2016

Female Police Officers' Perceptions and Experiences with Marginalization: A Phenomenological Study

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Walden University
2016

Abstract

Female Police Officers' Perceptions and Experiences with Marginalization: A

Phenomenological Study

by

Arlether Ann Wilson

MA, University of Houston Clear Lake, 2006

BS, University of Houston Downtown, 2002

Dissertation Submitted in Partial Fulfillment

of the Requirements for the Degree of

Doctor of Philosophy

Counseling Psychology

Walden University

September 2016

Abstract

There is a lack of female police officer representation in police departments nationwide.

Women's position, or lack thereof, in law enforcement is a topic of discussion in many

police literature reviews. However, there were minimal studies detailing female police

officers' personal experiences in the law enforcement profession. The purpose of this

phenomenological study was to describe and understand the perceptions and lived

experiences of female police officers, as well as the impact those experiences had on their

careers. Female participants from 3 police departments formed the purposive sample that

included 8 full-time female police officers. The feminist theory helped to clarify the

constructed meanings the women attached to their experiences. In-depth interviews were

conducted, and the data analysis was guided by the Stevick-Colaizzi-Keen method. The

findings revealed that all of the women pursued law enforcement careers and remained in

the profession for reasons similar to what they perceived to be the reasons among the

male police officers in their respective departments. The participants also suggested that

the perceived intentional institutional barriers did not impact the female police officers'

job satisfaction. This study contributes to social change by raising awareness about the

current status, concerns, and accomplishments of women in law enforcement.

Additionally, findings may assist police administrators and legislators in creating policies

and procedures that incorporate the needs of female officers.

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Dedication

This dissertation is dedicated to my two children. Anthony and Jerica, I remember when completing my terminal degree was just a vision. I often think of those days and I am in awe of how far we have come. The two of you were my motivation to conquer whatever challenges came my way. I am also proud of you for pursuing and completing your own goals, for being great children, and for understanding the value of persistence, dedication and education. I love you both.

Acknowledgments

I finally achieved one of my most challenging but rewarding life goals. However, this journey could not be accomplished without the help of my professor, Dr. Arcella Trimble. Thank you for believing in my vision and for your dedication. I also want to thank Dr. Reba Glidewell and Dr. John Astin for supporting and guiding me throughout this project. Marcia Roberson, we traveled this road together. We were each other's support during residency, internship, and all of the challenges and triumphs. Thank you for always being there. You're a true friend. Marcella Touchstone, I can't forget you and Victoria. Thank you for always remaining calm during the storm and for your unconditional friendship and support. Jeanette, thank you for your support, motivation and true friendship. Jessica, thank you for always being in my corner, for your unconditional support and for sharing your home without question. You are the epitome of a true friend. You never complained. You were just always eager to help. I love you and you can always count on me. A special thanks to Dr. Nicole Dorsey, Dr. Uche Chibueze, Mary Martinez, Dr. Carolyn Clansy Miller, Dr. Pauline Clansy, Andrea Works, Adrienne Gilmore, Krishun Bryant, Dr. Monique Grant, and Nettie.

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Chapter 1: Introduction to the Study

There has been minimal change in demographics of U.S. law enforcement. Thus far, many female and minority recruitment campaigns have been unsuccessful, and after more than 100 years of policing, there is a lack of adequate research on policewomen's experiences (Burke & Mikkelsen, 2005). In order to effectively maintain female interest in law enforcement, their needs and experiences should be incorporated when developing new policies. Currently, police administrators still report retention and recruiting problems for minorities (Faggiani, Fridell, Jordan & Kubu, 2009; Shelley, Morabito, & Tobin-Gurley, 2011), and many promotions for women have been met with resistance (Hassell, Archbold, & Stichman, 2011). There has also been pressure for police administrators to implement more effective and comprehensive recruitment campaigns throughout the country in an effort to attract more women to the police profession (Somvadee & Morash, 2008).

There is some discrepancy about the actual number of certified female police officers. However, the number of female police officers is steadily declining (Nicholas, 2012). Women are still underrepresented at all ranks, and the numbers are lower and sometimes nonexistent in rural areas. In 1972, women represented 2% of all police departments (International Association of Chiefs of Police [IACP], 1999; Nicholas, 2013), and between 1990 and 1997, that number increased to 14.3% (Langston, 2010). According to the National Center for Women and Policing [NCWP], (2002) female representation in law enforcement declined by almost 2% in 2001. Today women only account for 12.7% of the law enforcement population nationally (Lonsway, 2007;

career. Studying these issues may provide information about how to reduce officer burnout and decrease officer turnover.

Because women are highly underrepresented and the number of women entering the profession appears stagnant, exploring women's position in the law enforcement profession is vital. Specifically, exploring female officer's job satisfaction may provide information about why their integration into the profession remains low. Likewise, studying years of experience may shed light on why some officers achieve tenure while others do not. Finally, mentoring is a crucial variable to examine because female officer retention continues to be a problem. Hassell et al. (2011) compared the workplace experiences of male and female officers and revealed that mentoring improved integration, career development, and female officer camaraderie. Oftentimes, new hires are only teamed up with a veteran officer during the initial training period. Formal long-term mentoring program may be beneficial to female police officer's overall job success.

Marginalization is a central topic in the majority of female police officer studies. Reckdenwald & Parker (2008) described the relevance of marginalization as underscoring the disadvantaged position of women relative to men in the labor market, home, and families. The investigation into female officer marginalization revealed limited studies. In particular, most of the research is related to how marginalization influences the female crime rate, the marginalization of African American police officers, and barriers to the integration of female in policing (Price, 1996; Reckdenwald & Parker, 2008; Wetendorf, 2007). Women may be subjected to inequitable treatment because they

are perceived as a threat by male police officers. Nonetheless, few scholars have documented female officers' personal experiences of marginalization.

Background

The fight for women's rights and gender equality began more than a century ago (Shelley et al., 2011). Gender equality is a global campaign that seeks to place a higher value on the work that women do. Since that time, legislation such as the Equal Opportunity Employment Act has been instrumental in helping women enter the law enforcement profession. Today women are the main breadwinners in 4 out of 10 homes and earn more college degrees than men (Institute for Women's Policy Research, 2012). Although women make up nearly half of the workforce, there is still some disparity when evaluating the wage gap. Despite the positive contributions women have made in the labor market, being accepted by their male counterparts is also a challenge. Often through mandates, women continue to gain entry into male-dominated professions. However, once they enter, institutional barriers are implemented, and women are rarely afforded opportunities for promotion or advancement (Seklecki & Paynich, 2007). Given such prevalence, others may know a woman working in a male-dominated profession who has experienced this problem.

By the 1980s, the male dominated profession of law enforcement began to acknowledge women's presence in the field. Female police officers had achieved representation in law enforcement, which allowed their experiences to be studied (Seklecki & Paynich, 2007). However, research on female police officers contributions is conflicting and dated (Hassell et al., 2010; Kim & Merlo, 2010). The bulk of police

research has focused on the growth of women in law enforcement, barriers, sexual

harassment, gender differences, why women are deterred from the profession, physical

limitations, instruments used during the recruitment process, and the stress endured after

entry into the profession (Hassell et al., 2011; Prenzler, 2008; Rabe-Hemp, 2008;

Somvadee & Morash, 2008; Thompson et al., 2008; Woolsey, 2010). As a result,

accurate accounts of women's experiences in law enforcement may be limited because

female officer turnover is high and recruitment numbers remain low. Though women are

equally as capable of performing most police work, the unfairness in recruitment efforts

and selection practices prevent women from entering the profession (Seklecki & Paynich,

2007).

Investigating the barriers that affect female police officer's work performance,

retention and recruitment are also important.   For example, Burke & Mikkelsen (2005)

suggested that barriers such as discrimination, sexual harassment, and equality are

consistent complaints reported by female police officers who seek to challenge the

traditional law enforcement policies and procedures. However, the passage of Title VII

of the 1964 Civil Rights Act and the Equal Opportunity Act and the Pregnancy Act of

1978 was instrumental in holding police administrators civilly liable for inequitable

treatment of female employees (Dodge, Valcore, & Gomez, 2011). Women still struggle

to attain full acceptance into the police profession. Moreover, concerns about peer

acceptance and being viewed as a competent police officer are one of the greatest

concerns of female officers (Woolsey, 2010). In addition to a lack of career

advancement, women experience inaccurate judgments about their work ethic and low morale.

Gender inequality in patriarchal institutions contributes to women's subordinate status and underscores their disadvantaged positions (Reckdenwald & Parker, 2008). Consequently, studying the perceptions of female officers is vital to accurately capture women's contributions to the law enforcement profession. Women's feelings of isolation and lack of access to mentors is consistently documented in the research (Burke & Mikkelsen 2005; Hassell et al., 2011; Shelley et al., 2011). The results of earlier police studies rely solely on men's perspectives of support and fail to take women's point of view into consideration.

Variables

Years of police experience is an important variable to study because some female officers have been able to earn tenure and promotions. The research purports that, years of police service appears to have a significant effect on job satisfaction (Hassell et al., 2011). In fact, previous research revealed female police officers believe they are expected to work harder, and in many cases attain higher education in order to prove their competence when seeking advancement. Perhaps women who have achieved longevity in the profession have had time to develop better coping skills. However, differences in work performance may be attributable to the difference in the officer's support system and experiences while working in the field.

The variable job satisfaction was also examined because researchers have reported women as having a moderate degree of regret over their career choices

(Krimmel & Gormley, 2003). Although findings were mixed, female police officers experience more work-related stress than their male counterparts (Krimmel & Gormley, 2003). Burnout absenteeism, alcoholism, and an increased suicide risk have been linked to female officer job dissatisfaction (Krimmel & Gormley, 2003). Work-related stress may also be linked to poor job performance. This is in addition to the threat of violence and exposure to tragedy often witnessed by police officers (Dowler & Arai, 2008). While there is ample research on gender differences in policing, few scholars have explored the job satisfaction of policewomen.

Mentoring is a crucial variable because a lack of support and mentors for female officers has also been documented in the literature. Having support for one's work activities may be helpful in reducing overall stress, burnout, and psychological problems (Hassell et al., 2011; Morash, Kwak, & Haar, 2006). Supplying mentors to women in male-dominated professions may provide a less intimidating environment and improve overall job performance. Some researchers are not opposed to using men as mentors for female police officers who are compassionate about women's issues as mentors. According to Woolsey (2010), mentoring can decrease liability by providing resources to assist female officers in resolving complaints before they escalate. Additionally, access to more mentors may increase cohesiveness and the morale of female officers.

Problem Statement

Researchers have mainly focused on women's work performance and capabilities in the law enforcment profession. Furthermore, perceptions of discrimination has often been a major topic in those studies. There has also been inconsistent findings about the

current status and number of women entering and leaving the law enforcement profession. Since the implementation of the 1972 Civil Rights Act, women have gained minimal recognition in the field of law enforcement. There is a perception that the number of female police officers remains low because of a lack of qualified applicants. However, women still face internal and external obstacles when seeking equality in law enforcement (Rabe-Hemp, 2008). A review of the research, revealed women have made some progress in the profession and at one point accounted for nearly 14.3% of all sworn police officers in 1997 (Langston, 2010). However, since 2007, that number has steadily declined to approximately 11.3%, with women comprising 7.3% of supervisory positions in large departments and 3.8% in smaller agencies (Shelley et al., 2011). Although there has been a tremendous outpouring of support and suggestions from female networking and mentoring organizations, few women have attained administrative status.

Female police officers still face continued resistance, sexual harassment from male colleagues, and a proverbial glass ceiling to promotions. Haas et al. (2009) revealed that while sexual harassment is prevalent in many male dominated organizations, police officers from 35 countries revealed that 77% experienced sexual harassment from colleagues. Consequently, affirmative action programs have not been successful in diversifying police departments or i-ncreasing women's representation in the police profession (Haas et al., 2009). Perhaps the recent changes in the workforce demographics may assist police managers and policymakers makers in developing policies and procedures that are supportive of women, provide opportunities for advancement, and take their family responsibilities into consideration. In addition,

recruitment campaigns may provide women with a voice in the profession and the self-confidence needed to sustain a police career.

Purpose of the Study

The purpose of this qualitative study was to describe, analyze, and understand the perceptions and lived experiences of female police officers using interviews and questionnaires to determine how years of police experience, job satisfaction, and mentoring may have impacted them and their careers. Any instances with marginalization and sexual harassment were also described and analyzed to determine how those experiences may have influenced their careers

Research Questions

Several questions guided this study. The central question was the following: What do female police officers experience? The subquestions were the following: (a) How does what female police officers experience impact their career? (b) What situations have influenced female police officer's job satisfaction? and (c) How do female officers experience mentoring?

Nature of the Study

I employed a qualitative, phenomenological research design to conduct this study. The goal of this study was to explore the perception of female officers' years of experience, job satisfaction, and mentoring to examine how those variables may have impacted them and their careers. I designed this study to collect information from female police officers to capture the meaning of their lived experiences (Rudestam & Newton, 2007).

To achieve the goals of the study, I collected data from female police officers who met the selection criteria (described in Chapter 3). Once I was given permission to conduct the study, the interviews were audio recorded. Each participant was interviewed face-to-face. The qualitative research included a demographic information sheet (see Appendix C) to collect information regarding the participants' age, gender, ethnicity, years of police experience, and current officer rank. I used open-ended questions as described in the interview guide (see Appendix E). Participant interviews and field notes were also used as a backup and to document my thoughts and any pertinent observations captured during the interviews.

A qualitative design was best for this study because it allowed me to document female police officers' accurate responses to their individual subjective experiences. Furthermore, the study took place in a southeastern state. I chose this location because it had a large population of police officers. The chosen state had a population of more than 26,069,203 and employed 756,246 sworn police officers (U.S. Census Bureau, 2012). Information about the questionnaire, participant interviews, and sampling design are provided in Chapter 3.

Conceptual Framework

This phenomenological study was guided by the feminist theory. For more than a century, feminist theorists have worked to promote individualism and self-development of all women (Eisenstein, 2010). The theory of feminism has been instrumental in highlighting how earlier models inadequately explain women's positions in the past and future (Grosz, 2010). A central theme of feminism is concerned with issues of

oppression and social and power relations, regardless of race or sexual orientation (Lay & Daley, 2007).

Feminism was ultimately created by women to make women's concerns more visible. Using a feminist lens allowed me to view female police officer challenges from a holistic and historical perspective. Feminism is grounded in nearly every other discipline including sociology, physiology, and philosophy (Loftsdottir, 2011; Lay & Daley, 2007). Previous researchers choose the Acker's Gendered Theory and the theory of Tokenism to explain the issues and disparities between male and female police officers. According to the theory of feminism, supporting equal rights for women is necessary and demands equal pay, promotions, and provision of the same benefits provided to their male counterparts. The Theory of Feminism advocates for women, as well as social platform to combat the activities that attempt to suppress women.

Definition of Terms

Discrimination: This term is used to explain several types of oppressive behaviors including sex discrimination, race discrimination, and age discrimination (Kurtz, Linnemann, & Williams, 2012).

Equality: When the both sexes are equally represented throughout culture without the sex that is different becoming subordinate (Siegel, 2013).

Hegemonic masculinity: This term argues that society privileges a single normative ideal of male behavior and provides a broad sociological framework for understanding harassment, gender, and power. Men may be vulnerable to harassment if they are perceived as feminine (McLaughlin, Uggen & Blackstone, 2012).

Inequality: Inequity exists for a person whenever his/her perceived job inputs and/or outcomes stand psychologically in an obverse relation to what he or she perceives are the inputs and/or outcomes of other (Tims, 2016).

Job satisfaction: Job satisfaction is defined as workers wanting autonomy within their positions, recognition of their achievements, ample family and leisure time, and sufficient and fair pay (Gabbidon & Higgins, 2012).

Marginalization: Marginalization is a multidimensional and dynamic phenomenon reflecting a complex interplay between every person's vulnerability and political, economic, social, and cultural features (Nissen, 1999).

Mentoring: The mentoring process involves a more experienced individual helping someone less experienced to develop his or her capabilities and maximize his or her potential (Crouch, 2005).

Sexual harassment: Described as unwelcome sexual advances, requests for sexual favors, and other verbal or physical conduct of a sexual nature" that interferes with one's employment or work performance or creates a hostile or offensive work environment" (U.S. EEOC, 2011)

Police officer/deputy: Police personnel are uniformed officers who regularly patrol and respond to calls for service. Others are investigators, perform court-related duties, or work in administrative or other assignments (US Legal, 2014).

Assumptions

I assumed that the female police officers willingly and honestly provided feedback regarding the perception of their work experiences.

Scope and Delimitations

Each participant was required to be female, full-time, sworn police officers and have a minimum of 1 year law enforcement experience. The study was limited to female officers who were recruited from one county police department, and two constable departments in the southeastern United States.

Limitations

There were several limitations to this study. Because the participants were sampled from three police agencies in the Southeastern region, the main limitation in this study was the lack of generalizability. Another limitation was that there were only two high ranking officers, and the participants were primarily African American and non-Hispanic. Therefore, the findings may not generalize to larger metropolitan police departments. The findings of this study may lend insight to future qualitative studies where researchers are seeking to understand the factors that impact female police officer job satisfaction

Significance of the Study

According to Prenzler (2008), the discussion of female police officers has been marginal in police research. In police studies, scholars have investigated gender differences, barriers to entry, marksmanship, job satisfaction, stress, discrimination, and sexual harassment (Drew, Carless, & Thompson, 2008; Kurtz et al., 2012; Somvadee & Morash, 2008; Shelley et al., 2012). This research will contribute to the literature by identifying and analyzing female officers' lived experiences. The findings may contribute to social change providing female officers' voices to the literature and

identifying those factors and variables that may have influenced the female officers and their careers.

Summary

There has been some structural changes in U. S. police profession (Zhao, Herbst, & Lovrich, 2001). Yet, the number of female police officers employed in police departments are still disproportionate when compared to male police officers. In this study, I described and analyzed female police officers' work experiences and how years of police experience, job satisfaction, and mentoring impacted the perception of their careers. Demographic information, researcher notes, and questions related to job satisfaction, discrimination, and mentoring was used to analyze the variables related to the study. There are police studies on variables such as job satisfaction, job performance, gender differences, stress, and the inequitable treatment of female officers; however, no scholars have combined the variables of job satisfaction, years of police experience, and mentoring to determine if the variables influence female police officers' perception of their career.

