[The Gendered Nature of Prison Work: empathy, mothering and emotions of female officers in a women's prison]

[Dr Toni Wood]

Dr Toni Wood The University of Salford

a.wood2@salford.ac.uk]

Dr Toni Wood is a Criminology Lecturer at the University of Salford. Her research explores the health and wellbeing of prisoners and prison staff. Toni is also a co-founder of the Autism and Criminal Justice System Hub and is working on a study exploring Autism across the Criminal Justice System.

ABSTRACT:

Academic literature portrays prison officers in various ways; as insensitive figures lurking in the background (Cohen & Taylor, 1972) as brutes prone to violence (Kauffman, 1988) or more positively as noble people struggling to get the job done as best they can (Thomas, 1972). Traditionally, the role of the prison officer is over shadowed by stereotypical views of male officers being uneducated, brutish and insensitive (Crawley, 2004a). Officers were traditionally recruited to the service from a military background, an environment that is as structured and disciplined as the working conditions in the prison service. Women have worked in the prison service for many years, though historically they were confined to administration roles and were in the main, invisible. After the passing of Peel's Gaol Act (1823) only female officers could work in women's prisons, and male governors were replaced with matrons. At the time, it was felt that female demureness, good temper and compassion would rub off on the female prisoners and that reformed prisoners would emulate their behaviour (Zedner, 1991).

In England and Wales there is a growing body of literature related to prison officers (Liebling & Price, 2001; Crawley, 2004a; Arnold, 2005; Tait, 2008; Liebling, Price & Shefer, 2011), however, none of this is dedicated to female prison officers. Arguably, this could be due to the fact the profession has traditionally been recognised as a male occupation, and therefore the prison officer literature has been dominated by the thoughts and actions of men. Consequently, we know little of female prison officers' experiences of working in male-dominated, masculine organisations. In particular, we know very little about female prison officers' perspectives on gender specific issues, such as pregnancy and motherhood while working in these institutions, either their own, or the women prisoners they work with. Drawing on qualitative research in a women's prison, this chapter will focus on female prison officers as mothers and their roles and relationships with women in prison who are also mothers. The chapter will explore how gendered experiences such as pregnancy, miscarriage, child birth and child-rearing (of both the officers and women prisoners), can create

unique emotional burdens for some female officers, impacting their working role, home life and relationships with the women they work with. The chapter will go on to illustrate the ways in which these female officers manage, or mis-manage their emotions whilst presenting as professional in this male dominated workplace.

KEYWORDS:

1. Female prison officer
2. Women in prison
3. Mothering
4. Gendered empathy
5. Emotion

Main Body:

Introduction

Prisons are hidden worlds, with those that reside and those that work within them being the only people to witness the inner workings of this "*total institution"* on a daily basis (Goffman, 1961). Significantly, these hidden worlds are places of employment, making them ordinary places of work for many men and women (Crawley, 2004a). Those who choose the career path of a uniformed officer are themselves imprisoned and physically confined to this hidden environment, although when their working day has finished they can walk out of the prison gates and return home. There is a wealth of academic literature in relation to prisoners and how they cope with life inside, adjust to prison life and deal with the 'pains of imprisonment' (Clemmer, 1940; Cohen & Taylor, 1972; Sykes, 1958). However, much less has been documented about the working lives of the modern prison officer (Crawley, 2004a; Liebling & Price, 2001; Liebling et al, 2011). Beyond this, the literature concerning the modern female prison officer is near non-existent.

Traditionally, prison officers came to the service from a military background, an environment that is as structured and disciplined as the working conditions in the prison service. Academic literature portrays prison officers in various ways; as insensitive figures lurking in the background (Cohen & Taylor, 1972), as brutes prone to use violence (Kauffman, 1988), or more positively, as Thomas (1972) described them, as noble people struggling to get the job done as best they can. The literature on female prison officers is more difficult to locate, though there are important historical contributions from Johnston (2006, 2008a, 2008b, 2014). Johnston (2014) discusses the history of female officers and importantly, the introduction of the female staff onto the prison wings and landings, which came much later during the mid-nineteen eighties. Previous to this, women had worked in men's prisons but remained hidden, employed for either administrative duties or on the hospital wing (Enterkin, 1999).

