Sheffield Hallam University

'Girly-Girls', 'Scantily-Clad Ladies', and Policewomen

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'Girly-girls', 'professional women' and 'hard women'. Negotiating and resisting hegemonic femininities in non-traditional work space.

Bridgette Rickett

This chapter will present feminist research that will serve as a reminder of the utmost relevance of gender in the world of work today. To begin, widely cited facts and figures on women's position in paid work will be considered along with the argument that there is a need to go beyond these and to engage in the stories and day-to-day challenges that face women in paid work. To further this argument, the chapter will focus on the stories told by women who are employed in paid work traditionally associated with men. Using a poststructuralist-feminist-discursive approach, the aim is to illuminate how constructions of what it is to be a 'good' or 'ideal' worker are bound up by a gendered ideology around what is powerful, competent, successful and effective. Here, I will follow Foucualt's (1984) arguments that gendered discourses around work practices can be examined and understood as possible strategies of social control and regulation of women (and men) that can be challenged and resisted. It is argued that discourse becomes a crucial site for resistance to gender ideologies in work spaces, which in turn opens up possibilities for positive action and social change for women in paid work. Using this theoretical framework in research carried out with women working in

police work in the UK enables the telling of compelling and complex politicised stories.

Women and Paid Work

Women's emancipation in paid work has been celebrated in publication after publication of research findings that go on to describe women's phenomenal progress in various work places. All in all, women have come a long way in acquiring equal rights in paid work, making particularly striking progress in traditionally male-dominated work spaces. If we look to the US data, the National Association for Legal Career Professionals states that 45 percent of law firm associates are now women; women are better educated than their male counterparts, and women's workforce numbers across the whole world of work have improved.

However, it only takes a cursory glance at wider research findings to conclude that, despite these celebratory accounts, gender does still matter in the work place. Much of this research has attempted to quantify two main ways in which gender matters. Firstly, the research draws our attention to the so called 'glass ceiling effect', a metaphor widely used to describe the reality of the barrier that women experience in their attempts to progress above certain positions in work. Secondly, research has established the continuing presence of a gender pay gap, measured usually (and somewhat contentiously) as the relative difference in the average gross hourly earnings of women and men within the economy.

As Coleman (1998) has argued, the 'glass ceiling effect' has now become a dominant and potent way in which we talk about women and paid work. The emphasis on this effect has been driven, in part, by an attempt to further possibilities for women's representation in higher status professional,

managerial, leadership, legal and governmental roles. Understandably, this research has argued that furthering women in these roles will ensure a representativeness of gender in leadership positions. In turn, this will further emancipate other women working at all levels of paid work. Lastly, such arguments suggest that this progress will force a move away from the heavily masculinised and patriarchical structures, climates and cultures that permeate paid work spaces traditionally dominated by men. Indeed the 'glass ceiling effect' is found to be at its most powerful in highly traditional, male-dominated work such as corporate leadership (Matsa and Miller, 2011), management of political elections (Palmer and Simon 2008), human resource management (Pichler, Simpson and Stroh, 2008), and high tech industries (Fernandez, & Campero, 2012). Such findings have prompted authors such as Rutherford (2011) to argue that this effect is "actually like a thin layer of cling film wrapped around the locus of power, wherever it resides." (p.2)

Equal pay between women and men is also a potent issue to the extent that it has been referred to by Tharenou (2013) as a "stubborn anachronism" (pg. 198). For example, in Sweden, despite regularly ranking top in the World Economic Forum's Gender Gap Index, women still earn on average 15% less than men (Hausmann, Tyson and Zahidi, 2011). The UK has a larger gender pay gap of 19.29% (Office of National Statistics, 2010), while in Australia and the USA, women earn 18% less than men (or one million Aus dollars in a lifetime and 658 US dollars less per week on average). This pay gap persists despite research indicating that women often have higher levels of education than their male counterparts (Hausmann, Tyson and Zahidi, 2011). In addition, research findings from many parts of the Asian region (Ghosh, 2009) and Morocco, Madagascar and Mauritius (Nordman and Wolff, 2009), illustrate the presence of both the gender pay gap and the 'glass ceiling' effect. Again, the World

Economic Forum's Corporate Gender Gap Report indicates that it is patriarchal organisational cultures that are one of the most commonly cited barriers by women in paid work to both breaking through the 'glass ceiling' and closing the pay gap (Hausmann, Tyson, and Zahidi, 2011).

