"Don't Let the Job Change You; You Change the Job": The Lived Experiences of Women in Policing

Carrie Buist
Western Michigan University

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“DON’T LET THE JOB CHANGE YOU; YOU CHANGE THE JOB”:
THE LIVED EXPERIENCES OF WOMEN IN POLICING

by

Carrie Buist

A Dissertation
Submitted to the
Faculty of The Graduate College
in partial fulfillment of the
requirements for the
Degree of Doctor of Philosophy
Department of Sociology
Advisor: Susan Caringella, Ph.D.

Western Michigan University
Kalamazoo, Michigan
December 2011
“DON’T LET THE JOB CHANGE YOU; YOU CHANGE THE JOB”:
THE LIVED EXPERIENCES OF WOMEN IN POLICING

Carrie Buist, Ph.D.
Western Michigan University, 2011

In the last decade, the percentage of women working as police officer has not seen any significant increase. This dissertation, “Don’t Let the Job Change You; You Change the Job.” The Lived Experiences of Women in Policing uses in-depth, participant guided interviews with current women police officers to gain a better understanding of their experiences. The goal of this project was to allow the women to speak for themselves, and in sharing the narratives of their lived experiences as officers, both add to and build on the existing research on women working in policing. In addition to the interviews, observations of women on the job were conducted. This study explores topics in policing that specifically impact women officers, such as gender role stereotypes and the organizational structure that seeks to keep women out of the policing occupation.

The study implements feminist standpoint theory as well as postmodern feminism in order for the voices of the women officers to not only be heard but to be privileged as knowers. Complimenting these approaches is the use of phenomenology that allows for individuated perceptions and to highlight the phenomenon that is policing, more specifically women in policing. The findings conclude that women police officers remain marginalized and isolated on the job, even though they successfully perform the duties that policing requires. Further, the majority of the women faced some form of
discrimination or harassment on the job. Along with feeling this discrimination the women were also passed over for promotion, received differential treatment because of their status as women and were ignored when it came to providing them with uniforms and equipment that properly fit them, resulting in potential safety issues on the job. The most emergent issue that was found in the results of this project was the heightened harassment and discrimination that the officers who identified as lesbians faced on the job.
ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

I am deeply grateful to the women who participated in this study who took time out of their ridiculously busy schedules to meet with me and share their experiences. This study doesn’t exist without all of you. I would also like to thank the women who allowed me to observe them on the job and the departments where these observations took place.

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Acknowledgements—Continued

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If I thanked everyone who deserved it, the “thank yous” would be twice as long as this dissertation. So in brief, you know who you are.

Carrie Buist
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CHAPTER I
INTRODUCTION

Women represent approximately 12.7 percent (Lonsway et al., 2002) of the policing occupation and although some have estimated this percentage to be as high as 16 percent (Martin & Jurik, 2007) there has been no significant increase in the percentage in the last decade. While the topic remains researched in the field of criminology the interest in women police officers is not as popular as it was ten years ago. In general women remain on the periphery of the policing research; often relegated to a single chapter or section in textbooks or clumped together with other minority populations in policing.

There is a lingering question in the minds of those who continue to focus their research on women police officers, myself included, and that is why the percentage of women officers hasn’t increased, and why it has stagnated at such low levels. This is especially interesting when women working in a related field, corrections has reported that women represent 35 percent of correctional employees in adult institutions and 45 percent in juvenile facilities. Additionally women represent 23 percent of wardens and superintendents in the US prison system (Gondles, 2005). So, the question remains, what is it about the policing occupation specifically that keeps women from becoming police officers?

The existing literature often couches this answer within the concepts of gender role stereotypes and the organizational structure of the policing occupation. This current project focuses similarly, but uses interviews with women officers to gain their personal
interpretations about the policing occupation gained through their own experiences as officers. While there is no definitive answer as to why the percentage of women police officers remains in a stage of stagnation, the question demands investigation for at least partial understanding. I believe that the best way to gain a better understanding of why women are not attracted to policing is through exploring that which women who are already in the field have been through, know and perceive by way of interpretation. This chapter will serve as an introduction to such an inquiry. The remainder of this introductory chapter will serve to enumerate the statement of the problem, the purpose of the study, and the research questions that this project sets forth to examine.

Statement of the Problem

Taking into account that the percentage of women officers was under 10 percent twenty years ago, we certainly have not seen a significant increase in the field since then – which means that we have seen less than a five percent increase in the field since the 1990’s. This makes one question if there is something unique about the occupation that keeps women from exploring this profession. The interest in why there are so few women working in the field is heightened when looking at the increased percentage of women working in corrections, which is commonly viewed as the most comparable occupation to law enforcement.

Possible explanations regarding the lack of women police officers in the United States that have previously been explored often center on gendered perceptions of job performance. These include characteristics that have commonly been referred to as “male” or “female” traits – the perception that men make better police officers because
they are better physically suited to do the work of law enforcement. This concept is based on the assumption that men are physically stronger than women, therefore placing a value on physicality. Another possible explanation is the organizational structure of policing, including agility testing and policing styles. (Miller, 1998; Martin, 1999; Belknap, 2001; Gerber, 2001; Kakar, 2002; Scarborough and Collins, 2002; Garcia, 2003; Lonsway, 2003; Martin and Jurik, 2007; Corsianos, 2009). The structure of the chain of command may be another isolating factor in regard to women officers as well.

Purpose of the Study

The purpose of this study is to build on and add to the existing literature on women in policing by focusing on the lived experiences of women officers. This will be accomplished by implementing detailed semi-structured, in-depth interviews with female officers, as well as conducting field observations of women officers. The intent of this project is to learn more about what women officers experience and if these experiences are unique, i.e., to learn if there is a gendered difference in the field. The research aims to contextualize the nature of possible differences in terms of the extent these impact on female police officers both personally and professionally.

The purpose of focusing on the individual lived experiences of women will allow us to gain a better understanding of the life histories of female police officers, from their decision to enter into the field of policing to their experiences while in the field. The major questions that are being explored in this study are, could the experiences of women officers inform us as to why there is a low percentage of women working in the field? Further, what insight can female officers shed on this phenomenon? Yet further, if
women are marginalized in policing and viewed as less capable officers because of their differences from men in the field, how is it that they are kept on the periphery?

This project is couched within a feminist paradigmatic model, focusing specifically on the importance of standpoint theory and postmodern feminist approaches as these theories focus on the importance of individuated knowledge, truth, and meaning (Nicholson 1990; Collins 1991; Harding 1991; Zalewski 2000; Belknap 2001; Naples 2003). The methodological approaches used in this study are employed because of the importance they accord to privileging the participants, in this case these women’s voices and allowing them to inform the project and make their own contributions to the existing research given their own experiences and views. As indicated, feminist standpoint epistemology and postmodern feminism value personal truth and meanings to the individual herein. A phenomenological approach is also used here as it compliments these approaches by calling attention to both the uniqueness of perceptions as well as to the possibility of shared experiences (Husserl 1970; Haraway 1988; Nicholson 1990; Harding 1991; Collins 1991; Moustakas 1994; Zalewski 2000; Creswell 2003; Hartsock 2004; Hirschmann 2004).

Additionally, this project is influenced by the previous research on women in policing that focuses on gender role constructions at both the societal level as well as within the institution and occupation of policing. Finally, the organizational structure of policing, and the styles of policing styles identified in the literature are examined for their relevance to the questions at hand. Even though the previous research has found that expectations of how women and men act according to gender roles, and that the organizational structure of the policing organization have both negatively impacted on
women in the field the experiences of the women in these veins cannot and hence, will not be assumed in this research. This is to say that while the interviews with the women officers may reveal commonalities between them, some of the women may have not experienced the same challenges as others, and the women may differ or similarly interpret the influences on women in this male dominated occupation.

My main objective in this project is to allow the voices of these women to be heard. In doing so, their experiences may give particular insight into why the percentage of women police officers hasn’t significantly increased, and what it is about these womens’ experiences that would keep other women, or women in general, from becoming officers. It is not assumed the the participants’ experiences will be all negative in their impact in these above ways, just as it not to be assumed that prior influences are end all of understanding women’s choice of a policing occupation. The research seeks to discover which factors impact not only the choice of a policing career, but perhaps more importantly, how female officers’ experiences influence the way they work as a police officers, as well as the types of problems that they perceive.

Summary of the Chapters

The present chapter introduced the basic concepts that this project will address including topics that have been explored within the women in policing literature thus far. These same concepts influence the current research, in addition to the exploratory, qualitative methodological approaches that will be used in this study to uncover further insights into the nature of women in policing. These themes will be highlighted in further detail in Chapter Two where the conceptual framework will be delineated. The theories
and concepts described in chapter two will explore gender role expectations on both a societal level as well as at the institutional level of policing. Ideas about sex and gender and how those terms are so commonly conflated and misused in our everyday lives as individuals will be discussed. Next, these ideas and presumptions will be examined vis-a-vis the policing literature, focusing on how gendered characteristics are applied to men and women officers.

Chapter three introduces the methodological framework of this study beginning with feminist standpoint theory and epistemology and moving into postmodern feminism. Chapter three will explain why this project is qualitative in nature and why it employs feminist approaches to the research. Because of this I will use chapter three to position myself as a researcher and explicate my reasons for conducting this project in the manner layed out. Additionally, this chapter will discuss the phenomenological approaches followed in this study in terms of their relevance and influence. This is followed by an overview of the sample, the interviews, the observations, and how the data were coded, categorized and analyzed.

The results from the interviews begin to be imparted in chapter four where I will share some of the women’s stories about becoming police officers. This chapter will chronicle the officers’ decisions to enter the academy and some of their initial experiences upon entering into the world of policing. I decided to categorize these experiences because it yields valuable insight into what brought them to the occupation, beginning with their beginnings, if you will. Knowing how they became officers and some of their experiences in the academy will help us to understand these women as
people rather than merely officers who hold authority over us; in other words as real persons rather than merely uniforms.

Chapter five focuses on issues concerning the construction of gender on the job and explores the experiences of the women officers that have both worked within their expected gender roles and outside of those gender roles. This is used to illustrate that women officers are capable of using both their communication skills and their physical agility to succeed on the job. This chapter underscores the importance of both of these aforementioned characteristics in support of the previous literature that has praised women officers for their communication skills, but also highlights the importance that these women themselves place on physical abilities and agility; something that has rarely been detailed in the literature.

In chapter six issues regarding the organizational structure of policing will be explored. Topics such as the discrimination and harassment that some of these women experience, the lower status of women officers which oftentimes prevents them from procuring specific job assignments, promotions, or from even having the opportunity for certain jobs becoming available to them. Chapter six discusses the brotherhood that keeps women out of the inner circle of policing and the sisterhood that many of these women have developed in response. This chapter also takes a closer look into issues that have rarely been explored regarding the hegemony in policing that works in conjunction with these other factors to maintain women officers’ status as outsiders in their occupation, for example, specifically women’s feelings about their uniforms and the policing equipment. Finally, chapter six explores the unique challenges that lesbian officers face, specifically
the heightened harassment that some of the women in this study shared by way of treatment by male officers.

Part of this project included observations of women police officers on the job. These observations were primarily ride-a-longs with the women officers, but also included observations of detectives conducting investigations. The goal of these observations was to supplement the research in order to have a better understanding of what the women go through during their shifts. With that being said, chapter seven consists of my observations of these women; my descriptions of my time with them, the experiences of these times, and my assessment of the observations I was able to make as a whole.

The observations were conducted on five separate occasions in two different departments. Most of the observations took place as ride-a-longs, while two of the observations allowed me to shadow a detective and other women officers in their departments. These observations allowed me to have further insight into not only what women officers experience, but also into the word of policing as a whole, because I not only had the opportunity to see these women at work, I was also able to witness their interactions with male officers, citizens, suspects, and other law enforcement personnel.

Finally, this research will conclude with discussion of the findings in chapter eight. Along with the discussion of the findings, this chapter will consider the theoretical contributions of the study as well as some future directions that this topic might productively take. Chapter eight will also address issues relating to the limitations of the study, including reliability, validity and generalizability.
CHAPTER II
CONCEPTUAL FRAMEWORK

Accounts vary regarding when women first began working in the policing occupation, and while this examination will not cover the history of women police officers, it is important to note that women have been working in the policing occupation in the United States since the 1800’s. What is agreed upon is the role that women played in the profession – that of police matron. Women in policing were assigned duties focused on women and children. The role of police matron was to protect and serve, but not with any responsibility to the population at large or with any real governing power that allowed them to enforce laws or brandish weapons like male officers.

It wasn’t until the early 1900’s when police departments across the country began giving women officers the same responsibilities as the men, if not in action, than at least on the books. These female officers, while beginning to take on the same roles as the rest of the police force, were slow to be accepted and taken seriously on the job. Even though they were allowed the same assignments as men, women officers were still pigeonholed in the role of truant officer or part-time mother or sister.

Since the beginning, when women walked into police departments as employees beyond administrative roles, the ability to successfully perform their duties has been questioned. Those questions, it seems, have always been couched within the framework of physical agility and ability. The worry that women were too soft to be full-fledged police officers because they are too weak and because they are too emotional. It appears
that these concerns of whether or not women officers can measure up to male officers are addressed most commonly within the concept of gender, or gender role characteristics, or the gender role expectations of women and men based on constructed characteristics.

Another topic that persists in policing that may serve as potential barriers for women in the field is the way in which the structure of policing as a whole is organized. This structure often referred to as a paramilitary organization follows chain of command supervision and in turn develops and implements styles of policing such as police paramilitary tactical and specialized units that rarely enlist women as members (Prussel, 2001). The paramilitary design reflects the patriarchal influence in policing as the occupation continues to be male dominated in both patrol ranks as well as within supervisory positions. Further, these barriers to women working in the field result in occupational segregation preventing women, the minority in policing, to be integrated into the majority, which leaves them on the margins and unable to obtain the same opportunities or advantages that male officers experience, especially regarding job placement and promotion.

This review will begin with gender role construction, as its influence is evidenced throughout the literature and can also be applied directly to both the impact of the organizational structure through styles of policing such as job assignments and promotions (or lack thereof) and through the gendered nature of occupational segregation in the male dominated policing workforce.
Gender Role Construction

Before exploring the impact that gender role construction has on women (and men) in the policing occupation, a brief examination of gender role construction in society must be discussed. Gender role construction and in turn gender role expectations that are developed on a societal level through socialization, are often conflated with sex role characteristics that are biologically based. For instance, common held beliefs in US society posit that men should possess characteristics that center on physical strength, aggressiveness, and rationality. In contrast, it is assumed that women should possess characteristics centered on physical weakness, passivity, and emotionality. These beliefs are often incorrectly seen as characteristics that men and women are born with rather than characteristics that are developed during one’s life-course, beginning even before a person is born. Therefore when one acts outside of these expected roles they are viewed in a negative light, and their presentation of self is questioned by others as unnatural.

The opinion that an individual’s sex and gender are interchangeable is misleading at best and the results of confusing the terms can be detrimental, if not dangerous for women and men who are unable or unwilling to conform to societal expectations on how they should present themselves. For instance, another inaccurate interpretation of sex and gender is manifested in the public’s views on one’s sexual orientation. Society wrongly assumes that if a man is emotional, nurturing, passive, and does not display physical strength (a requirement to successful masculine presentation) he is often assumed to be gay and often not only characterized by such but more specifically negatively labeled. This negative label is also attached to women who display characteristics that have been
deemed masculine, such as aggression, physical strength, and rationality. Simply put aggressive, strong women are labeled as bitches or lesbians.

These stereotypes are, as mentioned, developed through socialization, but because socialization is a life-long process that begins even before a person is born (*are you having a boy or a girl?*) They oftentimes are confused as being inherent to the sex organs that one possesses or the sexual practices of the person. Pascoe (2007) highlights the imprint that these socialized expectations has on us and the need for many to associate gender presentation with sexual orientation. In fieldwork research at a US high school, Pascoe’s research indicates that masculinity is an identity that respondents think of as related to the male body but as not necessarily specific to the male body. Interviews with and observations of students at River High indicate that they recognize masculinity as an identity expressed through sexual discourses and practices that indicate dominance and control. (Pascoe, 2007, p. 13)

The significance of dominance and control highlight the ongoing importance that power plays within any discussion of gender. This power principle has most commonly been manifested through the influence of patriarchy in society. Patriarchy refers to the cultural dominance of males over females in society and is represented in daily life and also appears at institutionalized and politicized structural levels, therefore influencing the way sex and gender roles are interpreted (Millet, 1970). Millet contends that patriarchal power in society is “evident at once if one recalls that the military, industry, technology, universities, science, political office, and finance – in short, every avenue of power within the society, including the coercive force of the police, is entirely in male hands” (Millet, 1970, p. 25).
Patriarchy and gender, along with the connection of these concepts oftentimes are represented through masculinity and femininity, both of which are social constructions that have ongoing cultural significance in one’s personal and professional life. We are therefore operating within a patriarchal system that requires us to perform gender in ways that will allow individuals to gain societal acceptance. Our interactions with others can be viewed as a process of communication and presentation where we as individual women and men are working to fit into the roles that we have been assigned to from birth.

The concept of one having to perform gender is a concept that Butler (1990) termed *performativity*. In sum, individuals perform gender through the influencing factors of society. Individuals, as a part of society, are influenced and thereby influence each other regarding how one should “act” in relation to their sex. These actions reveal the constructed meaning of gender to us. However, these meanings have no real definition beyond what we as individuals and as a society have constructed them to mean. We, as a collective have decided that men should be physically and emotionally strong. We, as a collective have decided that women should be physically and emotionally weak, and as Butler contends, “we regularly punish those who fail to do their gender right” (Butler, 1990, p. 178).

We may ask ourselves, what does “doing gender right” mean? Perhaps it isn’t something that we can so easily articulate but rather something that we assume we “know” especially when someone hasn’t fulfilled their role. We do a double-take when we see a boy or man who wears a pink shirt to school or work and we most certainly turn our heads when a woman wears a police uniform because we just “know” that is unusual.
Rarely do we ask ourselves why we do these things, why we are more affected when we see men crying rather than women, why we don’t expect a woman to throw a football with as much accuracy as a man, why we have decided that painting a kids’ room blue or pink is done so to coincide with their sex organs.

According to Butler’s *performativity*, it is the method of repeating an action that allows us to become used to performing said action. If something is done in repetition those actions become established and therefore expected. When one performs an action that others are not familiar with and therefore do not expect then said action is evaluated, *why is this boy wearing pink? Why is this girl playing football? Why is this man pushing the stroller or changing his child’s diaper? Why is this woman a police officer?* Barak, Leighton, and Flavin (2007) further explicate this idea, noting

Gender is for the most part a social construction; a social process, something is negotiated and accomplished though routine interactions with other people. By being aggressive and not displaying feelings, men can assert claims to masculinity; by making themselves up to look attractive and by being sensitive to others, women accomplish femininity. In both cases, men and women “do gender” or “perform” gender through their daily actions and interactions – that is, they handle situations in such a way that they outcome is considered gender appropriate. Masculinity and femininity are never accomplished and secure in a final way; they are something that must be continually performed and (re-) accomplished. (p. 67)

These concepts speak to gender as a learned behavior. The difficulty in unlearning gender lies in the cultural foundations of our structures. Gender is present, even if silently, in everything that we do, therefore, it is difficult to breakdown the structural barriers that gender presents because for the most part, these barriers have yet to be fully recognized. Lorber notes that “the social construction perspective on gender recognizes the equal importance of agency (what people do) and structure (what results
from what they do). We have learned what gender appropriate in society is, therefore we act in a pleasing way in order to gain human agency” (Lorber, 2005).

These examples of the influence of gender in society play a significant role in the world of policing especially on the women working in a male dominated field. This male dominance is not only represented in the sheer numbers of male police officers but the organizational structure of the occupation as well. Organizational structure and how it impacts women working in the field will be detailed later, until then, continuing with the impact of gender role construction on women police officers, Garcia (2003) has indicated that within the policing occupation success is often gauged on having abilities that are seen as masculine, such as the previously mentioned physical strength, and rationality.

However, in her study of female police officers Garcia (2003) found that the most dangerous calls police officers respond to, according to police officers themselves, are domestic violence calls – which in turn research has shown to be more effectively handled by female officers (Garcia, 2003). What this finding may suggest is that gendered characteristics that are more often associated with women such as the ability to relate and communicate with others is something that is highly valued on these dangerous calls. However, even with this assumption, policing as a whole is seen as an occupation where masculinity is regarded as a more valuable tool than femininity – it is viewed as what it takes to de-escalate situations using physical agility rather than tactical agility and technology, and certainly deemed more important than being able to de-escalate a situation with a conversation rather than a physical altercation.

As previously mentioned, power and patriarchy play a major role both on a wider societal level but as well as within the policing occupation as they work in tandem to
produce and reproduce gender role expectations, specifically those pertaining to masculinities and femininities. These expectations have a profound impact not only on the job itself but the individuals working as police officers. Just as women in policing began their tenure in the policing occupation as matrons who were assigned to units specifically focusing on the needs of women and children, jobs assignments persist where women officers continue to be assigned to units and positions that are viewed as lower status than their male counterparts. This is often evidenced in tactical units such as SWAT teams or undercover units (beyond that of prostitution stings). When women are relegated to working jobs that prevent them from gaining the experience needed to apply for and be granted promotion they remain marginalized (Miller, 1999; Harrington & Lonsway, 2004; Schulz, 2004; Corsianos, 2009). Further, even when women have earned a promotion, they may not take the position in order to avoid backlash from male officers who they will be supervising (Schulz, 2004).

Gender role constructions of male and female characteristics can also be found regarding the importance placed on officers’ physical strength as mentioned regarding the value placed on masculinity. Although there is an ongoing assumption that policing is a highly physically demanding job, research has shown that in actuality 80 percent of the job requires little to no physical agility and is much more sedentary in nature (Garcia, 2003; Corsianos, 2009). So, rather than the action-oriented job that is portrayed in the media, such as in television and on film, policing actually does take on more of a social work, helping professional role even though commonly held societal perceptions of the job differ from the reality.
In addition, Lonsway (2003) has indicated that if physical agility requirements and specifications for police officers were to change there may be an increase of women in the field. However, this clearly could be a detrimental move – when there are physical requirements needed on the job, the ability to use one’s strength could mean the difference between life and death. In contrast to that opinion, arguments have been made in support of reducing physical agility requirements because of the technology and equipment that police officers use, such as their ability to communicate with citizens, their batons, tasers, and firearms (Corsianos, 2009), as “verbal skills and equipment that officers now have at their disposal can be utilized in place of physical strength by both men and women to control a difficult situation” (Wells & Alt, 2005, p. 105).

Beyond the suggestion of revamping physical agility testing requirements, Lonsway (2003) contends that women officers excel in communication skills and service to the community. These indications speak to the gender role constructions that we take on as characteristics based on societal expectations and repeated performances of these roles. Further, in de-valuing the importance of physical agility in policing there is an implicit recognition of the importance that policing have traditionally placed on physical strength and therefore characteristics that are deemed masculine and male-oriented.

If communication and service to the community are skills that women officers excel in as posited by Lonsway (2003) women officers may prove more successful in community-oriented policing. However, this style of policing which will be further detailed regarding the organizational structure and styles of policing is not an approach to policing that would necessarily allow for promotion to specialized tactical units.
Gender role construction does exist even if it is not readily recognized by women and men alike, certainly if one acts within their gender role boundaries they need not be concerned with the backlash they may encounter for their gender rebellion. However, Gerber (2001) is quick to note that men's and women's personality traits may not be as different as we have perceived, but that men hold a higher status based on the patriarchal power in society and therefore influences the way we credit certain personality traits. This speaks to earlier discussion regarding both gender and patriarchy, yet Gerber takes this contention a step further by looking at society and the requirements for successful policing as couched within these personality traits both on and off the job.

The difference (in personality traits) is a critical issue within policing; if women truly have different personality traits than men. They may never be able to function effectively as police officers'; they may never be able to manifest the highly assertive characteristics necessary for the job of police officer. However, if women's apparent personality traits result from situational forces, namely, their low status within policing, this opens up a variety of possibilities for change. (Gerber, 2001, p. :xiv)

The variety of change that Gerber mentions may come from several different aspect of policing, however, it is impossible to attempt to make any real suggestions for change without the input of officers themselves, who are actually living the lives of cops working in communities and working with each other and within an organizational structure that they may have adapted to, but have had little to no input on the design.

While Garcia (2003) has indicated that women police officers have proven that they are capable and successful police officers, equal to their male counterparts and even more successful then male officers in response to the most dangerous domestic violence calls,
at an organizational level (and societal as well) women working outside of their gender role construction of nurturing and care-giving is still met with resistance.

Organizational Structure

The ways in which policing are organized may serve as a contributing factor to the resistance that women face when entering into the field. There are and have been several different designs of the organizational structure of policing, but the most common continues to be the paramilitary configuration that is represented both as an organizational structure, with a chain of command featuring higher ranking officials at the top and patrol officers and administrative staff at the bottom, as well as being present in a particular style of policing that is commonly found in more elite, tactical units such as SWAT teams (Kraska, 2001).

This section will highlight the paramilitary organizational structure in policing as well as differing styles that are common in policing such as the paramilitaristic approach, as well as reactive policing and proactive policing techniques commonly associated with the community-policing model. The variety of policing styles may be influential regarding women working in the field, as evidence will show that women are commonly kept out of policing styles that place value on masculine gendered characteristics as opposed to policing styles that place value on characteristics that have been more commonly attributed to women. Further, these assignments and approaches to policing that have been commonly assigned to women are often downplayed as being less effective methods to policing.
In the previous section on gender role construction, gendered traits of women, such as the ability to relate to and understand others, communication skills, and tolerance, to name a few we highlighted. In policing, these gendered characteristics have been used to highlight a woman’s effectiveness as a police officer. However, policing still views these traits as being detriments, not attributes that can aid in the prevention and control of crime. Garcia’s (2003) work on gender “difference” in the policing occupation reminds us,

Efforts to keep women out of male occupations have been the product of society’s gender norms and have resulted in a lack of recruitment and failure to keep women in the profession, and inability or refusal to define women as competent, and to stagnate the occupational culture. (p. 336)

While the paramilitary organization and styles in policing are most prevalent in policing today, the discussion will begin with the traditional policing style that is most commonly used in the field and operates within the popular paramilitary structure. Approaches to this method of policing are found through a more reactive and response oriented model of policing rather than taking a proactive and preventative. Simply stated, if a crime occurs or there is suspicion of a crime, the police respond to and/or are dispatched to a certain location. This type of policing can be used by both frontline or patrol officers and detectives, often times the patrol officers will be the first responders and will then turn an investigation, if warranted, over to a detective.

Traditional policing or what some have called, traditional organization theory (Alpert, Dunham, & Stroshine, 2006) from an administrative approach has historically and traditionally been utilized in larger departments, typically with at least 100 officers. Within these larger departments there will be specialized units, such as the tactical units
that operate within a paramilitaristic model. Additionally, these larger departments may also have a community-centered unit but because of the size and scope of the department and the area in which they exist, the probability of in-depth community building is slight. Rather, those assigned to community-centered units would most likely utilize tactics that have commonly been associated with policing strategies related to broken windows or zero tolerance policing, where instead of having open lines of communication between the officers, citizens and the rest of the department, police officers are still trained and expected to aggressively police these areas (Alpert et al., 2006).

It can be argued that a reactionary approach to police work is ineffective policing that plays little to no role in combating crime. In response to the failure of traditional policing, Goldstein’s work (1979) on problem-oriented policing suggests a proactive stance regarding crime by using the role in which community plays in preventing crime from occurring. In properly implementing this style, police must recognized behaviors and patterns within a community in order to prevent crime from taking place. While aspects of community-oriented policing are found within problem-oriented policing, it lacks the interrelatedness with the community itself and the members of a community that community-oriented police espouses. Both problem-oriented policing as well as community-oriented policing have been attached to the broken windows model of policing, first introduced by Kelling and Wilson (1982).

Broken windows was borne from a study done in New Jersey called the Safe and Clean Neighborhoods Program that increased the amount of foot patrol in selected neighborhoods. While crime did not decrease (and it could be argued that it may have even increased) those living in the communities with increased officer presence felt safer.
The increase in officers did not decrease crime, but enabled the police officers to distinguish who “belonged” in the neighborhood and who did not, therefore making it the officers job to differentiate these “regulars” and “strangers.” Therefore, the contention of Kelling and Wilson (1982) is that disorder in a neighborhood is what breeds fear of crime victimization and if a police presence is found within the neighborhood this public disorder will decrease hence decreasing fear of crime. The police officer in the community serves as a method of social control; revisiting the ideas of “regulars” and “strangers” within a community, Kelling and Wilson (1982) note that it is the “regulars” who are the “decent folk” and that the police officer working in the community is there to enforce the “rules” (note, not necessarily the law) of a particular neighborhood. This is turn, keeps the neighborhood free of people who do not care about the community or who will bring disorder to said community through vandalism, or public drunkenness, or loitering and so forth.

Broken Windows is used to describe the problems associated with a community that is in disarray. For example, if one window in a home or in a building is broken and left in disrepair, then inevitably another and another window will become shattered and with it take the community from order to chaos. Police presence may not effectively decrease crime, but it may indeed, effectively increase order. The problem is that the perception of safety is not safety and therefore just as the neighborhood appears orderly, the crime being committed is done so in a more orderly fashion. Police officer walks beat A during a certain time of the day; therefore, criminal commits crime in sector B.

Using problem-solving and community policing interchangeable is problematic based on the implementation of each style. As noted, while smaller specialized units may
be located within larger traditional departments, the real impact of each of these approaches to policing differ in many ways, but especially regarding the level of public involvement. For instance, both problem-oriented policing and the broken windows approach as policing styles have been associated with zero-tolerance, a style of policing that can attribute most of its fame (or infamy) to the New York Police Department.

Under William Bratton’s tenure as NYPD police chief, police officers were instructed to take a zero tolerance (sometimes referred to as “quality of life” policing) approach to their job.

Bratton himself details what he decided was the problem in the city when he first moved there from Boston in the 1990s. Bratton wrote that upon his drive from the airport into Manhattan he was welcomed to the city by the “Squeegee pest” this person who would approach stopped vehicles and clean the windshields of the cars without provocation. He then went on to detail the problems the city faced by having to deal with “unlicensed street peddlers and beggars” and that there were “over 200,000 fare evaders” in the subway along with the “shakedown artists” and “beggars on every train.”