By studying female police officers' lived experiences and perceptions, the study addressed a gap in the literature. The findings of this study may also empower female police officers and provide women a voice in U.S. law enforcement agencies. Furthermore, findings could assist in developing recruitment campaigns that use more women as leaders and mentors. The results may also shed light on factors that decrease attrition, stress-related illnesses, and psychological abnormalities. Chapter 2 includes an in-depth examination of literature regarding the history of women in law enforcement,

contradictions about women's current representation in the police profession, recruitment

issues, gender stereotypes, as well as discrimination and sexual harassment

Chapter 2: Literature Review

Introduction

The 1800's were known as the matron and domesticated period for women in law enforcement. Thus women were not permitted to be employed as police officers during the first 100 years of policing (Kurtz et al., 2012). After years of debate and government involvement, women were allowed into the profession at the beginning of the 1800s. Although entry was permitted, initially women were not granted the full rights and responsibilities provided to their male counterparts. At that point, women's roles in policing were limited to working alongside their sheriff husbands (Archbold & Schulz, 2012). Though faced with adversity, female police officers continued to grow and redefine their roles as both women and enforcers of the law.

By 1845, two women were appointed as matrons to handle females held in police custody and sheltered runaways (Dodge et al., 2011; Hatteberg, Hammrich, & Glass, 1992; Koenig, 1978; Prenzler & Sinclair, 2013). Thereafter, the first female police officer was elected, Mrs. Marie Owens, in 1893, followed by Mrs. Lola Baldwin, a safety worker in Portland, Oregon in 1905 (Koenig, 1978; Prenzler & Sinclair, 2013). In 1910, Mrs. Alice Stebbins Wells, a social worker, was credited with being the first "regular policewoman" in Los Angeles, California (Lonsway, 2007; National Center for Women in Policing [NCWP], 2010; Rabe-Hemp, 2007). By the 1950s and 1960s, female officers were still absent from patrol divisions, but increased in visibility as traffic squad officers at schools (Prenzler & Sinclair 2013). However, because of the inconsistencies between male and female officer work, much of the research on women in law enforcement

focuses on examining and understanding gender disparities specific to female officer work-related problems.

Female officers' entry into the law enforcement profession has dominated police literature. In earlier studies, scholars focused on variables such as absenteeism, gender differences, tokenism, barriers to entry, job performance, job satisfaction, stress, discrimination, sexual harassment, marksmanship, and physical abilities (Carmen & Greene, 2002; Krimmel & Gormley, 2003; Haas et al., 2009; Somvadee & Morash, 2008). Many of those variables have been linked to retention and an officer's intention to quit (Hassell et al., 2011). However, there may be political and social significance related to a female officer's decision to leave the profession. To date, researchers have not combined the variables of job satisfaction, years of police experience, and mentoring to determine how they impact the female officer's career. Studying these variables may provide information about how to reduce officer burnout and decrease officer turnover.

A phenomenological, qualitative approach was used to investigate the different attitudes and perspectives on inequalities that female police officers may be subjected to. The participants were from an area in the Southeastern states. In the first section of Chapter 2, I detailed the theoretical foundations of feminist theory. In the second section, I focused on the women's entry into law enforcement, disparities reported by women officers while working alongside their male counterparts, the significance of the study, the purpose, and research questions formulated during the study. The existing literature and legislation related to equal opportunities, discrimination, and the historical challenges and barriers women faced prior to entering the law enforcement profession is included in

the third section. The final section is followed by an explanation of recruitment issues in law enforcement.

Literature Search

The literature review included published literature related to women's roles in law enforcement. The process to find literature was approached in a structured and systematic fashion in an attempt to capture gender differences, the history of law enforcement, workplace experiences, and recruitment issues. Published journals and peer-reviewed articles were obtained from the library of Walden University using Academic Search Complete, Psych Articles, Psych Info, and ProQuest Criminal Justice. Hard copies of published dissertations were also obtained through Walden's library. Several key words were used during the searches, such as *law enforcement, women, gender differences, police officers, marginalization, criminal justice, tokenism, Inequalities,* and *discrimination*. Each source was evaluated to determine any appropriate information relevant to this study.

Impact of Civil Rights on Law Enforcement

During the 1960s, women established a presence in policing although their numbers remained small. However, public concern about male police officer's aggression and use of excessive force prompted legislators to push for more diversity in law enforcement agencies. Public concern spiked about male police officers' maltreatment and insensitivity toward minority students who were involved in the Civil Rights Movement protests (NCWP, 2002; Seklecki & Paynich, 2007). As more innocent people were subjected to police wrongdoings, legislators saw the need to develop police

policies that would accommodate the needs of all communities. Because women were noted as taking a more sensitive approach to the public, legislators proposed hiring more women as a way to eliminate any concerns.

By 1970, the female role in policing continued to expand, and a limited number of female officers were assigned to patrol divisions. Progress happened slowly, and women were confined to caregiver roles; however, women continued to gain traction in the fight for equality, with the assistance of court mandates and public concern. Although the police culture traditionally promotes masculinity, both women and men are equally capable of performing police tasks. Both men and women possess the skill necessary for policing; women may use a different policing style. Female officers can be less confrontational, better at de-escalating hostile situations, and possess better communication skills (NCWP, 2002; Rabe-Hemp, 2011; Seklecki & Paynich, 2007; Zhao et al., 2001). As pressure from the community continued to mount for the implementation of a friendlier style of policing, police administrators could no longer deny the advantages of hiring female police officers. By the early 1970s, many police agencies began implementing a community-oriented model of policing. Law enforcement agencies were encouraged to restructure their recruitment programs and develop job descriptions, policies, and procedures that included attributes of both male and female officers.

While most police agencies implemented the community-oriented style of policing and began hiring women on their own, government legislation was necessary to ensure that women continued to gain equality in the labor market. The 1972

Congressional Amendment to the 1964 Civil Rights Act was instrumental in helping

women progress through the labor market. The rulings led to the mandated inclusion of

more women in male-dominated professions (Dodge et al., 2011), and legislators pledged

to withhold funding to employers who did not comply. Legislation continued to develop,

including the passing of the Affirmative Action and the Equal Opportunity Act, which

was implemented to provide equal opportunities in employment and education. The goal

was to ensure that women, African Americans, and individuals with disabilities would

have equal access to educational and employment opportunities (Rabe-Hemp, 2007;

Shelley et al., 2011; Somvadee & Morash, 2008). The legislation also advised

businesses, including law enforcement agencies, not to discriminate against applicants

based on their sex, race, color, religion, or national origin (Dodge et al., 2011; Kurtz et

al., 2012; Prenzler & Sinclair, 2013). In addition, the regulations protect employees from

retaliation related to reporting discriminatory acts.

        The government continued to back gender equality in the workforce, passing

more legislation specific to the law enforcement field. The 1973 Crime Control Act was

instrumental in increasing women's representation in policing, preventing any agency

from receiving federal funds from engaging in sex discrimination (Koenig, 1978;

Leskinen, Cortina, & Kabat, 2011). This ruling placed more legal obligations on police

administrators and allowed women more access in policing. In many instances,

administrators remained unsupportive, intentionally hiring a minimum number of

minorities just to maintain compliance and governmental support.

Consent decrees were another by product of affirmative action and equal employment opportunity programs. These types of laws compelled businesses to take certain actions. In regard to police departments, consent decrees mandated that police administrators include women and minorities in the hiring and promotion process (Allen, 2003; Woolsey, 2010). Allen (2003) collected data from three police departments in different states to determine the effectiveness of each department's affirmative action program. A total of 150 in-depth interviews were conducted with police officers including 15 top administrators (Allen, 2003). The study revealed that male officers from three police departments felt pressure from the courts and financial persuasion to hire minorities and women officers. The size of a community's minority population may play a role in whether affirmative action programs are used in certain police departments. Larger minority populations did not guarantee that a higher number of minority officers were hired. More research needs to be conducted on the effectiveness of affirmative action programs because subtle forms of discrimination still exist (Allen, 2003).

Although an effective tool for many years, some flaws still remained with the consent decree system. Most consent decrees are used to meet hiring quotas and are only in place for a specific number of years. Agencies under consent decrees often double the number of women in their departments compared to agencies without consent decrees (Woolsey, 2010). For example, a Pittsburgh Police Department was bound by a consent decree from 1975 to 1991. Today, that agency's consent decrees have expired, and female officer representation has declined (Woolsey, 2010). At present, consent decrees are rarely used, and it is normal for previous practices to return once a decree expires

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(Woolsey, 2010). Oftentimes, once decrees are no longer in effect, the number of women hired also decreases. This is why women's organizations favor the continued use of consent decrees to maintain diversity in police departments (NCWP, 2002; Woolsey, 2010).

Today police departments are more diverse (Dodge et al., 2008; Hassell et al., 2011). In the past, women's roles in law enforcement were created to supervise women and juveniles that male officers were not accustomed to dealing with (Hattegerg et al., 1992; Kurtz et al., 2012; Prenzler & Sinclair, 2013; Seklecki & Paynich, 2007). Policing is still regarded as a male-dominated profession, and most agencies are structured based on gender stereotypes (Kurtz et al., 2012). There is still some opposition to women working as police officers, which may also negatively impact recruitment. Furthermore, there is some debate about female officers' physical abilities and their contributions to the law enforcement profession (Seklecki & Paynich, 2007). Once women began their entry into policing, affirmative action programs, EEOC legislation, and consent decrees were necessary to ensure police administrators diversified their agencies. Yet, the implementation of these programs has minimally increased female officer retention and recruitment. In the past, many agencies temporarily abided by these guidelines or used tactics to dissuade women from seeking careers in law enforcement.

Recruitment of Women in Law Enforcement

Police administrators are facing a debilitating crisis; previous recruitment efforts have failed to sufficiently increase female officer representation. In the early 20th century, women were recruited to handle troubled teen girls after political pressure was

applied by women's groups (Appier, 1998). Today, female officers are still on a mission

to redefine their roles as police officers. However, the literature related to the recruitment

of female officers remains sparse, and locating adequate data remains a challenge.

Consequently, it is difficult to monitor women's progress or the effectiveness of

recruitment programs. For instance, Prenzler & Sinclair (2013) conducted an

international assessment related to the status of women in policing, comparing findings

from police departments in 16 countries: England, Wales, Scotland, Northern Ireland,

United States, Erie, New Zealand, South Africa, Ghana, Nigeria, Canada, Australia,

India, Pakistan, Hong Kong, Papua New Guinea, and Fiji. In 2010, female officer

representation in the United States was at 11.8% when examining data from 14,744

agencies (Prenzler & Sinclair, 2013). Furthermore, India had the lowest female

representation at 5.1% in 2010 (Prenzler & Sinclair, 2013). There is a need to conduct

further research on the recruitment of female officers.

The need for special legislation to improve equal employment opportunities for

women in the labor force is apparent in most police research (Prenzler & Sinclair, 2013;

Rabe-Hemp, 2008). Such legislation led to Felicia Schpritzer, a New York policewoman,

successfully suing the city in 1961 to take the sergeant's examination (Duffin, 2010;

Koenig, 1978; Rabe-Hemp, 2008). Schpritzer's case was litigated through the Supreme

Court of New York, and her efforts set a new precedent allowing female officers to apply

to take promotion exams. Through her commitment to increase equality for women in

policing, she helped paved the way for other women to freely seek advancement

opportunities during their law enforcement careers. With her effort and the support of the

federal government, women felt more compelled to fight for equal rights as policewomen.

Women comply with or tolerate unfair departmental rules while attempting to fully assimilate into the police culture (NCWP, 2002; Prenzler & Sinclair, 2013). Possible inequities become apparent to female officers during the recruitment phase, the police academy, and extend throughout the female officer's career. For example, agency administrators discouraged male officers from socializing with female officers in an effort to embellish any perceived differences (Shelley et al., 2011). Moreover, women are routinely assigned gender-specific duties, which involve women being pulled from the streets to deal with social-service-related issues such as caring for runaway teens (Krimmel & Gormley, 2003; Rabe-Hemp, 2011). However, confining female officers to caregiver duties is not always desirable to potential candidates and may be viewed as subtle discrimination (Rabe-Hemp, 2011). To combat this problem, women's organizations recommend that agencies develop recruitment programs that display women performing a variety of police duties. Each program should include an unbiased recruitment committee, female panelist, media campaigns, properly trained recruiters, and a strategy to monitor all recruitment efforts (Langston, 2010; NCWP, 2002).

Some agencies have eliminated the traditional boot camp model in order to increase the effectiveness of recruitment campaigns. This includes adopting a form of policing known as community policing (Matthies, Keller, & Lim, 2012). The community policing model was adopted during the late 1980s and the 1900s. It is a style of policing that helps residents build rapport with police, create personal connections, as well as

increase the agency's legitimacy (Matthies et al., 2012; Miller, 1999). Many citizens tend to favor the elements of community policing that stress community education, victim assistance, public service, and collaborative policing (Prenzler & Sinclair, 2013; Rabe-Hemp, 2008, 2011; Zhao et al., 2001).

Community policing has been successful because it relies on the positive attributes of female officers, such as emphasizing communication to de-escalate hostile situations and rarely discharging duty weapons (Krimmel & Gormley, 2003; Prenzler & Sinclair, 2013; Rabe-Hemp, 2008, 2011). Additionally, female officers tend to favor community policing because women are known to be more patient and supportive of citizens (Lonsway, 2003). It is actually a more community friendly approach to policing; however, there appears to be a social service feature involved.

There is a need for agencies to redefine the skills and representation of what it means to be a police officer (NCWP, 2010). Perhaps it would be helpful if agencies looked beyond traditional methods of recruiting, such as military personnel, because the population of women in that profession is also low (NCWP, 2010). While candidates with military experience are typically viewed as a better fit to the traditional police model, researchers argue that seeking candidates from other diverse professions may be beneficial.

Women were used in the police force because of public concern about allegations of police brutality, corruption, as well as the high cost of litigating these cases (Duffin, 2010; Hassell et al., 2011; NCWP, 2002; Rabe-Hemp, 2008; Seklecki & Paynich, 2007). However, the literature did not offer explanations for why some administrators are doing

a poor job of recruiting more females. In fact, most of those studies include respondents from correctional institutions and focus on female officer motivations for pursuing a police career and their work environment. This further revealed the importance of creating more dialogue related to female police officer's work experiences and the traditions they hope to generate (Rabe-Hemp, 2008; Shelley et al., 2011).

In conclusion, there is a need for future research surveying participants from law enforcement agencies and not juvenile or correctional facilities. The research also revealed a need to eliminate the traditional police model and seek police candidates from sources other than the military (NCWP, 2010). Creating opportunities for female officers to earn leadership and supervisory positions has also been suggested. This is pertinent since the number of females continues to fluctuate and has yet to reach a representation of 20 percent. Overall, data related to female officer's roles, recruitment, and current status is conflicting. Some researchers report an increase in female officer representation, while others report a steady decline (Langston, 2010). Based on the research, it may be necessary to re-evaluate and adjust many of the skills previously required to successfully complete police academies. Historically, women's organizations have been critical of any disparities, which have resulted in an increase in recruitment programs, Civil Rights legislation and implementation of community policing models to decrease the hiring gap. As a result, additional research is necessary to effectively record women's presence and contributions to the law enforcement profession.

Barriers to the Recruitment of Women

Although police chiefs insist otherwise, research shows the biggest barrier to the

recruitment of women in the police force is their fellow male officers (Franklin, 2005;

Lonsway, 2003). Milgram (2002) insist police chiefs desire to hire more female police

officers, but claim few women are applying. However, a review of the literature revealed

that most police studies related to female officers documents discrimination and the

negative attitudes of male officers as the main barrier to the recruitment of women

(Franklin, 2005; NCWP, 2002; Shelley et al., 2011). The lack of recruitment may be

fueled by the obstacles and impediments that still exist when women challenge traditional

departmental policies. For example, the usual recruitment process usually includes an

application process followed by oral interviews, a written exam, physical agility tests,

psychological evaluations, drug screenings and background checks. However, researchers

posit the requirements for passing physical agility tests are revised since the skills

mastered are rarely used in the field (Langston, 2010; Rabe-Hemp, 2008). Furthermore,

the findings in oral reviews are subjective and may place female candidates at a

disadvantage. Many of the above concerns may be addressed or eliminated by including

more women on police interview panels.

When examining the police literature, gender discrimination, sexual harassment,

male officer resistance, and a lack of support continue to negatively impact the careers of

female officers. Police studies have documented incidents where male police officers

encourage females to work with women and juveniles to maintain traditional roles

(Hassell et al., 2011; Rabe-Hemp, 2008). The current literature further reported instances

where women felt compelled to take on masculine characteristics or be viewed as inferior (Dodge et al., 2011; Rabe-Hemp, 2008). In general, women are expected to maintain their femininity but are often penalized for doing so. When female officers were noncompliant, they were chastised, labeled as weak and had difficulty soliciting support (Hassell et al., 2011). Today, women are still expected to prove their physical competency beyond what males usually do.

Research suggests that men and women enter the law enforcement profession for the same reasons, and some report the same level of job satisfaction (Dodge et al., 2011). However, findings also suggest that female officers leave the profession for different reasons when compared with male officers (Dodge et al., 2011). Those reasons are usually related to some form of discrimination, lack of advancement, or family responsibilities. Researchers posit these obstacles exist because chauvinism is deeply rooted in every aspect of policing and male officers view women's presence emasculating the profession (Prenzler & Sinclair, 2013; Rabe-Hemp, 2008). Thus male officers are of the mindset that if women can do police work, it cannot be that difficult (Dodge et al., 2011).