Some researchers argue there are few differences between the ways in which male and female officers work (Tait, 2008). However, a larger body of research suggests that within this gendered occupation, male officers often take on more of the physical role, such as control and restraint work, whilst the female officers are seen as more maternal. For example, research by Jurik & Halemba, (1984) and Carlson, Anson & Thomas (2004), indicates that female prison officers have a more personalised approach to dealing with prisoners than male officers. Similarly, Zimmer (1987, p.421) states, "some women play a mothering, nurturing role vis-à-vis inmates, a role that is in direct contrast to the macho, competitive role typical of men guards".

Although there is limited research exploring the experiences of female prison officers, even more invisible in existing literature is concerning the modern female prison officer working in women's prisons in relation to gendered experiences such as pregnancy and motherhood. This chapter draws on an ethnographic study in a women's prison, adopting Hochschild's (1983) concept of emotional labour and Goffman's (1959) *dramaturgical analysis* to explore female prison officers as mothers and their relationships with women in prison who are also mothers. The chapter will explore how gendered experiences such as pregnancy, miscarriage, child birth and child-rearing (of both the officers and women prisoners), can create unique emotional burdens for some female officers, impacting their working role and relationships with the women they work with. The chapter will go on to illustrate that emotionally, the officers have the potential to show compassion and kindness to prisoners; however, they often feel that they are not 'allowed' to show emotions of weakness or vulnerability, which would go against the core values of traditional prison officer culture (Crawley, 2004a). The chapter will conclude by considering the ways in which these female officers manage, or mis-manage their emotions whilst presenting as professional in this male dominated workplace.

Women doing a man's job: challenging occupational norms

Johnston (2014) contributes a historical understanding of prison work with a focus on gender and class in the working lives of female prison officers. At a time when deterrence was prominent, the regime implemented after the Gladstone Committee and its move towards a more rehabilitative model, there was confusion over the prison officer role. Johnston (2008a) discusses the onset of prison officer training schools along with the prison officer role in general, whilst acknowledging the early concerns of officers and the complex issue of care and control. More relevant to this chapter, Johnston (2014) discusses the history of female staff in the prison system, and their introduction onto the prison wings.

Historically, it was felt their female demureness, good temper, and compassion would rub off on the female inmates and that the prisoners would want to emulate this gendered behaviour (Zedner, 1991). Zupan (1992) describes this traditional feminine position in more detail and includes the term "pink-collar" for those women who worked in the prison offices. The introduction of female officers onto the landings of male prisons came much later, and like the introduction of male officers into the women's prisons, this was appropriately in-line with the cultural changes in society. According to Zimmer (1986), women, more used to subservient roles to earn a wage became pioneers in their new occupation as a prison officer; transforming the working roles of women. However, Zimmer (1986) also acknowledges that patriarchal divisions persisted, with women remaining humble and respectful of their male colleagues, quite simply, grateful of a better way of life and a possible career.

Available research highlights the different working styles of male and female officers. Britton (2003) argued women officers often take on a more maternal role. Similarly, Pollock (1995, p.113, emphasis in original) agreed male officers had a more "*masculine authoritarian approach"* with women adopting a more "*feminine, personal or caring approach"*. Fry & Glaser (1987) agree suggesting women officers have higher standards for service for prisoners, being less impulsive when it comes to "putting hands on" and restraining. However,

fundamentally, as articulated by Hemmens, Stohr, Schoeler & Miller (2002, p.474), available research indicates *"that women were not, and are still not, always accepted by their colleagues"*. Young (1991, p.193) argues that women cannot be embraced within the prison officer culture, claiming; *"women who do breach the boundary to penetrate this masculine world can only ever be partially successful and will often have to subsume 'male characteristics' to achieve even a limited social acceptability"*. Consequently, this can have an impact on women's own gendered experiences, including pregnancy and motherhood in such a male dominated culture.