In Bratton’s (1998) words,

Every platform seemed to have a cardboard city where the homeless had taken up residence. This was a city that had stopped caring about itself. There was a sense of permissive society allowing certain things that would not have been permitted years ago. The City had lost control. It was the epitome of what Senator Daniel Moynihan had described as a process of ‘defining social deviancy down’ – explaining away bad behavior instead of correcting it. (Bratton, 1998, p. 34)

Bratton goes on to indicate that the term, zero-tolerance policing does not adequately describe his method of policing. Bratton and other proponents of this style maintain its connectivity with problem-solving and community-oriented policing;
however, it has been argued that the Bratton style of policing is the opposite of an effective community-oriented policing model. In brief, return to the aforementioned comments Bratton made about what New York City had become – he notes that “The City lost control” and he indicates the many ways in which he believes that statement to be true, most of those problems stemming from nuisance and public order issues. Not once, however, does he make any suggestions for how to “correct the bad behavior of the city.” His answer is simply to apply this style of policing and in doing so the streets will be clean and the peddlers, beggars, drug dealers, and so on, will disappear. If anything this relates more to a broken windows approach to policing and he admits to being influenced by Kelling and Wilson (1982). But, just like broken windows, there are no real suggestions for change, only Band-Aid solutions to a much deeper-seated problem in the city that could be attributed to any number of things beyond citizens just being deviant for deviance sake.

Further, research has indicated, that this style of policing increases the likelihood of police using unnecessary force against citizens and in turn a higher percentage of police brutality complaints made by citizens. These complaints increased by upwards of 75 percent in New York City during the time zero-tolerance policing was introduced and implemented, under both Bratton, first as chief of transit authority to police commissioner, and under both the mayoral tenures of David Dinkins and Rudy Guiliani, Specifically, Amnesty International reported a 60 percent increase in citizen complaints in the early to mid-1990s (Greene, 1999). Additionally, while women comprise 16 percent of officers on the NYPD, at least 3 percent more than the national average they also only make up about 10 percent of citizen complaints. More significantly that means
that the vast majority of citizen complaints are lodged against male officers with both men and women officers operating under the same zero-tolerance command (Greene, 1999). This begs the question, is it really the style of policing, or the officers who are patrolling that increases citizen complaints? Most likely, it is a combination of both of these scenarios.

In any discussion of zero tolerance policing and community policing the focus should not be on how they are similar but how they differ, the realities of those differences are evidenced directly from the pen of the man who has been credited with the creation of zero-tolerance policing. The idea of encouraging the community to weigh in on what they feel as though needs to be policed or any general input from the community at large is not entertained in zero-tolerance policing, and those are in fact, key components to what community policing actually is – a style of policing that values what the community members have to say and will provide police officers the time and support needed in order to build up a community (Skogan, 2004; Greene, 2004; Miller, 1999).

Before a more detailed discussion of community-oriented policing, the paramilitary influence in policing should be highlighted both on the organizational structure level as well as how it is implemented as a policing style. The different policing styles that have been illustrated thus far, problem-oriented policing, broken windows, and zero-tolerance policing are all styles of policing that have been implemented under the broad rubric of traditional policing. What is also true of all of these styles and of traditional policing as well, is that they can all be couched within the concept of a paramilitary approach to policing, especially when focusing on the top down, or what has also been referred to as the pyramid command design (Alpert et al., 2006).
The paramilitary approach to the policing structure begins at the academy level with uniforms, haircuts, roll call, yelling, punishment meted out in the form of physical activity (drop and give me 50!), language (ma'am, yes ma'am/sir, yes sir). Some academies require their recruits (another example of military influence) to live on a specified campus with roommates in dormitories. There are specified training modules and lessons stemming from academic testing to firearms and driving training. Recruits are expected to be treated and act the same, look the same, talk the same (Corsianos, 2009). Differences exist between individuals but while identifying as a member of their recruit school, these women and men are to be viewed as one in the same. Women and men are paired together in self-defense combat such as boxing, and in some academies physical agility is graded equally regardless of.

These paramilitary expectations follow recruits into their respective departments, beginning with their first interactions with their field-training officers (FTO). While the paramilitary design follows the officers from the academy to their first day on the job and to full-fledged officers, what they have learned in the academic portion of their training is often sacrificed for on-the-job training that no book can teach them. The question must be raised, however, as to why police departments across the country favor the paramilitary model, when after all, these officers are not going off to fight a war in a foreign land, although some would argue that they are fighting a war in the streets, I would remind those individuals of Garcia’s (2003) 80-20 secret as discussed earlier. The real reason why the policing profession implemented a paramilitary organizational structure, was to do just that, implement structure and discipline internally and to attempt
to professionalize the profession because of the rampant political corruption of the 1950s and 1960s (Bittner, 1970/2006).

Introducing paramilitary techniques to the policing occupation initially may have proved an effective method to curb internal corruption and promote discipline but it has created a hierarchical structure that breeds hegemony in policing that may indeed work to keep women officers on the margins in policing. The low percentage of women working in policing as frontline officers is high compared to the miniscule percentage of women working in supervisory positions (Lonsway, 2003). The paramilitary organizational structure that is in place to guarantee discipline both on and off the street is commonly enforced by men, these are the same men who occupy the majority of supervisory roles and assign tasks and assignments.

Although this paramilitary structure remains firmly in place and its design has been key in the development of paramilitary units such as SWAT and other specialized task forces and tactical units, Bittner (1970/2006) makes note of two important details regarding the paramilitary structure, first he believes that it is a “primitive” design, an observation made over 30 years ago, and that

We have good reasons to suspect that if some men are possessed by and act with professional acumen, they might possibly find it wiser to keep it to themselves lest they will be found to be in conflict with some departmental regulation. (p: 198)

The suspicion that officers may not speak out or apply their own knowledge developed both on and off the job indicates one of the disadvantages of the paramilitary structure. The idea that one will take orders and give orders according to this structure without being able to voice her opinion on whatever matter or task is at hand may prove
detrimental not only regarding a specific assignment but also in regard to social factors within the policing subculture, a subculture that has traditionally been used to keep women out of, not only tactical units, but out of policing in general. Further and in relation to gender characteristics that are valued in policing, Kraska (2001) indicated that the militarism found in policing values and masculinity. Taking this further, this approach may work to keep women out and the structure itself makes it difficult to comment on the operations within any given department and impedes the development of different styles of policing outside of the paramilitary.

The discussion of the impact of the paramilitary structure is important not only because of the structure it influences, one of a non-linear hierarchy that silences the voices of officers and cuts off communication, but also because of the importance it places on those aforementioned specialized units often called police paramilitary units (PPUs) that use military-like tactics in law enforcement from the clothes they wear to the weaponry used in operations. The developments of these units are so pervasive that “At the end of 1995, 89 percent of American police departments serving populations of fifty thousand or more had a PPU, almost double of what existed in 1980 (Kraska, 2001, p. 7).

Unlike the traditional model of policing where officers “were not to intervene in any non-criminal matters, only those that offended the criminal code; police rationality reacted to criminal situations…” (DeMichele & Kraska, 2001, p. 84). PPUs often take a proactive approach to policing regarding crime control because the specialized units are often concentrated on drugs and weapons arrests. Indeed, “over 20 percent of all departments with PPUs use the units for “proactive patrol work” (patrolling high-crime...
areas in teams of four to twelve officers targeting suspicious vehicles and citizens), a 257 percent increase since the beginning of 1989” (Kraska, 2001, p. 7). Proactive patrol work is a necessary component of PPUs and this stance on policing has been compared to community policing (DeMichele & Kraska, 2001), however, since the majority of the tasks enacted by PPU officers are centered around serving warrants, this could certainly be argued as reactionary policing since crimes or suspected crimes would have had to be committed prior to serving said warrants.

In contrast to the paramilitary order, Skolnick and Bayley (1988) support of the decentralization of command, indicating,

Policing must be adaptable. To accomplish this, subordinate commanders must be given freedom to act according to their own readings of local conditions. Decentralization of command is necessary in order to take advantage of the particular knowledge that can come through greater police involvement in the community and feedback from it. (p. 14)

This speaks directly to Bittner’s (1970/2006) earlier comments as well as the detrimental effects of the paramilitaristic/hierarchical structure of policing. Additionally, Wood, Davis, and Rouse (2004) contend “the paramilitary subculture shares with the traditional subculture of an us-versus-them-orientation” (p. 142). One approach to transforming this us-versus-them-orientation may be found within a community-oriented style of policing; while paramilitary policing, both its structure and its implementation would fall under the traditional organization theory, community-oriented policing would fall under the rubric of open-systems theory that supports an organizational structure that is “flexible, adaptive, and organic” (Alpert et al., 2006, p. 97).
Community-oriented policing based within the open system theoretical model is deemed more effective when assigned to smaller units, commonly not exceeding 30 officers. This approach takes on a professional model, implementing an administrative style that allows for linear communication between the citizens or residents of a particular community, the officers working in the area, and the supervisory police officials. Often this communication from the community to the commanding officers is done by proxy through the community officers or a specified officer in the field who takes on a leadership role within the unit.

In the open-systems model, "Community relations are seen as an integral and essential patrol function (not just image building) and are planned by the team and its commander. They consist of good police service, positive demeanor, and input from various community groups" (Alpert et al., 2006, p. 97). Community policing, when implemented correctly, should be proactive in nature and work to solve the problems of a community without segregating the people of the community from the police. What’s more, community-oriented policing that allows for a more linear communication network should disallow the kind of problem-solving, broken windows, and, zero-tolerance or quality of life styles of policing that have been conflated with what community policing should be – integrative and cooperative – a distinctive style of policing that as Miller (1998) has noted, focuses on the importance of “informal styles of policing” allowing for informal aspects of policing to be “effective tools in enhancing recognition, trust, and support that citizens develop for their neighborhood cop” (p. 165).

The emphasis on community-policing as indicated by Cordner (2005) lies within four distinct dimensions, philosophical, strategic, tactical, and organizational. The
philosophical dimension pertains to the importance on some of the aforementioned characteristics such as the opinions of the citizens in the area and allowing the police officers themselves the ability to make decisions based on their experiences, these decisions are often discretionary yet serve a function based on the officers knowledge and the need for action or reaction depending on the encounter or issue. This attention to detail in a community highlights another aspect of the philosophical dimension, the importance placed on service.

The strategic dimension relates to the philosophical dimension in regard to the actual development of a community-policing model and its implementation within a specified location. Within the second dimension, the strategy is also couched within a move towards proactive rather than reactive policing methods with the emphasis on crime prevention. Tactical, the third dimension focuses on the importance of interaction with the community and forming positive relationships with its members. These interactions and relationships are fostered in order to allow for actual problem solving to take place. Finally, the organizational dimension takes place outside of the actual community and relies more on the responsibility of individual departments especially at the onset of the development of the structure itself. This organizational dimension often times emerges within the actual community through the identification of areas within a particular community that may require special attention, sometimes requiring more officers being assigned to a possible location.

Greene (2004) has noted that it is imperative for the policing organization to understand that its officers are serving the community, and that those community members should be seen as “clients.” Just as a doctor is paid to prevent a patient from
becoming sick or to assist patients in becoming healthy if they have become sick officers should approach policing in the same way; and one cannot assess the condition of a community without examining the community. Greene (2004) takes his stance on community policing beyond the patient-client metaphor and provides further support for the implementation of community policing indicating that

Community policing, if done correctly, can help to change the paramilitaristic style historically found within policing in order to make not only police officers more in touch with the commanding officers but to help the community itself be more in touch with the officers and police as a whole. (p. 30)

Rasor (1999) notes the importance of eliminating that paramilitary structure in order to develop a more community-oriented style of policing that allows for officers to use their skills and knowledge to make decisions on their own without having to ask for permission in every aspect of their job. She makes this appraisal based on her own experience has a police lieutenant who believes that the paramilitary approach to policing is not an effective organizational structure or style to accomplish the mission of police departments, especially as most departments espouse a community-oriented policing model.

What is exampled here is that the direction that policing has taken promotes the importance of community without ever having to fully develop the skill sets of officers to properly implement the style, especially when there has been an increased importance placed on the paramilitary model and the addition of PPUs throughout the country. PPUs support the traditional organizational theory of policing and in doing so either covertly or overtly advocates masculine qualities over feminine qualities community-oriented
policing support, such as communication skills and empathy. Miller (1998) has contended that women will excel in community-oriented policing however she asks,

If men adopt these feminine traits, does this perpetuate seeing men as the experts of caring in a community policing context, and is this appropriation done at women’s expense? Do women continue to be subordinated because, after all, it is only natural for women to have these traits? (Miller, 1998, p. 165)

Miller raises a valid question in light of the complexities of gendered characteristics and the importance placed on masculinities in society as she indicates the perceived inherent traits of women are more highly valued in men as opposed to when women assume traits that have been viewed as inherent in men. Another possible factor that impedes the implementation of community-oriented policing is the disinterest in the style because it is viewed as less interesting and/or exciting as traditional reactionary policing methods (Miller, 1999). This is exampled in the specialized tactical units that are seen as the most exciting assignments and allow for the manifestation of what the media portrays as real police work – breaking down doors is a lot more fun than building communities.

In contrast to the problems that may constrain the policing occupation because of its unwillingness to dismantle the paramilitary structure, Greenberg (1999) argues that it is not the structure, but the people that fail – that the paramilitary organization is a successful model to follow and should not be blamed for the shortcomings of individuals. Greenberg (1999) continues by noting that it is not the structure that impairs the development of community policing models or other partnerships with the community, but the people who are in supervisory roles that inhibit those developments by determining the importance of implementation.
Greenburg (1999) does make some insightful points about the paramilitary structure; however, he fails to recognize that the individuals who hold the leadership roles are bound to certain decisions based on that structure. Just as gender roles are constructed and impact people on a larger macro level, individuals on the micro level also support gender roles. Therefore producing a cyclical relationship, both producing and reproducing the expectations. This can also be applied to the paramilitary structure in policing, if an order is given it is followed, if a patrol officer disagrees with the commanding officer it is highly unlikely that the officer will lodge any complaint, and it is even more unlikely that a female officer will complain because of their marginalized role in policing.

The marginalization that women police officers face may begin at the time of their entry into the workforce, based simply on the lack of women working in the field. However, further subjugation may be attributed to the existing structure within the workplace such as the paramilitary/hierarchical structure that influences various other concepts and issues that reside within the larger policing subculture. This subculture develops through commonly held beliefs within policing – beliefs that extend beyond societal cultural beliefs (such as gender role construction). Cultural beliefs that are more far-reaching follow an individual into the subculture of policing but differ based on the set of values and beliefs that are unique to police officers (Kappeler et al., 2006). For example, in US society a shared belief is that women and men act a certain way, we present ourselves to the rest of the world in a way that is consistent with the beliefs of everyone else, we come to understand these beliefs, forming them and our attitudes and values based on socialization; the most common purveyors of this socialization are our
family, friends, schools, and the media. Therefore, regarding gender role construction, we are socialized into believing that women and men should act in a certain way. In the policing subculture, this belief is maintained, yet intensifies based on the assumptions on the job that male gendered characteristics or more specifically masculinities make for a better officer than female gendered characteristics or femininities – especially in paramilitary units.

The paramilitary structure and the increasing numbers of PPUs are influenced by patriarchy – the cultural dominance of males over females in society. Further, Dodge, Valcore, and Klinger (2010) indicates that because there are so few women in PPUs, more specifically SWAT, this “minimal participation [by women officers] in the realm of policing… continues to promote traditional patriarchal themes in law enforcement” (Dodge et al., 2010:219). These traditional patriarchal forces also influence other concepts in the policing occupation such as brotherhood, hegemony, job availability, and status.

The “brotherhood” is a concept found within policing that focuses on the relationships forged between the officers both on and off the job (Martin, 1999; Corsianos, 2009). The bonds of brotherhood are strengthened by activities that take place inside and outside of the workplace. Outside of the workplace atmosphere activities are male-centered commonly couched within alcohol consumption or socializing in locales such as bars or on the athletic-field. Certainly women may enjoy drinking and socializing in bars and playing sports, however, these activities are often perceived as “for the guys” and when female officers do make an effort to integrate they may “…go through uncomfortable hazing for encroaching on male territory” (Freedman, 2002, p.
Martin (1999) further contends that male-centered activities such as drinking and playing sports can lead to a “defeminization” of female police officers, meaning that women officers feel it necessary to abandon their femininity and take on masculine traits in order to fit in with their co-workers.

The value placed on masculinity in policing reaches beyond merely on-the-job experience and permeates the subculture of policing, limiting the opportunities not only for women officers while at work but also outside of the workplace. Women officers may in turn develop a sisterhood with other female officers however, because of the paucity of female officers there is no guarantee that other women will be working in the same department or have like-shifts that would allow for them to socialize or develop this bond. Further Eisenberg’s (2006) interviews with female officers in Seattle indicated that there was a sense of competition between the female officers. The women indicated that there was a perceived rivalry of female officers who were vying for attention from male officers, supervisors, or interloping into already developed friendship networks. For instance, a female officer who had established what she perceived as camaraderie with the male officers felt as though a newly hired female officer was more concerned with befriending the men in the department than the women and in the effort to do so she was essentially participating in marginalizing her women compatriots. Many women officers are unsuccessful in bridging the gap between themselves and their male co-workers; but when there is an effort to keep women outside of their friendship bonds and prevent women officers from integrating into their department this leads to further marginalization of women on the job. However, the level of oppression or
marginalization that the female officers experience, vary depending on the department and individual interpretation (Corsianos, 2003; Martin & Jurik, 2007).

In contrast to the idea that female officers want to become part of the brotherhood and desire, yet find it difficult to form a sisterhood in policing, Westmarland (2001) highlights the “new strange breed” of female police officer who is unable or unwilling to assimilate and become part of the “brotherhood” in the policing occupation. This refusal to become a part of the boys club intimates two things, one that this “brotherhood” really does exists and that there may exist the emergence of this new female officer who refuses to assimilate. If a female officer refuses to make the attempt to become part of the “brotherhood” she may be unaware of the negative comments or opinions made about her. Conversely, the refusal to assimilate also speaks volumes to the problems associated with the “brotherhood” being open to women officers becoming part of the fraternity.

*Hegemony*, in regard to the policing occupation can be closely linked to the concept of *hegemonic masculinity* which, as according to Connell and Messerschmidt (2005) is a “pattern of practice (i.e., things done, not just a set of role expectations or an identity) that allowed men’s dominance over women to continue” (p. 832). This of course is on a societal level, but can certainly be applied to the world of policing as a patriarchal, hegemonic occupation that may operate to keep women out of the occupation or at a subordinate level within the occupation. In connection to the ways in which “hegemonic social forces” are at play in the policing occupation as this concept contributes to the ways in which the category or “woman” has been approached (Corsianos, 2003). If the category of “woman” is viewed at a subordinate level than the category of “man” (as evidenced in traditional and paramilitaristic policing styles) then
women officers will continue to be viewed as less competent police officers (Gerber, 2001). An example of this can be found within this project – the fact that this exploration is on the experiences of “women” police officers in relation to the policing occupation as a whole speaks to the power of language and the social construction of the categories.

Hegemony in policing is found within those taken for granted assumptions regarding the patterns of practice on the job. Examples of this can be found in the lack of childcare provided and the mandatory shift work that disallow any accommodations to police officers with children. This can be true for both women and men working in the field but effect females more distinctly because women remain responsible for childcare in this country. Additionally, the uniforms, guns, and the support equipment such as ballistic vests and utility belts for officers are manufactured using a male standard without thought as to women officers who may physically not “fit” the standard (Corsianos, 2009).

These patriarchal and hegemonic forces as they influence the percentage of women working in PPUs and the way in which policing is organized from structure to style also influence the concept of job availability. Quite simply put, the presence of women in the field has not increased at any real sense even one hundred years after the first female police officer was hired in Portland, Oregon (National Center for Women and Policing, 2011). If there is a lack of recruitment of women officers in general or a lack of women working in the field at present the percentage of women working in the field will remain stagnant. What’s more is that when women have earned promotion they may not accept the promotion because of their fear of backlash (Schulz, 2003; Eisenberg, 2006).
As briefly mentioned previously, a long-standing debate about the lack of women in policing has centered on the agility testing required of cadets in order to become full-fledged police officers (or in the case of PPUs, the special agility testing done to be accepted on SWAT). Lonsway (2003) contends that if agility tests were reevaluated and changed the percentages of women in policing may increase. Revamping agility tests in order to make the requirements better reflect the physicality that the job actually requires is one suggestion, but while this change might contribute to increasing the number of women in the field, the idea of transforming agility tests to better suit the needs of women may also prove to have detrimental effects as well. However, evidence could support a change in the physical standards, citing first, one of the requirements to become a police officer up until the 1950s was that officers had to be 5-foot-8 inches tall. Further, however, PPUs, especially SWAT require the agility to knock down doors, chase after fleeing suspects and then if need be, aggress those suspects when caught. SWAT carries with it the notion that their assignments always require these abilities, however, this is just as much of a misnomer as the idea that patrol police work is constantly active as well. Either way, SWAT can be a hyper-dangerous assignment in policing and therefore require the agility it does as a preventative stance in order to do its best to guarantee the safety of officers on duty (Kraska, 2001; Dodge et al., 2010).

PPUs, SWAT, or other specialized units are viewed as the most dangerous assignments in police work and are the jobs that come attached with the highest status on the job. If women officers are relegated to patrol duty or specified units within patrol that only deal with women and children as the original police matrons were, or if assigned or have earned promotion to specialized units they are relegated to hostage negotiators or
spend their time posing as prostitutes, as opposed to the members of the team who are
knocking down the doors, they remain on the margins in the job. Their status remains
low even beyond specialized units as well because within departmental positions and
promotions into supervisory roles women are far less likely to be promoted as Lonsway
et al. (2001) noted “more than half (55.9%) of large police agencies surveyed reported no
women in top command positions, and the vast majority (87.9%) reported no women of
color in their highest ranks” (p. 4). Gerber (2001) indicates the imbalance between men
and women regarding their level of status on the job with male officers maintaining a
higher status than female officers. This lower status within policing that women hold is
connected to all of the previously discussed issues within the policing organization from
gender and societal expectations of gender role fulfillment to what the category of
woman means in our society and in our workplaces.

The lack of opportunity for women officers to enter into these elite and according
to Kraska (2001) expanding units in policing may prove to be another roadblock
preventing the percentage of women in policing to increase, but regardless of the increase
of women working in the field, the increase in specialized units such as SWAT will most
likely continue to decrease opportunities for women officers to try out for and gain
promotion or assignment into these ranks. This is evidenced in the lack of women
working in the field and within these units at present.

The ways in which policing have been organized and stylized (with the possible
exception of community-oriented policing), the separation between officers in specialized
units and patrol units and lack of recruitment and once in the field the lack of promotion
opportunities disallow for women to obtain job availability. This lack of job availability
relates to the difficulty of women officers having higher status on the job and in turn this is coupled with the isolation felt by female officers who wish to bond with their male counterparts (and other females in some circumstances). Finally, the overarching theme and influence of patriarchal, hegemonic social forces in policing may lead to occupational segregation.

Occupational Segregation

Occupational segregation, more specifically for this examination, occupational segregation based on gender, has been defined as simply “the tendency for men and women to work in different occupations” (Blackburn, Brooks, & Jarman, 2002, p. 513). However, occupational segregation based on gender can be and is prevalent in jobs that have been dominated by either men or women – upon entering these fields that have been saturated with one sex, it may prove difficult for the minority sex represented to be accepted as a capable person able to do the job or as an equal co-worker who deserves respect from the majority. The contention here is that this applies to women in policing as they are still viewed as outsiders looking in or more accurately insiders who maintain outsider status. Therefore, gender segregation is present within policing, especially when looking at certain assignments in PPU’s or community policing (where males may face gender segregation).

Miller, Will, Kerr and Reid (1999) categorized various municipal occupations and employment patterns in three different categories: distributive occupations such as sanitation and sewage jobs, parks and recreation, and planning and zoning; regulatory occupations focusing on police, fire, and corrections jobs; and redistributive occupations
dealing with positions like health care employment, welfare, and various hospital jobs. The purpose of their study was to investigate these various occupations in an attempt to discover if these positions presented a “glass wall” for women or if they were “gender balanced.”

The concept of the “glass wall” differs from the better-known concept of the glass ceiling or the “invisible” ceiling that exists preventing women from gaining the same professional advances as their male counterparts. Glass walls differ in that “glass walls are likely to persist when: (1) Organizational cultures create impediments to change; and/or (2) skills necessary to perform jobs in a given agency are not highly valued elsewhere” (Miller et al., 1999, p. 218). The authors found that these glass wall disparities are prevalent within the regulatory occupations including police and fire departments. These organizational cultures and specified skills that are valued as important in policing act therefore, as a barrier – a glass wall that prevents women from advancement.

Conversely, Williams (1992) contributed to the literature regarding occupational segregation by looking at men entering into predominately female-centered occupations. Focusing on careers in elementary education, nursing, and men working as librarians, Williams found that instead of the glass ceilings and glass walls that have worked to box women into subordinate roles, men experience what she coined as the “glass escalator” a figurative moving staircase that allows for men in jobs that are predominated by women to actually advance and be promoted faster than the women working in the very jobs that they inundate. Specifically, Williams interviewed men working in these jobs who stated that their supervisors (often male, even in female dominated professions) pushed for them
to accept promotions or take on extra responsibility on the job that would ensure their promotions in the quickest time.

In support of Williams' study, Reskin (1993) indicated that "custom contributes to segregation through employers' stereotypes about workers and about jobs that produce a sex-specific demand for workers for particular jobs. Employers assign the sexes to different jobs in part because of beliefs they hold about women and men" (p. 250).

Some of the men in Williams' study commented on the responsibilities that their female co-workers place on them especially regarding manual labor such as lifting or moving heavy objects while on the job. Outside of work, one of Williams' male participants mentioned being asked to change a flat tire for one of his female co-workers.

Both of these examples highlight the assumptions that we maintain in society regarding gender roles and in part help to identify the problems associated with sex-specific roles and jobs that have been assigned to men and women, and not necessarily with our approval. In policing, women are still expected to fulfill certain roles, as mentioned, with women, children, and any assignment that focuses on communication skills and empathy, while male officers are more likely to be assigned to tactical units that value physical strength and aggressiveness. Further evidence of the impact of occupational segregation on women in the policing field can be linked to the lack of women in positions of power in their departments and therefore unable to make assignments that may not mirror the jobs that male supervisors assign.

What we do know of the impact on occupational segregation on women in the workforce as a whole is reiterated by Guy and Newman (2004) who note, "Antidiscrimination and equal employment opportunity legislation over the past four
decades has made headway toward leveling the playing field for women at work. Nonetheless, occupational sex segregation and the pay gap have proven impervious to these laws” (p. 298). However, when consent decrees expire the number of women officers in those departments where these decrees were in place, begins to diminish.

The aforementioned concepts that impact the role of women in the policing profession that have been reviewed and explored such as gender role constructions, organizational structure including varying types of policing styles and models, and occupational segregation have appeared within the existing literature for good reason, they are concepts that continue to re-emerge within the field, even though research on women in policing is a topic that remains researched but that has also lost momentum in academia in the last several years. Perhaps some would argue that there is nothing new to learn within this area of research, I, of course, disagree and feel as though it will be through the detailed narratives of female police officers themselves that we are able to explore new territory.
CHAPTER III

METHODOLOGICAL FRAMEWORK

The methods used to conduct this research project pivots on feminist standpoint theory and phenomenology. In addition to these two approaches there will be some discussion on the influence that postmodern feminist theory had on the project. The importance of using feminist theory to address women police officers, and the structural organization of policing proves relevant based on the gendered perceptions and barriers of how women police officers are viewed and the barriers that they face on the job (Corsianos, 2009). The reasons why postmodern feminism is being explored here is because it focuses on the elimination of categories, a suggestion that could greatly impact the world of policing, which thrives on categorical description. Postmodern feminisms impact is also used in this project because of its relation to standpoint epistemology (Nicholson, 1990; Ramazanoglu & Holland, 2002; Hirschmann, 2004). Further, the ideas associated with the phenomenological importance of individual perception (Husserl, 1970; Moustakas, 1994) is a concept that can be found in postmodern feminism especially the value it places on individuated truths and meanings (Nicholson, 1990; Zalweski, 2000).

This research project is distinctly feminist based on the attention paid to “issues of difference, the questioning of social power, resistance to scientific oppression, and a commitment to political activism and social justice” (Hesse-Biber et al., 2004, p. 3). As the previous chapter highlighted, women in policing, although they are just as successful
(in particular cases *more* successful) than their male counterparts are still viewed with difference in the occupation based on their minority status, in no uncertain terms based on societal expectations of gender. The limits placed on women based on these expectations reflect the social power in society and the patriarchal influence within the male dominated field of policing. This project resists traditional positivistic scientific approaches through the use of the women officers’ personal narratives to inform the study. Using the officers’ voices as the data and using a feminist approach to analyzing and interpreting the data are the guiding lights to this project. In allowing these women to explicate their own stories, good, bad, or indifferent, their knowledge will be used to add to the previous research on women in policing and act as a knowledge-building apparatus to inform others of their experiences in the field.

This chapter will explore standpoint epistemology, postmodern feminism and phenomenology. I will also unpack the methods I used to conduct this project and provide information on the participants and the research process. First, I will begin by positioning myself as the researcher in this project. I do this because this project is a personal one – personal to me, and most certainly personal to the women who have lived these stories.

**Positioning Myself as a Researcher**

Stanley and Wise (2007) indicated, “self-examination” is an important step (or ongoing process) that helps to strengthen the research experience. At the onset of this project and certainly during this entire experience I have spent what has surely amounted to hours of self-examination. As mentioned, feminist standpoint, phenomenology, and
postmodern feminist theory help to guide this project, but the use of feminist standpoint in particular “will attempt to fill a situated story stressing gender, reflexivity, emotion, and action orientation” (Denzin, 2004). I believe this quote fits well with this project as a whole, but more specifically with both the women police officers I interviewed and observed as well as fitting with my own beliefs.

I started this project in August of 2010 but it really began for me when I was an undergraduate studying Criminology and Criminal Justice at Eastern Michigan University. I stumbled upon the topic of women in policing in a Policing in Society class taught by one of my mentors, and someone who is often cited in this current project, Dr. Marilyn Corsianos. These experiences sparked my interest in the controversies found in policing but also expanded my ideas of gender and further piqued my curiosity on just what feminism was all about. These interests were reflected in all of the research topics I chose, especially issues relating to marginalized populations, and gender. Soon I saw myself becoming a full-fledged feminist scholar – much to some of my professors’ chagrin, my “feminist agenda” was framed within radical and postmodern feminist paradigms. This project reflects those postmodern approaches especially those focused on individual truths and meanings and realities (Nicholson, 1990; Collins, 1991; Harding, 1991; Zalewski, 2000; Belknap, 2001; Naples, 2003).

