



# Survival in an “all boys club”: Policewomen in Serbia<sup>☆</sup>



Danijela Spasić<sup>a</sup>, Sladjana Djurić<sup>b</sup>, Zorica Mršević<sup>c</sup>

<sup>a</sup> Academy of Criminalistic and Police Studies, Cara Dusana 196, 11080 Zemun, Belgrade, Serbia

<sup>b</sup> Faculty of Security Studies, University of Belgrade, Gospodara Vucica 50, 11000 Belgrade, Serbia

<sup>c</sup> Institute of Social Sciences, Kraljice Natalije 45, 11000 Belgrade, Serbia

## ARTICLE INFO

Available online 15 November 2014

## SYNOPSIS

The paper is based on the results of the first qualitative research focusing on the position of policewomen in Serbia. The research was conducted from June to August 2011 on a sample of 30 policewomen of various standings as working police officers; it took into account the types of roles held, the police schools they finished, their professional experience and the size of the police organizations with which they were employed. The core questions in the analysis related to policewomen's experiences while completing their education, during the hiring process and while carrying out their police duties, as well as regarding possibilities for promotion. Although considerable improvement was noted regarding the status of women in the process of police education, most participants in the research had negative experience in the course of finding a job; they also experienced limitations with regard to their promotion as well as various sorts of harassment at work. The paper is based on the results of the first qualitative research focusing on the position of policewomen in Serbia. The research was conducted from June to August 2011 on a sample of 30 policewomen of various standings as working police officers; it took into account the types of roles held, the police schools they finished, their professional experience and the size of the police organizations with which they were employed. The core questions in the analysis related to policewomen's experiences while completing their education, during the hiring process and while carrying out their police duties, as well as regarding possibilities for promotion. Although considerable improvement was noted regarding the status of women in the process of police education, most participants in the research had negative experience in the course of finding a job; they also experienced limitations with regard to their promotion as well as various sorts of harassment at work.

© 2014 Elsevier Ltd. All rights reserved.

## Introduction

History shows that the job market is not founded on the free will of a job seeker but on the basis of deep-rooted prejudices leading to professional segregation (Kessler-Harris, 1990). The prejudices influencing the job market have arisen from the

gender-conditioned processes of interaction among the participants in gender-conditioned institutions. These institutions are established on hierarchical symbols, segregation and occasionally on gender exclusion (Acker, 1990). Attempts to exclude women from typically male professions, which are supported by social norms urging gender distinction, often result in low levels of engagement of women, and their unsuccessful or difficult survival in male-dominated professions; ironically, this exclusion is frequently attributed to women's incompetence (Garcia, 2003). Masculine professional culture is mainly characterized through supposedly universal rules and understandings imposed by dominant males (Tomić, 2009).

<sup>☆</sup> The paper is the result of research within the project No. 47017, entitled *Security and protection of organisation and functioning of the educational system in the Republic of Serbia (basic precepts, principles, protocols, procedures, and means)*, realized by the Faculty of Security Studies in Belgrade, and financed by the Ministry of Education and Science of the Republic of Serbia (47017).

E-mail addresses: [danijela.spasic@kpa.edu.rs](mailto:danijela.spasic@kpa.edu.rs) (D. Spasić), [sdjuric@fb.bg.ac.rs](mailto:sdjuric@fb.bg.ac.rs) (S. Djurić), [zmrsevic@idn.org.rs](mailto:zmrsevic@idn.org.rs) (Z. Mršević).

The issue of masculine domination in professions has become a significant subject in anthropological study over the 2000-year history of industrially developed countries – that is, the European countries and America (Frehill, 2004; Mellstrom, 2004; Padavic & Reskin, 1990; Podmore & Spencer, 1982; Winter, 2000). Patriarchy in modern cultures reflects a social system that allocates the most power, prestige and other socially important resources to men, thus allowing male rule and domination over women. Pierre Bourdieu explains that male power in contemporary societies is based on the rule of knowledge (Burdije, 2001).

Patriarchal structures are built in social institutions and in practice. Organizations and professions are part of a social structure generating patriarchal relations. The process of creating gender identity and roles in male-dominated professions encompasses aspects clearly specifying masculinity (while the opposite is apparent in female-dominated ones, such as housecleaning or child care); for example, the choice of profession, the use of a specific communication style, attire and so forth – all are often used by male members of an organization to reinforce their masculinity and, thus, their status. Finally, everything is submitted to this type of structure, including masculine attitudes toward family, acquaintance relations and networks (Tomić & Spasić, 2010). The dominance of masculinity, as shown in most studies of work and professions, is a significant factor in the divided job and professional market, as well as on the concepts of “typical professions” – that is, “male” and “female” professions (Catano, 2003; Cohn, 2000; Faulkner, 2000; Frehill, 2004).

