

The University of Akron

IdeaExchange@UAkron

Williams Honors College, Honors Research
Projects

The Dr. Gary B. and Pamela S. Williams Honors
College

Fall 2021

The Female Experience in Law Enforcement

Matia Martz
mjm358@uakron.edu

Follow this and additional works at: https://ideaexchange.uakron.edu/honors_research_projects



Part of the [Criminology Commons](#), [Gender and Sexuality Commons](#), and the [Social Control, Law, Crime, and Deviance Commons](#)

Please take a moment to share how this work helps you [through this survey](#). Your feedback will be important as we plan further development of our repository.

Recommended Citation

Martz, Matia, "The Female Experience in Law Enforcement" (2021). *Williams Honors College, Honors Research Projects*. 1459.

https://ideaexchange.uakron.edu/honors_research_projects/1459

This Dissertation/Thesis is brought to you for free and open access by The Dr. Gary B. and Pamela S. Williams Honors College at IdeaExchange@UAkron, the institutional repository of The University of Akron in Akron, Ohio, USA. It has been accepted for inclusion in Williams Honors College, Honors Research Projects by an authorized administrator of IdeaExchange@UAkron. For more information, please contact mjon@uakron.edu, uapress@uakron.edu.

The Female Experience in Law Enforcement

Matia J. Martz

William's Honor College

The University of Akron

Abstract

The following project aims to achieve a better understanding of what issues women face when entering the career field of law enforcement, and how to better educate the projected audience, whether that be a member of law enforcement or a future female recruit, in these issues. Outside of personal experiences from the author, this project will consist of a literature review and conclude with what future research can do to aid in this field. Topics covered include: career challenges that women have faced, how gender can affect one's perceived ability to work in law enforcement, how different styles of recruitment can affect gender in law enforcement, how the social construct of masculinity affects the career of law enforcement, and how sexuality and sexual assault are handled in law enforcement. The project concludes with a discussion of barriers women face in law enforcement and suggestions for future researchers.

Keywords: gender, policing, masculinity

The Female Experience in Law Enforcement

Gender inequality continues to be a prevalent social issue in our society. Therefore, it is not difficult to cite that there are differences between members of law enforcement based on their gender alone. Females have progressed far more slowly in law enforcement than men, with the first female officer being appointed in 1908 (Cambareri & Kuhns 2018). Even then, they were only allowed to handle female prison transfers and children. In 1972 Congress passed an amendment stating that there could not be gender inequality in any workforce, but this has not stopped the discrimination in law enforcement. Even though many studies have found that women have higher success rates in responding to domestic violence calls, use less force, and receive fewer community complaints than male officers, women are still behind in law enforcement (Cambareri & Kuhns 2018). Females have fought for promotions, difficulties with coworkers, different standards, and familial problems because of their career. This project will discuss the differences that females face in law enforcement exclusively via a literature review. In bringing awareness to this problem in the career field, it is presumed that the projected audience will understand the differences females face and how to handle these issues from thereon.

Personal Experience

Law enforcement officers are symbol of protection and safety in my neighborhood. I live in a small, rural town where the worst that happens is a traffic violation. Therefore, I have always held an immense amount of respect for their organizations. When I was choosing a career to pursue, I knew that I wanted to do something that made an impact and I wanted to help people. The medical field was simply out of the question; bodily fluids outside of blood made me ill.

Therefore, the criminal justice system became an instant factor of interest for me, and in my time in my major I have been directed towards law enforcement.

My classes have been male dominated. In my classes, my male counterparts have traditionally sexualized me and scorned me for wanting to be in the field. I've had a male classmate go to speak to me about a group project and trail off as he stared at my clothed chest and went silent. This incident was not isolated. It has been interesting to me that most of my professors have been female, and most of them have had experience in the criminal justice system, since that is not what the general demographic of the criminal justice system represents.

I got my first experience project when I was 16 at the University with my local police department. There, I shadowed an OVI checkpoint. Outside of the officer I was shadowing, I was the only other female present in a sea of uniformed officers. Now, I was not blind to the fact that what I had chosen was "out of the norm" for females, but I also was not aware that I was that much of an outlier and that I was simply outnumbered.

