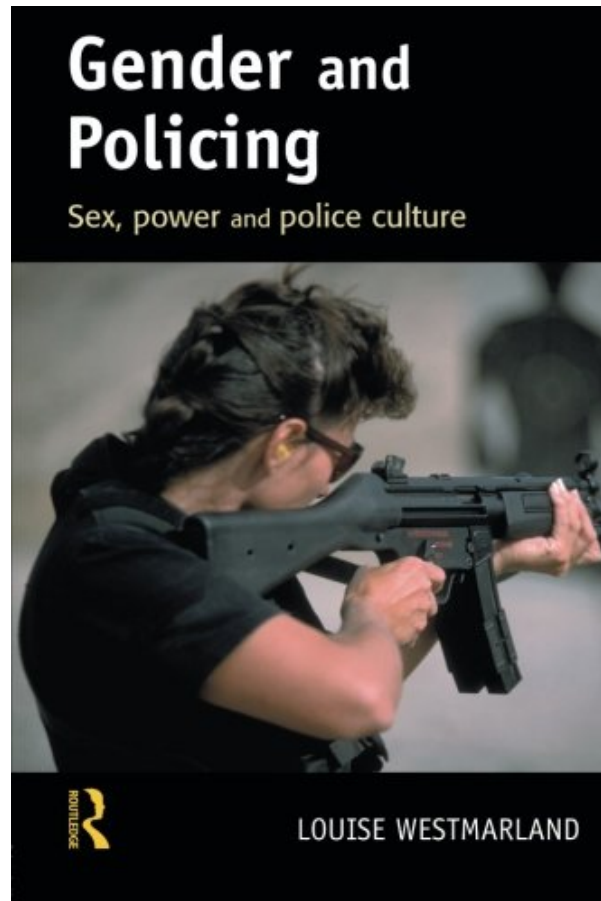


# GENDER AND POLICING BY LOUISE WESTMARLAND



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# Gender and Policing

Sex, power and police culture



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Louise Westmarland is a Senior Lecturer in Criminology at the Open University. Her research interests include gender and the police, violence, and ethics in the criminal justice system.

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Gender and Policing is an innovative study of the real world of street policing and the gender issues which are a central part of this. Derived from extensive ethnographic research (involving police responses to gangland shootings, high speed car chases as well as more routine policing activities), this book examines the way police attitudes and beliefs combine to perpetuate a working culture which is dependent upon traditional conceptions of 'male' and 'female'. In doing so it challenges previously held assumptions about the way women are harassed, manipulated and constrained, focusing rather on the more subtle impact of structures and norms within police culture.

Gender and Policing will be of interest to all those concerned with questions of policing and gender, and occupational culture more generally, while the theoretical framework developed will provide an important foundation for strategies of reform. At the same time the book provides a vivid and richly textured picture of the realities of operational policing in contemporary Britain.

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Louise Westmarland is a Senior Lecturer in Criminology at the Open University. Her research interests include gender and the police, violence, and ethics in the criminal justice system.

## Most helpful customer reviews

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A flawed and falied study of gender relations within British Policing

By S P Mead

I cannot recommend this book - or, rather, I recommend that you avoid reading it (and that you certainly don't buy it).

It's not that the subject matter isn't interesting, for it is. Both the broad field of criminology, and the ever-developing `new' discipline of police studies, are equally fascinating. The fact is, `crime' is an important facet of contemporary society. Similarly, the role of the Police is important too - for, as an institution, the Police increasingly intervenes in our `everyday' lives, and its presence is nowhere negligible.

As a sub-area of police studies, interest in gender relations is - of course - a legitimate enterprise. Yet, notwithstanding the potential a book on this subject has, Louise Westmarland's effort falls far short of being

either an enjoyable read or an engaging study on its declared object.

The fundamental flaw of the work is the authors' inability to offer anything of genuine substance regarding explanation of gender relations within policing. This flaw is compounded by various secondary limitations. Foremost of these concerns the fact that the book is a (bad) re-working of Westmarland's PhD thesis. As such, it tends to follow a rather unimaginative (and down-right boring) structure - starting out with a literature review, then moving on to a discussion on methods, and finally offering some 'data'. What was required, if it had been judged that such data was of actual interest, was a shift away from this student-style presentation to a more scholarly approach.

Having managed to endure the suffering of reading the early chapters, one finds that this supposed study of gender relations within policing in British society is in fact little more than a description of goings-on in a limited number of urban areas - taking place over a period of about a year - involving the author accompany a couple of dozen Police officers while on duty. As such, this is a very 'microscopic' study - and in no way can make any real or sustained claim to examine gender relations within policing in general at a societal level.

Even as a 'micro' study, the work suffers from its authors' selected methodology - an "ethnography" of Police "culture". A very simplified form of ethnography is employed (involving little more than conversation between the author and Police officers), while Police culture - although being highlighted as central to the work - is merely taken for granted, its meaning assumed and nowhere explored. And with regard to the problem of Police power (again highlighted in the title), such analysis is completely absent.

In the end, all this amounts to is a waste of time. Westmarland has produced only a sterile work. There are far better books available on this subject - and I recommend any of them in place of this one.

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