

Best Practices for the Recruitment, Retention and Promotion of Female Officers

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Best Practices for the Recruitment, Retention and Promotion of Female Officers

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## **Abstract**

### **Best Practices for the Recruitment, Retention and Promotion of Female Officers**

This paper reviews current and past research on the best practices for the recruitment, retention and promotion of female police officers. After finding the number of female officers in the profession has plateaued and remains far lower than the representation the general population would indicate, research points to structural, organizational and cultural changes needed to welcome female officers in the numbers expected for the field. Several recommendations for future research are included.

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## Introduction/ Statement of the Problem

Despite predictions in the times following the implementation of affirmative action and the subsequent consent-decrees that women officers would quickly be equal in number to that of male officers, women continue to lag far behind their male counterparts in commissioned roles. The most recent FBI data (2018) shows 12.6 percent of officers across the nation are female, up only slightly from 11.9 percent in 2014 (Federal Bureau of Investigation, 2019). The higher the rank of the officer, the smaller the number of police women represented despite decades passing, as documented by Salomon Alcocer Guajardo (2016) in his longitudinal study of women in supervisory positions in New York. During the course of the 13 year study, Guajardo found that women made little to no gain in achieving supervisory rank (Guajardo, 2016). The lack of females ascending to leadership positions confounds not only the public, but also the private sector, where an absence of female leadership in private and public corporations continue forward through time with little or no headway in achieving an active representation of female talent (Ng & Sears, 2017).

The overall problem is laid out literally by Tara O'Connor Shelley, Melissa Morabito and Jennifer Tobin-Gurley (2011, p. 351) in their research stating, police agencies “have difficulty in hiring, retaining, and promoting female police officers.” They state the situation is especially bad for rural agencies citing the situation as “dire” and point to little resources committed to “targeted recruitment of women” (Shelley, T.O.C., et al., 2011, p. 351).

Even with research showing women are less prone to corruption, the representation of female officers is low across the globe, with single digit percentages in third-world countries and just over thirty percent in more modern governments (Amaral et al., 2019). While this paper focuses on research in the United States and the obstacles faced by female officers in the U.S., it

should be noted that these same themes are occurring in Europe which is facing similar challenges with a system “shown to be based on male values and masculinity” (Osterlind & Haake, 2010, p. 21).

Recruiting, retaining and having women compete for promotion in numbers equal to that of male candidates (thus reflecting the population of the United States) remains a problem despite efforts of programs like affirmative action (Cordner & Cordner, 2011). Gary Cordner and Ann Marie Cordner address this issue in their 2011 research highlighting the employment of women police remaining low in the United States. They stated “the underrepresentation of women in law enforcement will not be remedied easily” as the problem is complex and covers a variety of jurisdictions (Cordner & Cordner, 2011, p. 220). The problem is also obvious in that there are departments who do employ substantially higher rates of female officers, defined as more than 20 percent, successfully such as Chicago, Detroit, and Washington, D.C. This makes the point that the national average should be quite a bit higher than 11-12 percent female officers (Cordner & Cordner, 2011). For comparison, Canada has a national average of 19 percent women police (2009) and Australia has 23 percent women police (2006) (Cordner & Cordner, 2011).

The gains made during the height of affirmative action have now stagnated; what many researchers refer to as a plateau (Matusiak & Matusiak, 2018; Schuck A. M., 2014). American law enforcement agencies have created specialized units to house female officers in order to appear equitable and welcoming of women when in reality those units divert the female officers from the areas where hegemonic masculinity still thrives, impeding the equitable employment of women (Matusiak & Matusiak, 2018). The most overt example of this was the police matrons of the late 1800’s – female employees that were allowed to only address certain crimes, never

attaining the full legitimacy of police officers (Chicago Police Department, 2020). More modern versions of this are less apparent as female employees can become commissioned officers, yet the subtle bias of opportunity lives on with sensitive crimes units and Special Weapons And Tactics (SWAT) teams matriculating very different gender pools.

By cultivating and pointing to these specialized units departments are gaining legitimacy from the institutional environment when really the “targeted set of opportunities” is solidifying the difference between male and female roles in the departments (Matusiak & Matusiak, 2018, p. 327).

### The Efficacy of Consent Decrees

In the late 1970’s and early 1980’s, the U.S. Attorney General brought a lawsuit against the City of Los Angeles for discrimination. As a part of the settlement, or “consent decree,” white females were to be employed at half their representation in the greater labor force and slightly less than half their representation in the population (Felkenes et al., 1993). These measures set goals that were lower than the goals for hiring men of color but still asked that Los Angeles set a short-term goal of hiring 25 percent female officers until the overall department reached a long-term goal of 20 percent overall. Other cities later held under consent decrees had higher goals set, with Birmingham, Alabama challenged with the highest goals of 25 percent annual hiring to meet a long-term goal of 44 percent representation in the long-term (Felkenes et al., 1993).

The Los Angeles Police Department did succeed with meeting and exceeding the goals set by the consent decree for several years, followed by several years in which it failed to meet the requirements (Felkenes et al., 1993). This failure was met with higher goals set by the consent decree enforcers to make up for the years the department failed. The success of the



consent decree, according to the researchers, was based on the LAPD's respect for rule of law, which the consent decree became for that department. The researchers felt the consent decree's influence in exploiting that respect overcame the fundamental hostility toward women that was present in all levels and areas of the department (Felkenes et al., 1993).

The most successful recruiting tactic employed by LAPD in order to recruit minorities and women ended up being radio advertisements, followed by print advertisements in newspapers. Whether these strategies would still be the most effective given the changes in technology since the 1980's is unclear, but is worth noting since other strategies such as sending representatives to career fairs and colleges was found to be not as effective (Felkenes et al., 1993).

Lack of commitment and resources have led to well-intentioned but ineffectual programs to increase the numbers of female officers hired, retained and promoted by law enforcement agencies (Felkenes et al., 1993; Krimmel & Gormley, 2003; Langton, 2010; Shjarback & Todak, 2019; Whetstone, 2001).