Advancing to administrative or management positions is also challenging and oftentimes discouraging for female officers (Dodge et al., 2011). This is particularly relevant in special divisions such as, Special Weapons and Tactics Team (SWAT). In 2001, only 17% of the 40,000 registered tactical officers were female (Dodge et al., 2011). Although in 1997 researchers confirmed that 90% of agencies with a population of at least 50,000 residents had a special division (Dodge et al., 2011). This includes

special response teams (SRT) and emergency response units (ERU), which deal with raids, suicide attempts, hostage negotiations, and the use of special weapons (Dodge et al., 2011). The Dodge et al. (2011) study revealed that women who participated in these divisions usually held decoy positions (prostitutes). The authors also noted that the female officers did not view the assignments as demeaning, but viewed it as an opportunity for future advancement.

Sexual Harassment

Sexual harassment is evident in many male dominated professions. Legally, sex discrimination occurs when someone is treated unfavorably because of his or her gender, especially in reference to hiring, firing, and promotions (EEOC, 2010). In general, sex discrimination does not have to include sexual actions, therefore, many incidents of harassment may never be reported (Hamilton, 2011). Researchers assert that three forms of sexual harassment exist in the workplace: gender harassment (nonsexual), unwanted sexual attention (uninvited sexual comments or gestures), and sexual coercion, which involves work related intimidation or rewards used to attain sex (Haas, Timmerman, & Hoing, 2009). Some researchers concluded that gender harassment should be differentiated from unwanted sexual attention and sexual coercion. In the law enforcement culture, some incidents are viewed as unwanted sexual attention while others are considered disrespectful to women (Leskinen et al., 2011).

Haas et al. (2009) reviewed a study conducted by Sbraga and O'Donohue (2000). The purpose of the study was to determine if women and men felt equally impacted by sexual harassment. The study concluded that respondents reported numerous

psychological and physical complications as a result of being exposed to sexual harassment. Incidents of uncontrollable crying, irritability, anger, depression, serious illness, injuries, weight loss, and fatigued were also documented (Haas et al., 2009). Although the study did not reveal gender differences, results indicated that males and females who report sexual harassment appear equally affected (Haas et al., 2009).

Since the passage of the Civil Rights Act, several cases have helped to establish legal precedent regarding sexual harassment. Actually two cases helped to determine the criteria for measuring a supervisor's behavior in sexual harassment cases. The *Meritor Savings Bank v. Vinson (1986)* concluded that hostile work environment and harassment was considered illegal (Leskinen et al., 2011). The outcome would be related to whether the perpetrator's actions were considered cruel (Leskinen et al., 2011). The court found in favor of Vinson, acknowledging that the plaintiff had previously been promoted based on her work performance. Furthermore, the court ruled that the intimate relationship between the employee and her supervisor was irrelevant.

The outcome of the second case was somewhat different. In the *Harris v. Forklift Systems, Inc*. (1993) case the female employee reported that she worked in an abusive and hostile environment. The plaintiff also claimed gender and sexual harassment. As a result, the court was required to take all aspects of the event into consideration. Consequently, this placed additional constraints on the victims since she was required to prove intent. Despite the outcomes, these cases established sufficient precedence for harassment cases to come.

In its early stage, equal rights legislation was used to handle grievances based on complaints that women were terminated for failing to give into sexual advances (Leskinen et al., 2011). The Barnes v. Castle case was instrumental in defining this type of sexual harassment as "quid pro quo." The case resulted in employers being held civilly liable if a female was retaliated against for not giving in to a supervisor's sexual advances. However, a decade passed before the U.S. Supreme Court ruled that creating a hostile work environment was also considered sexual harassment (Leskinen et al., 2011). Today when the term "sexual harassment" is used, most laypersons perceive it as a solicitation for sex. Therefore, many lawyers prefer the term "gender harassment," since it involves hostility based on one's gender and not sexual advances.

Sexual Harassment of Female Officers

Sexual harassment is also considered a major impediment for women in law enforcement. Researchers maintain that although 60 to 70 percent of female officers experience sexual harassment, less than 7% report any incidents (U.S. Department of Labor [U.S. DOL], 2010). The NCWP (2002) defined sexual harassment based on Title VII of the 1964 Civil Rights Act. By its definition, it considers unwelcomed sexual advances, requests for sexual favors, and other physical and visual conduct of a sexual nature sexual harassment. Several studies have documented complaints from female officers who were continuously propositioned for sexual favors (Hassell et al., 2011; Somvadee & Morash, 2008). Women's organizations recommend that each law enforcement agency develop policies and procedures that support the complainant. The NCWP (2002) also suggests more preventative measures be incorporated into

departmental policies and procedures manual and provide appropriate training on the topic.

Today, discrimination in the form of sexual harassment is still used to impede women's full integration into the police culture (Hassell et al., 2011). Recent studies indicate 44% of women and 19% of men have reported incidences of sexual harassment in the United States (Haas, et al., 2009). That number was higher at 61% in a study conducted by Dowler & Arai (2008). In contrast, a survey conducted on policewomen in 35 countries revealed that 77% of female respondents experienced sexual harassment (Haas et al., 2009). In another study, Somvadee and Morash (2008) surveyed 117 women from five police departments regarding whether they were subjected to sexual harassment by male officers in the past two years. The authors found that 90.6% (106) reported at least one sexual experience, and 58.2% of the respondents reported that they had been victims of sexual harassment (Somvadee & Morash, 2008). Specifically, participants reported being subjected to jokes, sexist or suggestive materials, offensive stories, and crude sexual remarks (Somvadee & Morash, 2008).

The International Association of Women Police (IAWP) agrees that sexual harassment is the primary problem in male dominated workplaces (Rabe-Hemp, 2011; Shelley et al., 2013; Woolsey, 2010). Indeed female officers report incidents of sexual harassment more often than male officers. For example, women are more likely to be exposed to sexist jokes, pornography, ridicule and rumors (Hassell et al., 2011). Exposure to this form of discrimination may increase female officers' susceptibility to detrimental health effects and psychological problems (Haas et al., 2009; Hassell et al.,

2011; Thompson, Kirk & Brown, 2006). The literature also affirmed that many complaints related to sexual harassment are inadequately handled or not dealt with quickly enough (NCWP, 2002). However, the reasons vary as to why many men do not report sexual harassment.

Female officers assert that sexual harassment exists because many police administrators are running their departments based on a chauvinistic social system. Moreover, internal affairs investigators have been known to retaliate, and are often improperly trained to handle sexual harassment cases (NCWP, 2002). Grievances that have been improperly handled may cause female officers to feel isolated, may lead to poor job performance, and increase the turnover rate. Furthermore, the code of secrecy associated with policing may discourage women from reporting sexual harassment for fear of retaliation or being shunned.

Male officers and society in general, have long questioned the ability of women to possess the strength and authority necessary for police work (Rabe-Hemp, 2008). In a study conducted by Franklin (2005), she concluded findings similar to other police studies including the assertion that permitting women into policing jobs leads to a hostile work environment, which includes isolation, retaliation, sexual harassment, discrimination and a lack of advancement opportunities.

The purpose of the study was to investigate the social structure of police departments, and understand how hyper masculinity and a lack of accountability contribute to the maltreatment of female officers (Franklin, 2005; Kurtz et al., 2012). The results exposed the secrets of police cultures and revealed the expectations male

officers place on each other. Based on the findings, numerous male police officers believe policing is still a man's job. Therefore, when women are allowed into the police culture, they are expected to accept a subordinate status.

In an earlier study conducted by Seklecki and Paynich (2007) the results were mixed. Seklecki and Paynich (2007) surveyed 377 respondents who served as participants in the research. The authors found that 27.1% of respondents reported experiences that would be defined as sexual harassment. Specifically, participants reported being insulted, called homosexual by citizens, approached for sexual favors, despite their objections, and being exposed to sexually explicit remarks. The participants also reported incidents of dirty jokes and insults. However, the findings suggest that a significant number of female police officers did not view the remarks as directed toward them (Seklecki & Paynich, 2007). Still some respondents reported that sexually based humor is pervasive within their department (Seklecki & Paynich, 2007). Although some participants reported that they experienced sexual harassment, they had no plans to leave the profession.

Based on the findings of the Seklecki and Paynich (2007) study, victims' perception and appraisal of sexual harassment are another area that warrants attention. Thus far, limited research has been conducted on how the victim perceived an act of sexual harassment. Somvadee and Morash (2008) reviewed a study conducted by Marshall (2003), which concluded that several women ruled out acts, which may have been perceived as consent. The study also documented incidents of name calling. For example, some women reported being called, "girl or gal," as well as inappropriate

comments about the women's bodies. One respondent reported that she witnessed another female officer rubbing her hand across a male officer's crotch (Somvadee & Morash, 2008). Researchers propose that some female police officers might have tolerated such behaviors because they wanted to be a part of the group (Somvadee & Morash, 2008). This type of behavior was also evident in a group of female officers who were surveyed from Los Angeles County, California. The results revealed that men view sexual harassment by women as funny, while women consider the same actions disrespectful. Based on the varied responses, female and male police officers appraise sexual harassment differently (Haas et al., 2009; Somvadee & Morash, 2008). Irrespective of the findings, women appear more bothered by sexual harassment than their male counterparts (Haas et al., 2009). For women who have been subjected to sexual harassment, having mentors and supervisors specifically trained to help women work through these challenges may improve female officer retention.

The majority of police research related to recruitment disparities cites gender and sexual harassment as leading barriers to recruitment (Dodge, Valcore, & Gomez, 2011; Dowler & Arai, 2008; Haas, 2009; Hassell, 2011; Hemp, 2008; Lonsway, 2008; Morash et al., 2006; Shelley et al., 2011; Somvadee & Morash, 2008). Although sexual harassment of female officers is heavily noted in the literature, the long-term effects and role this plays in women's barriers to recruitment are conflictingly and inconsistently documented. In fact, much of the above research contends that though many officers report experiencing sexual harassment, many female officers tolerate it and few report any incidents. Furthermore, the term sexual harassment is poorly understood and some

female officers consider it a casualty of the job, while others may fear retaliation or being ostracized. The literature also revealed that women are practically non-existent from police assignments that are considered overly aggressive, violent and require physical strength (Dodge et al., 2011). Although women's competence was discussed in the literature, Hassell et al. (2011) and Dodge et al. (2011) challenged some discrepancies and found that male and female officers are equally capable of performing police work. Thus, recruitment campaigns may be more beneficial if the needs and concerns of previous female cadets were factored into those programs.

The Role of Gender in Law Enforcement

The gender lines appear blurred in law enforcement, but most agencies are described as militaristic, uniformed and having hierarchical rank authority (Sever, 2008). This long tradition is associated with the hierarchal military style structure and has created an unrealistic belief that only men can understand the dangers of policing.

Now that women perform the same jobs as men, they are still expected to accept less pay, pass up promotions, not appear overly ambitious, and still be the primary caregiver at home. It is important to understand that social institutions were originally structured for and by men without any considerations for women (Acker, 1992). In doing so, institutional barriers were strategically placed giving women the impression that they were not capable or welcomed. Mechanisms such as intentional isolation by male officers and constructed hierarchies are often utilized to support a male agenda (Shelley et al., 2011).

A review of the literature showed that women made their entry into the field of law enforcement more than a century ago, but gender is still considered a major obstacle for women. The current literature also attempts to defend the absence of female officers by rationalizing society's view of policing. Kabat-Farr (2013) concluded that "stereotypes dictate that women ought to be submissive, weak, emotional, kind, and are best suited for domestic roles. However, expecting female officers to maintain domesticated roles seems to create unsatisfactory work experiences (Rabe-Hemp, 2008). This has led to female officers reacting defensively or even questioning their ability to do the job. Shelley et al. (2011) also indicated that this may be why "more than half of all police agencies report no women holding high-level positions (Shelley et al., 2011).

Kim and Merlo (2010) argued that some male dominated organizations may structure job duties that require long hours, and frequent travel to discourage women from applying for similar jobs. Research also asserts that some agencies may purposely implement maternal and family leave policies that limit female officer's ability to perform their duties once the uniform no longer fits (Shelley et al., 2011). It has also been noted that, many agencies do not afford pregnant officers the option of light duty once their pregnancy progresses. Some pregnant officers have opted to change professions, retire early or forgo motherhood as a means of fitting into the profession.

As a result, the military style of hierarchies employed by police departments hinders female officer's ability to advance their careers. Furthermore, if a female officer has a grievance against a colleague, organizational constraints may make it difficult to ensure her complaint will be handled appropriately. Shelley et al. (2011) contends that

restrictions are intentionally used to create feelings of hopelessness in female officers and to maintain a subordinate status.

Acker (1992) theorized that certain images are used to portray the ideal police officer as male, as they are seen as being more reliable, more aggressive and as having the ability to use special weapons. However, the aggressive, authoritative facade associated with police officers falsely portrays male officers as being more competent and promotes segregation. Acker (1992) further argued that this societal structure of gender causes people to focus on the differences between males and females, and not on the skill set required to complete the job.

Specifically in the police profession, comparing males to females is unfair, seeks to sexualize the work environment, subjects female officers to discrimination, limits women's opportunities for advancement, and imposes consequences for non-compliance. For example, the Shelley et al. (2011) study, described a case study involving a female police officer who was subjected to crude sexual behaviors. The female officer discussed how male officers would tape pages of Penthouse magazines onto her steering wheel and would insist that she scratch and sniff a picture of the female anatomy before assigning her a patrol vehicle (Shelley et al., 2011). These types of incidents were reportedly experienced by other female officers within that police department. The author contends that the goal of the male officers' behavior was to inform female officers that their presence was unwelcome.

Finally, different approaches such as; implementing affirmative action programs and EEOC legislation were enforced in an attempt to eliminate any imbalance in male

dominated professions (Benschop et al., 2001; Rabe-Hemp, 2008; 2011). As the number of female officers increased, researchers theorized that female representation would reach at least 50% in the police industry (Woolsey, 2010). However, over the past 35 years, female officers' representation continues to fluctuate or regress.

Researchers also maintain that this trend will remain unless a comprehensive assessment of current hiring practices is conducted by each agency. Afterward, those findings and recommendations should be disseminated on a local and national level. Measures should be implemented to place more female officers in patrol positions and not confine them to non-law enforcement roles. Otherwise, the task of properly evaluating their performance will remain obstructed (Shelley et al., 2011). It may also prevent society from acknowledging female officers' true contributions to the profession.

Mentoring In Law Enforcement

One of the greatest impediments to the retention of female officers is a lack of mentoring or administrative support. In policing, female officers report feeling secluded from male officers and feel they have few allies to talk to (Langston, 2010; Hassell et al., 2011). Although researchers postulate mentoring programs improve job performance, cohesiveness, officer morale, and retention, there is a lack of formal mentoring programs police departments (Hassell et al., 2011). When examining women's experiences in the field of policing, previous researchers have focused on how many women entered the profession, the maltreatment of female officers, and why they chose a law enforcement career path (Keverline, 2003). To date, minimum research has been conducted on the advantages of mentoring in policing.

Hassell et al. (2011) asserted that mentoring in policing is usually limited to working with field training officers (FTO). Depending on budget restraints, some officers are not provided any formal training. Consequently, those who successfully complete the training usually have a difficult time soliciting mentors. This sheds additional light on the need to create formal female mentoring programs that begin at the cadet phase and extend throughout the officer's career. The literature supports this recommendation since female officers typically face challenges that male officers do not (Hassell et al., 2010; Rabe-Hemp, 2011; Zhao et al., 2001).

The existing literature also consistently documents that female officers lack support, are provided few networking opportunities, and have family responsibilities that males do not. However, the type of program designed may not be as important as simply implementing a mentoring program. Finally, mentoring should be utilized as a tool to encourage a partnership between fellow officers and increase the female officer's professional development (Woolsey, 2010).

In conclusion, upon reviewing the literature, a military hierarchical structure was strategically designed into the law enforcement culture. As Acker (1992) explained, this type of structure sexualizes the work environment, promotes gender segregation and discrimination. The available literature further indicates that law enforcement was originally created as a man's profession, which may explain why there is a lack of mentoring programs or support for female officers (Acker, 1992; Kurtz et al., 2012; Kim & Merlo, 2010). Presently, few agencies provide mentoring to female officers and support is limited once field training ends. Currently, most police agency's operations

manuals do not include preparations for officer mentoring. Furthermore, policies are outdated and written to portray police work as dangerous, requiring excessive physical strength, and designed to confine female officers to domesticated or social worker roles (Franklin, 2005 & Prenzler & Sinclair, 2013). Researchers purport that by developing officer procedures based on gender limits female officers to non-patrol and non-leadership positions, which hinder women's advancement (Kurtz et al., 2012). Thus, a comprehensive assessment of each police agency's recruitment and hiring practices is warranted to assist police leaders in identifying which policies and procedures are appropriate for each department and determine where revisions are needed.

<div align="center">**Summary**</div>

Women's entry into the profession of law enforcement and the barriers they encounter are major topics in female police research. However, an accurate account of female officers' current representation and role in law enforcement is unknown. Some police research suggests that women currently represent less than 17% of the U.S. police profession and are slowly increasing at a rate of 0.4% (Dowler & Arai, 2008; Keverline, 2003; NCWP, 2002; NCWP, 2010). That number is even lower in small or rural police departments. Despite the strides women have made in the profession, recruitment remains low and the retention rate has not improved (Hassell et al., 2011).

The literature suggested that female officers are exposed to stressors such as overt hostility, male officer resistance, isolation, gender discrimination and sexual harassment (Haas et al., 2009; Somvadee & Morash, 2008). However, African American and other racial/minority female officers may have additional barriers to overcome, since

they are considered double minorities. Moreover, there is minimal literature on the hiring

status of other female minority groups (Zhao et al., 2001). More important, the obstacles

female officers are exposed to are rarely experienced by their male counterparts (Hassell

et al., 2011; Rabe-Hemp, 2011; Zhao et al., 2001).

 Research consistently reports that police research seeks to focus on gender

differences and justify the disparities and maltreatment of women. This brings an

awareness that police departments are in need of developing mentoring programs which

specifically enhance female officers' careers, networking opportunities, and personal

development. The literature revealed that women who achieve tenure, and report higher

job satisfaction are likely to advance into supervisory positions or other branches of law

enforcement. In spite of this, women represent less than 8% of all top command

positions and 2% of all police chief positions in the United States.

