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Playing the Game: A Qualitative Exploration of the Female Experience in a Hypermasculine Policing Environment

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Abstract

Domestically and globally females continue to be underrepresented in policing, despite their greater likelihood of advancing themselves through higher education, driving organizational change, and being less likely to use excessive force or be named in civil litigation than their male counterparts. Extant research indicates that women may be effectively gated from policing by a subculture that aggrandizes characteristics consistent with the crime-fighting paradigm. Using qualitative data from in-depth interviews with female officers, this study investigates the female officer experience of police subculture in terms of masculinity, gender disparities, and sexualized activities. To understand the perceived environment of the department and contextualize it within the literature, the dominance of masculine personality traits and gender disparities within the department are first explored to determine whether a hypermasculine subculture was present. Then, female officers'

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definitions of sexual harassment, their roles in these activities, and their motivations for participation were examined.

Keywords
females and policing, police subculture, sexual harassment

Introduction

Policing continues to experience an underrepresentation of females among its officers, despite factors such as law enforcement's existence for more than a century (Bell, 1982; Schulz, 1995) and women entering municipal departments in 1908 (Horne, 2006). Women comprise almost half (at least 46% since 1994) of the United States labor force (U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics, n.d.), but continue to represent only approximately 10% of all law enforcement officers (Langston, 2010; Sullivan, 2009; U.S. Department of Justice, 2018). Recent estimates indicate that female officers are a minority in all levels of law enforcement, with some variation. Specifically, females account for 16% of federal officers, 11% to 12% of local officers (police and sheriff, respectively), and 6% of state agency officers (Hickman & Reaves, 2006a, 2006b; Reaves, 2012).

This significant disparity is interesting given that female officers, in comparison to males, are more likely to advance themselves through higher education and drive organizational change in terms of the adoption of community policing (Orrick, 2008). They are also less likely to use excessive force or be named in civil litigation (Schuck, 2017). Low recruitment, retention, and promotion of female officers may, in part, be related to career–family conflict stemming from shift-work, low family support, childcare issues, and noncompetitive benefits (Cordner & Cordner, 2011; Cowan & Bochantin, 2009; Lonsway, 2007; Schuck, 2014; Wells & Alt, 2005); however, a large body of research indicates that women may be effectively gated from careers in policing by a subculture that aggrandizes characteristics consistent with the crime-fighting paradigm, such as masculinity, physicality, and aggression (Chan, 1996; Franklin, 2005; Miller, 1999).

Extant literature has described how women have traditionally used male-oriented techniques or adopted masculine behaviors or scripts as a strategy to excel in male-dominated workplace environments (Davies-Netzley, 1998; Furia, 2010; Hunt, 1984; Martin, 1994). These strategies are essential to their survival since women entering male-dominated domains, such as policing, are implicitly expected to accept work role definitions and behavioral scripts, which pattern interactions that were designed for and by men (Martin, 1999). This places many women in a state of role conflict, as lacking the adoption of masculine norms

leads to dismissal, while the adoption of them could lead to subsequent backlash from male colleagues (Ballakrishnen, Fielding-Singh, & Magliozzi, 2019).

An element of the masculine police subculture is a hypersexuality, evidenced by crude jokes, labeling, displays of genitalia and sex aids, nonconsensual sexual touching, and quid pro quo sexual harassment (Dowler & Arai, 2008; Haarr & Morash, 2013; Hassell & Brandl, 2009; Martin & Jurik, 1996). Literature frequently describes police subculture and associated sexualized behaviors as being predicated on the victimization of women (Franklin, 2005; Hunt, 1990; Prokos & Padavic, 2002). Recently, a study of a large urban agency found contrasting results revealing that female officers frequently engaged in gender harassment through telling sexualized jokes or stories while on duty, often as a strategy for fitting into the subculture (Lonsway, Paynich, & Hall, 2013).

The degree of participation in sexualized behaviors, and perhaps more importantly the motivations for engaging in such activities, by women employed by other police agencies remains underexplored. Specifically, the literature is underdeveloped as it relates to which behaviors female officers distinguish as sexual harassment, their participation in such activities, and the extent that participation is motivated by (a) an attempt to tolerate or conform to a hypermasculine culture (Haarr & Morash, 2013; Martin, 1979; Prokos & Padavic, 2002) or (b) and their self-selection into a subculture that mirrors their own values and characteristics (Raganella & White, 2004). Regarding motivations, the former indicates women continue to fight and sacrifice for a place in a profession that undervalues and discourages their involvement, while the latter suggests that women's stake in police subculture is approaching a crossroads.

Therefore, this study investigates the female officer experience of police subculture in terms of masculinity, gender disparities, and sexualized activities, as well as their effects on our female respondents, both personally and professionally. To understand the perceived environment of the department and contextualize it within the literature, the dominance of masculine personality traits and gender disparities within the department are first explored to determine whether a hypermasculine subculture is operating within the work environment, and how that culture impacts the workplace and those in it. This study then investigates the female officers' perceptions of how the hypermasculine subculture impacts possible gender disparities in the profession and their own experiences navigating the workplace. Next, female officers' definitions of sexual harassment, their roles in these activities, and their motivations for participation are explored. To do so, qualitative data from in-depth interviews with female officers in a large Southeastern police department are analyzed. The data allow for a rich examination of these areas and inherent nuances as the study design is qualitative in nature and grounded in the extant literature, which is subsequently described.

Literature Review

Gender in the Crime-Fighting Paradigm and Police Subculture

Gender operates within organizations through the development of gender-based divisions in social structure, identity, and perception (Acker, 1990; Scott, 1986). The perceptions and behaviors of personnel are, therefore, critical toward the construction and operation of gender within an organization, and law enforcement agencies are not immune from this logic. As public organizations, their cultural constructions—including those associated with gender—may be expected to exhibit a level of dependence on those maintained and displayed by larger society (Herbert, 1998). Extant literature, however, has consistently demonstrated the degree to which police are insulated from society (Crank & Langworthy, 1992; Katz, 2001; Waddington, 1999). Police agencies and operations are developed in accordance with classic organizational or institutional theory, lending themselves to control by the political class (Angell, 1971; Katz, 2001). As a consequence, police agencies engage in the construction of symbolic images and self-fulfilling prophecies, influenced by the dangers of police work and the need to appease the expectations of governing bodies (Chan, 1996; Waddington, 1999).

In particular, the image of police as *crime fighters* facilitates the development and persistence of policing myths among officers and administrators, while legitimizing policing in agreement with an idealized conceptualization proffered by politicians (Crank & Langworthy, 1992; Herbert, 1998; Katz, 2001). Maintaining this image further requires aggrandizement of certain individual characteristics that the ideal officer is expected to embody (Franklin, 2005; Herbert, 1998). Within the crime-fighting paradigm, masculinity, physical prowess and aggression, and courage are considered indicators of competence (Hunt, 1990; Prokos & Padavic, 2002). In turn, this crime-fighting paradigm promoted the development of a distinct subgroup popularly known as "police subculture" (Chan, 1996; Waddington, 1999).