In the spring of 2007 I left EMU with at least three things: My undergraduate (BS) and graduate (MA) degrees and a strong feminist conviction. In the fall of that same year I entered Western Michigan University’s sociology doctoral program. I knew by the time I entered the PhD program that my dissertation would be on the topic of women police officers and I knew that this would be my first real opportunity to
interview them and find out what it's really like to work in an environment that was so disproportionately male dominated (Lonsway et al., 2002; Garcia, 2003; Martin & Jurik, 2007; Corsianos, 2009).

By the time I officially began the present research I had completed all of my required courses and taken both of the comprehensive exams also required to complete the PhD program. One of those exams was on gender and feminism and I can say without reservation that studying, writing, and defending that exam was the single greatest academic experience that I have had, with the exception of counting from one to one hundred in Mrs. Burger's kindergarten class and actually receiving my doctorate (which is yet to be determined). It was during my time at WMU that I learned so much more about feminism and all of its intricate nuances that so many don't know from mentors like Dr. Susan Caringella and Dr. Angie Moe. In their classes I learned what value-laden research (Code, 1991; Wolf, 1996) meant and finally gained the vocabulary to tell others why I believed conducting research the way I did, the way we do, is valuable, and in my perspective the best kind of research.

This current project is indeed value-laden research. Make no mistake about it – I care about these women and what happens to them and about all of the other women officers whom I will never meet. I want for all them to be able to work a job that they so clearly love and are dedicated and committed to, without worry that they will be passed over for a promotion or denied a promotion for no other reason but their status as “woman.” I am concerned that they don’t have uniforms that fit them properly and safely, I don’t want them to feel as though they have to work twice as hard to get half as far, and I want them to be treated with the value that they so rightly deserve. So, yes, this
research is value-laden, and yes this research is action oriented because I want these things to change (Fonow & Cook, 1991; Mies, 1992; DeVault, 1999; Denzin, 2004).

People often ask me if I wanted to be a police officer – the answer changes depending on the day. Growing up, I was a rough and tumble kid playing cops and robbers in my Northwest Detroit neighborhood that saw a lot more robbers than cops. My heroes were baseball players, starship captains, cartoon soldiers, and police officers. It’s true, if there was a cop on TV I was watching, if there was a TV show and one of the characters was a cop, she or he became my favorite. I remember watching the 80’s drama, Hunter about a police officer of the same name and his female partner, McCall. There were lots of times when I would make-believe scenarios with my friends and pretend that I was McCall. Of course, I used to pretend that I was Han Solo too, but he also carried a gun and meted out justice for the entire Rebel Alliance. So, while technically he was a spaceship captain he was still a cop in my book.

So, yes, maybe I did want to be a cop, and maybe if I could run a mile without passing out, I would still want to be a cop, even after the horror stories these women told me. I suppose it’s because I think that I would be strong enough to make some serious changes, of course, “strong enough” is relative and for many of these women their strength, while not in numbers has come from sticking it out trying to prove that they are just as good if not better than their male counterparts, that they deserve to be there – which reminds me of that rough and tumble Detroit kid.

I am honored to share their experiences with you but before I do, I will begin by detailing the methodology and methods implemented in this study. First, feminist standpoint epistemology will be discussed along with postmodern feminist theory. This
will be followed by a discussion of phenomenology and its impact on this project. In general, these methods represent an overarching qualitative approach that is detailed along with the research process and information pertaining to the sample, interviews, ride-a-longs, and various other methodological experiences of this research project.

Feminist Standpoint Epistemology and Postmodern Feminist Theory

Feminist standpoint theory or feminist standpoint epistemology relies on differing perspectives and interpretations of social life, positing that one’s social position impacts what we know and therefore contributes to an individual’s “ways of knowing” (Hartsock, 2004; Harding, 1991). These perspectives and interpretations are influential and therefore “shapes and constrains what we can know” (Harding 1991, p. 120). This sentiment is related not only to the research participants in this project but also to me as the researcher. Collins (1991) has noted that standpoint theory focuses on lived experiences of individuals and in agreement with Harding (1991) notes that an individual experiences are influenced by social position and gender. These concepts are pivotal to this research project because of the disproportionate percentages of women working in policing along with the status they hold as police officers (Gerber, 2001; Lonsway et al., 2002).

Using the experiences of female officers and allowing their narratives to fuel the research contributes to giving voice to a marginalized population that we have heard very little from, allowing for knowledge-building within both the policing field and within the research literature. The use of the officers’ narratives also gives them an arena to use their experiences as an informative tool as they are the privileged “knowers” in this project and
therefore the authorities of their own knowledge. This is especially pivotal because policing as an occupation operates in distrust and suspicion of outsiders; it is an occupation that truly does exist behind the “thin blue wall” where its inner workings are often times protected and hidden from any outsiders looking in (Van Maanen, 2004; Manning, 1997). At the same time, policing as an occupation should call for diversity among its ranks. I say this because depending on the location of a particular police department, or precinct, the population of the residents the officers are thought to “serve and protect” may vary by age, race, class, sex, and sexual orientation just to name a few. Therefore, one would imagine that the more diverse a department is the more likely the officers will be able to effectively interact with citizens. Conversely, this may not be as true for smaller populations or more rural areas where diversity within the community is uncommon resulting in a police department that reflects the commonality of the community.

Returning to the implementation of standpoint theory, it is important to remind ourselves that historically in research “never had women been given a voice of authority in stating their own condition or anyone else’s in asserting how much conditions should be changed. Never was what counts as general social knowledge generated by asking questions from the perspective of women’s lives” (Harding, 1991, p. 106). The main focus of this project, the idea of using the personal narratives of women officers and sharing their personal lived experiences as officers highlights how these experiences impact individuals. These experiences may be similar or differ depending on the individual and their personal interpretation of the events in their lives. It stands to reason that some of the women being interviewed for this project may share some of the same
experiences and as Hartsock (2004) indicates, it is not uncommon for standpoint theory to necessitate a shared oppression among participants. Certainly there is a possibility for shared oppression to be revealed in this research or at the very least some variety of shared or common experiences, if for no other reason than for the fact that all of the women participating are female police officers working in a male dominated field, or moreover, that they are all, police officers.

There were in fact several instances when I asked the women if they had any negative experiences as cadets or officers where the women told me that they did not, but through the course of our interview they would convey stories to me that I would consider discriminatory. Therefore, while it is important to recognize the commonalities between the experiences, it is equally integral to this project to understand that their individual experiences and circumstances may vary drastically, but that their personal experiences are influenced by their social positions (Harding, 1991). In returning briefly to the women officers who didn’t report any discrimination – I went into this project with the perception that each person’s truth is their own. The implementation of feminist standpoint in union with postmodern feminism will help to support a better understanding of commonality and exceptionality within and between the female officers. Because of this, postmodern feminism is implemented as it focuses on possible difference among women including, “class, race, sexual, and cultural experiences” (Belknap, 2001) that other feminist theories have not paid attention to in the past.

For instance, during the feminist movement and within the development of various feminist theories the focus was on the ways that cultural and political action impacted white, middle-class, heterosexual women, hence the rise of the black feminist
movement (Combahee River Collective, 1979; Davis, 1981; hooks, 1984; Collins, 1991). Further expanding this is postmodern feminism that takes into account the possible differences between groups of women and how those variations matter, namely the unique experiences women have. In short, postmodern feminism seeks to explore topics with a critical lens (Nicholson, 1990), a viewpoint that is necessary in critiquing the possible problems associated with the policing occupation, namely dispelling the essentialism pertaining to gender roles and policing as an organization.

One of the criticisms of postmodern feminism is the “no one truth” approach – this concept has been conflated with the idea that there is no truth. A fairer assessment of this concept of “no one truth” is that individuals come to know their own truths based on the meanings they give to the world around them (Zalewski, 2000). As Harding (1991) has indicated, knowledge is socially constructed and therefore “shapes and constrains what we can know” (p. 120). The current project utilizes interviews with a small group (20 participants) of women police officers in an attempt to use their detailed narratives to explicate just that, their own truths, this approach agrees with Naples (2003) viewpoint on the use of interviews to allow participants’ own knowledge about their own situations and experiences to inform the study. This also allows the research and the general public to gain an understanding of the topic at hand from these women’s encounters, with the smaller sample seeking to work as a method to bring about more detailed information from the women – an approach that is not uncommon among phenomenological studies (Sandelowski, 1995)
The women police officers in this project reflect Harding’s (1991) aforementioned concept of “knowers”, a concept that is important to standpoint and postmodern feminism, especially methodologically, as Zalewski (2000) comments.

Postmodernists agree with modernists about the profound importance of the truth. The former are also keenly interested in the same kinds of questions such as, “How do we know?”, “What gets counted as truthful knowledge?”, and “Who gets to be considered a “knower”?” But unlike modernists, postmodernists are not interested in reaching and proving the truth and finding the ultimate ‘real’ answers to those questions. This is because they do not believe in the idea of truth in the same way as modernists. Postmodernists claim that ‘one real truth’ about anything is an illusion...Postmodernists see their task as working out how this belief in the truth of things comes about and investigating what it does. This does not mean that things (like women, knowledge, power) don’t exist, but is that what really matters about anything is the meaning that it comes to have. (p. 55)

When looking at standpoint theory and epistemology as a methodological approach, Hirshmann (2004) notes that even though women may maintain unique standpoints regarding their personal lived experiences these differences do not preclude a “methodological commonality” (p. 319). Standpoint theory then becomes an epistemology and in doing so this is where the methodology lies, “it refers to the general process of how knowledge is to be developed and understood. Epistemology is not a theory of what we know, but of how we know it” (Hirshmann, 2004, p. 320 emphasis on the original). Regarding, postmodern feminism, the emphasis on the influence of social constructionism shaping how we come to know things directly relates to what we know about those things that have developed meanings through social construction.

Phenomenology

As a methodological approach, phenomenology, the importance of individual perception plays a key role in understanding where the women in this project are coming
from, how they perceive their own situations. Although as a researcher I will analyze and interpret the information, it is important to recognize that my own perceptions and interpretations should also be analyzed so that I can “understand someone or something that is not my own” (Moustakas, 1994). The process of understanding my own emotions, experiences, and opinions about women in policing is necessary when approaching this project in a phenomenological standpoint, if for nothing else then for the importance of bracketing my experiences which will allow me to better understand women police officers who have participated in this project (Creswell, 2003).

The importance here is to look at the phenomenon of women in policing, and approach the research project without being influenced by the outside factors that exist and could possibly cloud the current project (Husserl 1970). Entering this project with a willingness to be open to the myriad possibilities the research would bring, especially using the methods implemented here, interviews and observations. Therefore, the interviews were primarily guided by the participants, something that has been referred to as phenomenological interviewing (Reinharz, 1992).

Moustakas (1994) suggests the importance of phenomenological reduction, which is attempted here, not only by bracketing but allowing the women’s narratives (their perceptions, their experiences) to inform the study. In analyzing the information that the women provide, several steps are taken to allow for themes and topics to emerge, Moustakas (1994) notes the importance of “stay[ing] with a phenomenon” and to “view it from different angles, persist to the point of exhausting what it offers during a particular time and place of perceiving and experiencing” (p. 92). Indeed, this form of reduction is used within this project in order to share the unique requirements of policing and the
women working in the field, done so with the help of grounded theory (Glaser & Strauss, 1967; Charmaz, 2004).

It is important to indicate that one of the components of phenomenology that I utilize in this project is what Moustakas (1994) and Creswell (2003) describe as transcendental psychological phenomenology that values the experiences of the participants as they report them over the interpretation of those events. Again, while I do analyze the data, I do so with the intention of privileging the voices of the women and how they interpret their own experiences.

Qualitative Research

Qualitative research does not have one agreed upon definition, however for purposes of this project I will use Denzin and Lincoln’s (2003) definition of what methods would fall under the rubric of qualitative methods such as, “interviews, conversations. . . , recordings, and memos to the self” (p. 5). In this current project, these aforementioned methods were used as well as other aspects of qualitative research such as “personal experience; introspection; . . . observational . . . that describe routine and problematic moments and meanings in individuals’ lives” (Denzin & Lincoln, 2003, p. 5).

This project is qualitative for several reasons; paramount to those reasons has been the relationship between the women officers and myself as the researcher. As indicated, this project has been informed by past research on women working in the policing occupation, one of the factors that have consistently appeared in the literature is the role of gender as it pertains to both women working in the field and the nature of the
work that is performed. I agree with this and contend that gender construction and in turn our expectations of gender roles impacts the qualitative nature of this project as qualitative researchers “seek answers to question that stress how social experience is created and given meaning” (Denzin & Lincoln, 2003, p. 13: emphasis on the original). Additionally, when conducting any research project where gender is a vital component of the topic and when the research is feminist-centered, qualitative methods are often preferred because of the value placed on women’s experiences. Policing is not only a male dominated profession, but it also reflects the influence of patriarchy in society and how that impacts women (Kirsch, 1999; Harding, 1991). This patriarchy has worked to leave women out of the center of research, marginalizing them and their experiences. This directly relates to gender and perceived sex roles in an occupation like policing where women are the minority and their experiences on the job are questioned based on the exclusion of women in police research, therefore silencing women police officers and the knowledge that they have about policing. This sentiment echoes Smith’s (1987) contention that by keeping women marginalized our knowledge is ignored and our history becomes nonexistent to the rest of society.

The emphasis on social experience and the meanings that are taken from those experiences are integral not only in this project but also within the epistemological and methodological approaches that this project has implemented. Further, while steps are used to bracket (Creswell, 2003; Moustakas, 1994) my own experiences and to be reflexive in order to gain objectivity (Harding, 1991), it would be remiss not to acknowledge the importance of interpretation in qualitative research (Creswell, 2003). While I am the researcher in this particular project I remain a woman whose knowledge
of women in policing has been influenced and shaped by those who have researched the same or similar topics. Highlighting the influence that all of our experiences have on us reflects the interpretation of the data as well as the value-laden nature of this project (Creswell, 2003).

Question Development, Interviewing, and Observation

I approached the development of the question guide for this project knowing that not every question would be asked or answered and that there must be room for adjustment during each interview. The questions themselves were influenced by the existing literature and research on women in policing (Corsianos, 2003, 2009; Lonsway et al., 2001; Duffin, 2010; Westmarland, 2001; Kraska, 2001; Genther, 2007; Eisenberg, 2006; Garcia, 2003; Miller, 1999; Gerber, 2001; Wells & Alt, 2005) and through thoughtful consideration from suggestions of my committee members. I wanted the interviews that I conducted to be more conversational, therefore even though I developed a list of questions (Appendix A) I was not beholden to them. I did, however, begin each interview with the same introductory question in order to break the ice with the women being interviewed, “when did you decide to become a police officer?” Even though the semi-structured, open-ended interviews were most certainly interviewee-guided (Reinharz, 1992) the interviews all followed the same sequence-of-events approach to their experiences as officers.

Regarding the sequence-of-events style to the question guide, I decided to develop the questions in this way for two reasons. First, because this study centers on the lived experiences of these women, I wanted to follow their stories from their beginnings to the
present day. I believe that starting each interview by asking the women what brought them into the policing occupation would allow for the women to inform me about what their influences were or who influenced them. Further, because all of the women had been working as police officer for more than a decade, this question was intended to help them recall how their stories began. Only two of the women’s interviews veered from this approach as when we met they began talking about their careers straightaway. I let them tell me their stories, but when there was a pause in the conversation I returned to the first question.

The second question that was addressed in the interviews was what their experience in the academy was like. After this question was asked and answered, the interviews became much more guided by the participants as the discussion of their academy training lead to their experiences on the job. For the most part, their stories were so detailed that many of the other questions I was interested in asking were answered without me ever having to ask. If those topics weren’t covered, I would ask them about specific questions I had previously developed. The most common examples of this regarded their uniforms and equipment. However, it should be clear that there was no real ordering to the questions and each interview manifested itself much more like a conversation than a question and answer interview.

This is not to say that I never asked the women questions while they were interviewing with me; what happened in all but one of the interviews is that the women were so open with me about their experiences, that any questions I asked from my interview guide were done so mostly in an effort to clarify their comments, or in the rare instance where their comments needed clarity I would ask them to explain them to me.
For instance, what was common was for the women to transition from their time in the academy to their first days on the job, something that I had planned to ask them in the questions guide. Once they began to tell me about their first days in their department, if they didn’t address any training information, I would interject and ask them if they were assigned a field training officer and if that officer or those officers were women or men. Another example of this was when the lesbian officers in this study would tell me about the discrimination and/or harassment they faced on the job; if they didn’t specify the contexts of the discrimination and/or harassment I would ask them if they thought those encounters were based specifically on their sexual orientation. Finally, out of the twenty women only two of those women were African American, and only one of the two indicated any problems on the job associated with her race. In this interview, there was no need for me to ask for clarity as she was very specific about her encounters that she felt dealt directly to her status as an African American woman.

So, while the interviews all followed the same structure as far as how the information was given there were still several variations within each interview regarding things like duration of the interview and detail of experience and narrative. These variations are not unheard of regarding face-to-face interviews, especially when the interviews are guided by the participants (Reinharz, 1992).

The ultimate goal, beyond that of gathering information on these women’s experiences, was to allow these women to feel comfortable with me; to trust me. I believe that this was achieved not only because I allowed them to guide the interviews, but also because I was someone who was interested in hearing about their experiences. In fact, many commented on how shocked they were that someone would be interested in
hearing their stories and that as women police officers they were used to being ignored. Furthermore, I believe that trust was established with these women because of the method used in gaining the access to them – using a snowball sampling technique allowed for women officers whom I had established relationships with to be interviewed and to bring other women into the study (if they chose to do so). These women who entered the project as strangers to me, had previously established relationships with my informants therefore since trust had been established indirectly I believe they were more apt to discuss their personal experiences with me.

Certainly this method is not without controversy (Reinharz, 1992). However, the opportunity to use informants whom I had already established relationships and trust with would allow for the other women to participate without having to worry that their identity would be revealed to their department or community. I did not want to build a wall between myself and the women who shared their stories with me; instead I wanted the women to feel comfortable with me (Fonow & Cook, 1991). I honestly believe that the difficulty of gaining access into police departments and advertising in said departments asking for women officers to share their stories with me, would most likely be difficult for the women, especially those who have already felt some kind of harassment on the job. This concern was paramount to this project as I did not want to compromise any of these women’s careers or safety.

Coupled with the interviews I observed women police officers on the job by riding along with them on their patrols and observing them during investigations both on the street and while working investigations in their offices in their departments. These observations served as a way to supplement the interviews with insight and examples
from the women while on the job. The goal of these observations was to remain as unobtrusive as possible while still being able to get some idea what being a women police officer was like.

Research Procedures

In this section I will detail the research practices and methods that I took in conducting the current research project. In addition to the in-person interviews I also included police ride-a-longs allowing me to act as an observer of a woman officer during her shift. The ride-a-longs should be considered as supplemental research with the expectation that spending time with women officers on the job would provide a better look into what a woman police officer’s day is like. The interviews and the ride-a-longs will be detailed later in this section, but at present I would like to discuss the importance I placed on confidentiality during the research project.

Confidentiality

I must note that beyond offering an outlet for the women to share their stories I wanted to ensure that their identities were protected. In order to keep the women’s identity confidential, we met in secure locations located away from the departments where the women worked. Also, no one’s real name is revealed in the analysis of their narratives – I asked the women to pick a pseudonym, however none of them did and therefore I assigned them aliases. Other steps that I took to promise confidentiality was to keep their information under lock and key in a secure filing cabinet and/or in a password protected computer. The audio files from the interviews were destroyed after the transcription was complete. Any departmental information the officers gave me during
the interviews, such as the names of other officers or supervisors, cases that they were currently working on, or people currently under investigation were not used in the final project.

Also, there were times that the officers' went "off the record," during those times the recorder was turned off and I did not take any notes in order to protect the privacy and secrecy of the topic they went off the record about. These same strategies were used for the ride-a-long portion of the project with few exceptions such as "going off the record" as the ride-a-longs were not recorded and the officer's identity was not confidential to their departments. Even though this is the case I chose to keep their identities confidential for this project. (Appendices B and C)

Sample: Interviews and Ride-A-Longs

As previously indicated, the project called for interviews with 20 women police officers. The sample size was selected after several conversations with my committee chair and during the proposal process with the members of the committee. We determined that 20 officers would be sufficient based on the importance this project has placed on the depth of the interviews and the content of the narratives rather than the generalizability of the sample (Sandelowski, 1995). As a researcher I would say that the sample size reflects a hybrid of both the phenomenal and theoretical variations in deciding the size of the sample. I say this because from the phenomenal standpoint, the experiences of women police officers is the phenomenon being studied and because of the assertion first made by Van Kaam (1959) that a phenomenological project will have between 10 to 50 participants (Sandelowski, 1995). Whereas the theoretical component
of this project is found within both the use of grounded theory in the analysis and interpretation of the interviews as well as the importance that this project has placed on explicating and adding to what is already known about women police officers (Sandelowski, 1995).

The women were recruited using a snowball sample technique where one interviewee would contact another and she would in turn contact another and so on. Access to the sample was initially gained through my associations with two women who work in the field. Those women who were interviewed were asked if they would be willing to inform other women officers of the project and provide them with the call for participants (Appendix C). I cannot deny that it was the relationship with the women that allowed for the other interviews. The relationship that I had with the two women was instrumental in making contacts with the rest of the women in the project. Weston (2004) may refer to this version of snowball sampling as “friendship pyramiding” – certainly some would classify my associations with these two women as friendships. The friendship relationships went far beyond me and my first two participants as many of the women knew each other either professionally or personally without my immediate knowledge.

Yes, some of these associations were because of the snowball sampling technique but what I found interesting was that on three separate occasions officers relayed a conversation about women officers they had heard about, who I had already interviewed. For example one officer told me “I heard about this one female detective who wasn’t allowed to wear her uniform for a gay pride.” Weeks before, I had sat down with a detective who told me that her commanding officer denied her request to wear her
uniform at gay pride. Two other officers told me stories about another officer with whom they had never met but her reputation was so well known in the area that they both made comments that I should interview her if I could, they didn’t know that I already had.

Returning to the sample and procedures, it is important to note that when the women were given the call for participants and asked if they would be interested in contacting other officers and giving them my information, they were told explicitly that they were under no obligation to do so and that they would not face any repercussions if they chose not to provide other women officers with the recruitment letter. The snowball technique produced participants who worked in a variety of departments and who held varying assignments and ranks. Some officers were interviewed who had spent their entire careers on patrol or as frontline officers to higher-ranking detectives who had worked in undercover units, or tactical units. In following with the National Center for Women and Policing report in 2001, I decided to separate the departments into two categories – small and large. Small departments consisted of women working in departments with less than 100 officers. Large departments are classified with having 100 or more officers (Lonsway et al., 2002). The women came from departments located in rural, suburban, urban, and metropolitan areas. Also, during the time of the interviews all of the women were currently working as police officers (Appendices B and C).

The women themselves were, for the most part similar in their demographic locations with 13 of the 20 women living in the suburbs of their respective city and two of the women classifying their home as being located in the city. As for race, 17 of the 20 women defined themselves as white, 2 of the 20 as African American, and 1 of the 20 as Puerto Rican. None of the women interviewed had less than 13 years of on-the-job
experience and the most was 37 years. As for the size of the departments, 15 of the 20 officers were currently working in large departments, leaving the other remaining five working in small departments with less than 100 officers. Most of the women interviewed were currently working as detectives (11 out of 20). Five of the officers were working on patrol and four of the officers were working in supervisory or administrative roles.

Of the women who identified as heterosexual, 10 of the 12 were married and had children, either their own biological children or step-children; one identified as single with a child and one was single with no children. Seven women identified as lesbian and out of those seven two of them had biological children of their own. One woman did not reveal her sexual orientation stating, “That’s my business.”

The ride-a-longs took place in two departments in the same state. There was no predetermined idea about where the ride-a-longs would be conducted, however, there would be 5 total ride-a-longs completed. In order to get permission to go on a ride-a-long with a police officer you either have to have the permission of the officer herself (be invited by her) and then be approved by the department, which in my experience does not go beyond signing liability waivers that are kept on file with the department. If you are not personally invited by an officer you can contact a department on your own and request that you be allowed to go on a ride-a-long.

For my first ride-a-long this is exactly what I did – in my conversation with the sergeant in charge of public and community relations I asked that I be assigned with a women officer because of the research I was conducting – I did not indicate that I was interviewing women officers in the state nor did I explicitly state that I was only
researching women officers. He assured me that this would be no problem, however, when I showed up on the morning that the ride-a-long was scheduled the lieutenant of the department had no idea that I was coming let alone that the ride-a-long had to be with a woman officer. The predicament worked out and I was allowed to ride-a-long with a veteran woman police officer. After this initial observation I partook in 4 more ride-a-longs one more with the same department and the other three with a different department.

Although I would have been more pleased if the ride-a-longs were done in five different departments, this opportunity did no present itself as calls and emails to various departments across the state were not returned. The women I interviewed were asked to consider allowing me to ride-a-long with them (Appendix B) but only two of them followed through on their offer. To be clear, the first ride-a-long that I conducted was scheduled by myself without any inside support. Coincidently, my second ride-a-long was by invitation from one of the women that I had interviewed, and actually took place in the same department as my first ride-a-long. Again, this was merely coincidental and was not planned in anyway. I accepted her invitation without concern that I would be outing any of the officers that I had contact with at the department previously because several months had passed and it was a different shift with different supervisors and patrol officers.

My third, fourth, and fifth ride-a-longs took place in another department. For the first ride-a-long I was invited by another woman who had been interviewed, the other two (fourth and fifth) were scheduled while I was conducting the third. I took these opportunities as they presented themselves, but for sake of clarity and transparency I attempted to conduct ride-a-longs in six other departments in the state to no avail. In
short, I had anticipated that it would have been easier to gain access to the ride-a-longs
that it actually was, but I am still thankful that I was allowed the opportunity to see
women officers on patrol. Details about these individual ride-a-longs will be covered in a
later chapter.

Interviews

As noted earlier, I interviewed the women in person, in a secure location. All of
the interviews were digitally audio-recorded for accuracy. Accepting to have the
interview recorded was one of the requirements of the project and was indicated both on
the call for participants and the informed consent (Appendices C and B). One caveat to
recording the interview was allowing the participants to “go of the record.” This meant
that if at any time during the interview the women wanted to relay information to me that
they personally felt was too sensitive or confidential, they could tell me to stop the
recording. When this did happen (in 5 of the 20 interviews) I would pause the device
(after they instructed me to do so), which stopped the recording – the recording would
resume only when they give me permission to do so.

I began each interview by thanking the woman for participating and taking the
time out of her day to meet with me. I would then show her the informed consent and
told her what the informed consent was and I then went over each section of the consent
form explaining to her what each section meant. After detailing the consent verbally I
asked her to read it and if she agreed to sign and date the form; all of the women did this
without needing any clarification and without asking any questions about the process.
The interviews varied in length, although it was anticipated and indicated in the informed consent (Appendix B) that the interviews would probably last between one and two hours, however, this would vary depending on the amount of information each woman had to share with me. Upon completion of the interviews, the shortest interview lasted just over forty-five minutes with the longest interview lasting over three hours.

Further, there was no set schedule as to when the interviews would take place, for example, I didn’t have a prerequisite that interviews would only take place on a Thursday afternoon, instead the interviews were done based on the availability of the officers. The women who participated in the study were not compensated in any monetary way, the only compensation they may have received was allowing their voices to be heard (Appendix B).

Each of the participants were interviewed once, however, they were provided with my information and instructed to contact me if they would like to add or amend anything that they told me in the interviews. With the exception of the two officers who I had known before the project took place, seven of the women informed me that if any other research projects developed or if I needed anything from them in the future that I should not hesitate to contact them.

Ride-A-Longs

The ride-a-long took place five times in two different departments. The goal was to observe the woman officer or women officers for the duration of their shifts. Department One was a large department located in a metropolitan area. At the time of my ride-a-long the officers were working 12-hour shifts. It is important to note that
although the term ride-a-long is being used here, not all of the ride-a-longs consisted primarily of actually riding as a passenger in a police car. The ride-a-longs consisted of riding in the squad car, responding to calls, talking to citizens, arresting offenders, dropping arrestees off at the jail, taking reports, writing reports, and observing officers during investigations; in short, ride-a-longs consisted of observing women officers during their work day, three of the officers’ work days consisted primarily of patrol and two of the officers’ work days consisted of investigations which kept us in the station.

These observations allowed me to have close contact with not only the woman officer I was assigned to, but with members of the community, criminal and noncriminal alike, other police officers who were mostly men, as well as correctional employees and support staff. Everyone I came into contact with at Department One, police officers, correctional officers and support staff was professional and kind for the most part. The citizens who I encountered in Department One were also quite friendly even when they were being arrested. This sentiment about the officers and support staff holds true for Department Two as well. Some marked differences in the two departments were location and community. Department Two was a large department in an urban area and their officers were assigned to 8 hour shifts. In Department Two I was exposed to a variety of officers from undercover agents to members of the tactical unit, command officers, to patrol officers.

Department Two was where I also spent time observing detectives working investigations on two of the three ride-a-longs in this department. What was also unique about Department Two was that the officers’ rode with partners, which meant that I spent an entire shift sitting in the back of a police car. More interesting than that, however, is
that the woman officer I was paired with had a male partner. I was apprehensive about this at first, although I didn’t say anything about it. Indeed, I was glad that I didn’t because I believe that this observation revealed more to me than any of the other observations I conducted. While the officers were friendly and professional, the citizens I encountered on the ride-a-long observations were far from it; on many of the calls we responded to, the citizens would make comments about who I was and why I was there or make unsavory gestures to me as we passed citizens in the car. Another significant difference between the departments was that I was required to wear a ballistics vest in Department Two.

The officers and support staff in Department Two were much more open and talkative than the other officers I encountered in Department One. When I was in the station it seemed like every officer stopped to talk to me. They asked me several questions about my life, but not about why I was there. For the most part, I assumed this was because they were already informed by the desk sergeant or by the officers I was riding with. Further, they spent much of their time in the station laughing at each other and joking around. Beyond the light-hearted atmosphere the police officers both men and women, seemed eager to talk with me about anything. For example, in one break from the road when we had returned to the station to write a report on a break-in, a male officer spent several minutes showing me pictures of his car on his telephone and then began speaking to me about a highly publicized case. I cannot reveal the case because it would without question reveal the department, but I was quite surprised that he relayed the information to me that he did. On a related note, this same case was discussed by one the woman officers I interviewed who did not work for this department but who was
working on the case in tandem with Department Two. I did not in either circumstance ask about the case.