Yet, in rural or smaller departments women and racial/ethnic minorities are rarely

promoted (Archbold & Schulz, 2012). Seklecki and Paynich (2007) addressed the

underrepresentation and recruitment of women in law enforcement and postulated these

issues may be better addressed at the academy or early career phase. Additionally,

previous studies focused on issues such as absenteeism, years of police experience, job

satisfaction, stress, and job performance.

This study was aimed at exploring female officer's perceptions within the context

of their subjective experiences. Additionally, this study also added to future police

research when seeking to investigate women's experiences and roles in policing, gender

differences, factors which contribute to job satisfaction and barriers that obstruct

women's ability to achieve tenure. Furthermore, the fact that women receive inequitable

treatment in the law enforcement profession is evident throughout the research (Dower &

Ari, 2008; Kurt, Linnemann & Williams, 2012). However, there was still a need to

document those personal experiences from the female police officer's perspective. As a

result, the following questions were explored: "What do female officers experience in

law enforcement?", "How does what female police officers experience impact their

career?", and "What situations have influenced female police officer's job perception?" I

described the methodology that was used to address the research questions in Chapter 3.

A discussion of the research design, sampling process, instruments used and procedures

are also discussed in Chapter 3.

Chapter 3: Research Method

Introduction

The purpose of this study was to describe and understand the lived experiences of female officers and how years of police experience, job satisfaction, and mentoring may have impacted their careers. Female police officers' perception of their job was qualitatively explored through participant interviews and researcher field notes to collect demographic information related to work experiences and job satisfaction. In this chapter, I described information related to the research design; instrumentation; participants; and a rationale for using the qualitative method, sampling, data analysis, and the data collection plan, the role of the researcher, how confidentiality was addressed, and possible ethical issues.

Research Questions

Several questions guided this qualitative phenomenological study. The central question was the following: What have female police officers experienced? The subquestions include the following: (a) How does what female police officers experience impact their career? (b) What situations have influenced female police officer's job satisfaction? and (c) How do female officers experience mentoring?

Research Design Rationale

A qualitative methodology was used to explore female police officers' insight into whether years of police experience, job satisfaction, and mentoring impact female officers and their careers. A qualitative inqury was appropriate for this study because it allowed me to appropriately analyze the participants' statements, lived experiences, and

perceptions that may have impacted their job satisfaction. In the qualitative approach, the researcher does not attempt to control the outcome (Rudestam & Newton, 2007). This discovery-oriented approach challenges the scientific method and promotes spontaneity (Rudestam & Newton, 2007). During this process, participants may offer alternatives or opposing perspectives, which were revealed through a thematic coding process. This is in contrast to the numerical collection of data in approaches (Newton & Rudestam, 2007). However, the differences between the two methods of inquiry usually lies in the approach the researcher chooses and not the theories employed (Rudestam & Newton, 2007).

I chose to use the qualitative approach due to Rudestam and Newton's (2007) argument that "qualitative research is not designed to test a theory" (p. 46). This approach allowed me to ask more than yes or no questions. Qualitative research is defined as any findings not revealed through statistical means (Golafshani, 2003). Qualitative researchers "actually talk directly to people" and "build patterns, categories, and themes by working back and forth between themes" (Creswell, 2009, p.175). Moreover, the quantitative method may not afford the researcher the ability to analyze information deemed important to the participant.

Law enforcement can be a rewarding profession, but like most politically structured organizations, attempts to change the status quo are usually met with resistance. For decades, women and minorities have been viewed as outsiders in law enforcement. As a result, women have traditionally fallen prey to passive and aggressive acts perpetrated by their male counterparts (IACP, 1999). In most cases, laypersons

rarely hear about internal conflicts or discriminatory acts unless the media is involved. Therefore, using data sources such as unstructured interviews, questionnaires, and researcher field notes are important (Creswell, 2009). I was optimistic that a qualitative approach would shed light on the "meaning that participants" gave to the experience and "not the perception of the researcher" (Creswell, 2009, p. 175).

I chose a qualitative approach because a quantitative method did not allow me to capture the experiences the participants deemed important. Madill and Gough (2008) conducted a study that focused on the technicalities involved in qualitative research, its purpose, and how it differentiates from quantitative investigations. Although the number of qualitative studies are minimal when compared to quantitative studies, qualitative research is gaining more acceptance (Madill & Gough, 2008). Using this method empowered me to explore the participants' personal experiences as police officers.

A phenomenological approach was necessary to capture the true lived experiences of the participants. Wertz (2005) suggested that phenomenology is based on the principle that scientific knowledge begins with a clear and unbiased description of the subject matter. Moustakas (1994) suggested that phenomenologists seek to eliminate any prejudgments and allows the researcher to capture information without biases or preconceived ideas. Thus, phenomenological research requires that the researcher refrain from integrating any scientific theories or hypothesis when investigating the subject matter (Wertz, 2005). Furthermore, phenomenology usually involves identifying and locating participants who have experienced the problem being studied. In fact, qualitative researchers attempt to understand the problem being studied in context-

specific settings (Golafshani, 2003). The findings from this study may assist police administrators and policy makers in developing policies and procedures that are more supportive of women, provide opportunities for advancement, and take their family responsibilities into consideration. This may also assist in creating recruitment campaigns that give women a voice in the profession and the self-confidence needed to sustain a police career.

Setting and Sample

According to the U.S. Census Bureau (2012), the southeastern region consists of 261,794 square miles with an estimated population of 26,069,203. There are approximately 756,246 sworn police officers and 17,885 police agencies in this region. The study included a one sheriff's department and two adjacent constable departments. Moreover, the county police department employed more than 4,000 deputies and had been accredited by the Commission on Accreditation for Law Enforcement Agencies (CALEA). The agency worked with other city, county, state, and federal law enforcement departments.

The county police department and constable department administrators were contacted via e-mail to request assistance in gaining access to participants. I sent each agency representative an e-mail letter to administrators (See Appendix A) with details about the study and requested support with participant recruitment. Upon approval from the police administrators, an e-mail list was provided by the agencies, and letters were distributed to potential participants. Additional information about the recruitment letter was explained in the instrumentation section.

Participants

This qualitative study used a purposive sampling method to recruit participants in the southeastern states. This method is one of the most commonly used sampling strategies because it seeks to group participants according to preselected criteria (Mack, Woodsong, Macqueen, Guest, & Namey, 2005). The sample size of approximately nine participants was based on the research questions and Moustakas' (1994) recommendations. For confidentiality purposes, the name of the agencies was referred to as police organization and county police department. Additionally, the criteria considered for the study included participants being (a) female, (b) living in the Southeastern states, (c) between 21 and 65 years of age, (d) currently employed as a full-time police officer, and (e) had a minimum of 2 years full-time experience.

Instruments

I also created the demographic questionnaire (See Appendix C). The questions were developed to help determine how representative participants are of the sampled population. For the purpose of this study, the demographic questionnaire was used to collect background information such as age, gender, marital status, and years of police experience. It was estimated that completion of the questionnaire took approximately 5 minutes.

Additionally, there was limited literature on women's experiences and perceptions in police research. Upon reviewing the current literature, there were no available instruments that directly addressed the research questions. Therefore, the two questionnaires were developed based on those research questions. I created an interview

guide (See Appendix F) that included 22 questions and probes. The questionnaire was divided into three sections. The first section was formulated to capture information about the participants' work experience. The second section included questions to measure job satisfaction (i.e., Are you contemplating a career change?). Questions related to possible discrimination or sexual harassment made up the final section. The participants' answers were audio recorded. The total time to complete the questionnaires and interview was approximately 45-50 minutes.

Validity and reliability concerns were addressed by checking the accuracy of the data and making sure that the same procedures could be implemented in future research projects (Creswell, 2009). This also included conducting member checks, multiple triangulation methods, and eliminating usability issues. For example, I ensured that each participant fully understood the interview questions. Member checks were conducted to confirm accuracy of findings. Additionally, my committee members and Walden University's IRB examined the instruments and addressed any concerns. A discussion of validity and reliability issues are further discussed in the Issues of Trustworthiness section.

Role of the Researcher

There are layers of responsibility involved when taking on the role of researcher. As Rudestam and Newton (2007) noted, challenges could occur when attempting to maintain "objectivity, remain detached, and be an unemotionally involved participant" (p. 42). Choosing an appropriate method of inquiry wa also important. Consideration of this information was critical because I worked with women who perceived themselves as

marginalized or discriminated against. At my department, male police officers outnumbered women police officers 3 to 1.   Although my reasons for pursuing the topic were personal, I was careful not to allow my personal experiences, opinions, or emotions to interfere with the study.

While exploring possible topics for dissertation, I was initially reluctant, but realized the importance of furthering the research topic. Moreover, ensuring equal rights for women in the workplace has always been a personal goal. Therefore, when conducting these types of studies, researchers assert that the investigator must be careful not to conduct backyard research (Creswell, 2007). To alleviate this concern, I contacted agencies for which I had no affiliation. Finally, although the epoche is difficult to achieve, I put aside any prejudgments, biases and/or preconceived ideas about the subject matter (Moustakas, 1994). This was accomplished by seeing things as they are and not as I hoped they would be. This included paying attention to the possible impact of my personal values (Creswell, 2009).

Data Collection Plan

Developing a working relationship with the police administrators was essential for locating potential participants. The particular sites were purposefully selected (Creswell, 2009) because they offered a large population of police officers. Prior to data collection, I sent an e-mail to the police administrator to notify them about the study and inquire about possible participants. Once an agreement was reached I was provided with an e-mail list of female officers, and the recruitment letter (See Appendix B) was disseminated to possible participants via e-mail. However, the e-mail and recruitment letter process

would have been repeated if the participant recruitment process was not successful the first time. I created the recruitment letter and tailored the letter based on the needs of the study and some of the guidelines outlined in Walden University's Sample Letter of Cooperation.

The recruitment letter included information about the study and a reminder that the interviews would be audio recorded, participation was voluntary, and that no compensation would be provided. The purpose of the study, limits to confidentiality, what was required of potential participants, and the timeline for completing the research was also explained. My contact information was provided on the recruitment letter to address any questions or concerns. Anyone interested in participating in the study was encouraged to contact me by phone or e-mail. Once potential participants were recruited, the participants contacted me by phone or e-mail to confirm their availability. However, the agency administrators were not privy to any information once the data collection phase began. Once interviews were scheduled, I met with each participant individually and privately for interviews at a private office in the Southeastern region.

The importance of participant confidentiality and informed consent (See Appendix D) were discussed, and necessary signatures were collected prior to beginning the interviews. The form was designed based on the sample provided on the Walden University Research website. I was hopeful that each participant would read and sign the form, which would demonstrate an understanding of what was required prior to participating. Each participant signed the necessary forms and confirmed that she was aware of her rights before beginning the study. Each participant was encouraged to print

or keep a signed copy of the consent form. Furthermore, Walden University recommended that researchers inform participants about any risk, benefits, confidentiality, and the participant's right to withdraw their participation. A section detailing background information about the study, how confidentiality was protected, and a brief outline of study procedures was also provided. My contact information and the number to the Walden University representative were included.

Each participant was interviewed face-to-face, at separate times, and all answers were audio recorded to ensure accuracy. Additionally all participants were advised about their right to withdraw without question anytime. As a means of establishing rapport, I assured the participants that I had no personal affiliation with the agency. The importance of interviewee honesty was also expressed. During the in-depth interviews, open-ended questions were used, and answers were audio recorded. Field notes were used as a backup to record my thoughts during the interview and as a means of capturing necessary nonverbal information (Creswell, 2009; Mack et al., 2005). Audio recordings were used during the interviews as a means of checking information and reducing the possibility of researcher error. To enhance internal validity, a multiple triangulation process was used. According to Meijer, Verloop, and Beijaard (2002), triangulation is a process that allows researchers to verify agreement of independent measures. Prior to data analysis, I transcribed the written and audio responses before using the qualitative computer software to analyze the text. Furthermore, because law enforcement officers are usually under time constraints, all initial interviews lasted approximately 45-50 minutes.

Data Analysis Plan

Prior to conducting the data analysis, I read over all collected data. As Creswell (2009) suggested, after documenting a detailed description of the participants' experience, an analysis of the data was conducted to identify codes, themes or issues. However, Stembler (2001) asserted that in order to allow for replication, the data have to be objectively and systematically analyzed. To assist in the process, I used a content analysis method to code the findings. Content analysis has been in used in qualitative research since the 20th century because it is useful when classifying large amounts of data (Hsieh & Hannon, 2005). Therefore, to increase the flexibility and thoroughness of the study, a computer-assisted qualitative data analysis was employed. The qualitative software QSR NVIVO 11 was used to organize and categorize the findings. The software also created a system for data organization, category building, coding, as well as the investigator's findings (Creswell, 2009).

Issues of Trustworthiness

Some critics question the trustworthiness of qualitative research because it normally does not address validity and reliability issues the way quantitative methods do (Shenton, 2004). Therefore, to ensure validity, my committee members and the Walden's University IRB examined all instruments and addressed any concerns. Shenton (2004) posited that researchers should be concerned that their study measures what it purports to measure. Consequently, several strategies were employed to ensure accuracy of the data.

Shenton (2004) discussed several criteria to ensure trustworthiness in qualitative research. Credibility, dependability, and confirmability must be demonstrated to

guarantee the accuracy of qualitative research. Furthermore, credibility is the qualitative researcher's way of assuring their readers that the findings are accurate. As recommended by Guba (1994), credibility was achieved by using open-ended questions, using tactics that help ensure the honesty of the participants (iterative questioning), peer debriefing, and conducting member checks. I completed member checks by asking each participant to read transcripts of dialogues once data was collected (Shenton, 2004). This included exploring each participant's answers and comparing those findings with recorded data. Once no themes emerged, I then determined that saturation of the data had been reached (Rudestam & Newton 2007). Finally, peer debriefing occurred once my committee members reviewed the proposed data analysis process.

Reliability indicates that the researcher's methods are consistent throughout the study (Creswell, 2009). Ensuring reliability also required that the researcher carefully examine and properly code all data. This criterion corresponds to the construct known as dependability. Dependability reflects the truthfulness, consistency, and reliability of the qualitative project. While confirmability requires that the findings and experiences come from the participant rather than the characteristics of the researcher (Shenton, 2004). When utilizing the phenomenological approach, the researcher is required to eliminate any prejudices or biases through a technique known as bracketing (Creswell, 2009). In an effort to reduce possible bias, multiple triangulation methods were utilized. Hence, field notes, interview and audio recording information were used in the triangulation process.

Lastly, it is important that researchers utilize consistent methods during the data analysis process. This included recording the findings in a format that was receptive to qualitative analysis, as well as creating an atmosphere free of researcher influence (Creswell, 209). This was accomplished by helping participants feel relaxed and comfortable enough to express their true thoughts. According to Patton (2002), any inconsistencies should not be cause for alarm, but viewed as an opportunity to investigate the participant's story. The researcher was mindful of eliminating any biases or expectations about the findings.

Ethical Considerations

Maintaining ethical standards and preventing harm to participants is one of the most important considerations researchers may encounter. Although I did not foresee possible risk to participants, I anticipated any ethical dilemmas and took proper measures to protect participants during the research process (Creswell, 2009). Moreover, when conducting the study I adhered to the ethical standards established by the American Psychological Association (APA) and Walden's Institutional Review Board (IRB). Therefore, safeguards were put in place such as, making sure participants signed the informed consent form, assuring them that all identification information and collected data was kept confidential, and that their participation was voluntary before allowing them to participate in the study. To ensure confidentiality confidential codes were created for each participant. Furthermore, if any incidents of sexual harassment were reported, the findings would be reported in the results section. However, every participant's identification information will remain confidential and will not be disclosed.

The transcribed data was stored on the researcher's personal laptop, which was password protected. No other individuals had access to the computer or the data. Additionally, the information was backed up and saved on a secure data device, which only the researcher had access to. The secure data device will be locked in the safe of the researcher's home office for five years. After that time, all data and protocols will be destroyed. The researcher's contact information was also be provided in case questions or concerns arise

Summary

Chapter three outlined the design and methods used to perform the research study. The study and research design explored the influence of years of police experience, job satisfaction, and mentoring to determine if the variables impacted female police officers' and their careers. For example, during the interviews the researcher asked, "Are you contemplating a career change? And "tell me about your experience as a mentee?" Female police officers from the southeastern states were recruited to participate in the study. A preliminary plan for data collection, analysis, and interpretation was also discussed. A discussion of the measures used, instrumentation, recruitment procedures, sampling, the role of the researcher and ethical considerations were also included. The findings and any explanation of the data are presented in chapter four.

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Chapter 4: Results

Introduction

The purpose of this qualitative study was to describe, analyze, and understand the lived experiences of female police officers living in Southeastern states. A purposeful sampling method was used to identify eight female police officers chosen from a population of women working in three local police departments. A qualitative phenomenological research methodology was employed to examine the essence of the phenomenon (Creswell, 2009). I was the primary instrument used throughout the data collection process. The participants' lived experiences were explored through open-ended questions aimed at capturing an accurate and true account of events during their law enforcement careers. The raw data were later used to formulate descriptions, categorize data, and generate a thematic analysis.

With each woman's permission, I audio recorded all responses and used a research journal to record my thoughts and any observations throughout the data collections process. At the end of the data collection phase, I carefully listened to each interview, transcribed each one, and summarized the findings verbatim, which were shared in another interview. The member check process was addressed by sharing the information with participants during a second meeting to confirm their statements.

As theorized by Husserl, transcendental phenomenological reduction requires a specific type of reflection (as cited in Smith & McIntyre, 1982). This was an ongoing process accomplished through bracketing or what Moustakas (1994) termed epoch. Bracketing required me to acknowledge any personal experiences or assumptions related

to the phenomenon that could influence the findings (Fischer, 2009). Because I had some experience with the phenomenon, I applied epoche by answering the same interview questions. The resulting data helped me to examine my own interest and experience with the phenomenon (Moustakas, 1994; Rudestam & Newton, 2007). I adapted the modified Stevick-Colaizzi-Keen method during the analysis to examine the data, which ensured I was mindful of my biases, prejudgments, and assumptions prior to transcribing the participant's data. This process was necessary to ensure that I accurately captured the meaning the participants' experience with the phenomenon and not imposing my own meanings onto the data (Creswell, 2009; Fischer, 2009; Moustakas, 1994). I also kept a research journal to notate my thoughts during the interview process.