While police subculture is influenced by its own informal norms, it is also affected by external laws and regulations that can challenge the subculture's ideology (Crank & Langworthy, 1992; Herbert, 1998). A paramount example is the inclusion of females in law enforcement. The entry of women into policing began in the late 1800s, but their assignments were relegated to duties that coalesced with the perception of women as domesticators (Bell, 1982; Berg & Budnick, 1986; Bryant, Dunkerly, & Kelland, 1985; Hunt, 1990). Beginning in the late 20th century, the field of policing was required to respond to legislated adjustments to hiring practices and began to emphasize the widespread recruitment of women into roles traditionally occupied by men (Belknap, 2001; Martin, 1979; Schulz, 2009; Zhao, Herbst, & Lovrich, 2001). As argued by Franklin (2005), police subculture is "predicated on the oppression of women

entering the police force" (p. 5). Such perspectives are grounded in the assumption that the entry of women into policing threatens the mythically masculine status of the profession (Hunt, 1990; Schulz, 1995; Waddington, 1999). Thus, when their roles expanded to traditional policing duties, women have been frequently met with extreme resistance from male peers and supervisors in the subculture (Balkin, 1988; Bell, 1982; Brown, 1998; Brown & Sargent, 1995; Heidensohn, 1992; Holdaway & Parker, 1998; Remmington, 1983).

The disparagement of women in policing may manifest as early as initial academy training (Prokos & Padavic, 2002). Through participant observation in a law enforcement academy located in a rural Southeastern U.S. county, Prokos and Padavic (2002) described a hidden curriculum designed to encourage hypermasculinity among male recruits, exaggerate differences between genders, and foster the exclusion of females from peer groups. These processes appear to mirror widespread cultural constructions adopted in the field (Archbold & Schulz, 2008; Hunt, 1984, 1990; Martin & Jurik, 1996), including the coercive treatment of female officers (Bryant et al., 1985; Feinman, 1994; Haarr, 1997; Haarr & Morash, 2013; Heidensohn, 1992).

As suggested by previous works, masculinity is showcased when women assume positions traditionally dominated by men (Cockburn, 1991; Gerson & Peiss, 1985; Padavic, 1991). The presence of women in policing may allow male peers to establish a collective identity through the construction and emphasis of gender differences as well as denigration of female colleagues (Archbold, Hassell, & Stichman, 2010; Archbold & Schulz, 2008; Franklin, 2005; Prokos & Padavic, 2002). In turn, women are often forced to sacrifice either their feminine or professional identities, resulting in their classification as *police*women or police*women* (Dowler & Arai, 2008; Haarr & Morash, 2013; Hassell & Brandl, 2009; Martin, 1980; Martin & Jurik, 1996). This process frequently begins during initial training and is reinforced by the organizational subculture, promoting sustained inequality between genders within the police hierarchy (Cockburn, 1988; Cordner & Cordner, 2011; Cowan & Bochantin, 2009).

Sexualized Activities in Police Subculture

While discrimination in job assignments and promotion opportunities have been documented (Holdaway & Parker, 1998; Poole & Pogrebin, 1988; Remmington, 1983), the literature describes sexual harassment as the hallmark of coercive treatment of female officers (Balkin, 1988; Cordner & Cordner, 2011; Haarr & Morash, 2013; Hassell & Brandl, 2009; Morash & Haarr, 1995). The traditional manner in which male police personnel use language to subjugate woman, including the use of labels, ranging from "hon" and "sweetheart" to "whore" and "dyke," appears prevalent (Archbold & Schulz, 2008; Berg & Budnick, 1986; Dowler & Arai, 2008; Heidensohn, 1992; Hunt, 1984, 1990; Lonsway et al., 2013), and serves to diminish the competence and efforts of female officers

in comparison to their male peers. Sexualized conversations and behaviors are also evident within the police subculture (Haarr & Morash, 2013; Prokos & Padavic, 2002). For example, female officers have had sex magazines and toys placed in their lockers (Martin & Jurik, 1996), had male officers expose their genitalia during roll call (Lonsway et al., 2013), and encountered "betting pools on who [would] be the first to have sex with a new female officer" (Martin & Jurik, 1996, p. 38).

Scholars have argued that such activities are the manifestation of a culture of masculinity that seeks to encourage female officers to either assume gender-acceptable roles within an agency or leave the profession of policing altogether (Prokos & Padavic, 2002). Extant research supports this assertion, as female officers encountering frequent gender-related jokes in the workplace report higher levels of work-related and emotional stress (Dowler & Arai, 2008). Furthermore, studies have revealed that women frequently sacrifice their femininity and adapt to the masculine culture if they intend to remain in the field (Archbold & Schulz, 2008; Bryant et al., 1985; Haarr & Morash, 2013; Martin, 1979). As described by Franklin (2005), these processes are perpetuated by men who self-select into the profession of policing because it embodies their personal ideals.

While the perspectives of Franklin (2005), and Prokos and Padavic (2002) portray police subculture as a cohesive collective defined by hypermasculine ideals and behaviors, other studies indicate that the contemporary field of policing exhibits less uniform and rigid adherence to a prescribed culture than previous iterations (Herbert, 1998; Sklansky, 2006). Several studies suggest that gay and lesbian officers face multiple barriers, including discrimination and exclusion, within the police environment (Jones & Williams, 2015; Miller, Forest, & Jurik, 2003; Roddrick, 2009). In contrast, Belkin and McNichol (2002) found that, despite initial apprehension of rejection, gay and lesbian officers received support and affirmation from fellow officers upon coming out, and they frequently attended social events outside of work with their partners. Similarly, in their examination of a mid-size Midwestern police department, Hassell, Archbold, and Stichman (2011) found no statistically significant differences in workplace experience between male and female patrol officers, with the exception of perceptions of abilities based on physical stature. They concluded that the "masculine ideal of policing has begun to erode, or at least soften" (p. 47). Furthermore, a meta-analysis of 39 studies examining gender differences in attitudes among officers published after 1990 revealed that gender was not a strong predictor of occupational attitudes (Poteyeva & Sun, 2009).

Cumulatively, these findings challenge the depiction of police subculture as a homogenous, hypermasculine ethos dominated by males, and additional works have noted that women are not mere bystanders within police subculture (Haarr & Morash, 2013; Prokos & Padavic, 2002). In a recent study by Lonsway et al. (2013), some respondents reported that female officers frequently engaged in

highly sexualized activities at work (i.e., displaying genitalia and sex aids) and described female officers as being more sexually suggestive toward males than males were toward females. Similarly, several female respondents noted their own participation in what they described as jokes of a sexual nature (Lonsway et al., 2013).

