons, are personally escorted out of the building.

Despite the readiness and enthusiasm of the women to share their experiences with me, I continued to work at establishing a rapport with them and tried to find areas where we had common experiences. For example, one of the women had completed her BA degree at the same university I was currently enrolled with as a doctoral student, another had close family ties to Scotland and a third had worked for several years for the same telecommunications company I had previously worked for, and in the same location. When the woman I interviewed at home asked me, as the interview came to an end, if I had five or ten minutes to spare as she would bring her young son down to meet me (an offer I could not refuse as this new mum had just given me over an hour of her time), I viewed this as a sign that I had developed a positive, if short, relationship with this police woman and mother. Reflecting back on my own interview experiences, and when I recollect the personal and intimate nature of some of the stories I was told, I believe I was successful in establishing positive relationships with most of the women, which helped significantly in achieving beneficial outcomes regarding the calibre of the resulting empirical data.

During the interviews, I became aware that I was bringing my own interpretation to what was being said, often as a result of the way it was said or in the body language the participant displayed. For example, one junior constable sounded as though she was in a recruitment drive for the Police Service, as she continued throughout the interview to enthusiastically stress the important work police officers did, the dangers of the job and how it required total commitment both in and out of working hours. This interview reminded me of Haynes' (2006) recollection of an interview she had carried out during her study of women accountants and motherhood, which, she suggested, felt as if she was "...being given some kind of sales pitch about the value of accounting and the nature of her firm, such as might be given to a prospective client." (p.209).

## **Observation**

I mentioned previously in this section that I was able to attend four ACWN quarterly committee meetings over an eighteen-month period. At each meeting I presented a short summary of my research aims and objectives, and by taking the opportunity to network with other attendees I was able to secure additional

interviewees. Layder (1996), under the heading of self and situated activity, includes varied levels of participation and observation, from "...'complete' participant observation...through varying degrees of 'closeness', to simple 'uninvolved' observations..." (p.115). Although I could question other participants who were presenting on topics such as policewomen's uniforms and flexible/part-time contracts, my involvement was very limited and I would class my attendance at these meetings as a guest observer. However, I was able to gain an insight into the workings of the network and the kind of issues the committee members were involved in. This was helpful as I was able to develop an understanding of how much or how little the women I interviewed knew about ACWN activities behind the scenes.

The meeting process was quite a formal affair, with the agenda and list of attendees being distributed about a week before the meeting. Actions from previous meetings and apologies for non-attendance were made at the beginning of the meeting, and updated minutes distributed by the secretary approximately a week after each meeting. I was accepted enthusiastically by the members, and in contrast to a more formal meeting process, the atmosphere in the room was informal. It was here that I first experienced what the literature describes as police or canteen banter often exhibited between police officers and staff as a way of dealing with the stresses and strains of the occupation with others who understand the nature of the work (Martin 1996; Waddington 1999). For example, as an ice breaker at my first meeting, I related the story of sitting in the police station reception at my first interview feeling guilty and wanting to announce to all and sundry that I hadn't done anything wrong. One of the more mature, senior officers replied that it is normal as she has been an officer for over thirty years and still shakes with fear and guilt whenever she visits any of the constabulary police stations. There were also several jokes made during the meetings often relating to Firearms officers, Undercover officers and the Vice Squad.

Attending the meetings meant that I was able to "...gather firsthand information about social processes in a 'naturally occurring' context." (Silverman 2006 p.21). This data not only provided background knowledge, but also allowed me

to compare existing theories from the literature to this particular women's network. For example, the literature highlights concern that diversity units, such as in-house networks, are having their budgets slashed and that women's formal networks in organisations are being used to deliver services that were previously the responsibility of HR or training departments (see for instance Laverick and Cain 2014; Gender Agenda 3 2014). At one of the meetings, the committee members discussed running another career development seminar that would be offered, once again, to both men and women and would come out of ACWN's budget. These development seminars, under another name, had previously been the responsibility of HR/Training. It was also clear from the attendances that committee members frequently struggled to juggle network and work commitments (see Laverick and Cain 2015), and at each meeting I attended, there were several apologies for non-attendance due to work commitments. For example, the worst turnout at a meeting I attended was seven attendees from Angleshire Constabulary, one guest and the network secretary present, whilst apologies for non-attendance came from eighteen Angleshire Constabulary officers and staff and one guest.

### **Data analyses**

My study used inductive reasoning, which Trochim (2006) described as a "...more open-ended and exploratory..." (p.1) approach to qualitative research than deductive reasoning as the researcher collects and analyses qualitative data from a small sample of participants in order to make sense of a particular situation. Saunders et al (2009) suggest this approach is appropriate to research focused on the personal experiences and perceptions of the participants and concerned with the context in which events are taking place, in order to "...get a feel of what was going on, so as to understand better the nature of the problem." (Saunders et al 2009 p.126).

Silverman and Marvasti (2008) propose that analyzing data is not something that should begin whenever the data gathering process is finished, but rather should be ongoing throughout the data gathering process. Linking data to existing theories and studies started during my first interview when gender issues I had previously read about came to life as my first interviewee talked

about the negative effects of taking a career break to have her family. As she would be returning to a profession that had moved on without her and be up against other qualified professionals who had more up-to-date knowledge, she did not return to her previous profession but rather joined the Police Service in a post that would suit her qualifications and skills. Linking the literature to my raw data and identifying recurring themes continued throughout the interview process and my excitement never waned whenever some aspect of our conversations either supported or contradicted the existing literature. For example, I remember the initial feeling of bitter disappointment, after having read in the literature that women's formal networks were set up to fight against women's exclusions from critical men's networks, to learn during one of the interviews that ACWN was initially launched in order to tick all the boxes in the constabulary's Senior Management 'equality duty' requirements. The male officer, who was also head of diversity at that time, had passed on what he referred to as 'this headache' to a woman officer who, luckily enough, was an active member of the BAWP and believed that the creation of a women's network could be their mechanism for delivery.

### **Themes and sub-themes**

Bryman and Burgess (2002) refer to the "The generation of concepts as one of the most frequently mentioned aspects of qualitative data analysis." (p.6), while Saunders et al (2009) write about qualitative data analysis through the creation of a conceptual framework. The literature search had provided me with headings for my interview aid and also provided me with my 'a priori' themes (King 2004) that were subsequently added to and provided the main themes for analysing the data. I used template analysis to analyse the data, a procedure Saunders et al (2009) described as "...a list of codes or categories that represent the themes revealed from the data that have been collected...codes which can be predetermined and then amended or added to as data are collected and analysed." (p.505).

I personally transcribed each of the interviews verbatim, as I was concerned that by simply taking notes I would miss data that would subsequently prove to be relevant. I examined the individual transcripts looking for relationships and



patterns as well as recurring and additional themes for further discussion. Due to the volume of data, I reviewed the interview transcripts time and time again as I worked through the data to compare and contrast as I went along, and to ensure that any new themes or sub-themes discovered were included in the template. After several revisions, when my initial or 'a priori' themes had been deleted or merged with other themes and additional themes and sub-themes had been added, a dominant set of themes emerged (King 2004). My final analysis template now consisted of two main headings divided into the most prevalent themes from the interview transcripts. The two main headings were then divided and sub-divided into themes and sub-themes. In order to avoid tackling the data as one large, formidable compilation of information, Silverman and Marvasti (2008) suggest taking "...some manageable *unit of one* as a focus"..." (p.69), and the sub-themes were my manageable units of one that allowed me to pull together and compare the varied experiences and perceptions of the women under a collection of sub-themes (See Appendix 7).

Once the analysis template was finalised, I set about creating new data documents for each of the sub-themes, which consisted of all relevant discussions extracted from the original interview transcripts. The original twenty-five interview transcripts had now been re-arranged into twenty new, coded data documents. These would now be the main documents I would refer to when writing my data analysis chapters. Although template analysis is a time consuming and intricate process, I chose to do this manually and not to use data analysis software. As far as the coding and computer skills needed to split the data into themes and sub-themes, I was confident, having worked with computers and computerised spreadsheets on a regular basis for more than thirty years, that I could do this competently myself.

### **A worked example of the data analyses**

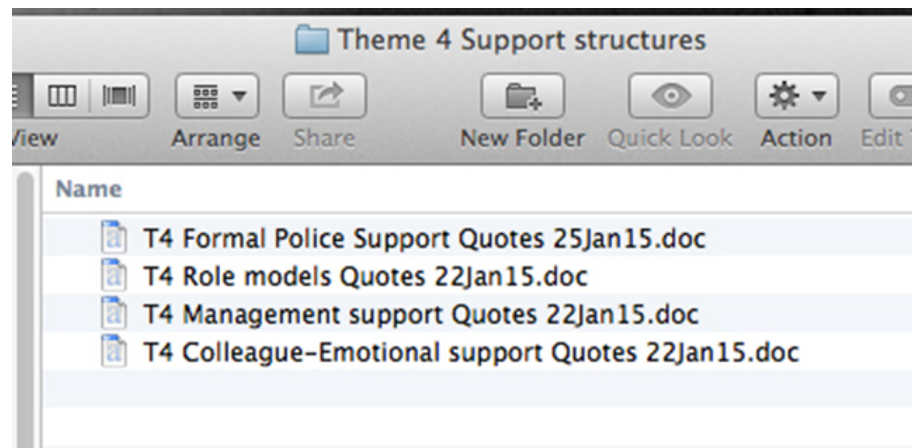
As a result of a comprehensive review of the literature in the principles of networking, organisational and police culture, women in the workplace/in policing and women's formal networks, my informed judgement initially shaped my interview questions. The literature review and the interview template I used as a guide subsequently provided the initial foundations for my thematic

analyses. For example, major considerations that emerged from the literature were the cultures, processes and practices in both the Police Service and in other public and private organisations that often created barriers to women's career development and inhibited their opportunities to develop both social and human capital at work. Another discussion that occurred regularly in the literature was the critical nature of networks and networking at work. These themes can be identified throughout the data analyses chapters 5, 6 and 7.

Once the interviews began, I was open to adding more themes and sub-themes for discussion that I had not previously anticipated. For example while discussing informal support with the women during the interviews I soon realised from their stories and the examples they provided just how critical informal colleague support and formal police support structures were to both men and women in policing. Therefore, under the heading of 'Support & Networks', using the theme of 'Workplace Support', I added the sub-themes 'Formal Police Support' and 'Colleague Support' to the original template. As a result I was able to contrast the women's interactions with their formal and informal support groups with the women's view of and activities with their formal women's network. Another example of an emergent theme from my initial interviews was the concept of the Police Service as 'family'. Several of the women talked to me about childhood memories as part of a 'police' family living alongside other 'police' families, while others spoke about the substantial support they received from colleagues during difficult times such as bereavement or illness. As a result, I revisited the literature and became aware of a close-knit culture that nurtured strong feelings of loyalty. From the empirical data emerged the existence of a somewhat inviolable allegiance to the Police Service by those in policing which, it can be argued, results in a culture more resistant to change than other organisational and professional cultures.

I eventually identified seven main data themes and twenty sub-themes to work with (see Appendix 7). The themes and sub-themes that are detailed in the template provided the final structure for my data analysis and determined the form my data analysis chapters would take. For example, Chapter 7, Section 7.2 relates to the theme, 'Workplace Support' and linked sub-themes in the

template. As mentioned previously, I had twenty coded word documents with the data I assessed as most relevant to each theme and sub-theme. For example, the screen shot below shows each of the coded word documents relating to the theme, 'Workplace Support'.



The four documents identified above would now be my main sources of empirical data on support structures for discussion that I would refer to when writing my data analysis chapters (See data analysis Chapter 7, Section 7.2).

Revising my data files and collating similar quotes together not only saved time when I was writing my data analysis chapters, but also helped me visualise better what was going on in each of the individual areas for discussion. Early in the process of choosing the data I realised that some of the discussions could relate closely to more than one sub-theme. For example, when discussing maternity leave or promotion (Chapter 6: 6.4) some of the women referred to informal support from both men and women colleagues and some of this data I deemed relevant in my analysis of informal support (Chapter 7: 7.2). What I also found difficult when writing my data chapters was omitting quotes that I had initially included in the coded documents. My final choice of quotes were those I found to be the most succinct and interesting and which I believed would provide the clearest understanding of the women's standpoints and experiences in each of the areas for discussion.

## 4.5 Conclusions

Due to the qualitative nature of this research, the sample of participants was small compared to those frequently used in quantitative research. Nevertheless, although the findings are not representative of all ACWN network members, the qualitative and inductive nature of the study provided rich data that allowed me to gain an understanding of how and why the women in the study interacted with their women's network, how they viewed the effectiveness of the network and what future benefits they believed their network could provide. There is support in the literature for qualitative studies since, in many instances, the level of detail in the data collected more than makes up for the statistical limitations of the study (Dick and Jankowitz 2001).

Using Layder's research map as a tool allowed me to explore the macro, meso and micro environments of the women, which lead to a better understanding of the complex relationship between the research contexts or 'levels of analysis', which helped develop the study's three levels of contextual framework, as outlined in Section 4.2. This also provided me with themes to explore with the women during the interviews. The semi-structured informal interviews and my attendance at ACWN committee meetings provided rich sources of empirical data. In addition, I benefitted from the positive aspects of a woman talking with another women, such as an easy flow of conversation, recognition of shared gender experiences and the discussion of topics of a more intimate nature.

As this interpretative and qualitative study set out to examine the experiences and perceptions of women members of a Police Constabulary women's network, I identified elements of both realist and social constructionist methodologies as the best approach to explore the first-hand narrative accounts of the women's lives and experiences, as seen through the eyes of twenty-five ACWN members and one doctoral researcher. Realist and social constructionist research methodologies fit with the aims of this research since the social construction of the roles men and women have in society influence women's careers and workplace experiences, while a realist approach recognises that people perceive divergent realities. At the heart of this research was the need to listen to the women's constructions of their lives and experiences, and this led

me to the determination that realist and social constructionist approaches to my research, which would also be qualitative, inductive and interpretative, would provide me with the best quality data for my purposes.

The findings of this study, in line with qualitative research, are not representative of all the network members. Qualitative data samples are often relatively small due to the time-consuming aspect of data collection methods, such as one-to-one interviews and data analyses methods (Drever 2003; Bryman and Burgess 2002). The data I collected from the twenty-five women was as much about differences as similarities, and about depth and not breadth. Gaining an in-depth understanding of how the women perceive their environments and why they react to complex issues the way they do involved generating very detailed data, and required this form of qualitative approach (Layder 1996; Bryman 2008). The time-consuming problem of transcribing interviews has been noted in the literature (Drever 2003; Saunders et al 2009). However, the benefits of digitally recording all the interviews and transcribing the data verbatim myself outweighed the drawbacks, as I could familiarise myself with the data as I was transcribing it, and I also had access at any time to the unabridged interviews and the hard copies. This meant that I could review them and review them again until I was confident that accurate notes had been made. I was also confident that my data analysis process was robust as I analysed the data personally, constantly looking for and linking the data to relevant themes and theories from the literature. I also kept field notes of my interview experiences in order to recall my own interpretations of what was going on. However, I acknowledge that the findings and conclusions of this study are not definitive or exhaustive accounts of what is going on, but rather the interpretations and the perceived reality at that time of twenty-five network members and one doctoral researcher.

The next three chapters explore the findings of the research data, and start with the women's accounts of work experiences, family lives, their workplace environments and their careers as women in policing. The women's perceptions and experiences of both formal and informal support in their workplace are also explored as well as their perceptions of and interaction with ACWN. The

analyses of the data close with the women's reactions to recent budget cuts and changes in policing.

## **CHAPTER 5: Identifying with and working within a 'police culture'**

### **5.1 Introduction**

In line with a social constructionist approach, Layder (1996) proposed concentrating on "...particular aspects of social life and social organization to see how they are reflected in research." (p.74). My study's social constructionist approach is one that recognises the link between the women's lives and work experiences and how previous experiences influence the close, interwoven relationships between the individuals and their current workplace environment. As part of my research, an appreciation of the women's past and present life and work experiences has helped to elucidate their current perceptions of their workplace environments and relationships. It also provides an understanding of their perceptions of and involvement with both formal and informal networks, and how their experiences have been shaped by gender inequalities in the workplace and police cultures and sub-cultures.

This chapter, which is the first of three chapters to draw upon the empirical data, begins with exploring the women's life and work histories within the context of their family and work that have emerged from the interview data. It includes pertinent influences of family, friends, colleagues and previous work environments. The second part of the chapter provides an insight into how the women perceive their working environment by exploring the women's perceptions of police cultures, past and present, and the work of policing, which includes their thoughts on how the public view police work.

As set out in Chapter 2, for this dissertation, social/network capital is defined as the building of individual social capital and networks of people, either consciously or unconsciously, by an individual for fortuitous and/or calculated benefits in order to enhance personal human capital, workplace experiences and career progression opportunities. Human capital is defined as an individual's skills and personal characteristics developed through education,

training, professional development and experiences plus personal wellbeing, all of which enhance an individual's abilities and opportunities in the workplace.

## **5.2 Development of social and human capital before policing**

This section provides examples of how the women's earlier work and family experiences helped them accumulate both human and social capital, which they believe were beneficial when they joined the Police Service. It also provides an insight into how informal, homophilous networks were formed at work.

### **Growing up in a 'police family'**

Several of the women I interviewed were part of families where fathers and other close family members were working, or had previously worked for the Police Service. This not only provided them with access to the wider 'police family', it also allowed them to draw upon the social capital that they accumulated as a result of these strong ties. For example, the father of one officer had been in the Police Service when she joined initially as a special constable and she had this to say about the extra support she received:

*"If I had an essay to do [for university] they would put me on static duty so I could do my essay as well." 12(O)*

The above comment identifies how help can be provided through informal networks and benefits reciprocated through links between strong and weak ties within an organisation. The instrumental support the officer received from colleagues and line managers came from the fact that her father was also a special constable. This therefore automatically made her part of the 'police family' and provides an example of how the Police Service, which is viewed as a closed and homophilous group, 'looks after its own'.

Another senior officer whose father had been a police officer described her childhood:



*“I’ve always been around policing and been around police families...I played with police children because we lived in police houses in police cul-de-sacs...it was very much a police existence.” 10(O)*

Her family lifestyle included socialising closely with other police families, and she had this to say about her first experiences as a police probationer:

*“There was never anybody there who made me feel I shouldn’t be there because of my gender...I knew how to manage those men and my sergeant, and I managed them. I think it’s inherent.” 10(O)*

Drawing upon her social and human capital accumulated as part of a police family, this officer believed that her male colleagues accepted her because of her ability to ‘manage’ them, which was down to the fact that she had a deep-rooted knowledge of police culture and experience of dealing with police officers and their ways. She also commented that, when she first joined the Police Service, she received support from other, more senior male officers in the station, which again could be construed as a homophilous Police Service looking after its own. Nonetheless, the fact that she recognised she had to “...manage those men...” suggests that she might have been unconscious or ‘gender blind’ to gendered conduct and that she had, indeed, experienced gender bias which she viewed as normal and something to be ‘managed’.

The example above can be likened to the gender unconsciousness, or ‘gender blindness’ within academia highlighted by Mavin and Bryans (2002), when members of their women’s informal network spoke about the lack of recognition in the organisation that male norms prevailed. Likewise, some of the women in Bierema’s study (2005) appeared to be gender unconscious when professing in public that gender issues were not a problem at work, while divulging in private that gender bias was, in fact, a concern. Unfortunately, the existence of gender blindness provides alternative explanations for gender differences at work, such as associating differences with personal choices and inclinations (Tatli 2010), and serves to sustain gendered behaviours as they go unchallenged (Broadbridge 1998). Moreover, Giblings and Hirst (2006) contended that male-

dominated, decision-making structures were partly responsible for gender blindness within the UK Police Service.

When asked about coping with stressful situations at work, one staff member again highlighted the benefits of growing up in a 'police family' and the coping mechanisms she developed as a child:

*"... if you've grown up with it, and that's all you've known all your life, it's not as stressful as if you've just come into it [police life] when you're 30 years old."* 4(S)

In addition to the women's descriptions of their family lives as part of a close police community, some described their current work environment in policing as a close-knit and caring culture, just like 'a family'. Others used the word 'incestuous', since, in addition to having relatives in policing, many officers and staff have husbands, wives and partners who also work for the police service. Previous studies support the women's perceptions of a closely-knit police existence. For example, the word 'incestuous' was used by Butterfield et al (2004) to describe police culture, while Brown et al (2006) described policing as not only a job, but also a way of life.

It was obvious that women perceived their police family connections as advantageous, and the suggestion is that their own workplace experiences have probably been influenced by these early social experiences as the women accumulated social capital while developing their human capital in the form of knowledge of police cultures and ways. The benefits from an accumulation of social capital of families and friends outlined above, in some cases, continue to be advantageous today, as one staff member explained:

*"[when stressed] I talk to the friends I have now, who I grew up with, and whose dads were policemen as well."* 4(S)

This demonstrates how the reciprocal benefits through close ties with childhood police family friends are still very much part of her life and serves to highlight the importance of these early, close ties in the Police Service. However, one

social change in policing is the demise of life as part of a police community outside of the workplace, as this staff member described a social, close-knit police culture and lifestyle from days gone by:

*“There were twelve houses and all the neighbours were policemen...Everyone was sort of round everyone else’s houses making sure everyone was all right.” 4(S)*

The above suggests a caring culture that created close bonds with fellow officers and their families. In addition to exploring the benefits of life within a ‘police family’, several of the women also commented on the perceived benefits of work experiences prior to joining the Police Service.

### **Previous work experiences**

When talking about past experiences before joining the Police Service, some of the women mentioned examples of friendship and emotional support provided by informal networks of other women, which Ibarra (1992) referred to as expressive networks. For example, one of the women spoke about early working relationships with other female colleagues when she was a young woman working in a male-dominated engineering culture, and then as an assistant in a psychiatric hospital:

*“They were all a lot older than me, so they sort of looked after me.”  
7(S)*

*“There [sic] was ten of us...we’d meet up with the other women and we’d lock the doors behind us if the supervisor was on the warpath.” 7(S)*

The above experiences of support and reciprocity resonate with Bryans and Mavin’s (2003) women managers who recognised the value of networking without the expectation of instrumental career benefits. These early networking experiences highlight examples of homophily based on gender (McPherson et al 2001; Brashears 2008), while both of the above quotes suggest the existence of informal networks of women providing reciprocal support in the workplace.

Ibarra (1992) found that women tend to turn to other women, rather than men, for emotional/expressive benefits at work. These networks differ to instrumental networks, the main objective of which is to use other members to gain instrumental benefits such as improving promotion or advancement opportunities. However, I argue that expressive support can also be instrumental as it develops confidence, fortitude and faith in oneself, which are all personal characteristics that can motivate and inspire people.

The importance of human capital in careers has previously been highlighted in Chapter 2. It is clear from the following comments that several of the women were aware of personal skills and characteristics gained in previous workplace environments, which proved to be advantageous when they joined the Police Service. For example, the participant below believed that previous experience in the Army prepared her for the gendered language she experienced in the Police Service:

*“Well, I was prepared for it, but I think, if you’re not...you’re not used to it...you know, the typical male banter that goes on sometimes.” 1(S)*

This woman was conscious of the existence of both masculine and macho cultures within the Police Service (Silvestri 2007; Loftus 2008; Gender Agenda 2 2006). She recognised her resilience in coping with a masculine and sometimes macho environment was down to her familiarity with similar environments and with the male banter associated with such cultures. She was therefore able to tolerate this particular aspect of gendered behaviour.

Tolerating gendered behaviour has been identified as one of the coping strategies women often adopt in male-dominated organisations in an attempt to fit in (Martin 1996; Powell et al 2009), and is reminiscent of Ainsworth et al’s (2014) women fire fighters, who eventually accepted offensive language as part of their organisation’s culture. A second woman who had also been in the UK Armed Forces believed that her experiences provided limited benefits, in that she had gained certain skills such as a knowledge of the law and experience of

military procedures which benefitted her when she joined the Police Service. These women are synonymous with one of the police officers in Archbold and Schultz' study (2008) who maintained that her prior military experience was an advantage.

A third woman, who had previously worked as an investment banker in London's Financial District, had been the only female trader in what was looked upon as a 'man's world'. This officer believed that her previous work experience gave her the tenacity and determination needed to get through the rigorous assessment process to join the Police Service. She was also accustomed to police culture as she had come from an extensive 'police family' and believed that this experience along with her previous work experience had been beneficial. She was more able to deal with some of the challenges she faced in the male-dominated environment of the Police Service, when she was "*...the only female in my intake of eleven*" 5(O). Similar to participant 10(O), who knew how to 'manage' the men in her constabulary, this particular officer talks about managing the masculine culture. Again, this suggests acceptance of the culture and compromise, by 'dealing' with the status quo rather than challenging it.

These women's experiences support the contention that women are often aware they need to manage gendered work relations (Maddock 1995) and they deal with this by 'fitting in' with the current cultures and expectations (Bryans and Mavin 2003). For example, there is evidence that women in policing frequently tolerate highly sexualised language and behaviours (Loftus 2008). Although the women in this study believed they were equipped with the skills to deal with gendered behaviours, it seems that gendered structures and behaviour within their workplace limited them to two choices: to personally cope with situations as they arose or alternatively rock the boat, challenge gendered behaviour and risk being ostracised.

All of the women interviewed who had joined the Police Service as late intakes were of the opinion that they had benefitted from coming in with some previous life experience as they had more confidence and had already developed skills

which would serve them well in the Police Service. Positive comments regarding previous workplace and life experiences include:

*“I certainly would struggle at the rank I am now without having had that [work and management experience.]” 11(O)*

*“I had life experience...I’d worked when I was a student...I’d had a lot of responsibility from a young age.” 13(O)*

The women who had joined the Police Service straight after university commented that the experiences gained living away from home, being able to prove that you can manage your time and the recognition that you have a level of commitment to complete a degree course had benefitted them in their careers as police women. It was obvious from the comments made that the women perceived human capital in the form of tenacity, determination and confidence as beneficial in policing. These traits gained from previous work experiences can be seen as particularly benefitting women, as existing literature indicates that women, more than men, often lack confidence in the workplace and continually question their abilities, while a lack of self-assurance affects motivation and career aspirations and frequently influences the choices that women make (Vinnicombe and Singh 2002; Bryans and Mavin 2003; Wood 2008; Broughton and Miller 2009).

It has also been proposed that developing social capital by networking with other women increases women’s assertiveness and confidence and encourages them to speak out against gender inequalities (Mavin and Bryans 2002). In recognition of this, constabulary based women’s formal networks look to both develop women’s social and human capital by encouraging women to network and increase women’s confidence by embracing the promotion of women’s career aspirations.

Finally, one junior officer who is not a British national, but comes from a country where police routinely carry guns, also highlighted how the society she was brought up in impacted on her choice of career path. She had served in her own country’s army, and had declared an interest in joining the Firearms unit:

*"I blame the fact that [Country] police are armed and that's the way I see the police. It's absolutely natural to me...I've done the national service and I've shot rifles and stuff like that."* 6(O)

The above comment recognises the strong link between society and perceptions of policing in that society, and relates to Cohen et al's (2004) study, where participants' career decisions and actions were explored, not only in the context of their lives more generally, but also by "...looking at one's life in retrospect, spinning it out in relation to current circumstances." (p.413). This also supports Layder (1996), who maintained that macro environments such as family life and previous social experiences are part of "...the unique psychobiography of the individual...which influences self-identity...and social activity." (p.72). The influence of social norms and gender stereotyping was also recognised by Cressida Dick<sup>13</sup>, who commented, "...in our society and culture, fewer women who join the police actually want to be armed." (Robinson 2014).

It is evident from the data above that the women I interviewed were aware of the benefits of the social capital and the human capital they had acquired prior to joining the Police Service, which predominantly came from two sources. Firstly, being part of or linked to a 'police family' through fathers and other family members brought several benefits such as experience of police culture at an early age, which helped the women easily adapt to the environment and culture of a police constabulary. Some of the women had also benefitted from extra support within their constabulary or unit as a result of their far-reaching, strong family ties. This highlights the wide-ranging and homophilous nature of the Police Service that takes care of its own, as well as the extensive and enduring influences of networks of both strong and weak ties. Secondly, previous work experience in male-dominant working environments had helped several of the women assimilate into the police culture, while skills such as self-assurance, resilience and know-how helped the women manage the challenges of a career in policing. However, it is possible that women who had worked in male-dominated environments or had close ties to policing as part of a police family

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<sup>13</sup> Cressida Dick, who is the current Commissioner for the Metropolitan Police in London, talking to the Mail in 2014 when she was Assistant Commissioner.

were normalised to gendered cultures and attitudes and may have been blind to the gendered behaviour they most likely encountered when they joined the Police Service.

