

Segregation as Efficiency? Group-Specific Institutions in North India

Nirvikar Jassal*

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Abstract

A number of nations have instituted group-specific institutions or ‘enclaves’ for women. The assumptions underpinning such bodies—physically distinct, autonomous units where constituent members belong entirely to a particular group—are that segregation of female administrators will better serve the interests of women by isolating them from patriarchal norms and practices. I scrutinize these assumptions by examining India’s experience with all-women police stations. Leveraging eight months of ethnographic research in and around police stations across the states of Haryana and Uttar Pradesh, I find that all-women police stations may diminish capacity for female administrators working in law enforcement, potentially create hurdles for victims of violence, and in some ways counter the broader goals of representation by marginalizing gender issues from the mainstream.

*Nirvikar Jassal (njassal@stanford.edu) is a Postdoctoral Fellow at the King Center on Global Development at Stanford University.

Introduction

Police reform remains an urgent concern in a number of countries, including outside the advanced industrialized democracies. To this end, several nations have initiated measures to improve the functioning and perception of law enforcement such as quotas for women and minorities (Karim et al. 2018; McCrary 2007), as well as the establishment of specialized police stations and help desks for vulnerable groups (Santos 2004).

Most academic scholarship on policing has focused on the persecution, abuse, and killings of ethnic or racial minorities (Soss and Weaver 2017; Lerman and Weaver 2014). Yet, women may also face a form of police discrimination rooted in *exclusion*, e.g. difficulty in accessing police stations, family or community pressure against coming forward, and even dismissive attitudes by law enforcement officials about assault (HRW 2009; Iyer et al. 2012). The goals of gender-based hiring quotas and ‘enclave’ police stations for women have been to make law enforcement more accommodating for female complainants as well as responsive to cases involving sexual and domestic violence (Perova and Reynolds 2017; Karim 2017).

Enclaves are physically distinct, autonomous units where constituent members belong entirely to a particular identity. The assumption underpinning enclaves is that segregation of women (or minorities) in group-specific institutions will better serve their interests. For example, in police stations run by policewomen for female victims of crime, administrators and clients will be theoretically unencumbered by patriarchy; similarly, women will be more likely to see justice in a women-only court that hears gender violence cases, while female judges working in the institution will also be empowered.¹

Are enclaves effective in articulating and accommodating the interests of vulnerable groups? I study the Indian experience of all-women police stations through eight months of ethnographic research in Haryana and Uttar Pradesh. I investigate whether such police stations, a form of ‘descriptive representation’ for women in law enforcement, generates ‘substantive representa-

1. In social science literature on deliberation, enclaves are defined as women-only groups (Karpowitz and Mendelberg 2018; Mendelberg, Karpowitz, and Oliphant 2014). Unlike female self-help groups and other voluntary associations, group-specific institutions like police stations or courts—run by the state to provide a public service—may not always be voluntary.

tion’ for in-groups (Pitkin 1967; Mansbridge 1999). Specifically, I assess the impact of enclaves on empowering policewomen and, indirectly, victims of gender-based violence by providing female administrators more responsibilities or increasing victims’ access to police services.

The findings suggest that all-women stations provide standard police stations an excuse to lighten their own caseload. All-women police stations are also more likely than standard police stations to practice an informal type of complaint resolution, i.e. ‘counseling’ and reconciliation with abusers. With regard to female administrators, I find that enclaves may prevent policewomen from gaining the same experience as men by relegating them to tackling specific cases at the expense of diverse forms of police-work, potentially reinforcing gender stereotypes of women being suited for “women’s work” (Martin 1982, 1999; Rabe-Hemp 2009). I argue that group-specific measures may create challenges for both administrators and clients.

This article is structured as follows: I situate the discussion of enclaves within the social science literature on representation, while highlighting the theoretical foundations behind separatism as a social strategy. I use survey data to contextualize violence against women in India, and point to the intuitions of policymakers in creating separate spheres. I carry out an ethnographic analysis of all-women stations, and use the institutions to make a larger claim about the inefficacies associated with segregation as a delivery mechanism for public services.

Representation and Law Enforcement

The impact of quotas or affirmative action measures for vulnerable groups have been studied vis-à-vis a range outcomes.² This literature shows that a demographically inclusive political body (descriptive representation) generates substantive outcomes, e.g. the presence of women in politics improves attitudes toward leaders (Beaman et al. 2012), changes gender norms (Beaman et al. 2009), and promotes development (Chattopadhyay and Duflo 2004). There is also a robust literature about the impact of representation for women in *unelected* state agencies (Keiser et al. 2002; Riccucci, Van Ryzin, and Li 2016). This literature, part of a broader academic

2. See, *inter alia*, Iyer et al. (2012) and Duflo (2005).

discussion about a ‘representative bureaucracy’³, suggests that the presence of women in law enforcement increases trust in the police as well as registrations of sexual assault or domestic violence (Meier and Nicholson-Crotty 2006; Miller and Segal 2019).

However, not only has research about the impact of ‘representative’ police forces in the Global South yielded mixed results (Karim 2020; Karim et al. 2018),⁴ but also existing scholarship has largely been restricted to affirmation action. Nevertheless, quotas are just one variant of representation. Policymakers have considered *alternate* measures based on the intuition that, even with affirmative action, vulnerable groups would likely still be constrained by the majority (Sabha 2012); instead, group-specific enclaves would potentially ensure administrators are able to interact with and be responsive *solely* to in-groups (Santos 2004; Nelson 1996; Kethineni and Srinivasan 2013). For example, while a gender quota in the police would still enable female officers to work on diverse cases, and a similar policy in a village council would ensure a woman *sarpanch* remains answerable to male residents, group-specific bodies would associate female administrators with in-group complainants and gendered concerns alone.

Some scholarship suggests that enclaves can be empowering. In Tamil Nadu, policewomen enjoy working with other female officers because it fosters a sense of camaraderie (Natarajan 1996, 2005). Natarajan (2008) notes that in standard stations women primarily do clerical work; yet, all-women stations allow policewomen to advance their careers in a parallel track, less dominated by men. The author provocatively argues that institutional segregation is effective for women in “traditional societies” because it provides a “backdoor to equality.”⁵

On the other hand, scholars of Brazil are more reserved. The first all-women station in Latin

3. Similar to the notion of descriptive and substantive representation in political bodies (Pitkin 1967), Thompson (1976) differentiates between *passive* and *active* representation in bureaucracies. In the former, the bureaucracy is simply made to accurately mirror society, whereas in the latter, administrators are supposed to push for the interests of social groups they are purported to represent.

4. In fact, even in the United States, scholarship about the impact of ethnic representation in policing find less positive results when compared to gender. While Theobald and Haider-Markel (2008) argue that blacks are more likely to believe that police actions are lawful if blacks conduct them, other studies find that racial representation in the police is *not* necessarily associated with improved outcomes (Ozkan, Worrall, and Piquero 2016; Barrick, Hickman, and Strom 2014; Hickman and Piquero 2009).

5. Related research on all-female police units in Liberia suggests that group-specific measures normalize women’s participation in hitherto male-dominated agencies (Pruitt 2016). These arguments echo scholarship on women-only deliberative bodies being responsive to the interests of female constituents as well as empowering for female politicians (Mendelberg, Karpowitz, and Oliphant 2014).

America was opened in São Paulo in 1985 as a way to create new jobs for women in the police as well as improve services for victims of sexual violence (Santos 2004, 2005). Some feminists were skeptical that such a ‘separatist strategy’ would be beneficial because they argued that women did *not* have innate talents in assisting other women, and since policewomen operated in the same cultural milieu as men, biases and bureaucratic incentives would likely remain constant (Santos 2004, 30-36). Evidence suggests that Brazilian policewomen may sometimes be *more* dismissive of gender violence than policemen in an effort to be seen as worthy by the bureaucracy. Policewomen may not want to work in segregated institutions either if it comes at the expense of carrying out front-line work (Hautzinger 2007; Nelson 1996).

Separatism as Strategy and Policing in India

Separation from men as a form of empowerment has its roots in the first wave of American feminism during the late 19th and early 20th century when activists appropriated the notion of ‘separate spheres’—which had hitherto been used to reinforce norms of women in domestic roles or a gendered division of labor—to *challenge* patriarchy (Marshall 1986; Kerber 1988; Rosenberg 1982). Freedman (1979) notes that ‘separate spheres’ became a strategy to develop all-female institutions such as women’s colleges, political parties, health clinics, trade unions and so on. The creation of physical spaces and institutions would enable women to speak freely and gain a footing into bodies previously denied to them (Schulz 2004).

Nonetheless, some argued that embedded within separate spheres was a paradox, i.e. group-specific institutions *promoted* gender differences by reinforcing an exclusively “male” domain against which women-only bodies could be measured (Craig 1994; Kessler-Harris 1989). Early American feminists such as Jane Addams or Crystal Eastman were aware of the dilemma of creating institutions that exclude men whilst removing barriers to gender equality (Craig 1994); there were even anxieties about women’s colleges inadvertently preparing men for prestigious jobs by training women for less valued “women’s work” (Spain 1993, 140).⁶

6. During the second wave of American feminism, the idea of separatism was partly revived in the 1970s by figures such as Jill Johnson and Marilyn Frye (Ryan 1989; Frye 1978; Shugar 1995). Separation was not seen as a withdrawal or submission to patriarchy but in fact a ‘seizure of power’ (Frye 1978).