Sustaining a career alongside motherhood can be challenging in male dominated occupations (Herman & Lewis, 2012). It has been noted by Blickenstaff (2005) that many women in these careers either leave after having children or remain in the workplace but fail to progress through the promotion pipeline. Beyond this, mothers often recognise that their career will be at a disadvantage if their personal choice is to work fewer hours (Lewis & Humbert, 2010), whilst some women trade-off family time to progress in their careers (Webber & Williams, 2008). Research with women working in other male dominated professions, such as the police, has brought attention to the unique challenge mothers can face. Cowan & Bochantin (2009) argue that pregnancy and motherhood clearly define female police officers, which in highly masculinised workplaces, such as the police, can potentially have detrimental effects on their career. They go on to argue that pregnancy and motherhood can often be framed as risky business, with mothering skills (de)valued, and work life balance impossible (Cowan & Bochantin, 2009). Agocs, Langan & Sauders (2015), also suggest that male dominated occupations such as the police, have unique organisational and operational cultures, which can become internalised, shaping officers' strategies both at work and at home. Many prison officers have families and are therefore required to deal with the strain and stress of the prison day (and the cultural practices and attitudes that enable them to do it); unsurprisingly, these practices and attitudes, while being an essential part of

the prison officer role, do not sit well outside of it, especially in the private world of the officer's family home. Here, rules and regulations and the need for order and control are antithetical to a relaxed, loving and child-friendly home (Crawley, 2002; 2004a) and more specifically, the role of women in the home (Oakley, 1985).

Even more invisible in existing literature concerning the modern female prison officer working in women's prisons are their relationships with the women who reside within them. The role of the prison officer is multifaceted (Crawley, 2004a; Liebling & Price, 2001; Liebling et al, 2011) and during any working day an officer can be a counsellor, social worker and carer, to name a few, whilst continually fulfilling the role of a custodian. However, we know little of prison officers' values and attitudes about the population they work with; particularly in relation to pregnancy and motherhood, and how this may generate differing emotions and/or impact their working role and relationships with the women prisoners. Exploring perceptions of Social Workers working with young mothers in/from care, Rutman, Strega, Callahan & Dominelli (2002, p.151) found that, workers had profoundly "middle class" values "through which they constructed their notion of "deserving mothers" which "gave rise to a number of interrelated assumptions". They go on to argue that social workers found working with this group particularly challenging and psychologically demanding, struggling to negotiate the often-conflicting elements of their role as parent/guardian/helper to the young mothers, alongside their responsibilities to child protection. As a practitioner working with women living apart from their children, Beckwith (2015) recognised her value-laden position and how her commitment to processes which support the identity of the birth mother to be respected, significantly impacted her working role and relationship with the women she supported. Beckwith (2015) also told of the way in which the stories of the mothers with whom she worked often disturbed her sleep and preoccupied her waking hours. She also told of the potential barriers that may have been created between herself

and the women she supported owing to her own role as a mother with her children in her care and how she had to be sensitive and respectful of this in her practice.

Theoretical Framework

This chapter draws on Goffman's (1959) *dramaturgical analysis* to explore the role of female prison officers and importantly, their performance during interactions with prisoners. Alongside this, Hochschild's (1983) concept of *emotional labour* will be applied to the analysis of prison officers' work and how they manage or mis-manage the many different emotions in the workplace.

Goffman (1959) suggested that social interaction could be divided into front and back regions. The front region is where the performance takes place, and the set, costumes, props and manner of the person, all have a role to play. The back regions are where there is no audience present; Goffman (1959) claims this is where we are our *authentic self* and we can return here when there is no longer a need to be in the front region environment. Using Goffman's dramaturgical analysis, the performance of the uniformed officers involves 'the set' (the prison), 'props' (keys, whistle and radio), a 'costume' (prison officers' uniform) and their 'manner' (tone of voice and language). The back region for the uniformed officers may not be reached until they are in the car leaving work or at home. Inside the prison, wing offices and other communal areas are usually busy places and staff may find it difficult to retreat into the back region whilst surrounded by colleagues; making these 'presentations of self' quite exhausting at times. Goffman's study of the *presentation of self* in social encounters demonstrates how the officers are able to maintain the identity (and characteristics) of, for example, a nurturing wife and mother, and how they can then present as an individual capable of dealing with the behaviour of a violent prisoner. Alongside this, the concept of 'emotional labour', and the work of Hochschild (1983)**,** who demonstrates how employees must *manage their emotions to fit with their role and job function*, will be applied. Hochschild (1983) explores organisational management and how employees often have to alter one's self to 'put on' a sincere

performance whilst working. According to Hochschild (1983, p. 198) "*feelings become 'transmuted' by the organisation and the smile, mood, feeling or relationship, comes to belong more to the organisation and less to the self".* Hochschild (1983) focuses on the work of air hostesses and primarily how they are paid to smile, and fundamentally, how these skills have become a 'saleable commodity' (Hochschild, 1983). However, it is accepted that prison officers will also smile and more importantly, understand the importance of smiling during certain communication with both prisoners and colleagues.

