The Underrepresentation of Women Police Officers in the United States.

Citation

Permanent link
https://nrs.harvard.edu/URN-3:HUL.INSTREPOS:37373891

Terms of Use
This article was downloaded from Harvard University’s DASH repository, and is made available under the terms and conditions applicable to Other Posted Material, as set forth at http://nrs.harvard.edu/urn-3:HUL.InstRepos:dash.current.terms-of-use#LAA

Share Your Story
The Harvard community has made this article openly available. Please share how this access benefits you. Submit a story.

Accessibility
Breaking the Gender Barriers:

The Underrepresentation of Women Police Officers in the United States.

Alfreda Cromwell

A Thesis in the Field of Legal Studies

for the Degree of Master of Liberal Arts in Extension Studies

Harvard University

March 2023
Abstract

This study explores reasons behind the underrepresentation of women police officers in the United States. Between July and October, 2022, a total of 81 women from five departments completed an online anonymous survey asking their opinions and experiences relating to the recruitment and retention of women police officers. Reporting on recruitment—e.g., the most common factor that kept women from entering or staying in the profession, women reported being most constrained by the culture of policing, including the stress and danger inherently involved in police work, and public perceptions of policing—for example, as involving police violence, harassment, discrimination and excessive force. Reporting on factors affecting their retention as police, a sizable minority of women noted harassment from male officers once on the job, as well as child and dependent care issues. However, many women in the study also reported that their police departments make an effort to proactively recruit women and that gender inequities in pay, task assignment and other forms did not seem to deter women from entering policing. Though gender inequality issues remain, many of the women noted increasing numbers of women in the police, including women in leadership positions. Overall, my survey findings suggest that police culture, more than institutional policy, is a barrier to gender equality in police departments, and suggestions will be made regarding how to change police culture.
Massachusetts Women Police Officers Attend an Annual Meeting
The Cambridge Room, Circa 1927 ("Massachusetts women," 1927)
Dedication

I would like to dedicate this research to my late Mother, Charlotte Charest. Thank you for always encouraging me to be my very best, for always being there and for loving me—unconditionally. Mom, you are, and will always be the Wind Beneath My Wings.
Acknowledgments

I would like to thank my Thesis Director, Dr. Joan Johnson-Freese for her insight, feedback, guidance, inspiration, and dedication. Without her, this paper would not be possible. Additionally, I would like to thank my Research Advisor, Dr. Michael Miner for his encouragement, support and advice. I would also like to thank my wife, Cheryl Tessari, for her enduring love and support throughout my thesis endeavor. I would also like to thank Chief Enrico Cappucci for inspiring me to pursue my education and for being an exemplary mentor throughout my career.
# Table of Contents

Frontispiece........................................................................................................................................... iv  
Dedication ................................................................................................................................................. v  
Acknowledgments ....................................................................................................................................... vi  
List of Tables ............................................................................................................................................ ix  
List of Figures .......................................................................................................................................... x  
Chapter I. Introduction ..........................................................................................................................1  
  Women’s Underrepresentation In Policing .............................................................................1  
  The Introduction of Women in Policing ...........................................................................8  
  The Police Shortage Crisis ..............................................................................................13  
  A Review of the Literature ..........................................................................................14  
  Early Studies (1970-2012) ..........................................................................................14  
  Studies Following 2012 ...............................................................................................18  
  The Intersection of Race and Gender in Policing ..................................................23  
  Intersectionality of Gender and LGBTQ Officers ..............................................24  
  Women in the Military .............................................................................................25  
  Study Aims and Hypotheses ....................................................................................27  
Chapter II. Material and Methods .....................................................................................................29  
  Sampling Strategy ....................................................................................................29  
  Demographics of Respondent’s Police Departments and Communities ..........29  
Chapter III. Results ..............................................................................................................................31
Demographic Characteristics of Sample..............................................................31
Testing of Hypotheses..........................................................................................34
Correlations.........................................................................................................55
Summary..............................................................................................................59
Chapter IV. Discussion ........................................................................................62
Findings in the Context of Gender-Structure Theory ............................................62
Implications..........................................................................................................66
Limitations of the Study and Directions for Future Research .........................67
Conclusion..........................................................................................................70
Appendix 1. Survey Instrument............................................................................71
References..........................................................................................................83
List of Tables

Table 1 Demographics of Respondent’s Police Departments.............................................30
Table 2 Demographic Variables ........................................................................................32
Table 3 Characteristics of Respondents’ Jobs in Police ....................................................33
Table 4 Value of Male and Female Police’s Opinions ......................................................35
Table 5 Views of Whether Women Police Have to Prove Themselves .........................38
Table 6 Policies about Family Care as Barriers to Women’s Working in Policing ..........40
Table 7 Perceived Barriers to Women’s Working in Policing ..........................................44
Table 8 Reports of Negative Attitudes and Harassment from Male Officers.................47
Table 9 Discipline of Men and Women in the Police.........................................................49
Table 10 Recruitment, Promotion, and Retention of Women in the Police ....................51
Table 11 Correlations Among Key Variables: Pearson’s Two-Tailed Correlations, P
    Values and Ns ..............................................................................................................56
Table 12 Significant Demographic Correlates of Key Variables ....................................58
Table 13 Table of Findings ..............................................................................................60
List of Figures

Figure 1. NYPD Wife Protest Women Officers in Patrol Cars ...........................................9

Figure 2. NYPD Wife Proclaims that Women Officers Endanger Male Officer’s Lives..10
Chapter I.

Introduction

“When I grow up, I want to be a police officer” has been a childhood aspiration for many young people in America; however, this noble goal was once unattainable for girls. When modern policing was established in the 1800s, women were prohibited by law from working as police officers. Initially, they could only serve in civilian support roles—as matrons and social workers—while men pursued careers in law enforcement. This practice continued for several decades until the 1900’s when police departments officially changed policies and laws to open their doors to women and eventually to give them arrest authority. Women’s participation in policing has since increased and evolved; however, the once “male only profession” has primarily shifted to a “male dominated” one.

Women’s Underrepresentation In Policing

Women’s underrepresentation in policing is a reflection of historical gender role differentiations in general, and most prominently in male dominated professions such as policing and the military. Historically, women worldwide have served primarily in what has been perceived as suitable gender roles and women have experienced gender-based discrimination through patriarchal laws, policies, and enculturation. No country treats its women as well as its men (Kelemen, 2015).

American law was founded on English common law because colonists sought to replicate the patriarchal social structure in England where men had complete authority
over their wives (National Women’s History Alliance, 2018). One particular law
specified that the “very being and legal existence of the woman is suspended” when she
is married or at a minimum she is under the control of her husband (National Women’s
History Alliance, 2018, para. 2). While the work of colonial women and children was
important, it did not necessarily assure them any significant power within the family. In
reality, any work performed within the household took place in the setting of patriarchal
social relations, which gave the man (the head of household) control over the family and
benefit from their labor (Folbre, 1980). Patriarchy, defined by historian Gerda Lerner,
(1986) broadly refers to the manifestation and institutionalization of male dominance
over women and children in the family and in society. It implies that “men hold power in
all the important institutions of society” and that “women are deprived of access to such
power” (Lerner, 1986, p. 239).

Gerda Lerner, in her study of Western civilizations (largely derived from
Mesopotamian, Hebrew sources and a study of Abrahamic religions) argues that the
introduction of agriculture created a shift toward patriarchy (Lerner, 1986). Prior to the
development of agrarian societies, the period of hunter-gatherers involved some sexual
division of labor. Women mainly took care of children and gathered while men did most
of the hunting. These differences essentially involved sex segregation, but were not based
on oppression (Lerner, 1986). The development of agriculture brought about the concept
of farming and land ownership. Men then took advantage of the biological differences
between men and women. Farming required labor intensive work and women needed to
have more children to work on the farms. Early laws were implemented in various
societies which regulated women’s reproduction and sexuality (Lerner, 1986). Women
were deprived of educational opportunities and over time, women’s inferior status in society deteriorated (Lerner, 1986). Ultimately, men began to control economic and political life and patriarchy became institutionalized as the norm. In her book *The Creation of Patriarchy* (1986), Lerner also proclaims that although women agreed to a sexual division of labor, it would eventually disadvantage them. Importantly, Lerner argues that patriarchy was created; therefore, it can be undone.

Gender stratification occurs when men are afforded more status, privilege or power than women (Chafetz, 2006). The unequal distribution relates to areas such as employment, politics, education, and land ownership (Denaj, 2016). Despite the advancement of women in the workforce, policing is one of the most “gendered” professions in modern societies, with the percentage of female officers far below that of the general labor force (Chan & Ho, 2013). From the inception of policing, male police officers have been granted more status, privilege and power than female officers. Essentially, policing has become gendered due to socially gender constructed roles.

Gender structure theory likewise offers analysis of gender as a social structure. This term was conceptualized by University of Illinois Professor Barbara Risman. In her 2004 article, “Gender as a Social Structure: Theory Wrestling with Activism” she holds that gender is embedded in the “individual, interactional, and institutional dimensions of our society” (Risman, 2004, p. 429). In this view, gender ought to be seen through the lens of a social structure. In other words, gender is entrenched in every part of society—and gender affects an individual’s opportunities. At the individual level, gender plays a role in how individuals develop. It is essentially not only the biological differences between men and women, but the cultural processes that play a large role in people’s
“gendered personalities and worldviews” (Risman, 2018a, para 6). This view holds that people’s gendered identities are “constructed through early childhood development with explicit socialization and modeling” (Risman, 2018b, p. 35). Essentially, it is the influence of the social culture that plays a major role in a person’s gendered personality (Risman, 2018b). Mostly, social culture influences how girls and boys embrace behaviors and personality traits deemed as masculine and feminine in society (Dietz, 1998). People’s understanding of suitable gendered identities then becomes the basis for how others are expected to behave and interact (Risman, 2018b).

The interactional level describes how men and women face different expectations that are constructed by society. Often when people meet there is an expectation for them to behave a certain way according to their gender. As studies have shown, police departments fall into this category due to the gender-based stereotypes and expectations that perpetuate the unfair treatment of women (Hakke, 2018; Rabe-Hemp, 2009). Individual and interactional levels have the potential to interconnect. How we conform to gender roles intersects with many other types of inequality (Risman, 2004). Also, Risman (2018b) points out the ways in which institutions—which she later refers to as an “Institutional-Macro” dimension—are also gendered (p. 4). This dimension of the gender structure concentrates on rules and regulations that restrain human activity, to include laws and regulations that can dramatically contribute to gender inequality (Scarborough & Risman, 2017).

Risman in more recent work (2018b) points to studies that social psychologists have undertaken on stereotypes (Deaux & Major, 1987; Fiske & Stevens, 1993; Heilman & Eagly, 2008). These studies examined the influence of stereotypes, to include
prescriptive and descriptive categories (Risman, 2018b). For example, prescriptive stereotypes occur when parents teach boys to behave like “men” and daughters to act like “ladies” (Risman, 2018b). Descriptive stereotypes occur when employers assume that women do not have the personality or commitment required for success in traditionally male dominated occupations—therefore disadvantaging women (Ely & Padavic, 2007).

With respect to stereotypes in police departments, masculinity is often seen as an essential part of policing (Corsianos, 2011). Male officers typically fit this ideology, as they are seen as “brave, rational, physically strong, and objective” while women are generally less likely to fit this ideal stereotype (Corsianos, 2011, p. 2).

In their article, “Masculine Defaults: Identifying and Mitigating Hidden Cultural Biases” (2020), social psychologists Sapna Cheryan and Hazel Markus describe how masculine defaults contribute to women’s underrepresentation in male dominated settings (Cheryan & Markus, 2020). They define masculine defaults as "a form of bias in which characteristics and behaviors associated with the male gender role are valued, rewarded, or regarded as standard, normal, neutral, or necessary aspects of a given cultural context” (Cheryan & Markus, 2020, p. 1024). Historically, masculine traits and behaviors have become valued and rewarded in male dominated occupations because men took power in society. Although Cheryan and Markus contend that there are many theories concerning how men took power, they argue that once men obtained it, they created workplace cultures that reflected their perspectives and values (Cheryan & Markus, 2020). Generally, women have lacked the power needed to change workplace masculine norms and values; therefore, masculine standards have become institutionalized (Cheryan & Markus, 2020). Although gender stereotypes may have
minimized to a small degree throughout the years, gender discrimination based on stereotypes persists (Tabassum & Nayak, 2021).

Structural discrimination against women has occurred because laws were initially written by men, to benefit men. When America gained its independence, all states denied women the right to vote. In 1839, Mississippi allowed women to have property in their name; however, the law stipulated that their husband’s permission was required. These laws were embedded in social mores which determined acceptable roles for women. The most popular magazine of this era, *Gody’s Lady’s Book*, even professed that “The perfection of womanhood…is the wife and mother, the center of the family, that magnet that draws man to the domestic altar, that makes him a civilized being” (Wayne, 2007, p. 1). Subsequent laws continued to discriminate against women. In *Bradwell v. Illinois* (1872), the United States Supreme Court ruled that a state has the right to exclude a woman from practicing law. In *Muller v. State of Oregon* (1908), the Supreme Court upheld Oregon’s 10-hour workday for women. Although this law ostensibly protected women, often referred to as benevolent misogyny, it was based on the assumption that women are weak and served to limit women’s employment opportunities, thus making women economically dependent on men. In *Hoyt v. Florida* (1961), the United States Supreme Court ruled that women were less likely to be called for jury duty because “woman is still regarded as the center of home and family life.” This law ultimately oppressed women, because it took away their right to participate in the legal system designed to protect everyone.