### Theoretical Framework

There are five theories that surface when surveying current and past research into recruiting, retaining and promoting female police officers. One theory, tokenism, brought to light by Rosabeth Moss Kanter's study of group dynamics in 1977, continues to be cited in research as a lingering effect for female officers (Archbold & Schulz, 2008). Kanter based Tokenism on Georg Simmel's work on group formation and process – that a group's make up determines its function so a distorted or skewed group would therefore have a distorted or skewed outcome (2006, p. 41). Kanter added to Simmel's work by using the word "token" to describe people set

apart by the characteristics ascribed to that position in society, not just people who are solitary or alone in a group (2006, p. 39).

### **Tokenism**

Kanter's theory of tokenism argues that women or any other minority are regarded unfairly by their peers and supervisors due to being the focus of a majority of a group's awareness when they make mistakes or do things in a way that is different from the dominant group (2006). This special status is not positive and often leads to stereotyping, distortion and coercion toward pre-existing opinions of what that person represents as a token (Archbold & Schulz, 2008). Tokenism also slows down the token's attempts to assimilate into groups which Kanter describes as polarization (2006) and places added pressure on the tokens which can lead to poor performance as these forces combine (Archbold & Schulz, 2008). Simmel and Kanter (2006) essentially point out that until women are so common in a group that their actions and contributions are regarded only as those – not with the additional stereotyping and societal expectations thrown in, the group and women will struggle to assimilate and contribute fully to that group's potential outcome.

### **Representative Bureaucracy**

Another theory is representative bureaucracy, and the progress toward active representation for female officers in the workplace. The representative bureaucracy theory argues having diversity within a workforce with special regard to race and ethnic group assists those in minority groups that are represented in becoming prioritized when it comes to creating policies and deciding who benefits from the implementation of those policies. A good example of recent research which showed how important this dynamic is for law enforcement was the work done by Kenneth Meier and Jill Nicholson-Crotty (2006). Their research showed a positive link

between female law enforcement officers and the number of sexual assault reports taken and arrests, leading to the conclusion that sexual assault victims are more likely to talk to female officers (Meier & Nicholson-Crotty, 2006).

### **Active Representation**

In this work, active representation is defined as the congruence of attitudes, priorities and values between the minority workforce and their administrators, as well as having persons in the role of administrator with the ability to act to benefit the groups they represent (Shjarback & Todak, 2019). Research points to having female officers at the front lines in a larger proportion than in the past is helpful, but will not create the changes desired by communities, namely: breaking down negative subcultures, improving community relationships/information sharing, promoting less aggressive tactics and raising the quality of police services (Shjarback & Todak, 2019).

Confirming the benefits of having active representation in the upper ranks of high-risk public organizations (policing) was research presented by Rhys Andrews and Karen Johnston Miller in their 2013 study on female chief constables. Their research found evidence that having female officers in positions of authority or being allowed more opportunities to make decisions led to a higher amount of domestic violence arrests in England (Andrews & Johnston Miller, 2013). If female officers are allowed to reach positions of authority, those higher ranking officers do actively represent female citizens by advocating for policies and practices that resulted in more domestic violence arrests, bettering the situation for female citizens on the streets (Andrews & Johnston Miller, 2013). Thus, the representative bureaucracy theory seems to apply to the plight of female officers in law enforcement or other high-risk professions and would offer

positive benefits to departments and agencies willing to give more female officers opportunities to reach positions of agency within their organizations.

Even passive representation of female officers appears to have a positive difference for female citizens. Researchers Amalia R. Miller and Carmit Segal found that the integration of women officers into the heavily male United States police force improved police quality on violent crime reporting and domestic violence (Miller & Segal, 2018). The research also noted where there were higher levels of female officers present, there was a significantly higher amount of crime reports police received for crimes against women and significant declines in intimate partner homicide (Miller & Segal, 2018). This rise in reporting for crimes against women was not seen in agencies that employed higher amounts of female civilian workers (Miller & Segal, 2018).

This rise in reporting crime at higher levels to female police officers is not only evidenced in America. After some innovative policy interventions in India, all-female police stations were created in order to try to combat rising crime against female victims (Amaral et al., 2019). A study looking at crime before and after the creation of these all-female departments showed reports of crimes against women went up by 22 percent, mainly reports of domestic violence and kidnappings (Amaral et al., 2019).

Susan Athey, Christopher Avery and Peter Zemsky's work on mentoring and diversity as a business model points to higher potential efficiency and better results for employers willing to mentor and promote persons from minority groups. This could also prove relevant for law enforcement agencies looking to harvest talent from all aspects of their communities and truly represent the interests of their constituents (Athey, Avery, & Zemsky, 2000). Athey et. al. found this was important for firms in the information sharing business (police work) since having a

diverse workforce would prove more efficient in gathering all data points in a community or industry in the long run (2000).

Women are both a numerical minority (tokenism) and an economic minority (not ascending the leadership structure to well-paying positions), which meets both conditions of Gary Becker's work on the economics of discrimination for "effective discrimination" (Becker, *The Economics of Discrimination*, 1971, p. 27). Becker further concluded there was a clear connection between lack of representation and discrimination of minority groups (1971).

### **Human Capital**

Gary Becker's Human Capital Theory, which he explored in his work *Human Capital* (1975), also applies to the situation of women police officers. The theory argues that younger members of the workforce are more likely to trade income for opportunities to invest in themselves because those workers expect those investments to lead to higher income later in life. Those opportunities are what develops a personal accumulation of knowledge, habits, social skills and facets of the worker's personality that are developed to enhance that worker's ability to perform labor and accomplish tasks. Becker discusses in his third edition of *Human Capital* (1993) the relationship between specialization and the marketplace. Becker points out a very limited market discourages specialization (Human Capital, 1993). For women police officers, most are in a situation of a very tight market or numerical representation of female officers. The experience of those few token officers already feels special and they already stand out (many times to their detriment) since others are always aware of the female officer's physical and social differences. While the male counterparts are encouraged by the marketplace which is filled with officers who look and are socialized similarly, female officers, according to Becker's specialization argument, would be discouraged.

For promotional processes, officers who competed and were successful in getting specialized positions with the department are rewarded for the officer's ability to stand out. Female officers, who already stand out and already are enduring the natural- many times negative- outcomes of being special, signing up for more specialness can be discouraging. Male officers with career aspirations are not stigmatized, but female officers can be labeled and devalued (Brown et al., 2019). When female officers attain enough experience and ability to qualify for promotional processes but are not rewarded with leadership or specialty positions of esteem, those same female officers pointed to in promotional materials become frustrated.