The above discussion on the women's past family and work environments focuses mainly on the participants' past experiences outside of the Police Service and shows how these environments have influenced their experiences in policing. The next section moves into the next stage of the women's lives, and provides a more in-depth consideration of the women's past experiences of police culture.

### **5.3 Looking back on past police cultures**

There is a strong link between corporate cultures and networking, and women's exclusion from informal networks as a result of male-dominated, gendered cultures has been cited as one of the reasons for the growth of formal women's in-house networks (Vinnicombe et al 2004). Police culture, in the past, had a reputation for being macho (Waddington 1999; Martin 1996), while the continuance of structures that support the traditional male career has been highlighted in more recent police studies (Brown et al 2006; Silvestri 2007; Dick and Metcalfe 2007). For many of the women in this study, entry into the service was at a time when gendered behaviours and formal processes were biased against them, which was evident from their discussions on past police cultures.

#### **Gendered behaviours and practices**

Several of the women described the less acceptable aspects of past police cultures, such as overt, gendered behaviours and practices that, they believed, would not be tolerated today. For example, one officer recounted a harrowing experience as a young sergeant in charge of a team of men when she was the subject of a case of physical sexual harassment involving a male probationer, and had to cope with:

*"...being sent to Coventry by a lot of the males in the team." 5(O)*



because she had reported her abuser, who was looked upon by the other males as one of the lads. The perpetrator was ticked off and moved to another section, an event that would now result in dismissal and a charge of sexual assault. She added further that:

*“I had another sergeant at that time, in [place]...from the Metropolitan Police at that time and had been through...ehm, something even more distressing, but along the same lines. I was able to lean on her a little bit.” 5(O)*

This officer, who had felt isolated and unsupported after the assault, indicated that she would have benefitted emotionally if there had been another woman in her team or unit to talk to at the time. What is evident here is that she chose to turn to a more remote, female colleague rather than confide in any of her close male colleagues. This supports Pini et al (2004), who believed that women’s sense of empathy and affinity with other women is a result of women going through similar experiences, in the same way that the officer above sought emotional support from another woman police officer who had experienced a similar episode.

As well as demonstrating the gendered nature of the culture and the lack of network support for women in policing at that time, this officer also highlights the benefits of women talking to women, which the literature suggests include openly sharing experiences and recognition between women that they were facing similar barriers such as sexism and discrimination (Bryans and Mavin 2002; Pini et al 2004; Bailey et al 2007).

In McCarthy’s (2004a) survey, participants cited the opportunity to discuss things with other women that they would not discuss if there were men present as one of the main reasons for joining women’s networks. That this officer had spoken to me about an act of sexual abuse also reminded me of previous studies by Finch (1984) and Padfield and Procter (1996), who found evidence that women being interviewed were more inclined to disclose more intimate details of their lives with another woman, than with a man.

## **Access to social and human capital**

The above discussion highlights how, for women, networking opportunities with female colleagues and accruing social capital have historically been limited. Past studies demonstrate how a lack of women peers is not the only barrier to women networking, and that network structures and practices also serve to exclude women from critical informal networks, such as out-of-hours networking in bars and clubs and at sporting events (Gregory 2009; Vongalis-Macrow 2013; Cahusac and Kanji 2014). For example, one officer with several years of service talked about the now discarded practice of situating bars in police stations for out-of-hours socialising:

*“There’s lots of things been settled in the bars... you could go in and have a drink with your team...you would find it easier than a debrief, where you could talk.” 5(O)*

The above comment describes the exclusive culture and out-of-hours, informal networking that went on in police bars that, while enhancing men’s social and human capital, simultaneously restricted women’s social and human capital.

An inability to network informally after work, often due to family commitments, has frequently been stated as a barrier to women’s advancement (Linehan 2001; Vongalis-Macrow 2013; Cahusac and Kanji 2014) as women are left ‘out of the loop’ and can miss out on critical networking opportunities for career advancement and promotion, while informal after hours networking sustains the gender homophilous networks of men. Furthermore, Gregory (2009) highlighted the negative nature of drinking after work in male-dominated environments, when gendered conversation, sexual innuendos and private jokes between men often make women feel uncomfortable. This leads to women’s exclusion in after hours networking, a view that was supported by the WPCs in Martin’s (1996) study of equal opportunities within a UK police constabulary. Nevertheless, Dick and Cassell (2002) concluded that female officers accepted sexual innuendo as normal, while Loftus (2008) also noted women in policing seemed to endure this type of language. As discussed earlier, to normalise such behaviour results in

gender blindness, when women accept such conduct as standard and unacceptable behaviour goes unchallenged.

The importance of informal networks was highlighted by several of the women who discussed past experiences of police promotion processes:

*“There were certain people...that were suddenly playing golf and suddenly seemed to get that role...it was certain people within a clique.”* 12(O)

*“By looking at who was on the team and who was on the list, you could pretty much say who was going to get that job. It was very much a little clique of those blokes who had gone through their careers together.”* 1(S)

The women above make the relevant point that a lack of transparency in promotion processes resulted in informal, covert, promotions and unfair practices. This supports Broadbridge (2004), who suggested that informal, unofficial promotion processes, often linked to informal networking and social capital of valuable weak ties, serve to ensure that management is dominated by “...the chosen few...” (p.559).

Nonetheless, despite an obvious lack of women in senior positions today, there was belief amongst the women that promotion processes had improved:

*“It’s different since when I joined the CID...if they liked you, you were offered the job...it probably was the old boys’ network.”* 5(O)

*“It [the promotion process] used to be [hidden]...it’s transparent now.”*  
1(O)

The women’s belief that promotion processes are now more ethical and open supports the continued recognition within the Police Service of the need for transparent and fair leadership and promotion processes (Grapevine Spring 2009; POLICINGUK 2013). While unfair and gender biased promotion processes go somewhat towards explaining the lack of women in senior roles in

policing, a number of interviewees commented on other barriers to progression they experienced. For example, one senior officer commented on the dilemma she faced as a young officer when considering applying for promotion:

*“What’s promotion going to do to my work/life balance?...There was also nobody who knew what it was like to be a woman in the police service in my environment. ” 10(O)*

Similar to the officer interviewed who had been sexually assaulted, the above officer also experienced a lack of same-sex colleagues and senior mentors she could turn to for advice. Sharing experiences and mentoring was promoted as some of the more instrumental benefits provided by formal women’s in-house networks (Pini et al 2004; Vinnicombe et al 2004).

A lack of same-sex role models and mentors is a situation highlighted in the literature in Chapter 2 as hindering women’s advancement in both public and private sectors (Rothstein and Davey 1995; Gaston and Alexander 1997; Gray et al 2007). This lack of support and isolation was recognised by the BAWP more than a decade ago, which confirmed that action had been taken by ACPO Women’s Forum to provide mentoring and support of female colleagues (Gender Agenda 2 2006; Angleshire Constabulary Website August 2013). However, ACPO was disbanded in 2015 and the Women’s Forum is no longer promoted in Angleshire’s website, despite the fact that men continue to dominate senior posts in the UK Police Service.

## **Roles and stereotyping**

Role stereotyping has been discussed in the literature review and this was explored in the empirical data. One officer spoke of the lack of women in some specialised units when, early in her career, she applied unsuccessfully for the Firearms unit. Although she had been aware of the difficulty of women getting through the physical assessment, she was confident she had the skills and fitness level and suggested her lack of success was because women in Firearms were out of the norm and therefore less likely to be considered suitable candidates. This was not an isolated experience, as another senior

officer who had previously considered joining the Firearms unit was put off by attitudes and the macho cultures of the unit and the Police Service at that time:

*“It was like, you can do it [Firearms], but be prepared to rock the boat...it was very, very male orientated...It is all very suntans and shades...and ‘look at my biceps’...it would have been a battle to prove yourself, and at that time I wasn’t prepared to do that.”*

12(O)

It is evident that this woman lacked the confidence or the will to continue with her application and therefore failed to challenge the dominant, male attitudes around the roles women should take on. Moreover, although she had decided against applying for the unit, it can be argued that this was not her own free choice and that gendered structures restricted the choices she made.

The notion that women often feel the need to prove themselves more than men is a recurrent issue highlighted by women in a variety of professions (Broadbridge 1998; Mavin 2006; Rabe-Hemp 2007; Roth 2009). In particular, the police women in both Holdaway and Parker’s (1998) and Archbold and Schultz’ (2008) studies believed that part of proving their worth meant they had to work harder than their male colleagues, which suggests that women lack the skills to get the job done. These attitudes, in turn, are likely to negatively affect their confidence, motivation and willingness to put themselves forward for promotion and/or atypical female roles. Furthermore, women’s exclusion from such units restricts their human capital development as they miss out on the additional skills acquired in such posts. This was highlighted by Gaston and Alexander (1997), who drew attention to women’s lack of experience in the ‘valued’ specialist departments as an additional barrier to women’s advancement. Gender stereotyping was not confined solely to those women officers considering joining specialist units. For example one officer commented that, when she joined CID early on in her career:

*“I did get given those jobs...a sexual assault or a rape which came in...invariably it would be a woman who’d get the job.”* 13(O)

The experiences of this officer supports the literature previously considered in Chapter 3 (Hanson 2010; IPC 2013; Dick et al 2013), which provided evidence of the practice of allocating women to those jobs that involved working with children, domestic violence and sexual assault cases. Another woman who joined the constabulary some years ago as an experienced administrator also provided an obvious example of gender stereotyping she encountered from male officers:

*“Some of the older male officers looked, kind of, on us, that we are kind of [sic] there to make tea and do a bit of photocopying.” 1(S)*

Dick and Jankowitz (2001) argued that it is not only work and police cultures to blame for this type of stereotyping of women, but that we need to look at the “...broader socio-cultural constructions of women’s domestic roles...” (p.181) in order to fully understand why these impediments to women’s careers exist. In this context, another experienced officer found that, as a young, single recruit and the only woman out of eleven intakes, she was given an unofficial role:

*“They classed me as mother hen as I was one of the oldest...I did look after the younger boys.” 5(O)*

Kanter (1977) identified the above situation, common in male-dominated organisations, where a token woman can find that she is looked on by male colleagues as a mother figure. However, although this mother figure is sought after for emotional support, being the nurturer has negative consequences as she is not rewarded for her competent skills that are valued in the work group. Whilst this officer confirmed that she had taken it upon herself to look after the younger recruits, therefore, by her own actions, conformed to the expected stereotype, it can be questioned to what extent, in her attempt to ‘fit in’ with her team of eleven men, were gendered structures influencing her decision?

In addition to women coping with sexual harassment, experiencing a lack of female social capital and being stereotyped, women with family responsibilities face additional obstacles.

## **Policing and family life**

Two officers who had entered the Police Service in the 1980s had this to say about policing and family life:

*“When I joined the average length of service for a female was four years...there was no part-time working, there was no flexible working...you came back on full-time shifts because you had some pre-arrangement...very few people did that...so they left.” 10(O)*

*“...women weren’t allowed to work when we were pregnant, where we were kept separate, where we were given certain roles.” 13(O)*

The above quotes suggest that, historically, a career in policing for a woman with family commitments was not an option, which would uphold the belief amongst the majority of officers in Dick and Jankowitz’ (2001) study that it was not possible to combine the requirements of police work with parenthood, and motherhood in particular. That more women than men continue to leave the Police Service for domestic reasons was highlighted more recently in Hanson’s 2010 report. Moreover, the fact that women were prepared to leave rather than question the gendered processes and perceptions of police work supports Dick and Cassell’s (2004) findings that “...on the whole, women do not contradict this construction of police work.” (p.66).

Although some argue that women freely choose family life over careers and that they are not restricted (Hakim 2002; Kelan 2014), other studies have shown that, although there is some support for Hakim’s theory, the situation is frequently more complex than simply the choices women make (Cross and Linehan 2006; Broadbridge 2010; Kumra 2010; Walsh 2012). The construction of police work as a full-time occupation and motherhood as a full-time commitment meant women were either prevented from returning to full-time police work or the restricted roles they were allocated negatively affected their future advancement and promotion prospects (Holdaway and Parker 1998; Dick and Jankowitz 2001; Dick and Cassell 2004). Several comments from the

women, discussed presently in Chapter 7, suggest that juggling a career with family responsibilities continues to be an issue for women in policing.

Finally, one of the senior officers highlighted one aspect of gender stereotyping that restricted women officers from carrying out their duties, referring to the regulation uniform for women in the 1980s:

*“We had to wear stockings...we couldn’t wear trousers. Ehm, just skirts and it was openly discussed at briefings “Is she wearing stockings?...does she have the kit on?” They would say...I remember getting over a gate with a skirt on and my male colleague going...”oh, she is [wearing stockings]”...men have never had that.” 13(O)*

The uniform not only created physical problems for women officers but also left them open to sexist remarks from male colleagues both in meetings and in public, which served to undermine women officers, endorse unacceptable behaviour and perpetuate gendered cultures.

The longer serving women, when describing their experiences of a police culture past, painted a picture of a highly gendered, macho working environment, in line with the literature, where women’s work experiences were quite different from those of the men. Some of the women also recounted experiences that were highly personal accounts of overtly gendered practices, such as flagrant sexist behaviours which were tolerated and were the norm at that time, when perpetrators of sexual harassment often received nothing more than a ‘ticking off’ and a transfer to another department. Another talked about the inappropriate dress requirements for women officers, which left them open to what was tantamount to sexual harassment from male colleagues. Informal and deeply biased promotion processes, lack of access to same-sex social capital and female role models and gender stereotyping were also highlighted, all of which undermined women and created barriers to career progression.



Several of the women had been aware of the existence of male-dominated networks and the 'canteen' culture as references were made to the old boys' network and the existence of 'police' bars in many police stations. This highlighted the chasm between an abundance of male social capital and a dearth of female social capital that served to bolster men's careers while simultaneously hindering women's careers. Furthermore, the empirical data from my study provides evidence of a Police Service that did little to accommodate women with children and family responsibilities, which made it difficult, if not impossible, for women to return after maternity leave.

Cockcroft (2005) suggested that, when writing about past events, they should be understood within the context of the time in which they occurred. In his investigation of police culture, he contended that "Much police practice would undoubtedly appear inappropriate at best and brutal at worst, and one would have to guard against judging past behaviour through the light of subsequent legislation and changes in practice..." (p.374). The existence of gendered behaviour previously deemed as normal does not mean that it was acceptable, and the consensus amongst the women was that many of the outdated practices and values have been challenged and changed over the years, making the Police Service a more positive workplace for women. Despite this, there is evidence from the data that such cultures, where overtly biased behaviour towards women was the norm, often carry a legacy of gendered behaviours and attitudes that can be difficult to change.

## **5.4 Perceptions of police culture today**

It is obvious from the discussions in Chapter 1 the UK Police Service recognises that police cultures continue to be a barrier to women, that changes still need to be made to create a less gendered work environment for women and that gender equality is something that has not yet been achieved (Gender Agenda 3 2014; Hickey 2015; Loeb 2015). When asked to summarise changes to police culture, the officer who had experienced serious sexual harassment (discussed previously) had this to say about policing today:

*“There is a very clear definition now, in the Police Force, about what will be tolerated and what won’t be tolerated. Times have changed...I now know [women] superintendents and others I could now go to...we’ve got more females in management roles.” 5(O)*

This response not only suggests a positive change in culture but also highlights the benefits of social capital and the emotional value of having a network of other women at work. Several others commented on their experiences of support from both male and female colleagues in the workplace and the concept of their constabulary as a ‘family’.

### **The concept of ‘family’ in policing**

In Pepper and Silvestri’s (2016) recent study of the Metropolitan Police Service’s interaction with young people, most of the young volunteer police cadets surveyed reported “...an increased sense of belonging.” (p.5), and viewed their group as equivalent to a family. The following discussion supports these young cadets’ perceptions of the police as family. For example, the staff member below highlights the benefits of close ties within the workplace for both emotional and instrumental support following a family bereavement:

*“The constabulary had taken me under their wing and was there to help me through that time...it’s my second home.” 8(S)*

Several other women reiterated similar experiences of solidarity and companionship:

*“The department I worked with...it was like one big family.” 6(S)*

*“I find it a very friendly organisation...kind of, like the police family.”  
3(S)*

*“It’s such a family. I don’t know whether you’ve seen that.” 14(O)*

*“The sense of camaraderie has been absolutely fantastic.” 4(O)*

The above descriptions of the Police Service as a family support the perception of police occupational culture as not just a job but a lifestyle, with a strong family atmosphere that encourages and respects loyalty (Brown et al 2006; Hallenberg and Cockcroft 2014). This perhaps helps to reinforce traditional, long established patriarchal views with the 'norm' being a man at the 'head' of the family. Nonetheless, there is evidence from this study that the women's perception of their constabulary as family nurtures a loyalty and fondness for their workplace environment, their colleagues and the Police Service.

There is a danger however that, as Rutherford (2001) suggests, the affection and deep-rooted loyalties people develop for their organisations can often create barriers to change. Furthermore, failure to recognise the importance of people and to understand the strength of organisational sub-cultures have been cited as reasons why culture change programmes are often unsuccessful (Schneider 1987; Wilmott 1993; Harris and Ogbonna 1998). Similarly, police culture and sub-cultures such as the 'canteen culture' have been identified as barriers to change in the Police Service (Jermier et al 1991; Kiely and Peek 2002; Butterfield et al 2004; Loftus 2008).

### **Constabulary culture and sub-cultures**

The literature reviewed as part of my research suggests that one of the main reasons for the growth of women's support networks is women's exclusion from male-dominated informal networks (Vinnicombe and Colwill 1995; Ehrich 1994; Pini et al 2004; Bierema 2005; Singh et al 2006; Bailey et al 2007; Maxwell et al 2007; Kumra and Vinnicombe 2010). While some of the women interviewed believed that one of the changes in the workplace has been the demise of these exclusively homophilous male networks, others had different opinions:

*"I still have a perception that there is still the old boys' network in certain areas, as in certain departments." 12 (O)*

*"We call it the old boys' network because they come up for retirement and all of a sudden, they get a job as a civilian." 2(S)*

*“This is an old boys’ club...it hasn’t particularly hindered me personally, but that’s because I work within the confines of it.” 8(O)*

This last comment highlights the officer’s strategy of working within the confining structures of an informal network. By taking this approach, the officer is maybe opting for an easier life by ‘fitting in’ or “...accommodating masculine politics.” (Davey 2008 p.662). By doing so, she is failing to challenge the male hegemonic climate in which she and her female colleagues have to operate. Moreover, she has failed to recognise that working within the confines of gender biased values and processes is a limitation that most men do not experience. Working to the men’s rules, thereby perpetuating the norm by accepting the prevailing gendered attitudes and processes, is a strategy which Davey maintains ensures the continuation of gendered cultures and behaviours.

Women often adapt their behaviour to fit in with management characteristics and behaviours that are deemed to be essentially male (Schein 2001; Vinnicombe and Singh 2002; Bryans and Mavin 2003; Bierema 2005; Davey 2008). Likewise, the strategy of women in policing both accepting and replicating what is often viewed as traditionally male behaviour has been highlighted by several writers (Dick and Cassell 2002; Loftus 2008; Archbold and Schultz 2008; Rich and Seffrin 2014).

Dick and Cassell (2002/2004) suggested that fitting in with prevailing police stereotypes creates an identity for women that recognises them as part of the pack and therefore accepted by male colleagues, while Bierema (2005) contended that conspicuous resistance to accepted organisational values and behaviours renders a woman invisible or, alternatively, labels her as a troublemaker. Furthermore, she highlighted how working within the confines of and acclimatising to a dominant male culture can result in negative perceptions of women’s formal in-house networks.

In addition to the apparent demise of the old boys’ network, and despite the suggestions that remnants of an old, gendered culture still exists, several of the longer serving women had positive comments to make regarding changes in

behaviours and attitudes. For example, this officer felt an outcome of diversity and equality policies was that:

*"...everybody knows how they should behave...we're all taught when to challenge behaviour which is inappropriate." 3(S)*

...thus suggesting that the diversity and equality values espoused at the top level of the Police Service are being recognised within police constabularies. In addition, some of the women had other ideas as to why police culture had changed for the better:

*"...at that time it was a lot harder for women, for those who were police officers, to break into it [Major Crime]. But whereas now...we have a lot of senior women, and good senior women here and good at their jobs." 1(S)*

*"It is changing...because people move on and we've been through a big period where a lot of more senior, older officers have left." 11(O)*

These women make the relevant point that changing demographics of the police service are changing police culture, which reflects the views of Kanter (1977), Brown (2000) and Kiely and Peek (2002). For example, Kiely and Peek highlighted the negative influences that 'old cynics' can have on young recruits, while Brown forecasted that the police 'canteen culture' would soon be a thing of the past as younger recruits question 'canteen culture' behaviour and are unwilling to perpetuate the antics of the older officers. Although the consensus among the women who had been in the service for some time was that the old culture had changed for the better and been replaced with a more transparent and fair one, one woman commented on one aspect of the new culture that perhaps holds people back:

*"When I was first here, it was very much a male/female culture...the male officers would go around pinging bra straps and making lewd comments...I just think we've gone the other way*

*now. You can't say anything for fear of someone making a complaint." 2(S)*

This comment demonstrates that police culture has changed over the years and aspects of the old macho behaviour are now recognised as unacceptable. However, the perception that there now existed an excessive use of 'political correctness', Loftus (2008) suggested, reflects "...a broader ambivalence and nostalgia about values which were previously mainstays of the dominant, white heterosexual, male culture." (p.773). The quote above demonstrates yet again how sentimentality and fondness for organisations and organisational cultures can create barriers to meaningful change (Harris and Ogbonna 1998; Rutherford 2001) and ultimately reinforce gendered attitudes of the workplace.

The above suggests that culture change is not only about changing processes and strategies, but also about transforming people's attitudes and challenging outdated views. For example, one senior officer had this to say about change:

*"I believe in evolution not revolution...[stepson] is nineteen and no one tells the women in his generation they can't do things." 10(O)*

This officer believed that, as mentioned previously, one of the catalysts to police culture change was older officers retiring from the Police Service. She identifies the relationship between society and organisational cultures, promoting the view that, as a new generation of people who have been brought up with different social values increases in number, cultures will change accordingly.

The discussion above has explored the women's historic social and work environments. The following section discusses the women's personal perceptions of the job of policing.

## **5.5 The nature of police work**

Chapter 3 draws attention to the stereotyping of police work as crime fighting, dangerous and men's work, due to a strong occupational culture and social

perceptions of policing (Brown 1998; Dick et al 2013). Moreover, it has been argued that women in policing as well as men promote the crime fighting aspect of policing (Holdaway & Parker 1998, Gaston and Alexander 1997; Waddington 1999) and help perpetuate the perception of police officers as crime fighters, saving members of the public and creating a safer society for us all. The following responses from the women in my study are some examples of the women's perceptions of the occupation they have chosen.

### **Perceptions of the job**

The comments below provide evidence of the unique view some of the women have of their roles as police women:

*"I was really interested in helping the victim, and detecting it [crime]." 13(O)*

*"I wanted to do a job that made a difference...it will make a difference somewhere along the line." 4(S)*

*"You get your prisoner, you do what you need to do...I've served my Country for a whole six years." 3(O)*

*"It's a very particular person who wants to come in and be a police officer. Most people, when you've got a bit of danger, are legging it the opposite way, where police officers are legging it to it...we are almost completely insane to be doing this job...even if we are off duty, we don't steer away from trouble...you're in your uniform whether it's at work or off duty, you're a police officer...You know, that's why we applied." 4(O)*

Waddington (1999) argues that officers look to normalise and even dignify the work they do, which results in a profound sense of mission and serves to sustain the occupational self-esteem of the police. This sense of mission can be seen clearly in the description of police work above. The women strongly promote the crime fighting aspect of police work, which supports the female officers in Archbold and Schultz' study (2008), who believed that it took a

particular type of woman to work in policing. For as long as women continue to be gender stereotyped into roles that are deemed more suitable, such as dealing with domestic violence, sexual offence and family support, gendered behaviour and attitudes in policing will continue to be "...embedded in everyday practices; practices which act as barriers to the potential transformation that women's enactments might produce." (Dick et al 2013 p.139).

### **The requisite human capital**

Several of the women I interviewed described the personal qualities and attributes they believed helped them carry out their duties, summed up concisely in the comments below:

*"I was quite an outgoing person. I think, like I say, anyone that joins this job is not the shy timid type...confident in their own abilities...It's a certain kind of person that you have in this job."*  
14(O)

*"I've always been incredibly independent and self sufficient, and again it stands you in good stead in the Police Service."* 10(O)

*"I am quite a strong, forceful woman."* 13(O)

Other participants described themselves as "*outgoing*", "*forthright*", "*having a scary look*" and "*having a certain presence*", employing phrases similar to the policewomen in Archbold and Schultz's (2008) study, and again supporting the stereotyping of policing as a tough occupation for tough people with personal characteristics frequently associated with men.

The women talked previously about how earlier life and work experiences developed certain personal characteristics such as confidence and determination that were beneficial to a career in the Police Service. The comments below develop this theme and illustrate how some of the women believe aspects of their human capital such as confidence and self-belief have developed since working in policing:



*"You're sort of taught not to stand back." 14(O)*

*"I've never been to so many fatal accidents, and you tend to grow up...that gives you something, some extra presence." 10(O)*

These officers' comments are again comparable to those of the participants in Archbold and Schultz's (2008) study who spoke about gaining the respect of colleagues and the public by carrying yourself in a confident manner. This highlights the women's acknowledgement of the need prove oneself by displaying certain traits associated with the job of policing in order to be accepted within the close-knit police fraternity.

The perceptions of police work described by many of the women in my study supports the literature on the nature of police work as well as the view that policing is "...not seen just as a job but is experienced as a way of life" (Brown et al 2006 p.22). Furthermore, the data support the contention that police work is frequently linked to crime fighting and catching criminals and that both men and women in policing nurture this police persona by "...placing and retaining aspects of crime work in the ascendancy." (Holdaway and Parker 1998 p.58).

## **5.6 Conclusions**

The objective of this chapter was to provide a detailed and highly personal view of the women's past and present social and working environments, thus helping to clarify the ways in which various environments influence and have influenced the women's experiences of their current workplace environments.

That some of the women I interviewed had benefitted from family links to the Police Service going back several years indicates the immensity and strength of a homophilous and close-knit police culture and one, it has been argued, that is averse to change. Moreover, that many of the women perceived the job of policing as more than a job, while several of them viewed their constabulary as akin to family further strengthens these bonds and heightens the sense of loyalty. This sense of allegiance and belonging prevents people from

challenging inappropriate behaviours and values. Moreover, if formal resistance to the way things are done in the Police Service goes against the grain for some in a culture that values loyalty to the pack, it can be argued that people are less likely to want to rock the boat by interacting with any group that challenges the status quo, such as a WIHN.

Despite the fact that police leadership is still dominated by men, all of the more experienced women I interviewed were unanimous that the culture of the Police Service had changed for the better. They provided evidence of an emergent culture that has moved away from the gendered culture of the past and is now a more gender equal workplace for women, citing gendered behaviours and attitudes that would now not be tolerated. Several reasons were given for the changes in culture, such as more women in senior positions, older male officers leaving and new younger officers with a different view of the world taking their places. However, while organisations can transform over time, they also leave a legacy of sub-cultures that are obstinate and refuse to change. While there were contrasting views on the continued existence of the old boys' network, there was the perception amongst most of the interviewees that remnants of the old culture remained, predominately as a result of the older, male officers.

Notwithstanding the fact the many women's networks espouse the aim of developing women's self-confidence, there is evidence from the empirical data that this facet of the women's personalities was already in evidence when they joined Angleshire Constabulary. This self-assurance, gained through the development of social capital throughout their early lives, they believed gave them an advantage when they joined the Police Service. A further illustration of this is that the women also characterised themselves as strong, forceful and independent when discussing the nature of policing and the strengths they had developed since joining the Police Service. These skills and characteristics are indicative of women who would most likely have success in promoting themselves in their chosen profession?

The next chapter explores the women's work experiences within the environment of Angleshire Constabulary, which includes discussions on the

public impression of police work, role stereotyping and promotion, work/life balances and workplace support.