Setting

I choose the research setting because it was centrally located and convenient for the participants. As Farber (2006) suggested, researchers should select a setting where participants feel comfortable and are assured privacy to freely partake in the study. The setting was also chosen because of its comfortable atmosphere, availability, and privacy. The location was typically used for individual and group counseling and sessions during daytime hours. The office was available after 5 PM on weekdays and all day on weekends. No personnel or clients were present during the in-depth interviews. The same office was used for seven interviews, and one interview was conducted in an adjacent office in the same location. Each office was furnished with a sofa, a chair, quilted throws, an end table, and a desk and computer. The participants were familiar

with the area of town, but not the actual study setting. No adjustments or interference with office personnel occurred during the course of the study.

Demographics

The study sample consisted of eight adult female police officers. One participant referred to her heritage as Columbian, and her ethnicity as Afro-Columbian. Another participant referred to her heritage as African American and Caucasian, but identified as biracial. The remaining six participants referred to their race as African American and their heritage as non-Hispanic. The sample was comprised of the diverse population of officers in the two adjacent police precincts and one sheriff's department.

The study sample shared common characteristics, such as (a) being a female, (b) living in the southeastern states, (c) currently employed as a full-time police officer, (d) between 21 and 65 years of age, and (d) having a minimum of 2 years full-time experience (see Table 1). All participants self-identified as police officers, and their mean age was 44.4 (SD=10). The youngest participant was 24-years-old, while the oldest participant was 58-years-old, which represented a range of 34 years. The participants' current job status also varied. For example, two participants worked in the courts, one was assigned to juvenile detention, two worked in patrol, one was identified as a working in the civil process division, and one was assigned to special investigations. Three (37.5%) participants indicated that they were looking for a career change, and 25% indicated that they were interested in moving to another department.

Participants' years of experience varied with 50% reporting having at least 15 years of experience and 50% had less than 10 years of experience. Supervisory

experience also varied with 25% of the participants identified as supervisors, 25% of the participants reported being senior deputies, and 50% identified as regular deputies. Educational attainment varied with 12.5% of the participants reported having a master's degree, 25% of the participants stated they had a bachelor's degree, 25% reported having an associate's degree, while 37.5% of the participants reported having some college.

Participants reported their marital status as married (25%), divorced (25%), and (50%) reported being single or never married. One participant was born in Columbia, one reported being born in Louisiana, one stated she was born in North Carolina, and the remaining participants (62.5%) were born in the Texas area. All of the participants had children, and the mean number was 2.25 (SD=1.2). The majority of participants (50%) reported having three or more children, 37.5% reported having two or more children, and one participant reported having one child (12.5 %/). Table 1 provides biographical information about the participants' age, ethnicity, race, educational level, marital status, number of children, state of birth, and rank.

Table 1

Demographics

	Column A	Column B	Column C	Column D
Age (M,SD)		44.4	10	
	21 – 34	1	12.5%	
	34 – 45	3	37.5%	
	45 – 55	2	25%	
	55 – 60	2	25%	
Ethnicity	African America	6	62.5%	
	Columbian	1	12.25%	
	Bi-Racial	1	12.25%	
State of Birth	Houston, TX	5	62.25%	
	New Orleans, LA	1	12.25%	
	Columbia	1	12.25%	
	North Carolina	1	12.25%	
Education Level	Master's Degree	1	12.25%	
	Bachelor's Degree	2	25%	
	Associates Degree	2	25%	
	Some College	3	37.5%	
Officer Rank				
	Corporal	2	25%	
	Senior Deputy	2	25%	
	Regular Deputy	4	50%	
Career Outlook				
	Seeking Career Change	3	37.5%	
	Seeking Different Department	2	25%	
Current Marital Status		2	25%	
	Married	2	25%	
	Divorced	4	50%	
	Single			
Number of Children	3-4 Children	3	37.5%	
	2-3 Children	4	50%	
	0-1 Children	1	12.5%	

Note: Rank describes the participant's supervisory level

Data Collection

I began data collection after receiving approval from Walden's IRB. In August, the recruitment letter (see Appendix B) was sent out to 15 potential participants, which resulted in nine participants contacting me to set up an interview time. One participant decided not to participate at the last minute because her family experienced a personal tragedy prior to the scheduled interview. The potential participant failed to return my calls. All participants met the required criteria for the study, which was outlined in the methods section.

Data collection was ongoing for approximately 11 weeks. Data were collected through interviewing the eight participants, and member checks were conducted a few weeks later. All interviews ($N = 8$) were conducted in a private office complex, which included five private office spaces. The interviews took place in the same office building at various dates and times. An anonymous coding process was used to assign identification numbers for each participant. Prior to beginning the interviews, I provided a brief introduction and reiterated the purpose for the study. Each participant was advised to ask questions throughout the interview and to inform me if any questions evoked any discomfort. After the participants indicated that they accepted and understood the requirements, the interviews began with each participant reading the consent form and interview protocol. Signed copies of the consent form (See Appendix D) were provided to each participant. With each participant's permission, an audio recorder with an attached microphone was used to record each in-depth interview. The

demographic form was completed at the end of the interview. Each interview lasted from

30-45 minutes.

Once I began the audio recorder, I presented each interview question to the

participant. Throughout the process, I carefully documented my observations of each

participant's nonverbal behavior, including eye contact and voice inflections, to explain

or clarify findings during the transcription process. This information was color-coded

and labeled during the transcription process; however, this information was omitted from

the thematic analysis process. At the end of the interviews, dates to conduct member

checks were discussed. Two members decided on dates after the in-depth interview, and

the remaining participants stated they would confirm at a later date. I listened to each

interview shortly after data collection.

After completing each interview, I briefly read through the data and made

notations about my initial findings. Then I transcribed each interview for clarity. For

confidentiality purposes, each transcript was modified to capture any omissions, altered

words, or specific names that could identify the participant. Notes from my research

journal were also typed and created into a Word document. All findings were compiled

into a Word document to be reviewed at a later date. As a result of the participants' busy

work schedules validation through member checks were conducted with four of the

participants. Of the remaining four participants, one was obligated to work late because

of a trial, one could not be reached, and two participants could not meet due to extra job

responsibilities. At the end of the validation process, one member recognized an error,

which was corrected.

I noted several similarities during the in-depth interviews. During the in-depth interviews, participants appeared eager to share their personal experiences as police officers, and minimal prompting was needed to complete the interviews. Some shared more details than others, but each participant appeared eager to share their concerns, thoughts, and feelings related to the phenomenon. The participants remained on topic throughout the interviews, and no major deviations were introduced. I carefully observed each participant during the interviews, and all of them displayed various hand gestures, facial expressions, and numerous voice articulations throughout the interviews. Overall, each participant was cooperative and freely answered all of the interview questions.

Data Analysis

As suggested by Moustakas (1994), I used the modified Stevick-Colaizzi-Keen method to guide the data analysis. The suggested steps were used with each participant's transcript. A research journal was used to record my personal thoughts, experiences, and biases during the study. This was helpful and allowed me to obtain a full description of my own experience (i.e., epoche) with the phenomenon (Moustakas, 1994). Prior to data analysis, I carefully reviewed all of the collected raw data to reflect on its overall meaning (Creswell, 2009). I considered the relevance of each statement as it relates to the research questions. Then all data were organized based on similar subject matter and topics in an effort to gather the meanings of the interviews. I omitted any overlapping or repetitive statements during the initial coding process (Moustakas, 1994).

The first phase of the coding process involved reading through each participant's transcribed data, several times to locate particular statements. Then I hand coded the data

prior to using any computer software. This initial process revealed some common words and phrases. After initially rereading and organizing the data, each transcript was imported into the QSR NVIVO 11 coding software. The analysis tool was used to locate key words and to electronically organize stored data. The software was also used to assist in the development of themes associated with the participants' perspectives of their experiences.

During this process, additional common words and phrases were identified, which appeared more visible through the use of a word tree and word cloud (see Appendix G). The next phase of coding consisted of reading through the data again and grouped the initial labels into preliminary categories. This information was saved, modified, and used throughout the coding process. The software enabled me to create separate folders for each question. The organization of the folders allowed me to generate codes that were later grouped into nodes. As indicated by Moustakas (1994), I created tables that include textual descriptions of what I experienced, as well as structural descriptions representing what the participants experienced, as a whole. All steps were repeated for each transcript.

Evidence of Trustworthiness

Unlike quantitative methods, qualitative researchers do not address validity and reliability issues in the same way (Shenton, 2004). Guba (1994) purported that this process is achieved through constructs of credibility, transferability, dependability, and confirmability (Shenton, 2004). Thus, internal validity was achieved through demonstrating an accuracy and consistency of the process used to capture the essence of

the participants' experience. Furthermore, addressing any threats to internal validity was also essential to establishing credibility. I accomplished this by incorporating validity strategies, such as triangulation, member checks, clarifying any bias, and through the use of rich thick descriptions to convey the findings (Creswell, 2009).

Credibility

Establishing credibility is the qualitative researchers' way of assuring their readers that the findings are accurate. As recommended by Guba and Lincoln (1985), credibility was achieved by using open-ended questions and probes and audio recordings. Member checks were also conducted at the end of the data collection phase. After transcribing each verbatim interview, a second interview was scheduled to allow the participants to read through their transcripts to check for any distortions, as well as to ensure correct documentation. If participants noted any misrepresentations in the transcripts, steps were taken to make the necessary corrections. The data were triangulated with multiple sources of data (Rudestam & Newton, 2007). Data analysis did not commence until the participant agreed that the transcript indicated what he or she intended it to reflect.

Transferability indicates that the researcher's methods are consistent throughout the study (Creswell, 2009). It also ensures that the study could be replicated under similar circumstances (Rudestam & Newton, 2007). Therefore, I carefully examined each transcript and properly coded all data. Dependability reflects the truthfulness, consistency, and reliability of the qualitative project. Confirmability requires that the findings and experiences come from the participant rather than the characteristics of the

researcher (Shenton, 2004). Lincoln and Guba (1985) indicated that dependability also requires that the research is repeatable. This was accomplished by systematically documenting and organizing the raw data prior to the data analysis phase. Furthermore, all participant audio recordings, memos and my journal entries were transcribed into Word and Excel documents (Microsoft). The handwritten information was also organized into separate folders. All information was secured and locked in a safe that only I had access to. Finally, failure to achieve data saturation may detract from the study's validity (Fusch & Ness, 2015). Thus saturation was achieved once no new themes emerged or new codes were generated. The goal of identifying themes that described the participants' experience with the phenomenon was reached during the last three interviews.

Results

Emerging Core Themes and Participant Textural Accounts

The data analysis generated six primary themes to represent a synthesis of the participants individual lived experiences: (a) aspirations for becoming a police officer; (b) barriers to promotion; (c) factors impacting job satisfaction; (d) perceptions of resistance during law enforcement career; (e) perceptions of inequitable treatment and (f) supportive and unsupportive relationships. During the analysis process, themes emerged through the identification of participants' significant statements. The basic meaning units were captured when participants used the same words repeatedly. Thus, primary themes were determined based on the majority of participants mentioning the theme at least once.

However, subthemes emerged from the existing primary themes and may have been mentioned by all or some of the participants.

The presentations of the following themes were not structured in any particular order.

Aspirations for Becoming a Police Officer. The first theme that emerged from the data was Aspirations for Becoming a Police Officer.   Female police officers favor some of the same career aspirations as their male counterparts. Research indicates that many female police officers choose their career paths for some of the same reasons (Chen, 2015; Dodge et al., 2011). The participants discussed their reason for choosing their profession. Data was collected related to the open-ended question: What events influenced your decision to become a police officer? The purpose of this question was to determine the career ambitions and motivations for current and aspiring female officers. The participants also shared their perceptions regarding the open-ended question: Tell me what influenced your decision to remain in the profession? The goal of this question was to determine why some agencies are able to retain female police officers. As shown in Table 2, five subthemes merged: (a) succeeding for children; (b) helping others; (c) relationships with officers; (d) retirement motivations; (e) acceptable compensation and inadequate compensation.

Table 2

Theme 1: Aspirations for Becoming a Police Officer

Subtheme Theme	References	Percentage of Sources
Succeeding for Children	7	44%

Helping Others	8	55%
Relationships with Officers	7	55%
Retirement Motivations	6	66%
Adequate/Inadequate Compensation	13	66%

Succeeding for Children

Three research participants identified the first subtheme of succeeding for children as their motivation for remaining in the profession. Police Officer six (PO6) shared her concerns about the lack of guidance for children. She said, "Just seeing most of the young kids not having proper guidance." When asked what influenced your decision to become a police officer, Police Officer two (PO2) provided a short answer and indicated, "My children." Police Officer three (PO3) stated, "My children, my children is what influenced me. When they got in school, every activity that came along they wanted to do it." She elaborated further and stated, "Well, in the beginning it was my kids, but as time went on I started to like it," when referring to her reasons for remaining in the profession.

Helping Others

The research participants stressed giving back to their communities and helping others as inspiring their career. The majority of participants listed encouraging and advocating for others as guiding their career aspirations. "I enjoy working with other women. I feel like I can be a blessing," Police Officer two (PO2) explained. Police Officer ten (PO1) stated, "Honestly, to help other women in the profession. To be a

voice." Police Officer seven (PO7) provided a more general statement and explained, "To be honest, I like helping people". Police Officer eight (PO8) noted, "Plus I like helping people and I think it's a pretty decent career.

Relationship with Officers

Several participants discussed having personal relationships with other law enforcement officers as influencing their career goals. Police Officer eight (PO8) stated, "I have lots of friends who are cops in my circle and back then I just needed a job. So I guess you can say, I was influenced by my friendships." Back then I used to watch Starsky and Hutch, and Berretta, explained Police Officer seven (PO7). Participant one (PO1) revealed, "Well my cousin is a police officer and he talked me into it." Police Officer five (PO5) stated her experience:

> This was an opportunity that knocked at my door. Okay, I can tell you a story if you want to hear about it. I used to be a supervisor at Sam's Club. Right here by Astroworld, and I had a girlfriend. We both worked there. My girlfriend's best friend's husband came up there to talk to her about getting on. He came up there to finish her paperwork or whatever. And sure enough I said, "Who was that?" He said, "If you know anybody who wanted to get on tell me because we're recruiting and it wasn't a lot of us." I was like alright. I'll try it, and now 23 years later, still here. It was just an opportunity that came across. Never dreamed about becoming a police officer.

Police Officer four (PO4) recalled her inspiration for becoming a police officer occurred during a career day at her elementary school. She recalled the following:

Well my dad and my step dad, both were in the army and one day, I think I was in the 3rd grade or 4th grade and they had career day at my school and I seen this police officer. He had this black hat on and a shiny belt, boots were shiny and he was just well put together. You know nice clean cut, well-groomed guy and I said, "Who are you?" Are you in the army? And he said, "No, I'm a police officer, what do you do and he said, "I arrest bad guys." And I was like bad guys. I was like I wanna do that. He said, "You do?" I said yeah, I want to do that. So I wanted to catch some bad guys and put them in jail. And ever since then it stuck with me."

Adequate & Inadequate Compensation

The participants' responses revealed some variations when discussing their current salary and earning potential. The law enforcement profession does not appear to discriminate when comparing the wages of male and female police officers. In general, the wage gap is evident when examining the officer's role in the department or her time in the profession. Three research participants identified the subtheme of adequate compensation as influencing their decision to remain in the profession. For example, Police Officer eight (PO8) stated, "The benefits and money." While Police Officer seven (PO7) said, "I like helping people and the money ain't bad either." And when I learned about the extra jobs and the money, then I said, "This is where I need to be so I stayed." In contrast, two participants talked about being poorly compensated at their agency. Police Officer four (PO4) revealed she received minimal raises and that she is not being well-compensated:

I been here 7 years and I have yet to receive a pay increase to where I am

satisfied. To where I can say yes, I am reaping the benefits from my job. Am I

reaping the benefits as far as pay? No I'm not. I have yet to see a huge change as

far as the pay. That's another reason why I'm going back to school. I mean, I

love being a police officer. I always wanted to be a police officer since that day

in the 3rd or 4th grade. If it was better pay I'd stay but I can't live on that, and I'm

a single mother.

Police Officer three (PO3) added a different point of view. She stated, "Its okay.

It pays the bills. If I could change somethings, I probably would, but I think precinct 2 is

too big, as rich of a county as it is, they don't pay no money. It sucks. I mean, I make

less money now than I did before I became an officer. They have levels but like

corporals they don't pay us corporal pay. I have to get deputy pay."

Retirement Motivations

Compensation appeared to be a motivation for some female officer to remain or

contemplate leaving the profession. The analysis also revealed participant motivations for

seeking retirement. Three research participants explained that their longevity in the

professions was related to retirement motivations. Police Officer five (PO5) indicated,

"My years of experience. I can't imagine someone else coming and saying come without

starting all over. Yeah, I'm too old for that. I'm too far in to really go someplace else."

Similarly, Police Officer seven (PO7) reported, "Plus I really don't have time to start over

again in a new job." Police Officer three (PO3) discussed how grateful she was to have a

job at her age. She shared the following:

It's just a blessing to have a job. Cause you know you go to some departments

and they get rid of you once you reach a certain age and bring in younger people

so they can pay them less money. They young and encourageable so you can

bring them in and pay them less money. And they excited to just have the badge

and the gun, but with older officers we been at it so long we know what to expect.

Barriers to Promotions. The very nature of police work often impedes a female

officer's ability to showcase her true abilities. Thus, the participants discussed their

perceptions regarding the statement: Describe your department's rules and regulations

when seeking promotions. The purpose of this question was to identify procedures

female officers are required to follow when seeking advancement. Additionally, the

participants discussed their experience related to the statement: If you feel comfortable,

please discuss any obstacles during the process. The goal of this inquiry was to uncover

any problems female police officers encountered during the promotion seeking process.

As Table 3 shows, four sub-themes emerged: (a) favoritism in promotion; (b) obstacles

experienced; (c) lack of formal procedures and (d) seniority.