Police departments point to female officers as living proof of their fairness across gender, many times in a consensual but still exploitative manner. Female officers who have appeared on every police department brochure and were featured in news stories, may not welcome more elevation in the public's awareness, even if those officers would perform the duties of a leadership role well – at least until there are so many officers like them, female officers start to be motivated to work to stand out again.

Gary Becker also points out women in general are less likely to take advantage of investments in themselves unless it benefits the woman's home life and her work life (Human Capital, 1993). Very few training and specialization opportunities in law enforcement translate to skills that improve a mother's or wife's home life, in fact quite the opposite is true. Special roles in law enforcement agencies often demand more commitment of time and talent to the work – including shift work or an expectation of flexibility to take on more work should the role demand it.

Researchers at the National Institute of Justice Summit on Women in Policing in 2018 asked for more research to determine whether the glass cliff theory – which argues women are

more likely to receive leadership posts when the organization is in crisis – applied to women in policing as well (Starheim, 2019). This distinction would be important for agencies and administrative officers as the theory tenets the posts women are receiving are also the most likely to fail. First coined in a Wall Street Journal report in 1986, researchers have examined this theory in the decades to follow and most recently in the public sector with Meghna Sabharwal’s (2015) work on administrators in federal agencies. Sabharwal found women working for agencies that had flat hierarchies and could lateral into positions from outside the agency were least likely to experience the glass cliff situation even if the agency was male-dominated (2015). Further research could identify whether this glass cliff phenomenon occurs for female officers serving in law enforcement agencies and shed light on whether the opportunities given to female officers with leadership traits are real chances or simply agencies wishing to set women up to fail.

### **Feminist Theory**

Feminist theory also plays a role in the dynamics affecting female officers in their professional environment. By examining the way differences and relationships between the two genders play out, feminist theory gives context to the injustices females encounter and best practices for bettering the social structure to prevent or counter the injustices (Grosz, 2010).

## Literature Review

### Tokenism, its identification and implications

This problem was first identified in literature by Rosabeth Moss Kanter in her book *Men and Women of the Corporation* in 1977 where Kanter illuminated the dynamic and negative effects of being a “token” female in a group environment (Kanter, 1977). This concept was applied to women police by Susan Martin’s 1991 article, “The Effectiveness of Affirmative

Action: The Case of Women in Policing.” Martin showed the initial success of affirmative action and the positives of having police officers from both genders. Affirmative action is the practice of favoring persons in groups formerly discriminated against. Martin cautioned at the end of her research that unless there were significant increases in applications from women, affirmative action would lead to less than 20 percent of women in policing at the start of the twenty-first century (Martin, 1991). Martin’s prediction of a token role for women police is evident in statistics compiled by the Federal Bureau of Investigation showing that the full-time law enforcement employee in 2018 (the most recent data available) showed 87.4 percent of officers were male (Federal Bureau of Investigation, 2020). This consistent “token” representation in most police departments has negative effects on the women who do step up to become police officers according to the 2003 research by John Krimmel and Paula Gormley. Their survey found departments who had less than 15 percent female officers, had female officers who were more depressed, had less self-esteem and felt their job was not as important as officers who responded from departments where there was 15 percent or more female officers (Krimmel & Gormley, 2003).

Affirmative action did enjoy some lasting success even if its effects did not reach above the street-level positions. According to Martin, the aspects of affirmative action that were made a part of the institutions and later accepted by administrators as having value – such as targeted recruiting, performance appraisals and job-related tests – have endured even after the federal government withdrew its support (Martin, 1991).

### Masculinity

One of the problems identified by research include “hyper-masculine” social structures within departments that consciously or unconsciously lead to leadership opposing women in



policing (Kingshott, 2009, p. 66). Even in situations where the U.S. Government issued consent decrees forcing departments to hire female officers, the mandate had little effect on active representation, with the basic hiring and graduation of officers increasing, but with little effect on promotions (Felkenes et al., 1993, p. 60). George Felkenes, Paul Peretz and Jean Schroedel (1993) found in their analysis that there was “little evidence that the day to day experience of women in the Department has become significantly easier” (p. 60).

The report created by the National Institute of Justice following their Summit on Women in Policing in 2018 also cited masculinity as a road block that led to female officers with leadership potential receiving less respect because their leadership style did not conform with “masculine norms” (Starheim, 2019, p. 21).

Work completed by Amie Schuck showed women are not as likely to take on habits and identity traits aligned with hypermasculinity (Schuck, 2014). Schuck defined the traits associated with hypermasculinity as prejudicial/discriminatory attitudes – especially the destructive use of coercive force as a means of social control (Gender Differences in Policing: Testing Hypotheses From the Performance and Disruption Perspectives, 2014). Schuck also found women were more likely to use “caring or feelings as a strategy of interaction whereas male officers are more likely to use behavior” (Schuck, 2014, p. 178).

Schuck found women and men take on traits of honor culture similarly, defining honor culture as the defense of the revered role of officers to those who demonstrate disrespectful behavior toward officers or the badge in general (2014). Schuck attributed the matriculation of hypermasculinity as well as honor culture as a likely result of the occupational socialization process versus beliefs that were held prior to employment (2014). As to why the adoption of hypermasculinity was so gendered, Schuck did not have an immediate answer and asked for

further research. The research did conclude however that lower levels of hypermasculinity were associated with less perception of negative citizen behavior and less complaints filed on officers (Schuck A. , 2014).

Additional research showed gender also affects officers' response to intimate partner violence with masculinity playing a role (Lockwood & Prohaska, 2015). Daniel Lockwood and Ariane Prohaska found masculine police culture, which they described as "deeply rooted" in gender, led male officers to be more likely to believe that domestic violence crimes were less serious than their female counterparts (Lockwood & Prohaska, 2015, p. 77). Researchers suggested the expansion of mandatory arrest policies and laws in order to take discretion out of the domestic violence arrest scenario to combat the propensity of some male officers to justify and rationalize incidents of domestic violence (Lockwood & Prohaska, 2015). Lockwood and Prohaska described the need to recruit and retain more women in law enforcement as important for the proper enforcement of domestic violence laws. They also suggested the hiring of men who respect women as equally important in order to not only help victims of domestic violence but also create a work environment which is not hostile to women (Lockwood & Prohaska, 2015). Addressing upper administration members, which are more likely to be male, was also suggested by the researchers stating that training on socialized stereotypes and gender sensitivity creates value in that it makes employees aware of their own stereotypical beliefs and the consequences of those views (Lockwood & Prohaska, 2015).