Such behaviors may be indicative of an attempt to conform to the prescribed culture (Haarr & Morash, 2013; Lonsway et al., 2013; Prokos & Padavic, 2002) or suggest that certain females, similar to their male counterparts, self-select into the profession of policing, in part because the culture mirrors their own values and ideals (Raganella & White, 2004). All female officers may not share the perspective that sexualized discussions and behaviors are mechanisms to be tolerated out of necessity if one intends to remain in the field. Rather, they may willfully engage in such activities out of a genuine desire to bond with colleagues, creating their own distinctions between "sexualized behavior" and "sexual harassment" (Lonsway et al., 2013; Seklecki & Paynich, 2007).

Increasing similarities between male and female officers in terms of workplace behaviors, perceptions, and experiences (Lonsway et al., 2013; Seklecki & Paynich, 2007; Stichman, Hassell, & Archbold, 2010) provide impetus to consider whether female officers have begun to attain a degree of ownership of police subculture, including sexualized behaviors in the workplace. With few exceptions (e.g., Lonsway et al., 2013); however, recent literature has not considered: (a) the degree to which some female officers engage in sexualized behaviors in the workplace as a consequence of their own normative values or to fit in or (b) the extent to which female officers distinguish between "sexualized behaviors" and "sexual harassment." These omissions prompted this study to qualitatively examine female officers' experiences of navigating the hypermasculine and potentially coercive police subculture, determine the impact it has on gender disparities in the discipline, and explore their perceptions of and participation in sexualized conversations and activities, and their effects.

Methodology

This study utilizes qualitative data from in-depth, anonymous, in-person interviews with female officers in a police department operating in the Southeastern U.S. At the time of data collection (2014), the department's jurisdiction had a population of approximately 130,000 residents who were primarily White (65%), followed by Black (23%), with a median household income of $31,000 (U.S. Census Bureau, 2013). During the study period, the department had 308 sworn officers between the ages of 21 and 61 years (average age of 39). The majority were male (80%) and White (77%).

This research is primarily exploratory in nature. Although available research guided the construction of items related to topics examined in the extant research, the interview addressed additional topics and subtleties that have yet

to be examined. Because the study aimed to explore various underresearched areas and nuances of the female law enforcement experience, the majority of items were open-ended and the interview instrument addressed a variety of topics, including those of a sensitive nature.

Due to the exploratory design and the sensitive nature of interview topics, the sample of female officers was acquired through the chain-referral sampling method (Heckathorn, 2002; Penrod, Preston, Cain, & Starks, 2003). This non-probability design was deemed the most feasible for entry into this specific area of research, which was anticipated to be challenged by social stigma, confidentiality concerns, and fear of exposure related to possible threats of safety/security (Stevenson, DeMoya, & Boruch, 1993). Due to these potential barriers, chain-referral sampling was appropriate because of its strength in accessing both hidden populations and specific groups where members are closely connected (Heckathorn, 2002; Penrod et al., 2003), such as female police officers.

Sampling originated with two different respondents, initiating two distinct referral chains. To insure a more diverse sample considering the use of chain-referral not all participants were directly connected to each other (aside from shared professions), and several participants were referred by non-participants.

Because of the nature of the interviews, the principal investigator (PI) instituted a strict security protocol, which included keeping the participants anonymous to the other investigators and research team. Potential participants would contact the PI directly about participation in the study, and the PI would schedule the interview at a mutually agreed upon time and location. A total of 11 female officers initially responded to the sampling strategy and nine scheduled interviews. She assigned each participant a code number and was the only investigator that maintained and had access to the list. The PI then conducted each interview in private settings after consent was provided by the participant. Using code numbers, interviews were audio recorded and later transcribed out of state. All nine female officers completed their scheduled interviews. Interviews averaged 3 hours in length, ranging from 1.5 to 6 hours.

The in-person interviews utilized a semi-structured interview guide to allow the research fluidity in the guided conversations. The majority of questions were open-ended to permit respondents complete freedom in answering. The interview guide aimed to be a holistic examination of the realities of female police officers' lives, and interview items were based on the extant literature, as well as lack thereof. The questions were organized into 13 separate sections that addressed demographics, motivations for joining, promotion, job execution, police culture, romantic relationships, family, sexual harassment, socialization, identity, and a variety of experiences and coping mechanisms.

Thematic analysis guided by the constant comparative method was used to analyze the qualitative data and reveal common thematic narratives from the respondents (Glaser & Strauss, 1967). In vivo and incident by incident coding were initially employed to help the researchers preserve participants' special

terms and give meanings of their views and actions in the coding itself (Charmaz, 2006). This form of coding helped the interviewer to remain attuned to our subjects' views of their realities, rather than assume that they shared the same views and worlds (Strauss & Corbin, 1990). Focused coding was then utilized to synthesize the data and determine the adequacy of constructed codes. In addition, this active rather than passive form of coding allowed for new threads of analysis to become apparent to the researchers (Charmaz, 2006). Last, theoretical coding was used to confirm the thematic categories.

Results

The sample comprised of nine law enforcement officers, which constitutes 15% of the sampling frame (female officers in the department). The sample is primarily White (78%) with an average age of 34 years (range: 25–47), which is similar to the racial majority of the department (77% White), but slightly younger than the department's average age of 39. Nearly half of the sample was currently single (44%), and one third (33%) had been divorced. The majority was heterosexual (78%). Time with the department averaged 9 years with a minimum of 2 years and maximum of 23 years. While occupations at the time of interview varied, all respondents had patrol experience (average of 7 years). Pseudonyms with basic demographic information replace code numbers in the reporting of results.

Hypermasculine Police Culture and Police as "Crime Fighter"

The major theme underlying our findings is the dominance of masculine personality traits in police subculture and the organization. Clearly, permeating all aspects of this department's culture was the belief that the ideal officer was to encompass traits typically attributed to males, specifically strength, courage, independence, assertiveness, and aggression. All of our respondents indicated that not only did both their peers and supervisors favor these traits, but that the occupation itself was gendered, in that female officers are often seen as not able to fulfill this ideal type as it was assumed to be tied to being male. As Mary (31-year-old White former patrol officer) indicated:

> [The] majority of males that think that—mainly males that are older, the ones that have been in for 20, 30 years. They have that ingrained in them, that this is a male job. Women just cannot do this job.

Adding to the gendered normative culture of policing was a gendered hierarchy within the department influenced by the masculine police officer ideal type. This hierarchical power structure extended beyond just biological sex and also included sexual preference, as many respondents indicated that lesbians were

more likely to be accepted by their colleagues, especially heterosexual males. This was commonly due to the perception that lesbian officers shared several characteristics with heterosexual male officers. Here, Patricia (27-year-old detective who identified as lesbian) explained her experience of interactions with male officers based on her sexuality.