Although laws today protect women from blatant sexism, discrimination and harassment, research has shown that women still experience these issues in non-
traditional career fields, including policing, through cultural norms. Not only do women face obstacles during the recruitment process, women officers continue to face barriers throughout their policing career. A study conducted by Kimberly Eikenberg, a doctoral student from Walden University (2022) found that women officers experience mistreatment in the form of negative attitudes, isolation, ostracism, and sexual harassment while on the job. Another study in 2020 by Timothy Brown, a professor from San Diego State University and his colleagues found that women police officers experience isolation and stigmatization within their departments. Furthermore, female officers are often not perceived to have the necessary physical and emotional capabilities (perceived inherent in men), in spite of having shown their abilities to control situations and deescalate them. These recent studies reaffirm the reality that gender inequality is deep-rooted and is reflected in the ways that women are perceived and treated in the workplace. The unequivocal integration of women will require a genuine approach to the recruitment, retention and promotion of women in policing—through the lens of diversity, equity and inclusion (DEI).

Today, women remain disproportionately underrepresented in policing across the United States. While women make up approximately 57.4% of the US workforce (U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics, 2021) women only make up about 13% of state, municipal and county officers (Hyland & Davis, 2019). This figure has only varied slightly over the past few decades. Consequent to industrialization in the United States, roughly between 1760 and 1850 (Pinchbeck, 2013) women began to enter the workforce. Early feminist movements also began to emerge, which created even more opportunities for women as they began to work outside the home (Price & Galvin, 1982).
By the 1970s, women made up approximately 2% of police officers (Martin & Jurik, 2006). While the number of women in policing gradually increased over the years to the current 13%, the male police establishment has not always supported the inclusion of women (Archbold & Schulz, 2012). Male officers have considered women’s inclusion a fad and downplayed their responsibilities (Koenig, 1978). Moreover, male officers have sometimes felt that women were not suitable to all aspects of policing; consequently, many officers filed complaints within their departments (McCartney & Patterson, 2021). Women have had to work hard to prove themselves and advancements for women in various police roles and promotions have been slow in coming. (Barlow & Barlow, 2000).

The Introduction of Women in Policing

In Colonial America during the 1600s and 1700s, policing consisted of constables, watches, slave patrols and sheriffs, but women were not allowed to serve in these roles. It wasn’t until the late 1800’s that women essentially worked for police departments in administrative support roles; however, they were not allowed to make arrests. Police women worked as specialized social workers, analogous to the glorified or executive secretary (Balkin, 1988). Women working as police officers initially faced structural discrimination (i.e., by policy, regulation or legislation) from male counterparts and superiors. That changed only slowly over time and on an ad-hoc basis.

Among the first women police officers with arrest authority were Lola Baldwin from Portland Oregon and Alice S. Wells from Los Angeles in the early 1900s. Subsequently, other police departments in the United States also began hiring women with arrest authority. It should be noted that police duties assigned to women such as
patrolling and investigations varied from state to state. By 1916, 30 cities within the United States hired women as police officers (Garcia, 2003). By 1925, 210 cities hired women and the number of women police officers increased to 417, though 355 women worked as matrons (Garcia, 2003). By the 1950s, approximately 2,610 women worked as police officers and by 1960, there were 5,617 women police officers (Heidensohn, 1992). Although there are roughly 100,000 women police officers from state, municipal and county law enforcement agencies as of 2020, women remain significantly underrepresented in policing (U.S. Bureau of Justice Statistics, 2020).

Title VII of the 1964 Civil Rights Act officially allowed women the right to enter professions that were traditionally male oriented (Marshall, 2013). Although this created a structural pathway for women, it did not bring them a great deal of advancement (Brown, 2000) due to cultural impediments deeply embedded in the law-enforcement profession. Impediments to gender equality generally occur in a structural or cultural manner. While structural impediments were being chipped away, widely shared categorizations and stereotypes of women refer to cultural inequalities, and those remained strongly embedded in police departments.

Even in the 1970’s some women in society also resisted other women’s participation in policing. In one example, according to a New York Times article, 25 women belonging to the New York City Policemen's Wives Association and the Citizens Organization for Police Support in Staten Island, protested in the streets of New York on June 21, 1974 (Walker, 1974). They displayed signs, which declared “Women are not physically or emotionally capable of backing up their partners on patrol” (Figure 1).

Figure 1. NYPD Wife Protest Women Officers in Patrol Cars
Signs carried by other women echoed this sentiment (Figure 2).

Figure 2. NYPD Wife Proclaims that Women Officers Endanger Male Officer’s Lives

There are several explanations regarding why women would oppose women working as police officers; however, one prominent explanation is that gender constructs and stereotypes are deeply ingrained in society. Some women, even after many years of advancement accept, even welcome, perceived gender-stereotypical expectations for themselves. This attitude was evident during the women’s suffrage movement, when many women determined to preserve (what they considered) the “special and unique place of women” (Goodier, 2013 p. 5) and worked against women’s gaining the right to vote. For example, in Susan Cooper’s (1870) “Female Suffrage. A Letter to the Christian Women of America,” she expressed that women were physically inferior, intellectually inferior, and fundamentally subordinate to men. These types of beliefs have endured overtime and unfortunately, they affect women’s ability to fully enter and gain positions of leadership in policing (Garcia, 2021).

Though women have worked in law enforcement in increasing numbers and played a crucial role in modern policing, women remain underrepresented in law enforcement positions, especially at higher levels (Hyland & Davis, 2019; Lonsway, 2006). According to U.S. Bureau of Justice Statistics (2020) women make up only 4% of police chiefs in the United States. Although women have now been involved in law enforcement for many years, they are still not given the same opportunities as men to obtain top executive positions (Clark, 2006; Rief & Clinkinbeard, 2020; Shjarback & Todak, 2019). In the police profession as a whole, most supervisory and command staff positions are held by men (Guajardo, 2016). Likewise, women rarely get promoted to positions that involve policymaking positions (Wilson & Blackburn, 2014). Women who pursue leadership positions often face harsher criticisms from their male supervisors and
are generally viewed as less competent than men (Green, 2021). Essentially, men’s perceptions of women’s competence can negatively predispose women’s performance reviews and consequently hinder their ability to be promoted.

In spite of some of the structural rights afforded to women, the idea of women working in a police male-dominated profession has shaken police organizations that have focused on men for generations (Taylor, 2014). Upon women’s entrance into the policing profession, male officers were resistant to women’s presence because they felt women’s inclusion threatened their valued institution (Taylor, 2014). A woman’s perceived lack of physical presence, tough physique and “masculinity” were cited as rationalization for that view (Silvestri, 2017).

However, the Equal Employment Opportunity Act of 1972 prohibited law enforcement agencies from discriminating based on gender (Deans, 2013); therefore, police departments were officially required to hire women for jobs equal to men. Other federal equal employment legislation such as the 1978 Pregnancy Discrimination Act, the 1963 Equal Pay Act, the 1978 Justice Systems Improvement Act, and the Equal Employment Opportunity Commission have all contributed to the advancement of diversity and reform of law enforcement demographics (Gossett and Williams, 1998).

Subsequent to the passing of these laws, some police departments still participated in discriminatory practices (Sulton & Townsey, 1981). These practices sometimes occurred through obvious practices such as administering unstructured oral interviews, offering invalid physical agility tests, denying pregnancy and maternity benefits, assigning women to desk jobs, and failing to provide women with a grievance process for sexual harassment (Sulton & Townsey, 1981). In one specific case, Philadelphia Police
Commissioner, Joseph O’Neill, refused to hire women as police officers (O’Neill, 1974). In a 1974 official report, he maintained that women were less coordinated than men, not physically able to handle violent situations, and less likely to take control of incidents (O’Neill, 1974). Commissioner O’Neill also argued that women “would not make as many arrests as male officers” or “enforce motor vehicle violations adequately” (O’Neill, 1974, para 6). After a six-year court battle, the Philadelphia Police Department was forced to settle a lawsuit in the United States Court of Appeals, Brace v. O’Neill (1977). It was also forced to hire approximately 70 women officers (Brace v. O’Neill, 1977).

The Police Shortage Crisis

Although the underrepresentation of women in police is a problem in itself due to women’s presence being a positive influence on communities and overall performance of police departments (Donohue, 2021; Lonsway et al., 2003), it is equally important to note that police departments across America are experiencing a general recruitment and retention crisis (Maciag, 2018) a problem exacerbated by the underrepresentation of women. Recruitment and retention in American policing has always been problematic, but the shortage of qualified men and women today is unprecedented (Henney, 2018). As of 2020, law enforcement within the United States currently stands at roughly 800,000 individuals, with an estimated 27,000 officers leaving the profession each year (Lentz, 2022). The reasons for the crisis are complex, including family issues arising as a result of the COVID pandemic, high profile police use of force incidents and subsequent police reforms—nevertheless, by recruiting and retaining more women in policing, departments can better increase their staffing levels.
A Review of the Literature

In spite of the laws enacted to promote equality for women, the stark difference of the representation of women in law enforcement is troubling. Scholars have sought to uncover why women are still underrepresented; however, recent studies are scarce. This may be in part due to the idea that older studies have already addressed this topic and the supposition that policing is generally expected to have more men. Most studies conducted on the subject of women’s experiences in policing took place between 1970 and 2012. The majority of recent studies over the last several years are similar to much older studies in some ways, but also reflect subtle differences.

Early Studies (1970-2012)

Generally, early studies revealed that women’s personal and professional experiences in policing were negative. Women’s negative experiences began (formally) in the police academy and many women continued to have negative experiences throughout their career (Block & Anderson 1974; Jacobs 1987; Wexler and Logan 1983). Early literature suggests that the police academy and field training for women were considered by male officers as the “first line of defense” to prevent “the female invasion” (Rabe-Hemp, 2008, p. 265). In effect, police standards were intended to exclude women since male officers did not consider them as having macho qualities such as courage, confidence, emotional detachment and aggressiveness that were necessary for the job (Garcia, 2003; Prokos and Padavic, 2002). Ultimately, resistance to women police officers focused on the masculine nature of policing (Brown & Heidensohn, 2000). Women were also denied access to careers in the police profession because they were
considered inherently emotionally and physically weak (Homant & Kennedy, 1985; Morash & Greene, 1986).

One particular study by Michael T. Charles (1981), a doctoral student at Michigan State University, found that while undergoing recruit training, male recruits disparaged female success. He also found that it did not matter how well women performed, they were criticized and not accepted because they did not have the same physical strength as men. His study did not reveal that women were unfit to do the job; the resistance came from the belief that women were not able to do the job as well as men and so women should not make the effort (Garcia, 2003). Furthermore, Charles found that male recruits had biased ideas of what women were capable of and would not accept female success (Garcia, 2003).

Older studies have also shown that negative attitudes of women extended beyond recruit training. In 1983, Judie Wexler and Deana Logan, associate professors of Holy Names College, surveyed 25 women police officers in California. They found that 80% of female officers described negative attitudes and behaviors of some male officers, such as questioning women’s sexuality, making anti-women statements and refusing to speak to them. Other women reported being physically threatened, not being backed up on serious calls, and being pushed out of fights; male officers also engaged in lewd comments and behavior and refused to let them drive or to work with them (Wexler & Logan, 1983). Most women in the study believed that the department “did not want women” (Wexler & Logan, 1983 p. 48).

As women attempted to assimilate in police culture from the 1970s through the 1990s, they experienced varying degrees of discrimination and harassment on the job
(Gossett & Williams, 1998). Many male officers believed that women were undependable and slow to learn (Koenig, 1978). Male officers still refused to speak to women and excluded them from social networks (Martin, 1980; Weisheit, 1987). Other male officers threatened to withhold backup from women officers (Gossett & Williams, 1998), a threat that if carried out could put officers’ lives at risk. Male officers also used ridicule, derogatory comments and language to intimidate women officers (Jacobs, 1987). In addition, many women faced sexual harassment and were discriminatorily precluded from job assignments and promotions (Holdaway & Parker, 1998).

Though early studies of women police officers proved women were just as capable as men in many areas, male officers continued to reject women police officers (Hunt, 1990). Joanne Belknap and Jill Shelley, professors from the University of Cincinnati completed a study in 1993 and found that the majority of women officers believed they had to prove they were better than the men to be viewed as competent and accepted. Approximately half of the women in their study admitted they occasionally did something they did not agree with in order to fit in.

Despite laws that protect women against discrimination, women in the early 2000s still experienced discrimination and remained a marginalized, unaccepted minority (Davis, 2005). A study in 2009 by Danielle Flanagan, an Instructor of Criminal Justice from West Texas A&M University focused on police agencies in the Texas Panhandle and found that most women in these departments believed they were viewed differently from their male counterparts. Most men in their study revealed that they were doubtful about women in physically demanding situations. In essence, although these women performed the same duties, they did not have the same level of acceptance of the men in
their department (Davis, 2005). Moreover, most women felt that more was expected from them as opposed to men and that women have not achieved complete equality.