Kingshott argued in his literature review of leadership in policing that previous integration barriers such as women's reluctance to use force when necessary have been disproven as anecdotes featuring situations in which female officers hesitated to use coercive force – a big difference (Kingshott, 2009). Based on that barrier's false reality, Kingshott argued

that many if not all integration barriers may be false and based on traditional or sexist viewpoints (Kingshott, 2009).

Police culture, when referenced in research, has been too generalized to only include emphases on physicality and masculinity according to researcher Marisa Silvestri. Silvestri's research focused on how this viewpoint of reducing policing to only the physical and masculine actions taken by officers was allowing a negative and de-motivating reputation for the profession to persist (Silvestri, 2017). Silvestri referred to this as the "Cult of Masculinity" and challenged researchers to stop over-simplifying the profession into those very gendered and clichéd terms as it supports arguments made in the past to exclude women as officers (Silvestri, 2017).

These over-simplified views are supported by television media and movie portrayals of women according to research by Cara Rabe-Hemp. She found depictions of female officers almost always supported the stereotypes that women are caregivers and nurturers more than crime fighters (Rabe-Hemp, 2011).

Silvestri does not underestimate the power of gender in policing and how the police officer through time has been defined by their literal body, thus leaving women unqualified for the position (Police Culture and Gender: Revisiting the 'Cult of Masculinity', 2017). The gendered and sexualized nature of police culture remains even into modern times with terms in the profession like "crime fighting" legitimizing the disparate environment (Silvestri, 2017, p. 294). Using force implies having a physique to apply coercive force, and even in today's modern society that physique is rarely pictured as female (Silvestri, 2017).

She also points out how time commitment throughout an officer's career is expected in order to attain leadership status in policing, something that female officers who take leave time in order to have children or care for family members cannot achieve (Silvestri, 2017). The

extreme work environment asked of leadership in policing further disqualifies females who may never be able to normalize time away from family – many times unpaid – in order to work on projects “beyond the call of duty” that are required to stand out in order to advance a policing career (Silvestri, 2017, p. 296).

Women also regularly cite childcare and family concerns as a major reason for not seeking promotion after being hired leading to passive representation. Thomas Whetstone notes in his research as to why officers do not seek promotion, “child care is a prominent concern, especially among female respondents” (Whetstone, 2001, p. 155). The report created by the National Institute of Justice following their Summit on Women in Policing in 2018 also cited day care as the number one thing brought up by women in discussions about factors disproportionately affecting female officers (Starheim, 2019). The report suggested further studies looking into the potential of provided day care as a tool for the recruitment and retention of officers (Starheim, 2019).

Even before women have to face the challenges of childcare, female officers face sexual teasing if not harassment according to a qualitative study by Timothy Brown, et. al. (Brown et al., 2019). The study found women were so used to sexual teasing that they had developed several strategies for neutralizing the teasing efforts. Even this teasing reinforced the female officers as an “other” and reinforced the male as normative (Brown et al., 2019). The study noted that women were finding “paths of least resistance” in order to survive hypermasculine cultures at work, with many bowing out at each stage of the career path (Brown et al., 2019).

The study also showed masculine activities in which a criminal was hunted down and brought to justice were most likely to be valued, whereas long-term investigations by female officers to shut down entire drug houses were not (Brown et al., 2019). Even more startling was

the revelation of the existence of a hypermasculine environment at a department where the female officers were employed at twice the national average, thus negating the argument that employing high numbers of female officers is enough to combat hostile work environments (Brown, Baldwin, Dierenfeldt, & McCain, 2019).

In his book, *Police Women Who Made History*, Robert Snow predicted problems with recruitment and pointed to policies that are not family-friendly, irregular hours and the relegation of female officers into “female jobs” as reasons why police work does not appeal as a career to women (Snow, 2010, p. 147). Dorothy Schulz also noted systemic discrimination and the low number of women entering law enforcement to begin with as factors in the slow progression of women to the higher ranks of law enforcement agencies (*Invisible No More: A social History of Women in U.S. Policing*, 2004).

Schulz further illuminated the unique experience of female officers with ambitions in her book *Breaking the Brass Ceiling* (2004) which drew attention to how frequently female officers needed to switch departments in order to continue up the leadership ladder. Only one third of the thirty three chiefs Schulz spoke with held the top job at the department where they began their career (*Breaking the Brass Ceiling*, 2004). Among those who do lead the agency where they began their career, the majority had left the agency for outside opportunities at some point in their career and returned (Schulz D. M., 2004).

## Assessment of Best Practices

### Recruiting

Having more female officers can save departments money in litigation as well as breed future success hiring women (Orrick, 2008). According to research, the average male officer

“cost taxpayers two and a half times to five and a half times more than that average female officer in excessive-force lawsuit awards” (Orrick, 2008, p. 17). Men are also eight and a half times more likely to have a sustained excessive force complaint against them versus female officers. Male officers are named two to three times the rate of female officers in excessive-force complaints (Orrick, 2008, p. 17).

Getting female officers in the door, in a field where men have dominated the ranks for decades, requires a specific plan and a focused recruitment effort. Incentives for referrals and accountability for recruiters can boost minority candidate numbers (Orrick, 2008). Having a plan in place for reaching the department’s recruitment goal, making those goals reasonable and holding recruiters accountable for attaining those goals are all important to increase minority representation (Orrick, 2008).

Starting a sub-group within the department that focuses on targeted recruitment can be important for gaining support from staff within a department (Orrick, 2008). Departments should look to the candidates who have already been successful at the department to see if that same process can be replicated for others (Orrick, 2008). Some departments also have situations where current employees can bring forward candidates similar to a sponsorship situation. As this setup can place more pressure on the candidates being hired, both in a positive way and a negative way, departments should consider with their sub-group ways to mitigate negative outcomes for candidates who do not succeed in their hiring processes.