Nevertheless, I persisted. Being an outlier only pushed me to want to learn more. Why was I an outsider? This was a public service job, and I did not see why both sexes could not be present for it.

My senior year of college, in 2021, I was taken on by the United States Marshals Service in their Akron office. I was not blind to other federal law enforcement offices; this was the first office that took me after attending multiple recruitment events for law enforcement. Most of the contenders at these recruitment events were male, however, and given a lot more attention and time than I. So, I am inherently grateful to the United States Marshals Service for the mere experience of being in the federal law enforcement world. During this experience, I was able to

experience the task force, K9 training, prisoner transports and intakes, court hearings, and more. I was the sole female intern at the office.

During my time with the USMS, I was treated fairly by my coworkers. However, there are systems in place in law enforcement that are geared towards men. For instance, while on the task force, I was handed a bulletproof vest that was a men's 2XL. Clearly, I was not a men's 2XL, but they did not have any other sizes on hand because that is what most of their officers fit. Also, while wearing this vest, clearly a part of the group of officers, I was catcalled by bystanders outside of the courthouse. Even though I was in a position of 'authority' I was catcalled, and no other males had any issue.

I will state that being near corrections was the worst experience for me as a female. Prisons are not the most welcoming of environments in the first place, but the inmates had zero respect and stared at me hungrily, as if I was a meal. Not a person, but an object. The catcalls, banging on glass, and general disrespect and harassment was so bad from the inmates that the security guards pulled me aside and asked me to hide myself until our prisoner came because they were uncomfortable with how the prisoners were treating me. I had also noticed at the time that the males that we have processed have either stared at me, treated me as I was invisible, or gave me unwarranted compliments.

On a personal note, my decisions have also affected my personal life. My parents were not and still are not pleased that I wanted to pursue a career in law enforcement. They are continuously nervous about the perceived danger and fear in the field. They hold that they should be protecting me, not I them. My high school friends looked down at me for choosing a non-prestigious career field and a "man's job", and even boyfriends were intimidated by my choices and would shy away from me for taking on a traditionally masculine role.

Despite this, I found myself falling in love with it the further I got into it, but even still I did not realize that even though I was welcomed with semi-open arms in academia, there would be differences in treatment between me and my male cohorts that may continue for some time.

Literature Review

In the following sections, the literature review will detail what previous research found while studying women in law enforcement. Women have faced a lot of challenges in law enforcement and have had to break down a lot of barriers to be present in the field, let alone work towards acceptance. This has been due to a variety of factors, such as the social acceptance of women entering the workforce, what their perceived capabilities were in the workforce, how the concept of masculinity affects a person's ability to work in law enforcement, and unfortunately, the issues of sexuality and sexual assault that both sexes face in law enforcement. Therefore, the following passages will cover the pertinent challenges that women are faced with when deciding on and continuing with a career in law enforcement.

Women and their Career Challenges

As stated previously, women were not allowed to handle any cases that did not include women and children. In the article "Perceptions and Perceived Challenges Associated With a Hypothetical Career in Law Enforcement: Differences Among Male and Female College Students" by Cambareri and Kuhns (2018), the authors saw that the discrimination in case work was only increased during the Great Depression. During this time, women were either sent home to be back with the children, or placed in administration work, taking away their cases completely. Despite the legislation passed by Congress during the 1960's and 1970's, it has taken several decades longer to repair the damage that females suffered in law enforcement

during that time where they sent home. Looking at that damage now, it is seen that females currently make up twelve percent of local, state, and federal law enforcement as full-time, sworn in officers. The proportion of females in law enforcement is lowest in rural law enforcement offices and highest in federal law enforcement offices (Cambareri & Kuhns 2018). This can be due to multiple problems, such as disapproval from family members and friends, a lack of targeted recruitment towards females, and anti-family policies that hold them back from applying to law enforcement jobs.