Methodology

The research from which this chapter draws was an ethnographic study exploring the working lives of female officers and to further understand the workplace experiences, reflections and working styles of female prison officers working in a women's prison. This qualitative method acknowledges the richness of data rather than volume, and the study was therefore a snapshot of the working lives of female officers, and in no way was this piece of research aiming to generalise the working lives of female officers. The research received ethical approval from both the University of Salford and NOMS through the IRAS application prior to any fieldwork taking place.

Owing to the impact of neo-liberal penal policies implemented in English prisons during the course of the research and a visible reduction in the number of frontline prison officers, it became increasingly difficult to arrange one-to-one time for interviews. Consequently, data was collected through regular observations documented in fieldnotes and a diary, interviews and many informal conversations encountered during each day in the field. A two-week orientation period was used at the start of the fieldwork to gain trust and form relationships with the female officers. This time was spent informally talking to the officers about their working day and challenges they faced whilst making tea and coffee in staff areas of the prison. Once relationships had been established with the officers it became routine to document both one-to-one conversations and those with multiple

officers in the form of a group. As with some of the observations there was a necessity to rely on memory as continuous note taking during these conversations was felt to be inappropriate.

There were a number of key respondents during the course of the research, these were female officers I met during the early stage of the project and who were key to me gaining access to other female officers. These officers also offered a wealth of information on a number of occasions when it was necessary to confirm general information about the prison and prisoners. In total, I interviewed twenty-seven female prison officers (PO), eight of which were senior officers (SO); data was also collected from numerous informal conversations I had with other female officers throughout their working day. The officers interviewed had worked for the prison service for between eight and thirty years and over half of them had worked only in the women's estate; alongside this, only one of the female officers disclosed that she was not a mother.

The focus of the research from which this chapter draws was to understand the workplace experiences, reflections and working styles of female prison officers working in a women's prison. Data sources including interview transcripts, field notes and diaries were revisited and manually coded and analysed thematically (Braun and Clarke, 2013) to specifically explore female prison officers' perceptions of working in a women's prison around gendered experiences such as pregnancy and motherhood.

Prison as an emotional arena

Prison is an emotional environment and the sociology of prison scholars have acknowledged the emotional impact of the environment on prisoners (Sykes, 1958; Cohen & Taylor, 1981). Much less has been written about the prison as an emotional workplace (Crawley, 2004b) and moreover, how prison officers manage, and at times mis-manage their emotions whilst at work. Similarly, whilst available research acknowledges that for women and particularly

those who are mothers, serving a prison sentence, can be emotionally painful (Baldwin, 2018; Crewe, Hulley & Wright, 2017; Lockwood, 2017; 2018); this research has highlighted that female prison officers can also experience heightened emotions 'looking after' these women; particularly where the officers have also had similar life experiences. The officers who participated in this research spoke of a range of emotions, including sadness, frustration, anger and resentment. However, what became apparent was a sense that they felt that they could not or should not show their emotions in the workplace.

Working with pregnant women

Pregnancy and childbirth of women prisoners, can bring about additional dimensions to the prison officer role. Women will need to be escorted to hospital for antenatal care appointments. There is also a tendency for the women to become more anxious around their pregnancy due date, which can require extra care and sensitivity from the officers. Once the women return to the prison after birth, there can be a range of health issues to monitor, some women give birth by caesarean section and will therefore require different support than a woman who has given birth naturally (information taken from a conversation with the manager of the mother and baby unit, 2013). Despite practical changes and challenges to the prison officer role during women's pregnancy and post-partum, these experiences can also evoke many emotions for the officers. Some pregnant prisoners will want to keep their baby with them in prison after birth, others will not or will not be able; some may lose the baby during childbirth and others may lose their baby without carrying full term, in the form of a miscarriage. Such experiences can be physically, psychologically and emotionally challenging for women prisoners (Abbott, 2016); however, throughout the research, it became apparent that these events could also be challenging for the officers supporting the women; particularly, where officers had experienced similar life events. Speaking of the potential challenges this presents for female officers, one officer suggested:

> *An officer asked to escort [to hospital] a prisoner who has miscarried could've miscarried themselves or could be trying and struggling to get pregnant themselves* (PO).