Getting female candidates in the door can be difficult as police departments watch the gains made during the affirmative action years dwindle if not reverse course. Recent research on why women remain “severely underrepresented in law enforcement” found the perceptions of potential female recruits showed women are less likely to feel a career in law enforcement will

be a successful career or accomplishment (Cambareri & Kuhns, 2018, p. 17). Respondents to the research survey also ranked dangerousness and high stress as undesirable aspects of police work (Cambareri & Kuhns, 2018). Since the researchers found perceptions of success to be the key to whether the potential female candidates would be interested in a law enforcement career, the researchers concluded departments should focus on raising the perception of successful female officers (Cambareri & Kuhns, 2018). Focusing on educating potential recruits on characteristics or practices found often in successful officers, particularly female officers, can potentially lead to more women considering a career in law enforcement (Cambareri & Kuhns, 2018). Researchers said departments should focus on including in their recruitment how women are “less likely to use excessive force, more likely to effectively respond to domestic violence situations and their policing styles are more likely to improve police-community relations” (Cambareri & Kuhns, 2018, p. 18).

Recruitment that focuses on the specific motivators for sub-groups might also help get more female recruits in the door. Anthony Raganella and Michael White found in their research that race and gender played a role in whether a recruit would be motivated to apply to be a police officer. As an example, white women were more likely to value the opportunities for career advancement as an important aspect of police work (Raganella & White, 2004). Hispanic females however, valued enforcing the laws of society and the fact that the job carried power and authority (Raganella & White, 2004).

Another research study on motivations of both sheriff and police recruits showed similar results with men and women sharing similar motivations for pursuing a career in law enforcement (Castaneda & Ridgeway, 2010). Both women and men said job security and helping the community were their primary reasons for seeking a career in law enforcement (Castaneda &

Ridgeway, 2010). Women were found to rate opportunities for advancement and good salary higher than male recruits, while ranking power and authority as less important, but for the most part answered similarly on all questions on the survey (Castaneda & Ridgeway, 2010).

The same research study did show however that perceptions of the disadvantages of pursuing a career in law enforcement were different on a few points between men and women. Women were more likely than men to think physical fitness, family obligations and favoritism in the police departments were downsides to a career in law enforcement (Castaneda & Ridgeway, 2010).

At the outset of a recruitment plan, efforts that focus on providing literature at locations where women who enjoy “non-traditional hobbies and sports activities” was recommended, as well as locations for selling sporting licenses and shops for “do it yourselfers” (Orrick, Recruitment, Retention, and Turnover of Police Personnel, 2008, p. 136). Having female officers as a part of a department’s recruitment team may also provide opportunities for women who are considering a career in law enforcement to speak with a woman who is already doing the job (Orrick, Recruitment, Retention, and Turnover of Police Personnel, 2008).

The spirit of physical testing standards is to determine if a candidate will be able to perform the job and remain fit over the course of their career, often twenty or more years (Cordner & Cordner, 2011). Physical fitness standards have been used in the past to discriminate against female candidates and it continues to present the biggest challenge for female recruits (Cordner & Cordner, 2011). Re-evaluating if the physical fitness standards required actually fit the job the candidate is expected to perform, may help more female officers get out on the road (Cordner & Cordner, 2011).



Written testing is another step in the process for departments to evaluate for significance going forward. Amie Schuck recently reaffirmed the negative relationship between an agency having physical fitness requirements and that agency's level of gender diversity (2014).

Norma Riccucci and Margaret Riccardelli (2015) looked at whether written testing was required by law for police departments looking to hire or promote officers. The research found nearly all police and fire departments across the nation were continuing to administer written tests despite almost no legal requirement to do so (Riccucci & Riccardelli, 2015). Some departments have defended their use even after legal challenges stating their union contracts require written testing or that written testing has always been a part of the process (Riccucci & Riccardelli, 2015). Often legal challenges are filed based on racial discrimination resulting from the tests, but diversity in general seems to thrive when other parts of the assessment process are given weight such as oral boards or scenario testing (Riccucci & Riccardelli, 2015).

Screening for educational requirements, however, appears to work in the favor of female candidates for police officer according to a study of both large and small departments by Amie Schuck (2014). Schuck stated this could be explained as female candidates seeing the educational requirements as an indicator of the department's professionalism (Schuck A. M., 2014).

Overall, Schuck recommended that departments consider how candidates are being assessed and whether the skills being assessed truly have a place and would be indicative of success in modern policing (Schuck A. M., 2014).

Barriers, internal and external, affect women differently in law enforcement according to the research by Jihong Zhao and his colleagues. Minority women were more likely to be affected by external barriers such as how many people in the community were from the same minority

group, while white women were more likely to be affected by internal barriers at their agency (Zhao et al., 2006)

Very few agencies, one in five, have created and implemented a targeted strategy for recruitment of women and minorities (Jordan et al., 2009). The success of agencies also varies greatly, with a budget dedicated to recruiting women and minorities positively associated affecting hiring (Jordan et al., 2009).

Researchers continue to look for points in the recruitment process that discourage minority and female candidates. Elizabeth Linos, et. al. considered the wording of the email used to invite candidates to participate in a hiring process and in doing so were able to raise the participation rate of racial minorities by 50 percent (2017). This was possibly the first test of changing language in order to “reduce stereotype threat during testing for public sector recruitment” (Linos et al., 2017, p. 952). Unfortunately the venue for the research, an agency where women were in visible and important positions already, lent a difficult environment to see a big jump in female candidate success rates, but the research itself shows how a small difference in strategy can reap large benefits (Linos et al., 2017).

### Retention

Several researchers have looked at the ways departments can support their female officers by committing resources, re-considering academy standards and aligning policy with supporting employees that have children (Kingshott, 2009). Once female officers are in the door, departments need to look at what works in their training academies to keep them. A special report from the Bureau of Justice Statistics found a large difference in retention for academies that were high-stress and paramilitary in approach versus those that were more academic focused. Only 68 percent of female candidates completed the predominantly stress-based model

academies versus 89 percent of female candidates in the academic focused academies (Reaves, 2009). The report illustrated the more stress-based the academy the smaller the chance of success became for female recruits, however at the academies where the focus was mostly academics, the female and male recruits had the same success rate, 89 percent (Reaves, 2009).

