Women Officers on the Move
An Update on Women in Policing

Foci: Susan E. Martin
1. Changes in status of women in policing
2. Resistance of male cops
3. Research and policy related to women cops

For more than half a century after the acceptance of the first sworn female officer in 1910, women in policing were selected according to separate criteria from men, employed as "policewomen," and limited to working with "women, children, and typewriters" (Milton, 1972). It was only in 1972, with the passage of the 1972 Amendments to the Civil Rights Act of 1964, that women officers obtained the right to an equal opportunity in a law enforcement career. Since that date, many departments, often under court order, have eliminated discriminatory personnel policies. Despite these recent changes, however, women officers still face a variety of barriers to full occupational integration. This chapter examines: (1) the changes that have occurred in the status of women in policing in the past two decades; (2) the nature of the resistance of male officers to women in policing and the problems the women officers face as a result; and (3) current research and policy issues related to women in policing.

Evidence of Change in Police Personnel Practices

Since 1972 many of the discriminatory practices that restricted the selection and deployment of women in policing have been eliminated and the number of female officers has grown. How adequate is the pace of change? Price (1982) asserts that the sexual integration of policing has not kept pace with changes in other male-dominated occupations, using the example of the increase of women law students from 8 percent in 1970 to 32 percent in 1980. Similarly, Reskin and Roos (1990), examining changes in occupational sex segregation between 1970 and 1988, categorized police work along with many blue-collar and craft jobs as those where women made disproportionately little headway. Fye, on the other hand, asserts that the

changes in policing have been so dramatic that "the traditional view of policing as a nearly exclusive white male occupation is quickly becoming outdated... (in) virtually every population category and geographic region" (1987: 10). Moreover, 98 percent of the municipal departments serving populations greater than 50,000 had women officers assigned to field operations (patrol) units (Martin 1990).

Growth in the Number of Women Officers

The available evidence presents a mixed picture; there has been slow but steady growth in numbers of women officers and supervisors nationwide and an expansion of their assignments into all aspects of policing. Nevertheless, women continue to be significantly underrepresented in police work according to data collected annually by the FBI since 1970. In 1971, prior to the change in the civil rights law, women comprised only 1.4 percent of the sworn personnel in municipal departments and 2.7 percent of the officers in suburban agencies. By 1975 they constituted 2.2 percent of the municipal personnel, with the largest increases occurring in departments with populations between 250,000 and 1,000,000 (U.S. F.B.I. 1976). As shown in Table 1, the proportion of women among all sworn officers in municipal agencies was 3.8 in 1980, 6.2 in 1985, 8.3 in 1990, and 9.5 in 1994. Similar figures for suburban county agencies are 8.1, 9.7, 11.3, and 11.4, respectively. Thus, during the past two decades the proportion of women officers in city departments has grown steadily, with the greatest increases occurring in the larger cities. The representation of women in suburban agencies also grew, so that proportions were similar in city and suburban departments. However, women's representation in the smallest cities (i.e., those with less than 50,000 population) and rural agencies lags behind the more densely populated areas. Similarly, women constituted only 4.2 percent of sworn state police personnel in 1987 and 4.6 percent in 1990 (3.9 percent of whom were white) (U.S. Department of Justice 1992).

Data on the race, rank, and assignment of officers by sex until recently has been "shockingly limited" (Walker 1985). A recent study by the Bureau of Justice Statistics reported the race/ethnicity and sex of sworn local police. As shown in Table 2, in 1993 white men comprised 5.7 percent of sworn police personnel, black men 2.2 percent, and women of other ethnic groups less than one percent. Looking at the ratio of women to men from each of the racial/ethnic groups, however, the table indicates that black women made up 19 percent of black sworn personnel while women comprised only 11 percent of Hispanic, and 7 percent of white and other ethnic sworn personnel.

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1 Source: U.S. Federal Bureau of Investigation, 1981.

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<th>Race/Ethnicity</th>
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<th>Female</th>
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<tr>
<td>White</td>
<td>80.9%</td>
<td>75.2%</td>
<td>5.7%</td>
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<tr>
<td>Black</td>
<td>11.3%</td>
<td>9.1%</td>
<td>2.2%</td>
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<tr>
<td>Hispanic</td>
<td>6.2%</td>
<td>5.5%</td>
<td>.7%</td>
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<tr>
<td>Other</td>
<td>1.5%</td>
<td>1.4%</td>
<td>.1%</td>
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Total | 100% | 91.2% | 8.7% |

Source: B. A. Reaves, 1996.

Data on the number of officers above the entry-level officer rank indicate that women's representation among supervisory personnel increased from less than 1 percent in 1978 to 3.3 percent of all supervisors in municipal agencies by the end of 1986 (including 2.3 percent white and 1 percent nonwhite women). Their representation decreases as one moves up the ranks: 3.7 percent of the sergeants, 2.5 percent of the lieutenants, and 1.4 percent of supervisory personnel of a higher rank are women (Martin 1990). According to a recent survey of the departments in the nation's 50 largest cities, women comprised 7.1 percent of supervisors, including 4.8 percent white women and 1.8 percent black women (Walker and Martin 1994). The fact that the proportion of women supervisors lags behind that of all per-
sonnel is not surprising since supervisors are selected from entry-level officers who are eligible for promotion after several years of service.