This research has provided a much needed illustration of the kinds of inequities faced by women in paid work. More importantly, we can see the beginnings of stories emerging that tell us of the less than trouble-free manner in which women take up, and progress in, employment in male-dominated organisations. However, much of this research is arguably limited to offering information on quantifiable outcomes for women that may screen out explanations that emanate from historical inequities, wider social and political ideology around gender, and positions of resistance to power sharing in organisational settings. Indeed, the influential gender theorist Connell (2006) has suggested that understanding women's unequal positions in these fields is not just about the measurable outcomes for women; it is also "about the power relations that are brought into play…. about the objectification of women's bodies, and about the impact on women's identities" in these work settings (p. 838). Moreover, Salzinger (2003) takes Connell's (2006) arguments further by concluding that some of this previous research may have "stopped at the gates" (p.13) by relying on quantitative data and failing to question the category of womanhood and the social and political realms in which gendered work practices exist.

Gender, Discourse, Work and Organisation
That organisational structures and practices are gendered is an accepted understanding in contemporary feminist scholarship. Connell's (1987) work has gone on to theorise that organisations are gendered by the way in which they draw on notions of femininity and/or masculinity that are hegemonically

defined. In later work with Messerschidt (Connell and Messerschidt, 2005), she maintains that a crucial part of the process of maintaining and reproducing sexual divisions in the hierarchical structures that characterise male–dominated work is the discursive play out of hegemonic masculinity. It is argued that it is within these structures that discursively represented sets of social norms around masculinity and femininity may serve as a means of shoring up sexual divisions in work organisations. As the poststructuralist theorists, Willott and Griffin (1997), have argued the result of focussing in on such discourse is that it allows us to consider the possibility that there could be complex and sometimes contradictory relationships around power and gender, and these may be reflected in the manner in which work is discursively constructed.

It is now clear that work places could constitute one of the more interesting sites where femininities are constituted and performed. It seems that discursive practices in the workplace can be powerful tools in shaping gender subjectivities, such that workers come to embody and enact organisationally privileged modes of practice, in turn achieving organisationally desired outcomes. Reflecting this interest, over the past decade a growing body of research has examined the discursive manner in which female subjectivities are shaped, played out, resisted and reproduced in the workplace.

This small body of research has explored the discursive construction of organisational femininities in highly professional paid roles not traditionally occupied by women, providing us with rich and challenging findings. However, what may now be required is a focus on the experiences and stories of women in everyday male-dominated work, particularly those working in the lower ranks of organisations, since these appear to represent the bulk of women working in fields previously dominated by men. In addition, it may be that the

glare of the 'glass ceiling effect' (often measured by focus on higher status/ranking/paid positions) has left stories of average working women untold.

A thorough review of the literature reveals interesting academic work that does tell us some fascinating stories from women working in male dominated work in lower paid positions or in lower paid fields of work. This research has identified several discursive patterns that appear to shape and reproduce unequal gender relations in paid work. Riley's influential work (2003) suggests that these discourses emanate from the notion of "traditional role(s) as our biological heritage" (102). This notion posits gender to have a biological basis, which results in men being the only ones able to carry out 'real work' (carrying with it power and status). Carey's (1994) earlier work suggests that women feel the need to constantly counter this notion. Her work reports that female Heavy Goods Vehicle (HGV) drivers search for feminine superiority over male colleagues to maintain any semblance of status as a competent worker. As one HGV driver stated, "You can't afford to make mistakes cos you're noticed more than a man…let's face it if it takes (me) some two shunts to get on a boat and it takes a man ten, they are going to criticise me more." It seems reasonable to conclude that one certain consequence of these superhuman requirements for women is that if they are not seen to live up to these ideals, they may be perceived as inauthentic workers who only support and service the 'real' work of others. Over the past few years, other discursive practices have been identified, such as the othering of 'feminine' tasks, an acute surveillance of women's bodies (Davey and Davidson, 2000), and the operation of what Hollway (1984) refers to as the 'masculine sex-drive discourse'. Collinson and Collinson (1996) report how this discourse dominated stories told by women working in sales. Within these stories, male colleagues were constructed as

being primarily influenced by a biological drive to procreate and as seeing their female colleagues as objects that precipitate these 'natural' urges.