Again, the goal was to observe the officers in their own culture, to peek through the blue curtain of policing and observe them in their own environment. I viewed these observations and the process as quasi-ethnographic fieldwork. Certainly I did not live with these officers and study them continuously for long periods of time (the total amount of time spent in the two departments totaled 52 hours) but I did live in their world for moments in time in an attempt to understand the uniqueness of their lives and the culture of policing. In turn, I am here, sharing this information with you. Van Maanen (2004) comments that “ethnography broadly conceived is a storytelling institution” and I intend to tell you the stories of these officers through my observations of them as police officers and as women. The “written representation of culture” (Van Maanen, 2004) will be detailed in the chapters to come.

It was interesting to see the power dynamic switch from the interviews to the ride-a-longs. During the interviews I did my best to approach the process using a linear lens, leveling the playing field as to not present myself as the one with the power in the process. I believe for the most part, I accomplished this goal by assuring them that I wanted to know whatever they wanted to tell me, and that they were the experts. I was surprisingly comfortable during the interviews, comfortable with the subject matter and the women I was interviewing even though most of them were complete strangers and I can say with confidence that they were comfortable too and that they had fun. I say this because these women told me stories that were very personal; they opened up about myriad topics from one of the women revealing that she was raped as a teenager, to being
openly discriminated against because of her sexuality, to a husband’s infidelity on the job. Among all of these painful, traumatic, and emotional stories, the one thing shared in all of the interviews was laughter and I think this is what worked to breakdown the power dynamics (Oakley, 1981).

This comfort changed when I went on the ride-a-longs at least in the beginning stages of each of the observations. This feeling of unease was not present when I went on the observations that previously interviewed women invited me on, but it was certainly present on the ride-a-longs with officers whom I had never met, this was especially true on the first ride-a-long that I had ever gone on. Even though I had spoken with some colleagues who had gone on ride-a-longs before to get a feel for what I should expect, I really had no idea how I would be welcomed into the policing fold. I know from the literature that policing is a closed occupation that doesn’t take kindly to outsiders. I also didn’t know what I would observe, not only how the officers would act or react but what kind of events I would observe while with these officers. I wondered what I would do if I found myself in the middle of a gun fight, but then reminded myself that the likelihood of that happening was slim. I also found it interesting that none of the officers instructed me what I should do if a dangerous situation did present itself.

One final note about the ride-a-longs—in both departments I observed all of the steps and processes that the officer took during every call and when the work for the day took us beyond the response call and into the jail, department, or into investigations, I was allowed to shadow the officer in all but one response (occurring in Department One), where there was a suspected person with a gun in an abandoned house.
Field Notes

I always had five things with me on every face-to-face interview I conducted – 1) Sony digital audio recorder, 2) One new, never before used legal pad, 3) several pens, 4) two copies of the informed consent documentation, and 5) several copies of the call for participants. During the face-to-face interviews I took notes on the women’s mannerisms and/or emotions. Taking notes on their self-expression was done in order to create a clearer picture of the experiences of these women. One of my main concerns while taking notes during the interview was to avoid making the women feel as though my note-taking was distracting me from what they were telling me, therefore my notes were brief, yet detailed enough to be able to look back at them during the transcription process and add their emotionality to the analysis. Also, at the onset of the interviews I indicated that I would be taking notes for accuracy but if they were uncomfortable with that, I would abstain – none of the women expressed any issue with me taking notes.

The ride-a-longs were a different story. I did not take field notes while I was observing these women on the job; I perceived note-taking to be very difficult while riding in the squad car with these women and while observing them with citizens, working cases, or back at the stations where anyone could see that I was clearly taking notes. Again, while citizens can generally go on ride-a-longs, I didn’t want to build walls between myself and the particular officer I was observing or call any unnecessary attention to myself while in the presence of other officers and/or supervisors. Therefore, the way I approached taking field notes during the ride-a-longs was two-fold – first, I carried my Blackberry cellular phone with me and when we took breaks, I would go to the restroom and write down notes in the “memo” section of my phone, using brief
descriptions and key words that would act as reminders for when I took more detailed notes after the observation was over.

For example, the first call on one shift was to an alleged criminal sexual conduct (rape) call. After having arrived on the scene I observed both the officer and the paramedics asking the victim questions and making comments to the victim in ways that I interpreted as victim blaming — after leaving the scene the officer and I returned to the station house to write up the initial report. When we arrived at the station the officer informed me that it would take her a few minutes to write it up and that I could take a coffee break. I observed her writing the report and right before we left to go back on the road I went into the restroom and wrote some comments in my phone. Those comments read, “CSC,” “victim-blaming,” “paramedics,” “officer,” “distrust,” “rude,” “insensitive.”

The second why that I approached field notes was that I brought my Sony digital audio recorder with me and left it in my vehicle. Upon the end of the shift I drove to a coffee house, purchased a cup of coffee, returned to my car, and sat there and retold the activities of the day, including my experiences and interpretations of the events. Once I arrived home I transcribed the notes about the observations and experiences of the observation.

Transcription and Analysis

As previously mentioned, transcription of the ride-a-longs was done as soon as possible after the observations took place using the detailed field notes from my audio recording as well as the brief field notes I took while taking breaks from the observation. Transcription of the face-to-face interviews also took place in this way, as soon after the
interview as possible and using both the audio recordings and the field notes taken during the interviews. The interview transcriptions were done without editing the content or the language used by the participants (Charmaz, 2004).

Several steps were taken in the analytical process of this project – a project that I consider an “excavation” that seeks to uncover information what has either been previously unknown or what will add to what has already been discovered (DeVault, 1999). The interpretive process of analyzing the data from the interviews and the observations was done using a grounded theory approach credited to Glaser and Strauss (1967) although the focus of the analysis that I performed was influenced by Charmaz (2004). While reading the transcripts for the first time, I took notes (memos) in the margins to develop codes and in turn develop those codes into categories. Although there have been several concepts and themes that have been discussed about women police officers in the previous literature (see Chapter 2) I used reflexivity and bracketing in order to gain objectivity (Harding, 1991; Fonow & Cook, 1991; Denzin, 2004; Ramazanoglu & Holland, 2002) when analyzing the transcripts.

Developing codes is essential for the analysis as “coding is the process of defining what the data is all about” (Charmaz, 2004, p. 506). My approach to the analysis was certainly more focused in my searching for codes and themes that were emerging from the data. The second step to my process was examining the codes and themes that I discovered and then developing the categories that would be used for the final analysis and interpretation of the data. My codes were brief descriptions of the topic (s) the woman were discussing. Codes such as “influence,” “academy,” “uniforms,” and “guns,” resulted in categories such as “becoming a police officer,” and “organizational structure.”
Additionally, the category of organizational structure and also the topic of occupational segregation were used in Chapter 2 and although it returns in the analysis, this coincidence should be viewed as information that was excavated from these interviews not categories that were developed before the data was analyzed. In short, the categories emerging from these interviews do mirror topics and concepts that have been previously addressed in the field, which, I believe lend support to the findings in this research project.

Returning to the codes for a moment, the process of picking out codes and themes from the interviews began in the first reading of the transcripts. As I was reading I would jot down words that I felt defined what the women were talking about in a particular section. Beyond, “influence,” “academy,” “uniforms,” and “guns,” codes included, “brotherhood,” “sisterhood,” “hegemony,” “threats,” “equipment,” “gender discrimination,” “harassment,” “stalking,” “sexuality,” “race,” “isolation,” “segregation,” “agility,” “training,” “politics,” “communication,” “citizens,” “promotion,” “shifts,” “assignments,” “masculinity,” “femininity,” “macho,” “media,” “dating,” “sex,” work harder/prove ability,” “nurturer/cargiver,” and “structure.” (Appendix D)

The codes were color-coded using high-lighters and colored pencils with each receiving its own color. I also developed a simple matrix with demographic and work-related information so that I could easily refer to it in order to determine not only categories such as age and sexual orientation but also the officers’ rank and the location of their department (Appendix E).

There were concerns regarding the development of the codes because there was significant overlap in the topics that the women covered in their stories, primarily
regarding gender roles. Gender is a significant variable that is found in all three of the results chapters. However, each category was developed to reflect the findings the women encountered and all of the major themes are included in the results. One major concern regarding the findings and the categories was that race is not included, even though one of the women did mention her experiences as an African American woman officer. Her story is highlighted in the results chapters and race is addressed, however, since there were only two African American women interviewed and only one of the two indicated any racial prejudice this topic did not warrant a category. The only other minority woman in the study identified as Puerto Rican and also did not discuss any racial prejudice.

Once developed, the first category focuses on what influenced the women officers because I wanted their stories to be explored starting with their personal beginnings, not only as actual police officers but as individuals who wanted to become officers. Related to this was their entrance into the academy because their dreams to become officers were realized when they entered the academy, successfully completed their training and became officers. Also, those first experiences as full-fledged officers were parts of their puzzles coming together to make the picture whole. The interconnectedness of these experiences made up the category, *Becoming a Police Officer* because all of those steps were needed to complete the process.

The second major theme that was revealed in the study was construction of gender and how stereotyped gender roles influenced how women were viewed by the other officers. Although the women reveled these gender constructions in the academy, it wasn’t until they were on the job that they became fully identifiable. Therefore, the
second category, *Constructions of Gender*, was developed in order to share the encounters that the women faced beyond the training period and into their careers. These stories included the women’s feelings of having to prove themselves and work harder than the male officers which was a theme that also presented itself in the third category, *You Don’t Belong Here*. This category was delineated from the others because it moved beyond the ideas that the women expressed about having to prove themselves as capable women to the continued discrimination they encountered on the job. The discriminatory and harassing behavior they experienced is supported by constructions of gender, but go beyond the ideas of gender roles and encompass women facing barriers based on their status as women. Further, and perhaps the more significant theme in this category is how the way policing is organized supports the discrimination and harassment of women, and ultimately allows these behaviors to fester and manifest on the job, impacting several factors including job assignments, promotions, camaraderie, and employee safety. This category also includes the unique discrimination and harassment that lesbian officers faced on the job.

These categories began to develop after the second reading of the transcripts as I began to combine some of the codes into possible categories that were further developed after the third reading. At this point as I read the transcripts, I finalized the categories combining some of the codes as they related to each other and an overall concept. In order to explain this I will now detail the categories further and explain their development.

After the third reading, I knew how important it was to focus on why these women became officers because many of their stories were so compelling, but at the
same time I also understood that their entrance into the academy was not only important but that it related to their entrance into the field. Therefore I decided to combine the codes, “influence” and “academy” and produce the category, “Becoming a Police Officer.” The second category that emerged was Constructions of Gender, and since there was overlap into all the codes and categories regarding gender, it was important to delineate what made this category specific to certain codes that had developed and would fit into this category. The women discussed many instances where they had to prove themselves on the job, and that they succeeded in gaining the respect of male officers when they showed them that they could handle a situation using physical agility. Even though the women expressed the importance of communication skills, they were adamant that there was a need to be successful on both ends of the spectrum. That both verbal and physical skills coupled with their equipment were vital characteristics to have in order to be successful. Other topics that ultimately fell under this category were citizens perceptions of the officers, and the reoccurring themes of masculinity and femininity, including gendered perceptions regarding how women and men handle emotional situations.

The third and final category that I developed called You Don’t Belong Here, encompassed most of the codes that came from the interviews. These codes were also broken down into more overarching themes before moving them into this category. For instance, the women discussed issues with their uniforms, guns, and equipment, all of which were manufactured for men and used in their departments instead of finding companies that made the same equipment for women. These sentiments were incorporated and classified as hegemony because the patterns of practice focus on men
and only men. Further, one of the women addressed being stalked by one of her commanding officers, and one mentioned the threatening behavior she had experienced, these related directly to harassment on the job and therefore were added to the overall theme. When taking all of the topics together they were related to the organizational structure of policing and produced feelings of segregation in the women, hence the title of the last category, but were still significant on their own to be dispatched in sections within the chapter of results.

Summary

The goal of this chapter was to detail the methodological framework and research procedures couched within this research project. The intention was to identify the importance of feminist standpoint, postmodern feminism, and phenomenology regarding this project. These concepts in both theoretical and methodological strategies allow for the project to be unpacked and presented in what I believe to be the most useful and responsible way, privileging the voices of women police officers and the experiences that they have had working in a field that is dominated by men.

In the research procedures section of the chapter my goal was to detail the steps I took in this project, from gaining access to the officers and ride-a-longs to my interpretive methods in analyzing the information that they provided me, during both the interviews and the observations. I also attempted to be transparent regarding myself as a researcher and how this project is a personal one for me for many reasons but especially because of my interest in policing, gender, feminism, and of course most importantly
women who work in this male dominated field of police work and the experiences that
they go through every day.

I provided some brief details from the interviews and the ride-a-longs in order to
give insight into some of the basic differences and similarities of the sample size. The
sample size itself, while small, was selected because I place more importance on the
participants’ ability to provide in-depth information rather than being concerned with
generalizability. The observations were also briefly described and focused information
from the two departments and also some of the differences and similarities between them.

In the forthcoming chapters, I will present the results from the interviews and the
ride-a-longs in detail. The results from the interviews will be presented by the categories
that emerged from the analysis. The ride-a-longs will be presented in a similar fashion;
however as you will see there will be marked differences in their presentation. As I
mentioned in this chapter, I approached these observations much like ethnography or
what I referred to as quasi-ethnography because of the experiences that I had during the
ride-a-longs. I did not immerse myself into the world of policing or these police officers;
however, I felt that I was a part of their worlds during these observations because of the
close contact I had with them, with other officers, and with citizens. Certainly there will
common themes that presented themselves during the observations and they will be
highlighted and discussed, but the information as a whole will be presented in a first
person detailed narrative in an effort to tell the stories of these observations.
CHAPTER IV
BECOMING A POLICE OFFICER

As previously mentioned, a questionnaire for the interviews was developed (Appendix A), and questions were asked in the beginning part of the interviews that followed this question guide. These initial questions allowed the women to lead me in the direction they wanted the interviews to go. Therefore all of the interviews were guided by the women themselves (Reinharz, 1992). In the beginning of the interviews I asked all of the women the same questions about how they knew they wanted to become a police officer and their first experiences as police cadets entering the academy. After these opening questions, the interviews became much more conversational. This chapter will detail what or who influenced them to choose the policing occupation and their initial entry into the job in the academy.

Forty percent of the women (8 out of 20) decided to become police officers because they were influenced or encouraged to apply by friends who were working police officers. One woman told me that she had been working in a high school as an administrative assistant making $15,000 a year when one of the student’s parents whom she had developed a friendship with told her that the police department was hiring and that she should apply. He went on to tell her that at the time (1996) many of the women who went through the academy could apply for assignment as administrative assistants (clerks) and that the job would be perfect for her. She told me that she didn’t want to become a police officer but that she needed healthcare benefits for her and her two
children since her husband had divorced her and he was not paying any child support.

Therefore, because of what she called “necessity” she began the process of becoming a police officer, more specifically a clerk. Catharine noted,

So after going through the agility tests – and I was 35 at the time so I didn’t even know being a police officer was available to me because I was so old . . . So I went through everything, I passed everything, and waited and got a phone call on a Friday and I started the academy the following Monday.

And I can remember the first day sitting there thinking, “What the hell have I done?” because it was really scary. But about halfway through the academy, you know, I’m thinking, “Okay, clerical. I’m going to be somebody’s clerk. Clerical, clerical.” But about halfway through the academy, we had driving instructions and then we had foot chases, and I never had more fun in my entire life.

And so once I graduated I was a street cop, and I got a call from my friend saying one of the deputy chiefs needed a clerk and he had recommend me, and I said, “thanks, but no thanks, “ because I like working the street and worked the street ever since.

Another woman got her start on the road to becoming a police officer while in college where she worked as a police informant working with them to eradicate drugs from on campus. Talking to Gloria was one of my most memorable interviews and one of the most in-depth because of her veteran status as an officer, working for 37 years on the job when we sat down for the interview. Now an administrator in her department but still active, Gloria told me how the police officers she worked with in college inspired her to join the force,

The police officers held something for me that was ethics, decisive, knowing what was and wasn’t a law and I know I became fascinated with that. I got out of college when I was 20 . . . I had worked in bars, that was my part-time job in college, and always said if you could be a good bartender, you could be a good cop.
So I went [to several departments] which were the only three departments at that time, 1974, that were hiring women patrol officers. I was not — I didn’t acknowledge myself as a women’s liberation front person but I can see now that I was clearly all about equality.

The academia part was no problem. The physical part was mostly fun. It was just kind of like gym class. It was the psychological aspect of the police academy that not having ever been in the military, I was astounded that so many people could make you feel so disliked so quickly.

The dislike that Gloria mentions was not uncommon among the officers I interviewed. In fact, 90 percent of the women reported some kind of discrimination, harassment, and to use Gloria’s words, feelings of being disliked or even hated on the job. The discrimination and harassment that the women experienced on the job is highlighted in chapter six. Returning to the influence of other police officers on these women’s decisions to join the force, three of the eight women came into contact with officers when they were young children or teenagers — Rebecca commented that she grew up next to a police officer who worked on a dive team, this fascinated her because “he would share the adventures of the dives and just — I always thought, you know, that would be a really neat thing to do.” Rebecca continues,

When I was a junior in high school, he made arrangements to go through a week of junior training. It was sponsored by the American Legion. They sponsored me and it was the most difficult thing that I have done, but I really enjoyed it and I felt that it was for me. And that I was just very committed that if I couldn’t [work for a particular department] that I didn’t want to be a police officer. So I pursued that and I was very fortunate that after college — I graduated from college in August and went into recruit school in April.

Rebecca’s fascination with her police officer neighbor inspired her from a child and her desire to become a police officer only grew stronger the older she became. Bell
on the other hand noted that her decision to become a police officer was “strictly by accident.”

It was not a planned event, and you can ask my parents because they’ll tell you that there’s a million and one things you want your baby daughter to do, and back in the 70s it [being a police officer] wasn’t one of them.

But I started working for the police department when I was 16 years old for co-op in high school. The last year you can work at some place for my typing class, because my father said, “computers are going to be the way of the world and every business is going to have a computer, in every home.” “Right, dad.” (Laughter).

So I went to work with the police department and I was their dictation person and typed all their police reports in their homicide unit.

For a 16 year-old girl who lived a sheltered life that was at home in bed at 9:00, I got a hard lesson in life for that, the first year of doing that. But it also intrigued me to another world that my folks didn’t know anything about. And so after working there for a couple of years, it came time to start thinking about what I want to do with my life and my folks had that planned. I was going to college and I was going to work on computers.

Bell went on to college and got her Associates degree but throughout her time in school she maintained her employment with the department, eventually operating one of their computer systems. Her exposure to the officers and her opportunities to go on ride-a-ongs kept her there and intrigued about the job so much so that

I got my associates and right after I got my associates, the department agreed to put me through the police academy. And in those days we were called token females . . . So as long as you got one, you know, you wouldn’t need to get anymore.

Similar to Gloria’s comment about feeling disliked in the academy, Bell provided some insight into her own feelings of isolation as a token female officer. Additionally, Bell shared some of the same characteristics with Catharine because while they were
encouraged to or inspired to become police officers because of their relationships with other officers, neither one of them sought out the profession. You might remember that Catharine stated she decided to apply both because she was encouraged by an officer to do so, but also out of “necessity.” Bell may have been encouraged after having spent some time working in her department as a civilian but she explained that her decision to become an officer was an “accident.”

Unlike Bell and Catharine, Emma’s story related more with Gloria’s – not what led them to become officers but the respect that they had for the officers they encountered. When I asked Emma when she knew she wanted to become a police officer she told me, “since I was probably about 14 years old – when I was 14, I unequivocally knew that’s what I wanted to do.” When Emma told me this, I suspected that something occurred to her or perhaps a friend or family member because she was so strong in her conviction, she didn’t simply mention that she knew she wanted to be a police officer at 14 years old, she announced it. I followed my hunch and asked her if something specific happened that influenced her decision,

Yeah, when I was 14 I was raped. And I had a very, very traumatic experience but there was a detective – I had a detective that I recall from that time period that worked the case that became very close to our family. I thought the world of him. He was – he was just a wonderful person and it was one of those things that at that age – you know even though I had a lot of issues going on, I just always knew that I wanted to be like him.

Emma went on to tell me that when she was 16 she left home and eventually entered the military but that during this time she always kept in touch with the detective that worked her case. Emma later applied for the academy and told me that she “liked it
because it was very – it was kind of militaristic and obviously I liked that from being in the military."

Another woman who knew she wanted to be an officer upon entering her teenage years was Simone. Simone remembered being 13 years old when she met a friend of her grandmothers who was a woman officer. Simone’s specific response when I asked her exactly when she wanted to be a cop was, “Not just a cop. I wanted to be a detective.”

Simone achieved that goal – here is some of her story,

When I was 13 years old I came to that decision [to be an officer] because I was a tomboy and I was that little girl that, you know, there was so many dynamics around me in terms of – my mom was a housewife and my father, was, you know, the worker and I saw the difference in his attitude towards her I guess for lack of a better term that he would be the so-called breadwinner and things like that. I’m a really visual, emotional person so that had a lot of effect on, you know, me and I was like, you know, almost to a point where he thought he was better than her because he was the man and making money and, you know, and then I only – I didn’t deal with girls when I was younger. I competed with boys. It was a constant competition. And the whole kit and caboodle was I can do anything you can do and I can do it better. If this is just simply cut and dry, you know, I always wanted to do the man thing for lack of a better term. I did. I was – the challenger, yeah.

I used to spend a great deal of summers with my grandma, and even before I met this lady I wanted to be a cop, you know. As simple as that. But there was a female officer on my grandmother’s block and she was a very attractive woman. She had two small children and she was a cop. She was like one of the first and my aunt would tell me, “She’s a police officer.” She was one of the first, you know, that worked the streets and things like that. So you know, that was – that was my mentor for me to see – to know that I wanted to do that. And then I actually saw another black woman doing it, you know, so it just kind of solidified.

Simone entered the academy for a department that required six months of training with the majority of that time spent away from family and friends living with the other recruits, much like an abbreviated boot camp.
It was difficult for me for several reasons because, as I said earlier, you, I was—I’m a homebody. I cling to my parents. Even though I have been to college and stuff, I stayed in the area where I live in. I went to community college and then transferred to a university or something like that, but was different for me because I was away from home, away from my parents.

We’re a paramilitary organization so we actually function a lot like the military. You had to respond to academy on Sunday and you stay all the way through Friday, and there was no set time you left on Friday. You go out at 10:00, 11:00 at night because, you know, it’s about discipline and stuff like that. And if somebody screwed up and it cause everybody to stay, you moved in unison. If you screwed up and got punished, we all got punished. You know, it was a lot—it’s a lot like military.

Simone was a life-long asthmatic and therefore experienced hurdles to completing the physical portion of the academy,

I was born asthmatic, so my doctor was really concerned about signing a consent, you know, to allow me to go to the academy because you have to pass psychological, medical, so many different criteria to even get into the academy. So you know, I told the doctor, you know, he’s like, “I’m not really sure where you’re at physically for this.” And I said, “You know, doctor, if living means dying, this is something I always dreamed about doing, you know?” And so he—I got him to sign the consent form. It was challenging for me. We had to run in the morning time. We had to do PT and I remember like the first couple weeks of going out, you know, I couldn’t get past the driveway, literally, and I was, you know, in duress because my parents were real protective of the fact that I had asthma because they didn’t have all the stuff like the rescue inhaler and things like that, the nebulizer machines and all that stuff. So I never pushed myself physically but then I did, and I mean I left the academy running marathons. When I asked Simone about the intensity of the program she told me

It was very intense. You know, you had to do it all at one time. It wasn’t like, “Okay, I can confront my physical fitness thing here then I can confront anxiety here.” It was all thrown at you at one time, you know. It was—it was—it was a challenge, but when you walked out of there, you felt like—and that’s the thing I think with the [department] that’s why people say we carry ourselves differently.

The conversation that I had with Simone was an emotional one, throughout the beginning of the interview she began to cry when she was retelling her struggles as she
hoped for the doctor to give her a clean bill of health so that she could begin the academy training. These emotions continued through her discussion of her time at the academy including her feelings of insecurity because she was one of few women recruit; more specifically one of even fewer women of color in her recruit school. She went on to tell me that it was a challenge for her to look at all of the faces of the instructors and not see anyone that reminded her of herself, no one there to reassure her that they succeeded and therefore she could as well. In her words:

I wasn’t the only African American female. It was – it was – we started out with four of us. Only three of us walked out of there, but it was monumental because that was the most black females that had ever walked out of the [departments] academy in the history of the [department]. So, you know, I wasn’t the only black female, but to – looking at the staff, you know, you trying to say, “I can do that,” and you don’t see a mirror image of whatever. You know, you need it. It kind of like qualifies what you’re trying to do.

Two of the twenty women went into policing because while in college they ended up taking criminal justice classes and then became interested in the job. These women expressed no interest in becoming police officers until they were in college and taking the classes. One even mentioned that she decided to become a police officer because she felt she had to make a decision about her career as she was soon going to graduate. Three of the women (15 percent) were inspired to become police officers because they had family members who were cops. Two of the women’s family influence came from members of their extended family (uncle, and brother-in-law), but only one of the women was inspired by a member of her immediate family,
My father was a police officer and so I grew up around that. I mean the whole time he was a police officer probably four or five years before I was born. So my whole life I grew up around that.

What I found especially interesting about Betty’s story regarding her father was that while she was ultimately encouraged to become an officer and influenced by him, she felt as though she was one of the most inexperienced cadets in the academy.

I just got out of college and I consider that I had a fairly sheltered life. You know, growing up, because I think my dad, you know, my dad being a police officer, we didn’t live in the city. We kind of lived in the – more rural area, you know, predominately white middle class area.

So a lot of the things that I experienced in the police academy were so foreign to me. You know, fighting with people, firearms, you know, shooting a gun, all of that kind of driving, evasive driving, all that. So it was – I think it was very difficult for me to speak, as it was out of my comfort zone. You know I was like, “Oh my gosh!”

Betty went on to tell me that her sister also decided to become a police officer, but that her brother decided to become a criminal, “he’s just bad – he’s a bad dude overall. So figure that out, you know? It’s just odd how things like that happen.” I asked her if she thought her father expected her and her sister to become cops and she responded,

He probably didn’t and I can only think now because I have a daughter, you know what I think, “uh I don’t want her to do that I think.”

It’s not because of all my bad experiences. It’s just that I think now, thinking back, there’s so many other cool things you could do. There are so many other – there are so many other careers you could do, you know? There are so many other – and I don’t think this a bad career and I think that I have acquired a lot of really important life skills in this career and I don’t regret choosing it. I still like it. But I also think that there are some bad things that go along with it, you know?

Another 15 percent of the women (3 out 20) told me that they went into policing because they liked working with people and wanted to help people. Coretta with thirteen
years’ experience on the job, Patricia with twenty-two, and Charlotte who has been working as an officer since 1985 all expressed how important it was for them to help others and that they recognized that their strengths were communication and the ability to get along with people. Coretta told me,

It seems to me a lot of people in general go into policing because other people in their family do, but for me it wasn’t like that at all because nobody else in my family is an officer. So I think I decided when I was like a junior or senior in high school. I think it was just like, I know of felt like my strengths were working with people and things like that… So it just seemed like a good fit career fit for me, and also because I didn’t want a desk job. I wanted to be able to move around and thinking like that. So I mean mainly because I just life to help people, like I had a lot of volunteering in my background growing up and that’s something that I continue to like to this day. So I think, looking back, I think those are some of the reasons like it is just a good fit for my personality.

So I finished up my four year degree and went to the academy. It was a good experience for me. I was drawn to hang out with other women like, some of us would go out to lunch... So we kind of bonded that way. Overall, it was – I like challenge so I thought it was a good experience.

When I asked Coretta if she could give me some examples of her good experiences she told me about the physical aspect of the academy, the agility testing that cadets go through that have been debated by the National Center of Women and Policing (Lonsway et al., 2002).

[There] were different standards for men and women and I don’t think we had like to pass the specific physical test in the academy, like even running and stuff was, just you know – everybody basically ran as hard as they could, and you know, I personally – lie when we did running and stuff I was measuring myself against the other women, and I was usually like – I was like the second. I’m not fat but second fastest person, like in the academy because I was in shape when I went there, so that was king of how I looked at it.
The guys were encouraging. Like one of my first days there I was like trying to run as hard as I could so I was just running by myself at my own rate and another guy came up to me and was like running with me just because I was running by myself, which was pretty nice, you know?

Patricia also chose to become a police officer because she liked working with people, “I do well with people.” Charlotte told me that she remembered being in grade school when she told her teacher that she wanted to be a police officer, her reason? Because she wanted to help people. Her teacher’s reply, “God bless you child.”

I worked at a hospital as a security officer for seven years. I decided that this was not enough. I just, you know, it didn’t offer enough of opportunity, enough of exposure. I still wanted something more. It just so happens that the police department was recruiting. I went and applied and I got the job. Back then it was predominately black. There were whites but not working or there to work for the city. The way – what’s unique about [her department] is that they not only train their officers, but they also train other officers throughout the state. So other officers can come there and get certified and those officers will be – or potential officers will be places in our classes in order to take certain portions of the class instruction.

Back then the [agility requirements] was not modified and I remember specifically because I was in the gym and I had on – I wore a white sweat suit, I remember that, and we had to climb a six-foot wall. We had to do the male push-ups. We had to carry a – was it a 65 pound bag or a 95 pound bag across the gym and place it up on a shelf. We had to drag a 165 pound or 185 pound dummy across the floor. So all of those were the same. Now, there is a difference, now, okay, but back then there was not. Now the hand grips, there was a difference in the gripping of the hand. They test your grip. So I remember there was a difference in the male grip and what the female had to grip, you know, in terms of I guess because of their body structure, what they’re capable of gripping, and what they may not be able to – what’s conducive for male and for female.

The culture is different. The way we live is different. Back then, we actually I think were more physically involved. The last what 15, 20 years, all kids do is watch TV and eat McDonalds. So there’s a difference. So the females were not passing nor were the males passing. So I think that may have led to – and I could be wrong, but I do believe that led to them changing the standards somewhat to kind of adjust to today’s youth.
Four of the women went into policing because of the job itself; more specifically three of them felt like their former military experience drew them to policing, while one believed that working as a police officer would be a good way to transition into a conservation officer. (Although there were four women who had previous military experience, three of those four specifically indicated that it was the military alone that led them to policing. Unlike Emma, who also had military experience but indicated that her interactions with the detective who investigated her rape is what led her to become a police officer).