In sum, the statistics indicate both good news and bad news. On the one hand, women have made steady numerical and proportional gains in law enforcement agencies in all parts of the country. On the other hand, they still comprise only a "token" (Kanter 1977) proportion of all sworn police personnel and, like women in law and management, are concentrated at the bottom of the police hierarchy but are virtually invisible in high-level administrative posts. Although women were promoted to sergeant at a rate slightly higher than might be expected based on their representation among those eligible, the pace of their movement into supervisory ranks suggests that women are not likely to assume departmental policy-making positions for many years.

Changing Eligibility and Selection Criteria

The increase in female representation in policing is clearly related to the development of a substantial body of law requiring nondiscrimination on the basis of sex in terms and conditions of employment. More than two decades ago police departments were brought under this legal edifice through the Equal Employment Opportunity Act of 1972 (amending Title VII of the Civil Rights Act of 1964), the Crime Control Act of 1973, the State and Local Government Fiscal Assistance Act of 1976, numerous state equal rights and fair employment practices laws and have been evolving case law in interpreting these laws.

Much litigation has been related to height and weight standards that eliminated most women and many Hispanics from eligibility for policing. Departments' failure to substantiate their claims that height is predictive of or correlated with superior job performance and the finding that there is no correlation between height and performance (White and Bloch, 1975) led courts to rule that the physical standards must be proved to be job relevant and necessary to safe and efficient job performance. In most cases such proof has been lacking. Consequently, differential height and weight eligibility requirements for male and female police applicants have been virtually eliminated since 1972. By 1979 only 23 percent of the departments surveyed by Sulton and Townesey (1981) retained any height and weight requirements for admission; by 1986 Fyfe (1987:7) found only 3.5 percent of the responding departments had minimum height standards (mean = 63.7 inches) and 3.7 percent had minimum weight standards (mean = 135.3 pounds).

Selection criteria also have changed. Most police departments use several criteria for selecting eligible candidates. These include a written examination, an oral interview, a psychological examination, a physical agility test, and a background check. Formerly, most female candidates were eliminated by the physical agility test and oral interview. The extent to which otherwise qualified women are screened out by the oral interview is unknown. The potential for bias is great unless interviewers are carefully screened, trained, and provided with structured interview formats. Increasingly, however, departments have moved toward structuring and standardizing the interview process as lawsuits have prohibited arbitrary practices. By 1981 Sulton and Townesey observed that oral interviews no longer appeared to disproportionately eliminate women candidates in large urban departments.

Physical agility tests have been a source of much litigation, due to differences between men and women in strength and agility, and the job-relatedness of many of these tests has been questioned. The proportion of departments that use physical performance tests to assess fitness increased from 58 percent of responding agencies in 1982 to 76 percent in 1986 (Fyfe 1987:7), but most agencies changed the tests to conform with the law which prohibits such tests from eliminating a disproportionate number of women (unless such tests can be shown to be reasonably job related and have a valid purpose). In Harless v. Duck [1619 F.2d 611(1980)], for example, the court found that the physical agility test under question was invalid under Title VII, stating:

Defendant did not meet their burden of proving that the test was valid and job-related. First, the job analysis does not specifically define the amount of physical strength required or the extent of physical exertion required. Second, the same type of tests never have been validated. Third, there is no justification in the record for the type of exercises chosen or the passing marks for each exercise.

Based on a survey of 246 municipal departments serving populations over 50,000, Martin (1990) found that 20 percent of the applicants were women; virtually the same proportion of those accepted (20.6 percent) and completing training (19.2) were women. Thus it appears that there is no systematic bias in the selection process; however, the wide variation among departments, in the proportion of applicants that were female and in the proportion of those women that were accepted, suggests that the recruitment and selection practices may favor women in some agencies and disadvantage them elsewhere. Furthermore, one of the factors that significantly reduced the rate at which women applied for police positions and at which those female applicants were accepted was the presence of a pretraining physical agility test.

Evaluations of Women's Performance

Many of the barriers to equal opportunity for women in policing were based on the belief that women could not adequately perform in the basic police role as patrol officers. In the early 1970s, as legal pressures to assign women to patrol mounted, nine evaluation studies of women on patrol were conducted in departments widely divergent in size and geographical location.
Barriers to the Integration of Women into Policing

The barriers to women in policing emanate from the structural characteristics of the occupation and the work organization, and the ways that cultural mandates and behavioral norms related to gender shape interpersonal interaction in specific occupational contexts.