This was echoed by a further officer, who stated:

> *I struggled to get pregnant with my second child…, escorts to hospital with pregnant women were always difficult days for me* (PO).

A further officer specifically spoke of how supporting women prisoners through such experiences brought about particular emotional challenges for female officers in a way that it did not for the male officers:

> *It's like miscarriage, it doesn't affect the men [officers] like it does us…I had to deal with a girl miscarrying on the wing, there was blood everywhere and she was screaming. I had only been back at work 4 months after my own miscarriage…It wouldn't happen to a male officer* (SO).

Speaking of being handcuffed to women prisoners on hospital escorts, a further officer highlighted the gendered nature of the role. The officer suggested that *"even though it has directly affected some of the female staff in the past…, it is always the female officers that go [to the hospital]".* This was again echoed by a further officer, who suggested:

> *If you have ever miscarried yourself or known someone who has, you will know there is generally a lot of blood, well the men here [male officers] just don't know how to handle it, they will turn their back on the cell and expect us [female officers] to deal with it, I don't mind coz I'm conscious of the women's dignity.*

Consistent with existing research (Britton, 2003; Carlson et al, 2004; Jurik & Halemba, 1984; Pollock, 1995), this analysis highlights the gendered nature of the role, with female officers adopting different roles and responsibilities to their male counterparts, often demonstrating higher standards of care (Fry & Glaser, 1987). Importantly, when considering gender and emotional labour, Hochschild (1983) explains how the world turns to women for mothering and how this fact often attaches itself to job descriptions. Whilst this officer suggests that she "doesn't mind" owing to her commitment to the woman's care and in respect of her "dignity"; when exploring gendered divisions in police work, Rabe-Hemp (2008) has argued that accepting such divisions can be a coping mechanism, a way of dealing with the stress of the role and cultural resistances to

their inclusion in the profession. However, this research draws attention to the particular emotional burden this can place on some female officers, especially where they have experienced similar events in their personnel lives.

A key issue that was evident when speaking to the officers, was the way in which they constantly have to manage (or mis-manage) their emotions in order to mask their feelings. Some officers claimed they would "go into robot mode" when tasked with dealing with incidents such as miscarriage (Fieldnotes, 2013), to ensure that they did not show too much emotion during these times, not to be too sympathetic and friendly, as this can be viewed with suspicion by other colleagues (Crawley, 2004a). For instance, one officer suggested: *"showing real emotions in here is not part of our job description, it's just not allowed"* (PO). A further female officer also spoke about this; *"if I got upset…, colleagues would look at me as being weak, so I have to keep it all inside until I get home…, then I get upset"* (SO). It was evident the female officers felt that they dealt with difficult situations in relation to the women's pregnancy differently than their male colleagues; officers spoke about male colleague's use of humour as a way of coping. Discussing male colleagues' use of humour after a woman had miscarried, one officer stated;

> *I don't tend to go in the back room for a brew after the incident if the men are in there, coz one of them will always say something like, 'well I won't be drinking red tonight' [in relation to the amount of blood on the bed or cell floor] (Fieldnotes, 2013).*

Available research highlights the use of 'black or gallows' humour as a coping mechanism for professionals responding to traumatic incidents (Christopher, 2015; Waddington, 1999). Indeed, Christopher (2015) has noted that it can contribute to the resilience and the health and well-being of those professionals. However, as highlighted in this quote, such humour can create a gendered division, placing further emotional burden on female officers, reinforcing their need to hide their emotions and manage their presentation of self. Discussing police canteen culture, Waddington

(1999, p.295) notes "*Because the canteen is a 'backstage' area it does not mean that officers are not staging performances",* therefore, in situations similar to this, male officers could be using humour as a coping strategy. Waddington (1999) goes on to state, "the canteen is the 'repair shop' of policing and jokes, banter and anecdotes the tools". The literature around police canteen culture is useful here when trying to understand the responses of some male prison officers. However, more attention is required to understand the impact of this culture on female officers.