# **CHAPTER 6: Women in policing**

## **6.1 Introduction**

In contrast to the previous chapter that predominantly explores the women's past experiences in their family lives, previous work environments, their current perceptions of police culture and the job of policing, this chapter explores their stories as women in policing within the current micro environment of their constabulary. The chapter begins by exploring the women's involvement with the public outside the confines of their constabulary and the women's perceptions of how the public view the work of policing. The discussion then moves on to the women's various workplace experiences within their constabulary, and includes stereotyping, career advancement and promotion. This is followed by an exploration of the issues the women face while juggling their careers in policing with external family commitments and includes their experiences during maternity leave and the problems they face around securing viable work/life balances.

## **6.2 Stereotyping and role allocation**

### **Public impressions of police work**

In accordance with Cockcroft's (2005) contention that we need to look at behaviours and attitudes from both within and outside the Police Service to fully understand the experience of women in policing today, the data below provides an understanding of the women's experiences when dealing with the public and an appreciation of some of the gendered perceptions of policing, which are supported by the wider expectations of the roles of women and men in society.

Existing studies suggest that social cultures combined with police behaviour, attitudes and cultures impact on how members of the public view police and policing (Barton, 2003; Butterfield et al, 2004). In addition to the macho

perception of policing emanating from within the Police Service, it was apparent from the women's stories that some members of the public viewed policing as man's work. For example, one officer described a recent visit to a travellers' site with two of her male subordinates:

*"They're [the public] not used to women being in senior positions...we had an issue on a travellers' site and they couldn't comprehend...because of their culture...when my sergeants were saying, you know this is the boss, they thought they were winding them up...I think people are always surprised to see a woman there [in senior rank]." 11(O)*

She added that the incident at the travellers' site was not a one-off, and that members of the public are often surprised to see a woman in a senior rank. This officer's experiences support the view of the BAWP (Gender Agenda 2 2006), that the public's perception of policing is gendered and that they have stereotypical views of male and female roles. Similarly, Blok and Brown's (2005) study of the gendered nature of policing found that the public expressed preference for male officers for incidents of aggression, violence and disorder. In contrast, they viewed women as possessing skills relating to empathy, sensitivity and compassion. Furthermore, women were the preferred sex when dealing with domestic violence, rape and child abuse. In line with these findings, one participant in this study believed that outsiders expect:

*"...the police to be macho. I'd want protection from criminals." 3(S)*

One negative aspect of this gendered perception was noted by one of the senior officers:

*"The usual thing that female police officers get is that they'd tell us we are all lesbians." 11(O)*

The macho perception of police work often results in name calling when, once again, language can be used to undermine the role of women in policing. The above example of gendered language from members of the public is aimed at both women's sexuality and the profession they have chosen. Although there

are processes and procedures in place within the Police Service to deal with sexist language internally, there is little that can be done to diminish this type of behaviour from members of the public. In contrast, another officer believed that the public perception of police work could work to their advantage:

*“I think women in the Police Force in the UK...is a really good thing...because criminals don't really think of a woman being on the other side.” 6(O)*

Despite the public's gendered views of police work, one participant had this to say about her work:

*“I just thought it [CID]<sup>14</sup> was more serious work...it's quite routine actually” 13(O)*

This officer's perception of police work supports Cockcroft's (2005) study of police culture, which found evidence to suggest that public perceptions of police work are unrealistic because the more mundane aspects of police work are purposely concealed. Family members can also reinforce the perception of police work as crime fighting and dangerous, as the following quotes demonstrate:

*“I started as a constable on the beat...even now they [my family] look at the headlines and realise it's a difficult job.” 16(O)*

*“[Dad] was going to follow me round in the car, in his own car, just to make sure that nothing happened...You're obviously putting yourself where everyone else is running away from the danger...My mum knew what kind of character I was and kind of how tough I can be, and determined.” 14(O)*

The above officer added that her dad's concern stemmed from his view that policing is all about catching criminals. It has emerged from the data that the public still perceive police work as catching criminals. Moreover, it would seem

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<sup>14</sup> CID – Criminal Investigation Department – This particular office was a Detective Chief Inspector

the public, in some situations, believe that making the Country a safer place to live in is a job more suited to men than women. These examples show that women in policing can experience gendered behaviours outside of the constabulary that marginalise women while promoting the value of men.

This emphasises society's gendered perceptions of policing and goes some way in supporting both Waddington (1999) and Dick and Jankowitz (2001), who proposed that the gendered perception of policing is not so much the fault of police internal cultures, but more the result of patriarchal beliefs embedded within society and the socio-constructions of the roles of men and women. Moreover, that several of the women also stressed the unique nature of police work as catching criminals and keeping people safe supports previous studies that highlight the problems women in policing face as a result of gender stereotyping from both outside and within the Police Service (Martin 1996; Holdaway and Parker 1998; Dick and Cassell 2004; Loftus 2008). This gendered perception of police work by both men and women surreptitiously sustains gendered occupational and organisational cultures, and serves to intensify the argument for the continuation of gender equality initiatives, which, as discussed in Chapter 3, are under threat due to cuts to police funding.

### **Gendered stereotyping at constabulary level**

As already discussed above, perceptions of the differing roles of men and women in society are often gendered and these gendered perceptions and expectations can create barriers for women in policing today. This manifests itself in several ways from time to time, such as gender stereotyping of women and sexist language in the workplace. For example, a male colleague had remarked to one junior officer that:

*“... ‘You’re almost like a bloke the way you fit in’....” 6(O)*

This officer believed that the above statement was sexist as it suggested men fitted into a life in policing more than women, which extends the ‘think manager, think male’ attitude (Mavin and Bryans 1999; Schein 2001) to include ‘think police officer, think male’. This view which regards being male as synonymous

with being the right or correct gender for policing is an example of the hidden gender biases that exist within the Police Service. This officer was aware of the more covert and insidious examples of language that serves to undermine women, which Ely and Meyerson (2000) maintained can act to preserve male superiority by endorsing the value of male above female.

Some roles in policing are perceived as unsuitable for women (Brown 1998; Cockcroft 2005; Dick et al 2013) and have resulted in an under representation of women in units such as PSU<sup>15</sup>, Dog Handling and Firearms. In contrast, there is an over representation of women in other roles deemed more suitable to women, such as handling child protection, rapes and domestic violence. Some of the women related role stereotyping to differing emotional and personality characteristics society attributes to women and men:

*“I think we are naturally better at some roles that others...like the men are sometimes better at some things and I don’t see that that’s an issue.” 7(O)*

*“I do think women do more naturally have that kind of skills around being sensitive and discussing things and that sort of thing.” 11(O)*

*“There are certain circumstances in the Intervention team where a woman is needed to do a particular job...domestic violence, rape, assault...I might be really fearful of my husband...or a male boss...I don’t want to talk to another man.” 9(S)*

*“I personally think that women tend to be better at the more softer skills...men and women are suited to different roles in society...I think it’s not being sexist, it’s being pragmatic...” 11(O)*

These comments support the perception that women are more suited to duties that require empathy and sensitivity, such as working with children and victims of rape and domestic violence, which accounts for a high percentage of women in these roles (Brown 1998; Hanson 2010). Perhaps aware of the current

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<sup>15</sup> Core functions of Public Support Units include riot control and apprehension of dangerous criminals



discourse on equality and the push for more women officers to enter male-dominated specialisms, it seems as though the comment from the last officer, 11(O), was almost apologising for her views on stereotyping in the way she defends herself by saying *“I think it’s not being sexist...”*.

In contrast to the above comments, several officers commented on the exclusionary cultures of some of the specialist units:

*“PSU is too much testosterone. It’s all the shields, it’s all going en masse.”* 6(O)

*“[Firearms] is perceived as a very masculine, testosterone-fuelled type of group...so I think that probably puts some women off.”* 8(O)

*“I wouldn’t want to do it [Firearms]...boys with toys.”* 4(O)

*“I think things like Dogs and Firearms and stuff is still probably seen as quite cliquey.”* 11(O)

The descriptions of some of the specialist sub-cultures provided by the women demonstrate the macho and homophilous natures of these specialist groups that serve to exclude those who are different. While the women talked about the cultures of specialists units and the skills and attributes required to join such groups, no references were made to the difficulties of flexible work patterns in these units.

The data suggests that these macho sub-cultures alone put women off applying for such roles, despite the fact that gender stereotyping can restrict the roles women are officered and by curtailing their opportunities, negatively influence women’s career paths. The above discussion supports Gaston and Alexander’s (1997) findings, that women’s lack of interest in some specialisms was down to their perceived macho/sexist images and that women themselves choose not to join these units.

There is evidence of the complex interplay of structure and agency at play in the comments aired by the women in my study. Although they seem to be making their own, informed choices to avoid certain specialist units, quite clearly gendered structures such as the nature and strength of these sub-cultures and the behaviours of specialist officers influence women's decisions not to apply for such positions.

One junior officer commented that she had shown an interest in a role in Traffic, as she was an experienced biker. A male colleague, ignoring her years of motorbike experience and skills, commented that:

*"...You should apply for that post because you're a female."...to me it was like...sexist." 6(O)*

This colleague was insidiously undermining the woman's personal abilities and confidence by suggesting that she would be given preference, not because of her skills and experiences, but rather because she would be a token woman in the unit since the Police Service were making extra efforts to encourage women and ethnic minority officers to join the under-represented specialist units. Unfortunately, when diversity initiatives are launched to promote those sectors of the workforce that are under represented, employees' skills are often ignored and gender comes under the spotlight instead (HMIC 1995; Archbold and Schultz 2008).

Women's underrepresentation in specialist units has been recognised by ACWN, whose committee members have been working behind the scenes with these units in an attempt to encourage more women into their ranks. This is because, as mentioned earlier, there are certain roles and units in policing that are seen to hold more value than others, and there is the view that gender stereotyping and women's exclusion from these areas can negatively affect women's career opportunities. Although women are being encouraged to expand their skills, or human capital, in order to join such units it can be argued that, as Laverick and Cain (2014) indicated, the human capital required for

these skilled units needs to be re-assessed, with less stress on the physical aspects of the roles and more on the non-physical skills required.

### **Women and domesticity**

It is obvious from the following comments that, despite the work being done by the Government and the Police Service, as well as in constabularies nationwide, to create a more diverse and equal Police Service, female and male stereotyping persists within our society and continues at the micro level of the police women's lives to restrict them:

*"The caring [for the baby], pretty much, for whatever reason, fell to me." 13(O)*

*"If I'm at home and my husband's at home, XXXXX [their son] is my responsibility. The women are expected to do everything...dropping off at the child minder each morning, I'll be the one doing that." 5(S)*

*"When I was studying I ran the house, did the shopping, did the cooking...when he was studying he didn't do anything." 10(O)*

Interviewee 10(O) above admitted this situation "*rankled her*", and from other comments made regarding childcare and domestic responsibilities, it was evident that most of the women interviewed concurred with their colleagues above. It would seem that caring for family is still frequently viewed as women's work and having children hinders women's career advancement (Wood 2008; Crompton and Lyonette 2011; Kahusac and Kanji 2014). It will be shown presently from the data how the social construction of the domestic role of women as carers directly affects their careers and choices in several ways. Other gendered structures and processes that influence their careers, such as promotion processes, tokenism and a lack of mentors and support in some areas are also explored.

### 6.3 Progression and promotion

Previous research has identified that women lag behind men when it comes to promotion to more senior roles. The literature on women in policing confirms that the UK Police Service is no exception, with women under-represented in all ranks in the police service, and more so in the more senior ranks (Dick and Metcalfe 2007; Hanson 2010; Brown 2014b).

Two senior officers provided evidence of this when they described their experiences when they attend events and network with other senior police officers:

*“When you sit in meetings with people like myself [senior ranking officers]...you suddenly realise sometimes there’s actually no [other] women in those meetings.” 11(O)*

*“I’ve felt really lonely on courses...You sit in a big circle. You are the only woman...and you could feel the hostility in the room. Firstly she’s young in service, secondly she’s a woman.” 16(O)*

The second comment above shows how the homophilous networks of male senior officers can covertly ostracise women in their ranks, and also demonstrates senior officers’ hostility towards those who move up rank quickly with fewer years of service than is traditionally expected in the Police Service.

This officer, who had previously commented on her feelings of isolation and the lack of women at lower rank when she was first promoted several years earlier, now spoke about a similar sense of isolation as a senior officer. Her experience of isolation that frequently affects women who work in male-dominated environments or are in management has been reiterated in the literature (Liff and Cameron 1997; Archbold and Schultz 2008). Another officer also stressed the importance of having more senior women:

*“I firmly believe in women supporting women...certainly as you move up the ranks, finding a strong female role model.” 8(O)*

In senior roles women not only feel isolated within a predominately male group, but also lack role models further up the chain of command and can be isolated from other women who are lower down the organisational hierarchy (Mavin 2006). These women lack the social capital of the men at their level and are unable to draw upon the reciprocity afforded as part of a senior, male, homophilous informal network. The BAWP (Gender Agendas 2/3 2006/14) recognises that women's isolation at senior level and in male-dominated units is an issue, and that women in policing lack same-sex role models and mentors.

Unlike men, women officers lack access to informal networks for reciprocal support at all levels. The BAWP (Gender Agenda 2 2006) highlighted this issue and proposed the establishment of effective support and network groups for women to alleviate isolation and exclusion. Likewise, Angleshire Constabulary recognised the need to address this sense of isolation and took on board ACPO's Forum Mentoring Scheme<sup>16</sup>. This was an initiative aimed at extending women's same-sex social capital and support for officers at and above superintendent rank and equivalent staff grades, in order to increase the numbers of women applying for promotion. However, ACPO was disbanded in April 2015 along with Angleshire's BAWP mentoring scheme, which has now been removed from the Angleshire Constabulary website, leaving women once again with limited access to social and human capital at senior levels.

### **Perceptions of promotion processes**

Similar to the 'think manager, think male' view (Liff and Ward 2001; Schein 2001; Vinnicombe and Singh 2002) is the 'think police leadership, think male' attitude (Silvestri 2005; Marchant 2010; IPC 2013). Processes which are biased in favour of the traditional male career path, negative attitudes towards equality initiatives which focus on promotion and advancement and the still accepted 'male' model of the perfect manager are seen as barriers to women's progression, and this is also true of the UK Police Service. Nonetheless, despite the perception of police leadership that relates more to men's career experiences than women's, such as an uninterrupted, full-time span of service

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<sup>16</sup> ACPO: Association of Chief Police Officers. Replaced by the National Police Chiefs' Council 1 April 2015

(Gaston and Alexander 1997; Silvestri 2005), the Police Service offers an accelerated learning programme, which several of the women commented on:

*“You miss the bread and butter of policing is the impression I was getting from people...I wanted a solid grounding of five years on shift because it’s where you learn your bread and butter policing.”*  
14(O)

*“I’ve thought about the high potential, but I’d like to move up my way and not have opportunities made for me by other people.”*  
12(O)

This first woman who spoke about *‘the bread and butter of policing’*, a phrase that can be found in the rhetoric around police promotion and basic front line policing (Blueline Jobs 2014; Fogg 2014; Police Federation 2016), seems to have been, in part, influenced by colleagues’ negative attitudes towards using the ‘fast track’ route. Her perception of the police accelerated learning programme supports Hallenberg and Cockcroft’s (2014) contention that, when it comes to training, the police put experience and practice at the top of the list.

Moving up the ranks in the Police Service without having gained basic policing skills developed over the years on the normal police career path is often frowned upon, while diversity initiatives that seem to challenge the traditional career path are often met with derision and resistance among both men and women. Despite the importance of the Police Service fast-track advancement programme, there remains a stigma attached to such programmes amongst some of the women, as they believed they would be receiving additional assistance and would not be progressing on their own merit (Silvestri 2005).

The second comment above suggests that this woman fails to recognise the covert strength of men’s social capital and that, for men, reciprocal benefits between informal network members linked to promotion and advancement are the norm (Broadbridge 2004; Broughton and Miller 2009). Her position is not an isolated case and is comparable to the women in Bierema’s study (2005) who did not want to be thought of as needing additional help. Despite the evidence

that men frequently benefit from their extended networks of social capital at work, the stigma of being seen to need and/or receive extra assistance has not only been linked to promotion based initiatives, but also to membership of women's formal workplace networks (Mallon and Cassell 1999; Mavin and Bryans 2002; McCarthy 2004a; Bierema 2005; Bailey et al 2007), and can put women off participating in network initiatives.

While much of the literature on women progressing in the UK Police Service focuses on barriers such as an exceptionally structured and systematic promotion process and leadership models based on a traditionally male career path (Gaston and Alexander 1997; Silvestri et al 2013), some of the women described additional issues:

*"It is very frightening...it's just, you know, believing in your own ability...I've always found them very daunting because you've got the competencies [but] you have to hit the buzz words and all the rest of it." 6(O)*

*"It just seems to be quite convoluted...and they make it very difficult...It's just lots and lots of hoops to put people off doing it...People who were brash were the people who were getting promoted, I said I'm not prepared to change my personality...I'm not prepared to play that game in order to get promoted." 12(O)*

*"I wouldn't want to do the work, and then to pass...and not actually be able to get a position." 14(O)*

The first woman talks about knowing the customary jargon at interviews, which is knowledge shared via informal networks, often from weak ties in more senior positions. It can be argued that women lack this type of knowledge and are therefore disadvantaged, since they are unable to accumulate the necessary social capital and the resultant human capital due to their exclusion from male-dominated, informal networks of information (Cross and Linehan, 2006; Gray et al, 2007; Davey, 2008; Kumra 2010).

It is likely, if these women had received the type of informal training and requisite knowledge passed back and forward between members of informal networks, that the promotion processes would seem less daunting and not so much like a game, but more like a surmountable career step.

In addition, despite several of the women using the words confident, forceful and self-sufficient in Chapter 5 to describe both themselves and characteristics common to women in policing, the women above talked about a lack of confidence when applying for promotion. These concerns demonstrate what Wood (2008) described as negative attitudes amongst women such as self-doubting and lacking in confidence, traits which Broughton and Miller (2009) contended are more notable in women than men, and can hamper a women's career progression. This was supported by one junior officer I had just interviewed, when she came running into reception to catch me before I left to tell me that she was about to take on the higher role of acting<sup>17</sup> inspector and felt she lacked confidence in her ability to do the job, although her colleagues and friends had reassured her otherwise.

These women's reservations support the findings of Vinnicombe and Singh (2002) who highlighted both superiority and confidence as two aspects of human capital that were attributed by males to themselves more than by females. It can be argued that this lack of confidence which limits women from advancing could be down to the fact that many women, as well as men, are socialised to 'think manager, think male'. For example, the word '*brash*', used by one of the officers above to describe her perception of the people who were being promoted, suggests an over-abundance of assertiveness and self-confidence - characteristics that have historically been used to describe masculinity (O'Neill and O'Reilly 2010) and viewed as management characteristics women need to be taught (Mavin and Bryans 2002). Moreover, this woman's reluctance to play games affirms the findings of Broadbridge (2004) and the sentiments voiced by the women in Davey's study (2008), who highlighted their reluctance to play what they described as repugnant political

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<sup>17</sup> The role of 'acting', such as acting inspector, means that the officer takes on the responsibility of a higher role, without being officially promoted, on a temporary basis



career building games. However, in spite of many women's reluctance to 'game play', Ely and Meyerson (2000) argued that women are able to play the game as well as, if not better than many men. However, the percentage of women in management does not reflect this, which suggests that other structures are at play which are not linked to women's skills and abilities.

As well as perceiving promotion processes as a barrier to career advancement, some of the women also referred to management support as another critical aspect of the promotion process. From the literature, we discover that line management support is linked to career progression (Gaston and Alexander 1997; Liff and Ward 2001; Vinnicombe and Singh 2002; Broadbridge 2004) and securing a work/life balance (Liff and Ward 2001; Dick 2004; Dick and Hyde 2006). While Broadbridge (1998) highlighted management support as a critical aspect of career progression, she also found that women mentioned lack of support from managers more frequently than men. The women's comments below reflect mixed experiences of career support and advancement:

*"He's very approachable. I spoke to him today about supporting my promotion...and he went 'yes, yes, of course I will'..." 5(O)*

*"If I was going to discuss career with somebody, obviously I know that my line manager was there for me to talk to anytime about anything." 3(S)*

*"I've had difficulty with one [line manager] in 15 years...I did feel that he was blocking my progress...It was a personality thing...I don't think it was a gender thing." 12(O)*

Several of the women had benefitted from support from both male and female managers and only one officer provided an example of what she believed was discrimination. The officer above had not been made aware of a promotion opportunity that would have suited her at the time, and later discovered that her line manager had, in fact, spent some time mentoring her male colleagues for the position. This lack of management interest in her career development, whilst favouring the male member of the team, was interpreted by the officer as "a

*personality thing*” and she dismissed the fact that it could be down to gender, thus accepting part of the responsibility for her manager’s lack of support. However, as previously noted in Chapter 5, it is this type of covert bias that can create gender blindness in both men and women in the workplace (Mavin and Bryans 2002; Bierema 2005; Giblings and Hirst 2006; Tatli 2010) as women provide alternative explanations for gender bias.

While close ties have been recognised for their lack of critical information relating to promotion opportunities, it seems that this officer’s male colleague benefitted from a gender homophilous close tie in the form of his line manager. It could be argued that the choice of her male manager to support her male colleague in preference to her could again be down to the ‘think manager, think male’ belief. This recognised predisposition amongst many that ‘manager means male’ serves to exacerbate women’s lack of access to those networks of social capital that open up opportunities for promotion either through their links to more senior contacts or by passing on their corporate know-how. Nonetheless, in spite of Gaston and Alexander’s (1997) findings that a lack of support from line managers and other supervisors were factors affecting the declining ambition among women police, the women in this study had mainly positive experiences of support and encouragement from line managers to apply for promotion. Nevertheless, even after promotion has been secured, women can still face obstacles as they are not always accepted at face value and have to prove they are worthy of the role or are labelled as tokens.

## **Tokenism**

The existence of tokenism has been discussed earlier. The following women provide further evidence that women still question their abilities and are concerned that they will be regarded as token women, and therefore not valued for the skills and attributes they bring to the job:

*“When you get a new female supervisor...maybe they need to prove their worth before the men, perhaps, would accept them.”*

1(S)

*“You do get the comment that...the reason we get promoted is because they are trying to increase the number of female officers at more senior rank. ” 11(O)*

*“I have applied for another role and I do think, to a certain degree, that my application has gone through for the fact that I am a female.” 6(O)*

*“I’d like to think...I got that role, not just because I was a woman, but because I was good at what I did and I earned getting up there.” 14(O)*

The suggestion in the first comment that women often have to prove themselves highlights the gendered expectation by some that women lack the skills that men inherently bring to a role and questions women’s abilities. This attitude looks on women as tokens who are not in the role because they have demonstrated the required skills for the job, but rather because of their gender per se. The use of the phrases *“I do think to a certain degree”* and *“I’d like to think”* by the women above suggest a lack of confidence in their own skills and the suspicion that being women just might have, or have had, a part to play in securing their sought-after roles. Unfortunately, it is gendered attitudes that lead to the self-analysis that many women go through when applying for or being offered promotion, as they once again question their own skills and abilities. It is evident that the women quoted above believe that they are often looked upon as tokens, leaving them feeling that colleagues are questioning whether women have the skills necessary for the roles they take on.

There is evidence that equality initiatives such as recruitment drives can be looked upon with cynicism by both men and women. For example, sixty-four percent of female officers in Archbold and Schultz’ study (2008) believed that, because the service actively encouraged the hiring and promotion of female officers, some of their male colleagues were sceptical about their promotions. In addition, they also found that these attitudes towards women’s advancement could make women reluctant to apply for promotion, thus continuing the gender imbalance in senior ranks.

Notwithstanding the comments above, the women below had contrasting views regarding promotion and advancement:

*"I didn't really have time to mess about...you have to, kind of, drive your own success in any role, whether you are male or female."*

8(O)

*"I've never felt held back...even if there were obstacles, I kind of wouldn't have let them be obstacles."* 13(O)

These two officers put their success down to personal characteristics, suggesting that these alone will open opportunities to promotion and that there is a gender level playing field. Nonetheless, this ignores the fact that an extended network of social capital, often in the form of weak ties, provides individuals with reciprocal benefits such as information and links to career and promotion opportunities and that women frequently come up against barriers that prevent them from accessing such social capital and benefitting from the benefits these networks provide (Broadbridge 2004; Cross and Linehan 2006; Van Emmerik et al 2006; Gregory 2009). Moreover, despite the second officer's belief that she had never been held back, it could be that she was oblivious of or impervious to gender barriers and biased behaviour since, as she said, she would not have let them be obstacles. As this officer was one of the more experienced officers who had joined the Police Service more than twenty years previously, when promotion processes were less transparent and more informal, it could be construed that she did not recognise the existence of such gendered processes.

This section has provided evidence that women do have reservations concerning promotion and how gendered attitudes and behaviours can negatively affect the way women perceive promotion. The following section shows that even those women who are not looking for promotion can face problems at work that men never experience, such as issues around being pregnant, and those that men generally do not experience, such as juggling family life with work.

## 6.4 Juggling family, life and policing

The women in Vinnicombe and Singh's study (2002) found balancing the demands of work and home life was an occupational pressure that set them apart from their male colleagues. However, this study will provide empirical evidence that, for some women, problems can start even before the baby is born. Some occupations and professions, such as policing, are more problematic for pregnant women than others (Martin 1996), while policing has been perceived as one of the most difficult occupation come back to after maternity leave (Martin 1996).

### Pregnancy and policing

Chapter 3 highlights the perception of pregnancy in policing as being akin to having a disease (Martin 1996; Hanson 2010), and that women have experienced harassment in the UK Police Service as a result of being pregnant or on maternity leave (IPC 2013). Despite recognition by the Government and the Police Service that more support is needed for women during maternity and that more training in this area is needed by line managers (Hanson 2010; Gender Agenda 2 Good Practice Database 2010; Gender Agenda 3 2014; Ingram 2015), it would seem that the problems women face start during pregnancy and that being pregnant continues to be a source of stress for women in policing (Martin 1996; Silvestri 2005; Hanson 2010; IPC 2013; Gender Agenda 3 2014). For example, concern over colleagues' reactions to being pregnant is evident from the comment below:

*"I felt guilty for the fact that I'd not long been in the role...I was going off on maternity leave...I was dreading announcing my pregnancy because of the reaction that I was going to get from the males – 'She's 30 and she's just got married and she's only coming in here for work/life balance and to bugger off and go and have a baby...she'll probably bugger off in a year's time and go and have another baby'..." 5(S)*

This woman's concerns started before she had announced her pregnancy publically, as she had started training for a new role and recognised the pressures on women created by the construction of policing as a full-time occupation that leaves little room for outside responsibilities. She indicated that her female colleagues would understand her situation, but that she was particularly concerned about the reactions from her male colleagues, which supports the argument for the natural development of gender homophilous social capital which increase understanding and strengthens trust (Brass et al 2004). Most of the women I interviewed who had gone through the work/pregnancy cycle talked about the predicaments they had faced while pregnant. The women's concerns can be seen in the comments below:

*"I got pregnant...with the nature of policing...I had to tell them earlier than I would have [normally] had to tell them." 14(O)*

*"If you declare that you're pregnant then you're out of the job you are doing for something that's deemed safe by other people. There are people than have kept their mouth shut and not disclosed they are pregnant." 12(O)*

*"As soon as I find out I'm pregnant, I can't do my job. They will take me off front line policing straight away...I worry about where they are going to put me." 7(O)*

These comments again underline the unique perception of police work that, in some circumstances, is not conducive to being pregnant. Furthermore, the comments below indicate that the above concerns were not isolated cases and that role allocation was an issue for women during and after maternity leave:

*"They seconded somebody into the position while I was away on maternity leave...I put in my application for work/life balance and the second line manager in my office had made it clear that he actually thought the person that had seconded into my position was very good and he actually wanted to see if he could keep her in the position." 5(S)*

*"I got offered a role I really didn't want to do...and basically it was that or nothing." 11(O)*

*"I'd been put on a new team. Nobody called me...I didn't even know who they were until I turned up on that day...Because I was on maternity leave, I didn't get a say in this one." 4(S)*

The above comments are clearly examples of the covert discrimination these women experienced during their pregnancies. The Police Service is obliged to take women back at the same level although not necessarily in the same role. Nonetheless, there is empirical evidence in this study that women lack any 'real' agency since, although they might have choices in the roles they accept, they do not always have any say in the roles they are offered. Moreover, their choices are restricted and they are frequently required to make sacrifices, which can cause additional pressure and anxiety that men do not experience.