In the early 20th century, American feminists created the first all-women police stations in the United States called Women’s Bureaus.⁷ Proponents of the Women’s Bureaus contended that all-women police stations are effective because *a) women police are fairer and better suited for gendered cases b) such a body would provide policewomen more responsibilities whilst giving policemen time to deal with “urgent” cases* (Congress 1925).⁸ However, certain senators and congressmen disagreed, and believed group-specific institutions had potential to create a system of pass-the-parcel by inducing existing stations to turn over their gendered cases to women-only institutions.⁹ Eventually, U.S. all-women police stations were largely abolished by the end of World War II when norms about group-specific measures changed; there would be no large-scale implementation of such institutions until Brazil in 1985 followed by India in 1992.

Today, India houses the largest number of all-women police stations.¹⁰ In fact, the broader idea of separate, group-specific arrangements as a vehicle of empowerment has a long history in the Subcontinent. Prior to Independence, there was a robust debate about the efficacy of separate electorates.¹¹ While nationalists like Aruna Asaf Ali and Shrimati Renuka Ray considered (but ultimately disfavored) gender quotas in legislative institutions (GOI 1999), freedom fighters such as Santi Das and Sarala Devi Chaudhurani supported separate electorates for women

7. The mandate of the Women’s Bureaus stated: “The functions of the Woman’s Bureau shall be exclusively police functions and shall include preventative-protection work. The Woman’s Bureau shall, in exercise of such functions: 1) Deal with all matters related to women and children coming to the custody of the police...2) cooperate with the proper officials in the prosecution of all cases of sex offenses involving women and children...3) investigate cases involving the criminal exploitation of women and children.” (Congress 1926).

8. Elizabeth Munger, a proponent of women-only institutions made the case that, “It must be understood that the women’s bureau does not supplant the work of 1,400 policemen in the District; it seeks to supplement it by performing certain services for women and children which can best be performed by trained women and by releasing the men for duties more urgent, in this time of lawlessness (Congress 1925, 48).”

9. For instance, Senator Royal Copeland of New York argued “This is what that [the bill] would mean to me: That this bureau should have transferred to it every single police duty now possessed by the police department of the city so far as the women and children are concerned; everything; it does not make any difference what it is; and, furthermore, that if a male policeman made an arrest of a woman or a child, that that prisoner should be turned over to the woman’s bureau. Of course, we should not excuse a police officer for not exercising his duty if he came in contact with something criminal, but if in making an arrest he arrested a woman or child, his duty would not be complete until he transferred that prisoner to the woman’s bureau (40).”

10. While outside the scope of this article, India has also established group-specific police stations for the Scheduled Caste/Tribe community (SC/ST). In the 2000s, the Indian states of Bihar, Chhattisgarh, and Jharkhand used funds made available by a 1989 law that outlawed discrimination against the SC/ST to establish *segregated* police stations for the country’s most stigmatized group. These exclusive police stations, run by SC/STs, were established for the purpose of registering and investigating complaints made by the SC/ST against out-groups or non-SC/STs.

11. Separate electorates were theorized to advance the interests of vulnerable communities by ensuring in-group administrators represent their interests (Jensenius 2017).

(Forbes 1999, 2005). Interestingly, debates about quotas versus group-specific measures were not restricted to politics. Following the Emergency, the government-appointed National Police Commission (1977-81) outlined the need to increase participation for female officers in the police. It said:

In fact, employment of police women in the investigative processes in cases as also in cases of kidnapping, abduction, rape, etc. will be very useful as victims will be more willing to talk freely to women police officers and furnish vital information essential for the investigation and prosecution of such cases...Such a role will also help in improving the general image of the police with the public...Women police, in our view, have a greater potential to cool, defuse and de-escalate many situations, and therefore greater use should be made of them than at present...Many women victims of crime are usually deterred from going to the police stations to make a complaint because of lack of confidence in having a sympathetic and patient hearing at the police station. The presence of women police in police stations would greatly help in creating such confidence and trust in the police (Vira and Reddy 1980, 57).

The push toward increasing the presence of women in law enforcement ran parallel to another proposal: *separating* policewomen in their own bureaus isolated from policemen. Ultimately, the National Police Commission disfavored the idea based on an intuition that such a strategy may, on the pretext of empowerment, in fact *hinder* the professionalization of policewomen (Vira and Reddy 1980; PTI 1983). The Commission noted:

We do not favor the present practice in some states of constituting a separate women police wing or branch and confining recruitment and promotion in it to women in that branch only. Apart from its being an exclusive branch secluded from the general police stream, promotion prospects in a small branch will remain limited and restricted...(Vira and Reddy 1980, 59).

The Introduction of All-Women Police Stations in India

Following the 1980s, as new laws against gender violence were enacted,¹² the state of Tamil Nadu led by Chief Minister J. Jayalalitha decided to roll-out all-women police stations (Ruiz

12. The 1980s was a period during which there was a legislative push toward strengthening legal provisions against violence against women (VAW). Dowry, and domestic violence associated with dowry-related harassment, had increased since Independence; yet, the existing law in place called the 1961 Dowry Prohibition Act had proven ineffective because officers rarely registered crimes under the regulation. In 1983, a new Indian Penal Code clause called Section 498A or 'cruelty by a husband or relatives against a wife' was made a cognizable and non-bailable offense (Oldenburg 2002).

2006; Natarajan 2008). The institutions fused the notion of women being suited for tackling gendered crimes with the idea of physical separation in group-specific bodies whereby female administrators would be under their own supervision and could work entirely with female staff.¹³ The special stations are identical to standard police stations except that they are run by and for women.¹⁴ They institutions are tasked with investigating (gendered) crimes of the Indian Penal Code (Appendix Table 3) and registering First-Information-Reports (FIR), i.e. a complainant’s first step towards formal access to justice. Policewomen may be stationed by their superiors at a standard station or the female-only unit typically located in the district headquarters. A victim of gender-based violence may theoretically register crime in the standard station near where the crime occurred *or* the segregated unit.

Following Tamil Nadu, other state governments began experimenting with all-women stations, and a few were introduced on a trial basis in north Indian states. The cities of Lucknow (Uttar Pradesh) and Bhagalpur (Bihar) introduced their first units in 1993 (Rao 1993) and 1995 (TNN 1995), respectively. Some feminists and human rights groups in India expressed skepticism about a large-scale roll-out. As early as 1993, women activists argued, “Of course, a woman may feel comfortable speaking to another woman, whether a police officer or not. But care must be exercised that this practice does not make general police stations unapproachable” or “If all cases of domestic violence are forwarded to an all-women police station it may also create an impression in the long run that women police officers should tackle women’s problems only” (Rao 1993).

Beginning in 2002, a National Conference for Women in Policing began calling for a 33 percent gender quota in the police. In 2009, adopting some of the Conference’s recommendations, the federal government began issuing advisories to state governments¹⁵ urging them to install any mechanism they see fit to promote the participation of women in law enforce-

13. Kerala had experimented with segregated units, yet Tamil Nadu—following Brazil’s roll-out in São Paulo (Santos 2004)—decided to mainstream the reform.

14. Unlike other institutions such as women’s help desks inside standard police stations where female administrators work with men, group-specific police stations are physically distinct and autonomous. For instance, in a women’s cell or protection desk, the staff may be answerable to a male officer; however, in all-women stations, the officers are answerable to a female Station House Officer only.

15. Policing in India is a state’s jurisdiction.

ment which may include women’s help desks in standard stations, group-specific police stations, and/or hiring quotas (Secretary 2009, 2013). Following the 2009 advisory, there was reluctance by states about adopting a 33 percent gender quota as this would theoretically increase hiring for policewomen; instead, there was enthusiasm among policymakers for adopting all-women police stations. From 2009-2012, the number of all-women stations increased from 1-40 in Bihar, 12-71 in Uttar Pradesh, and 8-31 in Gujarat. All-women stations were seen as a means to display a progressive vision on gender justice *without* the more costly policy of changing hiring practices; essentially, the exiting staff of policewomen could simply be posted to a separate building. The state of Haryana, for instance, adopted all-women police stations in 2015 but did not implement a gender quota; on the other hand, Maharashtra consciously eschewed enclaves in place of increasing the number of policewomen and ensuring that some are posted at every regular station (Sabha 2012). In fact, the federal government had to reprimand state governments for not implementing a quota and said, “The Ministry of Home Affairs had issued an advisory...whereby the States/ UTs were requested to raise the women representation in police to 33 percent. However, it is a matter of concern that not much has been done in this regard, except for a few states” (Secretary 2015).

A gang-rape of a college student in New Delhi in 2012 added a new level of urgency toward enacting policies that mitigate violence against women. Indian law outlined that a woman police officer be present for the *recording* of a female complainant’s testimony (GOI 2013).¹⁶ However, this raised a potential concern: the implementation of physically separate all-women police stations (which associated policewomen with *investigating* rather than just recording gendered crime) would move existing female officers to separate institutions thereby potentially making it *less* likely that they can be present for the recording of a female victim’s testimony at standard stations (Gilmore et al. 2015; Jha 2017).¹⁷ In fact, even the federal government

16. This language was similar to what was outlined by a drafting committee for a new Police Act, i.e. “Each police station shall have a Women and Child Protection Desk, staffed, as far as possible, by women police personnel, to record complaints for crimes against women and children...” (Committee 2006).

17. The idea of an all-women police station also ran contrary to other federal government advisories wherein the Ministry of Home Affairs urged *against* occupational segregation, and called for policewomen to carry out all forms of police duties, including front-line work, as opposed to gendered cases alone. Specifically, in 2014, New Delhi noted that, “States/Union Territories were requested to not follow any distinction on allocation of duty on account of being women...[policewomen] should be exposed to all forms of policing duties to promote

acknowledged potential challenges associated with enclaves by noting:

For complainants too, it is difficult to contemplate filing a complaint with the AWPS [all-women station] when the well-known nearby police station could provide the necessary succor. *The existence of an all-women police station is also cause for diverting all such complaints to the AWPS by regular police stations which is also not desirable* (Sabha 2012, 40).