The impact of feeling the need to manage or hide their emotions was expressed by another officer: "*Some days I leave work here [prison]…, I have gone home in floods of tears…, you can't cry here, you can't be emotional"* (SO). Hochschild's theoretical concepts of *emotional labour* and *emotion management* are useful in understanding how these officers suppress their emotions, an integral part of their occupational culture (Crawley, 2004a, 2004b). Hochschild (1983, p.7) suggested that staff manage their feelings in order "to create a publicly observable facial and bodily display"; suppressing or re-presenting their own private emotions making them appropriate within a role or expected job function (Crawley, 2004b). Goffman's (1959) *presentation of self* is also a valuable concept to use here, the female officers' feelings and emotions remain hidden and suppressed whilst they are in the *front stage* area of the process (prison wings and landings), and in certain situations the *back stage* may be at home, a safe place to express emotions and feelings. A concern here is around the broader impact on prison officers' lives, however, the literature around this is near non-existent in England and Wales; future research is necessary in this field when we consider, "*The most common category of sickness absence in terms of days lost"* for prison officers *"is mental and behavioural disorders, which includes stress related absences"* **(**HMPPS, 2018, p. 11). Exploring the impact of workplace stress and trauma on prison officers in Canada, Australia and the United States, South (2017) identified several areas of good practice that can be developed in the UK, such as peer support, staff training and increased provision of mental health services.

Working with mothers in prison

Whilst many officers spoke of emotions of sadness working with pregnant women, especially when this correlated with experiences in their own lives; for others, witnessing or being aware of the individual experiences of childbirth and mothering of women in prison generated many differing, complex and often competing emotional responses for the female officers, including compassion, anger and frustration.

For some officers, personally supporting women through childbirth facilitated a long-term bond with the women throughout their sentence; for instance, one officer recalled with great pride; "*I remember one woman who had pictures of her 14-year-old daughter on the cell wall and each time I went in her cell she used to remind me 'you were with me when I gave birth to her"'* (SO). This is consistent with the work of Abbott (2018) who highlights the positive experiences of prison officers attending the births of women in prison and how they can offer a supportive role. However, for some officers, the women's childbirth and mothering situations brought about complex emotional responses. Telling of some of the women prisoners giving birth, the officers recounted how certain events had a lasting effect on them; "*There are things I will never forget, like taking a baby out of a prisoner's arms when she had given birth because the mother was going to kill it"* (SO). Although recounting a challenging and potentially traumatic incident, this officer's account was layered with a sense of sadness, potentially at what the incident meant for the woman, her baby and her own experience of witnessing this event. Abbott (2018) brings attention to lack of training available for prison officers in supporting women through such experiences, particularly where a woman may be separated from her baby soon after birth.

The accounts of other officers were preoccupied with anger, as expressed by one senior officer: "*You want them all sterilised"* (SO). Whilst another officer commented: "*It's hard*

when you see a baby born rattling (detoxing)". A further officer suggested: "*It infuriates me that most prisoners are mums…being a drug user is not responsible…it can be difficult when you are the officer on escort to hospital when they are giving birth"* (SO). The same officer went on to add; *"One time I kept sticking the photo up of the baby on the notice board for the prisoner to see…she wasn't arsed…she just wanted tea and toast. I was so angry knowing she would never be there for that child…you do get very angry with the girls about their children"* (SO). I asked the officer to expand on her opinion with regards to how this type of resentment could have an impact on her working relationship with the women. The officer went on the explain, "*It's tough at the time but I've been in the job too long for it to change the way I treat the women and things like this don't happen all the time, most of the women are good mums and love their kids"*. These quotes highlight that the officers can be influenced by widely shared cultural ideologies around what it means to a 'good mother' when working with the women in prison around issues of pregnancy, childbirth and motherhood. Whilst the officer maintains that her own values do not impact her presentation of self or the way in which she 'treats' the women, such ideologies can facilitate the development of mothering hierarchies (DiLapi, 1989) that serves to other and stigmatise marginalised women. Within the context of prison, *some* mothers, such as those who were drug users or for whatever reason were not demonstrating expected mothering behaviours, were further stigmatised and constructed as less appropriate mothers.