Linked to the women's concern about role reallocation is the lack of communication with both managers and the Human Resources department during maternity leave. One of the women used the word "*alienated*" to describe her feelings while others referred to being "*isolated*" and "*out of the loop*" on maternity leave, which can be seen from the following comments:

*"When I went off on maternity...I've kept in touch with my old line manager...XXXXX kept in touch with me and HR didn't." 6(S)*

*"I didn't have any formal contact with the force at all, apart from General Orders." 11(O)*

*"My line managers knew unofficially what I was doing all the way along...I emailed [HR] and no-one ever came back to me." 4(S)*

*"Being on maternity leave, you are very isolated. HR don't help you at all." 2(O)*

*"If I wasn't seeing my colleagues out of work, no, then I wouldn't [have had any contact]." 2(S)*

Albeit administration requirements such as processing a request for a work/life balance while on maternity leave is a function of HR, several of the above quotes suggest that there was little help from formal sources such as HR. Most of the women mentioned informal contact and information provided by their networks of both female and male work colleagues during maternity leave, while some had taken advantage of formal in-touch days in the constabulary organised by ACWN for those on maternity leave.

There is recognition within the Police Service and police constabularies that more support is needed for women during maternity and that more training in this area is needed by line managers (Gender Agenda 2 Good Practice Database 2010; Hanson 2010; IPC 2013; Gender Agenda 2 2014). Nonetheless, it is evident from the empirical data above that women on maternity leave still feel isolated and neglected, which highlights the contrast between the rhetoric from the Police Service and the Government and the reality at constabulary levels.

In addition to the issues discussed above there is recognition nationwide that after the baby is born, women in policing continue to face the problems of juggling a career in policing with family commitments (Casswell 2013; Dick et al 2013; PolicingUK 2013; BAWP Gender Agenda 2014; Dick 2015; Laverick and Cain 2015).

### **Negotiating a work/life balance**

While improved work/life balances are frequently included in the aims of constabulary based women's networks and several network websites espouse the provision of enhanced workplace support for female staff (Staffordshire Constabulary Women's Network 2017; Angleshire Constabulary Women's Network 2017), Laverick and Cain (2015) have highlighted the problems women in policing face in securing flexible and part-time work contracts. Moreover, the BAWP (Gender Agenda 3 2014) contends that, for women in policing, gender is no longer a barrier in itself. Rather, it is a Police Service culture that creates barriers and sustain negative perceptions of family responsibilities and commitments which continue to restrict women's choices, such as viewing



policing as a full-time occupation requiring one hundred percent commitment at all times (Holdaway and Parker 1998; Dick 2015).

Furthermore, there is evidence that even women without children can bear the brunt of securing a work/life balance as the comments below show:

*“Without any consideration, they’ve changed him onto a shift pattern that doesn’t align with mine. So we don’t have a day off together at all...A few people suggested that it needs to be me who moves shift to align with him and I don’t think that’s fair because I don’t want to move shifts as it was him that moved.”*  
7(O)

*“My other half is a police officer, and I’ve had to change my department and role so that we work split shifts...we don’t have any rest days together...the work/life balance is gone.”* 2(O)

The situation, where both partners work for the police service, is not uncommon. From the evidence above, it is obvious that it can be an issue for women in policing due to gendered attitudes and the unwitting stereotyping of women’s positions in the workplace as being less important than those of the men. That the officers above were expected to disrupt their work schedules, rather than their husbands, highlights the covert attitudes and values that sustain gendered cultures and continue to create barriers for women. Their experiences support the findings of Archbold and Hassell (2009) that being married to another police officer can indirectly curtail women police officers, particularly in the areas of scheduling and shift work.

Many organizations, including the UK Police Service, recognise the dual burden of work and family life and outwardly promote workable work/life agreements for those with family responsibilities. However, there is still the belief that commitment to the job means working all hours (Dick and Hyde 2006; Dick et al 2013; Cahusac and Kanji 2014) and that having children is not compatible with a career in policing. This was supported by the majority of the women officers in Dick and Jankowitz’ (2001) study of police culture, and highlighted by Hanson

as negatively affecting the retention of women in the UK Police Service (Hanson 2010).

The following discussion will show the consensus amongst the women in this study was that the choices to be made between family and work commitments predominately fall upon women. The comments below clearly express how juggling work and family life is essentially a woman's dilemma (Broadbridge 1998; Cameron and Liff 2001; Mavin 2000; Cahusac and Kanji 2014):

*"We do face barriers and we do face difficult choices and personal choices that men generally don't have to make...we do have the babies, we really are the carers and we're the people who usually want to work in a slightly different way so that we can balance things." 9(S)*

*"I definitely think the work/life balance thing is major importance...I know so many families are struggling because they have children...and that is the one thing where females do have a disadvantage over males...It's the staying in the Police Force that's the problem. Until they sort that work/life balance, you can't have kids." 3(O)*

The women in this study were all too aware of this gender divide and how the added burden of the dual role they take on board influences the decisions they make, as the comments below confirm:

*"I was looking into doing a work/life balance and everyone I spoke to said don't bother doing it. They don't make it easy for returners." 2(O)*

*"Having a relationship and children if you are both in the Force...it's impossible...two police officers, with no work/life balance either way." 3(O)*

The above perceptions of policing and family life could result in women deciding that a career in policing is not a long-term career option, which can only serve to sustain the dominance of men in senior ranks within the Police Service.

There is no doubt from the data that, once a woman has advanced and/or moved into her role or unit of choice, having a family can disrupt her career. Furthermore, the last comment above highlights the additional problem of having a partner who is also in the Police Service, as the women below corroborate:

*“It’s literally working around my husband’s hours...It was tough getting back [after maternity leave]...difficult to work out the work/life balance.” 14(O)*

*“I couldn’t go back into the CID working as a detective sergeant, because my husband was on a squad and he worked unpredictable hours...I did have to find a role where I could fit around Xxxxx [Husband].” 13(O)*

Although working practices in some police units are perceived as less conducive to family life than in others (such as CID), all of the officers above were expected to sacrifice their positions to accommodate their husbands’ careers, and not vice versa. As the majority of women in policing have caring responsibilities for children, aging parents and other dependents, gendered attitudes towards women will continue to create barriers for the majority of women in policing. Until cultures change with regards to caring responsibilities, women’s agency will continue to be limited.

### **Line managers and flexible working**

Although work/life balance arrangements are frequently regarded now as an aspect of the psychological contract, Dick (2006) suggests that the initial success of negotiations is dependent on the line manager who is charged with the task of aligning the needs of the individual to those of the department. This study found that ACWN members interviewed had mixed experiences with managers when trying to secure a work/life arrangement:

*“I was part-time for about 2 years, and then my husband had a heart attack...They were very good...My boss at the time just said to me ‘Look come to me with what you think would work’.” 9(S)*

*“I think I’ve been able to chop and change my hours and increase and decrease etc...because I do have very, very good managers.” 2(S)*

*“I’m quite fortunate now as my current line manager...she’s part-time, she has her own children.” 5(S)*

*“To be quite honest, before my current line manager, I found it very, very hard. My line manager I had before was very, very inflexible...but take my new line manager, who is absolutely fantastic.” 4(O)*

*“I think HR have a part in it...my line manager said she had no say in what was agreed...she said that she could put her recommendations in but in hindsight, that it would go to the manager of the Logistics department.” 5(S)*

*“You go to your own line manager, and then your second line manager...there’s no continuity.” 1(O)*

The women’s stories and experiences suggest Police Service policies and practices surrounding part-time working and work/life balance are inconsistent, and that there are no formal guidelines. However, several of the women acknowledge that the issue is more complex than simply a matter of management attitudes. As the comments below confirm:

*“You’d always try and be flexible, so you would try and fit what the person wanted but also try and fit the needs of business, so sometimes it was about compromise.” 6(S)*

*“If you have very set and very formatted work practices i.e. shift work, then trying to find flexibility within that is always going to be a challenge.” 9(S)*

*“...the team I was on was just not going to work because there was a manager and three others, all of whom had children...all of whom wanted part-time or were working part-time.” 4(S)*

*“[On returning to work after having children] I wouldn't necessarily want to be a front line police officer in uniform...part-time...that would be hard to do...there are part-time officers but it is a full-time role really.” 8(O)*

*“It's quite difficult with police officers, partly because of our shift patterns and partly because of our ranking and stuff...it's not quite as straight forward as staff job-share...it is very complicated.” 11(O)*

*“...you kind of get discriminated against because you are a police officer, because [being told] ‘you need to work these shifts’...there are a few jobs which could be a nine-to-five role.” 3(O)*

It would seem from the comments above that some roles are not as compatible as others to part-time or flexible working hours and managers can be “...between a rock and a hard place.” (Dick 2004 p.316) when trying to reconcile the expectations and demands for flexible working with the expectations and needs of the business. Much the same as the women above, Dick (2004) sympathised with the role of managers trying to keep all parties happy. If they do not comply with reduced-hours applications, they face being accused of sexism and discrimination or not complying with diversity and work strategies. On the other hand, they are expected simultaneously to accommodate the needs of policing, which can be demand led and unpredictable, and the needs of employees looking to secure flexible and reduced-hours contracts.

Although the construction of police work creates problems for both women with children returning to work and their line managers, Dick and Cassell (2004) suggested that there are many roles that could accommodate regular or even part-time hours, a contention supported by the final comment above. This was reiterated by the BAWP (Gender Agendas 1 & 2 2001/2006), which recognised that negative views of part-time working are often the result of outdated attitudes and that there is the requirement to re-assess the nature of policing if the Police Service wants to recruit and keep skilled staff.

The loss of position can be a concern for some women seeking flexible contracts and Dick (2004/2009) suggested that, for those officers wishing to return to front line and operational units, many of the jobs in these units which are compatible with part-time contracts are in support or administration, are often less valued and sustain gender/role stereotyping as most part-timers are women. There is the perception that a reduced-hours contract in the Police Service not only negatively affects the ability to network, but also hampers women's promotion prospects (Dick and Hyde 2005), which is evident from the comments below:

*"I haven't made my mind up about taking the next rank...at the moment it's a balance between home life and my work life...and I don't really want the extra stress." 12(O)*

*"I get my inspector and I'm successful...and then I need to apply for a work/life balance...Now if that thought goes through a woman's head, they won't even apply, so you get the self-sifting going on" 9(S)*

Returning to the structure and agency debate, the above comments go some way to supporting Hakim's (2002) theory that women are only restricted at work by the choices they make (Kumra 2010; Walsh 2012). However the data above provides evidence that the women's choices are not free choices. Rather they are restricted by gendered attitudes and dated processes linked to the nature of police work, as there is no doubt that the women believed that having children would conflict with their careers and promotion prospects. The mental process

of 'self-sifting' that women often experience in relation to career progression and promotion, creating internal doubts and uncertainties, is reminiscent of the women in Bryans and Mavin's study (2003) who frequently questioned their own abilities and engaged in a process of self-analysis within a male hegemonic culture. Moreover, the above comments are evidence that the stress and added burden of juggling promotion and family life put some women off applying for promotion, and substantiate Liff and Ward's (2001) suggestion that organisational cultures, structures and practices influence women's decisions that the process for promotion and the jobs themselves are not for them.

Despite the majority of the women interviewed voicing their concerns about either having children or currently juggling family life and careers, two of the women thought differently:

*"I just think we've chosen to come and work for the police and it's up to us to make it work, not for them to make it work for us."*  
10(O)

*"They are not obliged to accommodate you and I don't, you know, see why they should have to do actually...why should the organisation have to be that flexible?"* 8(O)

The women above do not link the provision of flexible working contracts to issues of equality and fairness and fail to recognise that in the main, women and not men are discriminated against for having children and other caring responsibilities. However, these women are not alone in thinking this way (Silvestri 2005; Dick and Hyde 2006). For example, Dick and Hyde (2006) maintained that the widespread expectation in many organisations and occupations that employees will take responsibility for their own career development is embedded in policing and other 'quasi militaristic' organisations. Likewise, Dick (2010) found that many of the women in the study did not view part-time contracts as an entitlement due to the demanding nature of policing. However, it is worth noting that the women commenting above are the only two of the twenty-five women interviewed who voiced the view that the Police

Service should not be obligated to accommodate employees' external responsibilities.

Several constabularies have already implemented alternative working patterns in attempts to introduce a more flexible approach to front line policing as it becomes apparent that it is possible to be a good officer and still be committed to both job and family (Dick and Cassell 2004). The UK Police Service also acknowledged that more work has to be done to create a culture that recognises the need for an achievable and practicable work/life balance for its employees (Gender Agenda 2 Good Practice Database 2010). However, despite efforts over the last decade, in 2013, Fran Jones, the then Deputy Chair of the Police Federation, noted that recent events have raised concerns that progress on the conditions for women in policing has stalled (Casswell 2013), a situation confirmed by one of the senior officers in this study:

*“The only problem I can see is from a woman’s point of view...from the staff I manage...is getting a work/life balance is more or less impossible. They [the constabulary] reviewed every single work/life balance over the last six months [in my department] and more or less taken them all away...it’s money, it’s definitely money.” 1(O)*

This senior officer repeats the view that negotiating a work/life balance is predominately a woman's issue, a situation supported by empirical evidence and highlighted in the literature (Rhode 2001; Dick 2004; Cahusac and Kanji 2014; Laverick and Cain 2014). She also highlights the problems of meeting targets with a depleted workforce. Similarly McCarthy (2004a) recognised the problems busy managers have trying to cope with tight deadlines and suggested that diversity initiatives were often the first to be affected.

Laverick and Cain (2015) submitted that union representatives, equality and diversity practitioners and female focus groups all perceived line managers in general as unwilling to allow for alternative working arrangements. They also found that line managers encountered problems when considering applications



for flexible and part-time contracts, not only as a result of workforce reductions and restructuring, but also due to lack of knowledge, inadequate HR support and lack of training, which can be seen from the data above. The confusion experienced by the women in my study supports Dick (2010), who proposed that while regulations and guidelines on part-time working in the Police Service are negotiable and depend on the individual actors involved, most of the problems stem from "...the fuzziness of the policy on part-time working." (p.522).

## **6.5 Conclusions**

What it is evident from the data is that society can, at times, look upon policing as a man's job, while the Police Service continues to sustain a culture that favours men over women in more senior roles. This promotes the perception of women in policing as less able than men and helps sustain the public's impression that senior officers will always be men. While some of the women interviewed promoted the traditional differences in the skills of men and women (as identified in some of the literature - Brown 1998; Blok and Brown 2005; Dick et al 2013), when discussing those units that had an under-representation of women, such as Firearms and PSU, there was no mention of the skills required or the difficulties of the inflexible work demands. It is evident that these units discourage women from joining due to their overtly macho sub-cultures even before they have considered their work/life balance. That women are noticeably absent when these units are in public view further reinforces the perception that 'real' police work is a job for men. This is further reinforced by the women's own negative perceptions of promotion processes and a long-term career in policing, as gendered cultures and structures in the Police Service, combined with society's expectations of women as wives, mothers and carers, create barriers for women that most men do not experience.

Several of the women interviewed were sceptical of the traditional promotion process and lacked confidence to apply for promotion and succeed, despite the skills and experience many of them brought to the job as a result of work experiences gained through both previous work and life experiences and their

current careers in policing. Moreover, that the women cited several instances of support for promotion from line managers and colleagues is evidence that there are less obvious factors at play, rather than a lack of self-assurance and support, that influence the women's decisions not to apply for promotion. It is evident that a convoluted promotion process and a police culture that values the traditional male career do little to accommodate those who have family responsibilities. There is a male hegemonic culture that labels women who succeed as tokens and which influences and restricts women's promotion opportunities. Furthermore, the construction of policing as a full-time job requiring one hundred percent commitment and the continued existence of gendered police cultures and structures are major deterrents to women's advancement while simultaneously sustaining male dominance. The decisions women in policing make are often not free choices but rather compromises restricted by gendered structures and attitudes at work.

Only one of the women I interviewed had taken advantage of the accelerated learning/high potential promotion programme, while others believed that they would be perceived as receiving additional help if they were fast-tracked. The women in this study failed to recognise the existence of gendered sub-cultures and dominant informal networks with their own informal structures and processes that serve to provide additional benefits between members, such as help with promotion processes and links to those critical weak ties. In addition, these women failed to recognise that the accelerated learning and fast-track promotion programmes have been created to redress the gender imbalance that has developed over the years of discriminatory practices, without imposing direct quotas that are illegal in the UK, by moving away from the traditional police promotion structure that favours the career paths of men.

The stigma associated with the non-traditional fast-track path to advancement also highlights the influence of a police culture created and sustained by men that promotes the lengthy, linear 'bread and butter' of policing career path as the only way forward, despite the fact that it creates inequalities by supporting men while penalising women. The concept of the 'bread and butter' of policing acknowledged throughout the Police Service and a promotion structure

resistant to outsiders coming in at higher levels indicate the strength of a close-knit police culture that creates a feeling of having earned the right to be part of the pack. This encourages a sense of belonging and solidarity that is more resistant to change, while excluding those who have deviated from the traditional male career path, and goes some way to explaining why, as at January 2017, approximately three quarters of constabulary senior officer teams were men.

The women's stories spotlight having a family as a major problem for women in policing, which starts before the children are born, as they attempt to cope with the disruption to their careers during pregnancy and maternity leave. The data provides evidence of a police culture that labels pregnant women as manipulative and ignores the fact that maternity leave is a right, but rather views it as perk or benefit. This is the result of a police occupational culture that continues to view policing as a full-time job requiring one hundred percent commitment, combined with a constabulary culture that does little to demonstrate its formal support from both HR and line managers for women on maternity leave. That there was no clear formal guidance provided by constabulary senior management on how to deal with women on maternity leave suggests that there is no real substance to the rhetoric of support from the Police Service and that there is a lack of commitment from the top down within constabularies to improve the experiences of women who are on maternity leave.

In contrast, the positive support and benefits, both expressive and instrumental, that the women on maternity leave received through their informal networks in the constabulary from both male and female colleagues are highlighted. In addition, ACWN recognised the issues these women faced and had organised Keeping In Touch days, when the women came into the constabulary to network with their managers and colleagues, thus compensating for senior management and HR's failures to acknowledge their responsibility to fully support these women on maternity leave. Moreover, that ACWN was left to resolve issues of communication that should have been the responsibility of HR

illustrates a lack of recognition within Angleshire Constabulary of the diversity role of the women's network.

This study provides evidence that there is disparity between the rhetoric and the reality on flexible work contracts in policing. While full support for women with families is being espoused at macro and meso levels by the Government and by the Police Service nationwide, the reality is that women continue to face problems in their constabulary when attempting to juggle a career in policing with family responsibilities. The women's negative perceptions and experiences of obtaining flexible working reveal a Police Service that has yet to fully embrace the conventional career paths of women, and that women's way of working is not an embedded aspect of police culture but rather a deviant diversion from the norm. Moreover, the nebulous guidelines demonstrate a further lack of commitment from the top down in accepting flexible working as an established career path in policing, despite the fact that the majority of women in policing have family responsibilities outside of work and trade-offs between work and home form part of their daily existence. This begs the question whether women are really valued in an organisation that is predominantly controlled by men?

The expectation that men's careers come first once more illustrates a police culture where men are valued over women and women's roles are seen as secondary to the work of men. In addition, it also indicates the existence of a homophilous, informal network of men looking after and providing support for their members. These women's experiences demonstrate just how covert, gendered expectations in the workplace manifest themselves as gendered structures that continue to limit women's choices, and are examples of the dominant, informal male networks upholding male dominance by favouring men above women.

The next chapter will explore the women's experiences and perceptions of formal and informal support, networking, women-only formal, in-house networks and ACWN, and concludes with a discussion on their views on the effects of several years of cuts in Government funding.

# **Chapter 7: Police women: support and networking**

## **7.1 Introduction**

As discussed in Chapter 2, there is a general consensus that networking in an organisation provides information on opportunities for career enhancement and is a critical part of the informal promotion process. Furthermore, the perception that women's career progression is negatively affected partly as a result of exclusion from these critical, informal networks is reported frequently. This chapter begins with a discussion on the women's formal and informal support structures and goes on to explore how their perceptions and experiences of networking and networks are influenced by police cultures and sub-cultures. The women's perceptions of and activity with ACWN is explored and the chapter then concludes with a discussion on police culture, the effect of several years of police budget cuts on gender diversity initiatives and how these have impacted on ACWN and the women's networking experiences.

## **7.2 Support structures**

This section will show that the women in this study turn to various sources of support, both formal and informal, linked to stress and wellbeing. It then explores how the women turn to their informal networks of social capital for support, which include both male and female colleagues within the service and, at times, family members. It concludes with an overview of the women's experiences and perceptions of informal networking within their constabulary.

### **Formal support**

Every constabulary has an Occupational Health unit (Appendix 8) that provides an extensive support system for both staff and officers. Other internal support organisations are the Police Federation of England and Wales (Appendix 9) and TRiM (Appendix 10). Police officers and staff can also join Unison, one of the largest police and justice unions represented in the UK Police Service.

All of the women in this study had good knowledge of police support organisations and processes and the comments below highlight the extent of the support offered in the Police Service:

*“I was getting support through Occupational Health here...and I’m a member of Unison, and they did contact me.” 1(S)*

*“My dad died two years ago...and the constabulary supported me all through.” 8(S)*

*“I have a couple of friends in the organisation who are currently under Occupational Health...they have been extremely supportive.” 2(S)*

*“TRiM...There are assessors and they are trained, and if something has been very stressful or traumatic then you can approach them.” 7(O)*

*“I’ve gone through Occupational Health in the past...I think I would talk to my mates first and then if I needed to escalate it, I would.” 12(O)*

*“They were absolutely brilliant...the Federation said anything you and XXX need, we’ll be there like a shot.” 10(O)*

All of the women who spoke about formal support sources believed that they provide a valuable service, were in no doubt that they would use their services when needed and showed no reservations in turning to formal systems of support for assistance.

In addition to formal support, the women I interviewed also spoke about their informal support structures. The staff member below provides examples of both formal and informal support when she discusses her experience of a particularly traumatic 999 call from an elderly woman in the early hours of the morning to report a burglar breaking into her house while she was upstairs in bed:

*“That night one of the experienced call handlers who kind of trained me sat outside and he sat and talked to me about it. My team leader sat and listened to the call and gave me praise how I handled the call...and I got home and I got a phone call from the manager, the actual manager of the control room, saying that this had been brought to their attention...by the time I’d come back into work on the Monday...within half an hour I was over in Occupational Health and I was sitting down talking to a counsellor.” 5(S)*

This staff member’s experience demonstrates why support for officers and staff members can be critical at times. The next section shows how informal support systems in the workplace are also important for women in policing.

### **Informal support**

The following discussion provides empirical evidence that the women in this study still recognise the benefits of informal support in the workplace for emotional support and wellbeing. For example, the comment below came from a staff member who was training to become a special constable<sup>18</sup>:

*“I’ve had again so much support here...men and women...the Firearms officer here took me under his wing” 8(S)*

This staff member had received informal, instrumental support and assistance from full-time males and females, as several officers had taken her out on patrol with them in order for her to gain experience in a patrol car. As she was not part of the officer sub-culture, her closest ties were the other staff members in her team. The above benefits would therefore be coming from the weaker, more distant ties in her network. The following comments provide further evidence of

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<sup>18</sup> Police special constables are trained volunteers who work for their local police force a minimum of four hours a week. Once they have completed their training, they have the same powers as regular officers and wear a similar uniform.

informal support from both weak and strong ties of both sexes that could be construed as both expressive and instrumental:

*“I’ve found that, overall, most people are keen to see their colleagues do well and progress...In my first department...they were very supportive in ‘jemming’ you up so that you knew how to handle an interview.” 3(S)*

*“...we had to re-apply for our jobs...Xxxxx helped me as we had to re-apply...she was just someone who I knew was very good at knowing what needed to go into paper applications.” 14(O)*

*“I’d come back from maternity leave and there was a DCI there who said ‘You’re sitting your sergeants exam, aren’t you?’...and then he said there is a DS post being offered and you should get it...it was a male colleague who endorsed it.” 5(O)*

*“It was XXXXXX [male senior officer] who said I should be going for it...and within a year I was chief inspector. “ 10(O)*

*“I’ve always felt I’ve been particularly well supported by people around me and for whom I’ve worked.” 16(O)*

There is evidence from the women’s stories that both emotional support and instrumental benefits come from both men and women colleagues equally and from strong and weak ties. This can be seen from the comments above that describe support in the form of encouragement and/or advice in areas of promotion and career advancement. There is the perception that expressive benefits such as emotional and social support are less beneficial than instrumental benefits since the latter provide tools for career progression and promotion (Ibarra 1993). However, Scott (1996) found that the women in her study viewed their expressive ties as instrumental as well as they provided contact with key people in the organisation. Ibarra (1997) also suggested that women’s network ties can be both expressive and instrumental, and that women networking with other women can benefit in “...gaining advice from others who have faced similar obstacles.” (p.99).



The next section explores the importance of emotional support for those in policing and looks at how the women's extensive, informal networks provide this type of support.

## **Emotional support**

Due to the harrowing nature of some aspects of police work, which was evident from the previous example of a traumatic 999 call, I asked the women how they coped with the stress of day-to-day policing and during times of increased emotional stress, and who they turned to for emotional support. This is what they had to say:

*"You tend to talk it through with your colleagues and you'll all have an aspect on what's happened and how it's affected you." 4(O)*

*"...your colleagues...if it's work related, because they've been there and they've dealt with." 5(S)*

*"I think people at your own level, whether it be level of service or role, I think those people are probably the best to bounce things off...my sergeant." 6(O)*

*"You just sort of talked about it with your colleagues...if you spoke to anyone from the control room, they would tell you that you get a bit desensitised." 2(S)*

The consensus among the women was that they often turn to the strong ties in their network such as immediate colleagues and line managers, both male and female, for informal emotional support, as well as family members:

*"My husband...he's a police officer...if one of us has had a bad day, we'll come home and vent for twenty minutes...Sometimes, my colleagues or sergeant XXXX downstairs." 7(O)*

*"My partner is a police officer...If I've had a tough day, I can go home and sort of bounce it off...but it would be colleagues I would*

*...speak to because they've been in that situation so they've known it before."* 14(O)

*"Colleagues...and then my husband because he's a police officer as well."* 13(O)

*"My partner at home, the lads on the shift. You do form a good bond with your colleagues on the team."* 15(O)

*"My other half? He doesn't know what I'm talking about...I've got friends at work...my colleagues, really."* 12(O)

It is evident that the women I interviewed did not lack internal networks that understood the stresses of the job and provided reciprocal support when needed. In contrast, another woman highlighted the problems of discussing her work with 'outsiders':

*"If you try and discuss a call you've dealt with, with your family members, it's like an episode of Eastenders to them."* 5(S)

This comment is an example of just how alien police work can seem to those on the outside. Finally, one of the less recognised benefits of de-stressing with like-minded people in policing was described further in the comments below:

*"You kind of end up having a kind of black sense of humour...and that tends to get you through."* 11(O)

*"We've just got a really good team to talk things over. Sometimes we tend to just laugh about it."* 1(O)

*"...that whole callous humour thing...I don't think the outside world realise that sometimes you have to make jokes about things...It's not that people don't care...but you've got to have some kind of coping mechanism."* 8(O)

The data suggests that it is all about chatting with those who share a sense of kinship and again provides empirical evidence of the existence of mixed

gender, homophilous networks of support within the constabulary. This is in line with Waddington (1999) who argued that 'canteen' culture chitchat has developed as a way of coping with the stresses of the job with colleagues who understand the nature of the work. Furthermore, Martin (1996) suggested that this homophilous sub-culture, which provides emotional support and access to new social capital, also helps develop solidarity between police women and police men.

When questioned, none of the women viewed their formal women's network as a source of emotional support. However, they did talk about the emotional and supportive benefits of having more senior women in the workplace both as confidants and role models.

### **Motivational and inspirational role models**

Lack of senior women in policing to confide in at a time of personal stress or as social capital for instrumental benefits has been discussed previously. The comments below continue the discussion and demonstrate the benefits of senior women as motivational and inspirational role models at work:

*"We've got some really good, very inspirational women at the top...it's having that role model...you think, well she's got a family and she's done it and it makes you think well I can go for it." 1(S)*

*"I went to...the Senior Women in Policing conference...I'd never been so impressed...it was so uplifting and inspiring...everybody keeps telling me to go for promotion...and I thought what are you waiting for." 10(O)*

We can see from the above quotes just how motivational and inspirational female role models can be, and how these expressive benefits can also be instrumental in developing women's careers. Broadbridge (1998) found evidence that a shortage of same-sex role models was a problem encountered more by women than men, a view that is supported by the sustained contention that the Police Service needs more women role models (Gender Agenda 2

2006; Marchant 2010; Gender Agenda 2 Good Practice Database 2010; Gender Agenda 3 2014; Laverick and Cain 2014).