As a woman who wants to be in law enforcement, these have been personally regarded as barriers. On top of these issues in obtaining females, there is a difficulty in retaining them. This is due to the male dominated academies and culture in law enforcement which proves to be a difficult barrier for females to break. Also, there is a distinct lack of family-oriented policies such as maternity leave. Without these policies, it is difficult to retain women if they start a family and must go through the medical process of having a child, let alone the psychological and emotional process of having a child (Cambareri & Kuhns 2018). Sixty-six percent of females and forty-eight percent of males report that law enforcement careers lack family-friendly policies. On top of this, thirty-nine percent of female officers felt that they were less accepted in their agencies and thirty-two percent have reported lower levels of respect from their male counterparts. One quarter of female officers have reported that they have felt pervasive negative attitudes from their male counterparts (which include supervisors, administrative workers, and the public).

Despite these problems, women are definitely useful in the field. Women in law enforcement are shown to have higher amounts of empathy, are less likely to use force, have fewer citizen complaints, and have a higher success rate when responding to domestic violence calls

(Cambareri & Kuhns 2018). Despite this, female law enforcement officers are less likely to get promoted. Due to these pervasive effects, the researchers did a study on how college students felt about a career in law enforcement. Female students reported a lower sense of personal fulfillment and perceived success regarding becoming a law enforcement officer. Female college students were also found to find female law enforcement officers to be less respected by their community and male counterparts. Between the sexes there was a shared agreement between the level of acceptance that their families held for their career choices. Finally, when asked to rank the aspects of law enforcement that were less desirable to them, females were more likely to be concerned with the dangerousness and high amounts of stress associated with police work overall (Cambareri & Kuhns 2018).

Female Representation

There are several reasons as to why these studies are pertinent in understanding and being able to repair the problems females have in law enforcement. The article “Female Representation in Law Enforcement: The Influence of Screening, Unions, Incentives, Community Policing, CALEA, and Size” by Shuck (2014) explores the effects of the community, economic, and organization factors on women in law enforcement. The authors during the study show that there is a higher success rate in organizations that reflect the demographic they are protecting and that it is also important to understand the demographics of the people applying to be in law enforcement and what can be approved upon. Before one can do that, though, one must look at how many female officers are in law enforcement. In 1991, the number of females in law enforcement was 2%. In 2014, females only made up about 11.8% of law enforcement officers in local, state, and federal offices. That is 82, 418 full time female officers that are in offices in the United States (Shuck 2014). Although the times now are different than when women first started

in law enforcement, and many women have earned promotions into supervisory positions, it is rare to see a woman lead a larger organization.

To this day, women remain underrepresented, mainly in rural agencies, and the data suggests that there has been little progress in recruiting women into positions in law enforcement (Shuck 2014). The best predictions of female representation in law enforcement remains in the demographics of the people they would protect and serve. If the population is closer to that of a metropolitan area and has a racially diverse population, then women are more likely to serve in those areas. This is related to the number of females that are already present in the work force and if the environment that they are working in is more likely to have opportunities for equality (Shuck 2014). When looking at a pool of employees in a metropolitan environment, it is easier to find a larger, better-educated pool of women than that of a rural environment. Another contrast between metropolitan and rural environments, sociologists have identified that the three biggest predictors of females entering law enforcement are higher educational standards, decreased participation in the institution of marriage, and lower fertility rates (Shuck 2014). All three of these things are not common in our society, as a woman's "traditional" role is to do the opposite; stay at home, raise the children, and be married to a husband who is the traditional breadwinner.

The opportunity to oppose this norm is more commonly found in larger populations. This is the most popular "frame" when looking at the female representation in law enforcement. However, there are many issues when looking into this social phenomenon. For example, the sexes are divided when answering why women are not active participants in law enforcement. When the authors asked male police chiefs why they thought women were not in law enforcement, the men responded with that of a traditional view. The male police chiefs most commonly responded that women have more employment options that are more attractive (less

dangerous, maternity leave, etc). However, when female police officers were asked why there was not much female representation in law enforcement, they responded that police agencies do not actively recruit women or have policies that are female-friendly.