> Lesbian females are more accepted by guys than straight females, because they are almost one of the guys. They can talk about the same stuff, they can joke about the same stuff, and the guys don't feel like they are going to offend a lesbian female . . . they are very comfortable talking to me as a lesbian about other girls or stuff . . . there is more of a comradery there.

A theme that five of our respondents discussed was the feeling that lesbian officers were seen as higher in the social hierarchy than heterosexual females. The lower rungs of the hierarchy seemed to encompass heterosexual females and gay males. Karen (28-year-old straight White crime prevention officer) discussed how sexual preference plays into acceptance.

> I think that homosexual men are not as well accepted. I think that just kinda goes to men don't feel as comfortable with that, whereas they think, "Oh lesbians, that's hot" . . . There's probably several gay [male officers] in our department; I only know of one . . . he keeps it hush hush because you don't wanna be singled out. I don't think that anyone is going to treat you poorly because of it, but they may not want to be around you.

Traditional masculine traits and gender roles were perceived to play a role in determining which police activities were valued by the department and individual officers. Proactive police activities such as drug searches at traffic stops—or what one respondent termed "Dirty Harry syndrome"—were thought to be both more enjoyable and better suited to male officers, while female officers were often thought to desire more traditionally feminine occupational activities. Mary described how being proactive through traffic stops was valued by males and viewed as a traditionally masculine activity, which was often referred to as "hunting."

> The males, for the majority, enjoy the road. They enjoy the chase, to hunt as you could call it . . . I believe that the women want to be involved in intervention, or with the mentally ill, or do investigations. They're not really into drugs and doing the whole enforcing drugs or pulling people over to try and get in their cars. That is a huge thing. How many arrests can I make? How many people can I take down?

What is more traditionally identified as the "crime fighter model" was not only perceived to be valued by other offices, but also rewarded by administration.

Brenda (27-year-old White child protective investigator), expressed her frustration in command valuing "hunting" over other police functions.

> If somebody got a gram of fucking weed, they'd get ten stars, a cake, and a promotion. I shut down a crack house in my zone, and I thought it was a pretty cool thing. I got ahold of code enforcement and I was talking to them and I was forwarding all the emails to my supervisor . . . Eventually it was boarded up. Did I get any recognition for it? No. Because I didn't continually pull people over, harass them, and get dime bags of fucking weed, it didn't fucking matter.

In addition to relaying her frustration, Brenda also indicated that those frustrations contributed to her loss of motivation in her career, stating, "My motivation to do that job just plummeted. I just didn't care." All three of the respondents that indicated dissatisfaction with their policing career stated frustrations over their own promotion and the continual promotion of masculine roles as the reason. Karen, who was satisfied with policing, still echoed her three colleagues' decreased satisfaction noting:

> Unless you're into chasing people who have drugs, you get the sense that you're not valued as much . . . that kind of beat you down.

Five of our respondents expressed dissatisfaction with proactive and other stereotypically masculine police functions. Furthermore, they indicated that female officers were rewarded when displaying masculine personality traits. In the following quote, Susan (41-year-old White officer) who had been in the force for 17 years gives an example of a time where she "learned the language" by aggressively handling an irritable subject and was rewarded by her male peers for being aggressive.

> I went off my shit. I got right in his face and went on this 10-minute tirade. I don't even remember what fell out of my mouth . . . towards the end, I suggested that he exercise his rights to not make a sound and I apologized to his wife for doing what I did in front of her and she's like, "Oh no. He is scared of you" . . . So, anyway, he [a male officer on the scene] goes, "I've never seen anything like that. You can ride with me anytime."

Gender Disparity in Law Enforcement

Perceptions of gender disparities and sexual discrimination were also themes prevalent in the data. When two items asked for a binary response (yes/no) to whether sexual harassment or discrimination was prevalent on the job, respondents answered no. Regarding sexual teasing, conversely, all nine of our

respondents agreed that sexual teasing was a part of policing culture and six stated that sexual harassment was also. Furthermore, all participants relayed stories about they personally, or how other females, had been treated differently.

Pregnancy was the most noted example of the differential treatment of female officers, and it was common for females to be discouraged from becoming pregnant. In the following quote, Brenda describes an interaction she had during the training academy and recounts a common reaction of male officers to someone being reassigned due to pregnancy.

> A training officer said, "Don't be like some of these female officers and just get pregnant as soon as you go 10-8." Which means don't get pregnant as soon as you first get on the road [patrol] and have to be at the front desk for 9 months. I looked at my one girlfriend, and we were like "Is this guy for fucking real?"

Analyses further revealed the stigmatization of pregnancy. Pregnant officers were accused of seeking special treatment because they were not able to "cut it" on patrol. Patrol was seen as a more masculine and respected function of policing in the department. The following quote is interesting in that it dialectically highlights that while pregnancy is indicative of the failure of the female officer to meet certain standards, it is simultaneously perceived to create staffing issues due to the departure of that same officer, which illustrates equality in a sense.

> It's "Oh, she just doesn't wanna work the road, so she goes and gets knocked up." . . . This is just a weird field. It's not like you're looked down upon, but its like, "Well, you're out for 9 months, great." . . . I guess in a sense it's showing that you're equal, like "Oh shit, we're losing somebody," but at the same time it's like, "Sorry, most people on this job still wanna have a family, you know?" (Brenda)

While the attitude toward pregnancy in the police subculture did not deter all respondents who wanted to have children from doing so, one respondent terminated her pregnancy early in her career due to the stigmatization she had witnessed. She explained that the motivating factor for the decision was the anticipated isolation, and loss of her peers' support and respect in the department. Although she stated that she did not regret her decision, she still attributes the negative treatment of pregnant officers played a large role in her decision.

The fear of negative repercussions and stereotyping due to pregnancy is not unfounded or unique to policing and is also likely impacted by the masculine nature of the occupation. Comparative research has found negative impacts for mothers in the workplace included being seen as contributing less than their colleagues (Crosby, Williams, & Biernat, 2004; Cuddy, Fiske, & Glick, 2004), being paid less (Blau & Kahn, 2000), and employers having less interest in hiring or promoting them, especially in masculine type positions (Fuegen, Biernat,

Haines, & Deaux, 2004). Research has also shown that these negative stereotypes start before childbirth, with pregnant women experiencing more discrimination than their nonpregnant colleagues (Bragger, Kutcher, Morgan, & Firth, 2002; Halpert, Wilson, & Hickman, 1993). Last, research has posited that working mothers are categorized in only one of two ways; sometimes as female professionals who are competent, but cold, and more often are categorized as mothers/housewives who are warm, but incompetent as coworkers (Cuddy, et al., 2004), which is in direct contrast to the hypermasculine police-crimefighter model.