The masculine culture in many professions and organizational structures is influenced by the negative perception that the professional success of a woman implies the loss of her “womanly” qualities, since promotion and advancement in typically male professions supposedly requires a certain level of aggressiveness, coldness and domination. Males could historically find employment in professions from which females were by definition excluded, such as jobs requiring hard physical labor, certain professional skills and knowledge, as well as jobs for conquering new markets. Through creating fraternities, they proved themselves as males and took on jobs and professions enabling them personal and professional promotion (Tomić & Spasić, 2010). In male-dominated environments, many males demonstrate extreme animosity toward females in specific ways: by being unfriendly, sabotaging, mobbing and sexually harassing them. Less extreme non-acceptance is expressed through various forms of addressing women as outsiders, including sexual insinuations, paternalistic attitudes and other forms of discrimination (scorn, ridicule, skepticism and so on). A paternal attitude toward women implies a negative, subordinate relationship. Although women perform the same duties as men, and although they are equally qualified, work as hard as men and possess the same knowledge, masculinity does not allow women to advance because it considers them to be less capable and hard-working. Men in a male-dominated organization tend to treat women with sexually concealed insinuations, either verbal or non-verbal, by openly conditioning women's affirmation, survival and promotion (Padavic & Reskin, 1990). The tendency toward domination in male-centered organizations is part of masculine culture, whether that domination is demonstrated against men or women. Almost all male-dominated professions tend to

maintain hierarchical relations. Although males are inclined to establish informal systems of relations both at and outside of work, authority and subordination are invariably part of masculine relational structure.

In social conditions that might be characterized formally as “social equality”, women nonetheless consistently have fewer chances for social promotion in spite of that formal equality. Women often have an inherently unfavorable social position; they are faced with a real gamut of social limits and inhibitions – the hybrid sum of mechanisms that affect various domains of social life (family, education, the labor market), keeping women on lower levels of social structures than they really deserve. Thus, women remain social outsiders. It is well-known that women in the police profession never feel like insiders. They are sometimes openly discriminated against, but more frequently stereotyped and assumed to not belong. An important element of the social context of the high unemployment rate that affects the entire population, especially women. Therefore women employed in the police gain importance within the wider family, and can count on its increased support. Support is reflected in the increased willingness of older or unemployed members of both side, the woman's and her husband's family, to help with the kids and other household chores. This enables women employed in police in her smooth performance of its duties. These are the traditional solutions which do not belong to the repertoire of contemporary, gender-sensitive solutions. These are the solutions that were applied always when mothers were absent, ill or disabled to perform their traditional female roles within family. Maybe even a step backward. But they are a solution to a problem that mothers employed in the police have. The situation in society as a whole is still very far away from the use of paternity leave and changed gender relation within a couple.

#### *Police context: domination of masculinity*

Police services have always been among the traditionally male professions. Organizationally, it is a professional system: On the one hand, police services involve those organs and institutions that perform policing duties as a public service; on the other hand, they also involve those who perform police duties as their occupation. Police functions include keeping public peace and order by using the law as their source of authority. Taking into account all aforementioned characteristics, the police could be defined as a complex professional system organized for the purpose of keeping public peace and order in a society by using legal powers and necessary means, including force (Milosavljević, 1997).

The foundation of police culture in determining police officers' conduct at and off work is laid in accordance with the organizational and functional specificities of the police as part of a system. It represents a specific set of values, attitudes and beliefs that police officers acquire regarding their work, management and certain categorizations of citizens, as well as toward the judiciary, law and other social phenomena influencing their work.

The origin and maintenance of this cultural conduct is conditioned by feelings of social isolation, occupational risk factors, specific powers and accountabilities, the necessity of mutual solidarity in joint actions, frequent job-related contact with individuals that exhibit asocial behaviors, the internal system of education and “learning the ropes” of their jobs in

Download English Version:

<https://daneshyari.com/en/article/375923>

Download Persian Version:

<https://daneshyari.com/article/375923>

[Daneshyari.com](https://daneshyari.com)