As stated previously, this individual choice versus organizational policies is the most popular argument that frames the female representation in law enforcement, but most sociologists would agree that individual decision making, early socialization regarding work and career experiences, and the nature of career opportunities are the proper frames for this discussion (Shuck 2014). Despite this, the traditional frame is what holds women back in regards to getting careers in law enforcement due to how higher-level male officers view them. For example, there are a lot of traditional methods of recruiting and obtaining officers that are not only outdated, but not female-friendly.

For example, one of the most challenging facets when looking at a career in law enforcement is the fitness tests. Fitness tests are split between the sexes and may be the reason why some recruits may not be hired when they are highly useful. Traditional methods of perceiving ones fitness level in law enforcement are the methods of measuring push-ups, running a timed mile, and measuring oxygen intake using a stationary bike or treadmill (Shuck 2014). Departments with physical standards tests are shown to have less diversity than departments without. There is little empirical evidence that these fitness tests are reflective of the most common tasks that officers would perform in their jobs, that they are predictive of performance when dealing with hostile or noncompliant defendants and are associated with fewer negative organizational outcomes such as employee health care.

Another arena to explore is educational standards in departments. Higher educational standards were associated with a higher intake of female interests, and it's thought to be because

females associate higher education with professionalism. Higher education requirements may also facilitate opportunity for promotion and ideals consistent with the middle class, which is important to note because many law enforcement supervisors want to lower the educational standards to higher in a larger number of recruits without seeing the negative future outcomes that decision would hold (Shuck 2014). Finally, agencies with larger amounts of female hires were associated with organizations that develop models for targeting their community's needs. More female hires are typically associated with organizations that had a higher amount of recruiting budgets, open employment positions, and female-friendly recruiting strategies.

In seeing these trends, it is easier to see why smaller agencies have a more difficult time obtaining female recruits. It is also seen that in smaller agencies that social networks are highly influential in regard to hiring female recruits. For example, social networks in rural environments influence whether current officers can alert potential recruits about upcoming applications, encouragement from current officers, aiding recruits in the application process, and allowing current officers to influence those who are hiring in a way that may aid the recruit. This social network is more influential in rural spaces rather than metropolitan spaces because in smaller spaces there is a greater need for collaboration amongst workers (Shuck 2014). Finally, when looking at the demographic of a neighborhood in which a woman would be hired to protect, it is more common for female officers to choose organizations that utilize community partnerships and try to problem-solve for the community. This relationship is most significant for police departments rather than federal or state agencies, yet worth noting because it supports the link between workforce diversity and community policing (Shuck 2014).

Gender and Policing

The issue of examining gender remains complex and there are several factors that influence this issue. In the article “Doing and Undoing Gender in Policing” by Chan, Doran, and Marel (2013), the authors explore these factors in depth and aim to help the populace understand the gender disparity in law enforcement in the sociological scope. The authors recognize that though equal opportunity policies and affirmative action policies have helped aid in the proportion of female officers being raised, there are still many barriers that female officers face. Many of these remain to be sociological issues. Law enforcement, in its very nature, has been a very male-oriented profession. Women have a perceived “threat” to police images and the male identity when joining the traditional masculine profession (Chan et. al., 2010).

Why is policing seen as masculine? Well, traditional policing has a general claim of high amounts of physicality in the terms that it includes a lot of “crime fighting” and has a coercive nature, therefore with this physicality it has been viewed as traditionally masculine. So, most think that it’s a “man’s job”. The very essence of being female then has been viewed as leaving a negative mark on this job, since femininity in our culture is traditionally seen as “weak”. This is where most of the negative sociological impacts are being made and where women are met with resistance regarding getting a job in law enforcement. Some of this resistance is due to fears that citizens may reject a female’s authority in a world where it took several years to gain any. If anything, it is seen that the threat to one’s masculinity is the main sociological reason why females have been held back in law enforcement (Chan et. al., 2010).