Eliminating gender gaps in the success of candidates during the academy training process may be solved by having more female instructors according to a study by Scott Carrell, Marianne Page and James West (2010). Their research concluded having female instructors eliminated the gender gap in science and math performance at the Air Force military academy (Carroll et al., 2010). Adding more female instructors or having completely female academy classes was also recommended for larger institutions by researchers (Cordner & Cordner, 2011). This research implies adding more gender diversity to eliminate gaps between male and female candidates will help retain more female candidates for officer positions.

The role of the support from supervisors or management at their agency in lessening stress for female and minority officers in general was also cited as an opportunity to raise retention by research in 2017 conducted by G. Suboch, C. Harrington and J. House. That research recommended creating mentorship and peer support programs for women and minorities to combat the view in law enforcement that those groups will have less opportunities while having their mistakes enhanced by their greater visibility. The research stated this strategy would help organizations develop and encourage leaders from all groups (Suboch et al., 2017).

Another option agencies can consider offering is job sharing. This family-friendly policy would allow officers to go part-time when their home life is most demanding, such as after a child is born, yet still remain on the job (Cordner & Cordner, 2011). By allowing officers to step back temporarily, this option might keep a few women and men from having to walk out the

door should an officer choose to have a family. The Bureau of Justice Assistance recommended almost 20 years ago (2001) that departments implement family-friendly policies for departments worried about retaining their women officers (Harrington, 2001).

### Promotion

Data from a recent study published by John Shjarback and Natalie Todak confirms that women in supervisory positions remain rare, especially front-line supervision (2019). They attribute the lack of growth in females being promoted in law enforcement to the “same organizational factors offered in previous research – discrimination, bad schedules for family life and fear of being singled out as a token” (Shjarback & Todak, 2019, p. 141).

Research in the early 2000’s found women were similarly motivated to their male counterparts when deciding to put in for promotion. In Whetstone’s 2001 survey, he found the only time women responded differently on the survey as far as motivation for putting in for promotion was at the bottom of the list of reasons to promote: men had been encouraged more strongly by “others” to put in, whereas female candidates cited management as having encouraged them to put in. This similarity in motivation was echoed by research conducted by Anthony Raganella and Michael White in 2004.

Again, female officers pointed to the same motivations as men for getting into police work, agreeing on the most influential and on the least influential reasons for pursuing law enforcement careers namely job security and helping others (Raganella & White, 2004).

The only significant difference in their research involved women ranking “helping people” and “career advancement” significantly higher than male recruits, and male recruits ranked comradery and a “lack of other career alternatives” significantly higher than their female counterparts (Raganella & White, 2004). Even though these differences were found to be

statistically significant, Raganella and White emphasized that in each case, the factors were either very close to that of the other sex or were rated as not important by both sexes (Raganella & White, 2004). This finding illustrates while being physically different, women are motivated similarly to men when beginning their law enforcement careers. Departments looking to recruit female officers can use the same tactics but may have to alter the context or tone of their messages to suit the female recruit audience.

Women in managerial positions are less likely to be mentored at the same level as their male counterparts, hindering their careers in police organizations (Inwald & Schusman, 1984). The male employees are able to capitalize on the advantages of mentoring, getting positions and experience that makes them more competitive for promotional opportunities (Shelley, et al., 2011). Women stuck in stereotypical duties “traditionally associated with their gender makes it more difficult for their abilities to be properly evaluated by their superiors” further subordinating their status to their male peers (Shelley, et al., 2011, p. 358).

Research suggests that the more professionalism is emphasized by a department, the higher level of comfort female officers will have with the promotional process. Shjarback and Todak found departments who had a Commission on Accreditation for Law Enforcement Agencies (CALEA) certification (or a high level of professionalism as indicated by their degree of community policing) were more likely to have female representation in supervisory and middle-management positions (2019). This indicator did not translate however to the highest levels such as chief of police as those positions were more likely to be influenced by factors outside the organization (Shjarback & Todak, 2019).

## Barriers

Whetstone did however find a stark difference in the barriers women versus men faced when stating why they did not put in for promotion. Forty percent of women in the survey stated they did not put in for promotion due to childcare reasons, a significant number when compared to 19 percent of men citing that same reason (Whetstone, 2001). Thirty-nine percent of female respondents stated loss of shift was a barrier versus 29 percent of the male respondents, further supporting “family needs” as a huge barrier considered by women looking to promote (Whetstone, 2001).

## Potential solutions and strategies

Whetstone did point to mentoring as a possible opportunity for agencies to better support and encourage female officers to continue advancing their career, he stated a very low number of officers stated they were encouraged by commanders to put in for promotion (Whetstone, 2001). Of that low number, a larger percentage of respondents who did point to management as a support were women and minorities – although Whetstone stated the department used in the survey had not promoted either women or minorities in the previous three years to the research survey (2001).

Successful mentoring programs should include capitalizing on the most experienced, competent and professional individuals at a department by linking them with mentees with whom they can quickly build rapport (Suboch et al., 2017). Based on research conducted in Las Vegas, and follow up with candidates in the southeastern United States, formal mentoring decreases turnover and prevents officers from underperforming (Suboch et al., 2017). Research also encourages a more formal mentoring program that lays out the roles of mentor and mentee

to prevent potential mentors seeing the mentorship relationship as a way to form a personal relationship (Suboch et al., 2017).

The Department of Defense piloted a program allowing members to leave in order raise children, care for loved ones, and pursue restrictive career advancement (like going to law school full time) called the Career Intermission Program (Starheim, 2019). This program also allowed soldiers to take twelve weeks paid leave, double the amount of paid leave given at even the most progressive of departments (Starheim, 2019). Since many agencies cannot afford to have fulltime childcare provided to their employees, an opportunity for employees to take leave and step away with fewer penalties could allow more women to stay in the profession.

Thinking beyond economic incentives was identified by Whetstone as key to motivating both male and female candidates for promotion. Whetstone (2001) stated persons having enough experience on the job to put in for promotion are at the same time hitting a period in their personal lives that, especially for women, will be a huge barrier to stepping into a new role.