Table 3

Theme 2: Barriers to Promotions

Subtheme	References	Percentage of Sources
Favoritism in Promotions	15	100%
Obstacles Experienced	15	77%
Lack of Formal Procedures	4	44%
Seniority	6	44%

Favoritism in Promotions

All participants provided feedback related to their perceptions of favoritism in their agency's promotion process. Police Officer three (PO3) stated, "There's no seeking no promotion. It's more on who you know and who they like the best and who butt they kiss the most. It's a lot of favoritism. I might go tomorrow and they done promoted somebody and everybody is shocked." Police Officer five (PO5) said, "Take test, that's how they do it. No, we have a process. Well them back in the back room might have something to do with it, but you take test." Police Officer two (PO2) discussed the lack of fairness in her department's promotion process. She reported, "It's more about who you know or who likes you. She might decide that she wants anybody to be a supervisor on any given day. She holds the power." Likewise, Police Officer one (PO1) indicated, "It's who they want or like, you know? Like I said, it's who they want or like. That's the way of the department." Police Officer eight (PO8) talked about her experience of applying for a promotion several times. "I tried out for a promotion as a sergeant, but that didn't work. I really wanted to be a detective but I couldn't get that either. Although I scored well on the exam there were other factors that interfered such as, time in the division, who you know and stuff like that." Police Officer four (PO4) shared her experience of being passed up for promotions on at least three occasions. "You have to be tested, like for a sergeant. Everything is tested there is nothing given. In the end I went up several times. I've been number 2, number 3 so many times. It's just that one point. It's just ridiculous and I just gave up." In comparison, Police Officer seven (PO7)

provided a more positive perception of her department's promotion process. She specified, "I've seen young people come in and progress. They look at your performance, your attitude, and your appearance." While Police Officer six (PO6) explained, "We go on a bidding scale so within a year, if you don't have any docked time, if you don't have any suspensions, written reprimands or tardies you are eligible for applying for promotions".

Obstacles Experienced

Seven participants shared their views about perceived obstacles encountered when seeking promotions at their agency. Many of the participants cited perceptions of favoritism as hindering their opportunity to achieve advancement. Police Officer two (PO2) discussed her views related to competing for promotions in a male-dominated profession. She stated, "As a woman you always face obstacles when trying to move up in a male dominated profession. They feel threatened by women who can do the same job they been doing." Police Officer one (PO1) revealed, "Like I said, it's who they want or like. That's just the ways of the department." Participant eight (PO8) perceived her limitations as self-induced. "I didn't have any obstacles. Most of my issues were related to my availability or how I ranked in the process, so it's more me." Similar to (PO1), Police Officer four (PO4) stated, "I tried once and it's pretty much like this, they know who they want to pick. When they post a job they already know who they want to pick. They just want that person to go up and just do the interview and you know BS around and okay, you got it. Alright have a good day. But now that civil service has stepped in they do test." Police Officer three (PO3) explained:

I earned this position. I just want to make known that I am always striving for better. But as far as the corporal stripes, they was a surprise to me. But at the time I had been in a position that nobody else wanted to do. Sometimes it could get a little frustrating, but I became good at it, so I'm assuming that's why they gave it to me."

Police Officer five (PO5) talked about contemplating promotional opportunities earlier in her career.

She explained, "Well back in the day I wouldn't mind being a supervisor, but right now, un un. And the only reason I didn't was because I didn't want to take them calls in the middle of the night. I didn't want to receive a call saying, "girl your new shift is Tuesday and Wednesdays off at night. And it's because I pissed somebody else off way in the district or wherever and they trying to move somebody around. And at that time I had kids. I'm trying to hurry up and get out of here this is my last job. I'm done."

Seniority

Three participants discussed the subtheme seniority when their obstacles when seeking advancement. Police Officer seven (PO7) talked about losing an advancement opportunity to someone with more time at the department. She stated, "They go based on seniority too. I did try one time for corporal, but there was another guy who had been there so he got it." Police Officer four (PO4) indicated, "They do go by seniority. They give seniority points towards how well you answer the questions." Police Officer six (PO6) spoke about an incident similar to (PO4), "My experience with that was I was

trying to get moved to the day shift, but they said I lacked seniority. Although I have a total of 3 ½ years of experience, there are other officers that have more experience. Although I've been here, I lack points and experience."

Factors Impacting Job Satisfaction. Previous research revealed inconsistencies when examining gender differences in job satisfaction. The participants discussed their perceptions concerning the open-ended question: How do you describe job satisfaction? The goal of this question was to document factors which impact female police officers job satisfaction. The participants also expressed their views regarding the open-ended question: Are there any incidents in the workplace that have led you to contemplate a career change? The purpose for this question was to determine which factors contribute to current female officer retention and/or attrition. The participants shared their views related to the open-ended question: How would you describe your current job status? The purpose of this question was to examine female police officers' attitudes and perceptions regarding their current position. As Table 4 shows, four constant themes emerged: (a) contentment in work life; (b) limited support; (c) family responsibilities; and (d) lack of opportunities.

Table 4

Theme 3: Factors Impacting Job Satisfaction

Subtheme	References	Percentage of Sources
Contentment in Job	11	77%
Family Responsibility	8	55%
Limited Support	7	44%

Lack of Opportunities	8	44%

Contentment in Job

Five research participants discussed their views regarding contentment in work life. Several participants indicated they were satisfied in their current position. Police Officer four (PO4) stated, "I like my job. I'm pretty satisfied right now." Police Officer six (PO6) used a range to describe satisfaction in her current position. "I'd say 8, on a scale of 1 to 10. Ten being the best, I'd say an 8."   Police Officer seven (PO7) stated, "For me, it's about feeling more secure. I feel so much more secure than I did back in the day. You don't have to worry about ever getting fired here unless you beat up your wife or something. I even won employee of the quarter because I never missed a day of work." Police Officer one (PO1) indicated, "I do what I do cause that what I do. I enjoy being able to make sure somebody is protected. Look at life as a way of accomplishment and not always defeats." Similar to (PO6), Police Officer eight (PO8) reported, "I'd say on a scale of 1 to 10, I feel like my job satisfaction is about a 6 or 7. Reason being cause we got a new sheriff. It don't matter though cause I love where I'm working.

Limited Support

Three research participants identified limited support as contributing to them contemplating a career change. Police Officer one (PO1) said, "Yeah, but I don't have to deal with all the hassle of a career change. And most of them not gonna make exceptions for you." Police Officer five (PO5) talked about working with limited support in the courts. "We walk in the door and if the office don't call us for nothing you really on your

own, especially in that office cause my office is in the criminal building. But just get

their care, custody and control. That's really what our main thing is." Police Officer six

(PO6) discussed her perceived lack of support. "It's having to fight for my rights every

day or every other day," she said.

Lack of Opportunity

Several research participants discussed limited opportunity for advancement as

influencing their decision to contemplate a career change. Police Officer two (PO2) said,

"No, I just need to work to get a position where I can advance in my department. I might

change agencies but not professions. I might leave this agency within a year if I don't get

a better position." Police Officer four (PO4) reported, "Let me go back and retract that. I

am contemplating a career change, but I'm contemplating because of the pay. I got

mixed up. I'm sorry. I have yet to see a huge change as far as pay. Its 85 cents or 96

cents. I have yet to see a $2 or $3 dollar raise, so I'm seeking elsewhere. I'm seeking

other avenues."   Police officer three (PO3) discussed contemplating a career at her

current agency because of limited opportunities:

> I thought about a career change back when I was younger, and at this department.
>
> I thought about it cause when I came this is a small department and it's really hard
>
> to promote up and cause most of the people that's there is probably gonna be
>
> there as long as I'm there. You know it has been times when I thought about a
>
> career change as far as moving to a bigger department, so I can get a higher
>
> promotion. But at my age, I'm phasing down. I'm just holding on for twenty.
>
> Not twenty-one, twenty."

Family Responsibility

Three research participants identified the subtheme of family responsibilities as the reason for contemplating a career change. Police Officer five (PO5) stated, "Yes, I did actually back in 2000 or 2001 after feeling overwhelmed with my personal responsibilities, motherhood and wifely duties."   One of the reasons I decided to finally leave my previous profession was because they told me I had to leave work once I turned 6 months pregnant. I didn't want to. I wanted to work until I had my baby and then they told me this was a liability for them," explained Police Officer two (PO2). Police Officer seven (PO7) explained, I almost thought about going back into the accounting field, especially since I had my daughter at home and I was a single mom." Police Officer one (PO1) discussed the following:

> You know it's like this one little girl. She got pregnant and she was working the streets 9 months. The only thing that saved her was the guys. And the killing part was it was under a female police administrator. When she was four months pregnant and didn't know, but when she found out she was pregnant they told her she had to stay out here and do what she do. I think she wind up like the 8th month where she got so big. I think they start letting her wear a coverall. They told her they didn't have no positions for pregnant women."

Perceptions of Resistance during Law Enforcement Career. The majority of research participants shared their perceptions regarding the question: Have you ever experienced any resistance from fellow officers? The purpose of this question was to shed light on how officer resistance impacts female police officers' career. Participants

identified their perceptions regarding the question: Describe your agency's procedures

for filing grievance. The goal of this query was to examine the procedures followed

when handing female officer grievances, as well as any obstacles experienced during the

process. As shown in Table 5, four subthemes emerged: (a) respect for paramilitary

structure; (b) doubts about competence; (c) barriers to integration; and (d) confidence.

Table 5

Theme 4: Perceptions of Resistance during Law Enforcement Career

Subtheme	References	Percentage of Sources
Respect for Paramilitary Structure	11	100%
Doubts about Competence	7	22%
Retaliation	9	66%
Barriers to Integration	11	55%
Confidence	5	44%

Respect for Paramilitary Structure

All participants identified the subtheme of respect for the police structure when

going through their department's grievance process. Police Officer two (PO2) and Police

Officer eight's (PO8) statements were similar. PO2 and PO8 indicated, "If we want to

file a grievance, we required to always follow the chain of command. You go to your

supervisor first and if there's a problem, you work your way up the chain of command."

Police Officer seven (PO7) noted, "You gotta go through the chain of command. That

commander and then you take it to a higher level. You definitely follow procedures

cause they gonna ask you if you did. They will tell you we don't fire people. I remember

when a guy was drunk and drove to a casino with his gun and he cursed someone out.

That was the only person I knew to get fired. That taught me don't." Police Officer three

(PO3) stated, "We have to go through the chain of command usually. Once we go

through the chain of command, then the chain of command will meet and they'll call you

in for an interview and go from there." Police Officer six (PO6) added, "If you have a

problem, you complete the grievance form and hand it over to a supervisor and they deal

with it from there. Similarly, Police Officer five (PO5) specified, "The chain of

command. You know, start with your supervisor. Your immediate supervisor and if they

don't or it don't go anywhere, then you go higher up. Within a matter of time, you might

go to your lieutenant, captain and just up the chain of command." "We follow the chain

of command. We fill out the grievance form and we give it to civil service. Civil

service, they handle it now. Anytime we want to write up somebody. You know, if I

want to file a grievance against another deputy I go through the chain of command". "If I

wanna file a grievance against another deputy I go through the chain of command and

then it goes through civil service. But a lot of people, they don't write grievances,

because they are afraid of retaliation. You hardly ever hear of someone filing a

grievance." said Police Officer four (PO4).

Barriers to Integration

Three participants identified the subtheme barriers to integration in the early

stages of their profession. Police Officer one (PO1) recalled an incident during her early

years in policing. She stated, "A lot of them didn't want to ride with you in the first place

so they would just stand back hoping something would happen to you. I mean where

you'd have to holler for help." Police Officer eight (PO8) stated, "The old regime picked

for me. I had no choice of days off. They tried to stick me in other areas or divisions, so

I could lose tenure or seniority in my position." Police Officer four (PO4) discussed her

thoughts related to feeling alienated by her peers after making a mistake. She revealed

the following:

> When it's a hot pursuit or something you know. Join in or I need you to join in
>
> that pursuit. No, ya'll don't want me. And just because they don't call me. I
>
> guess they think they can do a better job than me or than I can. But they mess up.
>
> They mess up too. So nobody's perfect. There's no such thang as a perfect
>
> arrest. You know a perfect whatever. Everything is random. You know. A
>
> perfect traffic stop. Nobody's perfect. So just give me that chance. You know
>
> that I have already been given. You know. Just let me do it. If I mess up. I mess
>
> up. I can correct it later."

Retaliation

The subtheme retaliation was also identified as a barrier for some female research

participants. For example, three research participants recalled incidents perceived as

resistance early in their careers. Police Officer six (PO6) stated, "When fellow officers

want to do things their way and it's not the proper way of doing things. That's where I

feel like I get the resistance. In comparison, Police Officer seven (PO7) stated, "I did in

the past but not now. I had some problems with my supervisor at my previous job.

Everyone here is okay and they want to retire." Police Officer one (PO1) characterized

her perceived resistance as minimal and viewed herself as different from other female

officers by adding, "Well a lot of the, ooh wee. Yeah, I'm just thinking even, even as a

rookie I didn't have a lot of the problems that a lot of females had, because I never

tolerated it. Everybody thought I was a little special, and so they, so they didn't stop me

from doing stuff. I'm not the kind of person you can bully too good."

One participant identified the subtheme: doubt about competence. Police Officer

thirteen (PO4) recalled an incident where she questioned her ability to adequately

perform her duties. She shared an incident where she felt isolated and alienated during a

police chase. She stated the following:

> We had a chase and the said stand by the gage, because he's gonna come the other
>
> way, but you stand right here. This dude came right where I was because he was
>
> jumping the fence and he was going straight. But he made a turn and he seen the
>
> gate and I was right there by the gate. So as he came out I drew down on him and
>
> the sergeant was like I didn't tell you to go over there. I said no you told me to go
>
> over here by this gate, because he wasn't coming this way. But it was one deputy
>
> that was my FTO. He uh, uh after I got out the program, when he was out on the
>
> street, he was like lets go. Let's get it so, but it's some of them that won't call me
>
> at all. I guess they feel like that you know, she's not good enough or you know I
>
> don't think, or she's incompetent. Or whatever but it's whatever. You never
>
> know. You never know. I guess they think they can do a better job than I can."

In contrast, several officers presented an attitude of confidence about their ability

to perform their duties. Police Officer three (PO3) dissented somewhat from (PO4)

perspective and indicated she felt competent in her ability to do her job, "When I first got

promoted some people was mad about it, but the thing is I work." I work and I'm good at what I do." Police Officer one (PO1) advised, "It wasn't hard for me because I'm a very outgoing kind of person. As I've gotten older, I've restrained a lot. I learned tact a little. I'm good, but I learned back then, during that time, you couldn't out fight me, you couldn't out cuss me, you couldn't out talk me. I have a voice that carries, so when I say something you understood what I meant. All that was a benefit for me." While Police Officer sixteen (PO7) talked about how she has developed more self-confidence as a veteran officer. "I talk now. I remember in the past I didn't feel like I can talk. With time and spiritual guidance I feel more confident. I know everybody goes through something, even guys. Whether they go through it with their wives and children."

Perceptions of Inequitable Treatment. All of the participants shared their views regarding the question: Do you feel you've ever experienced or been exposed to sexual harassment? The goal of this question is to reveal the impact of sexual harassment on female police officers. The participants also expressed their views related to the statement: Please discuss your experience if any, with discrimination in the workplace and describe what marginalization means to you. This was asked to learn how acts of discrimination impacted current female police officer careers. Finally, participants discussed their perceptions regarding the question: How did that make you feel? The goal of this question was to determine current female police officers' feelings related to inequitable treatment. As shown in Table 5, five constant themes emerged: (a) recognizing messages of sexual harassment; (b) minimize acts of sexual; (b) barriers to

socialization; (e) gender issues; and (f) racial issues. The subthemes are not presented in any particular order.

Table 6

Theme 5: Perceptions of Inequitable Treatment

Subtheme	References	Percentage of Sources
Recognizing Messages of Sexual Harassment	15	100%
Minimizing Acts of Sexual Harassment	12	55%
Gender Issues	16	100%
Racial Issues	10	55%
General Acts of Inequality	5	11%

Recognizing Messages of Sexual Harassment

The research participants shared their perceptions of sexual harassment based on personal experience or being indirectly exposed to sexual harassment. All participants recognized the subtheme of sexual harassment throughout their law enforcement careers. Police Officer seven (PO7) stated, "I haven't experienced it personally. I've seen people marry each other and I think it's just a different breed of people. The first three weeks I was there a girl sat me down and hipped me to the game. They would ask questions like are you married. They were just trying to find a hook up while they were away. Most of them were married and I ain't never wanted someone else's husband anyway. I don't want my name to be slandered." Police Officer six (PO6) talked about a fellow officer who continued to pursue an inappropriate relationship although she told him no. She

indicated, "A man was, well one of the men at my job was trying to talk to me and I just kind of said, like no, I don't want to talk to you. That I'm not interested in you, but he kept pursuing. He kept pursing, trying to talk to me. I mean he kept saying how pretty I look and pursing the fact that he wants me and I just felt like that was sexual harassment." Police officer four (PO4) advised, "I don't cause I don't think I've ever seen that cause I don't really deal with nobody. Like I'm pretty much a loner. Wait a minute. I mean I have seen it in corrections. It was like a third party sexual harassment, where a male was talking to a female. She was a female sergeant. He was talking to the officer saying she has a big booty, a big coconut. Talking about her breast was coconuts and she had a big booty. And she didn't like it, so another female officer heard it and reported it. Even though the person that he was talking to, she didn't get offended, but that other person who reported it got offended. That situation is common, but I think it's more of the males doing it towards the females, cause it's more males working in corrections than it is females." Police Officer three (PO3) shared the following:

> I give them one warning. This is your only warning. If you cross that barrier again, then we gone have to go talk to them people. And then I don't have that problem no more. At first it made me feel like, let me see cause I don't want to say like a piece of meat, but in reality that's what it is. You know, I was the new piece of meat on the block, so let's see how many people gone do this or how many people gone do that. But once you get one out the way, then they spread the word and you don't have no problem.