Hegemonic masculinity is argued to be a central defining concept in American police culture. Hegemonic masculinity is known as the patterns that are practiced practice that allows males to assume dominance over females (Connell et. al., 2005). It is the social concept of how

masculinity can turn ‘toxic’ in a sense, and damage societal workings with its pervasive presence. Again, this turns the discussion back to rural areas and police academies. In rural police academies, it has been taught that ‘women are natural very different from men’ (Chan et. al., 2010). With this statement, it has been taught to recruits that it is acceptable to objectify, exclude, and degrade women in authority. This would be a very pertinent explanation as to why law enforcement, specifically in rural areas, is so behind in an ever-changing world where these words have been proven to be false and unacceptable. While police culture is expected to not be immune to change and is expected to serve the interests in its community, police work is still inherently carried out in a gendered organization where the exploitation and control are patterned through terms of a distinction between men and women (Chan et. al., 2010). It has been seen that police organizational policies and practices have put women at a disadvantage. For example, research in the United Kingdom points out that female officers are absent in high profile cases. This has been allowed because of the masculine domination in the wider society. Law enforcement officers are seen as crime fighters, which helps construct the perception that biological differences lead naturally to the division in labor between men and women. This is a social artifact, that both men and women are still trapped into this day.

Women, then, are forced to either accept this perceived biological “inferiority” or to overcome it by striving to become the encompass the traditional masculine roles in our society (Chan et. al., 2010). The logic of sexism associate’s masculinity with the dangerous outside work, and femininity with inside work. Therefore, one may see more male police officers and more female administrators. It is not a matter, either, of whether or not men and women are equal, rather than the fact that females deserve an equal opportunity in employment condition, career opportunity and more. This status has been seen as difficult to change. After many

decades of women gaining the right to be seen as an equal, men in policing still view them as subordinates and will use violence as the norm that women should be measured against. The issue is so deep that some women will still agree with the traditional view. The use of physicality and violence are still arguments, artifacts that they are, that are used to hinder females from joining law enforcement careers and are the main social issues in the female experience in law enforcement.

Teachings of Masculinity in Police Academies

Furthering our view on masculinity and police academies, the article “‘There Oughtta Be a Law Against Bitches’: Masculinity Lessons in Police Academy Training” by Prokos and Padavic (2002) explores what is known as a “hidden language” in police academies and how it encourages hegemonic masculinity in recruits. Academies teach recruits that masculinity is an essential requirement for practice of policing and that women inherently do not belong in law enforcement. Such teachings, then, teach male students to exclude female students and degrading the general population of females is commonplace and expected, which dictates how male officers should speak to females. The authors begin their article with a field note in which will be included in this research as well. The field note states: “Law enforcement training instructors often showed us episodes of the television show COPS as a teaching tool. In one episode, the cops arrested a shirtless man after his girlfriend had called the police. Angry at being arrested, the man yelled out, ‘There oughtta be a law against bitches!’ Our classroom exploded in laughter. For the remaining four months of training, when students wanted to joke about something a woman trainee had done or about women in general, they would exclaim, ‘There oughtta be a law against bitches.’ I estimate that I heard the phrase 25 times or more. To me, it came to

epitomize the way many men recruits felt about women becoming police officers with them; women simply did not belong” (Prokos et. al., 2002).

A male police officer’s first introduction as a recruit is to demean the female recruits. The academy that law enforcement officers are supposed to go to be professionally trained teaches them that women are not equal, not in authority and not in any other means of life. In this system, then women may be used as a foil, which allows masculinity to be defined by what is not. The process of creating a collective identity is finding the differences in a population. Women in academies in these spaces become tools of construction of the boundaries that decided who was an insider and who was an outsider in an academy. This creates gender differences when they may not have been there in the first place (Prokos et. al., 2002).