Harriet’s story was unique in two distinct ways, first she successfully went through the same academy two different times, once in 1987 and once in 2004; completing the academy in 2004 made her the oldest person, male or female to do so in her department. Also, Harriet was unique to this story, not because she faced outward discrimination and harassment on the job but she was without question the one woman in this project who experienced the most, with the majority of it based on her sexual orientation. Harriet’s story begins with her desire to become a conservation officer but since she couldn’t get into their school she decided to take a different route,

It is very difficult to get in especially for women at that time. So I joined [the department] I thought I’d get me some police background and it seemed to work because I lateralled from [the department] to the DNR. So I was a conservation officer for a couple of years and then I lateralled back for personal reason. I ended up getting married and my husband at that time was like, “No, you’re not going to do this.” And I had a baby so – I suppose I should have gotten rid of him and kept the job. Anyway, at recruit school you walk through the halls and they don’t really know who you are or what you’re up to because you all look the same, you’re wearing the same, your haircut is short, you’re not talking. They can’t tell what’s going on with you. There’s no interaction so – there was a lot of pain you know? And you see that with everybody. Everybody can hide something because how they have stylized their training which really helps is.
People complain about it but it's like, “You know this if for your benefit. Just keep your mouth shut, keep your eyes ahead and keep moving.”

So in ’87 when I was in recruit school as a female they didn’t have separation of men’s and women’s physical fitness requirements. And at the time I’m 20 something – 22-23. I came out of [her university] I had run track and I was pretty cocky and I had no trouble keeping up. I mean I was pretty good. But when I came back at – and so I’m like, “I can beat any of you guys.” You know I was just going to, you know? I was just as cocky. Then – so when I came back at 41 to the academy I realized that a lot of these gals who were having trouble with fitness, they had – they’re married, they had kids, you know? There was one – the oldest women was 36, we called her “grandma.” Harriet realized what this 36 year old she had first encountered felt when she returned to recruit school at 41 years of age. In fact, when she applied for her recruit school she didn’t think that the doctor would clear her. She told me over and again that the one thing you don’t do as an officer in her department is lie. So when she went to see the doctor she decided that she would make a deal with him:

The doctor said, “Okay, you’re not going to be able to do this because of this and you’re going to be injured and you won’t make it through the school. I’ll give you two weeks.” I said, “Double the amount of weight I have to lift and if I lift it, you’ll clear me.” And so that was the deal.

Summary

The goal of this chapter was to highlight what brought these women to the world of policing. Whether inspired to become officers from friends or acquaintances who were working as police officers, family members, or because they believed that becoming officers would suit their professional needs. Further, this chapter also focused on the initial experiences that these women had upon entering the academy. It was in those moments when the women came to a sense of what being a police officer meant and how they would be impacted by their decisions to become cops.
I believe the decision to become a police officer and the process of becoming a full-fledged officer are important themes to report on because it provides a sense of who these women are – beginning with their beginnings. Taking a look into their entrance into the academy also sets up the forthcoming chapters on their experiences working in the field. Within the narratives that the women shared in this chapter, they provided us with insight into the gendered nature of the job itself. This is especially salient in Gloria's comment regarding her feelings of dislike and Bell’s explanation of tokenism in the academy as she was the only female in her recruitment class.

Simone felt these same feelings of isolation and marginalization at her academy, yet she felt them two-fold because of her status as an African American woman in the academy; a place that had few women and no women of color. However, even with these feelings of difference that some of the women shared with me, the majority of them enjoyed their time in the academy. Unfortunately, for 90 percent of them, the good time they had in the academy didn’t necessarily follow them on the job. It should be stated that the majority of these women, with the possible exception of one, who was counting down the days to her retirement, truly loved their jobs, in fact they loved their jobs so much that they stayed when others would have left long ago based on the encounters with discrimination and harassment they faced.

The struggles that the women faced will be highlighted in the remaining chapters, but it should be noted that these struggles did not prevent the women from being successful police officers, or make them want to leave the job, even Patricia who was counting down those days to retirement, told me that she liked the job but hated the politics. One of the major themes that developed in the interviews had to do with gender,
more specifically the impact that social constructions of gender had on the officers. The
next chapter focuses on the influence that gender has on a male dominated job and how
those expectations of the ways in which men and women are "supposed" to act affect the
perceptions of what makes a police officer successful.
CHAPTER V
CONSTRUCTION OF GENDER

Gender has been the primary focus of research on women police officers (Belknap, 2001; Corsianos, 2003 and 2009; Garcia, 2003; Gerber, 2001; Greene, 2004; Kakar, 2002; Lonsway et al., 2002; Lonsway, 2003; Martin, 1997; Miller, 1998 and 1999; Morash, 1986; Scarborough & Collins, 2002; Schulz, 2003 and 2004; Sims, Scarborough, & Ahmad, 2003; Wells & Alt 2005; Westmarland, 2001; Wood et al., 2004; Eisenberg, 2006; Martin & Jurik, 2007; Duffin, 2010). The ability of women to perform their duties as police officers, using skills that they excel at and/or if they are just as good as their male counterparts are important questions to ask. It is necessary to note that the constructions of gender found within policing vary by degree and will be reintroduced in some capacity in the next chapter on organizational structure as gender discrimination that leads to occupational segregation. The present chapter focuses on the expectations that the construction of gender places in individual’s can influence how women and men are viewed within policing. All of the women at one time during their interviews discussed the perceptions of women police officers and their ability to perform the duties of the job; more specifically we debated the importance of physical strength and agility versus the importance of having good communication skills.

Gerber (2001) has questioned whether women officers will ever be seen as effective as male officers if, in fact, women have such differing personality traits as men. However, she goes on to contend that this may be connected to the low status that women
hold in policing and in recognizing this, change could occur. This is a viable argument, but also difficult to prove as it appears to be a “what came first, the chicken or the egg” scenario – do women hold positions of low status in policing because of their personality traits, or is it because of women’s different personality traits that they hold low status in policing?

Either way, what persists is the ongoing debate as to what characteristics work the best on the job; time and again the argument returns to the importance of physical strength, but this may in fact be misleading. Outside of this research project I have had countless conversations with male police officers who have told me that being able to communicate with a possible offender or a citizen is valued more than being able to physically aggress an individual. The concern for having physical strength and agility developa when communication doesn’t work and the fists begin to fly – is a woman strong enough to protect herself and her other officers if and when this happens?

Corsianos (2009) notes that there are several tools of the trade that can be used to assist both men and women officers if need be, such as guns, batons, tasers, and pepper-spray.

The women in this project agreed that communication was key to being a successful police officer. They also indicated that having successful communication skills was something that both men and women can possess and that these are as Gerber (2001) questioned more individualized traits. Coretta, who had completed her master’s degree in criminal justice was well aware of the physical strength versus the ability to communicate debate and commented that,

It’s basically a fact that women can deescalate situations better than men, I mean – and granted you can’t stereotype every single person, but women are much better able to communicate with people in my opinion. I was saying from my
personal experiences because like you know what? Somebody can say something to me and it’s not about competition to me or like I’m not, you know macho or whatever. I really don’t care about that. I care about going home at the end of the day and not getting my butt kicked. So it’s just natural from me being a smaller person to want to talk my way out of a situation . . .

The women also felt a need to prove themselves to the other officers, to prove that they could do the job, as Judith told me,

I just remember having to earn the respect even more. I feel I have always had to earn the respect being a female especially in police work and then 10 times more with those old school guys, you know, just proving yourself, not taking it personal and all that. I think it’s hard for some women because they take it personal. It’s not personal. So I think I have a good enough head on my shoulders that I didn’t get emotional about it.

Judith had at least two major opportunities to prove herself while on the job. First, she told me that she was the only woman on her department’s tactical unit. This is a major accomplishment for any female officer because of the lack of women across the country that have ever been selected to a tactical or SWAT unit (Kraska, 2001). She told me that although none of her team members ever verbally expressed their concern or disdain about her being in the unit that she could, “sense it.” The second opportunity to prove herself not only as a capable police officer but also as a member of her tactical unit was when there was a hostage situation in a local restaurant. Judith and the team she was on had apprehended a murder suspect, but the other suspect fled and ended up in a restaurant where he took a female hostage. Here are how the events of that day unfolded,

So when I looked in the restaurant I could see him with a gun to her head. So he’s walking around and – I didn’t hear the shots fired but I found out later there were shot fired in the restaurant. So he came out and he had her around her neck with a gun point at all of us and it doesn’t matter if it’s female or not, you know what I mean? Even with the female like – I don’t know why but I can’t see it any differently. But anyway, so he came out and I had used – got out of my vehicle
for cover and I think he was going to try and take my vehicle because it was unmarked. So I saw him looking up because I was ducking because then all of a sudden I heard a bunch of shots fired so I though he was shooting at me. So I ducked down and when I looked up there’s like this much [approximately 4 feet] space between him and the hostage and I shot him.

That was a huge hurdle I think. I got a lot of respect from people that didn’t even know me being in something like that because fortunately we’re not in that kind of situation often which is nice.

But I felt perfectly fine about it. You know, I didn’t know after the fact but a lot of people have issues. I mean who knows if you would have died if I did. I felt like he deserved to die because he killed two women. I can’t answer because he didn’t but was totally fine with that. I didn’t have any effects afterwards . . . the training totally kicked in.

I then asked Judith if she had any particular protocol that she and her other team members had to follow:

Yeah, the protocol. I mean you have to obviously surrender the weapons and it goes to ballistics and then you get — you’re on administrative leave and then you see the department psychologists and you can go individually or with a group but I wanted to do it as a group because we were all out there as a group and we all saw it. Everybody had a different role. I mean one guy on my team, he’s huge and he came around. He was on the inside. He was getting shot at. I know what that feels like, you know? So it’s just nice to just be able to sit down and talk about it. I thought that was really helpful. And a couple of the guys that I work with, they were — they had a difficult time because they wanted to shoot but it wasn’t the right thing to do and I commended them, I said, “You did good.” They know it, but, you know, you’re just in that situation where you want to help, you know, and save the, you know. He was not going to shoot the hostage or what. That’s what I kept telling them like, “You did good, that shows you have discipline”

Judith’s experience with the shooting highlights several constructions of gender, in fact, it turns the constructions of gender that we have to come to know on its head.

First, Judith was the one to ultimately shoot the suspect and therefore save the hostage.

She did so using force, something that often has been questioned regarding women on the
job. She also used one of the many tools that officers have at their disposal for a situation such as this, note that she never mentioned anyone tried to talk the suspect down or use their own aggressiveness to take the suspect down physically. Next, Judith kept her emotions in check during the shootout, even when shots were fired directly at the car she was taking cover behind. Further, Judith was clear to me that she had no post traumatic effects from the shooting incident and that she felt no remorse or emotion regarding the situation because she was confident in her decision. Finally, it wasn’t Judith who questioned her actions or felt regret, it was the male officers on her team who did, in fact the only time constructions of gender were present in this story was when Judith had to reassure the male members of her team that they “did good” which represents the social construction of gender as women are viewed as nurturing care-givers.

As for the way in which we view what attributes make the best officer, Betty commented that societal views were the influencing factors, yet still she thought they were changing. When asked why she thought the percentage of women working in the field remains so low she told me,

Well, I think – my personal opinion it it’s societal. I mean look at the way society portrays cops for the most part. I mean it’s always been portrayed as a male occupation, you know, the big strong police officer save the day, you know? It’s been portrayed I think as an occupation where – and I think very inaccurately that, you know, “Oh you got to be a big strong guy to do this job.” I think that’s just the way that society has looked at the occupation overall and when – you know when we raise our kids and they see that and they see this occupation, you know, my kids might think, “Oh well, yeah, you know, there’s women that are cops. My mom is.” They may not see so much of it being, you know, “Oh only guys want to be cops.” And maybe the way girls are raised, you know, and not really want raised to be rough and tough and fighting, you know, shooting guns. That’s societal as well. I mean that’s just the way – we don’t raise girls that way.
I then asked Betty if she agreed with the “rough and tough” mentality that she mentioned and she told me that in fact she didn’t, noting,

I completely disagree with it. I’m not saying that there’s not – I’m not saying that there’s not times where a big huge guy has been necessary because there are. But I got laughed at so hard one time in – I don’t know between ’92 and ’94 because I was working the road and I brought in the biggest guy and I was so little compared to this guy I had to struggle to get him into the backseat of my cruise. I mean he was huge – humongous! The guy probably should have grabbed me with one hand and picked me up and thrown me aside. Luckily, it wasn’t that kind of encounter. He was very polite. He was very large. He was very polite on the traffic stop. He had a warrant I was about to, you know, use a couple sets of handcuffs, handcuffed him. He was very cooperative, but I got laughed at so hard bringing him into the jail because people were like – they were just laughing because he was so huge and I was so little. It just looks weird, you know? But a lot of it is the way that you can communicate with people. You either – you can either diffuse the situation or you can escalate the situation based on the way you treat people. Not always, I mean some people, there’s just a small percentage of people that are going to be jerks no matter what you do. You’re going to get into a fight with them, they’re going to run from you, that’s the nature of the job. But I think for the most part, the way that you communicate with people is crucial. If you are able to communicate well with people and you’re able to sweet talk them and you’re able to, you know, you can diffuse a lot of situations and get people to be cooperative.

I asked Betty if she felt women communicate better than men and she told me that it was depending on the individual, that she had seen male officers communicate well with people, especially in investigations. Another story that Betty told me that was representative of gender roles on the job came when she and four male investigators were preparing to enter a house to see if it was occupied. The decision was made that they would enter the house through a window and because she was the smallest she decided that it would make the most sense for the male officers to boost her up through the window.

Well my sergeant was like, “No, you’re not going through the window.” I was like, “Well, why can’t I go through the window?” He was like, “Because you
have babies at home and I swear if anything stupid happened in there, I would never forgive myself if something happened to you. So you’re not going first.” He said to me later, “I would never forgive myself if something bad happened to you. You are their mom and they can’t grow up without you. Us dads, yeah they can probably grow up without us, but you’re their mother and they can’t grow up with you. Not that I think there was — not that I had a feeling that there was anybody in there and not that I think that you couldn’t effectively do this job or do your job, but you know what, if I had a choice and there are four of us standing out here and you’re the mom with two babies at home, I’m not sending you in first. One these other yahoos can go in first.”

Betty told me that at first, she was angered by his reasoning and his decision but after having thought about it, she agreed that he was probably right and that he didn’t mean any disrespect. This idea of paternal and maternal protection was discussed in one other interview as Catharine told me that she was oftentimes viewed by her male counterparts as well as citizens as someone’s, “mother, sister, or wife.” This also echoed Judith’s experience operating as the care-giver when her male team member needed to be reassured that he performed his duties properly. With Betty’s story the tables turned to the male officer feeling as though he needed to protect her from any possible harm, because being a mother outweighed being a father; another societal construction on gender roles.

Alice told me that she had spent countless hours listening to her male partners talk to her about love, sex, and marriage. She said that she too had trouble in her marriage but that she would never talk to her partners about it. However, she did tell me that the relationship you have with other officers is much different than relationships other co-workers share, “boundaries are not there when you’re a cop with another cop. You just don’t have boundaries like you do at a normal job.” Alice told me that she was known for her “complete, utter, tactlessness and saying what I think, like no filter.” She said that
her last chief told her she was arrogant to which she responded, “I have to be arrogant or
guys would walk all over me.”

The gender role stereotype that men are strong and women are weak both
physically and emotionally was challenged when Alice told me that she worked a lot of
rape cases and that when she came home at the end of the day ready to talk about her
cases, her husband was the one who couldn’t hear her stories, he would say, “Alice, I
don’t want to be exposed to that.” He said, “I don’t want that in my mind.” Alice went
on to tell me how she was often the officer selected to do death notifications to family
members because she was so good at not letting her emotions take over, something that
directly went against the gender role stereotypes about women,

I’ve had two friends, one here, one down there [in another state] who pulled a guy
over on traffic and the guy kills himself before they can get up to the car . . . I
mean – I mean it as hard for him. I wouldn’t have felt – see, I don’t think it
would have been hard for me because it had nothing to do about me. It had
nothing to do with me. I just – I just happened to be the cop that pulled him over.
I had to go do the death notification to the mom on that . . . I don’t have that much
trouble doing them. I don’t know, I compartmentalize, completely. When I’m
talking to you – actually, when I’m in like an interrogation or something, I
actually care about you while I’m in there with you. I’ve developed empathy, I
mean I’m really feeling sorry for you normally even as I’m getting a confession.
But then when I walk out of the room [claps her hands and if to say, “That’s it”] I
do feel sorry for them because they didn’t want to be where they’re at, nobody
chooses to be a burglar, the circumstances put them there. But as soon as I walk
out of the room it’s like the door shuts and I’m done.

Alice went on to say that the same was true for a death notification, she would let
them cry and listen to what they had to say, but once she left, “the door is shut and I’m
not, I don’t feel that weight anymore.” I thought Alice represented perfectly both the
ability to have emotions and empathy for those she came into contact with, while also
exemplifying part of policing that many officers would understand. While Emma told me
that she thought it wasn’t healthy for officers to not be affected by dealing with death. Much like Alice’s husband who didn’t want to hear the stories of the rape victims, Emma told me that she had gone to calls where children, even babies had died and the male officers couldn’t even enter the location where they were found. Based on societal constructions of gender roles, it’s unusual that Alice could avoid being emotionally affected after the fact just as it was unusual that the idea that a “strong” man couldn’t handle the scene of a child murder or death. In fact, Alice told me that a female co-worker told her that she was a “cold-hearted bitch” because of the way that she handled interrogations and death notices.

The important factor to keep in mind about discussions of gender roles and policing is that the preconceived notions and expectations of how women and men act and those characteristics are what influence the view of how those characteristics will or won’t fit in the policing occupation. For instance the assumption that women are too emotional to work a job like policing because of the dirty work involved like the potentially dangerous situations that may result in serious injury, death, and/or having to notify families of citizens and officers alike that someone has been injured or killed.

Also there is a longstanding assumption that policing is a dangerous and demanding job that requires physical strength in order to be successful. The assumptions are that women are too emotional and men are not, therefore men can deal with injury, death, or death notifications better than women. Here we see that was not necessarily the case, certainly from Alice’s perspective it wasn’t. Also, while it would be argued that women are not as physically strong as men, they did appear to have heightened communication skills, but those skills are not what garners attention on the job, even
though being able to talk one’s way out of a situation before a physical altercation occurs was valued. Conversely there were women who were willing and able to confront a situation using aggression beyond a sharp tongue.

The assumptions that accompany gender roles are often affiliated with societal perceptions of what is masculine and feminine, as Garcia (2003) has indicated, being viewed as successful in policing is associated with what we deem as masculine characteristics. Therefore should we consider women who do work outside of their gender role and adapt characteristics that are deemed masculine more successful than women who embrace their femininity on the job? Adrienne struggled with the answer,

I think that it can be still somewhat negative, but I think it can also be positive, you know? I know some – I know some – some female cops that are kind of prissy that – I mean they – they would kick your ass, you know? Its like, “I don’t want to fight with you.” But I think it’s just all a matter of how you present yourself ad how you represent yourself out there as a cop. I mean if you go out there and prove yourself to the males out there in the police work, you know, if you actually prove that you can do this job then – I mean in my experiences, they’ve been fine . . . But I also, you know, there’s also the big stereotype that every single female butch looking cop is a lesbian too, you know? It’s like you know, some of that can come back on you too because some of those guys they’ve fought this you know, they’ll just you know, treat you different and some of them won’t give a shit.

Adrienne reiterated Judith’s story about the shooting she was involved in, recall that she said after that incident took place she felt as though she had overcome a huge hurdle and gained the respect of her teammates. Patricia told me that she felt as though she proved herself every time she was in a situation where she had to be strong or kick down doors, telling me that eventually she earned the reputation from others as someone who “could handle her shit.” However, this wasn’t true for another female officer that she worked with,
I saw another female flop on this situation where she couldn’t control somebody, and after that, she was the lonely female. Nobody wanted her around the team. Nobody wanted anything. I don’t think that if you would have seen one of the guys flop like that – I don’t think you would have seen it as bad, but because she is a female it’s bad.

Rebecca provided insight into her experiences with confrontations with a male co-worker, the importance of both physical strength and communication skills, and how her training allowed her to do the job needed in order to take control of two potentially dangerous situations and in doing so, proved that she could do the job successfully,

You know you have your moments and it’s really changed a lot in our agency. I mean before you had your – you talk to him or you shoot him. Now you have immediate weapons where – you know there’s men that are my size that don’t want to confront people and fight. There’s always – I don’t care how tough you are, you could be in – there’s someone who’s going to take you out. So I truly believe how you talk to a person and obviously, like I told you, my parents prayed and I have guardian angels, but I truly believe if you treat people with dignity and respect and I’ve always talked by into arresting people. I didn’t care, I got my job done. They’re in cuffs in the backseat of my car and we’re going to jail. There’s one partner I had, I would sweet talk people and get them in car, get them cuffed. As soon as they’re in the car he’d start picking fight with them. One time I said, “You know what, to make it fair I’m going to take the cuffs off that guy and let him have a piece of you, you know? Stop harassing my prisoners!” That just made him angry. He was a real big man when they had the cuffs on, but he’s a little weasel.

You know I truly believe you need to be physically fit as a police officer ad there’s some who believe that when you choose law enforcement you lose the right to be unfit. And you know I’ve always maintained a level of physical fitness, running, working out . . . We used to be tested yearly on that but with their budget cuts that was the first thing to go. But you know, there’s only been one time that I dealt with somebody that got out of control and I called for backup but this guy was a monster and it didn’t matter if I had, you know, three or four guys there. I mean he would have wiped them all out.

So I think communication skills are vital. You know, you have your immediate weapons, you have your mace, you have your baton, you’ve got these tools to use. And you know, like I said, even if you are the most buff guy, one of my biggest officers got in a fight with some guy and the guy pulled his jacket over his head.
I've also found that men are less likely to want to pick a fight with a woman because that's not socially acceptable. But I do have a lot of – some of my worst things have been with other women. I remember once, this deputy was struggling with this women in court one day and I thought they were joking around and then I could hear him breathing really hard, so I put her in a headlock like this [showed the move] and then stood on her feet and I just leaned up against the wall so she's pinned behind me. She turned and bit my breast but I have my bullet-proof vest on. She like bit the straps off my shirt and she just kept fighting because she was biting my vest and she goes, “I’m going to bite your ass.” Another time, I was just out of rookie school and my partner was arresting a drunk driver and the guy was fighting him. I was brand new when I tried a headlock on him and this guy picked me up and I’m like this [approximately 3 feet] off the ground, so I just did the pressure point that they taught us in recruit school and he went down.

Rebecca’s experiences highlighted both the importance of communication skills as well as physical agility, keep in mind that her agility had little to do with strength and much more to do with training and the equipment that all police officers are either required to have with them or at the very least have available to them if they so choose to use it. At the same time her experiences showed us the ongoing problems associated with the desire of her male partner to fight instead of communicating, or as she mentioned, “sweet talking” the suspect. This idea of sweet talking a suspect pointed to the importance of deescalating a situation in an effort to avoid the very physical encounter that her partner was attempting to initiate. If you recall, Catharine mentioned to me that she is viewed as a mother, sister, or wife. She also told me that during her oral interview they asked her,

“Okay, the game is this scenario: You’re alone, you’re in an alley, and you’re confronted by a black man who is 6’5, 320 pounds, and he is looking to kick your ass. What are you going to do?” I’m like, “I’m going to offer him a beer and hope that he falls in love because that’s how I’m going to handle the dude.”

Adding to that Catharine said
There have been – I have had situations especially with mentals, being a female with a mental because we have patience, we have compassion. There’s a lot of things with being a female that men don’t have that we as a female police officer need to use. I mean go to a scene with domestic violence when there’s children, that nurturing part of being a female really helps. And it’s not weakness and I never thought it was a weakness to you, handle yourself on the scene, go home and cry.

So being a female I’ve always used to my advantage. When I was working at [her particular station] there was this mental and he would kick everybody’s ass. He would literally kick everybody’s ass – this was one of the guys that when you got a run, everybody showed up because you know there was going to be a fight. The guy would take all of his clothes off and grease himself up with Vaseline. He was bad because he was crazy. So I had gotten there. I got there and this guy is whooping everybody’s ass, so I said, “Hey!” He looks over and I’m like, “This is crazy, but have you ever had a blow job by a white girl?” [He says] “uh-uh.” “Would you like one?” He is like, “Uh huh.” “Okay, put your hands behind your back.” So he puts his hands behind his back, we lock him up and take him downtown. Whatever works.

I’ve been doing this for 15 years and I can count on one hand how many fights I’ve been in. I just won’t fight to fight because I’m gonna get my ass kicked and I don’t want to get my ass kicked.

When I asked Catharine specifically if communication skills were a part of policing that don’t get the attention that it deserves she responded, “Absolutely, Absolutely! And on average women are better communicators and they’re better at calming things down.” Alice’s experiences with communication briefly touched on the importance of being able to run a successful interrogation and Simone’s experience with conducting interviews shed more light on some of the stereotypes about women police officers and their ability to conduct a successful investigation

So I get this big case and from then on I don’t know if he [a male officer] was jealous. I do run into a lot of jealousy with the male cops because of the cases I work. I work all high profile cases… I work mostly law enforcement corruption, public corruption, whether it’s political or law enforcement, that’s the kind of cases I work They give me a lot of backlash, a lot of jealousy… It never meant anything to me, first of all, so I don’t know if they are gender based, or race based
because it never meant – it never meant anything to me. You what I’m saying? I’m one of those people that’s going to move forward, you can’t stop me, you know?

There’s a group that does interrogation technique and I’ve been in class with them and they say, “A woman absolutely will never get a confession from a serial rapist.” And I’m sitting in the room and I’m telling them, “I’m decorated because of that.” I have a emeritus service award within my department because I was able to get a guy who raped eight schoolgirls on their way to school, from school at gunpoint. I was able to get that man to confess to me that he had done that. So I’m sitting in a class where they – these people literally makes the comment that a woman would never get a male serial rapist to confess. It’s unheard of.

Another issue that came up in the interviews was gender discrimination faced solely because they were women working in an environment that is predominately male. These issues had nothing to do with how the women performed their jobs and everything to do with working closely with men. Alice told me that women are viewed as “meat” in a department filled with men. Bell told me that working with men was not without its challenges,

I’ve had male partners who were pissed to work with me and flat out said, “If you’re my partner tonight, I’m not working with you. My wife said I can’t work with you.”

I had one partner that his wife pushed in an entertainment center on top of him on his way out the door and he got injured in the head and I had to call an ambulance for him because she learned he was riding with me. I was, “I don’t want your husband, you couldn’t force me.” (Laughter) [His wife responded] “You’re spending the time with my husband in a car at night.”

I always made a habit of, you know, don’t mix pleasure with work. Somebody told me early on, “if you do that, you’ll gain more – you’ll gain more respect than those counterparts.” Before me that was there you get your dates, you know, so I learned, you now, I think having the respect for my coworkers was a little more important than finding a date for a Friday night, and it turned out to be a really really good word of advice.
What was interesting is that eight of the twenty women (40 percent) where married or in relationships with other officers, male or female. Yet all of them expressed the same concerns about dating other officers. Emma expressed the ease of her relationship because she was married to a male officer and commented on how he must feel about her going to work every day in a job that is loaded with men. She mentioned that [heterosexual] women who are in law enforcement are either married to another officer or are married to someone who isn't remotely connected to policing.

And the ones that are married to another officer I think is kind of more a rarity only because of that A-type personality and you really have to find a man that’s secure in himself. You know very secure in himself because he know that I go to work every day and you know, my husband, he knows all the guys that I work with but you go to work every day with 90 percent males so he has to be secure in himself, secure with you, trust you that you can hold your own and you know not to put up with their crap. But the females ten to have families that take them outside of law enforcement. They have kids, they’re involved in their kids’ schools, they’re involved in church, they’re – you know what I mean?

Because the majority of police officers are male there is an assumption made by citizens that all police officers they come into contact with are indeed, men. In fact, Linda noted her experiences with this phenomenon, not only how she dealt with it but how it actually helped her in the field,

I don’t know what it is but people automatically say “sir.” And granted I’m very androgynous-looking, I get called that all the time in uniform. And then the minute I open my mouth, about 70 percent of the people will pick up on, “Oh I’m sorry.” The other 30 percent will call me sir for however long I am dealing with them. It could be hours and they’re calling me sire. I’m like, “wow.” But you know whatever. Generally I don’t correct them.

There’s a local department here that only hires Barbie Dolls and they’re all very successful. Now, tell me, is that because the men around there want to look at Barbie dolls all day and that’s why they get promoted and they’re successful on their jobs? Or is it something else? I don’t know. I’m obviously very
androgynous, outright masculine presenting in a uniform. I think it helps me on
the road, so I’ll take it.

I’m tall, my height helps me. I present totally different in uniform than I do in
street clothes. I’ve been told that by other people over and over and over. They
say, “When you put your uniform on, you change.” “Okay, whatever.” So
apparently, when I present in a uniform, I present much different. I present very,
very standoff-ish, very confident, so I’m very intimidating to some people and I’ll
take that because it’s what you need on the job.

But if I’m female going up against a 6’3 guy, 220 pounds, guess what I’m not
going to bother to throw a punch. I’m just going to get my spray out, you know?
And is that an ego thing that a guy might not choose because he has something to
prove? Sure, sure. So that’s factor in the use of force. If I’m not as strong as
whoever I have to fight against, then I can use the other tools in my toolbox
instead of my fist.

This last comment from Linda once again showed the importance that the officers
placed on the other instruments they have to protect them and to control a potential
dangerous situation. Yet, we still put little stock in what these items can do, and we also
take for granted that every male officer is big and strong. Remember what Rebecca said
about her stature and that she included smaller male police officers in her scenario. We
forget about these things because we have been programmed to assume, and our
assumptions tell us that men make better police officers because they are strong, and
women don’t because they lack physical strength.

Audre valued the importance of talking your way out of a situation first, but she
stressed that communication skills didn’t mean much if a conversation turned into an
argument and in turn that argument became a fist fight, stating, “I could talk it, but I
wasn’t afraid to mix it up and that is important.” I then asked her if she thought that was
a commonly held perception among officers as far as women cops are concerned and she
told me,
It’s the reality. I trained a lot of women. I trained hundreds and hundreds of women in law enforcement in those areas, defensive tactics, and firearms and it was certainly — yeah. I’ll tell you there is a lot of technology out there that many officers’ not just females but many officers feel can assist them in performing certain tasks. The taser was one of them and even the taser will tell you that it is designed to help you do your job but not do your job for you. So in the event of a taser failure which happens on a daily basis, you still need to be prepared to handle yourself physically.