Cultural and Structural Barriers to Gender Integration

In a study of men and women employed in corporations, Kanter (1977) suggests that occupational behavior is shaped by three key structural features of the organization and the individuals’ position in it: the opportunity structure, the power structure, and relative numbers. These variables constrain and shape possibilities for action and press people to adapt to their situations.

Kanter observed that men and women behave differently in work organizations because men have more real power and greater opportunities for mobility. Both men and women, when placed in powerless and low-mobility situations, respond by lowering aspirations and developing different patterns of occupational behavior from those with greater power and opportunities. Blocked mobility leads to limited motivation which, in turn, sets in motion a downward cycle of deprivation and discouragement. Conversely, those with power and opportunities use these resources to gain allies and supporters and prove themselves, triggering an upward cycle of success. Although both cycles appear to be related to individual motivation, in fact they arise in response to organizational factors.

In addition, Kanter noted that number affects occupational behavior because minority individuals or “tokens” are treated differently than others in three ways. First, because tokens are highly visible, they face performance pressures. Second, because tokens polarize differences between themselves and dominants, they face heightened in-group boundaries and social isolation. Third, because dominants distort and stereotype tokens’ characteristics, tokens are forced into stereotypic roles.

In addition to tokenism, sexism affects women workers. Even when female tokens have job skills and work commitment they are harassed by male co-workers and excluded from informal social networks, while male tokens not only do not face similar discrimination (Kadushin, 1976; Schreiber, 1979; Williams, 1989), but are the beneficiaries of advancement up the “glass escalator” (Williams, 1992). Reskin (1988) identified three additional practices that men adopt to prevent occupational equality when women workers intrude into the men’s occupational world: they type jobs and tasks according to sex and give the less desirable and lower-paying activities to women; they treat women in a paternalistic manner; and they sexualize the workplace.

Paternalism involves men “helping” or “protecting” women by excusing them from difficult or undesirable tasks in exchange for submissive or
dependent behavior. This “help,” however, serves to control the women and deny them organizational rewards, stigmatizes them as inferior, and creates resentment by violating the men’s sense of fairness (Jurik, 1985; Swerdlow, 1989; Padavic and Reskin, 1990).

The emphasis on women’s gender includes sexual harassment which results in women experiencing psychological stress that contributes to higher turnover rates (MacKinnon, 1978; Gutek and Morash, 1982) as well as dilemmas in responding to co-workers (Martin, 1978; Swerdlow, 1989).

Occupational behavior also is guided by socially prescribed norms guiding the ways people “do” or enact gender within the context of larger social structures. Gender is not a fixed attribute of individuals but emerges as it is enacted in interactions (West and Zimmerman, 1987; Martin and Jurik, 1996). Thus the way men display appropriate “masculine” and women show “feminine” behavior emerges through “doing” gender in everyday social interaction, including those in the workplace. Consequently, gender is a pervasive feature of all aspects of organizational life including the images, interactions, workers’ identities, and policies that result in gendered divisions of labor and power relations in work organizations (Acker, 1990). For example, the extent to which definition of police work has become associated with the male gender is indicated by the merging of the word for the work and the gender of the worker (i.e., “police-men”). Because the norms and expectations of “appropriate” behavior for police (as well as for persons in other occupations historically dominated by men) are associated with enacting “masculine” behavior, women entering these occupations encounter dilemmas on the job. On the one hand, as police, they are expected to display “masculine” behavior and interact with fellow workers as peers and equals; on the other hand, as women, their male co-workers expect and pressure them to display “feminine” behavior (including deference to men) which is deemed inappropriate for an officer (Goffman, 1956). Thus, policewomen have to decide when and how to “act like a cop” and still “act like a lady” on the job.

Police Work, the Police Culture, and Men’s Opposition to Women Officers. In addition to the barriers women face in a variety of nontraditional occupations, certain aspects of police work lead to unique problems for women officers. Police officers have enormous discretionary decision-making authority. Across the wide variety of policing tasks there is always the potential for violence and the authority to use coercive means to enforce the officer’s definition of the situation. The police role as the representative of the coercive potential of the state and as a legitimate user of force in everyday life helps explain certain attitudes and behavioral characteristics of the police and their work culture. The presence of danger and the potential for violence lead to a generalized suspiciousness, isolation from the community, and a cohesive, informal occupational group with its own stratification system and norms. These, in turn, heighten the barriers to informal acceptance of anyone who is perceived as an “outsider” and, therefore, cannot be counted on to conform to group norms.

The men’s opposition to women officers has been amply documented (Bloch and Anderson, 1974; Sherman, 1975; California Highway Patrol, 1976; Martin, 1980; Charles, 1981; Hunt, 1990). Most of the men’s objections to women officers focus on their physical differences from men and are phrased in terms of concern for physical safety and women’s alleged inability to deal with physical violence. Nevertheless, a variety of other concerns underlie their opposition. Women threaten to disrupt the division of labor, the work norms, the work group’s solidarity, the insecure occupational status and public image, and the sexist ideology that undergirds the men’s definition of the work as “men’s work” and their identity as masculine men.