Gender Norms in Haryana and Uttar Pradesh

To evaluate the efficacy of enclaves, I turn to Uttar Pradesh (UP) and Haryana's all-women police stations. UP has housed all-women police stations since the mid-1990s, while Haryana implemented its units in 2015. This enables me to investigate the impact of two sets of all-women police stations, i.e. one decades old compared to a more recent intervention. In so doing, I am able to potentially hold factors constant such as culture and language; both UP and Haryana belong to the Hindi-speaking heartland, a region that retains particularly regressive gender norms.

Consider data from two modules of the Indian National Family Health Survey (NFHS), 2015-2016 which not only highlights the similarities between Haryana and UP in terms of the abuse that women face, but also the way in which such violence is internalized. Table 1 shows that in Haryana and UP, 31 and 36 percent of women report some form of physical violence (e.g. pushed, slapped, or punched); 6 and 11 percent report severe physical violence (e.g. kicked, strangled, or threatened with a weapon). A striking statistic is that 9 and 8 percent of women report sexual assault by their husband; this is noteworthy considering there is no law against marital rape (Chhibber and Jassal 2018b).

Table 2 is revealing of two points. First, a significant proportion of women believe wife-beating is justified. Of female respondents, between 17-20 percent in Haryana and 22-32 percent in UP, believe that it is justified to beat a wife if she goes out of the house without permission, neglects the house or children, argues, cooks inadequately, or is suspected to be unfaithful. Approximately 12 percent of women in both states believe it is justified to beat a wife if she

gender mainstreaming" (Secretary 2014).

refuses sex. The highest figure is in the category of ‘disrespect toward in-laws;’ 30 and 39 percent of women in Haryana and UP, respectively, believe wife-beating is justified if a woman disrespects her husband’s family.

Second, based on the table, it can be inferred that if women believe that it is justified for them to be beaten in a variety of contexts, then it is likely that victims of violence—especially abuse by a husband or in-laws—would turn to the police only as a *last* resort. In other words, it is important to contextualize forthcoming analyses by noting that women who visit a police station in Haryana and UP to register a crime have likely suffered significant hardship to have taken the step of approaching law enforcement.

Table 1: Women’s Experience of Physical and Sexual Violence in India

	Haryana	UP	All-India
<u>% Physical Violence</u>			
Pushed/Shook	11.9	17.1	12.4
Slapped	29.5	34.1	25.4
Arm Twisted	8.4	14.7	10.4
Punched/Hit	7.2	11.1	7.7
Kicked/Dragged	5.2	11	7.7
Strangled/Burnt	1.1	1.8	1.5
Threatened With Weapon	0.5	0.6	0.8
<u>% Sexual Violence</u>			
Forced Into Sex	7.5	6.2	5.3
Forced Into Sexual Act	3.5	3.2	2.5
Physically Forced	4.7	4.2	3.5
Any Physical Violence	31.3	35.9	27.9
Any Severe Physical Violence	5.6	11.3	8.2
Any Sexual Violence	9.2	7.7	6.6
Afraid of Spouse*	88	87	78.4
Respondents (N)	1,941	7,454	66,013

Note: Percentage of women in Haryana, Uttar Pradesh, and all-India, ages 15-49, who have experienced violence by their husband. ‘Any Physical Violence’ refers to being pushed, slapped, having one’s arm twisted, and punched. ‘Any Severe Violence’ refers to being kicked, strangled/burnt, and/or threatened with a knife/weapon. Answer choices for *Afraid of Spouse reflect those who said ‘most of the time’ or ‘sometimes.’ *Analysis based on National Family Health Survey 4, 2015-16.*

Table 2: Attitudes Among Women About Being Beaten in India

	Haryana	UP	All-India
% Justify Wife-Beating:			
She Goes Out Without Permission	17.1	27.1	23.6
She Neglects House/Children	19.2	29.8	29.2
She Argues	19.6	31.9	26.5
She Refuses Sex	11.5	12.8	12.7
She Cooks Inadequately	14.2	22.2	17.8
He Suspects Unfaithfulness	16.8	25.1	22.6
She Disrespects In-Laws	29.5	38.7	35
Respondents (N)	3,299	15,387	122,351

Note: Percentage of women in Haryana, Uttar Pradesh, and all-India, ages 15-49, who believe wife-beating is justified for the listed reason. *Analysis based on National Family Health Survey 4, 2015-16.*

All-Women Police Stations: An Ethnographic Analysis

I visited over a hundred police stations in the region and carried out observational and interview-based research (Patton 1990; Schutt 2018). I visited 2-3 standard *and* all-women police stations in Haryana’s districts; in Uttar Pradesh, I visited police stations in the east (e.g. Varanasi and Jaunpur) as well as in the west (Noida, Meerut).¹⁸ In total, I interviewed approximately 180 police officers.

The reason for carrying out interviews is simple. A non-interpretivist method would define some objective measure of ‘police efficacy’ or ‘access to justice’ (e.g. registrations of crime) and categorize outcomes that conform to that definition (e.g. number of registered reports in a particular station) (Jassal 2020). However, police officers in India may have their *own* definitions of ‘access to justice’, which is why it is important to ask them directly in order to gauge how such concepts are experienced and understood by them (Patton 1990).

Upon arriving at a police station, I introduced myself and the research agenda to the Station House Officer (see Verbal Recruitment in the Appendix). The officer had the ability to choose the location of the interview, and invariably decided to do so in his/her office. While the SHO would often ask to clear their office, it was not unusual for deputies and complainants to enter the room mid-way through the interview and give the SHO paperwork or have him/her take a telephone call. After completing my interview with the SHO, I asked his/her permission to

¹⁸ The representation of policewomen in the Haryana and UP forces is 9 and 4 percent, respectively. Most policewomen work in group-specific institutions.

carry out additional interviews with deputies at the station. The rest of the interviews were largely carried out with sub-inspectors, assistant sub-inspectors, and constables. (My interviews focused on officials from the state-cadre because they—unlike senior officers from the Indian Police Service bureaucracy—carry out most policing on the ground.) The SHO did *not* have a role in identifying or selecting other police officers to be approached. Interviews with the SHO’s deputies would take place in a separate office within the police station or outside. It was easier to carry out interviews with deputies in privacy and without interruption because they were not always restricted to an office. At no time could the SHO hear the responses given to me by the deputies.¹⁹ Each interview lasted approximately 30 minutes per officer and occurred at anytime between 9 am to 8 pm.

To mitigate social desirability, I took a number of steps. I informed respondents that were free to skip, ignore, or decline to answer any and all questions. In addition, information was collected anonymously for all respondents, e.g. I took down only basic demographic information and my notes were categorized as, for instance, “Assistant Sub-Inspector 2, X Police Station, Date.” On occasion, when a sensitive topic arose, I reiterated to the officer that his/her identity would remain anonymous. Almost all the officers that I interviewed provided consent and seemed more than eager to participate.

Still, even when taking steps to mitigate social desirability, interviews with public officials come with unavoidable challenges, e.g. officials may seek to provide answers that are not detrimental to their professional standing. When public servants are conscious that they are being observed, it may generate reactivity (Bouchard Jr 1976). For this reason, I supplemented interviews with *observation*-based research by recording the routines and habits of officers as well as the dynamics inside the station. Because ethical guidelines of research precluded me from directly interviewing victims of sexual and gender-based violence, by simply being present at the station, I was able to observe officers’ interactions with victims. I spent up to four hours at each police station as a fly-on-the-wall. Since a public setting like a police station can be a hotbed of activity, my presumption was that any social desirability associated with my

19. However, there were times when junior officers heard the SHO’s responses to my questions in the main office.

presence or identity would diminish after an extended period of time as officers become engaged with or distracted by other responsibilities. Moreover, I never gained the impression that any complainant was concerned about my presence; despite being a male researcher at the station, I was one of dozens of individuals at the institution at a given time that may have included escorts sitting in the waiting room, drivers, or other male family members of complainants.

Finally, in ethnographic research, it is important to identify oneself and acknowledge how one was part of the construction of the material (Wedeen 2010; Rubin and Rubin 2011). And so, in forthcoming descriptions, I highlight the questions that *I* asked in order to contextualize and be transparent about the way in which the information was obtained. The interviews were carried out in Hindi; the notes for the interviews and observations were transcribed at the end of each day that they were conducted.

Multiple Jurisdictions and Pass-the-Parcel

When I arrived at Jaunpur’s all-women police station on 9/27/17, it was already night. I met two women police officers (a sub-inspector and a note-taker or *munshi*) sitting on a cot outside the station. They informed me that the Station House Officer was away, but agreed to answer my questions. The policewomen were eager to vent to me about how dissatisfied they were about being posted at an all-women station.²⁰

The policewomen disliked the fact that they were away from their families in a manner which would not be the case if posted at a standard (or zonal) police station, and underscored that policemen use the enclave to lighten their own caseload. I began by asking the sub-inspector how many officers work at the institution. The sub-inspector said, “15 or so, but there are just two officers – me and the SHO [Station House Officer]. It’s tough because we answer to the whole district – and we go wherever we have to. So, going and investigating can be a bit of a challenge in a way that would not be at a normal *thana*.”