Promisingly, several positions of resistance and agency have also been discussed. Ashcroft and Pacanowsky (1996) argue that much previous research has presented women in male dominated work as passive, reacting without agency to the masculine environment they inhabit. However, they argue that women can be understood as active agents, who construct the spaces in which they work, crafting their identities within larger organisational discourses. Research has supported this reasoning. For example, in commercial aviation, one of the ways this was achieved was by women challenging their feminine status and reconstructing themselves as "one of the lads" (Davey and Davidson, 2000, page 212). These kinds of active re-constructions often reside in discourse that contests the traditional meaning around 'feminine sense' (versus 'masculine brutality') and so enables a presentation of an alternative reading of gendered power and status relations. Often such discourse is employed as a means to both argue for the superiority of performance of women in some work tasks (Carey, 1994) and contest hegemonic femininities by incorporating bravery, strength, success and sexual freedom into the understanding of female gender identities. Indeed, the high profile work by Evelene and Booth (2002) with female miners signals their active resistance, not least in seeking work in such a traditionally male domain, but also in their highly politicised discursive resistance in the face of intense hostility from their male colleagues. My own research (Rickett, 2010; Rickett & Roman, 2012) also illustrates that working class women in male dominated fields often express overtly politicised accounts of complex negotiations around dominant discourses. For example, the parodying of the 'hero position' presented by male colleagues in door supervision work may

allow for women to question the status of hegemonic masculinity and its resultant claim on power and space.

Women in Police work

Internationally, police organizations are generally institutions that control and protect society through the enforcement of law. However, the institutional ideology within the police force has often been criticized for reinforcing masculine power relations and serving to privilege police work as a male domain. In the UK, as in many countries, police forces struggle to recruit and retain women, particularly at higher levels (BAWP, 2006). Although women make up 58% of police staff, only 23% of police officers are women and they generally occupy a larger proportion of lower-level positions, with only 10% of Chief Superintendents being female (see Bullock & Gunning, 2007). Further, Judith Brown argues that recent cuts to the police force in the UK will disproportionately affect women working in policing to the point where any gains that have been made may be eroded (Brown and Bear, 2012). My work has also discussed the existence of patriarchy in male-dominated work (Rickett, 2010). This research has understood patriarchy as being grounded in wider social understandings of hegemonic masculinity (Rickett and Roman 2012). However, with the exception of Dick's (Dick & Cassell, 2002; 2004) research, a deconstruction of partriarchal discourses that shape, or are arguably shaped by, these practices in policing is lacking.

Judith Brown has theorized traditional representations of policing as rendering the policewoman as somewhat of an 'oxymoron'. Arguably, it is through the construction of police work as coercive and requiring physical strength that policing is a role clearly embodied by hegemonic masculinity. Drawing on

assumptions of feminine weakness versus masculine strength, women are seen to be unable to fulfil and accomplish 'real' police work (Brown & Heidensohn, 2000). In addition, it seems that essentialist notions of femininity and masculinity may be used as strategies for justifying incompatibility with, or suitability for, particular roles. While some work has been done to address inequality and promote change, it has focused on those women who have achieved career success and hold higher-ranking positions, often attributing success to the ability to perform the job as a man would (e.g. Silvestri, 2005). As argued previously, the focus on higher ranking women neglects the stories of the bulk of working women. This limitation in sampling and focus is particularly pertinent to police work. Drawing on these ideas Stephens and Becker (1994) argue that many highly masculinised discourses around 'real policing' are predominantly centred on the work carried out by lower ranking officers. They go on to suggest that it is through the use of femininity and masculinity in the construction of particular roles, skills and qualities that femininity is presented as being outside of, or even incompatible with, this 'real' police work. In sum, exploring how masculinity and femininity are negotiated and employed in the policing context could provide valuable understandings of the construction of 'real' or 'ideal' work.