Prison officer pregnancy and parenting

The prison officer occupation has unique organisational and operational contexts that shape officers' sense of self, as well as their normative beliefs and attitudes, both at work and at home (Crawley, 2002; 2004a). In particular, this research has highlighted the impact of such contexts on female officers' experiences of pregnancy and parenting.

Some officers framed their experiences positively; commenting on their "*great*" work life balance due to working 3 days a week, feeling it was a more flexible occupation than a 9-5 job when you had childcare to think about. Whilst others commented on how "*family friendly"* the role was. A small number of officers discussed their maternity leave; it was clear some female officers ambitious for promotion used part of their maternity leave as a way of studying for promotional exams, for instance, applying to become a governor; *"I used some of my maternity time to complete the promotional exams"* (SO), along with, *"maternity leave was a useful time for me to reflect on my career and whether I wanted to continue through the promotional ranks once I became a mother"* (SO). This highlights that whilst maternity leave was used for studying, it was also used as a time for reflection and to consider whether they wanted to pursue promotion. However, it may equally be that recognising that pregnancy and motherhood for women working in male dominated spaces can have detrimental consequences for their careers (Agocs et al, 2015; Cowan & Bochantin, 2009), the female officers utilised their time on maternity leave to illustrate they were still capable (if not more so) of doing their job alongside motherhood.

What became apparent through listening to the prison officers accounts was that their occupational role as prison officer had a significant impact on their own mothering. Some female officers who were also parents seemed to use the prison environment as a parenting strategy in the form of a scare tactic, even though there is academic evidence stating this process can have the reverse effect (see literature around Scared Straight programmes). For instance, "*I was going through a bad stage at home with my teenage daughter, so I brought her in here to show her where she could end up"* (PO). Although others seemed keen to more generally show their children where they worked: "*I brought my own kids in one day so they could see where I worked and to help them understand the job I do"* (PO). Along with, "*I have brought my kids*

in on family days, I want them to understand where I work…my son had his haircut here and he couldn't wait to get home and tell his mates" (PO). For some officers providing more transparency about their work helped to offer a more normalised view of the prison as a place of work; however, others suggested their children were embarrassed by their chosen occupation, as one officer commented that her child had asked, *"please don't have your uniform on when my friends come round"* (SO). Comments such as this from an officers' child illustrate that the prison officer role does not attract the same level of respect as other uniformed service roles, such as the police or fire service, with officers' children sometimes illustrating a lack of pride in their mothers' occupations.

Others found that they were unable to leave the 'job' at work, blurring the boundaries between their professional and parenting roles and the front and back stage areas (Goffman, 1959). The officers' working role is structured within a workforce used to routines and which abides by the rules and timetables of the prison. Spending many hours working under this strict regime, officers can become preoccupied with this at home, imposing the same level of militaristic routine with their children. The female officers appeared conscious of not being able to rid themselves of their 'prison persona' when they arrive home after a shift; talking to their children in the tone of voice they use with prisoners, ordering rather than asking them to do things in the house, expecting things to be done in a certain way, for instance; "*shoes off at the front door and lining them up neatly"* and "*be sat at the dining table quietly ready for tea at the same time each day"* (PO). One officer also commented how the role had made her more of a disciplinarian with her children;

> *Before I came to work here, I worked in a supermarket and I wasn't as disciplined with my children at home, now I find myself being more disciplined, meals at a certain time, homework, bed times etc and I don't realise how regimental I am being until I spend time in my sister's house or friends' houses*

> *and I observe the way they speak to their children….yeah, on reflection, the job has had a real impact on my kids (SO).*