Audre then went on to emphatically tell me why it was so important for women to have the physical ability to protect themselves and to know when the time for talking was over and the time for action had begun,

You cannot take the physicality out of law enforcement until you take the physicality out of crime and criminals. And so there needs to be that level of physical performance. Agility is certainly one of them, strength and power and the ability to deliver it. I think for women it’s even more important because physically coming into the job there is an issue of upper body strength and there are remedies for that. Many women do not seek to find those around this. So physically, a lot of times — not always — but a lot of times we are at a disadvantage when it comes to hand to hand confrontation.

Now as far as communication skills, I can tell you that there’s been a lot of women and again through scenario based training will oftentimes validate or invalidate the training you received on the job. And it can also give you an idea of where you’re going to be in a stressful situation. And women, a lot of times, will fall back to their ability to communicate and articulate what they want a certain person to do to a fault. So there have been a number of police officers involved in shootings and female officers dying as a result of trying to talk their way out of a situation that they should have shot their way out of.

Audre’s expertise in training gave a new and extremely forthright perspective on the physical agility versus communication skills debate. Here we see that yes, both are important, but because policing is a profession where danger is a constant possibility officers and according to Audre, especially woman need to be able to use their training and their skills to differentiate when physicality not only should be used, but when it must be used. Certainly, the research that Garcia (2003) has done concerning the 80-20
secret and the propensity of policing to be more sedentary in nature, along with other research conducted by Greene (2004) that policing is much more social work oriented than the adventurous, crime-fighting ideals we as a society have thought it to be is valid and accurate. What I believe Audreis saying is something that needs to be said, that policing is potentially dangerous and that if women want to be successful officers they not only need to be able to use their communication skills but be willing and able to use their tools including their primary weapon, their handgun, in order to protect themselves, other officers, and the public. Judith knows this better than most.

Summary

This chapter focused on issues concerning gender roles and the construction of gender as it relates to women police officers. The experiences that the women shared, primarily dealt with physical agility and communication skills as determining factors as what constitutes a successful police officer. Past research has indicated that masculine traits are valued over characteristics that are deemed more feminine such as the ability to relate to and communicate with others. The women’s story reflected these concerns through the use of their own experiences using both communication and physicality on the job.

The women commented that they had to work harder in order to prove themselves to their male counterparts and also told of their confrontations with citizens and suspects alike. Some of their stories were surprising and even outright shocking, especially the account that Catharine told about her oral interview and her encounter with the suspect who was mentally ill. Her approach was shocking yes, but she used whatever way she
felt necessary in order to deescalate the situation and ensure the protection of herself and her other officers. The idea of being able to deescalate a situation was echoed in several of the narratives highlighted here along with examples of when the women could no longer use their communication skills and had to use psychical force to control a situation or use their other weapons to augment their success.

The women's experiences also showed us that they do work outside of their gender role while on the job and do so quite effectively, but that they are not afraid and in actuality value their gendered characteristics on the job. Working both inside and outside of these roles appears to make a better, more well-rounded officer and also highlights the men who worked outside of their gender roles as well, especially regarding emotionality, for example, the men who couldn’t enter a crime scene where children had died.

The idea of having to prove themselves in their respective departments is not uncommon among the women, in fact all of the women in this research project felt as though they had to either prove themselves or work even hard than their male counterparts in order to gain respect. In moving forward the topic of gender will once again be covered, but will be examined in a different capacity other than the idea of gender specific roles on the job and move towards specific gender discrimination that these women faced based on the organizational structure of policing resulting in women being left out, forced out, or ignored in the policing occupation.
CHAPTER VI
YOU DON’T BELONG HERE

The previous chapter touched on the prominent role that gender played in policing, but the focus in chapter five was to explore some of the ideas that previous research had explored regarding physical agility and communication skills. Those problems that the women faced with having to prove themselves either with words, or physicality, or both highlight the importance that these two concepts continue to have in policing. What the women’s experiences told us is that while communication skills are indeed the most valued trait to have in policing, physical agility is also important, sometimes even vital, if and when communication fails and situations turn aggressive.

I decided to call this chapter, “You Don’t Belong Here” because this was the overall feeling that I got when listening to the stories these women told me about working as police officers. The effort that many of their male counterparts made to make these women feel unwanted go above and beyond simply believing that women aren’t physically strong enough to perform the duties of policing successfully. These women experienced discrimination, hazing, and harassment from some male officers that is nothing short of disturbing.

The experiences of the women reflect several components that I consider part of the organizational structure beyond merely the hierarchal, paramilitary, chain-of-command design. As examined in Chapter 2, these components include job assignments, promotions, and availability (Schulz, 2003; Eisenberg, 2006; Lonsway et al., 2002;
National Center for Women and Policing, 2011), the status of women in policing (Gerber, 2001; Lonsen et al., 2002), the brotherhood of male police officers (Martin, 1999, Corsianos, 2009), hegemony or the “patterns of practice” in policing (Corsianos, 2009). The components to the organizational structure also include the styles of policing that favor male characteristics over female characteristics such as reactive traditional policing (Alpert et al., 2006) versus a proactive community based model with a deconstructed chain of command (Skolnick & Bayley, 1988; Miller, 1999; Greene, 2004).

Beyond the discrimination, hazing, and harassment experienced by the women, they discussed their uniforms, ballistic vests (also called bullet proof vests or Kevlar vests), and their equipment. This information goes beyond just the simply consideration that perhaps their clothing and equipment doesn’t fit them properly and operates as examples of hegemony in policing (Corsianos, 2003, 2009), the patterns of practice that result in occupational segregation leaving women officers on the margins, maintaining their role as an outsider.

This feeling of being an outsider was revealed in the interviews with officers who identified as being lesbian. All of them were out at work and their experiences with discrimination and harassment from the male officers were prevalent in all of their narratives. The events and incidents they felt will be detailed in this chapter as well.

Organizational Structure

As indicated there are several factors that can fall under the category of organizational structure – there are various cogs in the machine that allow the structure, the apparatus that is policing to continue to operate the way in which it always has.
Women, the minority in the structure are often viewed, quite simply, as the wrench in the works – unwanted. This section will focus on the discrimination the women faced on-the-job, first related to their status, then by way of the brotherhood, which will include one particular event that focuses specifically on hazing. Further, the topic of hegemony will be highlighted. It is important to keep in mind that the discrimination that these women face on a structural level result in occupational segregation – the feeling of being an outsider, of not receiving the same job assignments because it is assumed that as women officers they are not as capable as male officers. One important note about these findings – there is significant overlap when discussing the organizational structure especially when discussing issues related to status and the brotherhood of male police officers. Therefore while the brotherhood appeared as a factor in experiences that these women discussed regarding their status on the job, there is a more detailed section to come that is dedicated specifically to the brotherhood and sisterhood of policing later in this chapter.

Status

Instead of addressing the status of women police officers as one variable in the discussion, this section will cover the concepts that are a part of the overall status that women officers have in law enforcement. Status consists of job availability, including promotions and assignments and in the case of this project the lower status of women police officers impacts their job availability, promotions, and assignments; and in this study all of these issues with status were related to gender discrimination.
Angela gave valuable insight to her being a woman in a male dominated field when she revealed to me that when she began her career she was the first woman ever hired in her first department. She explicitly told me that while not all of the memories there were bad that she did have some “horrible” memories of her time there.

My supervisor took it upon himself to call me to Meijer’s parking lot, “Hey if you’re available, can you meet me at Meijer’s?” So I pulled my cruiser up next to his, he said, “hey, I don’t know why I feel this way but I don’t feel women should be in law enforcement.”

. . . If I asked for your opinion, you give it to me and I’m not going to hold it against you, but out of the blue, he just needed to cleanse his soul. I said, “Really? Why would that be?” He said, “You know, I really don’t have a good reason. You’ve actually done a really good job. You just did a really good investigation on this last CSC we caught, criminal sexual conduct. You just need a phenomenal investigation on that, and I really have nothing to base this on other than my wife is a stay-at-home mom and I just don’t think women belong in law enforcement.” And I’m sitting there stewing and stewing some more and it was probably obvious, and he said, “Well I hope I haven’t offended you.” And I looked at him and said, “You have.” I put my car in drive and revved off.

Angela eventually left this department and went to a larger department in a less rural area. However, the same discrimination followed her to her new assignment, even if it took several years to do so. After having been assigned as a detective in the drug unit and serving in this position for 13 years. During her time in the unit Angela had received several accommodations and although she was aware that her commanding officer could remove her from the unit and put her back on patrol without a reason she said this rarely happened as long as you were doing well, and since she had received at least 12 accommodations in her 13 years in the unit this wasn’t a huge concern for her. There were other people in the unit with her but this story involves three of them, Angela,
another woman officer, and a male officer. It is also important to note that at the time Angela was nine months pregnant,

So we’re all informed that, “Hey, the time has come . . . “ Okay, is there a reason why you guys are backdooring our captain of the unit who’s begging them – these are administrators in the chief’s office – begging them not to take us . . .

The next day Angela talked to the male officer who was removed from the unit and he asked her to come and meet with him because he wanted to talk to her about what happened.

While we are meeting up talking, he gets a phone call from the acting assistant chief . . . He talks to both to them separately and they said, “hey what can we do to make your life better?” Now mind you, I’m now listening to this because now, I jump over into his car, I turned it off, he puts his phone up to his right ear and I proceed to listen with my left ear and I can hear everything. So the guy said, “What can we do to make your life better?” In his words, “I feel like I fired a bullet and I can’t get it back. So what can we do to make things right with you?” And in so many words, he said, “It looks bad that we booted the only two women in the drug unit. It’s really bad. So sorry, you’re getting screwed too, but what can we do to make your life better since we care about you?” [The male officer] said, “I feel bad for those two, they’ve done nothing but a bang up job. . . “ And the supervisor said, “Hey, let’s face it, we couldn’t piss on them if they were on fire."

Keep in mind that during this time Angela was nine months pregnant. As the conversation between the male officer who had also been removed from the drug unit ended with the assistant chief the male officer reiterated his empathetic feelings about Angela also being upset about their decision especially since she was pregnant to which the assistant chief responded, “I thought she already had her fucking kid.” After the conversation Angela and the other female officer decided to file a complaint against the assistant chief, who in turn was passed over for promotion. She asked if their complaint
had anything to do with him not getting said promotion to which she was told, “Oh probably, 100 percent.” She told me that she felt as though it was a victory and she was later promoted to detective.

The ability to file complaints against other officers, commanding or otherwise was an action that 15 percent of the women took in order to protect themselves from workplace discrimination based on their gender. Angela felt as though the assistant chief simply did not like women on the job but that he had to remove the male officer from the unit in order to mask his reasoning for removing the women, if a man was also removed than perhaps people wouldn’t think that it was motivated based on sex discrimination.

Another instance when legal action was taken on the job happened when Gloria took a stand for several other women in her department when they were all denied their shift bids for a specific rotation. Officers bid on shifts based on the time they have on the job, but also based on other shifts that they have been assigned. For instance someone who has bid for a day shift two bids in a row, but was assigned to night shift would theoretically be more likely to get the day shift on their next bid. However, if someone with more seniority also bid on that shift they would most likely get it before the person who had spent less time on the job. So when Gloria noticed that some of the older women she worked with were upset she asked them,

“Well what’s the problem?” [One of the women responded] “Well, I wanted days.” [Gloria asked] “Well, how come you couldn’t get them?” [To which the woman told her] “Because I’m a woman.” [She continued] “They just assigned us where they want us because we’re women.” I said, “The can’t do that, there’s contract that says by seniority.” The union wouldn’t touch it, so in the course of that shift bid in 1992 I learned of about eight women who have seniority to work day with weekends off and they had certainly earned their time, had worked their
job, we’re deputies, that had never been able to get off afternoons or midnights, and they would just assign them where they wanted them because they always had to have a woman only with work with women.

The women that were most affected by it where a little bit older than I was, were not streetwise, and they were terrified that if they fussed too much they’d be fired. So we had a class of women in this department that had no concept of you are paying union dues to receive fair representation, equal contractual rights, and they can’t just randomly say, “You’re fired.” I’m not a big pro union person, but I would always embrace that strength behind me.

So they were afraid to do anything about it. So I called the women together and I said, “Ladies, the bottom line is somebody’s going to have to take a chariot ride to the finish line.” I am sure the sheriff and undersheriff didn’t know about this. I’m sure that they just didn’t have any concept of this, but the minute I started talking about it, I could walk down the hall ad there were co-workers diving into the side wings because of course, your younger seniority males with five years seniority were on days and weekends off. The 12-year female was on midnights with Monday and Wednesday off or Monday and Tuesday off. So the men automatically took issue with it, “What do you mean? Those women will bounce me out of my slot.” So now we have this turmoil, and I am the problem.

So I went to the union and I said, “Gentlemen, you can be part of the problem or part of the solution. We’re not going to pick that up. Well, you not giving me a lot of choice here.” So I had gone to the sheriff and undersheriff and they said to me very boldly, “Be very careful where you tread. We’re not changing a damn thing until a federal court tells us to.” I said, “Well you’re not giving me much choice here.” I went to the union and the same thing. So I went inform of the union board and I said, “Gentlemen, you can be a part of the problem or you can be part of the solution. If you’re part of the problem I am going to own your grandchildren’s souls. I will own your great grandchildren’s souls. I will make you so miserable; I will make you literally think hell is a good day. So you decide what you’re going to do about this.”

So they called me in and they wanted to speak to me privately and I stood in front of the other six women (one had quit) who literally – I could hear their knees knocking behind me, and I said, “I’m not comfortable with that, you talk to all of us or you talk to none of us.” They said, “Why would that be?” And I said, “because I hear that there’s a big issue with retaliation, so any discussions we have from this point on, we need witnesses. You can have my attorney or you can have them. Your choice.” And I watched them turn beet red. I watched the veins in their necks start pumping and off they went to their offices and I thought, “They look a bit upset.” (Laughter) I was poison, but it still wasn’t right, it still wasn’t justified and if you don’t like me because I was standing up,, I said – I told
the undersheriff, “if I were your wife, your daughter, your sister, your baby
grandchild, you would want me to pursue this.”

Nothing came of the confrontation, except that Gloria was put on midnights the
one shift that she couldn’t stand. She went on to tell me one night she was working in the
jail and planning on going to another union meeting the next day. In order to put her next
experience in context it is important to note that this was around the time that there was a
post office shooting in the same state where a postal work killed several people including
himself.

I had my packets and my little information in the law and every else and I had
them all stacked in my locker. [A male officer] said something about, “So what’s
going to be the problem with this meeting tomorrow?” I said, “What’s going to be
the problem, did you hear about what happened [at the post office]?” And we’re
just talking, and I made a stupid comment intended totally kiddingly, I said, “Boy,
they ought to be dame glad I don’t work for the post office because there would
be some openings around here.”

When I walked into the union meeting, I’ve all of a sudden got two non-union
member – non-union board members in full uniforms sitting on either side of me,
in class A uniforms, and I mean they are squeezing me and I’m like, “Hey guys”
because they are convinced that I am going to shoot everybody in the room. They
called in the sheriff and undersheriff and said I’m nits, that I am a danger, and
have convinced the sheriff and undersheriff to suspend me. . . I was suspended
and going to go up and have my marbles counted (see a psychiatrist) to see about
fitness for duty.

Gloria went on to tell me that she was happy that I was doing this project and that
she was able to tell me this story because. “These new kids don’t understand what some
of us went through.” When all was said and done Gloria’s battle with the sheriff and
undersheriff lasted two years, culminating in 1994 when she was finally put back on the
road and the department was threatened with a lawsuit. Although Gloria went off the
record regarding her psychological evaluation she did tell me that later on she wrote the doctor a letter about their experiences together, the letter read,

I will tell my grandchildren about the time grandma stood up against the Sheriff’s department for equal rights for women in 1994, challenged the union and got suspended. I will tell them how I went to a doctor to get my marbles counted and how he perceived me as unjustly critical of the artwork he had in his office, but not mentally ill (smile). If ever you get to the area and want to go to lunch, just call, I’d be delighted to buy you lunch. Maybe we can talk about art... 

Another issue regarding the status of women in policing is that of promotion, a topic that should be considered as the women in supervisory roles still remains even smaller than the overall percentage of women police officers by at least 3 percent. Further, women officers may avoid being promoted because they fear backlash from the male officers they supervise and finally since male traits are traditionally valued more in policing, men are therefore promoted more often than women (Miller, 1999; National Center for Women and Policing, 2002; Garcia, 2003). When I asked Emma about her thoughts on men and women officers being promoted or applying for promotion she commented,

[For men] I think a lot of them associate that they’re not a success unless they attain a rank. And I see it – I’ve sat on the hiring boards and the panels within our union, our own people and how political it gets and how – maybe comes with wanting to be a top dog – it’s a general thing because there are some women who are the exception – they become so competitive too, but I’m not in competition with anybody. But for guys it’s kind of an ego thing, like they have to be better than someone else and if they attain a position or get something then they’re showing that they’re better and it’s not everybody, but a lot of them it gets really – I mean we have some guys that really get crazy over promotion time.

If a female does get promoted and I deal with this a lot with our union guys, you know when somebody might want to promote a minority and that always burns me and even – you know, you want a quality female because [if you don’t] it detracts from all the women when you bring in someone that realistically isn’t comparable to that male counterpart and we indirectly pay the price, because guys
look back and think, “well the only reason why she’s here is because she’s female.” It’s like, “No, she’s here because she’s qualified. She’s just as qualified as you are.” If you have two people whether it’s a minority, African American, Hispanic, if you have two people that are parallel and equal in background and training and scoring, you should take that female first. I truly believe that and not because you’re taking them just because they’re female, because comparatively they’re just as equal as that male and we need to be more effective of society but you talk to the guys and they get crazy about it. And it’s like, “you get crazy about it because you’ve been the majority all your lives, and now all of a sudden you’re threatened because, “Oh my gosh, we’re hiring five people and three of them are minorities.”

Simone told me about her personal experience being passed over for promotion,

I was passed on for promotion – I believe because I am a woman. We’ve never had – they had me serving as acting detective lieutenant for a year. They paid me out of class to work that position. That means I oversee all of the detectives in the second district . . . The position came available for permanent fulfillment. I put in for that position, I got an interview, but what they did is they promoted a guy above – a guy over me who had never been – his resume was nothing like mine. I had all these cases behind me, prison escapes. Everybody was so sure that this position was mine, but they do is what they call targeted selection interviews they put a panel of three people together – inspector, lieutenant, and whoever else.

You sit in front of them and they put questions to you. Well, his friend, somebody he came up with – he did dope all his life. Well that part is this commanding officer who he worked for is sitting across from him in the interview. They promoted him above me and he’s my boss now. He’s the boss – he calls me for everything whether it’s to answer questions, whether it’s to handle cases because he know I’m going to do a good job on them. He calls me for everything but this is my boss now but he’s a male. [The department] never had a female detective lieutenant overseeing a detective. It’s always been a temporary position. I didn’t get it, but I couldn’t fight it because it is so-called targeted selection interview process. You’re scored, you see what I’m saying? And if you’re my friend, I could score you better than I score someone else.

Yeah, so he got the position, and I work for this man everyday and take orders from this man every day. And I’m the one that he calls on for all these major specific – I get all the high profile cases. When the [name of the city] cop was killed, I was on vacation, he called me off of the vacation to go in to interview the guy. The police department requested that he interview the guy and he said, “No, I got somebody that I know can get the guy to talk.” He called me off of vacation and paid me overtime to go in and to interview the guy. And I got him to talk. I
got him to, you know, [confess to] shooting up a cop.” But you know, I’m good enough to go to solve all these cases but I’m not good enough to do the job.

As mentioned at the onset of this section all of these women’s experiences reflect some level of the “brotherhood.” In policing, male officers defending each other or collectively expressing their disapproval of women receiving promotions is commonplace. As Simone’s encounter just told us, she lost her promotion because she was a female who was going up against a male counterpart whose friend was the ultimate decision maker in the promotional process. Emma told of the disdain that male officers expressed to her because women and minorities were being hired and promoted over them even though they were just as qualified as the white males. Angela’s story further highlighted the brotherhood as her commanding officer who had removed her, another female officer, and a male officer from the drug unit contacted the male officer to apologize and allow him to decide what would make him happy in the situation, while being certain to express to the officer that they didn’t care about the female officers.

Finally it was Gloria’s experience with the shift bids of her other officers and ultimately herself that illustrated both the brotherhood as the men were getting the preferable shifts, relating directly to availability and assignments. However, her story also illustrated the sisterhood that, from the interviews, is also prevalent in the policing occupation. The next section of this chapter will take a deeper look into the experiences these women have had with the brotherhood, another aspect of the organizational structure of policing. This section will also highlight how the brotherhood impacts women leading to a form of occupational segregation, meaning that the women are made to feel as though they are outsiders in their own environments.
Brotherhood and Sisterhood

The brotherhood of policing has operated in a capacity to keep women from feeling as though they are apart of the organizational structure. While some women refuse to assimilate to the idea of the brotherhood, others attempt to join the ranks in order to become part of the group. The brotherhood can present itself in myriad ways from activities taking place outside of the workplace to the relationships of the officers while on-the-job (Martin, 1999; Westmarland, 2001; Freedman, 2002; Schram & Koons-Witt, 2004; Corsianos, 2009). The women expressed their feelings about the brotherhood and the sisterhood that exists within policing as well. Out of the twenty women in this project 50 percent of them told me that they believe there is a brotherhood in policing, 25 percent (5 out of 20) told me that the brotherhood in their departments were dependent on the age of the police officer, noting that for younger officers there was no such thing, but that for older male officers the brotherhood still persists. One women told me that there wasn’t a brotherhood per say but that men and women both interact with each other as equals, but depending on the individual. Twenty percent (4 out of 20) told me there absolutely was not a brotherhood anymore while one of the women told me that she “just wasn’t sure.”

Among the 50 percent of the women who told me they believe a brotherhood still exists in policing, forty percent of them told me that they believed there was also a sisterhood. Three of the women took annual vacations with other women officers, two others were involved in a monthly get-together where the officers would go to dinner and the remaining three all made mention of activities or a general feeling in the department that they worked in were women had to stay together. Roseanne told me that while she
likes the officers she works with and that they all get along but that there is definitely a brotherhood and the best place to find it is in any SWAT unit. I asked her if there had been any women in her department assigned to SWAT and she told, “yeah, but they all got pushed out.” Roseanne was one of the officers who mentioned the existence of the brotherhood depending on age, however in response to the SWAT unit she told me what the female response to it was:

I worked a shift that we called the “chick shift” because there were more females than males on the shift. We rocked it! I know that when I first hired on, women were really catty with other women. That gets old. But in the last ten years, we get a long just fine. The chick shift was the best and I tell you what, we got stuff done. We had the same stats as any other shift, but we had less complaints. It was just really fun and we all got along well.

Angela told me that she thought there was a brotherhood by that for the most part women are accepted into it, but not completely,

I would say we are accepted into the brotherhood, it’s probably 90 percent accepted into the brotherhood because there’s still the typical guy stuff that goes on when guys go out or something that women just are never going to partake in. Okay, because there are just certain things that guys just are not going to do or share with another female officer, whether it be whatever, screwing around on their wife or something like that. There are things that women won’t really think are too cool but other guys might say, “Hey, whatever, whatever.”

I asked Angela if there were any activities outside of work that she wouldn’t feel comfortable participating in with the male officers, she told me:

Maybe going out and having a beer after work. It might not be too cool to have your female co-worker with you having a beer because then you’re going to pay the price if their wife finds out or whatever.
When I asked Angela if she thought there was or had ever experienced a sisterhood on the job her answer was interesting and revealing:

You know, no, not really. Since I’ve been in the detective bureau I’ve been in the detective bureau for just over a year, we do, just the females, we do go out like once every three months or so and have martinis and appetizers and chit-chat. But that is probably the first time in a decade in a half that I’ve really done anything social like that, because really, I’ve never felt a real big connection socially between myself and the other female officers. A lot of female officers are groupies.

I asked her if she would clarify what she meant by “groupies” and she said:

It just seems like all they do is date male cops, primarily male cops. They’re just kind of cop-chasers and I’m in it for the occupation, so I really have little respect for females like that. And so I really am not going to ask that person out for dinner or a beer or whatever. But I do, but I still do have that certain, probably subconscious bond that if I see them at a seminar or something I may be more apt to ask them how they’re doing or what’s new or whatever. But yeah, so there’s kind of a bond but there’s also kind of an annoyance factor too.

Angela’s feelings of annoyance when it came to other female officers was shared by Linda and Catharine who also told me that they had problems with women who came into policing to find a husband. Also, you may recall that Linda also talked about “Barbie doll” female officers in the previous chapter on the constructions of gender.

However, for the most part women were supportive of each other because of the difficulty they faced as women. Patricia told me that there is an “old boys club” in her department and that creates some issues between the males and females where the men are valued more than women,

I just see the little things about the female-male issues, I don’t really see really blatant things but I see the small things. Regarding myself, I didn’t pay as much attention to him, but one of the old detective that I used to laugh with, she was a female, she was there long before I was. She kind of paved the way when it was hard to be fitting in with the guys. It was hard to be accepted into the group and
you really had to prove yourself. We used to a – you know the Wizard of Oz
song, “If I Only Had a Heart?” We used to sing, “If I Only Had a Dick” and we’d
make the song up. We can do this and we can do this if I only had a dick.

Emma told me that when she began in her department she noticed the brotherhood
right away, as she pointed out the importance of fitting in and having to prove yourself, a
concept touched on in Chapter 5,

It’s like you always have to come in and prove yourself. Whereas, for the guys.
They walk in and they’re automatically accepted, you know? And I know in
every department it’s probably different but like the culture is – you know the
majority of our guys are white males, but they all hunt, fish, shoot, trap. They
have something automatically in common. They come walking in on the job and
immediately it’s, you know the sergeant or a senior officer sit around and they’re
like, “Oh you know we like to hunt” and right away it’s like, “Wooo bonding
time.”

...After a call all the guys would migrate together or they cut off their breaks
together, you know nobody would say you know, “Hey Carrie! You know we’re
going to take a break, you want to come?” So it was one of those were you would
take it upon yourself to either show up or to say, “Hey, where are you guys going
to take your break?” To you know, invite yourself in.

Emma explained that there was another woman officer who wasn’t as forthright
as she was, that she was too timid to take the same approach to integration as Emma did
and eventually left the department because she felt so ostracized by the male officers.

When I asked her if she experienced a sisterhood in policing she said,

Well, you know it’s funny, I meant to tell you this when – when I first got hired
they had [a women’s group] and I remember I got recruited to go [there was a lot
of] old time females and it was a big group that had been getting together for
years and they would do this weekend at one of the detectives home and I
remember I went to it.

And I remember when I went, I was probably – I was really the only new or
young officer from my department that went, and I remember talking to some of
the gals that worked in the department saying you know, “Hey, why aren’t you guys going to go to that?” And it was almost like this, “Oh we’re not going to go to that.” Almost like a – they didn’t want to be associated with it. But I come to find out why, because the guys really had a problem with this. The guys had an absolute cow and would make fun of this little women’s group, and it was like – you know like I would tell them, “Why, you guys have your little men’s group everyday when you come to work.”

... It was the one time where all of us that are females in law enforcement could get together and we would have a hoot. I mean these gals would tell stories like who’d done it and yea, we probably trash some of the male counterparts that we work with or whatever, but it was that sisterhood. It was like somebody who was a female that sees things from our perspective and it was a social group, it was not a lobbying group or anything, it wasn’t a political group, it wasn’t a bargaining group. It was just a – you know but the guys really had a hard time because we’d have these flyers that would go up, you know letting people know when it was going to be. These guys would write like nasty crap about it or they would tear them down. Then we had quite a few females that would just refuse outright to go because they felt like it was like a slam on the guys of the department type thing because they want to be one of the boys. I want to be a police officer here but I’m not a boy and I don’t want to be one of the boys.

When I talked to Coretta she was quick to tell me that she was unhappy in her current environment; that supervisors had changed and now she dreaded going to work everyday. She was told me that that because of the environment in general but especially as of late because it has been “very bad” the women have to stick together. She began by telling me that the women were the “have-not” group. I asked her if that was because the climate had changed to one that valued the brotherhood or the male officers in the department or if it was a continuous problem and she told me, “I think it depends on the person, but the women like – the women pretty much band together.” But what happens when you have no other women to band together with?
Harassment

This section will focus on two of the interviews that I conducted with the women, Bell and Harriet, who experienced harassment from the men in their department. Part of Harriet’s story will begin here and will continue in another section on sexuality. The women in this project experienced discrimination because of their gender and as we’ll see later on based on their sexuality, yet Bell and Harriet’s level of discrimination certainly reached levels of harassment ranging from threats, stalking, hazing, and sexual harassment.

In 1986, Bell was transferred to a position within her department at a station where she was the only woman to have ever worked there. When she arrived she soon realized that there was no separate locker room for her to use. Every time she would come in for her shift, the men would stay in the locker room making her late to change into her uniform and start her shift. I should note that this particular department had a policy that the officers should not appear in public, in uniform unless they were on duty, therefore she couldn’t change at home before her shift began. She told me that eventually she got sick of waiting and knocked on the locker room door, “Pull your pants up because I’m coming in!” After the commander saw her do this a few times he arranged for a “little room” to change in. She went on to say after four years she left that assignment and moved on, but in those four years more women had been stationed there. During this time they were changing in a room that used to be an interview room and that the mirror in that room was two-sided.

So after I’d left there were some more women there and some very nice looking women would change every night in there and the troops are going to close the door and open it up (meaning the other side of the two-mirror there was another
They had a huge internal investigation and the reason I know this, they came to me and said, “Did it ever happen to you?” I’m like, “There was a mirror in there?” I don’t think I’m going to look because I had been there four years and I didn’t know they were doing it. But that’s what happen when you work with men, you know?

Bell went on to tell me that she was offered a job recruiting officers and that they had decided to give the job to her instead of the male officer who had more than twenty more years experience than she did at the time. She said they chose her over the male officer because he was “lazy, very lazy.”

... I thought that we had a really good friendship all along. When I got selected in that job, it was like the daggers came out, “I only got it because I’m a female, I’m just a slut” a whole list of things. I ignored it. He never once stood there and said, “Well, you deserve that job, but you know, I should have got that job.” The recruitment job required that Bell travel all over the state even though she kept a permanent office in one of stations. So on her way out to a job she stopped by the officer to get her things.

I grabbed my briefcase, and we’re on the road. I get up to do my presentations and all I have is pornography. I am shocked because all of my paperwork, all my video, everything is gone and it’s all porn. Magazines, pictures, everything. Okay. I thought, “You know, I’m not even going to acknowledge it.” The next time I came in, I checked before I left, and everything was burned. All my paperwork was burned. I’m thinking, “Okay, now you’re being destructive. I’m going to say something.” And I did and I showed it to the sergeant and he laughed. I said, “Well, I tell you what, you have to stop this because I’m going to lock my office now.” And the next day I came in, the office door was hanging off the hinges, and there’s a desk sergeant sitting there at night, all night.