20. The all-women police stations in Haryana and Uttar Pradesh are all urban. The police stations are located in the district headquarters, and most are in the center of the city. The primary distinction between the UP and Haryana all-women stations is that the former are more likely to be in a state of disrepair. Partly because the Haryana all-women stations were opened in 2015 (on the same day) and were designed as a symbol of the state’s new vision on gender justice, the institutions have newer infrastructure and buildings.

“Do many complainants come to you?,” I asked.

The sub-inspector responded, “*Yes, but largely when complainants get forwarded here.*²¹ That’s when the madam [Station House Officer] investigates it. Most cases do not come directly. FIRs [crime reports] are sometimes registered here but very, very few.”

“What are your hours?,” I asked.

“No hours. We have to be here 24-hours. We have to be physically present for 8 hours but we can be called anytime. If there’s been a murder, and a woman is crying, we often have to go to wherever the incident occurred. I have to pay for my own private room. We get an allowance but it doesn’t cover rent entirely. *For women police officers, it’s a huge inconvenience.*”

The policewomen described not only how the physical segregation isolated them from mainstream police-work, but also that all-women stations—in addition to forcing complainants to travel longer distances to access justice—create inefficiency because there are times when a woman needs to be interrogated or asked questions at other venues.

At this moment, the *munshi* interjected and said, “My family life is being ruined. I have to live here. I barely get to see my family. I want to be posted in a zonal police station closer to home. Male officers just have their work, but we have dual roles.”

After some time, the Station House Officer arrived in a jeep with her driver. After introducing myself and research agenda, she invited me to her office. Eager to answer my questions, and having called for tea, she asked me to begin my inquiry. I began by asking her thoughts about all-women stations’ efficacy.

The Station House Officer noted, “There’s nothing inherently wrong about the concept of an all-women station. There’s work here too. But some basic resources should be brought it. There are some advantages of being a gent’s *thana*. The gent’s police stations have more records and archives. We don’t have registers or records of people who have been accused repeatedly of offenses. The basic amenities that a sub-inspector needs are only available at a gent’s *thana*.”

In the exchange, the Officer hinted that these dynamics would be less likely to occur if she was posted at a standard police station. Like the sub-inspector and the *munshi*, the Station

21. Italics added here and subsequently for emphasis.

House Officer expressed that the all-women stations have a lot of work because standard police stations around Jaunpur use the enclave as an opportunity to lighten their own load.

The Station House Officer continued, “We will have to go to the very outskirts of a whole district in UP if necessary. So, a woman officer will go, along with four or five constables. *But the other officers think we do not have work, so they send us more rape cases!* We are posted here, but when sometimes they need a complainant to talk about what happened, they call us. That’s why often when a zonal officer at a gent’s police station needs our help, he sends for us to speak to an aggrieved female victim. And we have to go there too.”

In this way, not only are gender violence cases passed on to all-women police stations, but the segregation of policewomen manifests in fewer resources (at least in Uttar Pradesh) and being cut off. There is also a disconnect in that policewomen think that policemen at the standard stations have little work because policemen are not responsible to a whole district; then again, policemen at standard stations believe all-women stations have few responsibilities because the institutions are only associated with gendered crimes. This incongruity likely plays a factor in inducing officers at standard stations to deflect gendered cases, potentially affecting complainants’ access to services because they are forced to navigate this maze created by multiple jurisdictions.

A sub-inspector at the all-women station in Varanasi was even more explicit about bureaucratic inefficiency. When I visited the institution on 9/26/17, she underscored how, because all-women stations cater to a whole district but the institutions get the same monetary allowance as standard stations, the physical segregation makes it difficult to carry out investigations. She said:

“Money is tight. We have to spend some of our own money at these police stations sometimes. Because we cater to a whole district, sometimes we have to go far. Petrol costs money, and we have a set allowance. So, we have to ask money from the people who want the investigations done. And then people think that we are corrupt – we are not corrupt, that’s the situation we face! And if you spend money on each investigation, what are you going to feed your kids? The Station House Officer gets a driver, but we get nothing. And we are the ones

who are often doing the investigating. So, if the Station House Officer is not here and the car isn't available, we have to hire a tempo. I'm also a sub-inspector like the Station House Officer but I don't get the same resources when posted at the all-women station because I have to do so much travelling."

"Don't you get reimbursed?," I asked.

The sub-inspector said, "No. If I go outside the city, yes. It comes after a year or two. Any place around Benaras I will have to spend my own money if the car isn't free. So, these are the problems with an all-women station. *And on top of that, all-women stations are not taken that seriously by other officers, who keep shuffling off crimes to us that they feel are beneath them.*"

I asked the sub-inspector, "So you also register heinous gendered crimes like rape?"

"If a woman is raped – sometimes it's better for her to register the crime in the gent's police station. If a woman is raped, the police officers of the gent's *thana* in that particular zone might arrive at the scene more quickly than we can – we are in the district headquarters. *Even we as lady officers posted here sometimes encourage women victims to go to the local police station so the male officers can catch the culprit quickly.* The guy [suspect] may run away by the time the complainant comes all the way here, in which case who are the police going to interrogate?"

Puzzled at the repeated use of the phrase 'gent's police station' I said, "It's interesting that you refer to the other police stations as 'gent's *thanas*.' Aren't policewomen also posted at normal police stations – shouldn't victims feel comfortable reporting crimes there or to the female officers posted there?"

"There, you might have two or three female officers. Four tops. Police stations sometimes have 80-90 police. So, if a victim goes there, she will really just see mostly men. Here you have all women. *But, still, it's sometimes better for the complainant to go to the gent's thana.*"

My sense was that the creation of all-women police stations—without clear jurisdictions as to whose responsibility it is to investigate gendered crime—not only affects complainants, but also policewomen's morale and sense of worth. Female officers referred to standard police stations as "gent's *thanas*," suggesting that the creation of all-women stations impacts police jargon such that now a standard police station is seen primarily as a man's domain.

Figure 1 is a photograph taken inside a UP station. The board—which highlights rules to be followed by officers—is revealing. It illustrates that citizens *are not* supposed to be turned away. Rule 3 explicitly states that officers cannot refuse to register a complaint if they believe it to be false or exaggerated, and citizens cannot be turned away with the excuse that the case falls under the jurisdiction of another station (colloquially referred to as “burking”). Another board inside a standard police station (Figure 2) outlines that women police officers should, if possible, help in the *recording* of female victims’ statement. Yet, because most policewomen are posted at all-women police stations, the lack of accessibility of policewomen at standard stations make it more challenging to assist female victims in distress when they approach zonal institutions.

Institutional Norms and Reconciliation

In some contexts, all-women police stations are associated with the ‘counseling’ of female complainants. Some have referred to counseling as “forced moralizing”²² whereby officers caution women *against* registering crime reports by raising discussions about the victim’s status in relation to the marriage or community. Because standard police stations tackle all forms of crime (and are therefore a hub of activity), there are fewer opportunities and simply less time for (male) officers to spend time mediating between victims and abusers. If, for instance, at a standard police station an officer believed a case to be frivolous, it would likely simply be dismissed. On the other hand, at all-women police stations—because the institutions are associated with gendered crimes only—there is more room to encourage complainants to change their behavior.

One may ask: what purpose does a resolution to a gender violence case in the form of counseling or mediation serve as opposed to arrest of a suspect? Gender-based crimes, and dowry harassment in particular, are among the most common forms of complaints brought forward in India. Counseling enables cases to be resolved in an informal fashion to the benefit

22. Johari, Aarefa. 2019. “Forced Counselling, Moralising: The Difficulties of Filing Dowry Harassment Cases under Section 498A.” *Scroll.In*. December 5.

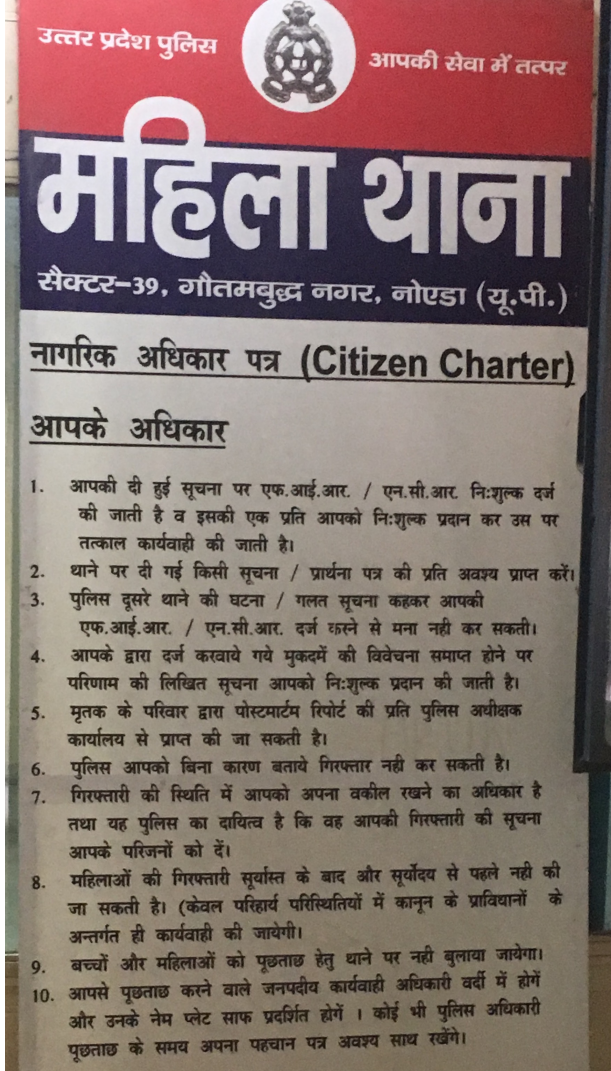


Figure 1: “Know Your Rights” Board Inside UP Police Station

1. Based on your information, a crime report is registered without any payment, in addition you will be receiving a copy, and we will take immediate action.
2. Please obtain copy of your report or application.
3. **Police can not refuse to register your complaint by claiming that it falls under jurisdiction of another station / or is false.**
4. When your case is closed and the proceedings are completed, the results will be given to you in written form without payment.
5. The family of the deceased may obtain a post-mortem report from the police station.
6. The police can not arrest you without a reason.
7. You have the right to a lawyer when arrested. It is the responsibility of the police to inform your family about the arrest.
8. Women cannot be arrested after sunset and before sunrise; only in special circumstances under certain legal provisions.
9. Children and women will not be summoned to the police station for questioning.
10. Police officers questioning you have to be in uniform and clearly show their name-badge; they must keep identification on their person during questioning.

of the bureaucracy without ‘clogging’ an overburdened criminal justice system. Then again, while counseling may be used for cases of domestic violence (Kethineni and Srinivasan 2009), discussions with police officers, including policewomen, reveal that counseling victims of marital rape is also seen as preferable to filing cases.