Gender integration continued to be intensely resisted because of the belief that women were not able to physically perform police duties (Davis, 2005). The societal stereotypes of women ascribed to women such as nurturing, subservience, and physically non-threatening, reinforced negative attitudes and rejection by male colleagues (Adams, 2001; Christopher et al., 1991; Timmins & Hainsworth, 1989; Wexler & Logan, 1983).

Other studies have consistently shown that women in law enforcement also experienced other forms of mistreatment. For example, a case study conducted in 2007 by Kimberly Lonsway, Director of Research at End Violence Against Women International and Angela Alipio, a student at the California Polytechnic State University, offers analysis of 13 women who sued their law enforcement agencies for sexual harassment or another form of sex discrimination. These women experienced mistreatment such as vulgarity, gender harassment and sexual harassment. The women also described being deliberately passed over for promotion, being unfairly disciplined and terminated. When some women complained, they were physically threatened by their coworkers. Other forms of retaliation consisted of social isolation, negative job consequences, vandalism to their property, and death threats. Many times, departments deliberately concealed the mistreatment of women.

Cara-Rabe Hemp (2009), Professor of Criminal Justice at Illinois State University, also found that police women were regulated to perceived women’s assignments such as sexual assaults and domestic-violence cases. These types of perceived women’s tasks mirror the type of assignments that were relegated to women.
first entering policing long ago. Even though women police officers felt they were better than male officers at serving women and children, hegemonic masculine police departments placed women in roles that male officers have historically not defined as “real police work” (Rabe-Hemp, 2009, p. 120).

Although early studies of women focused on the unique experiences and obstacles women faced, most studies were not centered on the recruitment, retention and promotion of women per se. Studies discussed how blatant hostility toward women, gender bias, and sexual harassment affected women’s success in these areas (Cordner & Cordner, 2011). Other studies pointed to microaggressions, defined as “brief and commonplace daily verbal, behavioral, or environmental indignities” (Sue et al., 2007, p. 271) that created cultural and structural barriers for women—thus contributing to women leaving their jobs in law enforcement at much higher rates than male officers (Boni et al., 2001; Dantzker & Kubin, 1998). Very few early studies centered on key issues such as maternity leave and other family-life work barriers.

**Studies Following 2012**

Recent studies are somewhat consistent with older studies; however, there are a few noteworthy differences. Collectively, studies show that women still feel they are not treated equally to men.

While a significant number of studies conducted prior to 2012 discuss the blatant discrimination, harassment, retaliation, and sexual harassment of women via structural and cultural barriers, newer studies primarily focus on cultural impediments that stifle
women. Newer studies show that despite women’s representation in policing for over a century, women still struggle to fully integrate into a masculine culture.

The law enforcement profession has always been and remains a masculine occupation (Graue & Weatherby 2016). Furthermore, policing has always been perceived as a violent, physically demanding, and dangerous occupation reserved for men (Chan & Ho, 2013). Police departments’ depiction of masculinity in their recruitment methods may partially result in the underrepresentation of women in policing (Rushin, 2021). Often, many departments promote advertisement and recruitment videos that focus on masculinity and warrior-style policing, rather than guardian-styles of policing (Stoughton, 2014). This type of recruitment technique is more attractive to men than women (Rushin, 2021).

In 2021, Wendy M. Koslicki, Assistant Professor of Criminal Justice and Criminology at Ball State University, conducted a study of recruitment videos from over 200 of the largest police departments in the United States. Although women were represented in approximately 85% of the videos, Koslicki found that approximately 34% of the videos displayed some type of military weapon, 42.7% depicted officers drawing their firearms, and 13.1% showed officers actively pursuing a suspect. A little over 43% of the videos ranged from slightly to extremely militaristic. Only about 50% of the videos featured officers engaging in positive community interactions.

Likewise, Rylan Simpson, a professor from Simon Fraser University, examined the recruitment process from 600 police departments across the United States and found that police recruitment videos featured high-speed driving, firearms use, canine deployment and special weapons and tactics (Simpson, 2022). These videos underscored
images of men, masculinity and physical fitness. However, recruitment videos rarely centered on community-policing characteristics—which some scholars argue is problematic since women are generally more drawn to community-service positions (Gibbs, 2019). Recruitment videos essentially reflect what police departments are seeking in candidates, and influence who decides to join the profession (Simpson, 2022).

Similarly, Michael Aiello, a professor from the State University of New York at Fredonia conducted a study of recruitment methods from 131 police departments and found that police agencies that advertised positions using community-service language had higher percentages of women officers. This language, as opposed to legalistic or watchman language, is more likely to attract service-oriented candidates (Aiello, 2020).

Other recent studies confirm that women still face negative cultural experiences compared to men. Rachael Rief, doctoral student and Samantha Clinkinbeard, professor from the University of Nebraska at Omaha used a comparative sample of male and female officers to examine perceptions of “fitting in” the job, organization, and workgroup. Their 2020 findings indicated that women "fit in" with the job and the broader agency, but are less likely than men to feel they belong within a smaller work group. In other words, women felt they fit in with the larger agency, but not with men whom they spend most of their time (Rief & Clinkinbeard, 2020). They found that women experienced subtle forms of discrimination, which partially explained their lower level of belonging (Rief & Clinkinbeard, 2020). They also found that masculine culture still prevails and that women feel they are outsiders. The findings from this study may also help to understand why women leave police departments at a disproportionate rate (Rief & Clinkinbeard, 2020).
Similarly, Lonsway and her colleagues conducted a 2013 study to examine the incidence, impact, and perception of sexual harassment in law enforcement. They found that most women officers in their study (approximately 93.8%) experienced some type of harassment throughout their careers and that sexual harassment was most likely to be perpetrated by a supervisor. Many women also reported retaliation for reporting sexual harassment. Women that experienced harassment but did not file report(s) usually stated they were concerned about the impact on their career, worried their complaint would be ignored, and feared they would experience retaliation by supervisors and/or coworkers. The researchers concluded that the reason for the harassment centered on gender and power—to keep women out of a job where they did not belong.

In 2021, Christine M. Paolillo, a doctoral student from the City University of Seattle, conducted a study of women’s perceptions of gender bias within police departments in the Northeast. In her study, women officers reported being treated like they were less competent than their male counterparts. Male officers ridiculed them for taking too long to use the restroom, even though women required more time to remove their equipment. Women also expressed that they experienced gender inequalities such as the lack of facilities for nursing mothers. Some nursing women described how they were mocked by a supervising officer for leaking through their uniform and bullet-proof vest. Some nursing women ignored breast-feeding restrictions and were issued a reprimand. When asked how gender discrimination endures within male-dominated organizations, women generally stated that men dictate the rules; therefore, discrimination endures because men do not want change.
Historically, women officers have faced obstacles regarding acceptance and advancement (Todak, Mitchell, et al., 2022). Although studies have shown that women police officers excel at leadership and supervision (Alexander & Nowacki, 2022), women’s representation in supervisory and leadership positions remains historically low (Hyland & Davis, 2019). Women are also underrepresented in specialized units.

Male police officers almost exclusively dominate elite specialty units (Todak, Mitchell, et al., 2022). Appointments to these units such as K9, SWAT, motorcycle and bomb units are often discretionary and motivated by gender bias (Todak, Mitchell, et al., 2022). Simultaneously, women may be reluctant to pursue units such as SWAT because they do not want to challenge the present circumstances and be regarded as a pioneer (Robinson, 2013). In 2022, Natalie Todak, a professor from the University of Alabama and her colleagues surveyed 32 women who managed to obtain positions on elite units. Women reported that they were successful in obtaining their positions by overworking, acting like “one of the guys”, having thick skin and separating themselves from women who were not respected (Todak, Boyd, et al., 2022). Half of the women in this study reported that they experienced sexual harassment, career sabotage, body objectification and social isolation. Other studies have also shown that women may choose not to pursue or are denied positions on elite units due to physical requirements and mental stamina (Robinson, 2013). In theory, newer policies and laws have allowed women to fully participate in all aspects of policing; however, cultural barriers still segregate women.

Recent studies connect gender bias to the lack of recruitment, retention and promotion of women in policing (Paolillo, 2021). Gender bias, which has manifested in departments in subtle and extreme ways, is detrimental to women, as it prevents or
restricts women’s opportunities. The gendered nature of the police profession is evident through the historical exclusion of women, the glass ceiling, and cultural importance placed on qualities such as masculinity, aggression and physicality (Gaub & Holtfreter, 2022). Furthermore, a lack of family-friendly policies, such as paid maternity leave, (Rabe-Hemp, 2015) hinders the recruitment and advancement of women officers, (Sceli et al., 2022) who generally bear most of the childcare responsibilities at home (Kantamneni, 2020). The lack of women leaders and mentors (Perry, 2019) and the failure of police agencies to strategically and proactively recruit women also help to explain the underrepresentation of women (Aiello, 2019).

The Intersection of Race and Gender in Policing

Recent studies on race and gender in policing are scarce; however, older scholarship posits that the intersectionality of race and gender has posed distinct challenges for women in policing. For instance, minority women police officers in earlier studies reported being treated as "doubly inferior" by other officers and experienced gender and racial discrimination intended to isolate and subordinate them (Dodge & Pogrebin, 2001; Martin, 2004). Because of their especially marginalized status, women of color experienced unique forms of discrimination that were not reported by other female officers (Dodge & Pogrebin 2001; Martin, 2004). According to Pogrebin and colleagues (2000) Black women felt as though they did not meet White male officer’s expectations of stereotypical women. Consequently, White male officers treated Black women differently than White women. White male officers subordinated White women officers through paternalism, increased protection, or seduction but subordinated Black women through rejection (Dodge & Pogrebin, 2001; Hurtado, 1989; Martin, 1994).
These studies also found that male colleagues were more willing to back up a White female officer who needed help because White women officers allowed men to take control (Martin, 1994; Pogrebin et al., 2000). Essentially, men were more agreeable to work with White women officers because they felt able to take on a more dominant role. Also, Black male officers seeking to feel accepted by White male officers needed to essentially reject Black women officers (Dodge & Pogrebin, 2001). Although current statistics are not available, according to a 2019 study it is unusual for women of color to hold supervisory or leadership positions in policing (Todak & Brown, 2019). Although there are Black women that serve in supervisory police positions (e.g., "Female police chiefs," n.d.; “Women in policing,” n.d.), they may face scrutiny not experienced by others (Wilson, 2019).

Intersectionality of Gender and LGBTQ Officers

Police Departments have not only been regarded as a gendered occupation, but also as a “sexualized” institution (Miller et al., 2003). For the last several decades, lesbian and gay individuals have pursued equal rights and social acceptance (Miller et al., 2003). Police departments were once the regulators of sexual morality, and up until recently, states criminalized same-gender sexual activity (Stewart-Winter, 2015). More recently, social institutions have widely varied in their acceptance, but until recently, officers that openly identified as gay or lesbian were dismissed from their jobs (Doss, 1990). Today, as new gender and sexual identities emerge, more current studies show that some LGBTQ police officers face harassment and discrimination because they are not recognized as part of the police culture’s “norm” (Hassell & Brandl, 2009; Jones & Williams, 2015). Common types of harassment directed toward LGBTQ officers include
derogatory remarks or jokes such as “dyke,” “tranny” and “butch.” Although laws and police policies have been passed to prevent the blatant mistreatment of LGBTQ officers, structural polices such as uniform (gender-specific dress codes) and gender-specific appearance and grooming standards implicitly discriminate against them.

Women in the Military

Women in the military have faced challenges similar to women in police departments with respect to gender discrimination. Like policing, the traditionally gendered patriarchal culture of the military has resisted the full integration of women. For instance, prior to 2016, women were structurally banned from serving in ground combat roles in the United States. When then-Secretary of Defense Ashton Carter opened combat positions for women for the first time in history, women were allowed to serve in occupations such as machine-gunners and fire-support reconnaissance units (Thompson, 2015). Being allowed to hold those positions did not, however, easily translate into women being accepted in those positions. The first two women to pass Army Ranger School faced online death threats; consequently, the service has become more cautious about sharing information relating to females serving in the infantry (Myers, 2022).

As in policing, opponents of women in combat roles contend that women are physically weaker (Collins-Dogrul & Ulrich, 2018). Although there is no evidence, opponents posit that as a result, standards have been lowered to be “politically correct,” which endangers soldiers and damages military effectiveness (Collins-Dogrul & Ulrich, 2018). While there are some physical traits that give women an advantage over men, physicality has been the justification for excluding women from professions traditionally dominated by men that require strength (Johnson-Freese, 2022).
graduated the first Women Army Rangers, 381 men began and 94 completed the course (Hennigan, 2015). Interestingly, 19 women began and two women graduated (Hennigan, 2015) which indicates that statistically, those two women physically outperformed the 286 men.

United States Army Reserve Captain Elizabeth Trobaugh (2018), a graduate from the School of International and Public Affairs, evaluated attitudes about women integrating into combat arms and combat-arms training. Despite participants knowing that women in training had passed the standard in warrior-type tasks (skills necessary on the battlefield or frontlines) they believed that women were less physically capable of passing (Trobaugh, 2018). While the military has made significant progress in terms of addressing gender inequalities, gendered stereotypes and institutional bias remain barriers for women (Trobaugh, 2018).