While discussing role models in general, some of the women spoke about one particular senior woman in Angleshire:

*“She’s very...what would I say?...very positive and very enthusiastic, but very approachable...If it’s all men you just can’t see how you can get there, but when you have women there, you can see other successful women.”*1(S)

*“[name] knows that I’ve applied to be a special and she’ll often say to me, [name], how’s the training going etc.”* 8(S)

*“I remember I attended a disaster scene and she was in charge...she was senior lead...it was such long hours and she put her arms around a couple of girls...she was really caring...I don’t know if it was because she was female, but just seeing her and she was so nice and so compassionate...I can’t remember many men who I felt that for.”* 13(O)

This female senior officer’s compassionate, approachable manner and concern for others is an approach to policing that is linked to a more transformational style of leadership which, it has been suggested, women bring to policing (Brown and Woolfenden 2011a; Silvestri et al 2013). Some of the women also commented on the outgoing ACWN chairperson as a role model, again because of her approachable manner and for the ACWN work she had taken on. The chairperson had the following to say about one instance of support when she helped an inexperienced officer with her first promotion:

*“I said I’ll coach you...I did some coaching and she passed that Board and she got one of the positions she didn’t think she would get... I do try and help through ACWN. I do know a little bit about getting through promotion processes and getting on and I do want to share that.”* 13(O)

This comment highlights the importance of being able to develop and accumulate social capital by linking up with a network of skilled and experienced people who can pass on advice and help. While the chairperson herself recognised the importance of role models, having organised a network day for ACWN members where both external and internal female role models came along to talk, several of the participants who had attended also confirmed that listening to successful women talk about their experiences was uplifting and motivating. Correspondingly, that women in policing lack role models has been acknowledged throughout the Police Service (Gender Agenda 2 Good Practice Database 2010; Gender Agenda 3 2014).

The above discussions have considered the women's experiences of informal, emotional support. The next section explores the women's informal and formal networking experiences and their association with their formal constabulary women's network.

### **7.3 Networking at work**

While men protect their dominant positions at work through their gender homophilous informal networks, women are frequently denied access to these networks and the knowledge and opportunities passed on through networking with weaker ties in the workplace. It is further argued that the growth of women's formal networks is the result of women lacking access to men's informal networks and the benefits they provide (Pini et al 2004; Bierema 2005; Singh et al 2006; Bailey et al 2007; Maxwell et al 2007; Kumra and Vinnicombe 2010). This section explores the women's experiences of both informal and formal networking and their perceptions of women's formal in-house networks.

#### **Informal networking**

Socialising with colleagues is one aspect of informal networking and the women had this to say about informal socialising opportunities within their constabulary:

*“There was a lot of females on that team...there was a group of four or five of us, and we would socialise quite a lot actually, and with the boys, we would go out as a team.” 14(O)*

*“I’ve made quite a few friends though work, and you know, we still meet up regularly. I mean, with my old team...and then I normally get together every three or four months with another team of mine.” 6(S)*

*“I have a lovely team...I do socialise with them sometimes.” 7(O)*

*“They still have a sport and social club, and it’s easy to socialise with other colleagues.” 14(O)*

*“I worked in [place] as a PC and I’m still in touch with these PCs that I knew then and we still go out regularly...now, that’s a women’s network...it’s a natural network with people you get on with.” 5(O)*

The experiences described above suggest that opportunities to network informally with both men and women within the constabulary are easily available. It also highlights the close-knit relationships that exist between close colleagues and ex-team members that help sustain a sense of camaraderie and the perception of the constabulary as family.

The experiences above relate to informal socialising between colleagues and do not include instances of informal networking specifically to gain instrumental support and assistance, the benefits of which are, again, well documented (Broadbridge 2004; Pini et al 2004; Van Emmerik et al 2006; Cross and Linehan 2006; Singh et al 2006; Maxwell et al 2007).

When asked about workplace networking one senior officer provided a very enlightening and succinct consideration of her personal experiences:

*“The blokes, they’re really good at networking, women are not so good at it and I think that’s because, and I think I’m guilty of it, is*

*that you don't realise how important it is within the culture of the organisation."* 15(O)

The comment above supports the establishment of formal women's networks, if only to emphasise the importance of continuously accruing social capital and inspiring women to network. There is evidence that men and women network differently at work (Ibarra 1992; Ehrich 1994; Broadbridge, 2004; McTavish and Pyper 2006). For example, the men in Broadbridge's study spoke about networking as ways of getting on in the company in a way that was not noticeable when the women discussed their experiences. However, it was obvious from the observations below that many of the interviewees in this study were aware of both expressive and instrumental benefits to be had from informal networking:

*"You do a certain amount of unofficial networking anyway...it's not what you know it's who you know."* 8(O)

*"I love being here because I'm in an office with other PAs and working with them or in the same office, you know, you get to hear things with chatting to them...or if you have a problem."* 7(S)

*"I'm more likely to have contacts in different fields so that I know potentially where I might go for help."* 5(O)

*"It depends who you trust and who you feel comfortable talking to...I know there are people I can go back to from years back, and I could say look, can I just have a quick chat to you about my career development."* 3(S)

*"I always knew I fancied doing that kind of work so I kind of made it my...eh...to befriend them."* 14(O)

There is evidence that men predominantly develop informal, homophilous network with other men for instrumental benefits while women form gender homophilous networks for expressive benefits (Ibarra 1997; Brass et al 2004; Gregory 2009). Nonetheless, the women above make frequent references to

both expressive and instrumental benefits to be had by informally networking with both men and women, such as sharing problems, picking up information, seeking career advice and securing key contacts linked to promotion and career progression (Scott 1996; Cross and Linehan 2006).

One particular example of informally networking for career enhancement was 14(O), who had purposely built up an informal network of mainly male contacts early in her career in order to (successfully) increase her chances of joining a specialist unit, thus supporting the contention that women can be aware of the importance of networking on their careers. This officer, who was currently on limited duties outside her specialist unit as part of her maternity leave, was worried now that her front line contacts in her specialist unit might move on before she resumed full-time duties. Her concern was that she would then lack the necessary contacts that could help her return to her specialist role after her maternity leave. This situation not only highlights her awareness of the instrumental benefits to be had through networking but also that having contacts is not all about progression, as it also helps you do your job.

It is evident from the discussions above networking is an important access to social capital that can provide both instrumental and expressive benefits. The section below considers the barriers that hold women back from informally networking at work.

### **Barriers to women networking**

As discussed in Chapter 3, several studies have found that female managers often lack role models and mentors at senior level, which increases their sense of isolation and prevents female managers from entering into opportune, informal networks that would extend their social capital and assist their careers (Linehan 2001; Vinnicombe and Singh 2002; Gray et al 2007; Broughton and Miller 2009). Similarly, since women are still under-represented in many areas in policing (Hanson 2010; Brown and Woolfenden, 2011b; IPC 2013; Home Office 2016), they continue to experience a lack of support and a sense of isolation (Gender Agenda 2 2006; Marchant 2010; Laverick and Cain 2014).



Two senior officers emphasised (below) the need for a mentor/sponsor at both lower and higher levels within the organisation to help develop the kind of social and human capital that men easily secure from a plethora of more senior, male colleagues. The second comment below adds to the narrative by highlighting the lack of senior women at higher levels and women's difficulty in securing high-level mentors:

*"The opportunities for women are as good as they've ever been, but unless you've got a sponsor who's going to watch your back and get you there, it ain't going to happen." 10(O)*

*"I don't know people that well, but I still know them and I could phone them up and speak to them...some of that changes as you change rank as well...the higher up you go, the fewer there are at the rank...XXXXX is my PA, and it's quite funny...me and XXXXX are the opposite ends of the spectrum when it comes to like, you know, rank...it's the loneliness of leadership because I don't have any peers here." 11(O)*

That the above officer predominately confided in her female PA highlights the isolation women experience as they move up rank in the Police Service. At macro level, the Government (Neyroud 2011) acknowledged the importance of mentors as high priority for those wanting to progress. Similarly, at meso level, the Police Service recognised the sense of isolation and lack of female social capital and mentors for women as they progress through the ranks (Gender Agenda 2 2006; Gender Agenda 2 Good Practice Database 2010), and have promoted the provision of constabulary women's networks and other similar gender initiatives such as mentoring and coaching programmes to support women at all levels. Despite this, my study provides empirical evidence that the rhetoric at both macro and meso levels and the reality at the micro level of the constabulary are at the opposite ends of the spectrum.

While senior officers face isolation and a lack of same-sex network contacts, women throughout the constabulary at all levels struggle to network informally

for other reasons. It has been argued that women's networks are limited as they fail to participate in out-of-hours socialising (Linehan 2001; Gregory 2009; Cahusac and Kanji 2014). Likewise, two of the women had this to say about out-of-hours networking:

*"Going down the pub...we can't do that because we've got children to go home to." 2(S)*

*"Men in the police do probably tend to interact with each other a little bit more outside work as well than women, because women are still doing the housework...with the children and all the rest of it." 6(O)*

The above comments indicate that although women often choose not to network out-of-hours, unlike men, their agency is restricted by the social structures that look to women to take on board the majority of domestic responsibilities within the home. Exclusion from this type of informal networking or "male bonding" (Linehan 2001 p.825) can seriously disadvantage women as they are not party to the inside information often discussed between colleagues after working hours (Singh et al 2006; Walsh 2012).

While the benefits of informal networking with both sexes have been discussed, it has been documented that women networking together provides a safe environment where they can share experiences and talk openly (Mavin and Bryans 2002; Pini et al 2004; Bailey et al 2007), a benefit I personally experienced when I was interviewing for this research. This sense of sharing experiences and talking openly can be seen from the comment below by the officer who had previously related her experience of sexual abuse in Chapter 5:

*"There was no women's network then...and I really needed help...if there was a female senior officer [in my constabulary] I didn't know her." 5(O)*

This example of the crucial support from having a woman to talk to at a time of crisis further supports the literature that highlights the benefits of women talking

to women. This officer also pinpoints the benefits of a formal women's network in a male hegemonic culture dominated at the top by men.

As previously mentioned, WIHNs are often set up to benefit women by counterbalancing their exclusion from the critical male-dominated informal networks. The next section explores the women's attitudes to formal networks of women in the workplace.

### **Benefits of women-only in-house networks**

Several of the women in this study refer to mixing with other women as something positive, which is a benefit often promoted by members of WIHNs (McCarthy 2004a; Vinnicombe et al 2004):

*"I think, naturally, men chat to men and help each other, and women chat to women and help each other." 6(O)*

*"I've always been a member of a netball club and I play for two clubs now...it's all women and I like that." 7(O)*

*"[A national conference for women in policing] That really lit the fuse for me, that conference, being around all those women...they were just amazing." 10(O)*

The above comments are evidence that gender homophilous networks occur naturally for women, while the last comment highlights the kind of emotional support provided by same-sex social capital, such as inspiration and encouragement, which can also result in instrumental benefits for the recipient. When I asked the women in this study what benefits they think they might look for from a WIHN, the comments were varied:

*"I think it honestly depends what it was going to do for me...if I was going to get something out of it and see the benefits." 2(S)*

*"If it was a one to one with somebody who said ok, have you got any issues with your work/life balance or do you need help?" 2(O)*

*“I think it would be, you know, just to be that there is somebody there...like a mentor. Somebody you could look up to.” 4(O)*

*“It’s an extremely powerful way of building your knowledge, just because everyone in the network brings something else...the fact that you are known by this group of people.” 9(S)*

The above comments relate to instrumental rather than expressive benefits, such as increased visibility within the organisation and access to a mentor, which supports the literature in this field (Singh et al 2006; Bailey et al 2007). In addition, one senior officer highlighted both emotional and instrumental benefits received over the years through her interactions with formal women’s networks in the Police Service:

*“Four women I met in 2000, I am still friends with today. That was the start of me [formally] networking, because I met four absolutely wonderful role models...they were all a rank or two ahead of me, and I was the junior rank on the course...XXXXXXX came up to me, she was a superintendent at that time, and she said to me, I’d really like to mentor you...I think I could help you.” 10(O)*

This officer was the one who was instrumental in launching ACWN several years after her initial introduction to formal networking. Her early experiences of formal networking support Hersby et al (2009), who highlight the benefits of senior women’s involvement in women’s networks, since they can champion the network and encourage other women to join. This officer also talked about how she keeps in touch with all four women and how they continue to provide reciprocal social and emotional support, which indicates that women can be as active as men when it comes to developing their networks of social capital. However, as the next section shows, women who choose to network with other women through the more formal route of a women’s network face barriers that men networking informally do not.

## **Disadvantages of WIHNs**

In contrast to the discussion above that acknowledged the benefits WIHNs provide, there is the perception amongst some that WIHNs can be derogatory, separatist, divisive, and anti-ethical (Pini et al 2004; Bailey et al 2007; McCarthy 2004a; Silvestri 2005). Several participants in this study voiced similar notions:

*“Just like boys’ networks, I don’t like them...they segregate, so that wasn’t comfortable with me.” 5(O)*

*“We’ve got to see something happening for the men now to make it fair.” 3(S)*

*“This is a conversation that quite a few men have, if they are white, in their thirties, married or single, they don’t have any network to support them.” 4(O)*

*“I feel quite sorry for the men at work because...women get this, that and the other and actually there’s nothing out there for the men...I don’t see why it should be for women...why not have a men’s network as well and give the same opportunities to the men.” 6(S)*

*“I had a male officer ask me, well why can’t I go on it? There’s no reason why he couldn’t go on it, but he’d been told by a supervisor, no it’s for women only.” 5(O)*

The women in my study are not alone as these sentiments support the findings in several other studies (McCarthy 2004a; Pini et al 2004; Bailey et al 2005; Bierema 2005). This provides evidence that women accept hegemonic male cultures as the norm, while the women above fail to recognise the Police Service as a white, macho, heterosexist, male culture (HMIC 1995; Brown et al 2006; Loftus 2008) with its male-dominated sub-cultures and networks. What the women also fail to realise is that men’s informal networks, which are closely linked to organisational cultures and sub-cultures, frequently segregate women to the benefit of men and the detriment of women within organisational cultures

that value networking and view informal networks as tools for advancement and promotion. They also fail to recognise that women's formal networks exist to openly counteract women's exclusion from the obscure, male-dominated networks and to create strong and weak ties for women that allow for the transfer of human capital and increased promotion opportunities.

Finally, one of the women made the following comment about the sexist and offensive office banter around ACWN:

*"There's been a few bits of banter in the office about it...from the men...(she laughed)...We get a load of banter like that...about it being a load of post menopausal women...a bit like the WI." 1(S)*

Labelling WIHNS seems to be a frequent occurrence (McCarthy 2004a; Bierema 2005; Bailey et al 2007), and both McCarthy and Bierema suggested that this ridiculing of WIHNS hides the fact that a meeting of women without men in the workplace is regarded as sinister or suspicious, or something of a curiosity by some men, but not vice versa. Perhaps this is to be expected in a police culture that values loyalty, where senior management teams are dominated by men while challenges to the status quo are not welcome.

Several of the women also spoke of other issues around WIHNS, such as the stigma often attached to membership of workplace support groups:

*"I think, all these support organisations, there's always a little bit of a stigma attached to them." 11(O)*

*"I do think if you are in those groups, and if you are particularly vocal, you are nailing your own coffin shut." 15(O)*

*"I remember me thinking...ehm...I'm not quite sure about that...you don't want to put yourself onto a different pedestal to other people." 12(O)*

*“There’s always the thought that, maybe, sort of...women need more help if there’s a network.” 1(S)*

*“I would rather just do it on my own...I felt that it [network assistance] would be perceived in a negative way...some people might question...well she’s only got that promotion because she’s in the women’s network...I’ve just sort of found my own path really.” 8(O)*

In essence, the comments above suggest that women who benefit through their formal women’s network are often stigmatised as deficient in some way or not part of the team, despite the fact that it is acceptable for men to benefit from additional assistance through their informal male networks without being challenged or their abilities being questioned. However, the women in this study are not alone. These sentiments support several other studies (Liff and Ward 2001; McCarthy 2004a; Pini et al 2004; Bailey et al 2005; Bierema 2005; Bailey et al 2007) that found some women perceived WIHNs as prejudiced and disruptive, that they created the perception within organisations that women are receiving an unfair advantage and that women are not able to advance on their own merit. However, again, these views lack any recognition of the additional help provided to men through their extensive, gender homophilous, networks of both strong and weak ties.

Several interviewees also believed that formal networks at work were not viable since they wouldn’t have the time to attend any of the events during working hours, while out-of-hours events were not feasible since they had family commitments, as the comment below suggests:

*“I am always at work and I can’t really have the day off to go. But again, if I’m not working I’ve got other things to do.” 1(O)*

Although women choose not to attend network events, the comment above highlights how women’s choices are frequently restricted by society’s gendered stereotyping of women as they are required to finish their shifts at work and pick up their jobs as mothers, home makers and carers. Women frequently express

time restrictions, external commitments, distant locations and long working hours as limiting their ability to join in women's network activities (Bierema 2005; Singh et al 2006; Bailey et al 2007). For example, Bierema found that the issue of time and other pressures at work was responsible for "...network idleness..." (p.215) amongst network members. Singh et al (2006) also found that commitment issues were the biggest challenge with network leaders, who often suffered from burnout as they tried to "...grapple with senior jobs and often have family responsibilities too." (p.470).

Finally one senior officer, who has been closely involved with the women's network movement in policing, described her journey from a decision that networking solely with women was not for her to becoming someone closely associated with constabulary and nationwide women's networks:

*"I'm thinking...I don't want to join a bloody women's network...I'm alright Jack, what would I want to do that for...I look back now and it was such a naïve and ridiculous thing to think...I'm thinking 'Oh my God, I hate groups of women'...I was absolutely dreading it. Well, I was absolutely wrong...That was the start of me [formally] networking." 10(O)*

The officer above looked back to her experiences as a schoolgirl to explain her negative perception of women's networks which, she believes, was the result of the bullying she experienced at school from groups of girls who would gang up on other girls. This again highlights how society and past experiences can influence the choices we make at work. However, long-term involvement with and commitment to women's networks in the Police Service developed as she came to recognise the value of her networks of female social capital.

## **7.4 Angleshire Constabulary Women's Network (ACWN)**

The previous sections have focused on the women's views of networking and women's formal networks in the workplace. This section explores the more



direct questions put to the women regarding their perceptions of and activity with Angleshire Constabulary Women's Network (ACWN).

Several women's formal networks have been set up by senior management as part of their organisation's gender equality and diversity strategy, while others have been set up by women employees (Vinnicombe et al 2004). I was to discover during the interview with the officer who launched ACWN that the former was the case:

*"...a complete chance thing happened as [NAME] who was a chief inspector here, at that time head of the diversity unit, happened to be in the office next door to mine, wandered in one day and said I've got this right headache over the equality act and the equality duty...and I said can I help you and I ended up writing it really...Gender Agenda 2 was being launched...we had all these actions...so I thought what's the best way of delivering on the equality duty and the action points behind it...it was a women's network who would do that work." 10(O)*

That this male senior officer passed on the responsibility of the newly delivered gender diversity duty to a female colleague suggests that he failed to recognise the importance of his constabulary gender diversity duties. It also suggests that he viewed gender diversity within the constabulary as a woman's responsibility.

### **ACWN visibility**

From the outset, all women who worked for Angleshire Constabulary were automatically enrolled as members of the network. However, one woman contacted me to say she was not a member of ACWN, but would like to be interviewed. This email alone suggested to me that ACWN visibility could be an issue and I therefore added questions around visibility onto my interview schedule. Comments from others confirmed my suspicions that this woman's perceptions of ACWN membership was not an isolated case:

*"I need to tell you that I'm not a member of ACWN." 2(S)*

*"I'm not part of ACWN here." 4(S)*

*"I obviously didn't pay too much attention...I didn't realise I had automatic membership." 3(S)*

*"I thought you had to maybe sign something...I didn't know I was a member." 14(O)*

Similar to the comments above, another woman asked me at the beginning of her interview if ACWN was a national police women's network and did it include County Council employees? (Some departments of Angleshire Constabulary share officers with Angleshire Council). Several of the women interviewed did not realise that they were members despite ACWN's large, pink and grey A3 posters (Appendix 1) advertising automatic membership for all women in the constabulary, both paid and unpaid. As the network had already been launched approximately seven years previously, the women's comments above are indicative of an ongoing lack of communication between the women's network and its members. Other women discussed the first indications that their constabulary had a women's formal network:

*"The only reason I know ACWN exists is that we get some mugs coming round with ACWN on them." 3(O)*

*"...saw it on the internet and they gave out mugs." 1(O)*

*"I think, only about a year ago I saw the posters and I know, as a woman officer, you are automatically a member and I didn't know about that." 4(O)*

*"We have a thing called General Orders that comes out every week...and anything that's to do with ACWN comes up on that...I think I would have just read about it on there." 1(S)*

Again this rather vague recognition amongst many of the women that they were or might be members of ACWN suggests that the tools used to advertise ACWN, although visible, are ineffective as they fail to inspire interest and are not communicating the required information. More comments were made regarding the effectiveness of ACWN's general communication strategy:

*“They don’t actively advertise things you can do...like courses in training and things. You really need to have a good dig around and have a look.” 1(S)*

*“We work in a busy office, so sometimes when I get emails which are all-user...sometimes I just click on them and delete straightaway. I haven’t got the time to read them...to do an email like that or to put something on General Orders...it’s just not going to get seen.” 2(O)*

*“I wouldn’t know what they were. I mean, to be fair, they are on the intranet, but so is, like another million things and I don’t have time to do that.” 11(O)*

*“But there’s so much information going in and out...I’ve seen things [about ACWN] and I think oh that’s interesting, but then I’ve never followed it up” 8(O)*

*“I maybe check it [ACWN website] once every six months.” 5(O)*

The comments above suggest that ACWN information gets lost in the deluge of daily data from other departments and units within the constabulary communications system, where information, if not directly relevant to the reader, frequently gets dismissed and deleted.

All of the comments around ACWN communication not only suggest a weak communication strategy but also that the onus is on the individual to search for ACWN information and activities. If, as suggested, the information regarding membership lacks visibility and is unclear, then it is likely that there will be little motivation amongst the women in the constabulary to sift through the intranet for information specifically relating to ACWN. However, in contrast to previous comments, some of the women believed that ACWN visibility and access to ACWN’s information was good:

*“I went in [to ACWN website] once...I know they’re there...I don’t know whether you get handouts to say what’s out there...or leaflets...you’d quite often go into the canteen and they’d have big*

*posters up, and you'd get emails...So yeah, I think they do enough to let you know you can potentially go along."* 6(S)

*"You can look into that anytime and that keeps you up to date with what's going on and what they are doing...if there's an event coming along it always goes on to our General Orders...and it gives you a good idea of what the event's about."* 1(S)

*"They have a website and you can jump in and out of it...so yes, I'm aware...yes, they are very easy to contact."* 5(O)

Although the comments above are more positive, overall, the women's perceptions of ACWN visibility were negative. While a few of the women followed ACWN on the intranet, the comments below relating to ACWN aims and objectives once again confirm a lack of interest in ACWN matters amongst members:

*"I'm just looking blank."* 12(O)

*"Not a Scooby doo."* 4(O)

*"I don't actually know what they are."* 2(S)

*"I'm not sure what they are."* 7(O)

*"I haven't got a clue what they are...They've not been advertised very well, have they?"* 5(S)

*"Do you have a list of them...I don't know what they are."* 3(S)

*"I've done nothing with them [ACWN]...I don't really know anything about them."* 3(O)

*"I wouldn't know what they were. I mean, to be fair, they are on the intranet, but so is, like another million things and I don't have time to do that."* 11(O)

There were similar comments from all of the women interviewed who were not involved in managing the network, which suggests an indifference amongst the women and a lack of connection between the members and the network management. As an effective gender equality initiative, Liff and Cameron (1997) stressed the need for WIHNs to communicate their objectives throughout their organisations if they are to be both recognised and valued by both employees and managers as well as universally acknowledged and accepted.

From my attendance at several of the ACWN committee meetings, I was aware of the 'behind the scenes' work ACWN is involved in, with projects that are often in conjunction with other units or in some cases other constabularies' support groups. Some examples of such work are: women's under-representation in specialist units; improving contact during maternity leave; and promotion processes/the Board exam training and support. I asked the women what they knew about ongoing ACWN activities:

*"I don't know what ACWN do, to be honest. That's probably the problem." 4(S)*

*"...we don't see it [what ACWN is doing behind the scenes]...they certainly don't advertise it." 4(O)*

*"I don't think anybody knows what the committee is or what they do...and if you say I'm going to an ACWN meeting, they [other colleagues] give you a blank look." 12(O)*

*"I'm sure they think they do [encourage networking], but they don't... they've never really said you are [a member]...but you know you are from the odd poster or something. Nothing ever happens with ACWN that I know of. They're not that visible." 1(O)*

As before, most of the comments were negative as few of the women were aware of the work ACWN was undertaking on an ongoing basis. The general consensus amongst the interviewees is that ACWN lacks visibility and fails to competently communicate network information, which is particularly noticeable from the discussions above. ACWN's failure to communicate adequately to its

members is similar to Grey's (2011) example of a senior supermarket manager/owner who used an MBA case study to find out to what extent his front line staff endorsed the corporate culture values...only to discover that "...three-quarters of them claimed to have never *heard* of the values." (p.74).

## **Networking within ACWN**

As discussed previously, there is the suggestion that women use networking for social and emotional benefits more than men, and I asked the women about using their network for social contacts with the constabulary:

*"I do tend to keep my socialising and work quite different...It's not something I would have thought of using ACWN for."* 7(O)

*"You can have as much socialising in the Police Force anyway...so I think, someone, just for socialising...no."* 1(O)

*"I don't socialise with anyone at work...my husband is not in the Police Force or friends, so I rarely socialise with anyone at work."* 5(O)

The majority of the women, like those above, did not link ACWN to social activities. Although most of the women did not look on ACWN as a route to socialising, several commented on ACWN development days they had attended:

*"The [ACWN] course I was on was all women and they felt more freely able to talk...Whether there would have been that same, shared feelings you got within that classroom if there had been men?"* 5(O)

*"We just happened to have all women on our [ACWN] course, which I found really good as I actually made a suggestion that I think it should be single sex, as I think everybody opened up and it was much more relaxed without having any men."* 2(S)

*“I’ve been along to a few of their events and I’ve found them to be really good and useful and really sort of productive. Through them I’ve found out about other things, such as I can do different courses and things like that...she [Angle’shire’s Assistant Chief Constable] came and did a talk, and when you get people like that...it makes other women think, “Oh, she’s done it so maybe I can get there as well”...whereas, if all your senior bosses are all men...?”* (interviewee shrugs her shoulders in a negative way).  
1(S)

*“It did focus on women in the sense that we had a lady who...I think she was one of the pilots flying the big aircraft over in Afghanistan...that was a really good day...just about women.”* 3(S)

*“They helped you look at yourself and maybe why you wouldn’t be achieving in certain areas, so it was about analysing yourself...in a nice environment. There were no males there.”* 5(O)

It was evident that the women who had attended ACWN development days enjoyed networking with other women, which supports the concept of homophily, highlighted in the literature as one of the major and most robust theoretical roots of networking (McPherson et al 2001; Katz et al 2004). Their comments also support McCarthy’s (2004a) findings, that eighty-seven per cent of the women networkers surveyed for DEMOS valued the opportunities to discuss things they would not discuss with men in the room, and rated the sex-specific nature of women’s networks as a positive influence when considering WIHN membership.

Through ACWN activities, the women in this study benefitted from developing their social capital, and in particular extending their network of weak ties, as they were able to socialise with other women within the constabulary they would otherwise not have met. In addition to the positive comments above relating to the emotional support gained by networking through ACWN events, the women were positive but more pragmatic when they talked about some of the more instrumental benefits they had received through contact with ACWN:

*“There’s been one time where I was feeling a little bit... ehm...unhappy...I did talk to a couple of people who are in the ACWN committee because they were people I trust...I trusted them and I knew them... it wasn’t gender specific.” 9(S)*

*“I was advised to by another officer who had had twins actually, and she said she had got in touch with ACWN, and I did eventually...I went to, you know, women coming back to work, for new parents group...some of those were quite helpful.” 14(O)*

The last two statements highlight the fact that the women above became aware of the assistance ACWN could provide through their own informal networks, thus providing examples of the women in the constabulary informally networking for themselves for instrumental benefits. It also provides examples of women extending their social capital through established links with other women.