I walked into the Station House Officer’s office of the all-women station in Faridabad, Haryana on 11/11/2017. As I approached the Station House Officer’s desk that afternoon, she was in the process of scolding a man who was standing across from her with his face bowed. Before entering, I had noticed a woman waiting outside the Officer’s room (who I later discovered was the man’s wife) with her hair and forehead covered with the loop of her Sari. Still, a black-and-blue bruise was clearly visible on the woman’s cheek near her nose-ring.

The Officer yelled, “Go back to the gully where you are from and find out how pathetic your reputation is there!” She continued, “How dare your father tell his daughter-in-law to get out of the house! Is it his damn house? She’s the one earning. That’s her house. Have you no shame?”

As I approached the Officer, the phone rang and she motioned me with her hand to wait. She said to the person at the other end of the phone, “Yes, the marriage will get saved. Just tell the guy to speak to his wife with affection. Look, my job is counselling. I’ve counselled both of them. After mediation, we will counsel. So, don’t worry. The marriage will get saved.”

My impression was that someone had called the Station House Officer about whether a crime report was going to be lodged against a family member or friend, to which she was intimating to the person on the other line that no formal crime report would be registered.

After hanging up the phone, she resumed her rebuke of the man standing in front of her and said, “If your marriage is not saved then I’ll register an FIR and lock you up in the *hawallat* [prison] – if you ever trouble your wife again! Every day you spend Rs. 10,000 on alcohol. No wife is going to tolerate this! If you need to drink, drink at home. What kind of behavior is this where you walk around like a drunkard and stumble back into your house to beat your wife?”

The man responded, meekly, “she doesn’t want to talk to me even.”

The Officer, lowering her voice, responded, “She will. If any wife is touched, and her father-

in-law kicks her out of the house, then she gets these *strange ideas*. Just tell your wife – ‘look, my father made a mistake, he’s your father too.’”

The man, regaining confidence and appearing defensive about the Officer’s earlier remark about beating his wife while drunk said, “I also didn’t drink that much, ma’am.”

The Officer, continuing to lower her voice, told the man, “You know, it’s an indication of a weak man to lay his hands on his wife...a very weak man. Just fix and patch up this fight. Come back on Saturday at 11 am. If you haven’t patched up by then, we’ll give you another date after that – don’t worry, everything will be fine.”

The Officer appeared to be trying to calm the nerves of the *man* and reassure *him* that no crime report would be lodged; during this exchange, the woman remained *outside* the Officer’s office. At this moment, turning to me, the Station House Officer asked me my business. After explaining my purpose and research agenda, she asked a female constable present in the room to escort the man outside, despite my protests that I could come back later. She insisted that I have tea with her so that she could tell me about all-women stations.

By the time the peon (who was also a woman) brought the tea, the Station House Officer and I were engaged in a discussion about her background and how long she had been working in the police. I broached the subject about the origins of the all-women police station in Haryana, and she told me that previously there existed ‘women’s cells,’ which were located inside standard police stations. The goal of those cells was to counsel female victims of gender violence into reconciliation with abusers.

The Station House Officer said, “...The Haryana government decided, ‘you know what, why not create a separate women’s police station.’ The main reason to create these institutions was that, for instance, if there was a rape of a woman, only a lady could tell another female officer what exactly happened and how. If a male cop asks a female victim, she’ll definitely tell him, but she won’t do it openly.”

“Couldn’t this have occurred at a standard police station?,” I asked.

“A lady victim may not be able to say to a cop, ‘you know, there were four guys, two of them grabbed my hand, one of them held my face, *one guy inserted it there...*’ The reason these

stations were needed was because – look, even though there is a female constable at a normal police station who will probably hear what the female victim has to say, the investigation will end up being undertaken by the man. Now consider whether the female victim needs to undertake a medical. We [at the all-women station] can advise the doctor, often times a female doctor, ‘look this victim needs to get X or Y test done, or a rape test or pregnancy test.’ Previously, the male officers wouldn’t know the full story – they would only find out through the doctor *that a rod was utilized or a stick* or whatever else.”

In this exchange, the Station House Officer described shockingly graphic images of women being violated in a fairly matter-of-fact tone of voice, suggesting that such complaints were not unusual. I then asked about the woman sitting outside the office and whether a crime report would be lodged against the man that she had been scolding earlier.

“No. His wife doesn’t want an FIR [crime report] registered. The wife wants to be counselled and patched up,” said the Station House Officer.

“Did she come here to register a crime report?,” I asked.

The officer replied, “*She came here before to register a crime report once, but not this time. I have so many complaints like this come to me, I can tell what she wants.* She feels that if an FIR is lodged it will ruin her family dynamics. She wants mediation and then counselling, and she wants the man to understand. *She also says that if she has any faults she wants to be alerted to them.* This will help to patch her up.”

My sense was that the Station House Officer was putting words in the complainant’s mouth; she acknowledged that the victim had visited the institution before to register a case. The Officer also used a phrase that I would hear repeatedly, i.e. “patch up.” My impression was that the focus in all-women stations was *not* to register or formally investigate complaints that may “ruin family dynamics” but simply to provide a safe space for complainants to talk. The dynamics illustrated a broader norm about violence against women—no matter how brutal or incessant—being a matter than can be mitigated by reprimanding abusers.

The story was the same in Varanasi. I asked a female sub-inspector what steps she followed

when confronted with a case of assault.

“Well, if it’s between a husband and wife, we don’t follow any steps *per se*. We do mediation, and explain if there are any problems again with beating up of the spouse, there will be consequences,” said the sub-inspector.

“Do women officers who work here have any special training to counsel?,” I asked.

The sub-inspector responded, “No. We don’t have any separate training to work in these *thanas* [stations].”

“So when is it that you register a crime report?,” I queried.

“If a complainant comes, their case won’t be registered immediately. We need to do some preliminary, basic investigations first before we lodge an official FIR. We need to go often to the place and speak to the constables working there and others to *make sure it’s not a fraud violence case. It’s not like a complainant comes and says she was being beaten and immediately an FIR is registered.* Only with regard to little children and if there is a rape case, only in those cases is an FIR registered immediately. *Or, maybe if she is beaten really badly, or is burned.* Then yes we’d register an FIR immediately.”

I asked, “Do you think women by their nature are better suited to work with gendered crimes?”

She said, “Probably. We are more emotionally suited. If a woman is crying at a gent’s police station, the male officer won’t know why. We will.”

“Do you ever feel that if you write down an FIR, you’re perhaps putting the girl in some more danger? Her husband and his family might punish her for going to the police? Is that a reason why you avoid registration?,” I asked.

The sub-inspector responded, “Imagine there’s a husband and wife. And the wife has an FIR registered. Sometimes her family members will be angry. That’s why we don’t do an FIR immediately. We need to spend time finding out what’s going on. *Now, if suddenly the girl decides not to pursue the case, there’s not a lot we can do about it. Sometimes the girl doesn’t support the registration of an FIR later on.* That’s why mediation prior to the registration of an FIR is key.” In this way, the policewoman intimated that it is in the police’s interest to avoid

registering a case so that victims can be encouraged to reconsider.

Officers also acknowledged that enabling victims to formally file a case could pose a danger. For instance, when I asked a policewoman in Jaunpur about a victim's life being threatened if a case is registered, she said, "Yes, that's certainly possible that the girl could be in serious trouble by her in-laws if an FIR is lodged. This is UP. It's a possibility we may never hear from her again! But we always tell the girl, 'look, what you're doing is not wrong. You're fighting for your rights.' We give them our numbers, and let them know if they call us we will come and sort it out." In this way, victims are not necessarily dissuaded from registering cases for malign reasons (i.e. to reduce the caseload); often, by failing to register to a case, policewomen may be *protecting* complainants from further retribution and, in some cases, saving their life.

When I visited the all-women police station in Sonipat on 11/22/17, I asked the Station House Officer about her perceptions of the efficacy of enclaves. She noted that a homogeneous environment affords a safe space for women; yet, with the same breath, she underscored how cases were rarely registered or formally investigated.