Historically, women’s roles in the military have been limited (in part) due to guarding the perceived model of masculinity (Goldstein, 2018). Conservative talk-show host Tucker Carlson’s misogynistic criticism of the Army’s new pregnancy policy, which allows women to wear maternity uniforms (Neumann, 2021), is a larger reflection of what many other far-right conservatives seem to believe. As Tucker Carlson puts it, “While China's military becomes more masculine, as it's assembled the world's largest navy, our military needs to become, as Joe Biden says, more feminine" (Neumann, 2021, para. 7).

Women in both policing and the military today face more culturally based bias than structural impediments, though structural biases still exist, especially in areas such as child care that are traditionally considered a “women’s issue” rather than a “family”
issue. In both instances, this cultural bias negatively affects staffing and organizational effectiveness, hence the imperative to identify, understand and address impediments to gender equality.

Study Aims and Hypotheses

The purpose of this study is to: (1) Identify the extent and forms of inequitable experiences of women in policing as they exist; (2) Identify and examine barriers women face during the recruitment and promotional process to the extent these barriers exist; and (3) Identify and examine the pervasiveness of gender-based harassment, discrimination and negative attitudes of women in policing. The questions I pose and seek to answer in this study are: Why are there so few women represented in police departments in the United States? Why is there such a disparity between men and women across various ranks? What are the conditions that prevent women from joining law enforcement? What prevents them from achieving promotional opportunities? What specific barriers do women face in this field?

The hypotheses being tested in this study are the following: (1) Gender bias is a major contributor to the under-representation of women in the police force; (2) Gender roles, specifically historically “masculine job descriptions” and public perceptions of the police (e.g., as showing violence or excessive force) deter women from becoming interested in policing; (3) Women routinely face discriminatory behavior and even retaliation from male officers when they speak up about mistreatment or file complaints; and (4) Law enforcement officials make an intentional effort to exclude women from the force and higher ranks. This study will further shed light on the extent to which the under-representation of women in the police force is due to gender biases on the part of
male police officers, and to what extent Gender Structure Theory explains this phenomenon.
Chapter II.
Material and Methods

Sampling Strategy

Using a personally-developed survey, data were collected from women police officers in the Boston Police Department, Miami Police Department, Tampa Police Department, Kansas City and San Diego Police Department. I used the non-probability convenience sampling method to select these departments. The organization, National Association of Women Law Enforcement Executives (NAWLEE) sent the survey to the police departments, and was indeed anxious to consider the findings. The survey was administered from July 2022—October 2022. Initially there was a poor response to the survey. Although it was stated in the survey and in the email sent out by NAWLEE that the findings would be anonymously reported, as a female police officer myself I suspect the poor response was due to fear of retribution for negative responses. Consequently, I contacted administrators from each department and personally asked that women participate in the survey, again assuring anonymity. Subsequently, 81 women officers responded. The survey contains the 47 questions in multiple-choice format and open-ended format (Appendix A).

Demographics of Respondent’s Police Departments and Communities

Table 1 shows the demographics of respondents’ police departments and communities. San Diego has the largest city population and Tampa the smallest. Boston has the largest police department, followed by San Diego; Tampa has the smallest police department. The percentage of female officers who responded to my survey was 14% to
20% across the five departments. An analysis of the demographic data from the respondent’s home cities supports previous findings of the disparity of women and people of color. Not all police officers live in the same town where they work; however, as stated previously, women make up 57.4% of the U.S. workforce (U. S. Bureau of Labor Statistics, 2021). Whereas women make up about half of the population from cities where their police departments are located, they only represent a small percentage of their police departments.

Table 1 Demographics of Respondent’s Police Departments

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Boston</th>
<th>Kansas City</th>
<th>Miami</th>
<th>San Diego</th>
<th>Tampa</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>City Population</td>
<td>654,776^1</td>
<td>508,394^2</td>
<td>439,890^3</td>
<td>1,381,611^4</td>
<td>387,050^5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Approximate Percentage of People Ages 18-64</td>
<td>64%^1</td>
<td>47%^2</td>
<td>60.4%^3</td>
<td>61.3%^4</td>
<td>59.6%^5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Approximate Percentage of Women in the Community</td>
<td>52%^1</td>
<td>57.3%^2</td>
<td>50.1%^3</td>
<td>49.5%^4</td>
<td>50.7%^5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Approximate Number of Police Officers</td>
<td>2145^6</td>
<td>1300^7</td>
<td>1100^9</td>
<td>1,887^11</td>
<td>1000^13</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Percentage of Female Officers</td>
<td>14%^6</td>
<td>15%^8</td>
<td>20%^10</td>
<td>16%^12</td>
<td>16%^14</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Notes:

6. Tiernan (2020)
7. Arbinger Institute (n.d.)
8. Stark (2022)
10. Miami Herald (n.d.)
11. National Policing Institute (n.d.)
12. San Diego Police Museum (2022)
13. Tampa Government (n.d.)
14. King (2020)
Chapter III.

Results

Demographic Characteristics of Sample

Police departments in five American cities were surveyed for this study, and 81 female police officers agreed to complete the survey. These included 54 women (66.67%) from Tampa, FL, 12 (14.81%) from Boston, MA, 4 (4.94%) from San Diego, CA, 8 (9.88%) from Kansas City, MO, 1 (1.23%) from Miami, FL, and 2 (2.47%) who didn’t provide that information. Several respondents from the Tampa department mentioned their department’s proactive attempts to recruit and retain female officers, which perhaps explains why Tampa police women felt especially comfortable responding to the survey.

On average, participants were 38 years old ($M = 37.72, SD = 7.76$). The majority were White, about one quarter were Latina, and about 20% were Black/African American (Table 2). Approximately 75% had a B.A. or M.A. degree. Approximately 67% were married or had a partner, and more than half had children under 18. Almost 75% said they were heterosexual.
Table 2 Demographic Variables

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Variables</th>
<th>N</th>
<th>%</th>
<th>M (SD)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Age</td>
<td>38.34</td>
<td>(8.00)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ethnicity (multiple choices possible)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>White</td>
<td>50</td>
<td>61.72</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hispanic/Latinx</td>
<td>20</td>
<td>24.69</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>African-American/Black</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>18.52</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>4.94</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Highest level of education completed</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>4.94</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Some college but no degree</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>7.41</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Associate's degree</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>9.88</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bachelor's degree</td>
<td>35</td>
<td>43.21</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Master's degree</td>
<td>27</td>
<td>33.33</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Didn’t say</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1.23</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Family status</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Married or Partner Status with children</td>
<td>35</td>
<td>43.21</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Married or Partner Status</td>
<td>21</td>
<td>25.93</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Single</td>
<td>17</td>
<td>20.99</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Single/Divorced or separated</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>6.17</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Single, Guardian</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1.23</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Missing</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>2.47</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Parent or caretaker of children under 18</td>
<td>44</td>
<td>54.32</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Caretaker of adult(s)—aging, ill or disabled</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>14.81</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sexual orientation</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Heterosexual or straight</td>
<td>60</td>
<td>74.07</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lesbian/gay/queer</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>14.81</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bisexual</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>3.70</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Asexual</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>3.70</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Prefer not to say</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>3.70</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

On average, respondents had served as police officers for 13 years, 11 in their current departments, and mostly full-time (Table 3). Almost 75% of the participants were
patrol officers and about 18% were sergeants. More than 33% said their current job was patrol, and about one quarter said their current job was investigations.

Table 3 Characteristics of Respondents’ Jobs in Police

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Variables</th>
<th>N</th>
<th>%</th>
<th>N</th>
<th>M (SD)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Years as a police officer</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Part-time</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>3.50</td>
<td>70</td>
<td>12.09 (8.09)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Full-time</td>
<td>70</td>
<td>12.77</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Years in current department</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Part-time</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>1.35</td>
<td></td>
<td>11.46 (8.13)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Full-time</td>
<td>67</td>
<td>11.03</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Current rank within the department</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Patrol Officer</td>
<td>58</td>
<td>71.60</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Corporal Detective</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1.23</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sergeant</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>17.50</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lieutenant</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>2.47</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Above Captain</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>2.47</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Chief of Police</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1.23</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Didn’t say</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1.23</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Current job assignment</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Patrol</td>
<td>29</td>
<td>35.80</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Investigations</td>
<td>23</td>
<td>28.40</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Administration</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>14.81</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Specialized Response Team</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>3.70</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Community relations</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>3.70</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Plain clothes</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>3.70</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Training</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>3.70</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>School Resource</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>2.47</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Academy instructor</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1.23</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mounted</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1.23</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SWAT/Motorcycle</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1.23</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Testing of Hypotheses

The hypotheses tested in this study were the following:

(1) Gender bias is a major contributor to the under-representation of women in the police force.
(2) Gender roles, specifically the historically “masculine job descriptions” deter women from becoming interested in policing.
(3) Women routinely face discriminatory behavior and even retaliation from males in the police force.
(4) Law enforcement officials make an intentional effort to exclude women.

Hypothesis 1: Gender Bias Is a Major Contributor to Under-Representation of Women in The Police

Hypothesis 1 was tested through questions regarding whether women officers felt their opinions were valued; whether they felt they had to prove themselves with male officers; policies or practices related to child care or family care; and gender equity relating to barriers to women’s entering policing.

Women’s opinions matter. Almost half (49.38%) of respondents did not seem to experience gender bias regarding whether their opinions were taken seriously. They reported that their professional opinion was valued as much as another male officer’s opinion (Table 4). However, about 20% of respondents thought men’s opinions mattered more. And about 30% said that it depends on personal and situational factors.
Table 4 Value of Male and Female Police’s Opinions

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Variables</th>
<th>N</th>
<th>%</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>

Your professional opinion is valued just as much as another male officer’s opinion

- Yes 40 49.38
- No 16 19.75
- It depends 24 29.63
- Unsure 1 1.23

Qualitative responses

- Opinions of men and women equally valued 4
- Men’s opinions valued more 2
- Women’s opinions valued more 2
  - Related to unique female officer role 1
- Value of opinion depends 7
  - Related to officer rank, age, egotism 3
  - It depends on the topic 2
  - Women back down about opinions 1

In qualitative responses, one respondent said, “While I was stationed at the busiest district in the city, I never witnessed or felt as though a male’s opinion mattered more and if it had I would have absolutely made it known to whoever was standing in front of me.” Another respondents stated, “I have never had an issue stating my opinion, but I also know when to keep my mouth shut and listen. If I’m wrong, I don’t have an issue admitting it.” Of two respondents who thought men’s opinions mattered more, one person mentioned “subtle underminings” and another said, “Unless you are a male, especially of color, your opinion doesn’t matter. You better stay quiet or the department will target you.” Two respondents thought women’s opinions mattered more. However, one woman
who was new to a SWAT team and the only woman on the team thought she was asked for her opinion more than her male counterparts were.

In the qualitative responses, of those who said “It depends,” some mentioned the rank, ego or age of the person listening. One woman said, “I’ve had some amazing male partners that value me as an equal. But a certain male supervisor I have—has an ego, so my experience and suggestions are rejected.” Another person said, “Many older male officers treat female officers differently and as a lesser officer.” Such differences could lead women to back down from their opinions on the grounds that women’s opinions didn’t matter, and not consider whether they were wrong. Paradoxically, when women censor their opinions because they feel their opinions won’t be viewed favorably, men and women may construe this type of behavior as a lack of confidence (Johnson-Freese, 2018). Men may also lose confidence in women which leads to women having to prove themselves repeatedly (Johnson-Freese, 2018). Dealing with microaggressions over time can also result in women becoming defensive, justified or not. One respondent said,

I feel like I have witnessed situations where both a woman and a male have had a difference of opinions. If the male’s opinion was chosen over the woman’s, I’ve noticed the female tends to say “Well, my opinion didn’t matter due to being a female.” Being a female myself, I’ve had to stand up and say “No you were wrong, just admit that you were wrong and don’t pull the male/female card.” It is often women who will call out other women, because they don’t want one woman’s poor attitude to be attributed to all women, which can happen (Johnson-Freese, 2022).

Two respondents also said respectively that a woman’s opinion was valued regarding sex crimes or child-abuse-related questions, but not with regard to tactical
questions or narcotics. These types of experiences reveal that men are still seeing women through a gendered lens. This outlook perpetuates old-school notions of separate gender roles for men and women—that women are expected to handle female police matters suited to their feminine nature.

Traditionally, women are valued when they offer opinions on things they are suited for: for example, positions requiring a person to be sympathetic, loving, helpful, friendly, kind, and gentle (Eagly & Carli, 2007). Correspondingly, studies of men and masculinities of social processes—which include “the practices, characteristics, expectations, interactions, and institutional dynamics culturally associated with” the ideal man—consider qualities such as “tough, stoic, breadwinner, risk taker, aggressive, dominant, and ‘leader’” (Berdahl et al., 2018, p. 426). Typically men subordinate women and are viewed as superior to women (Berdahl et al., 2018). Even through microaggressions, women are still being regulated to gendered roles.