In his conclusion, Whetstone (2001) stated the female officer choosing not to compete for a sergeant position viewed the new role as a significant disruption to their current family situation. When there are no supervisors who are female, candidates have trouble envisioning themselves doing the work. Employing female officers in proportions that do not isolate or make them feel as if they are tokens not only benefits other female officers at each agency, it has also been shown in the private sector to have important benefits for the entire team of workers (Hoogendoorn et al., 2013).

Dorothy Moses Schulz predicted correctly in 2004 when she described the ascension of female officers into the upper ranks of law enforcement as a “slow progression” describing law

enforcement as, “paramilitary organizations that rely on periodic civil service testing” (Schulz D. M., 2004).

### Accountability

Allowing officers in an agency’s academy or even out on the street to view female officers as taking the place of a “more competent” or “able” male officer can become dangerous for an agency’s future. The idea of limited spots or “limited capacity” was explored by researchers who found there was often a “hidden curriculum” male cadets are taught informally to “exclude, denigrate, and exaggerate female differences” creating cliques of officers who are either part of the inner circle or not (Shelley, et al., 2011, p. 357). Monitoring the atmosphere both in the academy and out on the street to ensure officers are not being excluded based on gender or class status at the department while creating accountability for those who are perpetuating that hindering environment will be key for a future including active representations of all gender groups in law enforcement.

Women who wish to rise in the ranks in business or in law enforcement continue to face an uphill battle according to a 2017 study on organizational determinants of women in management (Ng & Sears). Cited as a primary reason why so few women were advancing to management ranks was barriers at the lower ranks of the employer’s hierarchy, including lower self-efficacy, work/life conflict, absence of role models, no social or family support and gender-role socialization (Ng & Sears, 2017).

Achieving a representative bureaucracy in order to diminish the effects of gender in public organizations is a worthy goal. If an agency is successful in removing many or all of the barriers for female officers to reach the higher ranks of the organizations they work for, those voices at the top should assist in more sustainable policies going forward (Caceres-Rodriguez,



2013). Even the presence of women at the upper ranks of an organization can help counteract the “unconscious enactment of sex roles and socialization” by having a living example of how competent women can be in managerial roles (Caceres-Rodriguez, 2013, p. 702).

The United Nations Security Council undertook gender balancing starting in the year 2000, but only saw modest amounts of the expected gains from Resolution 1325 over the next decade (Karim & Beardsley, 2013). The resolution was intended to promote women’s participation in peace and security processes at all levels of the government in the members of the participants in the United Nations (United Nations, 2020). Due to the participating countries determining where gender-balanced troops were deployed, research found female military personnel were deployed where there was the least risk instead of where they were most needed to address sexual violence and gender equity issues (Karim & Beardsley, 2013). Suggestions for best practices from the research that could also apply to law enforcement deployment included: having a network of women who have already participated in military operations openly encourage and establish a precedent for other women considering participating on missions; offering more training to women from the participating in countries in the areas where women would likely deploy from for the more dangerous missions such as driving, computer skills and combat skills; and offering monetary incentives for including women in the participating troops (Karim & Beardsley, 2013).

Getting employees motivated to make the agency welcoming for female employees can be a challenge if there are employees that hold discriminatory or “traditional” views. In a report by the Air War College, Colonel Salome Herrera, Jr. made recommendations on how the military will be successful in integrating female pilots into the special operations regiment. Col. Herrera recommended above all - enforce the culture, proactively communicate and remove non-

conformers (Herrera Jr., 2014). Swift action by the unit was recommended for officers who are not adapting to the integration of female pilots (2014). By doing so, supervisors would send a signal to female officer that their contributions are valued and should not be hindered by a poor work environment. If directive or coercive leadership actions were not successful, Col. Herrera recommended asking those officers damaging the conforming efforts to leave (2014). He said during the female pilot integration, “despite their many years of selfless service” the damage going forward was worse than losing the talents of a few holdouts (Herrera Jr., 2014).

Col. Herrera focused on living the values that the unit has espoused as a way to move the unit positively forward into the new territory of integrating female pilots into their Special Forces unit (Herrera Jr., 2014). This recommendation could translate easily to many law enforcement agencies who often have “core values” espoused by leadership. Leaning on the values that drove agency success in the past was a theme during the consent decrees in which researchers found the officers strongly believed in the rule of law (Felkenes et al., 1993). Capitalizing on that feeling of loyalty and enforcing that culture to prevent it from being derailed by superficial concerns stemming from change can help the group stay focused on standards of excellence and selfless values (Herrera Jr., 2014).

Having open communication that would allow female officers to communicate any barriers they are experiencing was another key recommendation for integration (Herrera Jr., 2014). Col. Herrera recommended that communication be direct to leadership that can address the situation right away (Herrera Jr., 2014). Col. Herrera mentioned throughout his report the importance of enforcing the culture and addressing the distractions quickly and without hesitation (Herrera Jr., 2014).

On the other side of punishment is rewards, or more specifically, awards. In 2001 the Bureau of Justice Assistance (BJA) recommended under the “developing effective awards and recognition programs” section that departments should start giving awards or at least recognizing those who “maintain a workplace free of harassment and discrimination, mentor women and minorities or increase the diversity of the workforce” (Harrington, 2001, p. 6). BJA also recommended departments give awards to employees who have been part of successful innovative programs and to reward officers who have focused on community policing (Harrington, 2001).

### Conclusion and Recommendations

Since the 2018 Research Summit on Women in Policing, several papers have been published and many new topics of research started. As department heads wait for researchers to get specific on what aspects of law enforcement’s structure and atmosphere are struggling to draw women into the field, there is research that has confirmed areas of improvement departments can address.

Having a flexible work arrangement for officers, not just female officers but all officers with children, that is adapted to each scenario and not dictated by union groups is crucial to retaining and recruiting women. Very few examples of a successful arrangement for officers needing childcare and support during the stressful stages of child rearing were found. By creating an innovative option for officers, it will not only provide needed support, departments will also garner attention as a leader in family-friendly practices.

Ensure female officers are being groomed for the higher profile and most well-regarded positions in the department. The majority of the female officers participating in research efforts

by Suboch, Harrington, and House (2017) “shared the belief that advancement within the department or entry into specialized units was difficult to attain and not likely for many of the participants” (p. 106). For example, if an agency often promotes from the Special Weapons And Tactics (SWAT) team, make sure the SWAT team selection process welcomes and supports female candidates. If an agency requires candidates to be field training officers, ensure there are many female officers in that cadre. There is also a need to examine areas of a department that are majority female officers and why that is. Is there a way to make the areas where there are little to no female officers as attractive as the area where they are currently accumulating?