The Station House Officer informed me, "Counseling and mediation is what sets us apart from normal police stations. First, a complaint comes to us. We then typically conduct three rounds of counselling with both parties. For example, if a woman complains about something and tries to register a case, we will send an officer to bring the other party to the police station and have a round of counselling, thereby giving them an opportunity to resolve the issue in front of us. If it's not resolved, we give them another date where both parties have to appear at the police station. Once again, if it's not resolved we make them come here at another date. If it's *still* not resolved, we send them to the mediation center, where there is counselling there too. If after all that the issue is still not resolved, then only then do we lodge an FIR."

In the above quote, the policewoman describes how repeatedly trying to counsel a victim with her abuser are the main steps to be followed. The Station House Officer further explained, "At a normal police station, a woman could easily express how she is having problems with her in-laws, or that they asked for dowry and beat her up. However, the dynamics between

a husband and wife, and the specific nuances of those household dynamics women can only express in such an environment. They would not be able to tell men. Here we can spend time counseling.”

“So, your first reaction is to save the marriage?,” I asked.

“Our first reaction is to bring all the parties to the police station. Then, yes, we start with the counselling.”

“Even if a woman is being raped by her husband?”

“Nothing really happens with that [marital rape] here. Section 377 [unnatural or anal sex/sodomy] comes to us, but it’s difficult to verify. For cases like 498A [cruelty by a husband upon his wife] we don’t register an FIR immediately. Dowry harassment is the case that we primarily tackle - if a husband happened to beat up his wife *a bit too excessively* asking for more dowry. But, first, it’s important to verify with both parties. We have to ask if the allegations made are true or not, and whether they have anything to say. For rape cases however, the person accused is arrested and a crime report is lodged straight away.”

Similarly, the Station House Officer in Faridabad informed me on 11/11/17, “Look, when we patch up the girl with her relatives, we have the relatives over here. We give them the girl and the relatives two separate dates to appear here, 15 days apart. We ask the girl, ‘look, are you still having any problems? Your relatives didn’t punish you or anything for going to the police, did they?’ Then we actually meet everyone again after a month, then three months, and then six months. During those meetings we ask the girl how she is being treated. We also ask the husband separately what’s going on in the house. If an issue persists, then we do focus on counselling. *We tell the girl sometimes, ‘child, those are your in-laws, and they are like your parents. You should listen to them.’* That becomes a routine where after six months, the sourness between everybody recedes.”

Qualitative insights suggest that registration of crime may not fully encapsulate the notion of ‘access to justice’ or ‘police efficacy’ because victims of spousal abuse may not always want to take the step of lodging a criminal case; they may seek mediation in front of an authority figure. Counseling does involve ‘informal’ investigation in the sense that complainants and abusers

are called to the police station; this act may occur repeatedly, and generate a feedback loop whereby abusers (and victims) change behavior. Still, based on my observations, I witnessed many complainants explain to policewomen that they indeed sought the registration of crime but were being *dissuaded* from doing so. While research on all-women stations in Tamil Nadu shows that policewomen do not file case reports for crimes like domestic violence because victims want to be mediated (Kethineni and Srinivasan 2009), I find that this dynamic also occurs with *other* forms of violence against women.

How much is counseling an artifact of all-women police stations? Indeed, even standard police stations have established ‘counseling’ centers.²³ I eschew any qualitative judgement as to whether counseling is appropriate, except to note that the distinction between all-women stations and standard stations is that the former *regularize* the push toward reconciliation. Moreover, the emphasis on reconciliation highlights the manner in which certain forms of gender-based violence are seen as ‘family matters.’²⁴ Consider Figure 2, which depicts a bulletin board inside a police station in Uttar Pradesh. Point 17 notes that a *male relative* should be present when taking a woman’s testimony. I interpret this as an example of the belief that “real rape” is between a woman and a person unknown to the victim (Barn and Kumari 2015), because the rule disregards assault by a male family member.²⁵ Policewomen posted at enclaves did not appear to view such norms differently simply because they were physically segregated.

In sum, counseling is a form of ‘rehabilitative’ rather than ‘redistributive’ or ‘formal’ justice (Stalans 1996; Hoyle and Sanders 2000). The emphasis on reconciliation does not mean policewomen are not doing their jobs; quite the contrary, they may be fulfilling a crucial role in the interests of the broader bureaucracy which may seek to deprioritize cases seen as lacking in hard evidence or potentially a strain on police resources.²⁶ Nevertheless, the findings may help

23. “Proposal for More Women Counselling Centres at Police Stations.” *Business Standard India*, March 11, 2013.

24. There is indeed confusion about whether Section 498A allows for a suspect to be arrested immediately. The law was famously diluted in 2014 and 2017 after pressure from “men’s rights activists” (Court 2014; Chhibber and Jassal 2018a).

25. Assault perpetrated by a family member is significantly more common than by a stranger (DHS 2017).

26. A notable literature from criminology finds mixed to positive effects with regard to deterring sexual or domestic violence when suspects are arrested as opposed to reconciled through informal resolution or mediation (Sherman and Berk 1984; Sherman et al. 1992; Berk and Newton 1985).

to explain why, anecdotally, all-women stations have not generated the desired response.²⁷ In fact, senior officers from the Indian Police Service (IPS) acknowledged that all-women stations were not popular among either policewomen or female victims. When I interviewed an IPS officer in Chandigarh on 7/27/17 about his perceptions of enclaves, he said, “As district chief of Pauri in Gharwal, I had a *mahila thana* under my jurisdiction. My sense was that the women themselves—barring those who wanted to be in a comfortable day job with not much stress or they just had a baby—wanted to be posted at mainstream *thanas*. Unlike a *mahila thana*, a regular *thana* is a 24/7 hub of activity...You think you would expect more women to come forward and say they want their crimes investigated by a *mahila thana*. I did not see any such preference on the ground. I might as a policymaker feel very good about such a reform, but if the people manning the *thanas*, and the people who would go there, don’t feel particularly enthused, then I need to ask myself what ‘effectiveness’ means.”

Diminution of Capacity

While enclaves are theorized to empower administrators by increasing their capacity, I find that group-specific institutions may in fact *diminish* their professionalization. Even though policewomen may be engaged in counseling at all-women stations, the service is a form of informal work that does not count as investigation of a formal case. In other words, because the number of victims policewomen “counsel” does not appear on their listed caseload, it is plausible that they may be evaluated as having less experience by the bureaucracy when in consideration for promotion or in the running to head a regular police station. For instance, when I visited the all-women police station in Faridabad for a second time on 11/24/17, I asked the Station House Officer whether she had requested to work there. The Officer said, “There are no requests to be posted anywhere. They [the government] said we should have a women’s police station, and it has to be run by a woman, so I’m here.”

“Do you find working here fulfilling?,” I asked.

“Well, in a gent’s *thana*, there are a variety of crimes. Their portfolio is bigger. Ours is

27. Talwari, Gaurav. “Women Police Stations Draw Tepid Response.” *Times of India*. January 22, 2018.

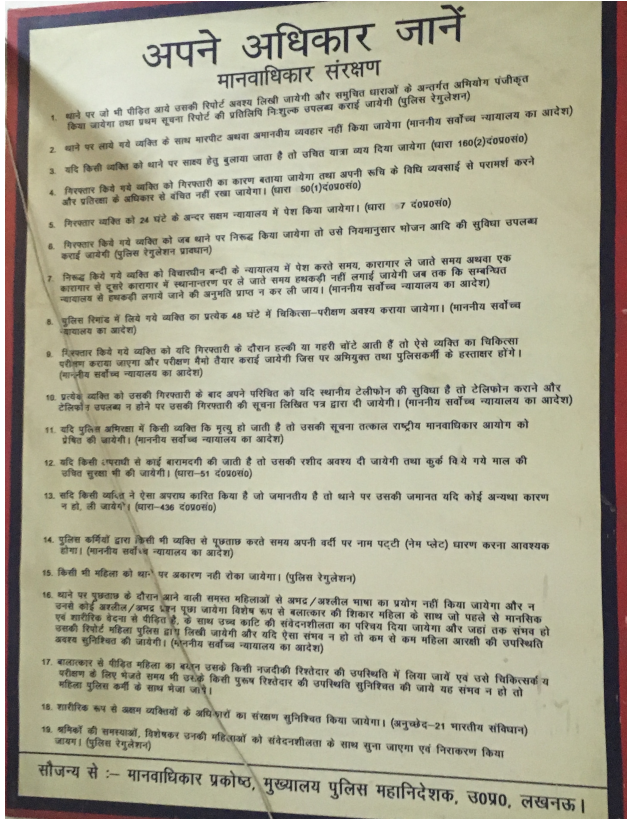


Figure 2: “Know Your Rights” II

1. Whomever in distress comes to the police station, a report will be written up according to the relevant sections, which will be entered into police records. A copy of the report will be made available to the citizen.
2. At the police station, nobody will be beaten or treated inhumanely.
3. If anyone is called to be a witness, they will be given an appropriate travel fare.
4. The arrested person will be told the reason for arrest, and according to their wish, they will be introduced to a professional and not be deprived of their rights.
5. The arrested person in custody is to be brought to the relevant court within 24 hours.
6. When the arrested person is brought to the police station, they will be given food and refreshments.
7. On bringing an arrested person to the court or from one station to another, they will not be handcuffed unless permission has been obtained earlier.