The Current Study

The aims and objectives of the research study presented in the following pages were to examine the constructions of accepted and rejected feminine identities within the male-dominated world of police work and to explore female subjectivities and the negotiation of 'competence', 'acceptance' and 'respect' in police work. In conducting the research, a post-structural and feminist-informed discourse analysis was used (e.g. Willott and Griffin, 1997) to collect data that allowed for a highlighting of key discourses on female subjectivities. However, this focus aimed not to simply explore how discourses are reproduced, but also

how they can be resisted though the performance of negotiated or contested discourse within the context of police work. Alternative discourses can question socialised normative ideology by negotiating dominant discourse in a way that troubles the power of those discourses to define and govern. In doing so, dominant, governing meanings around female subjectivities can be challenged. As Foucault argued (1970), alternative discourses can also directly contest by shaping transference of power (and knowledge) from governing forces to the groups that are being governed. Both of these discursive strategies (negotiating and contesting) can claim to be actions (or performances) that resist the locus of power by either questioning or shifting that locus of power. Therefore the focus of this analysis was also to explore any such resistance in the stories that policewomen tell.

The research involved individual semi-structured interviews with ten police women. All participants were aged between 20 and 35; they described themselves as White, British, from a working class background, and as being heterosexual; and they all lived and worked in West Yorkshire, in the UK. In addition, all worked in lower ranking positions in the West Yorkshire Police Force.

Analysis

Much of the talk from women in this study drew on the idea that femininity could be 'left at the door' and that it was more important for good relationships and good work practices that women should perform being one of the boys. This was keenly distinguished from actually being one of the boys, which was to be avoided, in part to ensure a play out of femininity as a means of ensuring acceptance from colleagues and as a refuge from workplace risk and danger. Playing one of the boys drew upon ideology around active, wily, courageous

and professional femininities that both serve to allow women to see themselves as worthy and competent workers while derogating certain normative femininities as unsuitable for the job:

> Erm, I think you have to be of a certain disposition as a women to be in this job. I mean, more than likely you're going to be working with men. And working the city centre, men love working the city centre! Cause, you know, especially, Friday, Saturday night with all the scantily clad ladies, "yey, get in!" First of all you're like "oh my god, I can't believe this." And then you're just, you know driving the van with lads pointing out nice ladies to them "one to the left, one to the right, and again straight ahead." And they're like, "you're alright you," and I'm like "yeh, I've worked the city centre before." I mean you might as well not join in but get on with it….Yeh, you've got to be able to give as much as you get, well, not you've got to, it is fun and if it's taking advantage, I mean generally you'll take it as a joke, but sometimes I know that some police officers, sort of really take offence to stuff. (Tanya)

> I quite like to enjoy, a bit of banter and a joke with the lads then that's…. ok but I think definitely if I was more feminine then it would be slightly different. (Bev)

In these extracts Tanya and Bev begin to describe an identity of the ideal police worker. This identity is one that embodies a "certain disposition," an essential way of being that makes them suitable for the role. Tanya outlines this "disposition" as being a requirement of both "working with men" and of working in certain work spaces, in this case the "city centre". She constructs

"getting on with it" as necessary for successful enactment of tasks and as a means of being accepted as a legitimate co-worker ("you're alright you"). However, in talking of herself as "not join(ing) in", she distances herself from being one of the men. In turn, this identity is drawn in relation to an othered femininity, which is constructed as not suitable to police work as a result of being likely to "really take offence" and by virtue of not having the "disposition as a woman to be in this job". There is a sense that this othered identity is problematic mainly because such a woman may openly contest sexist practice and this would render relations with co-workers vulnerable or possibly lead to her rejection. Therefore, there appears to be no discursive space available within this police worker ideal that would permit Tanya to explicitly contest such comments and practices without stripping her of the idealised status of being competent at social relations. These findings suggest that having the identity of someone who has a 'thick skin' and a sense of humour, -being able to have "a bit of banter and a joke with the lads" (Bev) - are prerequisites for the ideal worker in a male-dominated environment. It may be that in police work, along with other non-traditional work such as mining, this discursive strategy of 'playing being one of the boys' avoids the identity of the policewoman as someone who has fallen away from 'sensible womanhood' (Eveline and Booth, 2002).