Some of the women referred to the network’s ‘Step Forward’ courses. These development days had previously been run by HR and Training and called ‘Springboard’ as part of the general development programmes run by most police constabularies, and had recently been handed over to ACWN. Linked to this development is the concern that, as a result of Police Service budget cuts, the gender equality role and remit of women’s networks are disappearing and that women’s networks are now being used to deliver functions which had previously been the responsibility of other departments (Laverick and Cain 2014). Once again, despite gender equality and diversity being espoused by the Government and the Police Service, the reality at constabulary level is that diversity initiatives are being weakened as they are being used to provide general training and development throughout Angleshire Constabulary.

### **Barriers to ACWN participation**

The issue of finding time to follow ACWN activity on the constabulary’s computer network has previously been discussed. However, it would seem that many of the women also encounter similar problems when it comes to participating in ACWN events:



*“I’ve asked for time to go [to an ACWN committee meeting] in December, but they can’t spare me, so I can’t go.” 12(O)*

*“I do read stuff on there and I sometimes think that sounds interesting, but I don’t know. I’m so busy.” 8(O)*

*“Everything is always at HQ and I would say not so much here...I’m quite limited as to when I can go because of my shift pattern. So a lot of things they do, I’ll look and then I say, “Oh, I’m on nights” so I’m excluded straight away, and I can’t go.” 7(O)*

Since police work often requires shift work and unusual work patterns for both officers and civilians, being given time off to attend women’s network events can be an even bigger problem for women in policing, as the above comments show. Similarly, one of the senior officers reiterated the problems of releasing staff during working hours:

*“I’m down to a minimum now...I’m running with two officers under strength today...we’re on the bare minimum...I’m constantly understaffed.” 5(O)*

Time constraints have been highlighted in the literature as something that affects both informal and formal networking for women at work (Bierema 2005; Singh et al 2006; Bailey et al 2007), and it would seem that this issue has been exacerbated for women in policing as Government cuts to police funding since 2010 have resulted in a continued reduction in police numbers (IPC 2013; Police Federation 2017a). This, in turn, has created difficulties when employees require time off during working hours. In addition to pressures at work, some of the women also identified external commitments constraining out-of-hours networking:

*“You know, with courses and things that are run, if they don’t suit the hours I work and I can’t get childcare, therefore I can’t.” 5(S)*

*“I’d have to find child care, which is quite hard work.” 14(O)*

That the women's formal networking opportunities are compromised and attending ACWN events outside working hours is not an option is not surprising, as domestic responsibilities restraining women's informal networking capabilities has been reported continually in the literature (Gregory 2009; Vongalis-Macrow 2013; Cahusac and Kanji 2014).

Finally, while several of the women discussed the stigma of network membership in general as a barrier (Section 7.2), one of the women related the stigma of network assistance specifically to ACWN activity, when she stated that:

*"You don't want to rock the boat [by attending ACWN events]."*

12(O)

This participant believed that attendance at an ACWN event could label her as a troublemaker or a non-conformist, This supports Bailey et al (2007), who found that network activity could be viewed by some as admitting that they need additional help, while others have described network activity as controversial, discriminatory, separatist and career damaging (McCarthy 2004a; Pini et al 2004, Bierema 2005). Once again, women's choices are limited by gendered structures and attitudes that look upon women's network members as troublemakers, as they upset the status quo by challenging existing values and behaviours within an male hegemonic organisation that holds women back.

### **ACWN future benefits**

Towards the end of the interviews with the women, I asked about assistance that ACWN could provide in the future that they would find useful. That the women highlighted solely instrumental benefits did not come as a surprise to me as the data has previously shown that they have access to both formal and informal capital for emotional support, such as TRiM, male and female colleagues and, in some cases, partners who are also in the Police Service:

*"The only thing I would say, and perhaps I've missed something, but they don't do enough...ehm...things where we can get together and have these sort of development days. I would be up*

*for going to more...sort of...where they have speakers come along.” 1(S)*

*“I would have [joined ACWN] if I was going for promotion or that sort of thing. Promotion is so rare in the Force that anything you can do...So anything you can do to mingle with people...it would be useful, mentoring or something.” 1(O)*

*“With training...whatever thing comes up with training, if I can in any way justify it, I’ll just do it.” 6(O)*

*“I aspire to be a supervisor within the police, but until I’m confident about my abilities to be a good police officer, I’m not going to be ready to make that leap. Now, maybe ACWN can help me get over that hurdle.” 8(O)*

*“A pre board...definitely a pre board. You know, to have an idea of the sort of questions you would be asked.” 4(O)*

In line with earlier comments relating to WIHN, the women above refer to instrumental benefits linked to training, career development and promotion. Knowledge of promotion processes and mentoring are benefits that are frequently passed back and forward via informal networks at work. That these women believe additional assistance is required in these areas suggests they lack the type of social capital that supports and aids progression and promotion.

Several of the women interviewed who had experienced problems during maternity leave and negotiating a work/life balance also linked these issues to ACWN benefits:

*“I am just back from maternity leave. If there is anything they could have done to help me...cos it’s quite harsh...we don’t have a phased return to work...Being on maternity leave, you are very isolated. HR don’t help you at all...It would be nice if you could perhaps have someone to go to [at ACWN] and say, right, what are my options.” 2(O)*

*“I don’t see why they can’t be going through the HR list and saying, right, she’s on maternity leave...they’ll be coming back in about three months time...let’s give her a ring at home and say ‘Hi we’re from ACWN, what can we do to help your work/life balance’...” 3(O)*

*“They’ve obviously started doing something around the maternity thing, which I think could be helpful...they have said it was for both partners...it’s not just about women going along to them...and I think that’s really good.” 11(O)*

Gender specific issues such as pregnancy and maternity leave have been highlighted at macro, meso and micro levels as an issue for women in policing (HMIC 1992; Hanson 2010; Gender Agendas 2 & 3 2006/2014) and ACWN had recently launched a programme of drop-in-days for women on maternity leave. The woman above was talking about these KIT<sup>19</sup> days, however, she was the only woman who referred to the programme and even then was vague about the details, although this could be because the scheme was in its infancy. Moreover, there was the perception amongst the women that it was the job of HR and line managers to provide ongoing communication, which reiterates the view that other overstretched departments are making use of gender diversity initiatives such as women’s networks (Laverick and Cain 2015).

Despite the discussion above, one of the senior officers was sceptical that ACWN would be able to help women with either career progression or work/life balances at the moment:

*“It’s interesting at the moment because the police as a whole is in a position where there aren’t really that many promotion prospects...and it’s interesting that they [ACWN] are looking at stuff around work/life balances [shrugs her shoulders negatively].”  
11(O)*

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<sup>19</sup> KIT relates to Anglshire Constabulary’s Keeping In Touch days, when women and men are invited to ‘drop in’ to the constabulary during maternity/paternity leave in order to keep in touch with colleagues in the workplace.

The officer above is referring to two of the main issues affecting women in policing today, which are a lack of promotion opportunities and difficulties in negotiating flexible and reduced-hours contracts, exacerbated by budget cuts that have resulted in reduced numbers of officers and staff and a stagnant movement of officers into higher ranks (Brown and Woolfenden 2011a; Gender Agenda 3 2014; Silvestri et al 2013; Neyroud 2011). In addition there is evidence that the budget cuts are not only affecting women's roles directly but also indirectly, as equality and diversity initiatives are also being compromised due to lack of funding.

## **7.5 The future for women and women's networks**

Despite the rhetoric from the Government and the Police Service promoting gender diversity and equality in the workplace, the reality is that material cuts to police funding are hindering the progress of women in the Police Service (Neyroud 2011; Laverick and Cain 2015). I therefore believe that the effect several years of austerity have had on women in policing merits its own discussion.

### **Budget cuts and changes**

That recent police budget cuts are negating equality gains for women is evidence of the negative macro influences of society and Government policies on women, as increasing demands in all areas of social care and emergency services have necessitated reductions in police Government funding, leading to reductions in police numbers. Moreover, it has been argued that recent changes to police pay and remuneration structures (Winsor Review 2012) are having additional repercussions for women (Brown and Bear 2012; Laverick and Cain 2014). There is evidence from the women's narratives below that both funding cuts and changes to pay and remuneration structures are affecting the women in this study:

*"I had a break and went on secondment because I actually was getting to a point where the pressures were getting really great within*

*the Force because of the money saving and all the cost savings all the time.” 6(S)*

*“If you look at the changes in our conditions of service, where you get an unsociable hours payment if you work night times and unsociable hours, and a lot of women don’t do that, so yes, it is going to adversely affect women.” 13(O)*

*“Well, I’d love to stay here...we’ve got a few issues with our jobs at the moment, so fingers crossed it will all work out for us.” 5(S)*

*“The police cuts and you know...I just don’t know whether certain units are still going to be.” 14(O)*

The first comment by a staff member who has a young child and is on a reduced-hours contract described how she was expected to exceed her contractual hours in order to complete her tasks (Dick and Hyde 2005), despite having family responsibilities outside of work. The second comment supports the contention that changes to pay and remuneration structures have had a negative affect on woman whilst benefitting men (Brown and Bear 2012; Laverick and Cain 2015). Stress and low morale amongst those in policing due to recent budget cuts and remuneration changes has been recently highlighted by both the Police Service and the media (BBC 2016; Buhagiar 2017; Police Federation 2017b), and this study provides empirical evidence of this amongst the women I interviewed. For example, another officer highlighted the stress that she, as a woman, was experiencing whilst on limited duties during her maternity leave within her specialist unit.

The final comment reflects one officer’s concern that, as she was on a reduced-hours contract, the budget cuts might influence her return to work since specialist units were experiencing particularly harsh cuts in staffing (Shaw 2014; Sandhu 2015). Her concern stemmed from the fact that she would be more vulnerable than her male colleagues if and when staffing cuts were made because she worked limited hours within a specialist unit. This underlines the stress women, rather than men, experience at work when children are brought

into the equation. It has been established that securing a viable work/life balance can be more difficult for officers in specialist units (Clemence 2013; Dick 2015), and when combined with a decrease in numbers, this officer's concern over her future is understandable.

The next section will provide empirical evidence that problems women face relating to roles and job security, family responsibilities and securing flexible work contracts in order to continue their careers as police women have been exacerbated as budget cuts obstruct their negotiations for a work/life balance.

### **Encroaching on work/life balances**

There is the perception within the Police Service that work/life balances are becoming more difficult to negotiate (Clemence 2013). This was supported by Laverick and Cain (2015), who found evidence that, although gender was no longer perceived as a barrier to women's career progression, the Police Service was failing to resolve the issues for women (and men) who cannot work full-time due to family and caring responsibilities. This was reiterated by several of the women in this study:

*"Now that we've got big savings to make...I don't think they are as flexible in terms of granting the work/life balances." 13(O)*

*"I think, a lot of people, if they thought they could, would take a two or three year career break...I don't know how easy it is to get one now." 1(O)*

*"The police have now stopped career breaks so I can no longer take a career break...They used to offer term time contracts [school term time]. Unfortunately they have put a stop to that at the moment." 6(S)*

*"Your whole pool is lower...We've now got very, very little opportunity to offer flexible work to anybody." 9(S)*

One of the objectives advertised on ACWN's poster (Appendix 1) is to "...develop and achieve work/life balance..." for its members. While the women

above believed that achieving a flexible work/life arrangement had actually taken a step back and become increasingly more difficult as a result of the budget cuts, one of the senior officers was sceptical that the women's network could improve the current situation:

*"They'd [ACWN] have a really difficult job persuading anybody that they were going to be promoting work/life balances...they would find it impossible in this climate at the moment." 1(O)*

In support of the current literature, the officer above explained that several work/life contracts had been taken away recently and that she was currently having difficulty securing flexible-hours contracts for two of her officers who had just returned from maternity leave. Considering the difficulties women and line managers face when negotiating flexible or part-time contracts (Dick 2009; Laverick and Cain 2015), it is not surprising that one officer, on being asked if she would recommend the police service as a career for women, was hesitant.

*"When I first joined I would have said yes...but with all these cuts and all of that...It's just, there's a lot of change at the moment." 7(O)*

while one of the more junior officers believed that:

*"People don't necessarily look on being a police officer as something they're going to be doing for the rest of their life now." 11(O)*

It is evident that securing a work/life balance has become more difficult as police numbers continue to fall (Police Federation 2017a; Laverick and Cain 2015). As a result, ACWN benefits linked to long term career prospects, such as assistance in securing flexible work contracts, increased opportunities to network and enhanced career development and progression could seem less attractive if women do not envisage policing as a long term career.

### **Diminishing promotion prospects**

Boag-Munroe et al (2016) found evidence that a lack of promotion resulted in a decrease in morale amongst police officers, which "...in turn, has a significant impact upon police officers' intentions to leave." (p.8). Several of the women in



this study had this to say on their own personal situations regarding their careers:

*“The sergeants have got the same issues with people like me sitting in sergeants’ spaces that are [higher ranking] qualified inspectors.”*  
5(O)

*“Two of us had to step down [from acting roles] because of costs...I’m doing the same job, but just not getting paid for it...I don’t think there is a lot they [ACWN] could do about it at the moment...I’ve sat my exam and passed it, but basically I am at the point where we’ve got to be offered a board and they’re not going to be offering boards.”<sup>20</sup>* 4(O)

*“I would be really interested in it [promotion] but it’s really difficult at the moment as there aren’t any...I don’t want to fork out and have a lot of time revising and then pass and not actually be able to get a position.”* 14(O)

*“It’s difficult at the moment because there aren’t any positions available...it maybe change in five years time...but your exams may be expired.”* 12(O)

The above comments provide evidence that, despite successfully developing their careers in the hope of promotion, these women’s successes are not recognised as they remain in positions below their levels but are expected to carry increased responsibilities. The women’s experiences could be compared to Theresa May’s “more with less” strategy (Travis and Dodd 2015) as police constabularies get more for less from their employees as a result of diminishing numbers and increased demand. The comments below also indicate that it is not only the more junior officers who are being held back, and that this lack of opportunity is affecting women at all levels:

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<sup>20</sup> The Board interview is part of the promotion process when officers who have passed the relevant exams are interviewed in order to move up a rank, and subsequently apply for positions at the higher rank.

*"If the situation was like it was three years ago, I would do my inspectors exams, and look for promotion, but it's not. I'm forty-six and they [exams] only last five years...I think this is me now." 1(O)*

*"Obviously they're not...maybe not for another five to ten years, and by that time I'll be retired." 5(O)*

From the data, it can be concluded that some of the women I interviewed lack the motivation to further their careers. This supports Silvestri et al (2013), who maintained that, for women in policing the forecast seems to be stagnant, with promotion opportunities now biased towards men and the expectations of a more diverse leadership becoming more distant. Furthermore, in a police landscape of fewer officers and reduced opportunities, Silvestri (2015) asserted that the culture of insecurity, highlighted by the women in this study, will thrive.

Moreover, despite ACWN's aim to achieve a gender balance within Angleshire Constabulary, a lack of motivation amongst women in policing to sit the relevant exams as a result of decreasing promotion opportunities will ensure that men throughout the Police Service continue to dominate the more senior ranks, thereby sustaining "...a boys' club culture of arrogance and entitlement among senior officers." (Osborne 2016) and a culture of institutional sexism within the Police Service.

### **Diluting diversity initiatives**

In addition to the issues discussed above, there are concerns that government budget cuts have eroded gender diversity and equality gains and resulted in reductions in dedicated equality resources (Caswell 2013; Laverick and Cain 2014; Gender Agenda 3 2014). This "systematic disassembling" (Gender Agenda 3 2014 p.12) of police diversity and equality support structures was repeated by ACWN's chairperson, who described the network's finances as *"...an ever-decreasing budget."* 13(O). She added that:

*“I would have liked [ACWN] to have done more work on the under representation with women in Firearms...we just didn’t have the capacity.” 13(O)*

In addition, two of the senior women who were involved in running ACWN commented that:

*“They will use, and are starting to use the austerity thing as well...it’s a nice to do - not a must do [improving diversity]. We’ll go backwards very rapidly.” 15(O)*

*“The policy in austerity is pushing us into places where we probably were five or six years ago and we don’t want to go there.” 9(S)*

This section has shown how the recent budget cuts are a cause for concern amongst the women interviewed while having a negative impact on Angleshire Constabulary and ACWN’s aim of creating a more diverse workforce. It also provides evidence that ACWN is being used to support other departments, and the role of the network as a gender diversity champion is being diminished.

## **7.6 Conclusions**

This chapter has sought to understand the women’s perceptions and experiences of both informal and formal networking in their constabulary. The main objective is to analyse the women’s narratives on networking both informally and formally, their perceptions of and interaction with ACWN and finally how recent changes and Government cuts to police funding have affected their workplace experiences and influenced their perceptions of policing as a career.

All the women appeared to have a good knowledge of the formal support organisations and some had made use of them. While this is evidence that the women have no hesitation in turning to formal support systems for help and assistance at work, with such an extensive internal support system, it can also be argued that Police Service employees have less need to develop informal

networks for emotional support. However, the data from my study shows that informal networks of support are important assets in the daily lives of those in the Police Service.

It was apparent from the data that the women's varied sources of support were from both strong and weak ties within the constabulary. What is of interest here is that the women's informal support networks in times of stress were not gender homophilous, but were rather informal networks of police men and police women, and predominantly social capital that clearly understood the stresses and strains of the job and were aware of the internal operations of the constabulary. This highlights the strength of homophily in networking as these men and women are united by being part of a distinctly homophilous group of police women and police men, sustained by a strong occupational culture in a unique position, separated from "*...the outside world...*" 8(O), that creates feelings of solidarity and loyalty.

While emotional support is an aspect of networking at work attributed more to women than men (Ibarra 1992; Plickert et al 2007), it has been suggested that men network predominately for instrumental benefits (Ibarra 1997; Broadbridge 2004). In contrast, the women in this study experienced both instrumental and emotional support from their informal networks of both male and female colleagues and strong and weak ties. However, while the majority of the women turned to their social capital of both sexes for both instrumental and expressive benefits, most of the women recognised the benefits of having female role models for inspiration and motivation.

Although women in policing lag behind men when it comes to promotion, from the empirical data presented in this study, the dominance of men in more senior positions is not necessarily down to women's inability to network informally or to recognise the benefits of networking. Rather, there is evidence that other structures within policing hold women back whilst favouring men, such as exclusion from out-of-hours networking, a lack of same-sex social capital and mentors at higher levels and a promotion process that endorses the conventional career paths of men. When the women talked about female role

models within Angleshire Constabulary, only two high profile senior women were mentioned, which suggests a lack of visible senior women role models in this particular constabulary. Although the women had extensive networks of both men and women, most of them acknowledged the traditional gendered barriers to networking, such as the exclusion of women with additional family responsibilities from out-of-hours socialising, while the more senior women spoke about a lack of female social capital at their level as they moved up through the ranks dominated by men (Broughton and Miller 2009; IPC 2013).

While the women in my study saw both expressive and instrumental benefits to WIHN membership, it was evident that they had both positive and negative perceptions of women's formal networks, in line with common perceptions discussed in Chapter 2. Similar disadvantages were also linked to ACWN membership. Despite the existence of male-dominated informal networks, particularly at senior levels of policing, that covertly segregate men and women to the benefit of men and the detriment of women, the women failed to recognise that men in policing do have their own extensive, gender homophilous informal networks that often continue after hours in bars and on the golf course, to name but a few, within a culture that is deeply gendered and needs to change (Loftus 2008; PolicingUK 2013; McDermott 2013; Gender Agenda 3 2014; Laverick and Cain 2015). These negative perceptions that stigmatise ACWN membership is evidence of the strength of a police culture that labels women who associate with their formal network as troublemakers and disloyal to the pack, and creates covert barriers to women networking. While the Police Service and constabulary management espouse support for women's formal networks, police culture and sub-cultures work against them.

Despite some negative perceptions of ACWN membership, there is evidence from the data that most of the women would make use of the network if they thought it could provide real benefits. However, it was apparent that most of the women had scant knowledge of what ACWN was about, which is supported by the fact that very few of the women picked up ACWN emails and information on the constabulary intranet. Moreover, that the chairperson asked me if I would find out from the women I interviewed what they thought of the newly revised

aims and objectives recently advertised throughout the constabulary on the ACWN posters suggests that ACWN's committee members were unaware of the issue of network visibility amongst its members.

Although there was little ACWN activity amongst the majority of the women, several of them confirmed that they would approach the network if they thought it could offer assistance with maternity leave processes, work/life balances and career development. That these women would approach their network if it were to offer the instrumental benefits above suggests that they are not opposed to the concept of a women's formal support group, but rather unaware of the benefits provided by their women's network. However, there was also the view among some that, in today's climate of austerity, approaching ACWN would be useless, as the network would not have enough power to make any improvements in these areas.

It was apparent that there were issues with ACWN visibility, a lack of communications between those who manage the network and the members and a lack of motivation and interest amongst the members to find out more about their women's network or approach the committee for help. In order to explore this anomaly I looked in more depth into ACWN and its beginnings as what seemed like a 'tick in the box' of the constabulary's equality duty requirements. The network was initially launched as part of the requirements of a new gender equality act passed to Angleshire Constabulary's head of diversity. The male senior officer (and diversity manager) had then passed the responsibility on to one of the female officers. Although this female officer had been fully committed to the launch of ACWN, and had gone on to chair the network for several years, it could be construed that the senior officer/head of diversity had not been fully committed since he had passed on the gender duty responsibilities down the line to a less senior woman. Further examples of limited commitment to ACWN include a lack of continuity over the years as minutes of the meetings were never passed on to new incumbents when chairpersons and network secretaries moved on. It was also noticeable that ACWM committee members often found it difficult to attend meetings. For example, at one meeting sixty-six percent of those invited sent apologies for

non-attendance. Of the eighteen who failed to attend, seventeen were from Angleshire Constabulary.

The empirical data from my study indicates a lack of any real commitment to ACWN at all levels. It is my view that if women fail to recognise and value their women's network and the associated benefits it brings to both them personally and the constabulary in general, then the role of ACWN, which is not only to support the women but also highlight gendered structures and existing pockets of gender bias, will be undermined. The network will consequently lack any real power to create meaningful changes for women within the constabulary.

ACWN is active, albeit out of sight, working with other departments to improve the workplace experiences for the women in the constabulary and create a more gender equal environment. However, valuable time and human resources go into running ACWN and it is imperative that these resources are used to the best of their ability in order to ensure that ACWN is a viable, successful and valued part of Angleshire Constabulary. It is evident that the women's formal network is already being used to support other understaffed and overstretched departments, supporting the contention that seven years of budget cuts and changes are not only impacting on police morale nationwide (Buhagiar 2017), but also impinging on the Police Service and its goal of achieving a more equal and diverse workplace and culture (Neyroud 2011; Silvestri et al 2013; Laverick and Cain 2015).

The research participants' perceptions of and experiences with their women's formal network, the role of ACWN within Angleshire Constabulary and the impact of social, occupational and organisational cultures on the women and their network are reviewed further when I deliver my research conclusions in the final chapter of my dissertation.

# **Chapter 8: Research conclusions: women-only networks - help or hindrance?**

## **8.1 Introduction**

This final chapter will provide key findings and draw conclusions from my research at a time when formal women's networks in the UK are thriving and the Police Service is experiencing fundamental changes in an environment of austerity, budget cuts and decreasing numbers of police women and men. The next section explains my conclusions concerning the women's perceptions, experiences and expectations of their formal women's network, and identifies how gendered police cultures, attitudes and structures and the social stereotyping of women and men impact upon the women's relationships with their network. I review my research's original contributions to both management practice and knowledge, with particular focus on formal corporate women's networks and the UK Police Service, and finally discuss the study's limitations and implications for further research.

The study explores the concepts of police women networking and their relationships with their formal constabulary women's network from a multi-level perspective. It is evident from the empirical data that the efficacy and impact of ACWN and its relationship with its members are not only dependent upon the members' perceptions, experiences and expectations in the workplace, but also upon the occupational and organisational cultures within which the network is embedded. It is also dependent on the structures and practices that these cultures sustain and how these work together to influence the women's workplace experiences and their relationships with their formal network.

## **8.2 Research conclusions**

Discussing the women's previous life and work experiences has provided me with unique and individual insights into their past experiences and the human



capital the women of this study have brought to their careers as women in policing. My study provided evidence that women in policing often bring human capital in the form of business skills as well as personal characteristics such as self-assurance into the workplace, gained from prior work experience. Those who came from police families also bring with them a good comprehension of police culture and sub-cultures, the ability to fit into life in the Police Service and the skills to cope within an environment dominated and run by men in a police culture that has been described as male, white and heterosexual (Loftus 2008).

Despite the above aspects of human capital being valued in the Police Service, and while most of the women concurred that the Police Service was certainly a more equal and positive environment for women nowadays, they still encountered sexist attitudes and behaviours at work and isolation as they moved up into more senior positions. In a profession dominated by men at the top, this suggests a police culture that has still not fully accepted women into the Police Service as equals with their male colleagues, where pockets of gender discrimination still exist and create barriers for women in policing.

While several of the women suggested that pockets of sexism came from older, male officers and that the old boys' network still existed to a lesser extent, they believed that its influence and power had diminished considerably. However, none of the women acknowledged the existence of the powerful and influential informal, male-dominated networks of senior officers and leaders at the top and in constabularies, referred to as "...a boys' club culture of arrogance and entitlement among senior officers." (Osborne 2016) in Osborne's interview with Sue Sims, former Chief Constable of Northumbria Constabulary. This lack of recognition, I suggest, is due to the normalised perception of men in senior ranks and senior management teams in policing, and the continued construction of 'think senior manager – think male' in policing today, which is sustained by a homophilous male culture that serves to exclude women, or isolate and ostracise those who do move into senior ranks.

This is exacerbated by the stereotypical assumptions of the general public and the social construction of the roles of men and women, which views policing as

a man's job. Similarly, while the women spoke of the overtly macho cultures of many of the specialist units that discourage them from considering these roles, despite the fact that the skills gained in these roles are valued in the Police Service, there was no acknowledgement that these units are 'boys networks' with their overtly macho sub-cultures that exclude women from their ranks.

The above discussion focuses on the more covert aspects of police culture that continue to create barriers for women. However, the biggest and most obvious barriers to progression the women perceived was society's stereotyping of women, which looks on women as predominately responsible for caring for family and a police culture that did little to accommodate women who have family responsibilities. There was consensus amongst the members that policing was not a job for women with children and that having children was one of the main barriers for women who chose policing as a career.

Despite the contention by some that women make free and unrestricted choices to put family life before their careers, most of the women in this study viewed policing as a long-term career choice. However, several had chosen positions that were suited to the dual roles of mother and worker, thus confirming that their choices were restricted to those roles that provided a suitable work/life balance and that their choices were compromised by a police culture that values the traditional work patterns of men. It is also evident that gendered perceptions of women in policing is a synergistic interaction between society and a gendered Police Service culture, and one that is not mutually beneficial to women in policing.

### **Work/life balance and the job of policing**

The perception of policing as a full-time occupation requiring total commitment (Holdaway and Parker 1998; Dick 2015) serves to restrict women's choices, influences their career paths and requires them, more than men, to make compromises. The empirical evidence from my study suggests that negotiating a feasible work/life contract in order to accommodate family responsibilities was tenuous and that there seemed to be few formal guidelines for line managers and employees alike. The women blamed this on recent police budget and

manpower cuts, however, the constabulary policy does not guarantee flexible working for those with children and other external responsibilities. This provides evidence that securing a work/life balance within the constabulary is not an acknowledged aspect of the psychological contract between employee and employer, but rather a benefit or perk which can be given and taken away as and when required.

Similar experiences were highlighted when some of the women discussed their experiences of being pregnant and on maternity leave. Most of the women had received little or no support from their line managers during maternity leave and had relied on their own informal networks of friends, colleagues and in some cases partners to keep them in the loop. All of the women who had discussed maternity leave also indicated the failings of HR during this time and it was left to ACWN's chairwoman to organise KIT (Keeping in Touch) days for those women on maternity leave. The women's experiences at this time are not only evidence of a police culture that does not understand the needs of the women in its ranks, but also shows that the women's formal network is not taken seriously as a gender equality initiative. ACWN was, rather, being used as a dumping ground when HR and Training are overstretched, and the original role of the network as part of the constabulary's diversity strategy was being overlooked and undermined. This was further substantiated, as I was advised that ACWM now ran training and development seminars for its members, although they were open to both men and women in the constabulary, and that these seminars had previously been the remit of the training department.