8. For someone who is kept in police remand, their medical checkup will be done every 48 hours.
9. If, during arrest, a person has sustained minor or major injury, they will be adequately examined and a memo will be prepared on which will be signatures of officials and the suspect.
10. If any person arrested person wants to phone, they should be able to do so. If a phone is not available, adequate information should be sent to individuals close to the accused.
11. If, in police custody, someone dies, information must be immediately given to the National Human Rights Commission.
12. If something is confiscated from an offender, a receipt must be given to the person, and the items must be stored safely.
13. In case someone has committed a bailable offence, then bail must be taken.
14. Officers' name-plate must be visible during interrogation of suspect.
15. No women will be made to wait at the police station for any reason.
16. **In regard to women coming to the station, no obscene language is to be used. They are not to be asked obscene questions, and especially with regard women who have been raped who may already be in a physically disturbed state. In fact, women will be treated with the highest care, and if possible, a woman police officer will write her report. If this is not possible, then at the very least, a woman attendant should be present or made available.**
17. **The statement of the raped woman must be taken in the presence of a close relative. When sending her to a medical checkup, a male relative must be made available to escort her. If this is not possible, then at least a woman police officer should accompany her.**
18. People's physical rights will be protected.
19. Rights will be respected, and women will be heard with empathy; their examination will be done.

specific to crimes against women, rape, dowry. We are specialized. We have a bigger zone and are responsible to a district. *I don't get to investigate other crimes here.*" While police-women's occupational segregation—the disproportionate assignment of gendered tasks—was also a practice in standard police stations, all-women police stations simply institutionalized such imbalance in activities, forcing female administrators staffing those units to *only* work on those cases explicitly listed in Appendix Table 3.

In fact, at standard police stations, policemen appeared content with the arrangement of separating policewomen. When I arrived at a standard police station in Meerut on 11/17/17, I noticed that the offices were all empty except for a handful of constables and two sub-inspectors playing cards outside. I asked to speak to the Station House Officer, but a sub-inspector told me that the officers were away on VIP duty, i.e. escorting an important person. I asked a sub-inspector, "What do you think of policewomen in the force?"

"They are good, but not for arrest. For arrest, you need to catch the guys. The men are the perpetrators. You need to arrest them. Most of the women are constables who can't investigate, the other policewomen are posted in the all-women *thanas*."

"Do you think it's a good idea to have all-women police stations? There is one not far from here," I noted.

The male sub-inspector responded, "all-women stations are important. Only women can tell other women their problems without any inhibitions." Then, the male sub-inspector used my question as a cue to paint a broad picture about the significance of giving policewomen gendered tasks. He continued:

"Policewomen can spend time explaining things. Look, there's something wrong in this country. 70 percent of crimes have to do with differences between husbands and wives and dowry. A man can't keep a wife, and a woman can't make her husband happy. People have no understanding of their responsibilities. What's the duty of a woman? She should know, that she should make her husband breakfast. Instead of thinking about the man's breakfast, she is thinking about how much money she is going to earn for herself over the course of the day. *Women pressure their husbands by threatening to lodge cases of dowry, only to pressure them*

into behaving a certain way. How are they going to make this small fight as a crime? Women engineer these small crimes as conflict – their ways of thinking don't match men, but then they engineer it like a crime. *Otherwise, how will the women create pressure?* Suppose a woman gets married; she has been married for 5-7 years, and she has three children. Up till now, she has never spoken of dowry with this man. How is it possible that after so long she is going to come up with dowry? Where did this come from? Suddenly, the couples' views don't match, and now the woman wants to create pressure. Why will a father-in-law misbehave with his daughter-in-law? Then she suddenly decides to put a case against the father-in-law. The law is very strict about that – it means that the father-in-law will go to jail for ten years. She does this knowing the consequences. *Now the lawyers who sit in our courts, their job is to register these cases, and they make them up – they sit in the courts and write up these fraud cases.* There are also all these NGOs and social organizations. But even the social organizations are sitting there and eating *ras malai*, building up these *imaginary crimes* and increasing pressure. *Policewomen can be used to explain to the couples their rights and responsibilities.* But there's no incentive from any of the areas I have mentioned to cease the pressure and stop the engineering of these offenses. That only the police can do...in *mahila thanas* [all-women stations] there are few arrests. They counsel everyone and wrap everything up there and then. *Only in rare cases do they actually have to go out and investigate.*"

I highlight this quote from a policeman in Meerut because it exemplifies several points. First, policewomen, according to some policemen, are seen as useful in order to counsel—or caution—complainants from registering “fraud” cases. Second, it is evident that police officers may believe that cases involving cruelty by husbands against wives are fraudulent because they invoke a law often related to dowry harassment.²⁸ Third, there is a sense of exhaustion among officers with the number of gender violence cases that come before the police; there is a belief that such cases are “engineered” by NGOs, and that it is the duty of law enforcement to push back and “stop” the manufacture of such offenses. In this way, the policeman intimated that not only do all-women police stations have limited (front-line) work, but by grouping

28. In fact, female victims of crime *have to* turn to laws like Section 498A simply because there are few tools to which complainants can utilize in order to have their cases taken seriously.

all the policewomen in a homogeneous enclave, the dynamic can heighten the likelihood that complainants are counseled into reconciliation. According to the policeman, counseling is a tool utilized by the police to explain to victims their “responsibilities.”

Airing of Grievances

There is some evidence that a) all-women police stations may be effective in allowing grievances to be heard, and b) are a welcome assignment by officers less inclined to front-line police work. For instance, when I interviewed the Station House Officer of the all-women station in Noida on 11/20/17, she said:

“I prefer all-women stations. I’ve worked at a standard police station. We patrol and work all day and night there. If I worked in a general police station, as an inspector, I would get quite a bit of respect. But, I have girls [female deputies] here. If they work there, there will be a change in the kinds of duties they perform. We sometimes bring our family and our children to work, if they are close by. *What I don’t like is that when others [policemen] send over complainants to us because they don’t want to investigate. They dump their cases so they can become free.*”

In this way, aside from reiterating that all-women stations are a site for “dumping” unwanted cases, the Station House Officer expressed uninterest in being posted at a standard police station where she acknowledges she would have more influence. I then asked the Station House Officer why she joined the police; she told me that she always disliked policing but enlisted because her husband was killed during the Khalistani secessionist movement.²⁹

“My husband was expired in an encounter there. After that I had to join the police. I had very small girls. I was married for 7 years. I was only 24 when I lost him. I got married young. I was more of a homebody and I was thrust into this world. I did the training...But, I mean, the whole police atmosphere – I haven’t been able to immerse myself in it completely. I can’t use bad language and speak in a crude way, I can’t misbehave with people. At this police station,

29. Indian police agencies, including in Haryana and UP, allow a dependent of an employee killed in the line of duty to join automatically under ex-gratia employment or compassionate grounds.

I don't have to be 'tough' or use a weapon."

At this point, a woman who was weeping, barged into the Station House Officer's room. She told the Officer that her mother-in-law had been making her life a living hell. The young woman said that her mother-in-law told her to remove all her belongings from the house and get out or she would kill her and her children. The Station House Officer brought in another female assistant sub-inspector to console the victim, and informed the victim that she would hear the whole story once she caught her breath.

Turning to me, the Officer said, "Did you notice that? Do you see the positive effect of these women's police stations? The complainant didn't need to ask anyone to see the top officer. She walked right in. This wouldn't have happened at a normal police station; she'd have to wait." About two hours later, the husband and mother-in-law of the victim that had been weeping showed up at the police station. They too walked into the Station House Officer's room and, making themselves comfortable, asked if they could speak freely.

The Officer invited the mother-in-law to relate her side of the story by saying, "now, aunty, tell me what happened." The old woman began explaining how she lives on the ground floor of her son's house, and has been having problems with the living arrangements. The old woman said that her daughter-in-law would beat her with shoes simply because the mother-in-law asked for some money. The son—whose wife remained in the other room with the assistant sub-inspector—remained silent and appeared comfortable in having his mother speak for him. The mother-in-law explained to the Station House Officer that she never got any jewelry at her son's wedding and that there was only one piece of gold, yet everything else was silver. The mother-in-law explained that she knew the girl was going to come to the police to register a case against her and her son, which is why she decided to come to the all-women's station to explain her own side of the story. During this entire episode, the Station House Officer listened to the mother-in-law's point of view without interruption.

Then, the Station House Officer instructed a peon to call the daughter-in-law into the room. The young woman, upon seeing her relatives, began quickly summarizing the events that led her to come to the police station. Yet, the woman spoke so quickly that she stumbled over her

words. I sensed desperation and a feeling of being outnumbered; the woman appeared to be doing everything in her power to be taken seriously so that those in the room would not be able to discredit her. Still, the Officer listened, occasionally telling the son and mother-in-law to be quiet as they occasionally tried to interject with the word *jhoot* or “lie.”

Importantly, the Station House Officer allowed all sides to present their perspectives and air their grievances in front of her. As I sat in the corner of the large main office, nobody appeared concerned or even conscious about my presence. The parties were entirely focused on convincing the Station House Officer who was right. It took almost 1.5 hours for both parties to yell at each other, with the Station House Officer occasionally telling someone to be quiet so that she could hear the other person. At the end, no crime report was lodged. The daughter-in-law stayed at the police station refusing to leave with the others, and it is unclear when, if at all, she returned to her house.

Discussion

Even though a number of nations have enacted measures to promote the participation of diverse groups in public institutions, there is scant research about the impact of such measures, especially in the Global South. I attempt to expand academic discussions of representation—which have largely focused on quotas in elected institutions—to *new* modes of accommodating group-interests. I do so within the context of an understudied institution: the police. In general, the police is an important site to probe the impact of representation measures because, unlike elected office, law-and-order agencies have their own organizational culture, socialization processes, and are particularly unlikely to be representative of the broader social composition.