Men, however, are not the only institutional actors in this space. Some studies show that women did not respond uniformly to academy training. Their responses ranged from exploiting the practices of stereotypical femininity to fitting in with the stereotypical masculine energy that emanates from the organization. This range presents a challenge to women in policing. It is worthy to state that regardless of gender, these issues between genders may be seen as an acclimation in a challenging environment. The nature of the job does have violent tendencies and in fear, it may be reasonable to state that these may be coping mechanisms in an organization that pushes teamwork and cooperation. However, masculinity still proves to be a social construction that builds barriers for both male and female police officers (Prokos et. al., 2002).

Multiple forms of masculinity exist because of the roles that men and women have played for hundreds of years. It is traditionally accepted that women are equated to that of being virtuous, being best in the domestic realm and social services, administrative roles, and emotional issues. In contrast, male officers see themselves as handling guns, being supreme

crime fighters, having combative personalities, fighting, and desiring work in higher crime areas. This is perpetuated by the myth that law enforcement work is action-filled, extremely exciting, and adventurous. The harsh reality though is that police work is filled with more paperwork than street work and the myth should be dismantled not only in law enforcement agencies, but in the scope of society as well (Prokos et. al. 2002).

Another interesting issue that male officers have that is worth noting is that male officers fear that female cops will expose corrupt practices not only administratively but will expose excessive violence and even extramarital affairs. These notions supply the extreme resistance that some male officers may attempt to use against females entering their organizations. Unfortunately, harsh treatment from supervisors is a common theme for female officers. One example of this is that a trainer actually forbade one of his female officers from using the restroom or speaking to her male counterparts for the first three months of her training. This is not an isolated incident. It is also not uncommon for officers to demean their female counterparts through unseemly language or even sexual comments. There have been multiple instances of anti-woman remarks, unprofessional affectionate remarks, or the refusal to speak to their female counterparts altogether. Some male officers will even go so far to demean women by using innuendoes about their perceived sexuality. In a masculine workplace, a female may be seen as someone who takes a masculine role sexually. Although this has nothing to do with their job, some male officers will take it upon themselves to make widespread rumors about their female counterparts' sexualities (Prokos et. al., 2002).

Finally, in the world of harassment, some male officers will harass female officers with sexual magazines or sexual toys by leaving them in their lockers or will even go so far to leave the items at their homes. If their tactics of depleting the female population in their office do not

work, then supervisors may take it as far as to place females in traditional feminine jobs in a law enforcement office such as administration, thus perpetuating the masculine character that male law enforcement officers are expected to uphold. This issue, starting at an academy, may follow women their entire careers solely off a social construct that is an artifact in today's world, and yet is still revealed by many (Prokos et. al. 2002).

Sexual Assault in Law Enforcement

An unfortunate topic that must be discussed further when looking at the barriers that females in law enforcement face is sexual harassment and misconduct. In the article "Sexual Harassment in Law Enforcement: Incidence, Impact, and Perception" by authors Lonsway, Paynich, and Hall (2013), the authors discuss this issue between sexes and how it affects women in law enforcement. It has been noted numerous times that sexual harassment has been more common in male-dominated organizations rather than female-dominated organizations (Lonsway et. al. 2013). Sexual harassment has been researched for several years and in return has well-documented negative effects on the well-being of victims. These can be seen in a variety of ways, but for the purposes of this research it will be focused on psychological and professional well-being, and its strong effects can be seen across multiple workplace contexts and remain significant in every aspect of a victim's life, including their job performance. Although some victims may not label their particular experiences as sexual harassment, the effects will still weigh on the victims; they do not disappear simply because one of the parties did not think anything was wrong.

Unfortunately, most victims do not label their experiences as sexual harassment; research suggests that less than twenty percent of victims will. Fewer than twenty-five percent of women will go on to file a formal complaint after experiencing sexual harassment in their agency. One

study found that only twenty-one percent women who experienced rape at their workplace filed a complaint, and nineteen percent would go on to quit. There are several reasons for this, including the fact that they fear that their reporting will either make things worse for them, or that it will do nothing at all. Twenty-four percent of women in policing stated that they experienced a consistent atmosphere of offensive remarks, and one hundred percent of females who participated of the study, when asked a second time, stated that they had experienced sexual harassment. One hundred percent. It is suggested that one half to three quarters of female officers in the United States will be subjected to some form of sexual harassment during their law enforcement careers. It has been found that majority of these instances of sexual harassment have been frequent types of lewd comments and behavior that are sexualized in nature.