So I say, “Okay, either you’re deaf or you know what happened.” [He responded], “Oh, I know nothing about nothing.” And I go in [to her office] and every bit of my paperwork has burns all over it, and inside of my coat pockets and my uniform jackets had bottles of beer... So internal affairs came and said, “You know the last thing I want to do is be involved in this, what he’s doing is wrong, you don’t deserve that.” He retired six months later [the officer she assumed was doing it, the same officer who she got the job over]. I think they (internal affairs) came up with, “We can’t determine who did this.” I thought, “Not a very good policeman.”
But that’s okay, I learned not to keep anything of value, he scribbled all over my pictures, my family. Okay. So I took everything down like was moving every day and I tolerated that until the day I left to go to [a different assignment]. And that was the only time I had anything happen to me like that but it was so humiliating.

I realized back then nobody is going to take care of me, and I know this is a male dominated job, always has been always will be, and as long as I know where I stand in this place, there will never be disappointment.

Harriet’s experiences with harassment began in the same way that Bell’s did, she was the first woman assigned to her specific station. When she arrived she also soon discovered that there was no place for her to change into her uniform.

So I get there and I’m like, “Where should I change?” [A male officer responded], “Well, the locker room is around the corner.” He tells me where to go and I see it says “Locker Room” and then old [the oldest officer there] was standing there and he says, you know [slang term for officer], or something, “Okay you can change in here. You’re working with me tonight, “ and he proceed to walk in this locker room which was about the size of a closet. There are like four or five lockers and you stood in front of your locker and that’s where your stuff was and you’re elbow to elbow. “All right, okay.” So I started changing my clothes. He whips off his pants, he was standing there in his briefs and we’re talking away. I didn’t bat an eye, he didn’t bat an eye and we went on to work together.

I got through the first test and then he locks the car doors and pulls up to a snow bank and he says, “You stay in the car.” He makes this traffic stop and he locks the car doors and I’m like, “No!” I rolled down the car window and I climbed out of the car window, he was still going up there he and looks up and I’m standing at the corner of the car and he was like [mouth opened in shock] so he comes back – you know finished up with the driver, he comes back, he’s putting his head down and I knew he’s laughing because it just didn’t rattle me. And then I climbed back through the window and he was like, “We’re going to write him a ticket for such and such,” he was down to business. Nothing was said about it.

What I thought was especially interesting about this story was that Harriet followed it up by saying that her veteran partner was never “vicious” and that they worked well together, even though he was at the very least hazing her. After she told me
that they worked well together Harriet told me that her partner told her, “I really don’t
want to work with you, you’re a woman, you’re not very big. I don’t think women
belong in police work.” She held her own though, telling him, “I respect that, my
grandpa doesn’t’ either.” Harriet, however was convinced that everything the men did
when she first arrived at the station “was done with the best intentions.”

Harriet continued changing with the men in the locker room until someone
eventually complained to the commander about it. He instructed Harriet that she would
have to change in the public restroom in the station, the restroom, which she told me was
disgusting because it was the only public bathroom in the station and therefore it was
used to obtain urine samples from the drunks that were arrested, “this bathroom was
disgusting, it was awful, there was pee all over.”

So every day I come in there and I’d change, I’d take my tennis shoes off and
you’re just wondering how you’re going to manage this, like standing on top of
my tennis shoes so I won’t step in the pee and then I’d change, you know? And I
was squeezed in there putting my uniform on and I’m looking good and I go out –
well I made a mistake of leaving a hanger on the outside of the locker. So I got
chastised for that, so I was written up for leaving a hanger on the outside.
Everybody leaves their hanger on the outside of the lockers, why should I have
left it there. [The commander told her], “Because a criminal could gather it, it
could be used as a weapon or as an escape too, the – pick the handcuffs system or
something.” It was a bunch of bull crap.

While she was working at this particular station, Harriet was accused of welding a
sergeant’s locker shut, of having marijuana in hers, and of putting a dead skunk in the
commander’s office. Harriet recognized that it was her male counterparts that did all of
these things, that resulted in her being investigated by internal affairs, yet she still
maintained that none of it was done out of “viciousness” but that is was “funny.” Much
like the experiences her partner put her through regarding the locker room and the snow
bank, I interpreted the way her officers treated her as hazing. Later in the interview she would refer back to this experiences and compare her co-workers to bullies and reminiscent of a “gang.”

Harriet’s experiences didn’t end here, however, in fact, they just got worse, and I should note that many of these events took place in her first year as a trooper. Later in her career Harriet would leave the department and work the conservation job she joined the department to get, but would return to policing and encounter one other major incident of harassment that I will detail in a forthcoming section on sexuality. Until then, Harriet told me about her one of her commanding officers who was stalking her

[He] was actually following me home and I heard from my neighbors that there had been a car that keeps driving by my house. They described the guy and I said, “That’s my sergeant, really weird.” A very weird guy. I went – there was one place to get your haircut, I went to get my haircut and my boyfriend at the time, he had relatives who lived in town and one of them cut hair. Well she overheard [the sergeant] bad mouthing me and you knowing unprofessional sexist comments and the things that he was going to do to me sexually.

During this time Harriet told me that another commander came to her and told her, “You got to get out of that [assignment]. I don’t know what’s going on over there but you know I’ve heard things in the community and just be careful.” Later you will learn of an incident that lead to Harriet being taken to a union meeting blindfolded, and having her job threatened because of her sexual orientation. Through it all though she still believed that the first group of officers she worked with at her first assignment in the first year being on the job good men. However, later she would tell me that in her second time around she would tell another female officer, “We’re not a part of the fraternity. You got to stop trying.”
Before exploring the impact that some of these women’s sexual orientation played in their careers as police officers, the next session will highlight the “patterns of practice” in policing that work to remind women that they don’t belong there. These hegemonic practices work to segregate the women in their occupation much like the other issues we’ve discussed such as the lack of women supervisors, the brotherhood, and the discrimination and harassment that these women have encountered. Following the suggestion of Corsianos (personal communication 2010) I asked these women about their uniforms, equipment belts, handguns, and their ballistic vests; the items that are the manifestation of the authority that police officers present to the public, but more important the items that are used to protect them if and when a dangerous situations arises.

Equipment

As mentioned earlier, the women who participated in this project had worked no less than 13 years on the job, and more than half (55 percent) of the women were currently working as detectives so they rarely if ever wore their uniforms and hadn’t done so in at least ten or more years. However, it was one of the detectives with twenty-eight years of experience who told me of what would be come to known as “the bruise.” When I asked them about their uniforms most of them said that while they were uncomfortable that they had no issue with them, and four of them told me that their departments have contracted with companies that make uniforms and equipment especially for women. However, five (25 percent) of the women told me stories about their uniforms and how the ill-fitting garb could result in injury.
I asked Bell if she had a uniform that was tailored to fit her body or if she had a male uniform, she told me in no uncertain terms,

There is no female uniform. They were all male but they say that they have female now. I don’t know if that’s true. But I had a blue mark bruise on my hip for years and years, 15 years, because of the rubbing on my hip from the belt just where the gun would rest on the edge. And the pants were so uncomfortable, but when I came to [her current department] everything was tailored for you.

This was also true for the ballistics vest and Bell told me that she didn’t have an issue with her handgun because,

I’m a big girl and I got big hands so I never had a problem with the revolvers. I do know that early on when we started switching over to the automatic – semi-automatic and a much larger gun the smaller women were having some trouble and they tried to start some sort of class action suit to say, “Hey, let’s five the females or the smaller people – police an option to go with a different gun.” And [her department] is very quasi-military, everybody has the same thing. So that was shut down.

Emma told me that even though some of the women have a harder time adjusting to the guns because of their typically smaller hands, that it was imperative that all of the officers male and female use the same weapon in case there is ever a situation where as an officer you may have to use another officer’s weapon, when they are uniform than there is no worry that you wouldn’t know how to use it in a potential dangerous situation where you don’t have time to think. There was one exception that she remembered, “a [female officer] her hand was so small and the trigger pull was so much. I know initially they had to modify her gun and the ultimately they ended up letting her carry a smaller gun if I remember correctly. And she was a rarity.” When recalling her own experiences with her gun you’ll notice a very specific similarity to Bell

I mean I remember with the females especially, I mean we would be purple-bruised all down here (points to her hip) and because of the way our vest sits with – you know because we got boobs obviously. I mean most of us it would pinch or jab right in there (on the side of her breasts, and under her chin/neck), and it was just horrendous, but luckily we’re getting away from those big, big shotguns and they went to smaller rifles and they’re lighter and easier for, you knew even us to use.
I asked her if they had also moved towards vests that were tailored especially for women as well.

We wear female vests; ours is a little bit molded now. Again, different from when I first got here. When we first got here we wore these things, it was like – I mean that was the best feeling at the end of the day was to take off that Velcro and be like, “Oh” (breathes a sigh of relief). You know it was just horrible. And especially like that time of the month was always horrible because you are tender (breasts) anyway. And it would just be god-awful freaking miserable. You know you couldn’t wait. The newer vests now are lighter and the – they’re molded for women. But even ironically, you know talking about uniforms, when we first got hired, our uniforms were all like – we wore men’s style uniforms. They were terrible because the hips are cut different.

And actually just this year (18th year on the job), our department anyway, they switched to a different supplier and we actually for the first time every, they’re ordering women’s uniforms – sizes for women. You know I mean the actual – I mean it was so disheartening when you go get a pair of pants and it’s like, “What size pants do you need?” “Ah, 36” because you are in men’s sizes. It’s like, “oh this sucks” you know? But not it’s actually women uniforms and they are just – I mean it’s ridiculous but they’re to die for. I mean it was like they’re so comfortable finally to get a uniform that is made for a female.

She told me that it was “like you’re an afterthought” The little things that stick with the women, the intricate differences that we don’t often think about but that impact the overall moral of the women. When Coretta was talking to me about the uniforms she sounded completely dejected about them, very melancholy.

When I got my uniforms and stuff, they’re men’s clothes. So it’s king of – they offered to tailor then for me and, you know, I was just paying out of my own money. I was like, “I think it’s okay” you know? I know more about the stuff now, but like, you know, if you buy a men’s shirt and you’re a female that the collar is going to be too big, you know what I mean? So I mean in that way it’s like I don’t know if whether they had women’s pants or not. I’m not really sure. They might have. I should say that, but you know, the shirts had been for all men. I’m trying to think what else.
It was here that I asked about the vests

The first vest I got like - because they custom order a vest for you, do your measurements and order it. It takes a while to come in, so like the first - they gave me one to wear because, you know, they don’t want to send you out without anything. It was a regular men’s; it was a recycled one. It was better than nothing, you know. So I wore it.

There’s a lot of equipment in my opinion. Like we have - our department we have - you know equipment wise we’re probably one of the top in the country with what we have, but at the same time they want to get all the specialty stuff, and I don’t know if it’s available in women’s or they just don’t get it in women’s or it’s a combination of both, but the more specialized our equipment – like we have these – what are they called? They’re like padding for like riot duty – you put then on over your clothes and it’s kind of like – kind of what a catcher [in baseball] would wear. Well they’re like, “What size do you need?” And I’m like, “I need a small short.” They’re like, “Oh we don’t have short, and we don’t have small either.” I’m like, “Well I guess I’ll take a medium.”

Coretta pointed out that when you are wearing protective gear anything that doesn’t fit you exactly is going to be an officer safety issue because the bulkier the gear the easier it is to be injured because inevitably there are parts of your body that aren’t being protected. I asked her if she ever had any issues with her gun or her belt or both and she told me

I have a dark-colored bruise on my hip from where my gun sits, but it doesn’t hurt. It’s just more of a discomfort, but like if you work like an inside job for a while where you don’t put your uniform on every day then you put your uniform on, it hurts.

Linda also told me about the bruise from her gun that had built up a permanent “callous” on her hip and both Roseanne and Coretta told me that because of their size they are unable to fit as many items on the equipment belt, both of them opting to remove their flashlight. Patricia told me
Physically hated the uniform. I don’t like the uniform. I don’t like how it fit. When females first came on, when I first came on, we were still wearing men sized clothing, and I don’t know any female that is not shorter in the torso than most men so when I sit down in my vest and my vest goes up here [point to chin/neck] my chin is right here on my vest [imagine covering her entire chin up to your mouth with the neck of a t-shirt] it just didn’t fit. Up until this year (23rd year on the job) I didn’t have a pair of pants that were women’s sizes. This is the first year I’ve had patrol pants that are actually made for a female.

When I asked her if they have vests that are contoured for women now Patricia told me

I’m thinking [they started making them] in ’95 to fit more for the women, but what they basically did was they took the same amount of material and just squished it up in the middle so then you’re exposed on your belly (I can attest to this as this is exactly what happened when I wore mine on my third ride-a-long). So it was almost like they didn’t know what to do with them. They’re better now but they’re still not very comfortable no matter how you put them.

Even your belt, when you’re wearing your belt like as a female, when I wear my belt and I got to pull my gun out, my arm is way up here [near her breast] by the time I get the gun out because of my torso size. My belt hangs on me. And then the men’s pants, I always wear a pair of like a legging tight or something underneath it because otherwise, the crotch hangs down below about that far [4 to 6 inches] and you just rub and you get broken out and everything else. It’s just not comfortable.

I asked her if she and the rest of her department use the same handgun and if that was a problem for her

Yes, and it definitely is for me. My hand is extremely small and I had to figure out other ways to do it because even right now I can’t decock my weapon with my regular hand. I have to shift it and then decock it. And it’s harder, I can’t even fit my hand all the way around it. So there other thing you have to figure out how you’re going to do when it comes to doing certain things.

Providing women officers with uniforms that fit them properly and don’t hurt them is an afterthought in many departments, even departments like Coretta’s that has the
most advanced equipment was either unable or unwilling to provide her with protective gear that fit properly. The ill-fitting uniforms and the vests that are used to help save an officer’s life serve as reminders that they don’t belong; and the bruises and rashes that develop because of their uniforms serve as physical manifestations of their role as outsider. By not providing these women with the equipment to do their jobs just as effectively as their male counterparts the organization structure of policing is producing an environment that breeds occupational segregation for this women based on their gender.

Another way that at least 35 percent (7 out of 20) of the women in the organizational structure of policing impacted the officers was related to their sexual orientation where these women faced covert discrimination and harassment segregated them beyond merely their status as women. These experiences will be chronicled in the final section of this chapter.

Sexuality

Returning to the Harriet’s story she told me that when she started as a police officer she identified as heterosexual, dating men and eventually even marrying a man. However, she later came out as a lesbian but this happened long after to begin to experience harassment based on her perceived sexual orientation. When Harriet told her veteran partner that she was planning on getting married he told her, “You’re not getting married” and when she asked him why he told her in no uncertain terms, “Because you’re a lesbian.” This statement upset Harriet because she didn’t want people to think that this was gay based on the rules in the department at the time as homosexual activity was
considered, “lewd and lascivious” behavior, plus at the time she didn’t consider herself as a lesbian. She then went on to tell me that in one of the instruction manuals it indicated that arson was indicative of lesbianism and it there was ever an arson investigation than a possible suspect would be a lesbian. At the time, I thought this was peculiar for two reasons, one that this was actually written in a training manual and that Harriet told me about it in the first place. Later on in the interview her need to tell me this was revealed. Recall that Harriet’s sergeant was stalking her and while in town he was announcing to people in the barbershop all of the things that he wanted to do to her sexually, well when he found out that Harriet had spent the weekend camping with a male officer at another station the sergeant used the events that occurred that day as a way to target Harriet in what I saw as the ultimate revenge for her not showing interest a romantic interest in him.

This one guy says, “Do you want to go camping on such and such weekend?” And I was kind of seeing him but really we weren’t.” Yeah, so we were going camping together and we didn’t have the same weekends off. They didn’t know that – because you only get one weekend off a month. “Well we’re going on a camping trip, let’s go to [location] state park.” We’re up at the nature center, and we’re there – my dog was back at the camper and we had built a small fire that day just to boil some water for coffee and we put out the fire with two – gallon mild jugs of water and stirred it around. Well, this was the fall and there’s lots of leaves on the ground. We go to the nature center and it’s locked – it was closed, so we’re feeding the ducks in the channel and then we smell smoke, we hear sirens; there was only two people camped on the campground, or two camps being – to some people on the other side of the camp and we’re like, “That smoke in coming like where we’re camping. Shit, do you think we put the fire out? Oh my God.” So we ran back and as we’re running we hear, “Boom! Boom! Boom! Boom! Boom!” because our guns are in the car. Well his gun was in the car, I had mine on me. We got back and his car was totaled it was on fire. I had put my duffle bag in the trunk it had my fatigue hat and my ID and my shield in there. He was like, “Fuck! I lied to them to get the weekend off. I told them I was helping my brother move. Oh my God my gun is in the car” I was like, “Oh fuck! So is my hat, my freaking fatigue hat.” And what you have to do is sign for every item you have and then if you need something new you have to make a special request.
He says, "You can’t tell them that I was here. We can’t tell them." And I’m like, 
"Oh my God, you’re going to lose your job. You lied." Because the one thing 
you don’t do is lie.
So we get a ride from the other people in the park back to [the city she lived] and 
so I jumped in my truck. My big blue and silver Chevy 4x4, high-rise truck with 
two exhausts, but no I’m not a lesbian (Laughter). So I dropped him off and he 
says, "I was told to stay away from you." I’m like, "what do you mean, who told 
you to stay away from me?" So we left it at that and I never heard from him 
again.

Harriet then went about trying to get her hate, ID, and shield replaced and 
although she told her male companion that she wasn’t going to lie for him, because once 
again, the one thing you don’t do is lie, when she was questioned about the incident she 
didn’t tell them who she was with, she merely said that she was camping with a friend, 
that there was a fire and in the fire she lost her items. What she didn’t expect was that the 

male officer she was with ended up telling his commanding officer everything that 
happened including that he was with Harriet.

Remember all of this is taking place in Harriet’s first year as an officer. She had 
been harassed and hazed by her sergeant and fellow officers and she was warned by 
another officer to get out of her assignment because he was fearful that something would 
happen to her there. This same person eventually told her to be sure that she wasn’t alone 
with that sergeant at anytime. Now, she has the camping fiasco to deal with and even 
though she didn’t lie she did commit an act of omission by not informing the sergeant 
who was with her at the time, something that probably never would have impacted her, if 
the male officer didn’t implicate her, but he did and after he did the sergeant, the same 
man who had been stalking her called her into his office

So he assumes the position behind his desk and he says, "I need you to sit down 
and close the door." And I’m like, "I’m scared." And I said, "I can hear with my
ears standing up sire. I’m not sitting down and I’m not closing the door. There’s no one here with us.” So [another sergeant] comes in and says, “He is investigating this fire and your ID.”

Harriet went on to tell me that she was the one who ended up being investigated, but nothing happened to the male officer. Also, by this time, the sergeant who was harassing and stalking her had heard the rumor that she was a lesbian, but keep in mind that Harriet had yet to identify as a lesbian yet. Harriet didn’t understand how the incident could have warranted an investigation as nothing illegal happened and the only one who blatantly lied was the male officer who worked in an assignment in another station.

[The criminal investigation] was a bunch of bullshit. I wasn’t told that there was a criminal investigation going on, it was supposed to be an administrative investigation, that we wanted to know personally after he had already gone from the [other] sergeant to the lieutenant to the captain to human resources. Well what he did was open it up to investigate the lesbian for an arson. I swear to God, swear to god, that’s how he opened it..

Harriet was suspended for three days but there were no long term effects of the investigation, at least not on her professional record. Later on in her career after Harriet came out as a lesbian she had an eight year relationship with another female officer. During this time her partner put Harriet’s children from her first marriage as dependents on her insurance (at the time Harriet was going through the academy for a second time), she was granted permission to do this and later on she told Harriet that they were both being investigated for insurance fraud because someone in the department reported them. Harriet told me that the stress of the litigation eventually broke them up.
While interviewing this women, it came to my attention that three of them belonged to a group created by lesbian and gay officers. One of the officers, Linda, told me that she asked her commanding officer if she could wear her uniform for the annual gay pride parade in a neighboring city, she justified her request by nothing that a male officer wore his uniform to a neighborhood activity while he was officially off duty just a few weeks before. It was departmental protocol to get permission to wear our uniform if you were technically off-duty at the time. Her commanding officer denied her request.

Coretta and Judith both involved in the same organization had put up fliers in their break rooms to advertise the next meeting and every time they did they were taken down. In Coretta’s department she would find them discarded in the garbage but in Judith’s department they would be ripped to shred and left on the floor or countertops as a reminder. She told me that she just kept putting them back up, but that it was like an endless war between her and whoever continued to take them down. Much like Harriet, Audre came out later in life and after she had been in a relationship with a man for several years. She referred to her sexual orientation as an “alternative lifestyle”

When I first got hired in I was with the same person for years, the same guy, and that was accepted. And realizing when I was about 28 years of age that he and I are going to get married because I have this inner thing I had to check out, which I did. And once that was found out it really – things started to go downhill. But I was very professional about it. It was never an issue with me, but is certainly was an issue with them [her other officers].

And there was a time that, I’ll give you a great example of the behaviors and attitudes. I was involved with the use of force instruction team for my department. There was myself and I was with four other guys. And we went down to Ohio for a – it’s an International Association of Law Enforcement Firearms Instructors, and I thought it would be a great idea if we all went together. We get a van, we drive down there, we build camaraderie as a team. So I asked my significant other if she wanted to go. . . “Great we’ll go down and we’ll shoot rifles.”
So I said, “Well, since we are all going is it okay if [her partner] goes? They all said, “yeah no problem. It’s not a big deal.” So we all jumped in the van and we – the sergeant there, he says, “Why don’t we get a smoker for the road?” So, “What do you mean a smoker?” “A porno movie.” I told him I didn’t think that was a good idea.

Audre went on to tell me that later that night the male officers were having a party in their room that was next door to her and her partner’s hotel room. The party included the officers, one of them being this same sergeant who wanted to bring a pornographic movie on the trip, banging on Audre and her partner’s door, windows, and running up and down the halls. The story about the evening got back to another member of their department, a higher-ranking officer and when the sergeant found out about this he was angry.

So he pulls me aside in the middle of shotgun training and wants to dress me down in front of everyone. He then tried to do the same thing to [her partner] and she says, “Go fuck yourself! I don’t work for you but I feel bad for her [Audre] because she has to.” So it was a quiet drive back home.

And he said – this was a Friday, he says, “I’ll get with you on Monday.” Okay Monday come around – he puts me in the office with all the other instructors and tells me about myself and everybody took their turns... so not only did he tell me what a piece of shit I was in front of everybody else, he’s looking for an apology so I said, “If you’re looking for an apology you’re not going to get one.” Someone else then said, “you’re pretty uppity and you’re this and you’re that” and then the sergeant said, “And as far as you uppity bitch girlfriend is concerned...” I had heard enough, one lieutenant came to my defense and said that he needed to leave her out of it, but every since then the sergeant did everything he could to sabotage me.

Three of the twelve women who identified as heterosexual made a point to tell me that they didn’t want to be viewed as “dykes” that just because they are working in a male dominated job it didn’t mean that they wanted to be like men and they certainly
didn’t want to be perceived as lesbians. Monica, who identified as a lesbian told me that the first two questions the male officers ask when a woman starts on the job is, “is she tapable or is she a lesbian?” None of the women who identified as lesbians gave me any indication that they had support in their departments with the possible exception of Monica who works with two other out lesbians and works in a very liberal-minded area and station. It appeared to me that these women were the most segregated of all of the women who participated in the project because they experienced all of the same discrimination as the other women, but they had an extra “target” on their back.

Summary

This chapter focused on the ways in which the women officers in the project felt as if they didn’t belong in policing. Several topics were covered such as the status of women working in the field including job availability, assignments and promotions. Also discussed was the brotherhood of policing that seeks to keep women officers on the margins, and in turn the response to the brotherhood, a sisterhood that some of the women developed with each other. While some of the women believed that there is a movement towards integration of male and female officers, still the bulk of the women interviewed believed that a brotherhood exists and that a sisterhood is just as important.

Other topics covered in this chapter that focused on the organizational structure of policing were the harassment that the women faced, in particular two of the women, Bell and Harriet and the confrontations from their male counterparts that were both threatening and dangerous. Looking into the equipment that every officer needs and how the lack of proper fitting and tailored equipment for women also highlights the potential
danger that these women face on the job that is often overlooked. Ignoring the women’s need for properly functioning equipment seeks to segregate them further on the job. Finally, Harriet’s story was chronicled at the end of this chapter when I explored the experiences of the women officers who identified as lesbians and how the events that they have encountered on the job seek to further marginalize them.

In the next chapter I will detail my experiences as I observed women officers at work on ride-a-longs and general observations of women detectives on the job. What I learned that these women were just as unique in their approach to policing as their interviews were. Although there were many commonalities between them, each of them approached their job in their own way, helping to give me further insight into the lives of women officers.
CHAPTER VII

RIDE-A-LONGS AND OBSERVATIONS

Department One

Observation One

This chapter will detail my experiences as an observer in two different police departments on five different occasions, riding a long and observing women officers on the job. Department One, a large agency located in a metropolitan area was the site of two of the five observations. I rode along with two women officers, two different times several months apart. Department One works one officer per squad car, but what’s several cars in specific zones in order for officers to back each other up on calls that necessitate a partner and/or back-up. Department Two was also a large agency located in an urban area. The final three observations took place at this location in the same station. This department rode two officers per car, in my observation, one officer was a woman and her partner was male. During my observations at Department Two I was able to observe two woman detective sergeants as well, these observations also are considered ride-a-longs based on the myriad different tasks and assignments that go along with riding a long with an officer. In both of the departments the duties of the officers included patrol, investigations, arresting suspects, interviewing victims, taking reports, writing and filing reports, collecting evidence, writing tickets, going to the local jail/lock-up, and interacting with citizens.
I took very brief field notes while observing the officers, but did not take them in the presence of the officers. Instead I carried my Blackberry cellular phone with me and when on breaks in the station houses I would write brief descriptives in the memo section of the phone. I also too my Sony digital audio recorder with me and left it in my car while the on the observations. Upon the end of the shit I would get in my car, drive to the closest coffee house, buy a coffee, return to my car and sit in the parking lot recording my observations and field notes from the day. As soon as returning home, I transcribed the interviews for accuracy.

I contacted the sergeant of Department One via an email address that I found on the police department's website asking him about conducting a ride-a-long with a female officer. He responded letting me know that it wouldn't be a problem and told me to report to the station to meet with the lieutenant and sign the liability waiver for the ride-a-long. Please note that I am not including specific dates or contact people in order to protect the confidentiality of the officer I was directly assigned to and the other officers on patrol. Certainly, there is a public record of my being at this particular department, not once but twice, but because of the nature of this project and because I ensured the confidentiality of the women who interviewed with me, I have chosen not to use the names, locations, or any identifying information for the ride-a-longs.

When I arrived at the station the lieutenant actually had not been notified that I was doing a ride-a-long with a female officer, in fact, he had no idea I was even scheduled to be there. I informed him of the sergeant I had spoken to and the information that we exchanged and the lieutenant quickly cleared up the confusion and assigned me to
a woman officer who had 11 years on the job, but it wasn’t until later in the day when the officer told me this.

The station was quite large, the largest police station that I have ever encountered, yet there were hardly any officers or any other kind of foot traffic in the building. The sergeant had me sign a liability waiver in case I was injured or killed. The sergeant then told me that I could have a seat in the briefing room. As I walked into the room I saw several chairs set up in a semi-circle with a desk facing them that had three chairs behind it and several sheets of paper on top of it. There was a big screen television on the wall and the sergeant said, “Let me turn the TV on for you while you wait.” An old familiar theme song filled the room as ESPN’s Sportscenter came on the screen. It seemed that seconds after the music came on officers began entering the room with their cups of coffee in hand. Each of the male officers who entered would walk up to the main table and grab a piece of paper; some of them were carrying small black boxes. I noticed that each box had a number on it, but I had no idea what these boxes contained.

Approximately twenty minutes later the first female officer entered the room, unbeknownst to me at the time, this would be the woman I was paired with for the day. The male officers were joking with each other about another male officer who had just gone through taser training as they chided him about his experience he laughed and said, “my ass his still sore.” When the officer I was assigned to, I’ll call her Sandra, came in one of the male officer’s greeted her by calling her “girlscout.” She didn’t respond, simply picked up a sheet of paper from the table and a black box.

After ten more minutes had passed the room was full of officers, 14 white (or who appeared to be white) males and 4 white (again, in appearance) females. One of the four
women wore fatigues and was assigned to the K-9 unit. At the head table sat one other female who was the lieutenant and the male sergeant who assisted me. He in turn called the briefing to order, took role, and noted who had cameras by the officers calling off the numbers on their boxes. Yes, it turned out that the black boxes all held digital cameras in case they needed to take pictures of a crime scene and/or victim.

With the briefing complete, Sandra greeted me and we walked out to her assigned car for the day. I remember sitting in the front seat as she put her bag and camera in the trunk just taking everything in around me; the computer, the radio, the fact that there was an assault rifle stationed directly behind me and to my left, so close that my arm was touching it. I was a little uncomfortable knowing that a gun with that much power was as close to me as it was, it didn’t make me feel safe or protected in any way, it bothered me. Surprisingly though, after a few hours in the car, I had completely forgotten it was there. Once Sandra got in the driver’s seat, checked in on the radio and fastened her safety belt, we were off. . .to get coffee.

After coffee, we traveled to a secondary station that works primarily as the detective bureau, we stopped off her so that she could check her email since she had been off for a few days. While we were there I came into very brief contact with other officers, all but one of them appeared to be detectives, all wearing plain clothes and breezing by us as if we weren’t there, with the exception of the occasional head nod. The other officer who was there was a male officer who seemed to have a good relationship with Sandra, they both sat at computers talking about other cases, suspects, and citizens and made plans for lunch later at Subway.
Once we got back on the road, Sandra asked me about my interest in police officers and I told her that it began when I was an undergraduate at Eastern Michigan University. I told her that I was specifically interested in women police officers because there are so few of them working the job and that the first time I researched the subject I did a content analysis of women police officers on television. She said that she remembered TV shows like Cagney and Lacey but that she didn’t like to watch shows about cops because they were usually inaccurate. This conversation was interrupted by the a ding coming from the in-car computer instructing us that to go to a local plasma bank where there was a disturbance – this would be our first call of the 12 hour shift.