The use of women on patrol implies either that the men’s unique asset, their physical superiority, is irrelevant (as it is on most assignments) or that the man working with a woman officer will be at a disadvantage he would not face in a physical confrontation working with a male partner. Moreover, the possibility that women officers reduce the likelihood of a physical confrontation or act appropriately by protecting their male partner is no comfort because it undermines the gender stereotypes that permeate the male officers’ perceptual world. Women are not “supposed” to fight or to control other male citizens. At the same time, for a male officer, being “defended” by a woman is regarded as an affront to his manhood.

Women also threaten work-group solidarity. They raise the spectre of possible sexual intimacy between partners, fostering competition among the men and thus creating a competing set of loyalties. They also threaten the public image of police work and the mask of emotional detachment worn by male officers by exposing the fact that the day-to-day reality of policing does not revolve around crime fighting, but involves emotional labor and requires interpersonal skills. In addition, they inhibit men’s use of crude language, their illicit on-the-job sexual activities, and the fringe benefit of enhanced masculinity that these confer.

Men’s opposition to women in policing also reflects a “deeper concern about who has a right to manage law and order” (Heidensohn, 1992:215). In fact, according to Heidensohn, the view that “men own order and have sole rights to preserve it” is the real but unstated issue underlying their assertions that women are unsuitable officers and will destroy men’s solidarity. Instead, their resistance to women on patrol is better understood as emanating from a struggle over the ownership of social control. In sum, the men’s opposition to women in their ranks stems from their threat to their definitions of the work, occupational culture, social status, and self-image as men’s work which provides a psychological fringe benefit of the job.

Structural Barriers: Equality versus Equity. Women entering policing at a disadvantage. Few went through an extensive anticipatory socialization process in which they vicariously rehearsed police roles. Compared with the men, fewer women have been in the military, had firearms training, or played team sports that involve physical contact and imbue the spirit of the team player.
At the training academy inequality may be fostered in several ways. An emphasis on meeting physical fitness standards that do not have to be maintained beyond the academy magnifies the importance of the physical differences between the sexes. Informal coddling of women by some physical education instructors who are protective or unable to deal with some women’s manipulative efforts also negatively affects all the women. It allows some to move to the next stage of recruit training not fully prepared and fosters the expectation of those women that they can get along by being “different” rather than learning the lessons of group loyalty. It also undermines the confidence of male officers in women officers in general, and divides the women. At the same time, police training often fails to develop the interpersonal skills necessary to do the job well. These skills are usually more highly developed in women than in men, and their omission from the curriculum deprives the women of a job-relevant training opportunity in which they are likely to excel. Consequently, the new woman officer enters male turf on male terms with little recognition of the problems she will face, or acknowledgment of the interpersonal strengths she brings to the job.

The early months on the street are very important, since it is then that the reputation that follows an officer through a career is formed. Opportunities for learning and gaining self-confidence have a multiplier effect because once established, habits and reputations are difficult to change. Self-confidence grows with mastery of policing skills and positive feedback on performance. An officer who does not have, or does not take, opportunities to develop street patrol skills because of limited assignments, under-instruction, or overprotection is likely to act hesitantly, be viewed as a threat to others’ safety, and be deprived of subsequent opportunities to handle situations.

Female rookies face several disadvantages on the street. They tend to have been sheltered from street life, and to be smaller and not as physically strong as the male rookies. They must overcome openly hostile attitudes of some of their trainers, supervisors, and partners: a dual standard of evaluation; and the performance pressures that “tokens” encounter.

Unless the timidity of some female rookies and the protectioniveness of many of the men are consciously reversed, many women do not get opportunities to learn to act with decisiveness and confidence. Consequently, a self-fulfilling prophecy becomes a reality as they seek to manipulate others’ expectations of them rather than alter their own behavior.

Cultural Mandate and Interational Barriers. Women officers also face dilemmas in interacting with fellow officers and with citizens. As police officers, they are expected to interact with other police according to the norms governing relations among equals; as women they are expected to adhere to asymmetric norms governing male-female relationships where women are subordinates of men. Thus, in addition to dilemmas as “tokens,” women officers must cope with norms that put them at a disadvantage in interactions with male officers.

Men’s language keeps women officers “in their place” by constantly referring to them as “ladies” or “girls,” (terms that suggest that they should be protected), or by calling those that do not conform to sex role stereotypes “lesbians,” “broads,” “bitches,” or “whores.” Cursing also creates dilemmas. Many men are uncomfortable swearing in front of women officers but resent the inhibition on their expressiveness. Similarly, when women curse, men become offended and withdraw the deference they give to “ladies.” If the women avoid cursing, however, their words are taken less seriously.

Frequent sexual jokes and gossip remind the women that they are desired sexual objects, visible outsiders, and feared competitors. In turn, this joking makes many of the women, concerned about even the appearance of impropriety, avoid interactions that might be viewed as having a sexual connotation. They maintain their moral reputation but sacrifice the opportunity to build close interpersonal relationships necessary for sponsorship and protection.