Other arenas in which the female officers perceived differential treatment in comparison to their male counterparts were career ambitions and advancement. Male officers with career aspirations beyond patrol were not stigmatized, but when females had the same desires, they were negatively labeled and devalued as not being able to perform well in patrol. In addition, female promotion was often not perceived as meritorious since women were seen as less capable at policing. The following quote highlights how female promiscuity was posited as being the reason for a female's career advancement.

> There are still men [in policing] who do not think women should be doing this job, and when those people think that you only got promoted because you're a woman, then it's because you've fucked everybody in the department. It's very offensive because I don't have to sleep with someone to get promoted. I'd like to think that it's on my own merit. (Karen)

Karen did emphasize these perceptions were only held by a small and declining group of male officers, whom she referred to as, "the old guard."

Often when women were promoted it was perceived by male officers not to be based on merit, but due to preferential treatment through affirmative action policies. Furthermore, it does not seem to be solely male officers who have a negative opinion of affirmative action policies. Five of our respondents brought up affirmative action in our interviews. Three of the respondents indicated that there was preferential treatment based on race, with particular influence on African American women. One respondent did indicate that she felt that females in general have an easier time to promotion than males. The fifth respondent did state that beliefs of unfair promotions based on affirmative action were common in the department; however, she did not agree that it actually occurred. All five of the respondents were White. Interestingly, Karen likened instances of preferential treatment of females in promotion to supervisor as a "dose of their own medicine," relating it to the preferential treatment leading to males dominating specialized divisions.

> I try to explain it to them like this, if I wanted to put in for the SWAT team, what do you think my chances are of getting in at the boy's club? My chances are pretty

> much zero. I could be the best, most kick ass, go out there and out-do everybody, and I almost guarantee that they will pick a male over me. So, that's the same feeling . . . So, to me its here's a dose of your own medicine . . . there is nowhere where it says that you have a better chance of being promoted as a minority or a female. If you look at our supervisors, there's an interesting percentage, for us being a small percentage at this department, like 10 percent, I would say 40 to 50% of our supervisors are female. So, is there merit to what they think? Maybe.

Another disparity felt by female officers, but not perceived to also be felt to the same extent by male officers, was the need to prove themselves due to their sex—because females were automatically assumed to be lesser officers.

> Female officers can get labeled as not as good as male officers just because we don't have the same strengths. I don't think that's how I am personally perceived. I think at first I was, but once I proved that I can do it and did it well, I think that there wasn't any issues after that. (Patricia)

The presumption that females lacked the valued masculine personality traits also impacted how males would treat their female counterparts. Male officers were more likely to try to "assist" female officers. Mary described that male officers "want to be caretakers to the female officers." This was not considered to be out of chivalry, but instead attributed to male colleagues' beliefs that female officers required help. This is further illustrated in the respondents' common narrative that male officers did not trust that they could rely on female officers for physical calls for service. In the following quote, Deborah (41-year-old African American school resource officer) describes an incident that occurred when she was still a patrol officer and responded to a call for backup to assist a male officer with arresting a large male who was under the influence and acting erratically.

> The first thing I hear is "Yeah, I am going to need some more back up." [from the male officer at the scene] . . . Really? The part is, I knew him [the suspect]; I grew up with him . . . I ended up talking him down so that they can come in and cuff him. So, literally I was the savior of the day.

Deborah's pride in her actions, in spite of her resignation of her colleagues assumptions, is illustrative of Rabe-Hemp's (2009) findings that female officers often perform gender and police work collaboratively and use community policing as a means of legitimizing feminine characteristics (showing empathy, using communication skills, avoiding use of force) in police work.

In this study, the expectation that females are weaker than their male counterparts sometimes led female officers to shy away from asking for help. One officer expressed that she did not want to call for help due to fear of

being branded a "backup officer," a term for female officers who were perceived to have called too frequently for backup from male officers. In the following quote, Mary explains how being apprehensive in calling for backup made her feel.

> Isolated, and like I was working in a hostile work environment . . . I don't think it's really what a male has to fight with. I mean, I know that they have to prove their own, any new officer does, but I don't think it's like this . . . If you dare, as a woman, calling for backup on every traffic stop, or everything you go out on, you're going to get a negative connotation.

Due to the aggrandizement of masculine personality traits and gender roles, our respondents felt they had to illustrate dualistic gender characteristics, while male officers did not.

> As a female you have to, not change yourself, but you have to make sure you go above and beyond. Not do more than what you're willing to do, but show them "No, I'm here to work. I am an assertive, dominant personality, but I can also bring a different type of experience to it . . . that mothering personality" . . . but as a female you can't just have that personality . . . You show them, "No, I am willing to work and if we get into a fight, this is what I can do." (Angela, 28-year-old white, straight patrol officer)

Female officers must be able to demonstrate they possess both feminine and masculine roles to gain status equal to that of male officers, yet, this is not a requirement for male officers where engaging in more feminine police functions is voluntary.

Sexual Teasing Versus Sexual Harassment

The overarching theme from respondents was that sexualized behavior, and to a lesser extent sexual harassment, is part of police culture. Furthermore, resembling the work of Lonsway et al. (2013), our respondents did not necessarily view sexualized behavior as negative, and they often voluntarily engaged in it themselves. While the majority of behavior discussed by our respondents would be considered sexual harassment in the work place, our analyses revealed that respondents separated sexualized behavior into two categories, what we call "sexual teasing" and "sexual harassment." Furthermore, there appeared to be degrees of sexual teasing, and the dismissal or neutralization of the lower tiers of sexual teasing emerging as a thematic link among all of our respondents.

Sexual teasing was considered mostly harmless. Teasing was often perceived as friendly banter between mutual respective parties that was used to develop comradery and make female officers feel part of the group. While the

recollections describe teasing to be facetious in manner, the nature of this teasing often affirmed stereotypical gender roles and characteristics.

Conversely, sexual harassment was viewed to be malicious in nature. Harassment was differentiated from teasing when the interaction was not mutual, when power was used to try to gain sexual favors, or anytime the interaction was physical.

> We tease a lot, so I am good with teasing. I just think harassment is more, putting into a predicament, it is a power thing. (Deborah)

> Harassment is when one party isn't enjoying the teasing, that person is being specifically targeted to make them feel uncomfortable, or make them feel like they are less than something. Teasing is both parties are mutually involved in it. (Patricia)

Neutralizations of Sexual Teasing and Harassment

Our respondents fell into a continuum regarding their feelings about sexual teasing in the workplace. In some cases, respondents seemed to neutralize the practice, often highlighting some of its instrumental purposes. While Sykes and Matza (1957) and Scott and Lyman (1968) delineated theories predicated on how offenders neutralize their deviant behavior, in this study, the respondents may have neutralized instances of sexual teasing, not because they were always the culprits of it, but because they were justifying the majority behavior as a means to assimilate, to cope, or for professional survival.