Despite the Government and the Police Service's continued acknowledgment that more has to be done to accommodate women with families and that the Police Service needs to provide a more gender diverse service and increase the numbers of women in all ranks (HMIC 1995; Angleshire Constabulary Equality Scheme 2010; Hanson 2010; Gender Agenda 3 2014), there is evidence that little is being done at constabulary level to support these top down objectives. There was little recognition by constabulary management that they had an ethical responsibility to accommodate those women with family responsibilities who need to work in a difference way.

Little has been done from the top down to set out clear guidelines to ensure that the right to a work/life balance can be easily determined, and this aspect of securing a flexible work contract leaves it open to interpretation. For example, Angleshire Constabulary's 2016 General Duty Equality Report states that all police officers and staff within Angleshire Constabulary "...have the right to request a change to their working patterns or hours.", which is a prime example of the fuzziness of the constabulary's flexible work policy.

There is evidence from the empirical data in this study that the movement to create a more gender diverse Police Service with more women in police leadership and management positions now lacks momentum. Furthermore, the empirical evidence of the negative experiences of women of this study, who are required to juggle their careers with the responsibilities of family life with little support from constabulary management, supports my previous contention that women are not yet fully embraced by the Police Service and that there remains a gendered culture that accommodates women when possible, rather than accepting them as equals.

### **The gendered path to promotion**

As mentioned previously, it is recognised that the police promotion process is one that follows the traditional career path of men and blacklists those who do not follow this path. While Angleshire Constabulary promotes "An increased number of female and visible ethnic minority officers in the Constabulary on the High Potential Development Scheme" (Angleshire Constabulary Equality Duty Objective 4 2012-2016), all but one of the women who discussed the process had moved into senior roles in the traditional way, although several had been offered fast-track options and declined. One of the officers spoke about missing the bread and butter of policing, which was a view she had picked up from colleagues. The 'bread and butter of policing' seems to be a phrase used consistently (BlueLineJobs 2014; Fogg 2014; Police Federation 2016) to describe traditional police work, which is a concept in police culture that is used to discourage changes, not only in the police promotion process, but also to police cultures and sub-cultures.

This highlights the existence of a police culture that is a barrier to developing a more gender equal Police Service, and is such a strong influence that it holds back those who would benefit most from the changes. There is a lack of commitment from constabulary management for Angleshire Constabulary's High Potential Development Scheme, despite the fact that it is one of the Equality Duty objectives to encourage women to take advantage of the fast-track scheme. The reality at the micro level of the constabulary again contradicts the rhetoric from the top down, which indicates a police culture that continues to support the long established police promotion process and the traditional career paths of men. Likewise, ACWN also has the creation of a more gender-balanced workforce as one of its objectives. However, it seems that little is being done by the women's network to encourage its members to take on board a fair process which has been put in place to counteract the traditional, police promotion process that is biased against women. This indicates a women's formal network that does not fully acknowledge its role as a gender diversity tool nor understands the real gender issues that affect and influence its members.

### **Networking and networks**

I determined that the women I interviewed had access to several informal and formal support systems at work, while some had taken advantage of the formal support systems and others knew colleagues who had benefitted from them. It was also obvious from the empirical data that the women benefitted from their own informal networks and had varied networks of support that consisted of male and female colleagues in the constabulary, as well as male and female colleagues they had previously worked with or had met at police events. Support also came from networks of friends some of the women had made during childhood through being part of a police family. Others had received support in their early days in policing through their networks of family members such as fathers and uncles who were or had been in the Police Service. This suggests a strong network of police looking after their own, irrespective of gender or rank.

There was recognition from the members that there are gender barriers to women networking, such as the problems of out-of-hours socialising for women

with external family responsibilities. Some of the more senior members also acknowledged that extending their social capital by informally networking with same-sex peers became more difficult as they moved into more senior roles in policing due to the highly publicised lack of women at these levels. Despite these barriers, the empirical data shows that the women were aware of the range of benefits to be had, both expressive and instrumental, by informally networking. Moreover, their informal networks of support were not necessarily gender homophilous and often extended beyond their own constabulary to include strong and weak ties of both men and women.

There was also evidence that those women in more senior positions had received assistance, support and encouragement to progress their careers from both male and female managers and colleagues. This indicates that there are other reasons for a lack of women in senior ranks rather than women's lack of social capital and required skills, and supports my earlier contention that the existence of gendered structures and attitudes, a culture that values men over women and a Police Service that seems to be less than committed to accommodate those who have external family responsibilities are the main barriers to women's career progression.

It was obvious that many of the women had close and loyal relationships with their workplace as they referred to their constabulary as a second family. This highlights the exceptional strength and influence of a police culture that creates loyalty and a strong sense of belonging (Loftus 2010; Hallenburg and Cockcroft 2016; Pepper and Silvestri 2016) and suggests a close, informal, homophilous network of police women and men, bound together by a powerful and exclusive occupational culture. This strong bond allows women in policing to develop informal, extensive networks of both men and women and that the common factor here is the occupation of policing. It can be argued that this is a double-edged sword. Although it encourages informal networks that include both men and women, there is evidence from the literature that the strength of police occupational and organisational cultures are barriers to change (HMIC 1992; Holdaway and Parker 1998; Barton 2003; Loftus 2008; Myhill and Bradford

2013) and that there is a strong informal, male system that excludes women from achieving power and keeps men in control.

These strong bonds create a sense of allegiance and belonging amongst those in policing that prevents people from challenging inappropriate behaviours and values, since challenging the status quo and formal resistance to the way things are done in the Police Service will likely lead to exclusion from the omnipresent network of men and women in policing. If this is the case, people are less likely to want to be seen as nonconformists and outsiders by interacting with any group that challenges the status quo, such as a formal women's support group. This therefore goes some way to explaining why formal women's networks are perceived as divisive and exclusionary and can lack weight to make changes within such a closely integrated police culture.

There is evidence from the literature that women perceive formal women's networks as superfluous, if they believe that gender discrimination in their workplace no longer exists. However, the women I interviewed clearly identified current pockets of gendered discrimination, behaviours, attitudes and gendered structures in the workplace and recognised the benefits of having a women's formal network to champion them. Moreover, since the women spoke positively of several formal support systems within the Police Service, such as TRiM and Occupational Health, it could be assumed that there would be no negative connotations linked to approaching a women's formal support network for assistance when required. However, the next section reveals otherwise.

### **The formal women's network and its members**

As the main focus of my research was to explore the relationships between a police constabulary formal women's network and its members, this final section focuses on the relationships between ACWN and its members, the role of the network within the workplace and how this impacts on the women's complex association with their formal women's network. Two of the key issues evident from the empirical data were the women's lack of activity with their formal women's network and the network's lack of visibility within the constabulary,

despite the network's ability to be one of the more visible artefacts of gender equality within the constabulary.

From the data, I concluded that the contributing factors for the above state of affairs are mainly invisible, and that strong male homophilous cultures and sub-cultures not only hold women back from associating with their network, but also diminish and weaken the role of the network through a lack of support from management down. Several of the women interviewed were not aware that they were members, despite the fact that ACWN A3 posters confirming automatic membership to all women who work for Angleshire Constabulary were distributed widely throughout the constabulary. It was therefore evident from the data that there was an issue with ACWN visibility within the constabulary. For example, none of the women questioned were aware of the recently changed ACWN objectives that were openly advertised on ACWN's posters and although a small number of women were active in seeking out ACWN information, most of the women deleted ACWN emails without reading them.

Furthermore, there was a noticeable lack of activity by the members in seeking out ACWN information on the constabulary intranet. The empirical data from my study resonates with the findings of Opportunity Now's (2000) survey of senior women, when only twelve percent of senior women participants rated women's formal networks as 'fairly critical' or 'important' for career enhancement and progression, while less than half of the CEO's surveyed rated women's networks positively. In order to provide a more comprehensive understanding of the findings of my research, I looked at the three following areas of analysis more deeply: 1) The origins of ACWN; 2) Current network management; and 3) The women's perceptions and expectations of their network.

### **Origins of Angleshire Constabulary Woman's Network**

In 2006, several diversity requirements were passed down from the Police Service central management to all of the diversity managers at constabulary level. The male senior officer in Angleshire Constabulary passed the requirements relating to the new gender equality duty to one of the lower



ranking women officers to deal with. That this gender equality duty was passed down to a lower ranking woman officer suggests that this senior male officer did not see it as essential or important enough to take up his time. This act of relinquishing women's issues to a woman could also be construed as tokenism.

The rhetoric from central management indicating that gender diversity is being taken seriously contrasted with the reality at constabulary level. That responsibility was abdicated to a woman lower down the chain could be interpreted as a lack of any real importance attached to gender diversity, suggesting that gender diversity and equality is something that is not taken seriously by the constabulary senior management. It also seems that ACWN was imposed onto the women in Angleshire from the top down. While the network was a tick in the box initiative, no-one asked the women if they wanted or needed a formal women's network or for their suggestions as to how it should be organised and run. This further suggests that the women's views were not valued and that there was a lack of any real commitment from management to the success of the network and its role of promoting a more gender equal workplace for women in policing. These findings support Bierema (2005), who maintained that formal women's networks were being embedded into organisations as perfunctory diversity initiatives with little real support from the top down.

The empirical data indicate that there continues to be a lack of senior management input or interest in the efficacy of ACWN, as attested by the lack of network visibility, ineffectual communications and lack of members' interest in ACWN activities. To some extent, there exists what Laverick and Cain (2014) referred to in the Police Service as organisational tokenism at constabulary levels, where there is disparity between reality and rhetoric, with the reality being that senior leaders were making a show of support for gender diversity through initiatives that received little or no support. The demand for a more diverse Police Service comes from both Government and society. Those at the top of policing need to be publically seen to be embracing equality at all levels while, behind the scenes, ensuring that power remains with the chosen few, who, as the literature indicates, are white, heterosexual and male.

## **ACWN management**

As discussed previously, ACWN's management committee consists of volunteers who are required to fit committee meetings and other network responsibilities into their daily work schedules. It was obvious from my attendances at several of these meetings that the committee members found it difficult to find the time to fit ACWN responsibilities into already overburdened schedules. Again this indicates a lack of commitment from senior management and line managers as network committee members found it difficult to secure time off, suggesting that ACWN management was seen to be of little importance and something that was looked upon as an extra curriculum activity that was at the bottom of the list of things to do.

A lack of real commitment from network management was also obvious from the fact that there seemed to be little or no continuity when chairpersons moved on. This was noticeable when I asked for but wasn't able to have the previous chairperson's meeting minutes as they had not been passed on to the new committee secretary. There was also the suggestion from one of the more senior officers I interviewed that network leadership may be seen as a career opportunity for some in order to raise their profile amongst the hierarchy.

There were indications that the ACWN committee lacked any real recognition of the main issues around gender discrimination and diversity in the workplace. For example, since the women cited their inability to participate in after hours informal networking as one of the main barriers to informal networking, it therefore follows that formal networking would be equally difficult. However, ACWN's committee had organised an after hours 'Colour me Beautiful' event for the network members on a Saturday morning. Similarly, ACWN had organised several women's development days during working hours.

While the women who had attended these events spoke about the expressive benefits to be had from networking with other women, most of the women highlighted the difficulty of attending events and seminars during working hours due to their busy work schedules. This seems to have been exacerbated by several years of budget cuts and the reduction in the number of police and staff

throughout the Police Service<sup>21</sup>. Moreover, that the chairperson was working with several of the underrepresented units to launch initiatives to encourage women to join these groups indicates a failure on the part of the network to see the reality of the situation. There is a lack of recognition that the macho cultures associated with these groups are putting women off applying, and that running open days would do very little to change the women's current perceptions or change the macho cultures of these units.

The above discussion of the work that the network was involved in and the events organised by the network suggests that the network committee does not fully understand or acknowledge the full extent of the gender issues in the constabulary. This becomes even more obvious from the women's responses to my questions on the future benefits they would like to see ACWN provide. All of the women spoke for the most part about instrumental benefits such as assistance with the promotion process, maternity leave and work/life balances. However, there was the suggestion from some of the women interviewed that ACWN was powerless to improve anyone's promotion prospects in the current financial climate. Moreover, there was the view that ACWN would not be able to either support or improve anyone's work/life balance since line managers were working with reduced numbers and were finding it difficult to manage flexible and part-time staff and meet targets. Although ACWN requested feedback on specific events from attendees, there had been no general surveys sent out to members asking for their input as to particular issues they experienced as women in policing, or the type of support the women would expect from their formal network.

## **Members' perceptions and expectations**

The above discussions highlight a lack of any real commitment from constabulary and network management, which in part accounts for the network's lack of visibility and communications between the network and its members. However, although the network lacks a feasible communications strategy, the information is available if network members take the time to search

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<sup>21</sup> Angleshire Constabulary's response to the funding challenge (July 2013) confirmed a reduction in funding of £34.9 million between 2011 and 2105.

on the intranet. The questions left to answer, which are: Why is there very little interest from members in finding out what the network is about?; What does the network do?; What help is available?; need to be addressed. Although many of the women maintained that they are too busy to trawl the intranet looking for ACWN information, a few did take the time to follow ACWN and those that had attended ACWN events spoke highly of them.

Several of the women spoke about the stigma attached to membership of women's formal networks. For example, some did not want to be seen associating with their formal women's network or benefitting from the additional support, yet formal support systems such as TRiM, Occupational Therapy and the Police Federation were accepted as the norm. This is a common perception of formal women's networks and suggests that the women have been 'socialised' into accepting workplace cultures (predominantly macho) and gendered attitudes that deem any formal support from a women's network as an admission of professional 'neediness'.

Some of the comments from the women suggest a culture within the constabulary that is antagonistic towards women's formal networks. The obvious lack of confidence in the network's ability to help in some critical areas indicates that gendered structures still dominate the police culture and are perceived as insurmountable, such as lack of work/life balances and the perception amongst the women that the police service is not a culture that is compatible with family life.

If members believe that their network is either unable to improve their working environment or there is a stigma attached to membership, it follows that interest in the network will dwindle. ACWN needs to communicate effectively to its members that it can change things for the better, receives visible support from management to do this and is highly conspicuous within the workplace. Furthermore, if there is little recognition from management that ACWN is a valued part of the constabulary's gender diversity strategy and the creation of a more gender diverse workplace is still high on the agenda, then it is unlikely that

the network members will value the network and see membership as an acceptable route to a more gender equal career in policing.

Bierma (2005) concluded that the success of a formal woman's network is determined by an organisation's culture, and I argue that ACWN suffers from a culture that fails to recognise the importance of and the benefits to be had from the formal women's network. It would seem that ACWN suffers from what Laverick and Cain (2014) refer to as partial tokenism and that a lack of support throughout the constabulary renders the network ineffectual. To paraphrase Laverick and Cain (p.13, 2014), my conclusions indicate that there is a need for action within Angleshire Constabulary "...in the form of renewed investment and commitment to transform rhetoric into reality" (p.13) and provide ongoing and visible support for its women's formal network.

This study provides evidence that women's formal networks in policing are different things to different people. The women's relationships with their networks are not only dependent on the women's perceptions, experiences and expectations, but also on a police culture that fully embraces gender equality and recognises the important role of the network in supporting women and the more extensive objective of creating a more diverse Police Service. In theory, many of the women in my study saw benefits to be had through membership of their women's formal network and confirmed that they would turn to their network for help in specific, gender related issues, such as maternity leave and negotiating flexible contracts. In practice, few of them were active members of the network. Bierema (2015) found that, in addition to members' attitudes and lack of participation in their formal women's network, the strength of male hegemonic culture in the organisation also negatively impacted on the network's power and ability to make a difference.

## **Summary of findings**

The aims of this study were to explore the networking behaviours of the members of Angleshire Constabulary formal women's network, consider the culture in which the network and its members are embedded and investigate

the influences that impact upon the members' work experiences and their relationships with their women's network (refer to Section 1.3).

The first aim was to explore the women's histories. The empirical data clearly demonstrates that women bring a range of valued skills when they enter policing gained from experiences through family life as part of a 'police' family and/or previous work experiences. These aspects of human capital provided the women with valued skills and characteristic that helped them assimilate into a life in policing.

The second aim was to consider the networking behaviours of the women. The data demonstrates that the women have a range of social capital that extends outside the confines of constabulary. They have informal networks of both men and women and have benefitted from support and encouragement from both sexes. Moreover, several of the women referred to an extended 'family' of men and women in policing. This highlights a Police Service culture of camaraderie, solidarity and loyalty which, it has been argued, is a barrier to culture change within the Police Service. Despite these findings, the more senior women talked about a sense of isolation caused by a lack of social capital as they move up the ranks in an organisation dominated by men at the top. Moreover, within the constabulary and in the wider social context, there is evidence that gender stereotyping at macro, meso and micro levels, which looks upon women as the main family carers, continues to create barriers for women. For example, the data shows that women's formal and informal networking capabilities out-of-hours are often restricted due to their family responsibilities.

In line with the third aim, the women's narratives have exposed aspects of both overt and covert gender bias that exist within the constabulary and the data reveals how a patriarchal police culture has influenced the women's perceptions of and relationships with their formal network. There is evidence of a lack of support and commitment from constabulary management, in a culture that has failed to recognise ACWN's significant role in creating a more gender equal and diverse Police Service. This lack of support has resulted in a women's network that fails to reach out to its members and lacks visibility within the workplace. A

women's formal network that is considered to be peripheral and inconsequential is merely organisational tokenism. As such, the network can be more of a 'hindrance than a help', as it provides senior management with a semblance of gender respectability and conformance to the equality duty. In reality, little is being done to monitor or support Angleshire Constabulary Women's Network. This lack of commitment from the top down affects the network members as they have a formal women's network that does little to improve women's working experiences or ensure that gender issues are highlighted within the constabulary.

Finally, the study has revealed the additional stress women are under as they attempt to negotiate a feasible work/life balance in a culture that perceives police work as a full-time occupation requiring one hundred percent commitment and continues to value the traditional career paths of men. There is evidence that, despite the rhetoric from the Police Service that steps are being taken to attract and retain women, there is the perception amongst women that a career in policing is not compatible with having a family.

There exists a pervasive sub-culture that sustains and procreates stereotypical assumptions of women, both in society in general and in the Police Service in particular, which undermines their contribution as women in policing. This culture has become systemic within Angleshire Constabulary and is, to some extent, vocalised through the dismissal and devaluation of the usefulness of its formal women's network. This is notwithstanding the string of evidence that informal male-only networks are still in existence and their members benefit from and are able to fully exploit the social and human capital they provide to promote their own careers.

## **8.3 Original contributions to practice and knowledge**

### **Contributions to management practice**

Despite the fact that the Angleshire Constabulary Women's Network had been in existence for approximately seven years prior to my research, no in-depth

study of the members' perceptions, experiences and expectations had ever been carried out at the time of the research fieldwork. In addition to this, no research into the growth and development of the network had taken place. This study addresses these issues by providing a unique and valuable insight into the personal experiences of a selection of network members with regards to their work, careers and networking and offers a membership perspective on the development and role of ACWN. Furthermore, the study provides recommendations that will enable a review and revision of the current aims, objectives and strategies of ACWN, which should make a significant contribution to the management practice of Angleshire Constabulary's senior management as ACWN comes under the banner of the Constabulary's equality duty.

Angleshire Constabulary promotes the right of all officers and staff to request a flexible working arrangement (General Duty Equality Report 2015/16), and it can be surmised from the figures, which confirm just over forty-four percent of women and thirteen percent of men with flexible working arrangements (Angleshire Equality Duty report 2015/16), that this is a benefit taken up by women more than men. The same report also confirms that, despite the UK Police Service's objectives of prioritising female recruitment, retention and progression (Hanson 2010; Gender Agenda 3 2014), for the first time in five years Angleshire Constabulary saw the number of female officers drop by just over four percent.

The need for action on female recruitment, retention and progression is seen as an important objective of UK police constabularies nationwide. It therefore follows that other departments within Angleshire Constabulary, such as HR and Equality and Diversity, as well as other UK police constabularies can benefit from the findings of my research. Due to the qualitative nature of the data, this study highlights issues the women have around progression and retention. With reference specifically to ACWN chairperson and committee members, I would recommend that they periodically distribute surveys/questionnaires to every ACWM member requesting for feedback on the following:



1. ACWN visibility within the constabulary.
2. Members' perceptions of women's formal networks.
3. Members' ACWN activities.
4. Gender specific issues within the constabulary.
5. Perceived benefits ACWN could provide.
6. Recommendations from members re heightening ACWN visibility within the constabulary.

In addition, ACWN management should address the lack of support from constabulary management and communicate with the constabulary senior management on a regular basis in order to secure commitment to the network and its management team. Finally, as there is evidence that the volunteers who manage ACWN are having difficulty juggling their network responsibilities with their work schedules and budget cuts are affecting diversity initiatives throughout the Police Service, ACWN should discuss the possibility with management that some of the roles within ACWN are not voluntary, but rather stand alone positions within the constabulary or integrated as part of the job specification for those who manage the network.

The findings of my study should also be of interest to managers in the private sector, since it is now widely recognised that there is a sound business case for attracting and retaining women in the workforce generally. This study provides a current insight into some of the concerns and problems many women in the UK workforce either face today, or will face in the future, not only in the Police Service but also in other industries and professions. It is evident therefore that the findings are likely to have wider relevance than Angleshire Constabulary and are likely to apply to women in other police constabularies, and public and private organisations in the UK. My research is undoubtedly of value to directors, management teams, HR departments, women's formal networks and other business owners who employ women, and who are interested in improving the working experiences of the women in their organisations. Furthermore, while this case study focuses on a police constabulary formal women's network, WIHNs in general have much in common and as such the

findings of this research would be applicable to WIHN stakeholders in both public and private sectors.

### **Contribution to research on women's networks**

While my study adds to the relatively small amount of academic research on women's formal networks, it is original as it is carried out within the context of a UK police constabulary women's in-house network. Moreover, its focus on the lived experiences of the network members moves the debate on women's networks from a management perspective and provides the viewpoint of the rank and file who, it can be argued, are in the best position to comment on and assess the effectiveness of their women's network. By taking a broad approach to my research, which encompasses the macro (social attitudes and Government policies/legislation), meso (occupational and organisational cultures) and micro (workplace experiences and expectations) environments of the women, I was able to identify the importance of the development of both social and human capital to police officers and staff alike and how critical networks of informal support provide not only emotional support, but also instrumental support to both police women and men. We learn that networks of emotional support that develop human capital in the form of resilience and strength are not gender homophilous, but that women and men in policing benefit from informal networks of both genders that are bound together by the sense of being part of a greater 'police family'.

A minority of the women I interviewed talked about the emotional and relational support provided through formally networking with other women. For example, they considered the human capital to be gained from interacting with female colleagues at national and constabulary level women's network events. This included developing human capital such as increased motivation and resilience through sharing similar experiences and talking about issues specific to women, as well as extending their social capital in the form of strong (constabulary) and weak (national) ties. Nonetheless the majority of the women confirmed that they would not look to ACWN for relational/emotional support or to increase their social capital and gain access to those in the know. However a few confirmed they would interact with the network for instrumental gains such as additional

training, support during maternity leave and assistance with securing a feasible work/life balance that would enable them to successfully combine a career in policing with parental responsibilities. The literature highlights the social capital and resultant benefits women are not able to accrue as a result of being outside, or in some cases, excluded, from the critical informal networks at work and proffers women's formal in-house networks as a substitute and solution. This study has proven the submission that formal women's networks can make-up for this exclusion and marginalisation of women is, at best misleading and inaccurate and, at worst wrong.

Through research methods that focused predominately on the lived experiences of the women, which included both discussions of the women's experiences of their network and researcher observation 'behind the scenes', I was able to put forward a more nuanced understanding of the effectiveness of the network. One-to-one interviews with the women and researcher observations and discussions at network committee meetings provided a more in-depth understanding of the ways in which the dominant group in an organisation can undermine the efficacy and influence of gender diversity strategies such as formal in-house networks. My research identifies how the success of the women's network was negatively impacted upon by the social context surrounding the network as it suffered through a lack of any meaningful support from constabulary management. Moreover, the majority of the women's discussions highlighted little interaction between them and their network and an even greater lack of understanding of the network's aims, objectives and activities, which revealed a lack of network visibility within the constabulary. It became obvious, therefore, that the network management was failing to reach out to the members, communicate effectively or find out the women's expectations and requirements of their network. If WIHNS are to be taken seriously by management, then network members need to be on board as an integral and inclusive part of the network and should be actively involved through effective communication from network management in ensuring the success of the network. In addition, it emerged from the data that recent budget cuts were having an adverse affect on ACWN support from within the constabulary as committee members struggled to cope with the demands of

running the women's network with increased workloads as a result of a shrinking workforce.

My study has taken the discourse on women's networks further and identified how women may not be able to draw upon their formal women's networks to enhance their social and human capital. Although we learn from the literature that WIHNS exist to counteract women's exclusion from critical, male-dominated, informal networks, this piece of research provides evidence that this is not necessarily the case and that women are unlikely to view their women's network as a viable substitute for those crucial, informal networks at work.

### **Contribution to knowledge**

O'Neill et al (2011) have highlighted a paucity of studies into women's formal networks in the workplace and their impact on women's careers, while academics researchers have called for more research based on the experiences of women at work (for example Mavin and Bryans 2002; Broadbridge and Simpson 2011). My unique study provides an exploration in these under-researched areas pertaining to women networking, their perceptions, experiences and expectations of their formal women's network, and the role of a women's formal network as a gender diversity initiative within the workplace.

As previously discussed in Chapter 1, several writers have promoted the need for more management and organisational studies based on women's experiences, which includes research focused on women's corporate networks and how these networks impact upon women's experiences in the workplace (Mavin and Bryans 2002; Singh et al 2006; Benschop 2009; Broadbridge and Simpson 2011; O'Neill et al 2011). My research context of Angleshire Constabulary's Women's Network is a unique exploration that combines both gender and formal organisational networking within the context of a major UK Police Constabulary. This adds new, up-to-date data to several areas of research, including formal networking in UK organisations and gender and networking studies in UK policing. This contributes and adds to existing knowledge and 'fills a gap' in several areas of organisational research and

management. Furthermore, while this was one case study with a relatively small number of participants, my study contributes to the little researched area of formal women's networks and their members and provides an appreciation of the issues surrounding network support and visibility, and why some women interact with women-only networks while others do not. In addition, the study also provides a broader picture of the women's current experiences and concerns as women in policing today.

### **Research limitations and implications for future research**

This breadth of this case study is limited not only to the Police Service, but also to one particular police constabulary. In addition, the sample of interviewees is relatively small, which is a common criticism of qualitative research. However, I am not claiming to provide a definitive explanation of how all the women interact with their network nor an ultimate solution to the issues highlighted by the women. My research, instead, looks to provide an in-depth, rather than a broad understanding of some of the issues that a small, mixed group of ACWN members have experienced. As previously stated, there is no claim that the findings are representative of all the members of ACWN. As such, this research looks to open up a debate on the efficacy and influence of women's formal in-house networks and provide a starting point for further studies into the little researched field of women-only networks in policing and other professions.

### **My reflexive postscript**

As mentioned in Chapter 1, I have worked in several male-dominated industries and in a profession that was, in my early days, dominated by men. Although I was aware of pockets of sexist behaviour and the existence of somewhat macho networks of men in these organisations, I failed to recognise that these gendered attitudes and behaviours were sustained by influential organisational cultures and sub-cultures. These behaviours had always existed in my own 'babyboomer' lifetime and the way I dealt with them was to unconsciously work around them, prove my worth and study. As a result of my research, I now recognise the role they have in sustaining men in dominant positions within organisations, industry and in the boardrooms of the UK. Moreover, I am more

aware of the covert nuances of gendered behaviours that often permeate workplaces, business events and networks that continue to exclude, ostracise and restrain women in the workplace.

My experience of talking to the twenty-five women demonstrates the strength of gender homophilous networking, and in particular, the positive effects of women talking to women. Although I recognise that each of the women would have their own personal reasons for volunteering to take part in my research, I believe the ease at which the women discussed their experiences and beliefs was because I was another woman, with shared experiences both in and out of the workplace. I am still overwhelmed at the women's enthusiasm and the intimate discussions I had with some of them on very personal experience both in and out of work. I will always be immensely grateful to these twenty-five women who provided me with the rich empirical data for my research as well as a very personal insight into the careers of women in policing today.