Gender stereotyping enables men to cast women into the roles that reflect in their linguistic categories, limit women’s behavioral options, and have a negative impact on their work. Women either get pressed into enacting the “seducress,” “maid,” “mother,” or “pet” roles, or get labeled “lesbians” or “bitches” (Kanter, 1977). The former are depersonalized, protected from occupational demands, excluded from opportunities to develop occupational skills, and criticized for failing to fulfill their duties as officers. The latter are permitted to remain in the men’s informal world, but their dangerous qualities are neutralized by denunciation and pejorative categorization.

Informal social exclusion and sexual harassment also remind the women that they are not “just officers.” They are visible but excluded from career-promoting networks, vulnerable to harassment but held responsible for the outcomes of such interactions. They experience more hostile interpersonal work environment than male officers as well as a unique group of work-related stresses. While the primary sources of stress for officers appear to be common to women and men (i.e., organizational and task-related concerns), both Wexler and Logan (1983) and Morash and Haarr (1995) have observed that women also endure an additional category of stressors. These include a lack of acceptance as officers; denial of information, sponsorships, and protection; and both sexual harassment and language harassment (i.e., deliberate exposure to profanity and sexual jokes).

Relating to Citizens. All police officers face recurrent uncertainties in relating to citizens who may seek to disrupt normal interaction by disavowing the officers’ identity, and by ascribing to them irrelevant statuses based on age, sex, or race (Goffman, 1961). While citizens usually defer to the police officer who usually has higher social status than persons he or she encounters (Sykes and Clark, 1975), some seek to base the interaction on the officer’s “irrelevant” status characteristics, thereby reversing the
flow. Although all officers occasionally face such deference reversals, these situations continually threaten women officers' interactions and force the women to find ways to turn them to their advantage, minimize their occurrence, and limit their effects on the officer's control of the situation.

In police-citizen encounters, four possible combinations of gender and social category may arise: male officers with male or female citizens, and female officers with male or female citizens. Each combination has different expectations and management problems as police relate to citizens by doing gender while they seek to control the situation or otherwise enact the police role.

In interactions with male citizens, male officers have status superiority by virtue of their office and expect citizens to defer and comply. On the basis of shared manhood, however, they are status equals. This shared manhood can sometimes be effectively used as a resource for doing gender since it is to the citizen's advantage, saying, in effect, "act like a man (i.e., control yourself) and I won't have to exert my authority as an officer to overpower you." It also benefits the officer by minimizing the necessity of using force and allows him to act as a "good guy," giving a little to gain compliance. When suspects or offenders try to define the situation in terms of shared manhood, however, officers may view the interaction as denying the deference due to their office. When a male officer relies too heavily on the authority of the badge or rejects a male citizen's effort to be treated "as a man," the result is a "duel of manhood" which has a high probability of a physical or verbal confrontation that might well have been avoided.

Male officers' double-status superiority over female citizens generally leads to fewer problems arising in such interactions, except those related to sexuality. Male officers may use the authority of their office to gain control or gain compliance by asserting, "act like a lady and I'll treat you like one." If invoking the rules of chivalry works, the officer gains control while enhancing his sense of manly generosity. If it fails, he can still treat the woman as a wayward "girl" on whom he will not waste his time, or he may use force.

Interactions between female officers and male citizens are problematic because police expect to take control of situations and be shown deference by citizens; men may defer to the office but resist being controlled by or deferential to a woman. For that reason expectations regarding how a man relates to a woman and to a police officer generally are different and sometimes often are in direct conflict. Women officers are given deference, either out of respect for the uniform or because compliance does not challenge a man's manhood if he chivalrously complies, whereas fighting a woman may cause a man to lose status, particularly when there are witnesses. However, the man's deference is revocable, particularly if the officer acts "unladylike" in carrying out her occupational role obligations. Since they often are at a physical disadvantage, female officers may have to rely on the deference of males as a control strategy. Although most women usually try to minimize rather than activate their gender status,

they recognize that men seek to redefine situations so as to affirm men's status superiority but that they must retain control.

When women officers encounter sexist or sexual comments they usually ignore them or reply "you wouldn't say that to a male officer, would you?" They may also use a variety of verbal and nonverbal cues involving use of the voice, appearance, facial expression, and body postures which also convey the message that despite their small stature, as police they are to be taken seriously. Learning to transmit these messages, however, requires altering longstanding habits such as smiling, and learning literally to "stand up to people."

In dealing with women citizens, female officers get both greater cooperation and more "hassles" than male officers. While their common gender status implies a reduction of social distance, it evokes the special consideration that female citizens expect from (male) police, and for this reason, may arouse the female citizen's anger at not being able to flirt or cry her way out of a situation. Women also are more willing to fight female officers than male officers. Conversely, women officers often are viewed as more sympathetic and so are able to gain the cooperation of female citizens, particularly victims, who refuse to talk to male officers.