These experiences also occur in the military. Women have only recently been accepted into combat roles; still, research shows that women’s integration will be slow (Kavanagh & Wenger, 2020). Unfortunately, gender stereotypes still exist in the military as shown in a recent study conducted by Doctoral student Karley Richard from the Indiana University of Pennsylvania and Sonia Molloy, assistant professor from Penn State York; the study found that men in their study viewed women as “weak, caring, and kind” and needed the protection of men (Richard & Molloy, 2020 p. 690).

Proving oneself. Asked if they had to prove themselves to gain acceptance or respect from male co-workers, the majority of respondents said yes (Table 5). One respondent said “Females have to work 5x harder than the males to get noticed and
accepted.” Another responded yes, and said “That is a constant thing you need to do on this. Especially for women. They easily forget the things you have done right on this job.”

In police departments, and for women in particular, proving oneself repeatedly may come in many forms. To show she is a team player, a woman may feel compelled to work more shifts (and more shifts than men), even if this comes at the detriment of her family. Women may also sign up for undesirable department tasks and may avoid displaying fear when responding to calls—even when it is acceptable for men to show fear. Likewise, women may work harder to excel at qualifications concerning driving, firearms, defensive tactics and the like. This rings true for almost all male-dominated fields. Institutional sexism often occurs through a gradual process of integration, where women have to prove they can do specific jobs such as combat tasks (Fenner, 2001).

Table 5 Views of Whether Women Police Have to Prove Themselves

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Variable</th>
<th>N</th>
<th>%</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>You often feel you have to &quot;prove yourself&quot; to gain acceptance/respect from male co-workers</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>52</td>
<td>64.20</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>No</td>
<td>28</td>
<td>34.57</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Unsure</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1.23</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Two respondents also mentioned the importance of showing themselves as team players. “I do feel I work twice as hard to show I'm a ‘team player.’” Another said:
I think this is just a regular thing that women have to do in any field that is male-dominated and which used to traditionally been a male job role. I personally don’t take any offense to it, and if anything, I have enjoyed the challenge of earning respect from my colleagues and working hard to prove my value to the team as an officer.

Findings also showed that whether one felt one had to prove oneself also depended on the stage of one’s career \((n = 4)\) and how welcoming the unit was \((n = 2)\). One woman said, “When I first started my career yes, but once my co-workers got to know me longer in this job, I was never questioned and was considered one of the guys.” Another said, “When I first started law enforcement, there were some old views left in the profession, but some women change that view with time.” Being able to prove oneself could also depend on the sexism of male colleagues \((n = 3)\) and on the person \((n = 1)\).

However, 12 percent of women said they did not need to prove anything but to be “a good cop” who had the stamina to do the job. One woman said, I have seen quite a bit in law enforcement over the last 20 years. I believe that there have been a lot of changes to the aspects of my job and the perception of women working the job than compared to when I first started. The lessons that I have learned is to always do what you feel is right, speak your mind (politely when needed), and never worry about fitting in. If you are a good cop and work hard, you will earn respect from all.

Another respondent said, “If you do not see my value by the work I do on a day to day basis then you never will and I don't feel the need to prove it to anyone.” Although these kinds of responses reveal more equity between male and female officers, I speculate that
women who state that they feel they don’t need to fit in may still acknowledge that they may not fit into male police culture.

Policies related to child care or family care. Asked about several policies or practices related to child care or family care, a sizable minority of women agreed that these policies make it difficult to work in policing (Table 6). The biggest problem noted, by more than 40% of respondents, was that shift schedules do not accommodate to child care needs. This indicates that police departments are not allowing women the flexibility through policies (or contractually) to take time off to take care of their children. Between 20-25% of respondents also indicated problems with lack of adequate maternity leave or lack of family care leave or vacation time to care for parents or relatives. About one fifth also mentioned lack of assignment options (such as desk jobs) for pregnant mothers and 12% mentioned lack of facilities for pregnant or nursing mothers.

Table 6 Policies about Family Care as Barriers to Women’s Working in Policing

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Variables</th>
<th>N</th>
<th>%</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Police policies or practices that make it more difficult to work in policing (all that apply)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Shift schedules that do not accommodate to childcare needs</td>
<td>35</td>
<td>43.21</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(i.e., need to work overtime hours, night shift)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lack of adequate maternity leave for mothers</td>
<td>19</td>
<td>23.46</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lack of family care leave or vacation time to care for parents</td>
<td>16</td>
<td>19.75</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>or relatives</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lack of assignment options for pregnant officers</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>18.52</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lack of facilities for pregnant/nursing mothers</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>12.35</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Only a small group of women surveyed stated that they perceive the lack of maternity leave and pregnancy assignments as an institutional barrier for women. Based on my own professional experience, that the majority did not see maternity issues as an institutional barrier can perhaps be explained as indicating they believe that in order for women to thrive in the police profession, they must forego any gender specific accommodations. Requesting or demanding gender specific accommodations can be negatively perceived by male peers and supervisors as requesting special treatment. Foregoing such requests, however, can create a hidden or unacknowledged barrier to women officers, such as the glass ceiling—which prevents women and minorities from rising through the police ranks (Yu, 2021).

In their comments, the women most often mentioned the importance of flexible work hours or time off to accommodate family needs. One mother of small children commented positively on “being able to take a day off for a sick kid. Or take my lunch break at my kids’ soccer game” within her organization. Yet, being a parent could also limit the types of positions one received: for example, “not being picked for assignments because you're a mother and it’s assumed that you must not be able to manage a different schedule due to having kids.” Another woman said, “I've been asked about how I would balance my family and the commitments of the assignment.” This response is particularly interesting. My assumption is that men (including men who were actively helping to raise children) would probably not be asked such a question, which is blatantly illegal. Such questions translate as microaggressions committed against women. A third respondent accepted that shift work was part of the job: “I knew what shift work was like and I
committed myself. I don’t ask for extra because a male officer doesn’t get extra. We are treated well during pregnancy and our department values families.”

Two respondents also commented on improved department policies for maternity leave: “The department now offers several weeks of paid maternity leave. I wish they would’ve had it 12 years ago when I had my daughter.” From an institutional standpoint, it appears as though police departments that have implemented quality maternity leave policies are not necessarily being mandated to do so. Actually, policies regarding maternity issues remain problematic for policing (Clinkinbeard & Rief, 2022). Most police departments have implemented some form of maternity-leave policy; however, policies are not always ideal or official, or are offered on a discretionary basis (Rabe-Hemp & Humiston, 2015). For some departments, perhaps the implementation of quality maternity leave policies are a reflection of internal pressures or a sign of proactive support for women, as indicated by the qualitatively comment of a survey respondent.

There has been a drastic change since I came on the department until now. When I had children, there was no paid maternity leave. There is maternity leave now, which is great. There are also facilities for nursing mothers. The changes that have been made over the last 20 years is definitely a step in the right direction. However, another respondent said bereavement leave was only offered to those with families, indicating that officers’ close/family relationships aren’t valued unless they meet traditional definitions of family. Policies such as these may discriminate against single women, who may not have children.

Gender equity. Questions about gender equity and masculine policing as barriers to women’s entering policing were also asked using a Likert scale, and findings for these
questions were compared to test Hypotheses 1 and 2. Five items about gender inequities all correlated highly enough to build a multi-item scale with statistical reliability (Cronbach’s alpha = .91) and were averaged into a scale called Gender inequities barrier to women entering policing (Gender inequities). Three items about stressful/dangerous police work, masculine police culture, and evaluation of public attitudes about police work also correlated highly enough to build a reliable multi-item scale (Cronbach’s alpha = .77) and were averaged into a scale called Police Culture Barrier to women entering policing (Police Culture). Items about physical fitness requirements and written or promotional exams as barrier to women’s entering policing were used separately.

On average, respondents gave a neutral score of about 3 on the 5-point Likert scale as to whether gender inequities kept women from entering the police (Table 7). Perceived barriers included lack of female leaders and mentors ($N = 40, 49.38\%$), different job expectations for the same job ranks ($N = 38, 46.91\%$), unfair work assignments ($N = 33, 40.74\%$), gender differences in performance reviews ($N = 26, 32.10\%$) and lower pay for women than men at specific job ranks ($N = 18, 22.22\%$).
Table 7 Perceived Barriers to Women’s Working in Policing

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Variables (N = 81)</th>
<th>M (SD)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Gender inequities as barrier to women’s entering policing scale(^1)</td>
<td>2.95 (1.07)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Different expectations for the same job rank</td>
<td>3.19 (1.30)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lack of female leadership/mentors</td>
<td>3.10 (1.37)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Unfair work assignments for women, as compared to men</td>
<td>3.04 (1.18)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Gender-biased performance reviews</td>
<td>2.86 (1.07)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lower pay at specific job ranks</td>
<td>2.54 (1.32)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Police culture (stressful/dangerous; masculine, unpopular)(^1) as barrier to women’s entering policing</td>
<td>3.66 (1.05)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Existing public perceptions of police officers</td>
<td>4.00 (1.27)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Perceived stress/danger of policing</td>
<td>3.59 (1.28)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Masculine culture of police</td>
<td>3.32 (1.27)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Physical fitness requirements</td>
<td>2.68 (1.12)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Written or promotional exams</td>
<td>2.06 (0.99)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

\(^1\) Items coded 1 = strongly disagree, 2 = disagree, 3 = neutral, 4 = agree, 5 = strongly agree

In qualitative reports, one woman noted different tasks for men and women. On the shift that I work, there are only about 3-5 female officers working in the entire city at a time. This causes us to get pulled away from our work areas to assist male officers with searches of female defendants fairly often. Additionally, I have heard from other female officers that they often "get stuck with" handling the sexual assault/battery and child related calls as their male counterparts do not want to do those investigations (this has not been my personal experience, just what has been shared with me).

If women are relegated to certain tasks, they risk stagnation, which may also be detrimental to women who want to pursue other police interests to achieve better job
satisfaction, wellbeing, and chances at promotion. Often, promotion opportunities are competitive and a well-rounded experience is needed to be more marketable.

However, another respondent commented on cooperation she had from her team. My experience up to this point as a female officer has been that male officers on my squad are quick to respond to calls as my backup and almost always attempt to arrive to calls at the same time or meet at a different location prior to arrival. I am unsure if this is due to me being a female or just being a newer office as my squad has 10-15 years more experience.

Hypothesis 2: Gender Roles, Specifically the Historically “Masculine Job Descriptions” Deter Women from Becoming Interested In Policing

Confirming Hypotheses 2, respondents on average agreed that the negative nature of police culture kept women from entering the police (Table 7); women agreed that public perceptions of the police (for example, as showing violence, harassment, discrimination and excessive force; see DeVylder et al., 2018; Mallory et al., 2015; Phillips et al., 2002) and stress/danger keep women from entering the police. The respondents were neutral about whether the masculine culture of police kept women from entering the police. Respondents were also neutral as to whether physical-fitness requirements kept women from entering the police, and disagreed that written or promotional exams kept women from entering the police.

Several respondents were proud of their physical and mental stamina in doing police work. “Women need to be able to do the same things as men, no matter the physical requirements or danger. We're all the same here,” one woman said. Another woman commented, “I have worked hard to prepare myself physically and mentally. I
don’t have to prove it to them because they already know I’m equipped with the necessary tools.” Another woman sought to challenge herself.

I knew I had to prove to myself, not other males, myself that I was going to crush and pass the assessment, pass motorcycle school and SWAT school. I knew I had to push myself physically and mentally and start working out a little harder. I had to prove to myself that I was good enough and could push myself to complete the different schools. I never thought of it as competing with males or females, it was more of a competition with myself to do better and be better.

Todak, Boyd and their colleagues (2022) also found that police women typically earned positions on elite units such as SWAT and motorcycle squads by overworking, “acting like one of the guys, refraining from complaining” and having a thick skin (Todak, Boyd, et al., 2022, p. 196). Todak, Boyd, et al. thought that women on elite units create a symbolic boundary between themselves and women who are not respected, not devoted to their job, focused on having children, or acting in other ways not accepted by men.