When asking women in the military and in federal legal practices, it was found that nine out of ten victims experienced these problems without the purpose of sexual engagement but rather with the purpose of degradation (Lonsway et. al. 2013). This supports that the purpose of such acts has more to do with gender and power to drive women out of male-dominated fields such as law enforcement. The typical perpetrator of such acts is a coworker, rather than a citizen or supervisor. Reporting of such behaviors was more likely to happen when physical touching occurred rather than the verbal remarks. This supports the fact that women are more likely to report when physicality is involved because they find that action “more severe” (Lonsway et. al. 2013). When physical touching was involved, it was more likely to be from supervisors or of those with more power. Although these issues are less likely to be experienced, it does not mean that they should not be reported and these incidences in general are exacerbated by the fact that most remain unreported.

As stated previously, fear of retaliation is the number one reason why many of these instances remain unreported. Women in these situations faced retaliation even when the aggressor's original behavior stopped or if the aggressor had been reprimanded by a higher up. The most dangerous form of retaliation was that of coworkers refusing to stand up for the victim. In organizations such as law enforcement, it is paramount that victims have someone by their side. Without such, victims have experienced the failure to provide immediate backup in dangerous or emergency situations in the scope of their daily job duties. This makes their jobs life-threatening when they would not have to be. Since this form of retaliation is the most popular, it has made women in law enforcement that are victims fear for their lives and in some cases, makes them leave their jobs (Lonsway et. al. 2013). Although gender harassment may be a commonplace issue in police work for both sexes and neither are free from it, females are more likely to experience repeated sexual harassment and are more likely to be targeted with unwanted sexual attention. Men's experience can be categorized into negative remarks about men, lewd comments, and the enforcement of traditional heterosexual behavior. It has been documented that women find these lewd behaviors more upsetting than men, although there have pervasive negative effects for both genders despite how they are initially perceived. A lot of officers perceived sexual harassment as something that is routine for the job and something not worthy being reported, since people generally working in law enforcement are less likely to see themselves as a victim, and are unaware of their rights in their agencies (Lonsway et. al. 2013).

Conclusion

The barriers that women in law enforcement face during the scope of their careers are a lot steeper than expected, because of the legislature and the perceived progress that the United States has made since women were first allowed in law enforcement. Still, women are more

likely than men to not be accepted in law enforcement agencies. The main issue with recruiting women in law enforcement has been lack of family-friendly policies, such as a lack of maternity leave, and that the recruitment is mainly targeted towards males. This view of a law enforcement job was only pushed by media such as T.V. shows and movies, and may not be the reality of the job, therefore it is an outdated thought process that holds back female recruits.

These barriers have been put up due to the traditional masculine role that those in law enforcement have been forced to uphold and the social artifact of what masculinity is. Although sexual harassment is not an experience that is unique to just females, females are more likely to experience frequent sexually charged comments and are more likely to face harsh retaliation. Although most women won't think of what they experience as sexual harassment because during their time in academy these behaviors may be taught and encouraged; this negatively affects both males and females, and there has been a decrease but not an erasure of such behavior in present-day academies.

Society's antiquated belief system is the driving factor in what holds back women in law enforcement. Outside of my own personal barriers that I have faced, such as unwanted male attention during the job and general social isolation because of my perceived career choices, many women in law enforcement face far more during their careers. The atrocities that happen during their careers are not to be ignored but to be spoken about so that we as researchers, students, and law enforcement employees can create a better future for female recruits. Pursuing law enforcement as a female recruit is not an easy route by any means, but it's a worthy route and can have a lasting impact on not only the community but on future recruits of all sexes.