Officers also spoke about how their level of suspicion had risen since being in the job. Officers are taught to be suspicious during the short training period and this can spill-over into their private lives, as expressed by one officer; *"I have teenage girls at home and I look through their phones, school bags and blazers…it's not healthy, it's as though I don't trust them and I do"* (PO). Another officer recounted a similar experience; *"I have found myself becoming stricter with my kids at home, they are both teenagers and it is unhealthy that I constantly question what they are up to as though I don't trust them anymore"* (PO). It could be argued this type of parenting is due to the lasting impact of the occupation and the routines and rules of the prison that allow the officers to become institutionalised spilling-over in to their home life (Crawley, 2002). However, as discussed by Cowan & Bochantin (2009) in relation to police mothers, having extensive experiences with people who come into contact with the criminal justice system, and having awareness of the crimes for which they have been sentenced, can shape mothers' fears about what could happen to their children, impacting on their mothering practices. As Crawley (2002, p.7) commented; *"a striking aspect of prison work is the strain of living in, and moving between, two worlds – only one of which is contained within high walls*." Some officers therefore suggested that they felt that their parenting was contaminated by their workplace. Consequently, some of the female officers felt it was easier to hand over the role of the disciplinarian in the home to their husbands/partners/children's fathers, especially if they did not work in the prison themselves. Beyond this, it highlights the working role of the female prison officer can at times conflict with ideas around 'good mothering' which are supposed to be caring, gentle and nurturing.

Discussion

This chapter has highlighted how some of the pains suffered by those serving a prison sentence can have an impact on the personal well-being of some of the female officers, by illustrating similarities between the female officers and women in their care. It has highlighted how certain events such as pregnancy and miscarriage can have a direct effect on some of the female prison officers, as these are personal events they may have struggled to deal with themselves privately away from the workplace.

The female officers must also cope with their change in occupational circumstances, most notably when they have given birth or have young children to care for at home. Some officers saw their time away from the workplace on maternity leave as time to reflect on their future careers and for some it was a time to progress through the promotional ranks of the prison service. The impact of neo-liberal politics was also having an impact on changes to their working lives, with changes to working regimes and patterns impacting on their lives at home. However, many of the officers I spoke to were keen to disclose how beneficial their work life was to the balance of their home life.

With staff shortages currently an everyday part of prison life, the officers are increasingly under pressure to deliver a professional service with depleting resources to hand, whilst continuously presenting themselves as confident and professional. When they return home from work they must present as a different character, one that is not always centred around discipline and control.

The gendered role of the officers has been important to understand how female prison officers differ from their male colleagues and how this occupation can de-sensitise the officers to situations many of us would struggle to comprehend. Importantly, it is evident the officers use common female traits or ‘gendered empathy’ to assist with how they approach certain challenges in the prison, and how this also helps them deal with personal issues the prisoners are concerned about. However, this leads us to the personal issues of female prison officers and how the occupation can affect them quite

differently from their male colleagues. The emotions and feelings around certain situations they are faced with when dealing with the prisoners can only surface when women are working alongside other women in this type of total institution. It is acknowledged that at times humour is used in the smooth running of the prison and as part of the occupational culture to assist the officers with their everyday emotions and feelings. It must be noted that during the fieldwork both male and female officers used humour for different reasons during their working day, however, female officers tended to use it to lighten the mood and not to cope on the spot with traumatic events such as one of the women miscarrying.

It is clear there are similarities between the female officers and the women serving a prison sentence when events such as pregnancy and childbirth present themselves in a prison setting. These female related issues highlight again that there is a need for gender specific training for prison officers allowing both male and female officers to gain awareness of these female related health issues.

Theoretically, the concept of *emotional labour* has been helpful throughout this research; in understanding the, sometimes, deep-seated emotions and feelings of female prison officers in the workplace. The theoretical literature has allowed for a deeper understanding of how these officers manage their feelings whilst at work and at home, and how certain situations, unique to women's prisons, can have an emotional impact on female prison officers. As Fineman (2000) noted, emotions are invaluable to the inner workings of this type of organisation. Prison officers manage the emotions of prisoners and perform emotion in line with their occupational norms, whilst as Fineman (1993) states, keeping their own 'real time' emotions in check. For the female prison officers who engage in emotional labour on a regular basis, this literature emphasises how they must be aware of their own emotions to be able to recognise the emotions of others. Observations during the fieldwork highlighted that when performed at its best, emotional labour goes relatively unnoticed. Alongside this, Erving Goffman's work has been useful, mainly because of the applicability of his theory around the *presentation of self*. Through observing and talking to the

female officers it has been illustrated how they have to present themselves in certain ways during certain situations whilst on the *front stage* to abide by the masculine occupational norms of the prison officers role. Overall, the Prison Service, as an occupation continues to be dominated by men, though this chapter clearly illustrates that if women do the job in the way they have been observed it is safe to state that it is no longer a resource for constructing masculinity.

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