Hypothesis 3: Women Face Discriminatory Behavior or Retaliation from Males in the Police Force

To follow up on asking about masculine culture, Hypothesis 3 asked if women routinely face discriminatory behavior and retaliation from males in the police force. Table 8 shows that a sizable minority of respondents reported a hostile work environment by male officers (46%), sexual harassment (38%), harassment on the job (38%), or being shunned by male officers for not going along with a particular opinion (25%); 22% said they had considered leaving a department due to harassment, but only 4% said they had actually done so. Another 8% mentioned being harassed due to sexual orientation.
Table 8 Reports of Negative Attitudes and Harassment from Male Officers

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Variables</th>
<th>N</th>
<th>%</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>In your department, male officers generally have negative attitudes about women police officers</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>No</td>
<td>39</td>
<td>48.15</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Yes, women in general</td>
<td>26</td>
<td>32.10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Yes, women of particular ethnic groups</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>7.41</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Yes, women of particular sexual orientations</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1.23</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Unsure</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>11.11</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Subjected to a hostile work environment by male officers</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>37</td>
<td>45.68</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>No</td>
<td>43</td>
<td>53.09</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Unsure</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1.23</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Subject of sexual harassment by male officers</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>31</td>
<td>38.27</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>No</td>
<td>48</td>
<td>59.26</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Unsure</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1.23</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Didn’t say</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1.23</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Subject of harassment by male officers</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>31</td>
<td>38.27</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>No</td>
<td>47</td>
<td>58.02</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Unsure</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1.23</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Didn’t say</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>2.47</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ever shunned by a group of male officers for not “going along” with a popular opinion</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>20</td>
<td>24.69</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>No</td>
<td>56</td>
<td>69.14</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Unsure</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>6.17</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Seriously considered leaving job (as police officer) due to mistreatment by male officers</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>18</td>
<td>22.22</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>No</td>
<td>62</td>
<td>76.54</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Unsure</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1.23</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Left a police department: Mistreatment by male officer(s)</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>3.70</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Left a police department: Reasons related to your gender</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>2.47</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Three participants said harassment had been limited or subtle. “Things are much better now than in past. The harassment is much more subtle. In the past, officers would just say to your face I don't want to work with you.” Yet one respondent reported regretfully that “Male who harassed me and created hostile work environment has been promoted since incident.” The implementation of laws and policies over the years have helped to curb the blatant mistreatment of policewomen, so it is not surprising that discrimination occurs more subtly. Subtle bias or harassment may be just as harmful for several reasons. It may happen more frequently, yet not be severe enough for some women to report or leave—until the harassment reaches a tipping-point. Moreover, I suspect that with subtle forms of bias, agencies may not see the need for change.

Asked if they had ever reported being harassed or mistreated to a superior officer or management, 80% said they had not (Table 9). Of the 16 women in the study who did report harassment, 9 (56%) said their complaint was ignored. Of eight women (50%) who said the complaint was investigated, half said no action was taken against the officer, one said the officer was inadequately disciplined, and three said the officer was disciplined appropriately. Additionally, of the 16 respondents who reported mistreatment (filed complaints), 6 (38%) said they had been retaliated against for whistle-blowing, and 2 (13%) said they weren’t sure. Asked if their department conducts impartial investigations of complaints about male officers by women officers, the majority of women were unsure, perhaps because most had not filed complaints themselves. The majority of the respondents thought women were neither disciplined more harshly nor more often than men for the same type of infractions.
Table 9 Discipline of Men and Women in the Police

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Variables</th>
<th>N</th>
<th>%</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Reported instances of being harassed or mistreated to a superior officer or management</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>No</td>
<td>65</td>
<td>80.24</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>16</td>
<td>19.76</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Complaint(s) was ignored.</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>12.33</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Also received discipline as a result of complaint(s).</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4.11</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Complaint(s) was investigated, no action taken against officer(s)</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>5.48</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Complaint investigated, officer(s) were disciplined appropriately.</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4.11</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Complaint(s) investigated, officer(s) inadequately disciplined.</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1.37</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ever been the subject of retaliation for being a whistleblower in your department</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>No</td>
<td>67</td>
<td>82.72</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>9.88</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Unsure</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>6.17</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Didn’t say</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1.23</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Department conducts impartial investigations of complaints about male officers by women officers</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>20</td>
<td>24.69</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>No</td>
<td>17</td>
<td>20.99</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Unsure</td>
<td>44</td>
<td>54.32</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Believe women are disciplined more harshly than men for the same type of infractions</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>13.58</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>No</td>
<td>56</td>
<td>66.67</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Unsure</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>18.52</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Didn’t say</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1.23</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

In qualitative responses about reporting harassment, one woman remembered, “A formal complaint was swept under the rug but once again, not because of gender but because of political reasons and who you know.” Three women also said they received discipline as a result of the complaint. These situations provide a solid rationale for why women choose not to report mistreatment. If women know that previous complaints filed
by women have been ignored for whatever the perceived reason, they will likely be less inclined to report, especially when retaliation is likely.

Some women may prefer not to call attention to themselves, so as not to be labeled as “the woman” who is too emotional or couldn’t handle the pressure of a male-dominated environment. Women may also try to fit in so as not to risk being shunned.

Interestingly, although men are allowed a great deal of freedom in expressing emotions, women are not given this latitude (Johnson-Freese, 2022).

Hypothesis 4: Law Enforcement Officials Make an Intentional Effort to Exclude Women

Hypothesis 4 asked if law enforcement officials make an intentional effort to exclude women from policing. Specific questions in the survey related to whether police departments actively recruited women and whether their departments focused on skillset rather than physical fitness. A sizable minority (43%) of respondents reported that law enforcement agencies instead seek to recruit women and to make equitable decisions about assignments and promotions (Table 10); 37% of respondents also reported that departments recruit for skill set instead of physical fitness. However, 25% of the women thought they had been overlooked for a promotion.
### Table 10 Recruitment, Promotion, and Retention of Women in the Police

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Variables</th>
<th>N</th>
<th>%</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Department proactively seeks to recruit female officers</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>35</td>
<td>43.21</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>No</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>16.05</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Unsure</td>
<td>32</td>
<td>39.51</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1.23</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Department engages in recruitment practices that focus on skillset rather than physical fitness</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>30</td>
<td>37.04</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>No</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>14.81</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Unsure</td>
<td>39</td>
<td>48.15</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Decisions about assignments/promotions: Which describes how things work in your department</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Men and women are treated about the same</td>
<td>45</td>
<td>55.56</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Men are treated better than women</td>
<td>25</td>
<td>30.86</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Women are treated better than men</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>11.11</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Didn’t say</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>2.46</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>You feel you have ever been passed over for a promotion because you are a woman</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>20</td>
<td>24.69</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>No</td>
<td>60</td>
<td>74.07</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Didn’t say</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1.23</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

In the qualitative reports, 11 respondents noted limitations in recruiting or promoting women and 10 reported positive actions to recruit or promote women. “It's a boys’ club and they select their friends,” one respondent said. Another reported on “unspoken limitations put on amount of women at certain ranks.” Two women said they had not been promoted. Others reported that women were “not selected for specialty positions due to gender,” had lost “opportunities for positions that would propel my career” or not gained “a position in a squad” or that “a position was downgraded in
classification because I was a woman performing that role.” This reflects a pattern of women being held back and deprived of certain positions.

Some women officers may also believe that physical attractiveness may hinder a woman’s opportunity for promotion. For example, one woman in the study reported: “Attractive women do not get the same access to male supervisors to prove themselves because it can appear inappropriate.” Prior studies suggest that men in male-dominated workplaces may view attractive women as less capable or less qualified (Johnson et al., 2018). Alternatively, some women may be afforded what has been called the “halo effect” of attractiveness (Dion et al., 1972). Much like having to walk a thin line between showing competence to their male colleagues but not being perceived as threatening to male colleagues, women are left to straddle being attractive but not too attractive. Officers may suppose too that because women are attractive and feminine, they are also nurturing and weak, and do not have the emotional toughness to lead.

Other respondents mentioned leadership qualities that are not valued in women, such as “The tests are set up to test traditional male traits of leadership” and “Women are capable leaders but don’t fit the model the departments look for.” However, another respondent said “Departments should embrace the different ways women lead; plenty of talented women never get the chance to lead because the testing is so biased, oral boards are not objective, you can score well on the written exam but never do well on oral boards because you don’t look the part! Must be a better way to evaluate individuals for advancement.” It appears that women sometimes feel that police departments set the criteria for leadership and supervisory positions according to typically male criteria that women are not seen as living up to.
On the other hand, 10 respondents mentioned departments’ actively recruiting women, and seven mentioned quotas for recruitment and promotion of women to increase diversity. One respondent said “Our department has a decent amount of females of all races/ ethnicities/ sexual orientation/etc.” Another respondent said:

Overall, our department is great for females. We have lots of females that are promoted and on specialty teams. I feel that a lot of the "old males" that have an attitude towards females have left or retired. The new males coming in seem to have a more accepting attitude. I feel our department is progressive and supportive of females. Of course there's still some males with their egos and personality, but overall it's good.

This may be evidence of generational change, where newer officers are more progressive about women and their roles in leadership positions.

However, respondents cautioned against selecting women leaders for reasons that are questionable or wrong. One respondent said:

Woman in law enforcement are tough and they need to be. We cannot have a culture of weak woman getting positions because they are female. We need tough, intelligent and worthy females to stand on the front lines with us.

Another commented, “Sometimes less qualified females are promoted over more qualified males just because the department feels the need to fill the quota.” Another said:

I feel our department pushes to promote a lot of females. Sometimes based on just gender itself (or knowing "the right people") rather than skillset and ability. I believe it's good to promote females, but if a female is promoted for the wrong
reasons, I feel it hurts the female reputation and then we're made fun of or joked about.

And another participant commented:

With having a female Chief, the females of the department believed we could have a stronger voice for change at the agency and unfortunately that has not been the case…. The female chief has not moved the needle in adding more females in positions of rank. She is just filling in the spots that were previously occupied by females. There is not a strong representation of competent experienced females in the department staff.

Women in leadership positions, however, face challenges in promoting other women that men do not.

As Joan Johnson-Freese, Professor Emeritus, National Security Affairs, Naval War College cites in her book, *Women vs. Women, The Case for Cooperation* (2022) that while women not being promoted by a woman supervisor was once attributed to what is called the “Queen Bee Syndrome,” women holding other women back, that myth has been dispelled. Rather, it is often implicit organizational expectations regarding how many women should be in leadership positions and middle managers that limit women’s advancement. Women leaders also face scrutiny in advancing other women which men do not, thereby inhibiting being able to support and advance women the way other men support men (Johnson-Freese, 2022). Increasingly, women police officers are holding leadership roles, but change is often slower than individuals would like to see.
Correlations

Finally, some of the key variables tested in the hypotheses were entered into two-tailed Pearson’s correlations. (Table 11). For Hypothesis 1, items about having one’s opinion valued, having to prove oneself, being passed over for promotion, sum of work-family practice barriers, and gender inequities as barrier were used. For Hypothesis 2, the Police culture as barrier scale was used. It was not strongly associated with perceptions of gender inequities and is not shown in the chart. For Hypothesis 3, a Hostile work environment scale was built; it averaged items about hostile work environment, and being the subject of harassment or sexual harassment. “Unsure” responses were taken out. For Hypothesis 4, two variables were used representing whether women perceived that women were or were not proactively recruited into the police department. A fairly large percentage of women were not sure; this variable was also tested as a correlate but was not significant. Table 11 shows that perceived hostile work environment (as construed in Hypothesis 3) correlated significantly with all of the gender inequities variables. Reports that women were not proactively recruited as police also correlated positively with reports of barriers (work-family practices, gender inequities) and correlated negatively with reports of having one’s opinion valued. Reports that women were proactively recruited correlated negatively with perceived gender inequities barriers. Proactive recruitment of women into the police may be associated with perceptions of reduced gender inequities in work conditions but not reduced hostile work environment; yet lack of recruitment may also signal acceptance of barriers and not valuing women’s opinions.
Table 11 Correlations Among Key Variables: Pearson’s Two-Tailed Correlations, P Values and Ns

Women not proactively recruited

Opinion valued

Sum work-family practice barriers

Have to prove oneself

Hostile work environment scale (includes harassment, sexual harassment)

Gender inequities as barrier

Passed over for promotion

\[ r = .27, p = .02 \text{ (81)} \]

\[ r = -.24, p = .03 \text{ (80)} \]

\[ r = .32, p = .00 \text{ (80)} \]

\[ r = .36, p = .00 \text{ (79)} \]

\[ r = .36, p = .00 \text{ (79)} \]

\[ r = .36, p = .00 \text{ (79)} \]

\[ r = .51, p = .00 \text{ (79)} \]

\[ r = .43, p = .00 \text{ (79)} \]

\[ r = .38, p = .00 \text{ (79)} \]

\[ r = -.29, p = .01 \text{ (81)} \]

\[ r = -.37, p = .00 \text{ (80)} \]

\[ r = .35, p = .00 \text{ (80)} \]

\[ r = -.69, p = .00 \text{ (79)} \]

\[ r = -.53, p = .00 \text{ (79)} \]

\[ r = .60, p = .00 \text{ (79)} \]

\[ r = -.60, p = .00 \text{ (79)} \]

\[ r = -.53, p = .00 \text{ (79)} \]

\[ r = .35, p = .00 \text{ (80)} \]

\[ r = -.30, p = .01 \text{ (80)} \]

\[ r = -.24, p = .03 \text{ (80)} \]

\[ r = -.30, p = .01 \text{ (80)} \]

\[ r = -.30, p = .01 \text{ (80)} \]
Table 11 also shows that women were less likely to think their opinions were valued if they reported more work-family barriers for women, felt they had to prove themselves, and reported being passed over for promotion. The latter two variables also correlated positively. Perceptions of a hostile working environment were associated with women’s reporting more work-family barriers, feeling one’s opinion wasn’t valued, feeling one had to prove oneself, and reporting having been passed over for promotion. Thus, perceived recruitment of women and reduction of gender inequities are associated with better work-family coordination and sense of having one’s opinion valued, but did not seem associated with perceptions of less hostile working conditions.