There is also an agentic construction of the self here as Tanya draws upon the notion of playing along with the boys. Within this construction of self, she can leave 'female sensibilities' to inhabit an identity of 'one of the boys'. This is a presentation of a dynamic and agentic selfhood, one that moves between identities as a strategic means to gain the prized possession of acceptance and respect. Therefore constructing this strategy as 'playing along' does enable her to see herself as having the necessary skills and expertise to play along and

maybe even hoodwink her colleagues into giving her ideal co-worker status. This discourse therefore negotiates with the ideology around the male embodied ideal police worker by allowing a limited kind of womanhood to be part of that ideal. However, caution is required in defining this as contesting ideology around gendered practice since it could be argued that 'playing along' with such practices may also serve to uphold the exaggerated heterosexual posturing described (e.g. "yey, get in!"). Arguably, the function of such posturing may be to ensure an adaptation to the 'comradeship of men', by coercing women (and lower status men) into adapting to practices (such as sexist banter) to secure the power and position of men.

Two other identities are also present in Tanya's extract: female members of the public that engage in night time leisure activities in urban spaces (embodied here as "scantily clad ladies"), and the male officers. As previously discussed, male colleagues are portrayed as overwhelmingly heterosexual, even predatory towards female members of the public and singling out "ladies" in the city centre for objectification and potential heterosexual "conquests". There is a sense that these practices are largely hidden from women outside of policing and therefore are shocking when first encountered ("oh my god I can't believe this"). In addition, successful policing by women requires a playing along ("she's nice") despite feeling initial shock at these practices. Arguably the acknowledgment that such common interactions are shocking and worrying when first encountered allows Tanya to distinguish herself as someone who is playing a necessary game of being one of the boys, rather than someone who *is* one of the boys. Moreover, despite an initial attempt not to "join in" (and therefore retain some sisterly credentials with the 'scantily clad ladies'), Tanya presents the prized status of respect and acceptance as being only available through playing along and giving implicit permission to the maintenance of

similar crude examples of sexual harassment. The distinction Tanya uses is further highlighted in Kristy's talk:

> I probably prefer to work with men than women because it's not bitchy, I'm like one of the lads really, and erm yeh... not be afraid to get stuck in even when you are a bit like 'ahh not the face! Oh god I've just had my nails done!' but yeh I mean I've been told about my hair you're not allowed to have your hair certain colours, you can't have it a certain length, well you can but you have to have it tied back. A lot of things you can't sort of do like you can't come in with nail varnish on, can't wear loads of jewellery...you're not supposed to wear much make-up, (points at face) get real! But I think, to be honest, use it if you can. You know, if I go to a job, looking like a piece of shit and looking fugly, I think, well, I'm more likely to get punched, than I would be if I had a bit of mascara on and a bit of make-up on, flutter your eye lashes and like 'look darling', kinda thing 'don't hit me,' 'd'you want to go out on a date before you kill me.' (Kristy)

In this extract, Kristy states that she is *like* "one of the lads", again drawing a distinction between 'playing' and 'being' and emphasising an ability to self-present in ways that enable her to be competent in her role. She draws a heavily gendered distinction between friendly and amicable work colleagues (embodied as male and "not bitchy") and unfriendly, difficult work colleagues (embodied as female). As Sue Lees' (1993) research has shown, women's conformity to specific understandings of hetero-normative femininity is achieved through a collection of linguistic and social practices. Terms such as 'bitch' serve as key mechanisms through which women's activities and social reputations are

controlled to the advantage of men. In conforming to playing at being one of the boys, Kristy is avoiding labels such as 'bitch' and assimilating her work practices accordingly. In addition, the identity distanced and subjugated here is that of a frail, fragile woman who is "afraid to get stuck in" and therefore is unsuitable for the role. But Kristy is also careful to maintain a feminine identity that is situated within the markers of hetero-normative femininity (e.g. by wearing make-up), presented as a necessary adaptation to ensure protection from harm ("I'm more likely to get punched, than I would be if I had a bit of mascara on and a bit of make-up on"). Similarly, Debs' words suggest that she can be protected by men due to her embodiment of hetero-normative femininity:

> Plus I'm very short and blonde, I think a lot of male officers feel they
> have to protect me. (Debs)