The first example of teasing being neutralized due to the higher order of having an instrumental purpose is as an avenue for developing comradery between officers. This neutralization was also the most salient explanation of sexual teasing in our data. Many of our respondents reported that by engaging in it, or by dismissing and not reporting it, they could be more accepted by male officers. In the following quote, Karen not only explains why she sees sexual teasing as a bridge between male and female officers but also seems to imply a desire to acquiesce to get along in an inherently coercive environment with profession, promotional, and mentoring consequences for reporting or speaking out.

> Do I want to hear about ball scratching? No, I probably don't. Does it make me feel bothered and offended? No. They treat you like you're part of the club, you're part of the boys' team, you're an equal . . . that you at least have the type of relationship where if they say something that offends you, you say it back to them and not go say a peep to a superior when they had no intention of making you feel that

> way . . . I don't want people to feel like they have to treat me differently, so I take it as a compliment.

The previous quote not only highlights the instrumental perception of teasing, but also alludes to how, while not seen as negative, it may not be considered welcome either. Furthermore, it is the respondent who has to neutralize the insular, protective, and misogynistic culture of policing described by Franklin (2005) through appealing to the higher order of comradery that it may provide.

Dealing with the rigors of police work was another way respondents neutralized sexual teasing as having an instrumental purpose. The following quote is how Patricia responded when further probed about how her belief that sexual teasing was part of police culture made her feel.

> It doesn't bother me, I think that that is what we do, because we are so serious, and [the job] can affect you, and any time that you can laugh about it, I am good with it.

Respondents often neutralized incidents of sexual harassment or downplayed it as teasing, stating that they were not affected by these incidents due to their personality. The most common characteristic reported was that of not being easily offended. More specifically, that the teasing was not injurious because they themselves did not get offended by it.

> I'm not overly offended by things, and I'll give back . . . sexist jokes, racy jokes, even like "I'm hitting on you" type jokes, even maybe flat-out wrong jokes, I would laugh because I wasn't really offended by it. (Mary)

Other officers stated that they engaged in teasing or joking around because they enjoyed it and it brought fun into the work place.

> I have a dirty mind and I like to have fun and be funny and stuff like that and as long as it was in good fun, it didn't bother me at all. (Brenda)

Karen echoed statements about how officers have a unique sense of humor, but in her explanation of not being offended, she goes further. She alluded to teasing or the acceptance of it being a requirement, especially since it is a male dominated environment.

> To me, if you are sensitive about stuff like that, this is probably not the environment for you . . . To me, that's the kind of work environment I signed up for. When you work with predominantly men and they have a crude sense of humor, you just need to fold into that and if you can't people are not going to want to be around you.

The occupation of policing being a male-dominated environment that all but guarantees sexual teasing was a strong theme in our data. Respondents posited that the predominance and acceptance of sexualized teasing, often depreciating women, might not be caused by the culture of policing as much as traditional masculine gender roles and norms. In contrast, respondents were critical of the notion that teasing which depreciated men would be as accepted if policing was dominated by females.

While none of our respondents indicated that they engaged or initiated sexual harassment, six of our respondents reported participating or initiating what they perceived to be sexual teasing. In several explanations, respondents talked about their proactive role in sexual teasing, but the majority of the examples given by respondents referred to sexual teasing in general and how that affected female officers. When respondents relayed their proactive stories, they noted that the behavior was playful in nature, did not hurt anyone, or was in retaliation to a male officer's sexual teasing of a female officer.

> I like to turn it around, because it's always the girls that get harassed and whatever . . . We'll talk about the guys who work out and have their shirt sleeves tailored so they're short sleeves and I'm like, "Oh, are you wearing the medium?" Stuff like that. (Susan)

While sexual harassment was not reported to be nearly as common in the profession as sexual teasing, our respondents indicated that harassment did occur. Many also indicated that harassment does not happen as frequently as it did in the past. Karen described the experiences of female colleagues working in smaller, less progressive agencies.

> A lot of the gentlemen that they work with don't respect them. There are times when I think they try to do all of these things and single them out to run them out of the department . . . I think it is a part of our culture, an unfortunate part. I think it's leaning away from that, the newer generations, the longer women have been doing this job, the better.

Another respondent downplayed male actors in sexual harassment as possibly being ignorant of how to treat women, both in general and within the work place.

> More situations probably deal with just trying to get some action, versus how they're going to make the female feel. So just hopeful that if I slap your ass when you walk by, you're gonna be like, "Yes, that was great!" and go off into the locker room. Not thinking like, "Oh, maybe she's gonna think that I don't think women should work in law enforcement." I guess there are individuals who

> may use that as a tactic [to pressure someone to leave], but I think it's just not controlling yourself the way you should in a professional environment. (Karen)

Respondents often downplayed or neutralized sexual harassment as a survival strategy to avoid professional, promotional, or social consequences. This survival strategy was necessitated by the inherently coercive environment that stymied reporting of instances of sexual harassment and sometimes even sexual violence. While extreme forms of sexual harassment and abuse were not common among our respondents, one respondent did describe two serious incidents across her career, including an instance where she was the victim of sexual assault by a superior officer.

In the first year of her career, Patricia was sexually assaulted by a superior officer while they were both inebriated, an event she never reported. When asked why Patricia did not report it she explained she felt like she couldn't because he was her superior and she feared that she would quickly get a negative reputation as either a "slut" or a "bitch," look like a victim, and would be ostracized in the department. She further explained that she felt, and still feels, it would have been fruitless because the "guys can and do take sides with other guys." This feeling of helplessness contributed to her negative experience of working under the same superior the following year where she routinely avoided him but still had to follow his command. Even after that Patricia stated that she does not regret her decision due to her then rookie status and how she felt it would have destroyed her reputation.

Conversely, she described how later in her career, after she had gotten some experience and was no longer afraid to be titled as "that girl," she experienced a situation in which several inebriated male colleagues visit her house uninvited late at night. The male officers were friends with a colleague of hers with whom she had conflict in the past. While there was no explicit verbal or physical harassment, the altercation and the intentions made clear by the officers were enough for her to informally report the incident to higher ranking friends the following day. Her friends suggested she formally report the incident, to which Patricia declined. She was told that it would be taken care of, but she was never informed of its resolution. She later found out that no disciplinary action was taken toward her male colleagues, even though similar situations resulted in disciplinary action in the past. In addition, she was accused of "blowing up the situation." When asked if this had impacted her current attitude regarding reporting incidents, Patricia replied, "If I had to do it again, I probably wouldn't have done anything that far (informing higher ranking friends). It caused more problems for me than it did for them." While Patricia was the only respondent that indicated she was the victim of sexual assault, her thoughts on the negative repercussions of reporting various levels of sexual harassment events were common among our respondents. This coercive workplace environment actively discouraged whistleblowing and further alienated female officers.