Table 12 also shows significant correlations between demographic variables and key variables used to test hypotheses. Women in the Tampa Police Department were the least likely to report gender inequities, work-family practice barriers, no proactive recruitment of women, and having to prove themselves; tended to report their opinions were valued; and were marginally less likely to report being passed over for promotion. However, the women were not less likely to report a hostile work environment, \( r(N = 78) = -.04, p = .75 \). African-American women were especially likely to report their opinions were not valued, a hostile working environment, and not being in departments that proactively recruited women; they also tended not to work in the Tampa Police Department, \( r(N = 79) = -.29, p = .01 \). African American women may report less positive work conditions not only because of their race but because some may work in large inner-city departments with more traditional gender roles. Parents or caretakers of children under 18 also noted more work-family practice barriers consistent with parents needing flexible time and arrangements to take care of younger children.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Gender Inequities Scale</th>
<th>Tampa Department</th>
<th>African American</th>
<th>Parent/ caretaker of children under 18</th>
<th>Years in department (&gt; 10)</th>
<th>Age (&gt;38)</th>
<th>Recoded education</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>$r$</td>
<td>-0.23</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>$p$</td>
<td>0.04</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>$N$</td>
<td>79</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sum work-family practice barriers</td>
<td>$r$</td>
<td>-0.31</td>
<td>0.27</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>$p$</td>
<td>0.00</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>$N$</td>
<td>79</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Opinion valued</td>
<td>$r$</td>
<td>0.24</td>
<td>-0.26</td>
<td>-0.23</td>
<td>-0.33</td>
<td>-0.24</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>$p$</td>
<td>0.03</td>
<td>0.02</td>
<td>0.04</td>
<td>0.00</td>
<td>0.03</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>$N$</td>
<td>78</td>
<td>80</td>
<td>78</td>
<td>79</td>
<td>79</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Have to prove self</td>
<td>$r$</td>
<td>-0.23</td>
<td></td>
<td>0.26</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>$p$</td>
<td>0.05</td>
<td></td>
<td>0.02</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>$N$</td>
<td>78</td>
<td></td>
<td>79</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Passed over for promotion</td>
<td>$r$</td>
<td>-0.19</td>
<td></td>
<td>0.24</td>
<td>0.27</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>$p$</td>
<td>0.10</td>
<td></td>
<td>0.03</td>
<td>0.01</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>$N$</td>
<td>78</td>
<td></td>
<td>79</td>
<td>79</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hostile work environment scale</td>
<td>$r$</td>
<td>0.24</td>
<td>0.26</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>$p$</td>
<td>0.04</td>
<td>0.02</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>$N$</td>
<td>78</td>
<td>79</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Yes, proactive recruitment of women</td>
<td>$r$</td>
<td>-0.22</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>$p$</td>
<td>0.05</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>$N$</td>
<td>81</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>No proactive recruitment of women</td>
<td>$r$</td>
<td>-0.32</td>
<td>0.22</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>$p$</td>
<td>0.00</td>
<td></td>
<td>0.04</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>$N$</td>
<td>79</td>
<td>81</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Additionally, Table 12 indicates that women who had been in their departments longer tended to say their opinions were not valued and to report a hostile working environment. Older women also tended to say their opinions were not valued and to report a hostile working environment, as well as being especially likely to say they had to prove themselves and had been passed over for promotion. More educated women also tended to say their opinion was not valued and that they had been passed over for promotion.

These findings suggest that there is a glass ceiling for women in the police. Even when women have longer tenure in the police or greater education, their greater claim to status based on tenure or education could be viewed as a challenge to men’s authority and thus resisted either directly through a hostile work environment or indirectly through denial of promotion or through continually expecting women to prove themselves. This helps explain women’s dropping out of the police over time. It should also be noted that most participants were lower-rank officers who may have had limited experiences of promotion. However, participants being of lower rank would be typical of police departments generally. In short, demographic variables were associated with several gender barriers for women; however, a proactive department such as Tampa’s could have the potential to reverse some of these barriers.

Summary

The conclusions for this study are shown in Table 13. In this study, confirming Hypothesis 2, the strongest statistical findings show that the issue that seems most likely to keep women from entering or staying in policing is the culture of policing, including its stress and danger, and public perceptions of police, e.g. negative views (Table 13).
### Table 13 Table of Findings

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Hypothesis</th>
<th>Findings</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1: Gender bias is a major contributor to under-representation of women in the police</td>
<td>No or neutral for opinions mattering, issues of gender equity; Slight majority of women try to prove themselves; Sizable minority concerned about time for family</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. Gender roles, specifically the historically “masculine job descriptions” deter women from becoming interested in policing</td>
<td>Yes for stress/danger of policing and public perceptions of policing; Neutral for physical stamina required</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3. Women face discriminatory behavior or retaliation from males in police force</td>
<td>Sizable minority experience harassment, but not retaliation for whistle-blowing</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4. Law enforcement officials make an intentional effort to exclude women</td>
<td>No, a sizable minority reports recruitment and promotion of women</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

However, to some extent, gender bias also seems to contribute to under-representation of women in the police (Hypothesis 1). More than half of the women in the study felt they have to work harder and longer than men to prove themselves to gain acceptance. Additionally, reporting on police policies or practices that make it more difficult to work in policing, a sizable minority of women (approximately 43%) indicated shift schedules that do not accommodate to childcare needs. For example, there is hardship for women with children who are required to work overtime and night shifts.

Additionally, to some degree, women still face harassment, discrimination and retaliation (Hypothesis 3). Although the majority of women did not believe male officers in their department generally have negative attitudes about women police officers, over 30% of women expressed that male officers had negative views of women officers. In this study, 46% of women also reported a hostile work environment by male officers, 38% reported sexual harassment 38% reported harassment on the job (38%), and 25% of women reported experiencing being shunned by male officers for not going along with a
particular opinion. However, in contrast to Hypothesis 4, that police departments have policies that actively exclude women, 43% of respondents reported that their departments actively recruited women. Women in the study also valued improved equity in the past 20 years and seemed hopeful for the future. Chapter IV will discuss the findings and their implications for police departments.
Chapter IV.
Discussion

Today, although there are more women in policing, more women in leadership roles and overall fewer structural barriers to women in policing, historical gender roles still create different societal expectations for men and women, and men remain dominant in hierarchical police force structure. In the five U.S. cities represented in the current study, women made up less than 20% of members of the police force. Policing remains one of the most “gendered” occupations (Chan & Ho, 2013) and one which operates within a hypermasculine culture (Brown et al., 2020). Over the years, blatant discrimination and harassment has decreased, and women’s representation in policing has improved, but representation has stagnated numerically overall and regarding leadership positions (Gaub & Holtfreter, 2022).

Findings in the Context of Gender-Structure Theory

In keeping with gender-structure theory, gender roles in police departments are defined by patriarchy, stratification of tasks by gender, and the way in which gender is embedded in the “individual, interactional” and macro-institutional parts of society (Risman, 2004, p. 429), all of which contribute to women’s inequality in the male-dominated police force. As stated by Risman (2018b), gender is not simply about individuals, but should be understood as part of a social structure that has implications for the individual, interactional expectations, and macro-institutions. These factors are also associated with each other and will be discussed. Essentially, gender encompasses more than individual’s identity—“gender is a system of inequality” (Risman et al., 2018, p.
19). Overall, my survey findings suggest that police culture, more than institutional policy, is a barrier to gender equality in police departments, and suggestions will be made regarding how to change police culture.

Individual aspects of gender relations. In the present study, individual dimensions of gender inequality included whether women police felt their opinions were heard or whether they felt they had to prove themselves. For example, the majority of women in the study did feel that they needed to prove themselves. Women in the study reported having to work “5x” harder than men, show they are team players, being one of the guys, working hard to prepare physically and mentally. As corroborated by Silvestri (2017), a woman’s perceived lack of physical presence, tough physique and “masculinity” are often reasons for men are resistant to women’s inclusion. For this reason, it is essential that departments value and adopt skill-based recruiting practices where officers do not have to prove themselves primarily regarding physicality.

In the present study, data correlations also showed that feeling that one had to prove oneself was related to whether one reported a hostile work environment or being passed over for promotion. Women’s having to prove themselves may be a way that male officers can legitimize being hostile. This finding adds to a study by Barlow and Barlow (2000) which also found that women had to work hard to prove themselves. Women have made advancements in various police roles and promotions (“Female police chiefs,” n.d.; National Institute of Justice, n.d.); however, it was not without experiencing hostility (Barlow & Barlow 2000).

In the current study, feeling that one had to prove oneself was also associated with feeling that one’s opinion wasn’t valued. Women in the study reported that whether their
opinions were valued depended on a number of factors, including the rank, ego or age of the person listening. These findings support the Rief and Clinkinbeard (2020) study which evidences that even when police women "fit in" with the job and the larger agency, they may still not feel valued and are still less likely than men to feel they belong. Today, female officers are still working harder than their male counterparts to be accepted and valued (Clinkinbeard et al., 2021), even after police women’s having over 100 years on the job.

Some demographic variables were also associated with feeling that one’s opinion was valued or that one had to prove oneself. For instance, older women (to include women with more tenure) especially felt they had to prove themselves and had been passed over for promotions which indicates an invisible barrier often referred to as a glass-ceiling.

Interactional aspects of gender relations. Interactional dimensions for female police in the present study included whether women experienced barriers in navigating family roles in the work environment. Women in the study talked about such issues as getting flexible shift schedules or getting maternity leave. Reporting a greater number of work-family barriers was also related to whether the women felt their opinions were valued or experienced a hostile working environment.

In the present study, relatively few women reported harassment in the police department, but of those who did, about half found their concerns were ignored. Some also reported retaliation for whistle-blowing. Women in other studies have also reported similar gender harassment and sexual harassment (Lonsway & Alipio, 2007). A thinking process, called the Ladder of Inference, essentially explains how people make decisions
(Argyris, 1990). In this case, even if police departments implement zero-tolerance policies for sexual harassment, if women see other women filing complaints and nothing happens or the filers experience backlash, other women will not file complaints as experience has interfered with decision-making.

Macro-institutional aspects of gender relations. Institutional policies measured in this study included women’s reports of gender inequities in pay, work, or leadership; and whether women were or were not proactively recruited for the police. About half of respondents reported that their departments did not recruit women, for such reasons as “the boys’ club” environment.

Another half said their departments did recruit women and mentioned the many qualified woman in leadership roles of all races/ethnicities/sexual orientations. Perceptions that the department did not recruit women into the police force were associated with reports of gender inequities and more barriers to work-family integration. These issues centered on the need for flexible time and arrangements to take care of younger children. Based on my experience in the police profession, these are areas women leaders work on (Sceli et al., 2022), where men may not.

One of the issues that respondents in this study discussed with great interest was bringing more women into leadership positions in the police. Some of the issues mentioned by women officers included the problem with subjective oral boards for promotional opportunities and the need to embrace the different ways women lead. Many of the women said how they are treated depends on their leadership. If the leadership is enlightened, then things are good. If there is an ego-driven misogynist in leadership, things are not-so-good. But focusing on leadership is ad-hoc—since departments can go
from having a great leader to a terrible leader and so all the progress made goes away. That brings “organizational behavior” into play, which indicates it is sometimes easier to change a person’s behavior than their attitudes. Although changing someone’s attitude for the better is more genuine, due to cultural stereotypes this may not always be possible. Good leadership may not change a person’s attitudes, but through policy change and example-setting, police departments can foster the equity and inclusion of women.

However, in general, survey reports of institutional policies did not correlate with perceptions of a less hostile working environment. Changes in institutional policies and laws seem to have only put a dent in solving issues of male gender bias and harassment. The study asked if law-enforcement officials make an intentional effort to exclude women; the answer seemed to be, no, but they also did not seem to stop informal practices that harm women.

Gender discrimination may not be as pervasive or overt as it was years ago, but it still occurs. There may be an assumption that women have made progress in the police profession; therefore, some may be skeptical or in denial about the unequal treatment that women experience. Awareness through education would help women and men alike to understand that women still face cultural and institutional barriers in policing, and that this is something to recognize and address.

Implications

An analysis of this study’s findings suggests several ideas. As stated, structural discrimination against women has occurred because laws were initially written by men to benefit men; therefore, police departments should enlist women to help create department policies. Ultimately, police departments must implement policies that embed gender
equality by removing the opportunity for bias. For example, these policies may include reviewing resumes for hiring and promotion without identifying the individual as male/female, or using only initials rather than names. Standardizing questions used in interviews and scoring respondents’ answers at the time when questions are asked, rather than at the end of an interview, has also been shown to reduce tendencies to overlook poor responses in favor of general candidate likability. Bias-awareness training led by women in police departments could also help officers to recognize and minimize deliberate or implicit bias. It is also important to note that training led by women could result in backlash. It may be productive for officers to engage in bias training—e.g., training that uses the Harvard Implicit Bias test (Project Implicit, n.d.), an online test that helps participants understand they may be biased and the extent of their bias.

Implementing policies is often a necessary element in changing behavior. Departments must not only solidify zero-tolerance policies regarding harassment, sexual harassment and discrimination, but must also be held accountable to thoroughly investigate and take appropriate action when such mistreatment occurs. Departments must also create and reinforce practices and policies that encourage women to report instances of mistreatment without fear of retaliation. Additionally, departments would benefit from having more women serve on disciplinary boards, and the use mediation to allow discussion of context, microaggressions, etc.