Throughout the research process, I have gained human capital in the form of research and interviewing skills, as well as increased confidence. As a result, I have recently taken on the role of project administrator on a two year social history project called 'The Island People's Story' (Appendix 11), developed by the director of the Orkney Folklore and Storytelling Centre, Lynn Barbour. As well as co-coordinating the project, I will be interviewing women and men of the Orkney Islands about the roles their mothers, sisters and grandmothers had, as Orcadian women, in a fishing and farming environment during the early twentieth century. This project will be utilising the skills I have gained throughout my doctoral research experience – and so my research journey continues.

## **Appendices**

**Appendix 1: ACWN Poster**

**Appendix 2: Women's In-House Networks – Websites**

**Appendix 3: Gender Agendas 1,2 and 3**

**Appendix 4: Email to Angleshire Constabulary**

**Appendix 5: Research Participants**

**Appendix 6: Interview Aid**

**Appendix 7: Data Analyses Themes**

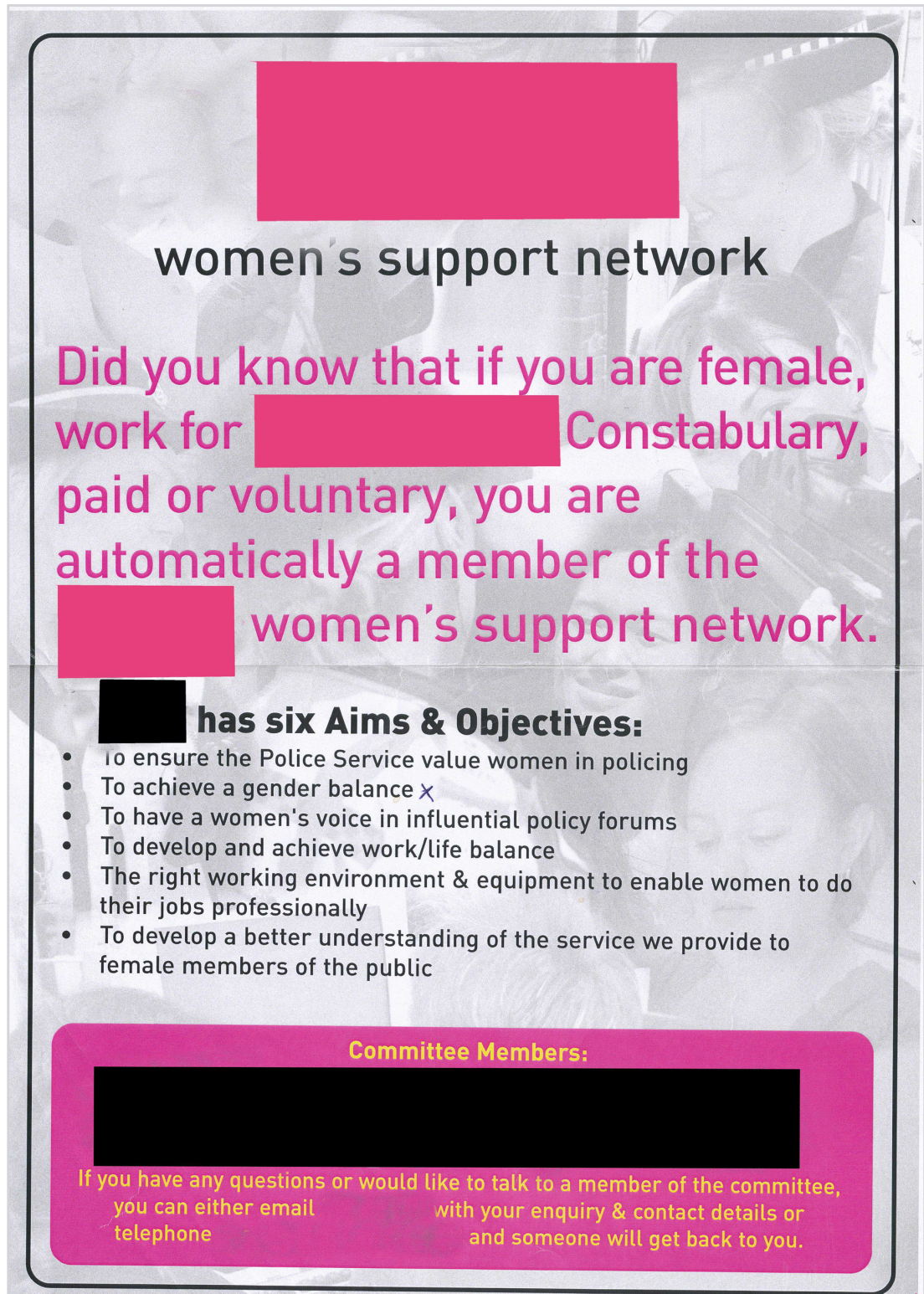
**Appendix 8: Police Occupational Health**


**Appendix 9: The Police Federation**

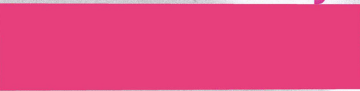

**Appendix 10: Police TRiM**

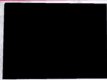
**Appendix 11: The Island People's Story**

## Appendix 1: ACWN Poster


A poster for the ACWN (Allied Constabulary Women's Network) featuring a background image of police officers. The text is overlaid on this image. There are several redacted areas represented by black boxes. The text is in various colors: black, pink, and yellow.


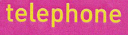
  
women's support network

Did you know that if you are female,  
work for  Constabulary,  
paid or voluntary, you are  
automatically a member of the  
 women's support network.

 has six Aims & Objectives:

- To ensure the Police Service value women in policing
- To achieve a gender balance x
- To have a women's voice in influential policy forums
- To develop and achieve work/life balance
- The right working environment & equipment to enable women to do their jobs professionally
- To develop a better understanding of the service we provide to female members of the public

**Committee Members:**  


If you have any questions or would like to talk to a member of the committee,  
you can either email  with your enquiry & contact details or  
telephone  and someone will get back to you.



## Appendix 2a: Women's Formal In-house Networks

### **GE Women's Network 2014/2017**

**The Women's Network was created to accelerate the advancement of women working at GE. By sharing information, best practices, education, and experience, we help one another develop the leadership skills and career advancing opportunities needed to drive GE's success.**

### **Professional Development for Women (2017) Women's network (2014)**

The Women's Network is all about growth. It exists for the more than 100,000 women working at GE to cultivate their leadership skills, business practices, personal contacts and career opportunities. By engaging and developing our membership in areas such as technology and sales, we are working to provide the growth leaders who will ensure GE's success going forward.

The Women's Network was created in 1997 to help the women working at GE advance their careers and the company's business. This effort includes sharing the experience, best practices, and knowledge

of successful women role models: the executive team represents a diverse group of women from each of GE's businesses and critical corporate functions. Today the rapidly growing Women's Network has evolved into a worldwide organization of over 150 Hubs (Chapters) in 43 countries helping thousands of women around the world. All Women's Network events share the goal of professional development.

Typical examples include workshops, speaker engagements, mentoring and networking activities. We also reach out to the communities in which we operate, partnering with local organizations to contribute

physical and financial resources for those in need. At a global level we have established a scholarship program aimed at supporting qualified women in college. Our goal is to support young women interested

in technical or business careers while building a future pipeline of candidates for GE's entry-level leadership programs. The Women's Network is proud to have raised \$431,622 through 2008, and to have given scholarships to 108 women.

The Women's Network has five priorities:

Enhance women's professional growth by providing information on coaching career paths, flexibility, and role models

Develop new and existing commercial talent

Foster the retention and promotion of women in technology and engineering Improve GE's ability to attract, develop and retain diverse women

Cultivate the leadership competencies that reflect GE's focus on growth

Our focus on these five growth priorities will ensure that women are well prepared to realize more and better opportunities for themselves and for GE.

For additional information about the Women's Network at GE, please email Janice Ferguson.

[Janice.Ferguson@ge.com](mailto:Janice.Ferguson@ge.com)

### **Engagement**

GE's Women's Network established a scholarship program in 2002 and has raised more than \$700,000, from employee donations, for female undergraduate students in engineering, technology, and finance fields.

In 2011, the network implemented a series of STEM (science, technology, engineering, and math) day camps for junior high school girls. Hubs and GE partner universities develop curriculum that fosters girls' interest in STEM with the long-term goal of encouraging more women to enter those career fields.

<http://www.ge.com/careers/culture/diversity/womens-network>

## Appendix 2b: Women's Formal In-house Networks

### **Lloyds Bank – May 2016/2017**

#### **Breakthrough network (2017)**

Our Breakthrough network has more than 11,500 members, and held more than 50 events in 2014. The network provides positive female role models through the Footprints in the Snow programme, where colleagues share their careers paths and top tips. It has a successful Parenting arm and mentoring scheme, and the group welcomes men as members.

<http://www.lloydsbankinggroup.com/our-group/responsible-business/diversity-and-inclusion/gender-equality/>

#### **Breakthrough network (2016)**

Our award-winning women's network, Breakthrough, is now the largest of its kind in the UK with 15,000 members and 4,000 mentors. Breakthrough held more than 50 events in 2016 on career development and mentoring. Follow Breakthrough on Twitter @LBGBreakthrough. Our Breakthrough Network was named in the 2015 Top Ten Women's Networks list in the inaugural Global Diversity List published by the Economist.

<http://www.lloydsbankinggroup.com/our-group/responsible-business/inclusion-and-diversity/gender/>

### **Marks and Spencer 2015/17 (No change – both websites dated June 2015)**

"Hi, I'm Fiona and I've been with M&S for 10 years, how time flies! I work in HR and I am currently the International Employee Relations Manager for the business. This role is really varied, so I get involved in everything from complex business change programmes, writing policies to make sure we have an attractive people proposition, to working on our diversity and inclusion strategy..."In 2014, I launched our first women's network, which was set up to promote the progress of women, and to provide informal mentoring and networking opportunities. This network gives my colleagues access to a range of inspirational role models, whilst also creating a forum to explore and address the career challenges women face..."At M&S we recognise the importance of having a diverse workforce and are committed to creating equal opportunities for everyone. This begins with our recruitment and selection procedures, and runs through the core of what we do. "We understand that our differences make us stronger, encouraging everyone to be who they want to be. We respond to the needs of our employees and customers, taking pride in the role we play in the community through our employability programmes including Marks and Start and Make Your Mark (<http://careers.marksandspencer.com/helping-you-find-work>).

"As part of the diversity and inclusion strategy, I am working in my team to develop initiatives and procedures to enhance opportunity, creativity, innovation, diversity and personal development. The case for driving a culture inclusive of varied talent is well established; a diverse leadership team gives us an advantage to help place us as an employer of choice. "We've invested in a number of pilot schemes, including cross business mentoring, run by the Government backed 30% Club, which aims to increase the number of women in FTSE 100 Boards. We've also partnered with a local school to provide 1:1 mentoring support for around 50 female students between the ages of 15 and 17. In addition, we've just piloted our first development programme solely for women.

<http://careers.marksandspencer.com/inside-mands/our-differences-make-us-stronger>

## Appendix 2c: Women's Formal In-house Networks

### **The Royal Bank of Scotland 2016**

#### **Focused Women**

The Focused Women's Network was launched in March 2007 to support RBS in actively attracting, retaining and developing talented female members of staff. The network supports the development and career advancement of all RBS employees by giving them further opportunities to network internally and externally, to get involved in activities that will enable them to excel and challenge themselves, and to gain access to additional personal development.

We welcome men as members to the network as they can often provide support to women who wish to progress to senior levels, and for those men also wanting to progress, all of our development activities are relevant to both women and men.

<http://jobs.rbs.com/pages/diversity-and-inclusion>

### **The Royal Bank of Scotland 2017**

#### **RBS Women Network**

The RBS Women Network was launched in 2017 bringing together the bank's various gender networks under one overarching banner including Focused Women, Women in Technology, Coutts Women's Network, Compass and Business Women Can. The network's aim is to attract, retain and develop talented female members of staff and we support the bank's aspiration to have a fully gender balanced workforce by 2030. RBS Women is open to all colleagues regardless of sex or gender identity, and provides high quality personal development training, internal and external networking opportunities, and access to senior leaders and mentoring. We ensure female talent and successes are recognised internally and externally and promote RBS as an inclusive and attractive place for women to work.

<http://jobs.rbs.com/pages/inclusion>

### **Xerox 2017**

#### **The Women's Alliance. Since 1984.**

For more than three decades, women at Xerox have joined hands in The Women's Alliance to share ideas and support one another's professional growth.

In that time, the group has grown exponentially.

It's part of our vision for a richly diverse workforce. A purpose for which we're recognized as one of the most progressive corporations in the world. Hundreds of women from all over the company meet each year for networking, study and camaraderie at our Annual Women's Conference.

#### **Our Vision**

Women at Xerox are represented, recognized and valued at all levels of the corporation for their contributions and leadership.

#### **Our Mission**

The Women's Alliance is a catalyst to advance the personal and professional development of women at Xerox, enabling each of us to attain our goals.

<http://www.thewomensalliance.net/about/>

## Appendix 2d: Women's Formal In-house Networks

### **Tesco 2014**

Women in Tesco, our women's network, aims to help women across the business progress by providing opportunities for skill development, mentoring and networking. In 2010/11, we began our first Women in Leadership development programme to encourage talented women in the UK to fulfil their potential and progress into more senior roles. We are particularly keen to promote women in countries where traditionally very few women have held senior positions. In South Korea, we appointed our first female director in 2009, and have since promoted another female director through our Options programme.

At Tesco in the UK, there is only a 2% difference in pay between men and women. Anything less than 3% is deemed statistically insignificant.

<http://www.tescopl.com/site/library/policiesandfactsheets/inclusion.htm>

### **Tesco PLC – 2017**

#### **Women in Tesco Network**

Women at Tesco have told us that they want to feel inspired and empowered to drive their careers forward. They want to be able to get advice and listen to life stories from both leaders and their peers in order to help them make the right choices. We will facilitate the opportunity for all colleagues to be part of our wider network and encourage colleagues to build their own network which supports them through every stage of their career. The Women in Tesco network champions gender diversity and promotes a culture of diverse and inclusive thinking, where women feel confident to share their views and articulate how they add value to the business.

We are a member of [Everywoman](#), the world's largest network and learning and development platform for women in business.

<https://www.tescopl.com/tesco-and-society/reports-policies-and-disclosure/inclusion-policy/>

## Appendix 3a: Gender Agendas 1 and 2

Gender Agendas 1, 2 and 3, launched by the BAWP between 2001 and 2014, highlight the continued existence of gender inequalities within the police and the barriers women face as a result of gendered perceptions and processes.

Gender Agenda 1: Gender Agenda 1 (2000/1) outlined the main issues affecting women officers in the UK Police Service and focused clearly on “the specific needs of the 16% of women officers within the Service” (p.1). The document’s five aims included demonstration by the Police Service of how it values women officers; the achievement of a gender balance across ranks and specialisms; the inclusion of women in influential policy making; the recognition of the demands of having both a work/life balance and a successful police career, and finally the creation of an environment and the provision of equipment of a quality and standard which would allow women to carry out their work in a professional manner.

Gender Agenda 2: Gender Agenda 2 (2006) builds on the work the original Gender Agenda started and provided for the inclusion of civilian staff, which meant that all female personnel employed in the police service would now be represented. GA2 cites the under-representation of women in the police force, and in particular, in higher ranks, as one of the barriers to progress for women in the police force and aims “To achieve a gender, ethnicity and sexual orientation balance across the rank structure and specialisms consistent with the proportion of women in the economically active population” (p.1). However, it highlights concern that, at the current recruitment rate, it will take 14 years at to achieve 35% women officers, a figure deemed to be a more balanced percentage and supported in the literature as an objective towards a more gender equal police service (Hanson 2010; Brown and Woolfenden 2001). To achieve a representative service within five to seven years, GA2 states that a “twin track approach of a) positive action and b) affirmative action” (p.7) must be embraced, while noting that affirmative action (the recruitment of a disproportionate number of proficient women over a determined period of time) was currently not legal.



## Appendix 3b: Gender Agenda 3

Gender Agenda 3: Gender Agenda 3 (2014) based on research carried out by Laverick and Cain (2014) on the progression of Gender Agenda 2, confirms that, in spite of an increase of women in high profile and leadership roles, “as a result of efficiency savings in many forces, police staff roles have reduced, which has predominately affected women (p.3). It also recognizes that several constabularies do not have any women at ACPO level, and there is still a shortage of women in some specialist posts. One of the focus groups perceived that, although gender per se no longer remains a barrier to recruitment and progression, family and caring obligations do. There was also the perception amongst some of the survey participants that developing a diverse workforce was no longer seen as important and that ” the police service is regressing rather than moving forward with this issue” (p.3). Gender Agenda 3 concludes with eight pages of issues raised by the research along with recommendations and actions, some of which are:

- The introduction of ‘direct entry’ into management and leadership roles will have a negative impact on current promotion prospects is detrimental to workforce morale. In addition, direct entry training requirements may also hold back parents and those with additional caring responsibilities (p.10).
- There is a lack of consultation and contact with women on maternity leave regarding working patterns and allocated roles, along with delays in processing flexible working applications (p.17).
- There has been a scaling down in the size and remit of national and force level equality and diversity resources, and in some forces equality and diversity has been merged with other functions such as HR (pp.9/12).
- The reduction of financial support for staff support networks as well as pressures on the networks due to workforce reductions and increased workloads (p.13).

## Appendix 4: Email to Angleshire Constabulary

**Monica Holloway – 1 Loring Road, Berkhamsted, HP4 2HR, Herts**  
Email: [monica.holloway@btinternet.com](mailto:monica.holloway@btinternet.com) Tel: 01442 866163

**Doctor of Business Administration Research: Women Specific Business Networks**  
**University of Hertfordshire, De Havilland Campus, Hatfield, Herts.**  
Member No: 07166827 Ethics No: BS/R/003 08

Dear NAME

I began my doctoral research in November 2008 focused on the networking experiences of members of formal women's in-house networks. My primary research phase, which includes interviewing members of women specific corporate networks, has now commenced and I am currently contacting chairpersons and organisers of corporate women's networks to request permission and assistance to approach their members to ask for volunteer interviewees.

If I could have your permission to include XXXXXXXX Constabulary in this research, I would be most grateful if you could advise me of a contact within your organisation or alternatively pass my request on to your women's network chairperson. I am more than happy to discuss my research with you further if you would like more information before considering my request.

My research supervisors, Dr Janet Kirkham and Dr Moira Calveley, are both based at De Havilland Campus in Hatfield and can be contacted to confirm the authenticity of my letter:

1<sup>st</sup> Supervisor - Dr Janet Kirkham, Email: [j.d.kirkham@herts.ac.uk](mailto:j.d.kirkham@herts.ac.uk)

2<sup>nd</sup> supervisor - Dr Moira Calveley, Email: [m.d.calveley@herts.ac.uk](mailto:m.d.calveley@herts.ac.uk)

Yours sincerely

Monica Holloway

## Appendix 5: Research Participants

<b><u>OFFICERS</u></b>			<b><u>STAFF</u></b>		
<b><u>Ref.</u></b>	<b><u>Status</u></b>	<b><u>Age Group</u></b>	<b><u>Ref.</u></b>	<b><u>Status</u></b>	<b><u>Age Group</u></b>
<b>1(O)</b>	Inspector	40-55	<b>1(S)</b>	Staff	30-39
<b>2(O)</b>	Constable	18-29	<b>2(S)</b>	Staff	30-39
<b>3(O)</b>	Constable	18-29	<b>3(S)</b>	Staff	30-39
<b>4(O)</b>	Constable	18-29	<b>4(S)</b>	Staff	30-39
<b>5(O)</b>	Inspector	30-39	<b>5(S)</b>	Staff	30-39
<b>6(O)</b>	Constable	18-29	<b>6(S)</b>	Staff	18-29
<b>7(O)</b>	Inspector	30-39	<b>7(S)</b>	Staff	40-55
<b>8(O)</b>	Sergeant	30-39	<b>8(S)</b>	Staff	40-55
<b>9(O)</b>	Sergeant	30-39	<b>9(S)</b>	Manager	30-39
<b>10(O)</b>	Senior Officer	40-55			
<b>11(O)</b>	Chief Inspector	30-39			
<b>12(O)</b>	Acting Inspector	30-39			
<b>13(O)</b>	Senior Officer	40-55			
<b>14(O)</b>	Sergeant	30-39			
<b>15(O)</b>	Inspector	40-55			
<b>16(O)</b>	Senior Officer	40-55			
			<b>Age Group</b>	<b>No.</b>	
			<b>18-29</b>		5
			<b>30-39</b>		13
			<b>40-55</b>		7
			<b>Officers</b>		16
			<b>Staff</b>		9



## Appendix 6: Interview Aid



<b>Heading</b>	<b><u>Description</u></b>
Family, friends and colleagues:	Discussion of 'police families', informal support networks in previous employment
Previous work experiences:	Discussion of previous work experiences; influences on current perceptions and experiences of police work; social and human capital
Police culture - past	Discussion of perceptions and experiences of gendered behaviours and practices, networking and sexist behaviour
Police culture - present	Discussion of the demise of 'old boys' networks, women at higher levels; gendered structures and behaviours
Perceptions of police work:	Discussion of the nature of policing; public's perceptions of police work; participants women's perceptions of police work
Society & gender:	Discussion of women's roles in society, the gendered nature of family and parenting expectations; the choices women make
Roles and stereotypes:	Discussion of gendered roles and stereotypes, men and women's human capital: under-representation of women in specialist units
Promotion:	Discussion of lack of women at senior levels, police promotion processes, fast track programme; promotion and parenting, and tokenism
Work/life balance:	Discussion of pregnancy, maternity leave; securing a work/life balance; flexible/part-time work arrangement
Formal police support:	Discussion of the various formal organizations and processes that support both officers and staff in the UK Police Service
Management support:	Discussion of line manager and senior management support, with particular focus on advancement and promotion, work/life balance and maternity leave
Colleague & emotional support:	Discussion of colleague support, emotional benefits, the 'canteen' culture; women role models
Informal networking:	Discussion of informal networking and socializing, the benefits of networking, barriers to networking; old boys networks
Perceptions of WIHNs:	Discussion of the benefits: women talking to women, instrumental benefits provided by WIHNs; objections to women's formal support groups
Network stigma:	Discussion of the stigmas attached to network membership; arguments for and against WIHNs
AWN experiences:	Discussion of AWN membership, visibility and members' activity
The future for AWN:	Discussion of the perceptions of future benefits AWN could provide
Budget cuts & changes affecting careers & promotion:	Discussion of climate of change and austerit; influence and impact on careers and workplace

## Appendix 7: Data analyses themes

### Headings, Themes and Sub-themes


Life and Work		Support & Networks			
Life & Work Experience	Police Culture & Police Work	Workplace Support	Networking & networks	Angleshire Constabulary Women's Network	The future for women & women's networks
Family, friends & colleagues	Police culture past	Formal police support	Informal networking	AWN experiences	Careers & promotion
Previous work	Police culture present	Management support	Women-only networks	The future for AWN	Work/life balance
	Perceptions of police work	Colleague support			Gender diversity
	Work, life & family	Role models			
	Police environment				
	Roles & stereotypes				
	Advancement & promotion				

## Appendix 8: Police Occupational Health



### Police Associations

#### Occupational Health and Welfare



The role of the Occupational Health, Safety and Welfare Unit is to support and enable the Constabulary to maintain a healthy workforce in a safe environment. Advice is professional and impartial.

We work with Line Managers to support their people responsibilities, and with members of staff to advise them on the effects of health on work and work on health.

Our aim is to develop a health promoting work culture that best meets the requirements of the Constabulary's internal and external customers.

Our team is dedicated to providing a confidential and accountable professional advisory service on Health, Safety and Welfare issues to individuals and the Organisation.

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Police and Crime Commissioner

## Appendix 9: The Police Federation

### The Police Federation of England and Wales Aims and Objectives<sup>1</sup>

The Police Federation of England and Wales (PFEW) is the staff association for police constables, sergeants and inspectors (including chief inspectors).

We are one of the largest staff associations in the UK representing 122,000 rank and file officers.

#### Core purpose

Our core purpose was amended in May 2014 for the first time since the Federation was set up in 1919, following a recommendation in our Independent Review for it to reflect our commitment to act in the public interest, with public accountability, alongside our accountability to our members.

In fulfilling our statutory responsibilities for the welfare and efficiency of our members we will, at all levels:

- ensure that our members are fully informed and that there is the highest degree of transparency in decision-making and the use of resources.
- maintain exemplary standards of conduct, integrity and professionalism.
- act in the interests of our members and the public, seeking to build public confidence in the police service and accepting public accountability for our use of public money.
- work together within the Federation and in partnership with others in the policing world to achieve our goals.

#### Aims & objectives

The Police Federation of England and Wales has a statutory obligation to ensure that the views of our members are accurately relayed to government, opinion formers and key stakeholders. To ensure this we measure the work we do and what we seek to achieve against our organisational aims and objectives.

#### Represent and Support

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<sup>1</sup> [http://www.polfed.org/aboutus/aims\\_objectives.aspx](http://www.polfed.org/aboutus/aims_objectives.aspx) 31 March 2016

# Appendix 10: Trauma Risk Management



## TRAUMA RISK MANAGEMENT (TRiM) – FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS

### Q1. What is TRiM?

TRiM is a Trauma Risk Management Programme which evolved out of a Stress Trauma Project in the Royal Marines. In the aftermath of a traumatic event, you could be faced with a number of differing reactions and the TRiM Programme has been implemented by Avon and Somerset Constabulary to provide support and assistance for colleagues who wish to access it.

TRiM is based on the principles of education, risk assessment and mentoring and the programme is peer led. The TRiM Practitioners you may come into contact with are non-medical colleagues from within the Constabulary and include Police Officers and Police Staff who have undertaken specific TRiM Training.

Participation in TRiM is completely voluntary and further details about the process can be found in the TRiM Procedure and TRiM Handbook which are available on the Intranet.

### Q2. What is classed as a Traumatic Incident?

A traumatic incident is any event that can be considered outside of an individual's usual experience and causes physical, emotional or psychological harm.

### Q3. What is a TRiM Risk Assessment?

If you have been involved in a traumatic incident you will be offered the opportunity to meet with a TRiM Practitioner to undertake a TRiM Risk Assessment. In general, this meeting should take place about three days (72 hours) post incident.

The assessment is a confidential 1:1 meeting and usually takes between 45 minutes to one hour. During the meeting you will have a conversation with the TRiM Practitioner about your involvement in the incident and your thoughts about it. At the end of the discussion the Practitioner will have completed a TRiM Risk Assessment form which acts as a guide to how you are processing the incident. This form will be shared with you and the TRiM Practitioner will discuss and agree with you what action, if any, will follow. This may include signposting to appropriate support services or it may be that no further intervention or assistance is required.

26 June 2017

# Appendix 11: The Island People's Story

## THE ISLAND PEOPLE'S STORY:

### A CELEBRATION OF THE WOMEN OF THE NORTHERN ISLES OF SCOTLAND

*"The enchanting tongues went on and on beside the fish oil lamps, then the grey of morning entered the crofts, and called the islanders back to their hard work of ploughing and fishing"*

George Mackay Brown

The aim of this two year community project is to explore, discover and present the lives of the Orkney women, their men and families who worked the land and fished the sea in the North Atlantic Islands of Orkney in Scotland.

Through telling their stories and presenting their social customs and work traditions, the roles they played in the Orkney Island life and work cycles can be brought alive and recognised. Alongside their men who worked the land and fished the sea the island women nurtured their families and sustained the island way of life on a daily basis for many generations.



Using multimedia techniques, storytelling, expressive arts and traditional Island crafts alongside audio and visual reminiscence we can bridge the gap of time - Community groups, families and individuals can listen to the spinning of their tales and stories, discover and practise their island life and work traditions. The Island people's Story is an invitation to celebrate these Island women and their families who worked the land and fished the sea, discovering how they carved and moulded who the indigenous Orcadian Islander is today.

#### **PROJECT DESCRIPTION:**

This Orkney Island Folk Art and Oral heritage project will be based at the Orkney Folklore and Storytelling Centre. Using the Centre as the hub, outreach community reminiscence programmes, Folk Arts sessions and Creative Story Circle workshops will be taken into surrounding parishes, townships and Islands.

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Note:

ACWN Website 2017 – Angleshire Constabulary Women's Network web page. It is not possible provide the website link as ACWN is a pseudonym for the benefit of this research