My recent research that focussed on interviews with female door supervisors suggests that hyper-feminine markers are seen as both dangerous and limiting to the successful enactment of occupational identities (Rickett and Roman, 2012). However, what is interesting in Kristy's and Bev's statements is that such markers are presented as a protection from harm from other men. Here, the 'masculine sex-drive discourse' (Hollway, 1984) is drawn upon in the presentation of gender relations between the female police officer and "customers". Within this discourse, very particular indicators of hetero-normative femininity are privileged through the manifestation of desirable femininities as a function of risk avoidance. For example, caricatured feminine posturing of a sexually available female (e.g. "flutter your eye lashes and like 'look darling', kinda thing 'don't hit me'; 'd'you want to go out on a date before you kill me'") is referred to by Kristy as a means of avoiding being harmed by male customers. In turn, male customers are written as driven by a heterosexual

sex-drive to the extent that they can be manipulated into switching from the violent and dangerous man () to the sexually interested , and therefore safe man by the deployment of hyper feminine sexuality.

Kristy's extract also illustrates the complex nature of such gendered performance, as a switch in identity is achieved from professional policewoman to a potential sexual conquest that could be dangerously more akin to the othered, and highly objectified 'scantily clad ladies'. This struggle to maintain a self that is acceptably and safely 'feminine' (ie. not the 'scantily clad ladies' and not 'fugly') appears to be as a result of performing femininity to a lesser, and possibly more acceptable, extent (e.g. "I'm more likely to get punched, than I would be if I had a *bit* of mascara on and a *bit* of make-up on"), while consenting to masculine ideals of "getting stuck in" and being "one of the lads":

> I mean I'm not saying that it's totally and utterly equal, but it is better than what it is out there. But as long as you're not too girly (laughs) the job isn't a girly job, it's not about floss your teeth and shape your nails, it's not about that, it's about getting stuck in and doing the job and not being afraid to do the job. But I mean I'm not particularly a girly girl anyway so that probably helps. (Becky)

> I think you definitely, I think if I was more of a girly-girl then it would, I think it would probably be different. (Kristy)

These extracts present a version of womanhood that is "not afraid" and is focussed solely on successfully "doing the job". But it is clear in these extracts

that this subject position is acquired only through a rejection and subjugation of being too feminine ("not particularly a girly girl"). To be a "girly girl" is to be vulnerable and a liability, which will hinder any ability to enact certain roles required of the job. However, within that statement there is, again, an acknowledgment that some femininity is required. Thus, a line is drawn between unacceptable and acceptable levels of femininity. What is also active here is a strong resistance to the myth of the passive, non-aggressive woman who emanates from the ideology of gender division of labour that proposes 'female work' is 'safe'. Instead Becky presents a fearless, courageous worker who can "get stuck in", who resists notions of fragile and vulnerable womanhood. In distancing herself from this too "girly girl" identity, many aspects of hegemonic femininity are rejected. Reay (2001) suggests that girls who take up a 'tomboy' identity can also be read as showing recognition of, and resistance to, gender hierarchies that position being male with having more power and status. Such a contesting discourse may be recognition of the lack of respect and social power afforded to women and the limited and limiting discourse around normative femininity within the work place. As other work has suggested (e.g. Woolhouse, Day, Rickett and Milnes, 2012), it is a difficult and fraught business for women to contest derogating aspects of hetero-normative femininities, while also having to account for their own 'feminine' practices (e.g. make up) and subjectivities.

Discussion

This analysis highlights that women are not simply positioned by existing discourses around work and gender, but they can position themselves within these, variably taking these up, resisting, negotiating and tailoring them to achieve a desired identity. In sum, working within the tight and precarious discursive space between a vulnerable, unsuitable, highly feminised worker and

the competent masculinised worker position, these women manage to negotiate identities that allow them strength and courage, agency and professionalism. This work is precarious, as negotiating these identities risks the reproduction of sexist ideologies that are strong mechanisms for the control and policing of women's practices (i.e. through othering of the "bitch", the "girly-girl" and the "scantily clad ladies"). What is also illustrated by these stories is a recognition of, and a resistance to, the potential disempowering repercussions that othered subjectivities (such as the "girly-girl") offer women. Indeed, these positions are to be avoided where possible by some hefty hedge work between acceptable and unacceptable womanhood. As previous writing has suggested, the options available to women are not limitless. Rather, processes of power appear to set down restrictions upon the variety of ways open to women to construct themselves, their worlds and their options for resistance. As seen in the discourse of 'playing being one of the boys', negotiation is often a more available and common strategy than resistance *per se,* but one which is tied to agency and sometimes empowerment nonetheless.