While it can be argued that some of the respondents had adopted a police culture that had accepted the use of sexualized behaviors, more had not fully adopted this culture, but neutralized or reframed it as instances of sexual teasing. Forms of sexual harassment that were perceived to not be malicious in nature, be between mutual consenting parties, and not be physical were neutralized as "sexual teasing," especially if it was instrumental, did not offend them, or was seen as inevitable. Reasons for downplaying sexual harassment did not stop here however. Respondents neutralized, accepted, dismissed, or apprehensively participated in forms of hypersexualized behavior often to remain or progress in the field of law enforcement. In other words, respondents seemed to neutralize what they saw as minor forms of sexual harassment to get along in the field, but did so with more severe forms of harassment or assault to survive in the field.

Limitations

Limitations of this study center on generalizability due to the sample. First, the sample was comprised of nine female officers from one department. Despite the small sample size, clear themes were evident in the rich data. In addition, it is important to note that these themes emerged in a department where female officer representation was twice that of the national average. Specifically, the female representation in the study's department was 20%, exceeding the consistent national average of 10% (Langston, 2010), but within the global maximum of 30% (Prenzler & Sinclair, 2013). Second, the study employed chain-referral method, a nonprobability sampling technique. This method is susceptible to selection bias and at risk of producing a sample in which a significant portion of the participants will know or know of each other. While these concerns should be noted and potential bias considered when interpreting results, the method achieved a diverse, although small, sample in terms of social networks, and professional rank and experience due to design and the efforts of potential participants.

Discussion

While the gender lines in policing are beginning to blur slightly, policing still represents an occupation that is dominated by male officers. Furthermore, research has repeatedly pointed to the hypermasculine nature of police culture. Given that violent crime is often cited as being a top concern for the public and administration, the official response appears to be the hiring and valuing of police candidates who have traditional masculine traits, believed to be better suited to handle physical criminality.

This has led to the formation of a true "crime-*fighter*" model of policing where hypermasculinity sculpts the parameters of tolerable behavior, values traditional masculine capabilities, and penalizes femininity. Interviews

demonstrably revealed that female officers are often not perceived to have these capabilities, despite having shown their abilities to control situations, "hold their own," and de-escalate situations. Furthermore, the proactive types of police were perceived to engage in more thrill-seeking behaviors, which is often associated with masculinity. Conclusively, the respondents in our interviews revealed consistent themes that merge personality research with the formation of hierarchical, proactive-style organization based on masculinity, findings that are consistent with previous studies (e.g., Haarr & Morash, 2013; Hassell & Brandl, 2009; Hunt, 1990; Prokos & Padavic, 2002).

The effect of gendered preferences may contribute to the low representation of females in law enforcement. It is possible that these stereotypes led to a selection effect, where females are less drawn to the traditional masculine profession. In contrast, the hypermasculine policing culture might serve to limit female participation, not through selection effects alone, but also by pushing women out at multiple stages in the career. While this study did not focus on why female officers joined the force, our sample was limited to female law enforcement officers, meaning the individuals were already drawn to the profession initially, and results did reveal a hypermasculine culture. All of our respondents revealed perceptions that behaviors such as assertiveness, risk-taking, and a "hunting" mentality were latently and explicitly rewarded through the construction of a personality hierarchy between peers and through managerial preference. The favorability of masculine traits also constructed a status hierarchy that consists, in order of general preference, of heterosexual males, homosexual females, heterosexual females, and homosexual males. This is in line with research finding that in more developed societies with less traditional sex roles, gender differences between men and women in job preferences are exacerbated (Costa, Terracciano, & McCrae, 2001; Schmitt, Realo, Voracek, & Allik 2008).

Our findings also suggest that female officers were either initially or continually perceived to not have traits associated with the prototypical masculine officer. This led female officers to be treated differently than their male counterparts when performing the same tasks or during major life transitions. For instance, females who aspired to promotion were often stigmatized as trying to avoid patrol duties (a symbolization of the masculine nature of police work), while these same aspirations by male officers were not devalued by their male colleagues. Furthermore, female officers often felt they had to prove themselves more than their male colleagues, especially at the beginning of their career, because they were not seen to be innately "masculine." Finally, the cultural stigmatization of pregnancy (a female-only experience) was prevalent. These values of the subculture resulted in several outcomes among this sample. The most prevalent effect was a decrease in job satisfaction or worse scenarios such as female officers avoiding asking for help in high-risk situations. Moreover, the stigmatization of pregnancy played a key factor in family

planning for some respondents. Once again, our findings echo those of early studies of gender within policing subculture that revealed both the aggrandizement of masculine traits (Chan, 1996; Hunt, 1990) and the oppression of women entering policing (Balkin, 1988; Bell, 1982; Brown, 1998; Franklin, 2005).

Regarding sexualized behavior, our respondents differentiated sexualized behavior into two categories that we call "sexual teasing" and "sexual harassment." Sexual harassment was described as more direct verbal and physical sexualized malicious behavior, often initiated from someone in a status of power. Behavior that was seen as not malicious in nature, and between two mutually respective parties at similar rank, was considered by respondents to be relatively harmless and categorized as "sexual teasing." Other sexualized behavior where individuals were targeted and did not have all parties' consents was deemed to be sexual harassment. Both sexual teasing, and to a lesser extent harassment, were identified to be part of police culture. With this said, while we use these terms to be reflective and illustrative of the subculture, the situations of sexual teasing constitute sexual harassment despite the differentiation that emerged from respondents.

Resembling previous literature (e.g., Haarr & Morash, 2013; Lonsway et al., 2013), our participants did not necessarily see teasing as a negative action and often voluntarily engaged in it themselves. Our respondents neutralized the deviant nature of sexual teasing through the perception that it was merely friendly banter among mutual respective parties and often had instrumental purposes. For example, they viewed teasing as a way to develop comradery, to be accepted by their male peers, and to cope with the job. Furthermore, our respondents indicated that they were not affected by the practice due to their personality, such as a deviant sense of humor or not being offended easily.