The earlier discussed “limited capacity” mindset also leads to “deployment blocking” or assigning female officers where they will be comfortable and tucked away instead of challenged and provided opportunities (Shelley, et al., 2011, pp. 357-8). There is a need to set business-style metrics and have accountability for the administrators assigned to the problem of equalizing the amount of female representatives at the table until there is active representation for all genders. Archbold and Moses Schulz stated back in 2008 advice that still rings true today, “with so few women reaching the ranks beyond patrol officer, it is critical that police administrators continue to think about ways to increase female presence in the upper ranks” (Archbold & Schulz, 2008, p. 70).

Giving consideration to how a department advertises to its female workers can be important. Does it always use the same people? Do those persons enjoy being held up as a token or role model for others? Were they asked if they enjoy that role in a way that they could say no? Ensuring the recruiting ads do not stereotype the officers and show the department as welcoming to all – not reinforcing the “traditional gendered image” of policing will be key to signaling a department’s true environment for future employees (Shelley, et al., 2011, p. 360).

Looking at whether female officers are receiving too much scrutiny when they make an error because they stand out and if so, find a way to neutralize the effect needs to be a priority for departments wanting to keep a diverse work force.

Departments should also be examining why some of their recruiting efforts are working and what kind of return on investment the department is getting from its efforts.

Police departments need to conduct exit interviews and retain the information gleaned in a manner that translates to action items. Until research has specific, evidence-based recommendations, departments will need to conduct their own short-term research on what is working and what is causing their workers to walk away from the job. Departments need to nimbly take advantage of those insights and act quickly to prevent a trickle from becoming a stream of workers leaving the career.

Departments also need to think hard about the way the city leadership portrays law enforcement in the community. Are leaders supportive of police action? Are they clear about their expectations or do their expectations change with the media environment? Research has found communities find female officers as competent, or more competent in some situations, than male officers (Shelley, Shaefer Morabito, & Tobin-Gurley, 2011). The fact that female officers have to rely on better communications and negotiations strategies than physical prowess has earned them respect from many communities and research indicates more citizens are comfortable approaching female officers to make reports (Shelley, Shaefer Morabito, & Tobin-Gurley, 2011). Making city hall and community organizers aware of the value and contributions of female officers is vital to creating an environment female officers will find enticing and comfortable to work in.

Few workers want to sign up for a career in which they are doomed to fail. Have officers on the department been sacrificed on the altar of public opinion or mass media? If so, did the department ensure those officers were taken care of? Officers and potential recruits are watching how leadership both within the department and the local community support or fail to support their officers.

#### Future research

Krimmel and Gormley asked that future research into tokenism look into the larger structural concerns within policing that may be encouraging discrimination against women (Krimmel & Gormley, 2003). Their research acknowledged there was a basic good of having women in larger proportions working in the law enforcement sphere but asked that future research get specific on why and what better organizational structural supports could be put in place to get women working in the proportions representative of the talents women have to offer (Krimmel & Gormley, 2003). The benefit of having clear guidance would be law enforcement administrators and leaders would have few options except to consider and make the changes or face losing more female talent. More research was recommended on the effects of tokenism, specifically on women who are experiencing the intersectionality of their race and gender or their sexual orientation and gender (Krimmel & Gormley, 2003). The benefit of this research would be to help agencies better hone the nuance and tone of their recruiting and retention efforts for specific sub-groups (or desired sub-groups) within their department.

With regard to affirmative action, Zhao et al. (2006) found in their longitudinal study on the effects of affirmative action dwindled as Zhao looked in the early 2000's. They encouraged future researchers to look at that issue as well as the underlying issues playing into the representation of Caucasian, Black and Hispanic female officers in law enforcement (Zhao, He,

& Lovrich, 2006). This sentiment was echoed by Salomon Guajardo (2016) who also asked that future researchers look at organizational factors and their influences on sub-groups of women and their chances of achieving supervisory positions. Similar to the future work recommended on tokenism, this research would help leaders better understand what worked in affirmative action and capitalize on those strategies to better harness the talents of female officers in line positions as well as supervisory roles. One avenue not addressed during Schulz's examination of police chiefs was why so many female police chiefs were achieving that rank at university police departments (Schulz D. M., *Women Police Chiefs: A Statistical Profile*, 2003). Future research asking why that is occurring (do universities provide a more equitable environment /value traditional views less) might be helpful to police departments who are struggling to matriculate women in their higher ranks.

Often viewed as the fairest way to evaluate candidates, written testing is starting to be viewed as a barrier to women and people of color wishing to become police officers (Ricucci & Riccardelli, 2015). More research on why these tests are discouraging social diversity in the ranks of police departments could help diversify our police while also confirming whether exhaustive testing is really giving departments the candidates that have the most merit for the positions.

One source cited in many studies featured in this paper was the organizational data provided by the Law Enforcement Management and Administrative Statistics (LEMAS) survey. Several researchers suggested additions to the survey and wanted additional information on the quality of the survey data, while acknowledging their gratitude that there was at least some source of information going forward as many surveys and sources of information are no longer available. In particular Amie Schuck asked at the end of her research study for additional

questions on the survey to capture more information about female officers such as why female officers leave law enforcement agencies (Schuck A. M., 2014).

As mentioned earlier, Elizabeth Linos, et. al. did a study on changing the nuance of language in an invitation email to candidates, helping garner 50 percent more participation by minorities in that specific hiring process (Levelling the playing field in police recruitment: Evidence from a field experiment on test performance, 2017). More studies that further examine the points in recruitment and careers where minorities are exiting the processes may yield some easy changes to help encourage talented women and persons of color to join the ranks.

Recruiting, retaining and promoting a more representative amount of female officers allows agencies to profit from having 30-50 percent more talent in their teams. Any business person faced with those numbers would commit resources, timelines and accountability to make that happen. It will be crucial for further research to support those wishing to make a clear case for that outcome. Motivate more agencies to allocate more resources and publicly commit to values they espouse in their mission statements could be the difference between an engaged community-focused future for law enforcement and ever-larger lawsuit settlements.

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