Future Research

There are multiple ways that these issues can be helped, and there is so much more research to be done. For one, leaders in law enforcement should collect data regarding the physical tests that they use and their outcomes, whether they be positive or negative. If positive relationships cannot be documented, then it is reasonable to state that leaders should change their evaluations of physicality and traditional fitness tests that meet current standards. If females are not meeting physical standards such as agility requirements, then it is reasonable to suggest that law enforcement officers could make a partnership with schools that are law enforcement oriented for physical training courses. This partnership would not only give law enforcement recruiters a 'worthy' pool of recruits. Also, at a college standpoint would include recruitment events at universities, which would produce the number of qualified recruits. I know at the University that we have several and that I have been able to make a few connections myself. It would also be helpful for law enforcement agencies to include what they are looking for in particular in a strong recruit; not just physically, but the qualities of a person that they are looking for. This may include emotional intelligence or strong analytical skills. This may help in singling out qualified recruits and taking the confusion out of the application process.

In rural areas where recruitment is low regarding female officers, one of the most troubling recruitment areas was the social networks. This can be decreased by decreasing the influence of social contacts and providing access to screening for law enforcement jobs at regular intervals, instead of random occurrences. This may be expanded to a statewide occurrence, so that a variety of people can apply to the job and be considered. Mentoring programs may be popular in rural areas and could be implemented in order to obtain female recruits in order to

expose more women to policing. A modern use of recruitment could be social media, but I know that social media is that of a touchy subject for most law enforcement officials.

As for issues of sexual harassment, I find that it should rely on the administrators to make sure that their workers follow standards and that reports are taken seriously. No person should have to go through that, especially not at their workplace. Retaliation should not even be a thought when trying to report an injustice and there should be trust in an organization that relies so heavily on teamwork and cooperation.

As for future research, it may be of interest to look further into male experiences of sexual harassment. It did not occur to me to think that this may be a pervasive issue for both sexes, because I have been so permeated by heterosexual culture and how heterosexual males throw around the phrase “shop talk” so easily that such lewd behavior is considered a norm.

A lot more could be done. I hope that my words are enough to alert more people about the issues in law enforcement in regard to female recruits and officers.

References

- Doran, S., & Chan, J. (2010). *Doing and undoing gender in policing - Janet Chan, Sally Doran, Christina Marel, 2010*. SAGE Journals. Retrieved November 20, 2021, from <https://journals.sagepub.com/doi/abs/10.1177/1362480610376408>.
- Kuhns, J. B., & Cambareri, J. F. (2018). *Perceptions and perceived challenges associated with a hypothetical career in law enforcement: Differences among male and female college students - Josie Francesca Cambareri, Joseph B. Kuhns, 2018*. SAGE Journals. Retrieved November 20, 2021, from <https://journals.sagepub.com/doi/full/10.1177/1098611118760862>.
- Messerschmidt, J. W., & Connell, R. W. (2005). *Hegemonic masculinity: Rethinking the concept - R. W. Connell, James W. Messerschmidt, 2005*. SAGE Journals. Retrieved November 22, 2021, from <https://journals.sagepub.com/doi/pdf/10.1177/0891243205278639>.
- Paynich, R., & Lonsway, K. A. (2013). *Sexual harassment in law enforcement: Incidence, impact, and perception - Kimberly A. Lonsway, Rebecca Paynich, Jennifer N. Hall, 2013*. SAGE Journals. Retrieved November 20, 2021, from <https://journals.sagepub.com/doi/full/10.1177/1098611113475630>.
- Prokos, A., & Padavic, I. (2002, December 16). *'There Oughtta be a law against bitches': Masculinity lessons in Police Academy training*. Wiley Online Library. Retrieved November 20, 2021, from <https://onlinelibrary.wiley.com/doi/abs/10.1111/1468-0432.00168>.

Schuck, A. M. (2014). *Female representation in law enforcement: The influence of screening, unions, incentives, community policing, Calear, and size* - amie M. schuck, 2014. SAGE Journals. Retrieved November 20, 2021, from <https://journals.sagepub.com/doi/10.1177/1098611114522467>.