That is not to say that our respondents were simply passive actors forced to conform to a coercive system, nor were they all active participants who did not see any fault in the behaviors. Many of the neutralizations presented in this paper can be interpreted as chosen "paths of least resistance" where our respondents consciously or subconsciously went along with the status quo because the institution of policing and their place within it depended upon it. Johnson (2005) posits that oppressive social systems, particularly patriarchy, both create and are reinforced by proscriptive and prescriptive stereotypes that guide the conscious and subconscious choices we make from one moment to the next. These "paths of least resistance" reinforce oppressive systems by limiting the agency one has when facing situations that can be critically reflexive of the system. Furthermore, these paths are often means where the oppressed buy into or behave according to dominant cultural expectations that perpetuate their overall oppression, but they may believe it is in their best short-term interest to do so. These choices can be conscious, such as a female officer reluctantly putting great effort into her appearance so as to be seen somewhere between "butch" and "slut," because she sees it either as

professionally safer or less work than challenging the hypocritical nature of the system. They can also limit their choices subconsciously, such as one never questioning the culture of masculinity or how it reinforces patriarchal hierarchies, when witnessing male officers telling sexist jokes in roll call, instead just dismissing it as "boys will be boys."

Our respondent's recollections of sexual teasing often had similar themes where sexual terms and situations were perceived to be used in a facetious manner; however, the nature of this teasing was still an affirmation of stereotypical gender trait characteristics that reinforced the status of male as normative and female as the other. Regardless of this fact, for many respondents, the path of least resistance was to neutralize their participation as having some higher order or purpose. Here it is important to note Johnson's (2005) explanation of how one's mere existence in a patriarchal society forces one to participate in it, and more specifically that one can participate in their own oppression when one depends on society, and its rewards and punishments hinge on not challenging the status quo. To this end, the coercive nature of the hypermasculine police culture's role in these neutralizations cannot be overlooked. In addition to neutralizations of behavior having instrumental means, there were many other cases in which respondents indicated either the reluctance to participate, feelings of coercion, or pressure to not acknowledge and especially not report events due to retaliation, rejection, or professional stagnation.

While instances of sexual harassment or abuse were not as common as instances of gender disparity or sexual teasing, they were existent in our respondents' narratives. As in previous literature (e.g., Lonsway et al., 2013; Stichman et al., 2010), our female respondents often did not report the serious incidents out of fear of negative repercussions, including professional and social isolation, being stigmatized, being overlooked for mentorship/promotion opportunities, and even dismissal. Here, the "path of least resistance" literally was for their own survival.

Last, Johnson (2005) argues that patriarchal "paths of least resistance" can make the oppressive system seem natural, even invisible. Since these paths are inherent in the oppressive social systems themselves, they allow actors to either defer responsibility to the constraints of the system or not even consider the oppressive nature of their action (Johnson, 2005). For example, a manager that has to downsize his office may do so with conflicting emotions but feel coerced to participate to keep his own standing in the system, or he may rationalize it as unfortunate but normal fluctuations of labor in the capitalistic economic system. In our respondents' cases, many may be overlooking, dismissing, or neutralizing various behaviors that they would not otherwise due to the belief that it is the normative structure of policing.

In sum, our qualitative, interview-based research substantiates more quantitative research conducted by Veldman, Meeussen, Van Laar, and Phalet (2017). Responses indicate that heterosexual female officers and gay male officers

appear to undergo a two-stage process of legitimization, the first stage being the basic officer training, and the second stage consisting of the burden to prove they can fit in with "the guys" in the subculture. This second stage may not have an exit point as masculine behavior is seen as the primary motive for producing quality policing. This is consistent with previous research that finds support for policing exemplifying a patriarchal social structure that rewards male domination and masculinity and rejects femininity (Franklin 2005; Hunt 1984; Martin 1980; Morash & Haarr, 2012; Rabe-Hemp, 2009).

Conclusion

The occupation of policing not only has an overrepresentation of males but has also been argued to have a traditionally masculine subculture. Furthermore, this subculture has often acted as a gatekeeper, limiting female participation in the occupation. Regardless, modern policing has seen rises in both the numbers of female officers and the roles they are permitted to occupy. Nevertheless, the rise of females in the force has not fundamentally altered the hypermasculine nature of policing. This study used face-to-face interviews with female officers to document their experiences in navigating the subculture in terms of gender roles and disparities, sexualized activities, and their effects. Particular attention was given to the role of agency the officers perceived themselves to have, including whether they felt coerced to participate in the culture as a means to conform and be accepted or they actively participated in the culture without coercion or pressure. While our study was consistent with previous literature on the experience of female law officers, it was limited by a small sample size. While several qualitative studies on female law enforcement also share similar sample sizes (Archbold & Hassell 2009; Archbold & Schulz 2008; Belkin & McNichol, 2002; Haarr & Morash, 2013), future research should continue this line of inquiry with larger qualitative samples, or utilize mixed method or quantitative designs. With that said, this study yielded several key findings that are supportive of prior research and call attention to new avenues of empirical exploration.

Our study results evidenced a hypermasculine police culture that shaped the social and professional task hierarchies of the department. Officers who were seen to encompass traditionally male traits were presumed to be better suited for policing. In addition, masculine occupational roles and activities were the most valued and rewarded in the department. We found that female officers were not monolithic in their experience and reaction to navigating law enforcement. Their participation regarding the social and professional task hierarchies was often one of conformity and resentment. Female officers would "play the game," so to speak, by dismissing negative connotations toward feminine traits or conditions such as pregnancy, and strive to be proficient at code switching between feminine and masculine traits depending on the situation. In addition, female officers felt they were required to prove themselves more than their male

colleagues. While blatant sexual harassment was scorned, our respondents neutralized sexual harassment they believed to be less severe as "teasing" behavior. It was here that female officers were more proactive in their participation and seemed to indicate self-selection as a reason. Unlike the feelings of conformity in having to prove themselves to be tough, sexual teasing was often seen as an occupational necessity or not impactful.

Our findings also indicate that a more complex social hierarchy may exist. While this study focused on biological sex, several responses denoted that a hierarchy predicated on both biological sex and traditional gender roles may be at play. For example, some respondents noted less social distance between other minority groups and heterosexual male ideal type as compared to that between females and males. Furthermore, other groups were excluded and othered through categorization in traditional stereotypic roles such as "the ambitious female," "the slut," or "the flamboyant gay." Future studies should investigate not only the inclusive and exclusive nature of police subculture, but also the nuanced nature of how it categorizes those involved, as well as the related effects.

Importantly, this study revealed the existence of a hypermasculine police subculture in a department with a female representation twice the national average, and the severity and effects of several experiences are jarring. This indicates that the mere presence of more female officers is not sufficient to overcome the hypermasculine work environment, and a concerted effort to modify the subculture itself must be undertaken and sustained to effectuate change. While specific policy implications cannot be effectively argued given this study's limitations, the study revealed several areas where change could be targeted as respondents shared similar experiences and effects in varying degrees. Potential areas of focus include the valuation of certain characteristics, respect for others regardless of gender and sexual orientation, destigmatization of pregnancy, reconceptualization of sexual harassment, stigmatization of all forms of sexual harassment, and support for victims. The authors strongly urge other researchers to not only continue work in this area but collaborate with departments on future studies and the development, implementation, and evaluation of evidence-based policies.

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