Some have claimed that even with the implementation of quotas, minority groups might *still* be constrained by dominant members from assisting in-groups; for this reason, policymakers have considered *group-specific* institutions. Such institutions would theoretically promote representation by separating administrators based on identity such that they are able to articulate and accommodate the interests of in-groups without constraints. I use the case of

all-women police stations to probe the efficacy of this ‘separatist strategy’ or the idea that segregated enclaves empower vulnerable groups by providing administrators more responsibility or increasing clients’ access to services. Some limitations of this study are that I make a claim about victims’ access to police services by relying on observation (rather than interviews with survivors of assault), and the insights gleaned are based on fieldwork from just a few north Indian states. Nevertheless, I argue that while enclaves may provide a space for citizens to air grievances, such measures may be associated with challenges for three reasons: *multiple jurisdictions*, *institutional norms*, and *diminution of administrator capacity*.

First, all-women police stations may induce the deflection of gendered cases from standard police stations. In this context, I find remarkable parallels between the anxieties associated with segregated women’s police stations in early 20th century America with outcomes a century later in modern India. While complainants are *not* supposed to be turned away at standard stations, the institutionalization of enclaves may enable this to occur more frequently. The act of forwarding complainants may discourage victims from seeking help from law enforcement and provide standard police stations time to deal with “urgent” cases. While all-women stations are not voluntary for the staff who work inside them, they were designed as an optional resource for complainants. However, the creation of multiple overlapping jurisdictions may affect both the speed and likelihood that victims are able to have their complaints addressed by *narrowing* rather than *enlarging* access points.

Second, I find deep-rooted norms that hinder women from registering cases. While ‘counseling’ may serve the interests of the police bureaucracy, evidence suggests that the emphasis on mediation might also enable other heinous forms of crime such as rape to be lumped into the same category as marital disputes. In many of the instances that I observed, victims approached law enforcement to register a complaint but were unable to do so. While it is true that complainants may not always want their marriages to end (in cases of spousal abuse), I find that counseling may sometimes be coercive, and limit victims’ choices (Hoyle and Sanders 2000). However, this does *not* necessarily imply malign intent on the part of administrators; law enforcement officers may have their own definition of what ‘efficacy’ means in the context

of accommodating gender violence cases, and female officers in particular may be doing their best to be helpful within the system in which they operate. In their view, enabling victims to speak freely or reach a compromise with abusers in front of an authority figure may be both an alternative as well as safer approach than pursuing charges.

Third, enclaves may lower the likelihood that female administrators are able to develop capacity and experience. Because all-women police stations prioritize gendered crimes, the implementation of enclaves forces the limited existing staff of policewomen to be moved from standard stations, thereby giving policewomen less experience with murder or kidnapping cases. Interviews suggest that policewomen are often unsatisfied in all-women police stations; they are not discontent with tackling gendered cases *per se*, but the physical segregation isolates them from carrying out assignments that the broader criminal justice system may prioritize. Occupational segregation, in addition to physical separation, may manifest in fewer resources and a misalignment of the interests of administrators with those of the bureaucracy. While female officers are likely to be assigned gendered tasks even within standard police stations, the establishment of group-specific enclaves may *formalize* female administrator's association with gendered work. Future research could shed light on whether enclaves also perpetuate regressive norms; if policewomen serve in units away from policemen, then male officers may be less likely to be sensitized to gendered issues. Broadly, the *design* of enclaves, wherein segregation is embedded, may create a system of 'separate and (un)equal.'

While the notion that women are able to speak freely in all-women stations conforms with social science literature about enclaves and deliberation, I do not find support for lawmakers' intuitions that women are innately suited or predisposed to assisting in-groups; realities on the ground suggest a more complicated story. The premise behind 'separate spheres' is that when citizens are accommodated by their own group, they will be less likely to face bias. However, minority group administrators may *also* be conditioned to particular practices or because bureaucrats serve within a broader cultural milieu in which certain issues are prioritized over others. Enclaves may not be a panacea; in fact, it remains an open question as to whether incorporating diversity in *existing* institutions may serve as an alternative to segregation.

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Online Appendix

Figure 3: All-Women Police Station, Washington, D.C., 1920



Source: Library of Congress.

Figure 4: All-Women Police Station in Haryana and Uttar Pradesh, India, 2017



Left: Complainants (and a male escort) waiting outside AWPS in Sonipat. Right: AWPS in Meerut. Source: Personal.

Table 3: Description of Sections & Special Acts Investigated by All-Women Police Stations in Haryana

Section	Description
IPC 1860;294	obscene acts or songs
IPC 1860;304-B	dowry death
IPC 1860;313	causing miscarriage without woman's consent
IPC 1860;314	death caused by act done with intent to cause miscarriage
IPC 1860;315	act done to prevent child from being born alive
IPC 1860;316	death of unborn child
IPC 1860;318	concealment of birth by secret disposal of dead body
IPC 1860;354	sexual harassment
IPC 1860;366	kidnapping, abducting a woman to compel her to marriage
IPC 1860;366-A	procurement of minor girl
IPC 1860;366-B	importation of girl from foreign country
IPC 1860;376	rape
IPC 1860;376-B	intercourse by husband upon his wife during separation
IPC 1860;376-C	intercourse by person in authority
IPC 1860;376-D	gang rape
IPC 1860;376-E	punishment for repeat offenders
IPC 1860;497	adultery
IPC 1860;498	enticing or taking away a married woman
IPC 1860;498-A	husband or relative subjecting woman to cruelty
IPC 1860;509	word, gesture or act intended to insult modesty of a woman
IPC 1860;306	abetment of suicide
IPC 1860;317	exposure or abandonment of child
IPC 1860;326-A	acid throwing
IPC 1860;326-B	attempted acid throwing
IPC 1860;363	kidnapping from guardianship
IPC 1860;377	unnatural sex
IPC 1860;494	marrying again during lifetime of husband or wife
IPC 1860;495	concealment of marriage
IPC 1860;496	ceremony gone through without lawful marriage
The Child Marriage Restraint Act, 1929	
The Immoral Traffic (Prevention) Act, 1956	
The Dowry Prohibition Act, 1961	
The Commission of Sati (Prevention) Act, 1987	
Protection of Women Against Domestic Violence Act, 2005	
The Information Technology Act, 2000	
The Indecent Representation of Women (Prohibition) Act, 1986	
Protection of Children from Sexual Offenses Act, 2012	

Note: Description of gendered crimes to be tackled at all-women police stations. *Based on 2015 Haryana circular.*

Template Recruitment Script:

Hello. I am X. I am a graduate student working with my faculty advisor, Professor X. I am inviting you to participate in a research study. The purpose of this research is to better understand the history and operation of specialized police stations in India and about policing in general. I would like to interview police officers posted at this station, who are 18 years and older, to learn about their experiences and opinions regarding these types of police stations and about the police in general. If you decide to participate in this study, I will ask you a few questions that will take about 30 minutes of your time. Remember, this is completely voluntary. You can choose to be in the study or not, and decline any of my requests. If you would like to participate, we can go ahead and start now. Do you have any questions for me at this time? Thank you very much. [Proceed with Verbal Consent]

Figure 5: Consent Page 1



Consent to Participate in a Research Study



Introduction

My name is [REDACTED] I am a graduate student working with my faculty advisor,



[REDACTED] We are conducting a research study, which I invite you to take part in. This study is open to police officers, visitors to the police stations, and those with knowledge about policing in India. Anyone under 18 years old is not eligible to participate. We will not be interviewing or talking to any person/s held in your holding cell.

Purpose

The purpose of this research study is to better understand the history and operation of specialized police stations in India and about policing in general.

Procedures

If you agree to be in this study, we will ask you a few questions about your experiences and opinions regarding these specialized police stations, and about the police in general. Answering our questions should take 30 minutes of your time. We will not be collecting any identifiable information about you. We may also request to accompany you or one of your officers on the beat for one hour. You are free to decline any and all our requests and ask us to leave at any time.

Risks/Discomforts

Some of the research questions may make you uncomfortable or upset. Participation in this research study is completely voluntary. You are free to decline to take part in any aspect of this project, and are free to ask us to leave at any point. In case confidentiality is breached, the risks will be minimal because no personally identifiable information will be collected or used. Only the researchers [REDACTED] will have access to the study records; they will be stored in a password protected computer.

Confidentiality

The information you provide us will be handled as confidentially as possible. If results of this study are published or presented, no personally identifiable information will be used. We will



Figure 6: Consent Page 2

not maintain a link between your identity and the information we gather here. The answers to your questions and our field notes will be stored in an encrypted format on a password - protected computer. [REDACTED]

You are free to choose where you would like to conduct the interview – in your office, outside the police station, in an empty room, as you see fit. In case the interview takes place in a public location, i.e. near visitors to the police station, please feel free to give us your demographic information in a private setting. In case a sensitive topic arises, we can offer not take notes or move to a more private location. In case a private location cannot be secured we could step outside or simply move to the next question.

Future Use of Study Data

When the research is complete, your study data will be saved for possible use in future research done by myself or others. I will retain this study information indefinitely after the study is over. The same measures described above will be taken to protect confidentiality of this study data.

Compensation/Payment

You will not be paid for taking part in this this study.

Benefits

There will be no direct benefit to you from participating in this study. However, it is hoped that the information gained from the study will help researchers and policymakers better understand the police in India.

Rights

You have the right to decline to participate or to withdraw at any point in this study without penalty or loss of benefits to which you are otherwise entitled.

Questions

If you have any questions about this research or would like to validate our credentials please feel free to email or call [REDACTED]

My email address is [REDACTED]

[REDACTED]
[REDACTED]
[REDACTED]

[REDACTED] [REDACTED]