Effective officers of both genders appeal both to "gender-appropriate behavior" on the part of citizens, and to their respect for the officer's authority to gain cooperation. They use a citizen's expectations and values to their advantage, draw on mutually shared statuses to diminish social distance, and only rely on the authority of their office when necessary. Ineffective officers, on the other hand, either too rigidly rely on their formal authority or cannot transcend the limitations on their behavior posed by adherence to traditional norms for doing gender. For female officers this means failure to use the authority of their office and overreliance on deference to them as women; for male officers this means overemphasis on aggressive "macho" behavior that may result in an avoidable confrontation.

In sum, a woman officer faces barriers and handicaps that are built into both the formal and informal work structures. These culturally mandated patterns governing male/female interaction force her to "think like a man, work like a dog, and act like a lady" (Martin, 1980: 219).

**Issues for this Decade and Beyond**

Have numerical increases and the passage of time required to achieve seniority and promotions reduced the barriers and limitations women officers face? What new problems challenge the women who move into supervisory positions, and the departments that hire women in greater numbers? These issues for future research will be addressed in the final section of this paper.
Numbers: The Effects of Moving Beyond Token Status

Kanter (1977) observed that the proportion of minority individuals in work groups affects the manner in which minority members are treated. Her theory of tokenism suggests that members of a small minority suffer adverse conditions due solely to the small size of the subgroup. She distinguished four group types on the basis of proportional size of the minority: uniform groups with only one category of sex, race, or ethnicity; skewed groups in which minorities or "tokens" comprise up to 15 percent of the members; tilted groups typified by minority representation between 16 and 35 percent; and balanced groups. She asserts that minority members in tilted groups face barriers and constraints to acceptance that are less intense than in skewed groups because minorities can form coalitions affecting group culture.

An alternative minority proportion/inequality perspective, originating in race relations literature (Blalock, 1967; Marden and Meyer, 1973; Giles, 1977) asserts that minority individuals are less likely to be accepted by dominants when there are enough of them to threaten the economic and political security of the majority; thus, there is greater discrimination as the minority grows larger and more powerful.

In a test of these competing perspectives examining several work groups in a single organization where group membership ranged from highly skewed male to highly skewed female, South, et al. (1982) found some support for both perspectives. In measuring women's isolation from the work group they found no support for the hypothesis that token women have less contact with male workers and supervisors. However, consistent with the minority proportion hypothesis, female representation was negatively associated with the amount of encouragement for promotion women got from male supervisors. The proportion of women in a group was not significantly related to the quality of relations among women. The authors concluded that "token women are not found to face more severe organizational pressure than nontokens" (South, et al., 1982: 587) and that an increase in the number of minority workers without alteration in the relations between dominant and subordinate is not likely to improve the position of minorities substantially, and may even worsen relations.

Other studies also cast doubt on the assertion that an increase in number alone will relieve the problems of tokenism for women. In a study of the effects of proportions on women managers in two companies with 6 and 19 percent female managers respectively, Harlan and Weiss (1981) found that there was no simple linear relationship between the amount of gender bias or stereotyping and the percentage of women in management. The women in the 19 percent company faced more overt bias and harassment, and women in both companies felt that they had to work harder and face more challenges to their authority than male managers. Deaux and Ullman (1983) found the attitudes of males in the steel industry toward women were more negative in the company with more female employees than in the one with fewer. In a study of the automobile industry, Gruber and Bjorn (1982) found men's sexual harassment of women became more frequent and severe as the proportion of women increased. Thus, it is unclear whether the increase in the number of women in policing has reduced the occupational dilemmas posed by tokenism. While some of the performance pressures due to visibility may have diminished, the organizational structures embedded in a broader social system of gender inequality remain in place, and as women move up the organizational hierarchy, they again face the problems of "tokens" as well as challenges to their authority from men who may tolerate working with women but resist working for them.

Assignments, Promotions and Women as Supervisors

For more than half a century women officers' assignments were limited to those viewed as compatible with their gender. Although women now are assigned to patrol just as men are, it appears that women officers continue to be disproportionately concentrated in support positions rather than line activities (Martin, 1990). Based on case studies of assignment patterns in three large agencies, it appears that, even with the same amount of time in policing, women have had more nonpatrol assignments than men and that a higher proportion of women than men hold staff support positions while men go into line units, such as special operations and traffic. These differences appear to arise from "pushes" away from patrol into "inside" assignments (Hunt, 1990) due to a hostile environment resulting from men's paternalism and harassment and from "pulls" toward assignments that offer more favorable hours and working conditions and that reflect women's skills and interests. Similar questions arise with respect to racial patterns of assignments and how the combination of race and gender affect the occupational opportunities of minority women. The emerging literature on the intersection of race and gender suggests that because cultural images of white and black women differ, black women often are treated according to separate norms, are less often put on a pedestal or treated as "ladies," and afforded protection by white men (Martin, 1994). White women, particularly those who are physically attractive, appear to be more likely than black women to get inside assignments and protection on street patrol (Martin, 1994) and less likely to get recognition for superior performance (Belknap and Shelley, 1992).