Minimizing Acts of Sexual Harassment

Four research participant's perceptions of sexual harassment revealed they may have attempted to minimize the incident. Police Officer two (PO2) specified, "Actually, it's been fine for me. It don't affect me, because I'm used to hearing those kinds of complaints. It also has a lot to do with how we as women carry ourselves. You have to have self-respect if you want respect." Similar to (PO2), Police Officer eight (PO8) said, "I don't have no experience with sexual harassment at least not myself or anyone I'm around personally. I haven't. No one has in my department where I work. Well of course, that's something I see all the time, but you get used to it." Police Officer five (PO5) explained, "Okay, experienced or exposed. I have been exposed to it. Just so much of just talking. You know, just saying stuff but nothing derogatory to me where I have to go file or whatever." Police Officer three (PO3) stated,

"Yeah, all the time, but I'm a woman and I know how to deal with it. This is my thing, a person only do what you allow them to do. I'm not going to allow you to make me feel suggested to sleeping with you and then when you move on to the next one you just kick me on down. No, I'm gonna earn my way. Paper wise or job wise or just on experience alone. And I'm already a master peace officer, so the rest is history.

Police Officer one (PO1) specified, "I was rough, so they didn't want to take too much of a chance that you try to harass me. I might get mad and they didn't want that. They knew that they couldn't do it and nothing be said. Most of them figured I would fight them. In fact, during that time I would."

Gender Issues

All of the participants indicated gender discrimination issues as a main barrier to overcome in order to achieve longevity in the police profession. Police Officer two (PO2) indicated the following:

> Well yes, mostly related to being a female. The people who promote or get what they want seems to be the ones who play politics. Like it or not, it's always going to be gender problems in law enforcement. Its politics so I'm not about that, so whether they like me or not, I'm gonna be okay. You would think there would be more females at my agency since there is a female police chief, but I feel like they gave me my opportunity, so I want to pay my dues to show my appreciation.

Police Officer seven (PO7) stated, "Lately where I am, they are happy to have us. We work as hard as the men or even better. They try to keep down problems and confusion, so I can't say I have any real problems with discrimination at this agency. Some of my past agencies discriminate against women. We couldn't do some of the jobs that the male officers did. Back then women officers didn't even try to get a promotion." Police Officer eight (PO8) advised, "And not just females. In some respects, gender is not a problem. But when you talk about disciplining deputies, there is clearly a gender bias." Police Officer three (PO3) advised, "I worked. Sergeant trained me and I outworked most of them men there, but they still promote the men. But now anytime somebody drop an assist or whatever, I'm the one they call to help them. This is my thing. I think people don't understand that women have to work harder than men simply because we have to earn respect. A man can walk into a room and his presence will give

89

it to him, but a woman….you got to go the extra yard." Police Officer one (PO1)

discussed being a recipient of consent decrees implemented as part of police reform in the

early 1990s. She explained:

> The main reason I joined years ago was I got the job was because I satisfied two
>
> categories, I was black and I was female. Back during that time when the federal
>
> government was saying, if you don't hire women, we gone cut your funds. A lot
>
> of people, your black officers didn't like riding with female officers, because they
>
> felt like if, they got into a confrontation or if they got into a problem, that the
>
> female officer couldn't back them up, as well as a male officer could.

Racial Issues

Three participants indicated their experiences with inequitable treatment were

directly related to their ethnicity. Police Officer three (PO3) indicated, "I just think

things are harder because I'm black." Police Officer eight (PO8) conveyed, "As far as

race discrimination, you see that and hear 3at all day. Well there are certain or different

rules for minorities. The white deputies, they get away with discrimination. What I'm

saying is someone of color gets harsher punishments. I mean you can't be black or

Hispanic." Police Officer one (PO1) indicated, early in her career that she was offered a

job to fulfill federal mandates in place during that time. She stated, "A lot of the White

officers didn't want to ride with you because for the most part, they didn't care too much

for Black officers, period, especially females. It was well one thing about being a Black

female officer. You have to prove yourself."

One research participant noted general acts of inequality when attempting to integrate into her agency as negatively affecting her work performance. Police Officer four (PO4) indicated the following:

Okay, well it was one incident where I was responding to a domestic disturbance call. It was a domestic violence in progress where a male and a female, they were tenants and the landlord was trying to kick them out for not paying rent. So the boyfriend assaulted the landlord. Okay, when we got there, when the other deputy showed up, when we got there he had hit the landlord with an unknown object. So he was bleeding from his forehead, so I said what did you hit him with and the tenant said, "I hit him with my hand and I didn't hit him with anything else," but the landlord was like, no he hit me with something. I asked him, "Hey do you want to file a report." He said, "No, I'm leaving." I said, "Sir I need to get your information and he said, "No." The landlord got in his truck and left. Okay so I didn't get a name or anything like that. I got the boyfriend's information and he left. I said get your stuff out and he left. The deputy that showed up said, "Hey you don't have to take a report because the victim left." I said, "you sure?" He said no report because you don't have a victim. You don't have a suspect. I said, "I do, I have both." Even though they left the scene I have both. But to make a long story short, we get back to the office and the landlord goes to the hospital and he wants to make a report, because we didn't ask if he needed any emergency care. And I was like, that's not true, because he said he didn't want any assistance. He said he just left and I got wrote up. And I said what about this

deputy here? Nothing happened to that deputy. We both showed up. Both took

care of the scene, but anytime there's a domestic violence call you have to make a

report, but by him being a senior deputy and I hadn't been out there even a

month."

Supportive Relationships/Unsupportive Relationships. All of the participants

expressed their perceptions regarding the statement: Describe what mentoring means to

you. The goal of this question was to determine female police officers' interpretation of

mentoring. Participants also discussed their experiences regarding the query: Tell me

about your experience as a mentee/officer in training. The purpose of this inquiry was to

gain insight into the types of support and guidance female police officers receive during

the training process. Participants also shared their perceptions concerning the open-

ended question: How would you describe your level of support or your mentoring

experience? The purpose of this question was to determine current female officers

networking opportunities, as well as any available role-models at their departments. As

Shown in Table 6, 4 subthemes emerged: (a) guiding others; (b) inadequate training; (c)

supportive relationships; and (d) inadequate officer support.

Table 7

Theme 6: Supportive Relationships/Unsupportive Relationships

Subtheme	References	Percentage of Sources

Guiding Others	20	100%
Supportive Relationships	4	22%
Inadequate Training	10	33%
Inadequate Officer Support	15	55%

Guiding Others

All research participants discussed the subtheme of guiding others as part of the mentoring process. Police Officer eight (PO8) specified, "Mentoring, it means something positive and encouraging. It means guiding someone through the process that probably hasn't been through it before. To make that person more comfortable." Police Officer one (PO1) stated, "We don't have a mentoring program at all. It's what the people come up with. For me, it's just like anybody who rode with me. I try to put myself in a position where they know what they doing and they can always call me. I mean if they leave here going someplace else, they can still call me." Police Officer four (PO4) advised, "Somebody to take me under their wings. Teach me the ropes. Teach me how the field that I'm going into. Teaching me what is expected from me. What should I expect from that field that I'm in? You get kind of personal relationship with that person, but not too personal." Police Officer two (PO2) reported, "Mentoring is when someone looks out for you like my current partner. She was always there for me. She wasn't gonna let me fail. She took her time and showed me the ins and outs of the job." Police Officer five (PO5) stated, "Mentoring is to take somebody by the hand and show them the ropes. Show them what you know." Police Officer seven (PO7) said, "Mentoring is

very important because a lot of young people mimic what we do. Mentoring is like a therapy thing or therapeutic for me. Maybe we can help someone avoid some of the things we went through, but only if they willing to listen." Police Officer six (PO6) stated, "Mentoring is like counseling and giving advice when you need it. Helping them along the way if they need your help." Police Officer three (PO3) specified, "Mentoring to me would be trying to get someone that's in trouble on the straight and narrow and guide them to a positive way."

Supportive Relationships

Some participants recognized acts of support when fellow officers needed assistance. Police Officer one (PO1) elaborated on an incident where a female officer was required to work on patrol throughout her pregnancy. PO1 stated, "It was a blessing that the guys out here, they looked out for her. I think one supervisor would make sure somebody checked by with her. But just sitting in a patrol car. I understand that you can't make special concessions just because you're a female walking in. But you have to have something in place for a situation like that." Police Officer seven (PO7) talked about how supportive her fellow officers were when her mother died. "When my mother died the honor guard came out and they all came out to support me. The whole upstairs was there for me. I was shocked. It was like wow. That's why people don't want to go nowhere."

Unsupportive Relationships

In comparison, four research participants identified incidents where they perceived their coworkers did not provide adequate support. Police Officer four (PO4) stated the following:

I don't know. If something were to ever happen. If I was ever involved in something on the job, we have a union and I have yet to join and I'm thinking that would probably help. But if I'm not in a union I don't know how far I can get with that. So, I don't know how much support I would get. I can't trust them. You know? I can't even trust my supervisor. Who do you turn to? Now we have civil service and its like don't go to civil service because it's like they don't have your back, cause they're not there for you."

Police Officer six (PO6) indicated, "I would say that the department not so good. I feel like you should get it from all the supervisors. They should help you in some kind of way. They should supervise you in some kind of way, but not all, but the majority it's not good." Police Officer one (PO1) stated, "Okay, fellow officers I do, cause you know you have people that I've trained. People that I know I been around, so I seem like the furniture. You know? I feel like, if I were to get sick today, and I called my partner, I feel like if she had to, she'd spend the night at my house to take care of me. You know that kind of stuff. As far as administration is concerned, I feel like if I stomped my toe and said I don't feel like coming in, you either come in or you fired."

Inadequate Training

Two research participants provided feedback indicating that some of her department's patrol procedures were not clearly explained during the training process.

Police Officer five (PO5) said, "I didn't get to experience everything. It was only 2 months of training after I got out of the police academy. I didn't really get to see everything you know that was listed on the paper that I was supposed to do. They give you a piece of paper saying, hey, you have responded to this type of call or that type of call. There were different types of calls and there were some calls on the list that I didn't get a chance to respond to. I mean after the program I did, I was about 85 percent."

Police Officer one (PO1) explained the following:

> Oh man, in fact for the most part, during my FTO program I had good guys. Even
>
> the White ones were good guys. I only had a couple and one night I got a call that
>
> still bothers me to this day. I got a call one night: Rape in progress and that was
>
> out in Clearlake. And back then I had no idea where I was at, so I was trying to
>
> key map and that's why everybody I trained, I teach them how to key map. I'm
>
> running this rape in progress and I got myself turned around and I couldn't figure
>
> it out on the key map cause, so I was just key mapping and driving. So he looked
>
> over at me and said, "You got yourself in this, so get to the call. And, and my
>
> thang was, I said yeah, I know you gone mark me down, I say but this is an in
>
> progress call, so just tell me where it is. "I'm not telling you nothing." Oh, it was
>
> raining and I stomped the gas, that car was spinning and smoking. I was pissed
>
> off cause it was a rape in progress and here this jackass gone refuse to tell me
>
> where to go. And I guess God was helping me guide the car, cause I mean I went
>
> straight to the call. He looking at me stupid. Oh my goodness, fortunately, it
>
> wasn't any good. It was a prank call, but just the potential of it made me mad

cause you talking about a rape in progress and some woman may be getting raped.

And you gone tell me to get there the best way I could.

Summary

Chapter 4 included an outline of the procedures used to conduct this qualitative phenomenological study. Face-to-face in-depth interviews were conducted to understand the lived experience of eight current female police officers working in the Southeastern states. The interviews took place in a private office during non-business hours. The eight participants were recruited through the use of purposive sampling. The recruitment process resulted in identifying 9 participants who met criteria for the study. The final study included a sample of 8 participants who had personal experience with the phenomenon. The interview data was later coded and analyzed, which allowed the findings to emerge. A discussion of the findings is discussed in chapter five.

Chapter 5: Discussion, Conclusions, and Recommendations

Introduction

The purpose of this qualitative, phenomenological study was to examine the attitudes and perceptions of female officers' lived experiences to aid in the development of new departmental policies and procedures that will include the needs of female police officers. The findings were based on the analysis of eight in-depth interviews with female police officers working in the Southeastern states. All participants were interviewed using the same interview questions. Given the importance of women's contribution to the law enforcement profession and the scarcity of literature regarding female police officer's experiences, an investigation of what women experience throughout their careers was warranted. A review of the current literature provided some guidance in the development of the interview protocol

This study contributes to the existing literature on women's personal experiences in law enforcement. The findings are relative to the motivations of the participants in this study and are in line with the findings of past studies. Past researchers have supported the belief that only men have the physical and emotional capacity to do police work. Additionally, the women in this study explained the importance of supporting each other and factors impacting career longevity. Some of the women explained what was necessary to survive in a male-dominated organization, as well as any barriers they encountered. Other women discussed situations where they were assertive and went against the norm.

Interpretation of Findings

Themes Shared Between Participants

The interpretation of findings section is organized by the six primary themes that emerged during the data analysis process. The findings are presented to provide an understanding of the significance of each theme as it relates to the research question. The research questions were developed based on inconsistencies or gaps in the previous literature.

Theme 1: Aspirations for becoming a police officer. The female police officer participants identified succeeding for their children, helping others, relationships with other officers, retirement motivations, and adequate compensation as their perceived motives for becoming police officers. Two female police officer participants also identified inadequate compensation as an incentive for seeking employment at other agencies. Four of the participants noted having personal relationships with other officers as inspiring them to become police officers. Half of the participants conveyed helping others as a motivation to enter the profession, while three participants reported succeeding for their children as an inspiration for becoming a police officer. Some of the female police officer participants indicated that their salaries and opportunities to work security jobs while off duty as influencing their decision to remain in the profession. Additionally, three female police officer participants shared the perspective of achieving retirement as their motivation for remaining in the profession. These three participants voiced concerns about the time already invested at their jobs and expressed that they could not see themselves starting a new career.

Though small in numbers, women continue to integrate different areas of law enforcement that were once designated as male-only occupations. Although some female officers enter the profession for reasons that differ from their male counterparts, the differences are minimal. This study confirmed the findings in the Dodge et al. (2011) study indicating that women and men enter the profession for the same reasons. Kim and Merlo (2010) suggested that female officers place more emphasis on helping the public while male officers favor the power and status provided by the position. Furthermore, all of the participants' responses were consistent with previous findings when examining their motivation for remaining in the profession. When asked about her motivations for becoming a police officer, PO1 stated, "Honestly, to help other women in the profession. To be a voice." The findings also correspond with earlier research when exploring the participants' incentives for entering the profession. Researchers contend that financial security, job security, and encouragement from family and friends are major motivations for women to enter the law enforcement profession (Kim & Merlo, 2010; Lonsway, 2007; Price, 1996; Seklecki & Paynich, 2007). Overall, compassion for others and devotion to the job appeared to be a major factor for the participants remaining in the law enforcement profession.

Theme 2: Barriers to promotion. I found that female police officers continue to face barriers when seeking promotional opportunities. All of the participants acknowledged specific problems related to achieving promotions at their agency. The study also mirrored the conclusions drawn by Lonsway (2007) that "Female officers reported less trust in their colleagues than do their male peers" (p. 3). Though some of

participants applied for promotions, most of them expressed mistrust in the administrators making the decisions. Furthermore, although half of the participants applied for promotions, only two of the participants in the current study accomplished corporal status in a medium-sized county agency, which is nonpaid and the lowest supervisory rank. The two female participants who earned promotions expressed a sense of pride in their accomplishments, but admitted the positions were earned after completing assignments that no one else wanted. Additionally, all of the female police officer participants conveyed experiencing favoritism in the promotions process, and seven participants noted perceived barriers such as, being female and family obligations.

Some of the female police officer participants also identified a lack of formal procedures, a lack of seniority, and general obstacles as barriers to attaining promotions at their agency. Researchers purports that these intentional institutional barriers are designed to discourage women from seeking promotions. This revelation supports the previous research findings, which posit that the police culture seeks to feminize and devalue the contributions of women. Thus, the majority of police agencies have a limited number of females in top management or supervisory positions (Lonsway et al., 2002; National Center for Women in Policing, 2001; Rabe-Hemp, 2003; Shelley et al., 2013). In fact, there are no women in top command positions in more than half of police departments nationwide (Lonsway, 2007; NCWP, 2002; Shelley et al., 2011). Female police officer representation accounts for less than 1% of all top management or chief positions nationwide (Shelley et al., 2011). Women of color make up less than 1% of all supervisors and top command positions in the law enforcement profession (Kurtz et al.,

2012; NCWP, 2002; Shelley et al., 2011). Despite the disparities experienced at their agencies, the female police officer participants discussed gratification and satisfaction in their chosen profession.

  Theme 3: Factors impacting job satisfaction. Overall, the majority of the participants reported being satisfied or expressed contentment in their current careers. Yet, only three of the eight female police officers discussed limited support as their reason for contemplating a career change. An additional three participants reported seeking different careers as a result of limited promotional opportunities. Although three women indicated family responsibility as the reason for considering a different occupation early in their career, all of them remained in the profession. This study confirmed some of the findings in the literature. Based on the findings, only three of the female officer participants changed agencies; however, none of the participants switched careers. However, previous research produced mixed findings in regards to overall police officer job satisfaction. Dowler and Arai (2008) found that gender harassment and gender bias had a greater influence on job satisfaction. In this study, none of the participants perceived gender harassment as negatively influencing their job satisfaction.

  Stress was another factor which researchers indicated may impact female police officer's job satisfaction. Some scholars argued that the work environment that female police officers are subjected to may lead to higher levels of stress and job dissatisfaction. Hassell et al. (2010) argued that problems in the work environment such as a lack of departmental support and limited opportunities for advancement may negatively affect a female officer's job performance. Similar to the findings in this study, Hassell et al.

asserted that a negative environment has minimal effect on the officer retention rate. Although the Krimmel and Gormley (2003) study found that female police officers experience more work-related stress than their male counterparts, the findings in this study revealed stress had minimal impact on the participant's job satisfaction.

In this study, I found that female police officers chose law enforcement careers for reasons similar to their male counterparts. However, after some time in the profession, the female police officers may have experienced inequitable treatment, a lack of support, and limited opportunities for advancement, which may negatively impact their job success. These feelings of discontent appeared to diminish when the participants received guidance and support from other officers. Furthermore, mentoring and guiding other female officers was revealed as strength in this study. All of the participants discussed the importance of guiding and supporting others. Moreover, the majaority of the participants became mentors or a source of support for other female officers when faced with obstacles. Developing camaraderie with other officers may provide a healthy outlet for women when faced with internal and external barriers.