Limitations of the Study and Directions for Future Research

The study is subject to several limitations. The non-probability sampling method used to select police departments for this study was not representative of the population, although the five cities that were selected happened to represent different parts of the
country: the East (Boston), South (Tampa, Miami), Midwest (Kansas City) and West (San Diego). The small sample size also has the potential to limit generalizations and limit my conclusions to being inferences. Nonetheless, the results of the study should not be dismissed. Nix and his colleagues (2019) analyzed the response rates of 497 surveys and found that on average, 64% of police officers responded to the surveys. Certain factors indicated a survey’s response rate such as in-person survey versus online. However, low response rates were only weakly related to nonresponse bias, suggesting that a low response rate by itself is not a reason to ignore findings (Nix et al., 2019).

The study may also show sample bias because it was difficult to recruit police women for the study, perhaps due to busy officer schedules and fear of retaliation. Also, there was only a small representation of women in upper ranks in the survey and as a result the views of especially successful or experienced women may not have been included in the study. On the other hand, the number of lower-ranking women may give credence to the idea that many police women face promotions barriers. The study sample also did not include an adequate representation of women of color or women from the LGTBQ community; therefore, it is hard to draw conclusions about these group’s experiences as a whole.

Also, a relatively high percentage of the women represented in the survey worked in Tampa and Boston; therefore, the study’s findings about police women’s experiences (whether positive or negative) may primarily be a reflection of these departments. In particular, Tampa officers represented more than half of the sample. These women were also especially likely to report that their department was proactive in recruiting women to the police and to report more positive experiences in their departments. At the onset of
the study, Tampa was not initially included in the study. After learning about the study, Tampa administration took the initiative to send the survey to their women officers. This suggests that the Tampa Police Department is a proactive and forward-thinking department. I speculate that Tampa is unique in this regard and this study’s results would not be as positive if police women in other parts of the country were better represented.

Using a survey as an instrument also could have presented challenges. First, women completing the survey online may have been worried about the anonymity of the survey; therefore, they may have under-reported or stifled their responses. Also, there may have been some self-report bias; for example, women may not have wanted to admit that they felt their opinions don’t matter and as a result they may have provided more positive responses. Some of the survey questions may also have been vague. In an interview, I would have had the opportunity to observe a woman’s reactions and probe more when an answer needed clarification or more description of context. A future study should consist of a more detailed survey with additional in-depth interviews.

However, this study is valuable because it showed the way in which many issues correlate, thereby providing direction for future studies to build on, though potential sample bias (for example, the many women from the more liberal Tampa Police Department) must be considered regarding those correlations. The correlations also do not reveal the causality of the variable relationships. As this study is cross-sectional—meaning a snapshot in time—a longitudinal study would need to be conducted to study any long-term correlations and the way in which variables are associated with or influence each other over time.
Conclusion

The lasting effects of patriarchy still affect women in the male-dominated police force. Women have made quite the journey from homemakers, to matrons, to policewomen with arrest power. However, while women have come a long way, their progress has stagnated. Women are still significantly underrepresented throughout the various ranks in policing, even though institutional laws and policies that have systematically disadvantaged women have faded to some degree. However, cultural obstacles—mainly, the masculine oriented culture of police departments—still limits the full integration of women. Organizational culture must maintain a constant “full steam ahead” approach in ensuring that women are fully represented and valued in policing.
Appendix 1.

Survey Instrument

Recruitment and Retention of Women Police Officers 2022

Study Description and Consent Form

My name is Alfreda Cromwell and I am a graduate student at the Harvard Extension School in Massachusetts. As a requirement for my Master of Liberal Arts Degree, I am conducting a study on the recruitment and retention of women police officers in the United States.

I am requesting your participation in this study to offer your opinions and experiences relating to the recruitment and retention of women police officers. You were selected in this study because you are a woman police officer in one of the following departments being studied: Boston Massachusetts, Miami Florida, Tampa Florida, Kansas City Missouri, and San Diego California.

The study will take place online through SurveyMonkey. You will be asked to answer a series of questions about your opinions and experiences as a female police officer. This survey should not take any more than 15 minutes to complete.

This survey is completely anonymous. You do not have to answer any questions that make you feel uncomfortable. You do not have to participate in this survey. There is minimal risk that you may find some of the questions to be uncomfortable. There are some sensitive questions about sexual harassment and whistleblowing. As this information is highly sensitive, there are employment risks and reputational risks. To mitigate these risks, I will not be collecting any identifiers at all. I will also ensure that all points of contact at your department will not see any responses. You should not provide any identifiable information in any of the open field questions.

There is no compensation for participating in this survey.

This survey should not be completed while on duty.

The benefit of participating in this survey is that it will help to address the barriers in recruiting and retaining women police officers. For questions or concerns about this study, please contact Alfreda Cromwell at 781-506-6949.
* 1. I have read this consent form and I understand what is being requested from me as a participant in this study. By completing and submitting this anonymous online survey, I am consenting to participate in this study. I understand that I should not provide any identifiable information in any of the open field questions.

Do you freely consent to participate?

☐ Yes
☐ No
Recruitment and Retention of Women Police Officers 2022

2. Where is your department located?
   ○ Boston, MA
   ○ Miami, FL
   ○ Kansas City, MO
   ○ San Diego, CA
   ○ Tampa, FL

3. How many years of experience do you have as a police officer?
   Total: 
   Part-Time: 
   Full-Time: 

4. How many years have you worked in your current department?
   Total: 
   Part-Time: 
   Full-Time: 

5. What is your current job assignment?
   ○ Administration
   ○ Patrol
   ○ Investigations
   ○ School Resource
   ○ Specialized Response Team
   ○ Other (please specify) 

6. Which best describes your current rank within the department?
   ○ Patrol Officer
   ○ Sergeant
   ○ Lieutenant
   ○ Captain
   ○ Above Captain
   ○ Chief of Police
7. Does your department proactively seek to recruit female officers?
- Yes
- No
- Unsure
- Other (please specify)

8. Does your department engage in recruitment practices that focus on skillset rather than physical fitness?
- Yes
- No
- Unsure

9. Do you feel that your professional opinion is valued just as much as another male officer’s opinion?
- Yes
- No
- Unsure
- It depends

Please feel welcome to comment:

10. Do you often feel that you have to “prove yourself” to gain acceptance and respect from male co-workers?
- Yes
- No
- Unsure

Please feel welcome to comment.
11. Do you feel that you have ever been passed over for a promotion because you are a woman?
   ○ Yes
   ○ No
   If yes, please explain:

12. When it comes to decisions about assignments and promotions, which comes closest to describing how things work in your department?
   ○ Men are treated better than women
   ○ Men and women are treated about the same
   ○ Women are treated better than men

13. In your own experience, have any of the police policies or practices below make it more difficult to work in policing? Please check all that apply.
   ○ Lack of assignment options for pregnant officers
   ○ Lack of adequate maternity leave for mothers
   ○ Lack of facilities for pregnant/nursing mothers
   ○ Shift schedules that do not accommodate childcare needs (i.e. need to work overtime hours, need to work night shift, inflexible week schedule)
   ○ Lack of family care leave or vacation time to care for parents or relatives
   ○ Other (please specify)

14. Do you believe that women are disciplined more harshly than men for the same type of infractions?
   ○ Yes
   ○ No
   ○ Unsure

15. Do you believe that women are disciplined more often than men for the same type of infractions?
   ○ Yes
   ○ No
   ○ Unsure
16. Have you been the subject of harassment by male officers?
   ○ Yes
   ○ No
   ○ Unsure

17. Have you been the subject of sexual harassment by male officers?
   ○ Yes
   ○ No
   ○ Unsure

18. Have you ever felt subjected to a hostile work environment by male officers?
   ○ Yes
   ○ No
   ○ Unsure

19. Have you ever reported instances of being harassed or mistreated to a superior officer or management?
   ○ Yes
   ○ No

20. Generally, if you have reported instances of harassment or mistreatment, which of the answers BEST describes the outcome?
   ○ My complaint(s) was ignored.
   ○ My complaint(s) was ignored and I received discipline as a result of my complaint(s).
   ○ My complaint(s) was investigated but no action was taken against the officer(s).
   ○ My complaint(s) was investigated and the officer(s) were inadequately disciplined.
   ○ My complaint was investigated and the officer(s) were disciplined appropriately.
   ○ N/A

21. Have you ever been the subject of retaliation for being a whistleblower in your department?
   ○ Yes
   ○ No
   ○ Unsure
22. Does your department conduct impartial investigations of complaints about male officers by women officers?
   ○ Yes
   ○ No
   ○ Unsure

23. Have you ever been shunned by a group of male officers for not “going along” with a popular opinion?
   ○ Yes
   ○ No
   ○ Unsure

24. Have you ever seriously considered leaving your job (as a police officer) due to mistreatment by male officers?
   ○ Yes
   ○ No
   ○ Unsure

25. In your department, do you believe that the male officers generally have negative attitudes about women police officers?
   ○ Yes, regarding women in general
   ○ Yes, regarding women of particular ethnic groups
   ○ Yes, regarding women of particular sexual orientations
   ○ No
   ○ Unsure

26. Have you ever left a police department due to mistreatment by male officer(s)?
   ○ Yes
   ○ No
   If yes, please explain: 

27. Have you ever left a police department for reasons related to your gender?
   ○ Yes
   ○ No
   If yes, please explain: 

Please indicate whether you strongly disagree, disagree, neither agree nor disagree, agree, or strongly agree that each factor would dissuade women from entering or staying in policing:

28. The perceived stress or danger of policing
   - Strongly disagree
   - Disagree
   - Neither agree nor disagree
   - Agree
   - Strongly agree
   - Not sure

29. The masculine culture of police
   - Strongly disagree
   - Disagree
   - Neither agree nor disagree
   - Agree
   - Strongly agree
   - Not sure

30. Existing public perceptions of police officers
   - Strongly disagree
   - Disagree
   - Neither agree nor disagree
   - Agree
   - Strongly agree
   - Not sure

Please indicate whether you strongly disagree, disagree, neither agree nor disagree, agree or strongly agree that each policy or practice could disadvantage women’s entering policing.
31. Written promotional examinations
   ○ Strongly disagree
   ○ Disagree
   ○ Neither agree nor disagree
   ○ Agree
   ○ Strongly Agree

32. Physical fitness requirements for entrance, promotions or assignments
   ○ Strongly disagree
   ○ Disagree
   ○ Neither agree nor disagree
   ○ Agree
   ○ Strongly Agree

33. Gender-biased performance reviews
   ○ Strongly disagree
   ○ Disagree
   ○ Neither agree nor disagree
   ○ Agree
   ○ Strongly Agree

34. Unfair work assignments for women, as compared to men
   ○ Strongly disagree
   ○ Disagree
   ○ Neither agree nor disagree
   ○ Agree
   ○ Strongly Agree

35. Different expectations for the same job rank for women, as compared to men
   ○ Strongly disagree
   ○ Disagree
   ○ Neither agree nor disagree
   ○ Agree
   ○ Strongly Agree
36. Lower pay at specific job ranks for women, as compared to men

- Strongly disagree
- Disagree
- Neither agree nor disagree
- Agree
- Strongly Agree

37. Lack of female leadership/mentors in policing

- Strongly disagree
- Disagree
- Neither agree nor disagree
- Agree
- Strongly Agree

38. What is your age?

39. What is your racial or ethnic identity? (Select all that apply.)

- African-American/Black
- East Asian
- Hispanic/Latino
- Middle Eastern
- American Indian/Alaskan Native
- Pacific Islander
- South Asian
- Southeast Asian
- White
- None of the above, please specify...

40. What is the highest level of education you have completed?

- High school diploma or GED
- Some college but no degree
- Associate's degree
- Bachelor's degree
- Master's degree
- Doctoral degree
41. What is your family status?
   ○ Single
   ○ Married Status or Partner Status
   ○ Married Status or Partner Status with children
   ○ Single/Divorced
   ○ Single/Separated
   ○ Widow/Widower
   ○ Other (please specify)

42. Are you a parent or caretaker of children under 18?
   ○ Yes
   ○ No

43. Are you a caretaker of adult(s) such as aging, ill or disabled relatives?
   ○ Yes
   ○ No

44. How do you identify in terms of gender?
   ○ Cisgender
   ○ Transgender
   ○ Non-Binary
   ○ Intersex
   ○ Bi-gendered
   ○ Genderqueer
   ○ Genderfluid
   ○ Gender Expansive
   ○ Prefer not to say
   ○ None of the above, please specify
45. Do you feel that you have ever been harassed or mistreated by male officers due to your gender identity?
- Yes
- No
- Unsure

Please feel free to comment:

46. How do you identify in terms of your sexual orientation?
- Asexual
- Bisexual
- Gay
- Heterosexual or straight
- Lesbian
- Pansexual
- Queer
- Prefer not to say
- None of the above, please specify

47. Do you feel that you have ever been harassed or mistreated by male officers due to your sexual orientation?
- Yes
- No
- Unsure

Please feel free to comment:

48. Is there anything else you would like to add?

Thank you for your participation.


Massachusetts women police officers attend an annual meeting (c. 1927) [Photograph]. The Cambridge Room, Cambridge, MA.