Although it appears that women are gaining their "fair share" of promotions to sergeant in the large urban departments, questions arise with respect to opportunities for attaining higher rank, particularly top management positions that are based on political decisions rather than standardized examinations. Whether women in policing will be limited by a glass ceiling that women managers have encountered in other occupations remains an open question.

How have superiors and subordinates reacted to women supervisors? Limited interview data suggest that a woman sergeant's position is
not an easy one. Like all new sergeants, they face problems adopting an effective supervisory style and “thinking like management.” In addition, women sergeants face renewed difficulties as tokens, tend to lack mentors to help them, come in for more testing of their authority than new male sergeants, and face many of the problems observed from studies of women managers in other occupations.

Harriman (1985) asserts that although there were few differences in the attitudes, motivation, and behavior of effective women and men managers, the women’s careers progressed more slowly than those of their male cohorts. A review of studies of leadership found no differences in behavior between the sexes after controlling for situational and other demographic variables (Nieva and Gutek, 1981); other studies have noted a tendency to identify effective leadership traits with masculine traits (Schein, 1975) and to regard women as less effective or successful leaders (Harriman, 1985; Statham, 1986).

Research on the relationship between gender and the use of power have found that successful managers of both sexes get and use power strategies effectively. However, the strategies and styles most associated with competence (i.e., direct rather than manipulative; concrete resource mobilization rather than personal) are also associated with masculinity. All styles may be effective if used by a man, but masculine styles were found not to be effective when used by a woman. Thus women supervisors face a dilemma: they can manipulate and be unrecognized or be direct and risk ineffectiveness and hostility.

All performance evaluations are subjective. Not only may rating systems involve categories or activities that are gender stereotyped, but the choice of words in a written evaluation—as well as what is omitted—may exert subtle influence. Although women were found to be no less competent than men in a number of studies, there were differences in the way their performance was perceived and evaluated which resulted in an overall pro-male bias in performance evaluations (Harriman, 1985). For example, women were rated less desirable candidates for university department chairmanships (Fidell, 1970), and identical work was rated higher by both males and females when it was attributed to a man rather than to a woman (Mischel, 1974). The effects of subtle differences in written evaluations was identified by Thomas (1987) in a study of promotion evaluations in the Navy. Women candidates whose numerical evaluation scores were as high as the men’s were much less likely to have written comments commending for a position of commanding officer. Not only did supervisors’ silence work against them, but the written comments focused on gender stereotyped feminine traits (e.g., well groomed, supportive, sensitive) that are valued less highly than the masculine terms (aggressive, logical, mature) in which males were described.

In a study of men and women managers and their secretaries, Statham (1986) found not only that men and women managers tended to have different management styles, but that each was critical of the other’s style. Men saw women managers as too hovering and unwilling to delegate; the women viewed the autonomy that men gave subordinates as “neglect.” These findings have implications for women’s success because most women managers are supervised and evaluated primarily by men who regard their style as inadequate. For women police officials the problem is compounded by having mostly male subordinates who may share with male supervisors resistance to a “feminine” management style. The anticipation of such opposition was suggested by a survey of women eligible for promotion (Wexler and Quinn, 1985) that found that nearly half the women stated that their greatest concern in being a sergeant was related to the negative reception they expected within the department.

Turnover

Much of the literature on personnel turnover suggests that women in private industry have slightly higher turnover rates than men and that they leave jobs primarily due to family reasons, whereas men resign to accept other jobs. Others question these conclusions and suggest that women’s turnover is related to their overrepresentation in jobs that are poorly paid, unsatisfying, and require a low skill level (Kanter, 1977) as well as to high levels of sexual harassment and discrimination (O’Farrell and Harlan, 1982; Jurik, 1985). Jacobs (1989) also found both an unexpectedly high proportion of women entering male-dominated jobs and a high turnover rate as well. This led him to conclude that the barriers to women’s entry are lower than expected, but that employment in male-dominated occupations is less a permanent achievement for women than a temporary pass through a “revolving door.”

The research on gender differences in turnover rates in policing is inconsistent. Women’s turnover rate was found to be significantly higher than that of the men in the California Highway Patrol, the Royal Canadian Mounted Police (Linden and Minch, 1984), and one California sheriff’s department troubled by a generally high turnover rate (Fry, 1983). Although women made up 6 percent of the sheriff’s department personnel, they accounted for 17 percent of those leaving the department in the three years prior to Fry’s study. Their high turnover rate appeared to be related to their immediate assignment, however, since 71 percent of the women who resigned were assigned to the custody division (i.e., the jail) and 38 percent accepted employment with other law enforcement agencies. Another study (Sutton and Townsley, 1981) found that male and female turnover rates in municipal departments are similar. Martin (1990) found some support for both similarities and differences. Based on data from 303 municipal departments, women had a higher turnover rate during 1986 (6.3 percent) than men (4.6). The gender gap was even higher in state police agencies (8.9 percent for women versus 2.9 for men). At the same time, analysis of other factors affecting turnover indicated that in departments where women’s turnover was high, men’s separation rates also were
high. The association between male and female turnover rates suggests that the same factors affect each group: internal policies that weed out officers who do not "fit" and alternative employment opportunities. Further research is needed on both turnover rates and reasons that officers leave a department.