It is clear that many problematic ideologies of gender (and the asymmetrical power relations that these support) prevail, despite an emphasis within feminist poststructuralist theorising on discourses as transient and constantly under threat from active resistance. As has been pointed out by those such as Parry, Glover and Shinew (2005), it is difficult to define some expressions of agency as either 'reproduction' (e.g. of oppressive gender norms) or 'resistance', and that the two often work simultaneously. This difficulty in definition is evident here in both a resistance to being too "girly-girl" and an acceptance of the need to perform heterosexuality to enable good work relations and as protection from physical risk. For example, these negotiations involved contesting and often othering unacceptable gender norms such as the display and embodiment of

hyper-femininity. Therefore, allowing only certain, restrictive ways of being a woman seems to be acceptable. Both of these discursive practices (reproduction and resistance) arguably also serve to reproduce oppressive gender norms aimed at policing and regulating the practices of women in male dominated work. Indeed, subjectivities represented here of 'playing being one of the boys,' while certainly enabling positive interpersonal relations, acceptance and respect, may also serve to objectify and disempower by reminding women both of their position as sexual objects whose main function is to gratify and of their precarious place in this unsafe male environment. In turn, the much prized possession of respect and acceptance is constructed as a struggle to achieve for a policewoman when ideal policing is so strongly masculinised, leaving competence in some situations belonging exclusively to the embodied masculine identity.

Playing 'being one of the boys' and 'not being a girly-girl' may serve as powerful tools that enable the restriction or regulation of feminine subjectivities within masculinised work spaces. However, they may also offer the potential to liberate from constraining gender ideals by operating as counter-discourses (Weedon, 1987). Despite prevailing power inequities currently endemic in male dominated work that serve to exclude and regulate women and their practices, the women interviewed still counter powerful and restrictive ideals. For example, the courageous worker, one who is not afraid to 'get stuck in', and one who has a 'thick skin' is offered as an alterative position for women to enable successful enactment of their police work. However 'playing being one of the boys' and rejecting of the 'girly-girl' are not socially desirable or profitable for women in our society, therefore these positions are a struggle to achieve while also inhabiting notions of respectable womanhood. There is no doubt that while these positions do afford status and respect in police work, this work continues

to be constructed in ways that make certain hetero-normative womanhood vulnerable and unsafe. Therefore it is important that in representations and talk of and around traditionally male dominated work, women and men are presented as being equally capable of enacting these important skills as well as the more socially desirable (for women) emotional work skills of promoting 'good social relations'.

The findings presented here may resonate and 'make sense' to women working in traditionally male dominated work spaces where the search for the highly masculinised gifts of status, respect, acceptance and power is an uncertain and fraught one. Writers and workers aiming to further women's paid work in male dominated spaces and enhance their experiences at work may now need to carefully focus on how restrictive and regulating masculinities can be uncoupled from the ideal worker. For example, a focus of future research and practice could be to work with police organizations by re-positioning police work as public service work (which indeed is a more accurate description), rather than the gender-saturated promotion of 'crime-fighting'. This institutional ideology promotes masculine and conservatist ideals that reinforce masculine power relations and serves to privilege police work as a male domain. Indeed, routine engagement in direct and dangerous crime-fighting is merely a myth that permits and justifies such practice. Working with police organizations and their employees to re-position police work away from these ideologies will enable a rebuilding of a work space that is not grounded on patriarchical ideology where many hetero-normative femininities are derogated but where multiple and often competing gender identities are enacted as a means to be 'good at a job'. Despite social change in gender relations and egalitarian value systems in organisational spaces, what this data reveals is the entrenched, gendered, and sexist discourse and practices encountered, negotiated and resisted by women.

Therefore, the quest for further emancipation for women in non-traditional work may be best focused on the stories told by women and men who work in these spaces. In particular, it is argued that this focus could be well placed on the nuances and complexities told about gender identity negotiation, and the agency employed in trying to perform the variable ways of being both a worker and a woman that appear to underlie much of the efforts to achieve and embody the 'ideal' worker.

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