Theme 4: Perceptions of Resistance during Law Enforcement Career. The female police officer participants identified retaliation, barriers to integration, and doubts about their ability to adequately perform their job in the above thematic perception in regards to dealing with officer resistance. The participants also identified respect for the chain of command during the grievance process regarding their perceptions of retaliation during their career. This correlates with research conducted by Shelley et al. (2011) indicating that oftentimes police departments utilize a quasi-military-style command

structure to control and segregate women. In spite of this, all participants acknowledge the importance of following departmental procedures, regardless of their complaint for fear of being reprimanded.

There was an identifiable pattern related to perceived retaliation and resistance from fellow officers earlier in the women's careers. Three participants discussed perceived difficulties to fully integrating into the police culture. Some of the participants discussed how their partners withheld help and how they were placed in a position where they could be hurt while answering dangerous calls. While some female police officers recounted stories about having to continuously prove themselves during their career, four participants recalled having a confident attitude about their work performance. This was confirmed in the Seklecki & Paynich (2007) study where the majority of the women felt they were just as capable as their male counterparts. These participants showed they were able to successfully manage their expected roles, despite the deliberate occupational stressors.

As noted in earlier research, transitioning into a masculinized workforce such as, law enforcement remains a challenge for women. Much of the previous literature related to female officer resistance focused on women's initial roles in the police profession, and attempts to justify why the police culture is resistant to their entry. These studies argue that the management style of police departments use discriminatory practices and alienation to stall women's entry into the profession (Franklin, 2005; Hassell et al., 2010; Lonsway, 2007; Price, 1996). Additionally, researchers and women's organizations are still recommending more diversification in the law enforcement profession (Hassell et al.,

2010; Kim & Merlo, 2010; Krimmel & Gormley, 2003; NCWP, 2001). This was inconsistent with the findings of this study. None of the participants reported problems completing the academy or being hired at their agency. However, some female police officer participants reported incidents they perceived as resistance such as, withholding support and isolation at the early stage of their careers. Their accounts confirmed the findings in previous police officer studies (Lonsway 2007; Seklecki & Paynich, 2007; Shelley et al., 2011).

Theme 5: Perceptions of Inequitable Treatment. Consistent with the literature review, all of the female police officer participants identified messages of sexual harassment and gender discrimination as a primary concern during their careers. Some participants also identified racial issues and provided responses which appeared to minimize acts of sexual harassment within this thematic perception. Additionally, general acts of inequality were also recognized. Each participant discussed her personal experience as a recipient of or witness to sexual harassment. Their experiences included, being propositioned for sexual favors, recipients of sexually explicit jokes or comments, being asked out on dates or just overhearing comments directed at other female officers. Some participants viewed themselves as a new target to be conquered after being hiring. This supports previous findings that as many as 90.6% of female police officers reported incidents of sexual harassment, and that female officers are often solicited for sexual favors and subjected to unwanted sexual advances (NCWP, 2001; Seklecki & Paynich, 2007; Somvadee & Morash, 2008; Timmerman & Hoing, 2009). The results also supported the findings in the Somvadee & Morash (2008) study which found that

although the participants identified sexual harassment, the majority of them chose not to

report it. In this study, one incident was reported by a bystander and not the actual

participant.

Several of the participants provided responses which appeared to minimize the

discriminatory behavior by indicating they were not really bothered by it or by stating it

was the norm. One participant eluded to the fact that some female officers unconsciously

solicit sexual advances, because of the way the carry themselves. These findings also

support previous conclusions that female police officers tolerate sexual remarks and often

appraise sexual harassment differently than their male counterparts (Haas et al., 2009;

Somvadee & Morash, 2007). The findings in the Shelley et al. (2011) study revealed that

some of the women were ostracized or persecuted after exposing acts of sexual

harassment. The findings of the current study did not concur with the previous study.

All of the participants were supportive of other female police officers.

In reference to gender issues, many participants identified factors relevant to

Acker's (1990) theory of gendered institutions. All of the participants reported

experiencing discrimination based on gender and/or race. They also confirmed some

aspects of the theory, because all of the participants believed that they were powerless

and that their work performance was appraised unfairly during the training process. The

findings further revealed a notable relationship between previous research (Burke &

Mikkelsen, 2005) and the current participant's revelations as it relates to gender and

racial discrimination. Each participant clearly identified incidents where they perceived

being a woman presented difficulties when trying to fit in to a male-dominated culture.

Several participants discussed incidents which they perceived as subtle and overt

discrimination in the form of alienation, hostility and limited opportunities for

advancement. This study was also consistent with the findings from the Gauthier (2008)

study where Black female officers perceived they faced greater barriers because of their

ethnicity. One participant indicated that early in her career, she was a recipient of federal

consent decrees, which mandated police departments to hire a specific number of women

and minorities. Finally, the literature review revealed a few studies regarding the

implementation of consent decrees, but there was minimal information available to

measure the outcome of those programs (Allen, 2003; Woolsey, 2010).

  Theme 6: Supportive Relationships/Unsupportive Relationships. The female

police officer participants identified perceptions of guiding others, supportive

relationships, inadequate training, and scant support in the above theme. The findings

confirm the literature review which revealed that mentoring is important to the

foundation in the female police officer's training process. Although two participants

indicated they received mentoring during their field training program, none of the

agencies had formal mentoring programs. Some of the findings contradicted the Shelley

et al. (2011) study indicating some female officers are hesitant to form bonds with other

women, for fear of not being accepted by male officers. Many of the female police

officer participants were able to create their own support systems, which included female

and male officers. These officers acknowledged the impact of having fellow officers

available during some of their toughest moments. This was also consistent with the

research on mentoring in law enforcement which revealed that providing female police

officers mentors improves camaraderie, job satisfaction, officer retention, and positive

integration into the police culture (Hassell et al., 2009).

Limitations of the Study

There were several limitations to this study. Since the participants were sampled

from three police agencies in the Southeastern region, the main limitation in this study

may be the lack of generalizability. Another limitation may be the fact that there were

only two high ranking officers, and the participants were primarily African American and

non-Hispanic. Therefore, the findings may not generalize to larger metropolitan police

departments. The findings of this study may lend insight to future qualitative studies

seeking to understand the factors which impact female police officer job satisfaction.

Recommendations for Future Research

I propose several recommendations based on the results of the analysis of the

female police officer participants' lived work experiences. I propose to use the current

relationships among the study's findings and research literature to aid in addressing

challenges in the law enforcement profession. The National Association of Women in

Law Enforcement Executives (NAWLEE) and the National Center for Women in

Policing (NCWP) recommends and supports the implementation of formal police

mentoring programs. Therefore, my first recommendation is for police administrators to

develop a standardized training program that includes a formal mentoring program for

female police officers. Given this, the program should begin at the cadet phase and

include provisions for long-term support, which extend throughout their law enforcement

careers. A successful program would provide female officers opportunities to network

with other female officers. Additionally, in an effort to decrease the attrition rate, the program should pair the mentees with female mentors who have achieved longevity and leadership roles at their agency.

One participant voiced her concerns about female officers not having adequate support or duty options during their pregnancies. Therefore, the second recommendation is for police administrators to create policies which will allow women to work at their agencies in other capacities throughout the duration of their pregnancy. Supervisors should consider the impact of creating a more autonomous environment for women with family responsibilities. Furthermore, women should not have to choose between their families and their career. All of the participants noted concerns about favoritism in their department's promotions process. Therefore, the final recommendation for future research would be to create more standardized and fair policies for seeking police promotions. This includes creating more diverse recruitment panels which include female police officers from various national police departments, as well as hiring and promoting more minority officers.

Implications for Social Change and Practice

The largest positive social change that can come from this study is raising awareness about the current roles and concerns of female police officers. The findings will contribute to the existing literature by focusing on the female police officer with various years of experience. The eagerness and willingness of the participants to share their experiences in law enforcement further reveals the need for additional research in

this area. The results of this study will hopefully encourage legislators and police administrators to revise their current polices and standard operating procedures.

Conclusion

This qualitative phenomenological study explored the attitudes and perceptions of 8 female police officers working in the Southeastern States. A review of the literature revealed minimal scholarly research available on the personal experiences of female police officers, especially those in higher ranking positions. Specifically, as it relates to the female police officer's perceptions and viewpoints regarding the importance of formal mentoring programs, advancement opportunities and perceptions of inequitable treatment. All of the participants identified mentoring and peer support as crucial to the success of their careers.

To date, much of current police research is dated and do not include updated information regarding women's contributions and representation in the law enforcement profession. The results of this study contradicts previous findings which suggests that the physical, emotional and perceived dangers of police work deter women from the police profession (Dowler & Arai, 2008; Lonsway, 2007; Morash, Kwak & Haarr, 2006; Seklecki & Paynich, 2007; Shelley et al., 2011). Despite these conclusions, more women continue to enter the profession; however, there is still some difficulty attracting qualified female police applicants nationwide. This is partly due to the structure of law enforcement agencies paramilitary organizational structure. At present, there are a disproportionate number of women in lower supervisory rank and top command positions in the profession. Thus, if a female officer has a complaint that includes one of her male

counterparts, requiring her to adhere to a chain of command could bias the outcome. Therefore, revising departmental grievance processes and procedures may improve officer retention.

Finally, the legislation created to ensure gender equality has done little to eliminate the socially structured obstacles in male dominated professions. The findings of this study confirmed that women still face unique barriers such as, officer resistance, outdated standard operating procedures, limited promotional opportunities, and a lack of administrative support. These challenges often began at the academy phase and persist throughout the female police officer's career. Today female police officer entry and attrition in law enforcement remains a major topic in police studies. Although women continue to enter the police profession, their recruitment has stalled. As a result, the number of sworn female police officer has failed to increase beyond 17% of all officers nationwide. In many agencies, the number of sworn female officers has declined and their numbers are still low or non-existent in smaller or rural agencies. This study revealed a clear perception that female police officers experienced resistance, retaliation and alienation during the early phase of their careers. If the female officer is permitted to fully assimilate into the profession, there are better opportunities for building camaraderie. Additionally, the findings showed that regardless of the women's years of experience, female police officers acknowledged that gender and race places them at greater risk for inequitable treatment. Furthermore, as police departments increase their representation of female officers in all ranks, recruitment may improve and women may feel more welcomed and appreciated.

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Appendix A: Email/Letter to Administrators

Dear Honorable Sir/Madame:

My name is Arlether Wilson and I am a former police officer in the Houston area and a doctoral student at Walden University.   I am recruiting law enforcement officers for a very important study. I am conducting a qualitative study titled "Female Police Officers' Perceptions and Experiences with Marginalization: A Phenomenological Study." The study seeks to explore whether years of experience, job satisfaction, and mentoring impact female officers and/or their careers.

I will interview each participant using specified questions. Each interview will be recorded and last approximately 45-50 minutes. The researcher will use pseudonyms and all information will be kept confidential.

I am seeking sworn female police officers who have worked a minimum of two years. I plan to begin collecting data by May, 2016. I truly appreciate your time and consideration in advance. Participation in my study will help me fulfill my requirements for a Ph.D. in Counseling Psychology at Walden University.   I look forward to hearing from you soon.

Sincerely,

Arlether Wilson
Walden University Ph.D. Student

Appendix B: Recruitment Letter

Dear Candidates:

My name is Arlether Wilson and I am a doctoral student at Walden University. I am recruiting law enforcement officers for a very important study. I am conducting a qualitative study titled "Female Police Officers' Perceptions and Experiences with Marginalization." The study seeks to explore whether female officers' years of experience, job satisfaction, and mentoring impact them and/or their careers.

I will interview each participant using specified questions. Each interview will be recorded and last approximately 50 minutes. The researcher will use pseudonyms and all information will be kept confidential.

I am seeking sworn police officers who have worked a minimum of two years and work in the southeastern region. I plan to begin collecting data by August, 2015. If you are interested in participating in the study or know someone who meets the criteria, please have them contact me as soon as possible. I can be reached via email at arletherwilson@yahoo.com .

Participation in my study will help me fulfill my requirements for a Ph.D. in Counseling Psychology at Walden University. I appreciate your time and consideration and I look forward to working with you.

Sincerely,

Arlether Wilson
Walden University Ph.D. Student

Appendix C: Demographic Information Sheet

Please provide a response for each question

Pseudonym: _____   **Date**: _____

Age: _____   **Race/Ethnicity**:_____

Current Rank
(Check One)
- o Regular Police Officer/Deputy
- o Sergeant
- o Detective
- o Lieutenant
- o Captain

Years of experience as a police officer: _____

Number of Police Departments you have worked at: _____

Marital Status:
(Check One)
- o Married
- o Single
- o Divorced
- o Separated

Number of Children: _____

Highest Educational Level:
- o Some college, but did not finish
- o Two-year college degree / A.A / A.S.
- o Four-year college degree / B.A. / B.S.
- o Some graduate work
- o Completed Masters or professional degree
- o Advanced Graduate work or Ph.D.

Appendix D: Informed Consent Form

Dear Participant:

You are invited to take part in a research study of "Female Police Officers' Perceptions and Experiences with Marginalization." The researcher is inviting you as a participant, because you are a full-time, state certified police officer, with at least 2 years of law enforcing experience. This form is part of a process called "informed consent" to allow you to understand this study before deciding whether to take part. Please feel free to ask any questions before beginning the process.

This study is being conducted by a researcher named Arlether Wilson who is a Doctoral student at Walden University. She has more than 18 years of law enforcement experience in the Texas area. Many of her own experiences motivated her to conduct research in this area.

Background Information*:
The purpose of this study is to describe and understand the lived experiences of female officers and how years of police experience, job satisfaction, and mentoring may have impacted their careers.

Procedures:
If you agree to be in this study, you will be asked to:
- Participate in a 45-50 minute interview with the researcher
- Permit the interview to be audio recorded
- Complete demographic questionnaire
- The interview will take place at a church conference room
- Provide contact information, for follow-up questions, which will be kept confidential

Here are some sample questions:
Tell me about some moments or situations in which you experienced or were exposed to sexual harassment. How do you feel; reflect on your experiences of having to work around those involved?

Voluntary Nature of the Study:
Your participation in the study is voluntary. It is important that you feel comfortable participating. Please understand that you have the right to withdraw your participation at any time. Furthermore, there are no penalties for not completing the process. Everyone will respect your decision of whether or not you choose to be in the study. No one at Walden University or your Department will treat you differently if you decide not to be

in the study. If you decide to join the study now, you can still change your mind later.
You may stop at any time.

Risks and Benefits of Being in the Study:
This study does not involve any risks. Being in this study would not pose risk to your
safety or wellbeing. The researcher is hopeful that the outcome of the study will lead to
improved policies, rules, and regulations at law enforcement departments.

Compensation:
No compensation will be provided to participants.

Privacy:
Any information you provide will be kept confidential. The researcher will not use your
personal information for any purposes outside of this research project. Also, the
researcher will not include your name or anything else that could identify you in the
study reports. Data will be kept secure by a password secured USB. Data will be kept for
a period of at least 7 years, as required by the university.

Contacts and Questions:
You may ask any questions you have now. Or if you have questions prior to beginning
the study, you may contact the researcher, Arlether Wilson via email at
arletherwilson@yahoo.com. If you want to talk privately about your rights as a
participant, you can call Dr. Leilani Endicott. She is the Walden University
representative who can discuss this with you. Her phone number is 612-312-1210.   You
may also discuss any concerns with Walden's University Review Board.

Statement of Consent:
I have read the above information and I am voluntarily making a decision to participate in
this research study. I feel I understand the study well enough to make a decision about
my involvement. I understand that by providing my signature, I am agreeing to the terms
described above.

Date:_____

Signature of Participant

Date:_____

Signature of Investigator

Arlether Wilson, MA
Doctoral Candidate

Walden University
100 Washington Avenue South, Suite 900
Minneapolis, MN 55401

Appendix E: Interview Protocol

Please Read Prior to Beginning the Interview

Thank you for meeting with me today. Your privacy is of the utmost importance and I understand that your participation is voluntary. I would like to take a little time to talk to you about your experiences while working with your fellow officers. The goal is to complete the interview in less than an hour. As indicated on the consent form, all responses will be kept confidential and only shared with members of the research team. Furthermore, to prevent omitting pertinent information the interview will be audio-taped. However, the audio-tapes will be destroyed at a later date. Please understand that you do not have to answer any questions which make you feel uncomfortable

Appendix F: Interview Guide

Date: _____   **Pseudony**m_____

_____	Interviewee's Introduction
_____	Purpose of the Study
_____	Confidentiality & Informed Consent
_____	Explain the Duration of the Interview
_____	Opportunity for Participant to ask questions

Introduction

1. Tell me about yourself (age, education, marital status, and ethnicity)?
2. How would you describe your current job status?
3. What events in your life influenced your decision to become a police officer?

Discrimination/Sexual Harassment

1. Describe for me what marginalization means to you?
2. Tell me about some moments or situations in which you experienced or were exposed to sexual harassment.
3. How do you feel; reflect on your experiences of having to work around those involved?
4. Was the incident reported to a supervisor?
5. Please discuss your experience with discrimination.
6. How did the incident(s) make you feel?
7. Describe your agency's procedures for filing grievances.
8. Tell me about some of the moments you experienced resistance from fellow officers.

Job Satisfaction

1. Briefly describe your work day as a police officer.
2. How do you describe job satisfaction?
3. Are you contemplating a career change?
4. What incidents in the workplace have caused you to contemplate a career change?
5. Tell me about what influenced your decision to remain in the profession?
6. Describe your department's procedure for seeking promotions?
7. If you feel comfortable, please discuss any obstacles during this process.

Mentorship

1. Describe what mentoring means to you.
2. Does your department provide mentors?
3. Tell me about your experience as a mentee/officer in training.
4. How do you feel; reflect about your experiences with your mentor/FTO.
5. How would you describe the level of support or your mentoring experience?

Closing Statements

a. Do you have any questions are concerns you would like to discuss before we end?

Appendix G: Word Cloud