**Pregnancy Policy: The Emerging Legal Issue**

While the decade of the 1970s marked great strides in assuring legal equality for women, it also brought before the court the "harder" issue: how to deal equitably with biological differences between the sexes. Because only women can get pregnant, there is no way within our legal framework to treat men and women equally and equitably at the same time.

Underlying our legal framework are a set of assumptions and power relations that limit legal reasoning and affect decision making. One assumption is that men and women naturally and biologically occupy different roles in life. This has led to the view that being a worker and mother are incompatible and has resulted in maternity leave and other employment policies that put hardships on women.

In the 1970s in several cases the Supreme Court ruled that employers did not violate Title VII of the Civil Rights Act by denying sick-leave disability insurance or health insurance coverage to female employees to cover disabilities resulting from normal pregnancy. The court found no sex discrimination in California's disability insurance plan which excluded pregnancy from coverage but covered sex-linked disabilities such as prostate operations (Geduldig v. Atello, 1976). Likewise, in General Electric v. Gilbert (1976), the majority held that sex discrimination occurs only when men and women are treated differently with respect to a shared situation or characteristic. Since men cannot become pregnant, it was not discrimination against women to deny them health benefits for pregnancy. The employer simply removed one condition from the list of covered conditions.

In response, Congress passed the Pregnancy Disability Act in 1978, broadening the definition of sex discrimination to encompass pregnancy, childbirth, and related medical conditions. It prohibited an employer from: (1) requiring a woman to take leave set arbitrarily at a certain time during pregnancy; (2) failing to grant full reinstatement rights; (3) failing to pay disability or sick leave for pregnancy in the same manner as it pays for other employee disability or sick benefits; and (4) protecting a woman employee from "reproductive hazards" without scientific evidence that a hazard actually exists.

While clarifying Congressional intent, the law left the equal treatment/special treatment question unresolved, as have two apparently contradictory Supreme Court decisions (Wimberly v. Labor and Industrial Relations Commission of Missouri and California Federal Savings and Loan v. Guerra). These rulings leave it up to each state to decide whether to give pregnant women more favorable treatment than other workers that are physically unable to work. Federal law only requires states to treat women as well or badly as their disabled co-workers; states are permitted—but not obligated—to require employers to give additional benefits without being discriminatory.

Because police work poses the risk of unpredictable physical violence or injury which many departments regard as a "reproductive hazard," pregnancy raises a number of policy questions for departments which often are not covered by bargaining agreements and municipal personnel policies. Although many departments have "light duty" policies that permit officers who are temporarily disabled to work in noncontact positions, there appear to be no uniform policies or common practices with respect to: (1) the point at which the pregnant woman becomes "disabled" and, thereby, "unfit" for patrol or other duties; (2) the person(s) who make the determination of whether the woman should be reassigned or forced to take extended leave; and (3) the assignments that are suitable for an officer on light duty. As the number of women officers are pregnant at the same time increases, a department's deployment problems grow, increasing the need for consistent and clearly articulated policies that assure both adequate protection of the community and of the rights of pregnant officers.

In conclusion, the status of women in policing today is uncertain. Clearly the most blatant barriers that kept women out of police work for more than half a century have fallen, and women are entering policing in increasing numbers. Gaining admission to the occupation, however, is only a first step. Women officers still face discriminatory treatment that limits their options and opportunities for advancement. Nevertheless, as more women enter the occupation, move slowly into positions of authority, and serve as role models and sponsors for other women, there is reason for guarded optimism about the future of women in law enforcement, as well as a large number of questions waiting to be addressed.

**Notes**

1. In 1985 only 2 percent of the top corporate executives of Fortune 500 companies were women (Powell, 1988:75) and 6 percent of law firm partners were women according to an ABA study (Goldberg, 1991).

2. These studies assessed the Pennsylvania State Police (1973), Metropolitan Police of Washington, DC (Bloch and Anderson, 1974), the California Highway Patrol (California Highway Patrol, 1976), Denver (Bartlett and Rosenblum, 1977), Newton, Massachusetts (Kiziah and Morris, 1977), New York City (Sicher et al., 1978), and Philadelphia (Bartlett Associates, 1978, Phases I and II) police departments.

3. The women managers were described as "task-engrossed and person-oriented"; the men were "image-engrossed and autonomy-invested."

**References**

Section V Minorities in Policing