Upon arriving to the plasma bank I assumed that I was going to be sitting in the car while she performed her tasks, remember, I had never done this before and didn’t really know what to expect. As she put the car in park in front of the building I was reminded what happens when we assume as she instructed me to follow her. When she told me this, I instantly became anxious and concerned because I didn’t know what to expect, all I knew was that there was apparently someone in the building who was causing a disturbance. Another officer, the same male officer who was at the station, pulled up as we began to walk in, he jumped out of his car and immediately took the lead as we walked through the doors. Sandra and I followed behind him. I thought it was interesting that we had arrived on the scene before him, yet here we were now following him into the building. A younger woman who appeared to be a nurse met us in the lobby and instructed us to come into the backroom. She told us that the man had already left and the situation had ended without injury or any real cause for concern. The male officer didn’t ask any questions and he didn’t write down any notes, but Sandra did.
Even though the disturbance had ended and in all actuality wasn’t much of a disturbance at all, Sandra asked the woman if she knew who the donor was, if he had been there before, and if she had kicked him off of the premises. The nurse responded, “yes” to all of her questions and Sandra took down her information as well as a description of the donor, she also promised the nurse that she would return to the center later in the day to check back in with her and make sure everything was okay (which she never did). Back in the car we went and head out to a local apartment complex.

On the way to the complex Sandra told me that there hadn’t been a call or a report of any activity at the apartments but that they were in a “bad part of town” and that she made an effort to do a “drive through” at least one time per shift so that they would see the police presence in the area. I asked her if she thought it help and she told me that it was her way of working with the community, that she didn’t have the time in her day and that the department didn’t have enough officers to actually spend the time working with the people who lived in her zone to be too effective but that she did what she could do. She then told me that the other community job that she was actually assigned to so was to patrol a local elementary school to make sure that the traffic in the area was kept to a minimum and that there weren’t people “flying through” the school zone. She told me that we were actually headed in that direction and if we were lucky we might be able to write some tickets. At this point, even though I had only gone on one call with her, I found the language she used interesting – the point she made in referring to her and I as a “we.” This continued throughout the entire shift, which made me feel like I was working with her instead of merely observing what she was doing. Throughout the day as we
went on calls, I had to remind myself to avoid getting involved with any of the suspects or victims, however, in one call of the day, I wasn’t able to avoid it.

The second call of the day was to a suspected CSC – criminal sexual conduct – rape. When the computer in the vehicle dinged, I looked at the screen to read where we were going and what kind of call it was. I found it helpful that I could see for myself what we were about to experience before she even told me, it helped me prepare myself for what was to come. What was interesting about this call, was that it originally went out to another officer, who then radioed Sandra and asked if she could take it instead. The voice over the radio was distinctly male. She agreed and off we went. I asked her if that was something that happened often, male officers deferring CSC calls to women and in no uncertain terms she told me yes, in fact I remember her exact words being, “it happens all the time.”

When we pulled up to the house I observed that the fire department was already there meaning that paramedics had also been called and where already in the house with the victim. The exterior of the house was not well kept, the grass was overgrown, there was debris on the front lawn, Sandra said, “well let’s go see what we have here, this should be interesting.” What I found interesting was that Sandra didn’t talk much, but when she did, it was usually in short sentences and either discouraging or sarcastic. As an observer having her speak in such a way made it easy for me to remember and jot down in my phone later, but as a citizen I was a little put off by her demeanor. Cigarette smoke billowed from the open front door as we approached the front door, which was open. Sandra walked into the home and I stood in the doorway, no one asked who I was
or what I was doing there. The paramedics were talking to the victim and Sandra let them complete their own line of questioning before she began hers.

I have read about the way women who have been the victim of rape have been treated, I know what victim-blaming is, but this was the first time I had every witnessed it first hand. The paramedic was asking the victim what she had to drink the night before, the night she had been raped, she told him she hadn’t had anything to drink. He then asked her what drugs she had taken to which she responded, “weed.” The paramedic then questioned her as to how that could have been the only drug she did since she had claimed that she had passed out. She told him, through her tears as she was curled up on her couch, knees to her chest, covered in a blanket, that she only smoked some of a joint and that she has never passed out from smoking marijuana before and that is why she thinks she was drugged. I felt so bad for this young girl who at the time I assumed from looking at her, was no more than a teenager, the paramedic then said, “so do you want to go to the hospital or what?” This question really stuck with me, as I write this I can still hear him saying it, it took every thing I had not to make a comment and/or walk away because I was so angry and disgusted with the way this man was treating her. I was also shocked that Sandra let him continue with his line of questioning without stepping in and taking over the investigation. She told the paramedic that she did want to go to the hospital and once she said this Sandra told her that we would follow her to the hospital and that we would take her statement there.

We walked back to the car, Sandra said nothing about the victim but did mention how much she hated going into homes like that one and that she hated the smell of cigarettes. She also mentioned that the paramedic was probably “pissed” that he had to
transport her to the hospital instead of us taking her. As we made our way to the hospital I asked Sandra what I should do when we arrived. She told me that I should come with her and watch her take the victim’s statement and that it would be fine. When we arrived at the hospital Sandra opened the trunk and said that she hoped she had an evidence bag so we wouldn’t have to go back to the station, she did, it was simply a medium-sized brown paper bag, exactly like one you would put groceries in, and we walked into the emergency room doors. I was extremely nervous at this point because of the way the victim had been treated but also because I felt like I was invading her privacy, I didn’t know if I should be there or not, but after the way I saw the paramedic treat her and observed complete silence from Sandra at the scene I thought it was imperative that I see how Sandra treated the victim and if the victim had no objections to me being there I decided I would stay.

The nurse took us into a small private waiting room where the victim was sitting on a sofa, she was wearing a hospital gown and hospital robe. I sat down in a chair closest to the door and Sandra sat down next to the victim. With pen and pad in hand, Sandra asked the victim to tell her everything that she remembered from the night before. Before she began to retell the events she looked at me and I nodded, Sandra then asked her, “this is my ride-a-long for the day, is it okay if she is in here?” The victim said “sure” and began to tell her story. Sandra listened intently while the victim told her that she met up with a man she knew the night before, that he had come over to her friends house and that she went out and sat with him in his car, she described the make and model of the car but said that it was too dark for her to be sure of the color, it was either red, black, or blue. She went on to say that she had only known this man for a few days
and only knew him by his street name (nickname) but that she had his phone number in her phone at home. She told Sandra his street name and recalled that when she sat in the car he gave her the joint and they began to smoke it. She said that she had taken two or three hits and that was the last thing she remembered until she woke up on her friends front lawn with her pants down by her ankles, but that was all she could remember. Sandra asked her to call home and get the number and the victim did. However, the first time she called there was no answer.

At this time the nurse came in and asked Sandra to come with her to collect the victims clothing, I got up to go with them but Sandra instructed me to stay in the room. I sat there, very uncomfortable but as much as I wanted to leave I couldn’t. I felt like this woman had been through so much and that me getting up and leaving would just be someone else who acted as if she didn’t care about what happened to her the night before or what she was going through now. So I just sat there with her in silence. Moments later the victim called her house again in a second attempt to get the assailants phone number and this time someone answered. As she was being given the number she started to look around for a pen and a piece of paper and I did the same, yet there was nothing in the room to write with, I opened the door to look for Sandra and she was no where to be found either, so I took out my phone and typed in the number in the memo feature of the phone as she told it to me. When she hung up the phone I assured her that I would give the officer the number. What seemed like an hour passed, but in reality it was only about five minutes, Sandra returned with the evidence bag filled with the victims clothing she asked her what her friends name and address was and told her that she was going to
secure the evidence and then go talk to her friend. While we were in the room, in the victim's presence I told her that I had the assailant's phone number.

Sandra and I left and went back to the car where she thanked me for taking the number. She then told me that we were going to head back to the station so she could enter the evidence and check on any information about the assailant. When we arrived back I gave her the number and observed her on the computer looking up his alias, to no avail. She asked me for the number and wrote it down in her notepad, but she didn't do any computer searches for the number, which I thought, was odd. I asked if she could do a search for the number and she told me she would try to later. She then told me to wait there and that she would be back in a few minutes. I didn't ask her what she was doing, so I waited there, then walked the halls looking at some of the old pictures on the walls of academy classes passed, seeking out the women in the old black and white photos, most of them had the title, "secretary" underneath her picture and name.

When she returned she went back on the computer and I went to the restroom to jot done memos from the event in my phone so that I could remember the events later on when I recorded my day and then transcribed the notes, even though there was little doubt that I would forget. Soon after I returned from the restroom we were on the road again. This call and the time back at the station easily took an hour and half out of the day, so I figured that if we were heading back on the road we probably wouldn't return to the station right away. I asked her if she thought we would return soon and she said that we could go back anytime I wanted, she took this inquiry to mean that if I had to use the restroom again, but I didn't and told her I was just curious. She said that she had to take a lot of bathroom breaks and that she would have to go back around lunch time to pump.
because she had recently had a baby, her second daughter with her husband who was also an officer and had another child from his former marriage. This was the most she revealed about her personal life during the shift. As I mentioned, she wasn’t very talkative, but she was kind to me.

The rest of the shift was uneventful, in fact it was quite boring with three exceptions. The first was a call we went on to an abandoned house where some of the neighbors suspected an armed man was hiding. Four officers showed up to this call, including another woman officer who was working with the K-9 unit. Sandra instructed me to stay in the car while she and a male officer went around to the back of the house and the K-9 officer and a male officer went to the front door. I couldn’t see what Sandra and her partner were doing but I could see the two officers at the front, they entered and exited fairly quickly as they realized the house was empty. The second exciting moment was when we had to “go lights and sirens” and entered into high speeds in order to respond as backup to other officers dealing with a man with a knife. However, the excitement was brief as it ended before we got there. Finally, we eventually returned to the CSC victim’s neighborhood to interview her friend.

Sandra and I walked up to the friend’s front door where she met us and came outside to talk to us. Again, I just stood there, saying nothing. The friend told us the same thing the victim did in the hospital, they were hanging out she called the assailant he showed up in his car and she went out to meet him. It was late at night and the friend ended up falling asleep. When she woke up her friend was at her front door crying and visibly upset and said that the man had drugged her and raped her. What was interesting was that the friend kept saying that she didn’t want to get involved in the situation
because her husband would be angry that she was hanging out with the victim because
the victim "smokes" (marijuana) and he didn’t like the victims friends. She said that she
didn’t know why the victim had called the assailant in the first place because “she hardly
knows him.”

During the conversation, Sandra took notes but didn’t ask any questions other
than asking the victims friend to tell her what happened. At the end of the interview, the
friend simply stated that beyond what she told Sandra she just didn’t know what really
happened. Sandra responded, "well if she’s lying we’ll figure it out.” This was another
example of victim-blaming, but at the same time I wondered if Sandra felt this way solely
because of this case or if it was because of all of the cases she had worked before this
one. When we got back to the car I asked her in no uncertain terms if she thought the
victim was lying, her words to me were, “everyone is lying to me, you’re lying to me
until I prove that you’re not.” I thought this viewpoint was telling, it wasn’t because of
this case, it was because of every other case she has ever worked and every other person
she has come into contact as a police officer. I couldn’t help but remember the
characteristics of police officers that is discussed in virtually every introduction to law
enforcement or policing textbook, that police officers share common characteristics and
among those are distrust and suspicion (Walker & Katz, 2004; Van Maanen, 2006;
Manning, 2006).

After this brief conversation we met up with the male officer at Subway for lunch.
What I witnessed here was interesting in two ways. First, Sandra further showed her
distrust and suspicion of others when she told me that cops eat where they can see their
food being made so that no one taints it. Secondly, she stepped out of the character she
had showed me thus far when she pulled a bunch of stickers of police badges from her back pocket and handed them out to all of the little kids who were in the restaurant. They thanked her and stared at her as she ate her lunch, and all the while she kept smiling and waving at them. It was during this time that the male officer also referred to her as girl scout so I took this opportunity to ask her about it, but before she could answer the male officer chimed in and said, “because she does stuff like that, all the stickers and shit.” At that, she just laughed and told him to “shut up” that not everyone could “be a hardass like you.” He simply responded with a “whatever” and then changed the subject asking her about the CSC. He came right out and asked, “so is that CSC bullshit or what?” I was shocked to hear her tell him that she wasn’t sure yet and that it could go either way, especially after what she told the victims friend and what she told me about her distrust of others.

The shift was close to coming to a close and we had only gone on a total of three calls, in all honesty we spent the majority of the shift at the secondary station house where I walked around the halls and she spent time on the computer. The lack of interaction with other officers and the public made for a day that didn’t produce any real depth of data. Although it did allow for me to have a better understand of the instruments that the most patrol officers use throughout their day, like the computer, the car itself, the camera, and the database that allows them to search for offenders or people with arrest records.

There was little interaction between Sandra and the other officers with the exception of the briefing before all of the officers went on the rode. While there was some representations of gender in the meeting by the time the women officers entered the
most of the conversation between the troops had ended with the exception of the
one male officer calling Sandra a girlscout and the male sergeant running the meeting
even though the lieutenant and presumably the person in charge was a woman. The only
other things that I took note of in the observation was that it was Sandra who took notes
on the one call we went to where there was another officer there, the male officer who
arrived after we did but walked into the plasma center as if to take the lead although
ultimately he didn’t and that it was Sandra the female officer who took the time out of her
day to interact with the children at the restaurant even while she was eating her meal and
despite the comment made by the officer that essentially made fun of her because of her
time with the kids.

There are certain things that I knew I would have to take into account going into
this and all of the observations, that policing is a closed occupation where outsiders are
not readily accepted. Most of the time it felt like they didn’t even know I was there, in
the briefing room, at the secondary station house, and at lunch; even the few citizens I
came into contact with didn’t seem to take notice, except for one glance from the CSC
victim and even then she didn’t care that I was present during her interview, if she did,
she certainly didn’t tell me or Sandra. Ultimately, there just wasn’t enough activity that
could allow me to make a more detailed observation about the way in which she worked
the job other than the brief accounts that I have already mentioned. These items both fit
within the gendered expectations of women in general, specifically her time with the kids
at the restaurant and fit within the general expectations of police officers, male or female
regarding her distrust and suspicion of others.
Observation Two

The second observation in Department One was done after one of the women I interviewed invited me to ride-a-long with her. She was just coming off of an undercover assignment and returning to patrol duty after a year. She told me her biggest fear was that she wasn’t going to fit into the uniform. Upon entering the department for the second time, the first thing I looked for was whether or not any of the officers were there from the first visit. Since several months had passed and since she was transitioning back to patrol I was confident that this would be a new rotation, and it was.

When I got to the department I stood outside the locked doors until she saw me there and opened the doors for me. She escorted me in and announced that I was there to do a ride-a-long with her for the day, unlike the first observation these officers went into a supply room to get their cameras. I was standing outside the room when Judith told me to “come on in” and “check the place out.” There were four other officers in the room, three male and one female and once again Judith announced to them that I was doing a ride-a-long with her, the other female officer looked at me and sarcastically commented, “good luck” and we all laughed. In the briefing this time around there were also 14 officers, but unlike the first observation, half of these officers were women, including to lieutenants at the front table. The briefing room had not changed from the first observation and was set up exactly the same, the only difference was that the television was not on during the second observation.

Just as I did with the first observation I signed a liability form and after the role call we headed out to her car. I felt that this observation would be at the very least more comfortable than the first one I went on, perhaps because I had already met Judith, but I
also felt as though the group of officers working this rotation were a closer unit than the
one before. They seemed to get along better, they were laughing in the supply room, and
Judith specifically always had a smile on her face, which was also true in the interview,
quite frankly she was very personable. This light-heartedness continued when we got in
the car as she had only been back on the road for a few days she was having difficulty
figuring out the computer. She must have turned it on and off five times before she
finally said that we might have to get another car because she couldn’t figure out why the
computer wasn’t allowing her to sign in. However, after two more tries it finally accepted
her passwords and we were ready to go . . . get coffee.

When we pulled into the coffee house she mentioned that she had to park in the
back because it was against department policy to have more than two cars at one location
at a time during a break. I didn’t know what she meant because I could only see on other
squad car in the parking lot, but soon after we ordered our coffees and sat down two other
women officers joined us. I was happy about this because I thought it would be a great
opportunity to spend time with these women at one location. The topic of conversation
turned to vacation plans that they were all making together, to travel to one of the
woman’s cabins and spend the weekend together with their kids. After they made the
plans they began talking about one of the woman’s children’s birthday party the week
before when one of the woman challenged a male officer who had gone to the party to a
race, in which she won. The conversations I observed spoke to the “sisterhood” that
some of the women in the interview commented on, I remember thinking that it does
exist, while at the same time taking interest in the story about the party and the race
against the male officer. Clearly there was some level of integration between the male
and female officers but still a level of competition among them, of course this could have just been an individual rivalry. The last topic of conversation was on another shift's tendency towards laziness, all of the officer they mentioned appeared to be men as they did use first names and one of them specifically said, "those boys are so lazy."

One of the women left before we did because she got a call, but soon after we were called to a home for a possibly break-in. This time around I assumed that I would be getting out of the car and going closely observing each call as I did on the previous observation. Judith told me on the way there that I should expect that her and I would be getting lost several times during the day because she didn’t know the area very well. Luckily on this call we followed the other officer there from the coffee shop. When we arrived there was another car there as well, operated by an African American male. Judith and I walked around the perimeter of the house but soon realized that the owner was there and he had no idea why they were called out. The officers didn’t question him about anything, but simply stated that they wanted to make sure everything was as it should be.

Our next call took us to vandalism at a local barbershop, nothing much to speak of here, we entered the shop, Judith took down the owner’s information and we headed to the station to write the report. While we were there she told me that she had some photos to show me of a crime scene that the detective were investigating. Apparently a local man who was no stranger to the police had recently been found dead in his home after having been there for several days. She told me that he was one of the first people she asked about when she went back on the rode, so when she was informed that he had been found dead, she took an interest in what happened to him. After calling several
detectives on her cell phone she finally got a hold of someone who had access to both the autopsy and the crime scene photos that were saved on a CD. The detective instructed her to get the CD from his desk, which she did. By this time one of the other female police officers that we had coffee with was also at the secondary station house and we decided to view the photos together.

I had no idea what I was in for. The pictures were grotesque to say the least, beginning with the pictures of the deceased’s body in the morgue, discolored, naked, and bloated. Then we viewed the actual crime scene photos where his body was discovered. The home was a mess, it appeared that he was a hoarder as there was garbage from one end of the room to the other. There he laid in the middle of what I assume was his living room; he had several electrical cords wrapped around his body, specifically his neck and his penis; he was naked. Judith actually commented once the photos began to load, “why are they always naked?” It was sarcastic and funny in a moment that was uncomfortable for all three of us, so (un) naturally we were all barreled over in laughter.

With the pictures viewed Judith and I head out on the rode once more, this time she told me that she wouldn’t be writing any tickets today because she had little knowledge of how to work the computer in the car other than taking her calls. She also told me that they also have a way to write reports in the car but that she didn’t want to have to deal with it if she didn’t have to. I felt bad for her; that she was thrown back into patrol without the training she needed to do her job effectively and even though she made jokes about it, I sensed that she was nervous that she might have to write a ticket and that everyone involved would have to wait for her to figure out the system. We wouldn’t have to worry about that though, not until the last call of the day, that is.
Our third call was to a domestic disturbance, a call that I fully expected to stay in the car for, but Judith instructed me to come with her. We arrived at the home meeting two other units there who were already in the house. When we entered, the male officers were talking to the husband, so Judith and I walked over to the wife who was in her bathrobe playing with her son who appeared to be about three years old. The woman’s mother was in the kitchen, but walked out to smoke a cigarette on the front porch, we soon realized that it was her, the mother, who had made the call. This was an interesting call, the wife introduced herself to all of us there, shaking our hands, and asking our names, she was young, and appeared to be in some sort of a daze. Judith decided to take the wife and her son outside and talk to her as the male officers stayed in the home and spoke with the husband. We soon found out that the wife had just been realized from a mental institution and that her mother had called the police to come there the night before, but no one had showed up (later Judith would blame this on the laziness of that particular shift once again).

The wife kept repeating that they were “working it out and getting their family back together” but her mother told us, insisted in fact, that her son-in-law had poisoned her daughter and committed her so that he could take custody of their son. She essentially told us that he wanted to kill her daughter. However, because her daughter was no longer under medical care, was of age, and didn’t want to press charges, also because there was no sign of any physical harm to any of the parties involved they officers couldn’t do anything. The male officers came out from the house and told Judith that they thought the wife was “nuts” and that there wasn’t anything going on there. They went to their cars and left. Judith on the other hand stayed and talked to the mother
for several minutes instructing her what to do the next time something happened and if she called the police and they didn’t show up that she should go and lock herself in her car or leave the scene immediately. When we got into the car, Judith asked, “what do you think?” I really didn’t know how to respond to that question, first I wasn’t expecting it, and secondly I honestly had no clue how to protect the people involved when there was nothing that the officers could legally do. Judith said, “I guarantee we’ll be back to this house.”

This call was foreshadowing for the rest of the day as the next two runs we went on were domestic violence calls. Both of them involved younger couples, one with no children and the other with several children and the woman was currently pregnant at the time. When we pulled up to the first call the victim was standing on the curb of her apartment, she was visibly shaken, her neck was bright red from having been choked by her boyfriend and she was in a panic because she had to get to a job interview. She later told us that she was just at this particular apartment because she had to come to a place to get ready and her friend let her use her place, currently the victim was sleeping at a homeless shelter. Judith took the camera out of the trunk and took pictures of the victim’s neck and we then went up into the apartment that was in the upstairs of a home. As we walked up the narrow steps I tried not to touch anything just in case there was ever the need to dust for fingerprints. Judith took the camera with her and took pictures of the bathroom, the location of the assault. Although the boyfriend had fled the scene moments later another officer apprehended him. That officer (a white male) and us took off to the jail to put him in the system.
I have been to two jails in my life, one to visit a friend and the second time was on a jail tour while in college. While they were preparing the suspect for intake, I sat behind bulletproof glass in what I would describe as a control room, filled with computers, telephones, and monitors. On the monitors I was able to view every inmate in the jail. In a room that was adjacent to the control room were more computers were located, this is where Judith wrote the report. This entire process took about an hour to an hour and half mostly because while Judith was writing the report an officer brought in a female who was out of control, kicking, screaming at the top of her lungs, crying hysterically, trying to drop to the floor, demanding medication that no one knew about, so Judith went back out to intake in order to help the other officers, I followed her back into the control room and watched the scene unfold.

After in-taking the prisoners and writing the report, Judith told me that she wanted to drive through the old neighborhood she used to work in, as we drove around the area she went past a community center that was setting up for what appeared to be a block party, she instantly got excited and told me that these were "her people" and hasn't seen them in over a year. So we pulled up and she got on the overhead speakers and started joking with all of them, "hey you, yeah you, put that sign down!" "Where's your mother?" "Aren't you wanted?" When they recognized it was her the entire group of them, at least ten people, called out her name and literally came running to the car with their arms outstretched, she got out and hugged every one of them and introduced me.

We didn't get to enjoy the company very long before we were called to another domestic. This one was involving a woman who was pregnant and her boyfriend and father of the unborn baby. When we got to the house another officer had already arrived,
he had already taken the boyfriend into custody and had him in the backseat of his squad car. Judith and I went into the house where the victim was crying. She told us that she went to make a phone call and he pushed her down, when she got up he “slammed” her to the floor again, hurting her back and ribs. What was interesting in this case was that it was actually the boyfriend who called 911 and claimed that he was the one who was who was the victim. Just like all of them citizens we encountered this woman had no problem with me being there and observing the situation, not even when she removed her shirt to show Judith where she was injured. Judith of course documented the scene and the injuries just as she had at the other domestic.

When we walked outside the male officer was telling the boyfriend that “this is what happens, you’re just gonna have to deal with it.” So, back to the jail we went. The same process took place, me in the control room, Judith and the male officer processing monitoring the prisoner being processed, and then the computer room to write the report. In the middle of writing it, Judith stopped and said, “I want to hear the tape.” So she asked me if I, too, wanted to hear it and of course I said yes. So we got in the elevator to go to the dispatchers area. On the way down two women entered the elevator with us, and Judith later told me that one of the woman was the chief of police.

It seemed like everywhere we went, everyone knew who Judith was. When we walked into the dispatch area, it was like Norm walking into Cheers, “Judith!” She stopped and talked to all of them, most of them women. I would say that there were a total of 20 people in the room, some dispatchers some administrative assistants, and all of them were women with the exception of two male dispatchers. She walked right up to the lead dispatcher and asked to hear the tape of the call. She escorted us into the room
with the dispatcher who took the call. We all listened to it and Judith asked the dispatcher what he thought was actually going on. He told us that he thought the boyfriend was lying to cover for himself because he had a record, which the boyfriend admitted to on the call. In the background of the call we could clearly hear the victim crying and asking for help and saying that she was going to press charges this time. It was hard to listen to, but as soon as the tape ended Judith looked at me and once again asked, “what do you think?” and I told her, “I think we got the right guy.” “Me too” she said, and continued by telling me that she felt good about the arrest.

Judith took me on a quick tour of the jail, wrote the report and we went to lunch with another officer who Judith used to work undercover with. While at lunch they talked about a case they were working before they went back on the rode and Judith mentioned that she was going to make sure that she was going to see the case through until the end regardless of being assigned to patrol. It’s important to note that neither one of them was reassigned as a punishment, but that they do rotating shifts nor assignments and it just so happened that they were rotating out of the undercover assignment.

After lunch we returned to the main station so that Judith could pick up some paperwork and from there we just patrolled the neighborhood until we ran into another officer who had just arrested a prostitute. Apparently while she was in the back seat of the cruiser she was telling the officer that she had or could get information for them as if that meant that she wouldn’t go to jail. Judith and I pulled up and as Judith searched her purse, finding several prescription pills, Judith asked me to look them up on the internet on my phone because her computer wasn’t working. The pills turned out to be for schizophrenia and the woman was told they were speed. Judith then told her that she
didn’t even know what she was buying and that for all we know those could have killed her. The male officer sat in his cruiser and didn’t interject while Judith talked to the woman and asked her who she knew and what information she could provide. I won’t include the specifics of the conversation because it involved an ongoing investigation.

At the end of the day I felt like after having spent 12 plus hours with Judith, I felt like I got to know who she was and in doing so, in discovering what her personality was, that is what told me what kind of police officer she was. Certainly, I didn’t observe any of the male officers we came into contact with spending one second more than they had to with the citizens, while Judith spent most the investigations speaking with the men and women we came into contact with, with intent. I felt like she had to talk to them, that it wasn’t something she was forcing herself to do or that she felt it was a requirement, I felt like she wanted to talk to them and in doing so, that is was makes her an exceptional officer.

Sure, policing had hardened her to some degree, this was especially prudent when we were looking at the pictures of the man who had died. I was trying to mask my utter disgust at what I was viewing and she was making jokes, jokes that I laughed at to break up the discomfort of what we were both viewing. But in the end what I realized was that if I ever need a cop, Judith would be the kind of cop I would hope to encounter. I also realized that there was indeed a sisterhood to policing as I viewed her interactions with the other women officers and I knew that they needed each other, but that in general all of the officers, male and female alike that I encountered that day worked together as a unit.
Department Two

Observation Three

Observation three consisted of an 8-hour shift with a male and female officer, the male officer had been on the job for 21 years and the female officer for 16 years. As I was introduced to them I was quickly instructed that I needed to wear a bullet proof vest and that they would find one that fit me. After some time they returned with the vest of another female officer who was off duty that day. I went into the bathroom, put it on, and looked at myself in the mirror hoping that I was wearing it correctly. When I walked out on of the officer who I had interviewed for this project and who had set up the ride-a-long for the day checked to see if the Velcro was fastened correctly, she adjusted the straps and told me, “you’re ready to do, have fun out there.”

Department Two was located in a highly populated urban area and because of my knowledge of the area I assumed that I was in for an exciting day, once again another lesson to remind me that I shouldn’t assume. The building itself appeared old, maybe built in the 1960s, and it appeared to the a former school house as well, this was probably the only similar thing between Department One and Department Two, beyond the friendliness of the officers in general. I didn’t participate in a role call, but I observed on later, it took place outside with all of the officers standing in a line being told to “be careful out there.” We walked to their patrol car and I was told to slide into the backseat and there was literally three inches of legroom because of the location of the divider from the front and back seat. This was an uncomfortable ride for me so I squeezed my legs into the room available so that I wouldn’t have to slide in and out of the car on the stops as it too more time to do that than to get out the more traditional way.
The male officer drove and the women officer rode shotgun. I was unable to get a good view of the front of the car and it was very difficult for me to hear anything the officers were talking about because of the bullet proof glass and also because the windows were down. The male officer drove around their assigned zones and began entering and exiting local gas station and convenience store parking lots, he later told me that we were doing that because it was near the first of the month and people would be cashing checks, events that often led to people being robbed once they left the store they were in. While we drove I observed the female officer playing solitaire on her cell phone, something she did the entire shift.

As we drove past citizens I was often greeted with obscene gestures and “fuck you’s” to which the officers said nothing. I couldn’t be completely sure that those comments were being addressed specifically to me or to us, or to the image of the police in general. We had been in the car for approximately an hour before the male officer pulled someone over and wrote them a ticket for expired license plate tags. As he discussed the situation with the driver the female officer, Kim, and I stood behind the passenger side of the car, her hand was on her gun the entire time. After the traffic violation we pulled into a gas station where the male officer ticketed a homeless, mentally ill man for loitering. I remembered asking myself, “what’s the point?” but I didn’t say anything to the officers other than asking them how much the ticket was for. One hundred dollars. It seemed like a joke to me and I was irritated by their decision but I kept my opinion to myself.

Hours dragged on as we continued driving in and out of the gas stations and convenience stores, unfortunately this was what 90 percent of the day consisted of. We
finally took a call to a breaking and entering of an elderly couple. I walked around the perimeter of the house with the female officer where we found a window that had been left open and decided that this was the only place the suspects could have entered. When we walked into the home, it had been ransacked and the couple was missing collectible coins, several shot guns and their car had been stolen out of the garage along with several lawnmowers and tools. Beyond the gendered construction of the man driving, this was the first time where I observed a real division of labor based on gender. As the male officer literally stood in the living saying nothing, it was Kim who spoke to the couple and a sister of the wife. It was Kim who went room to room and wrote down everything that was missing. It was Kim who comforted the couple. It was Kim who called in the make and model of the stolen car, on her cell phone, no less because their radio equipment wasn’t working.

Protocol required us to return to the station in order to write the report. When we got there, the three of us walked into a small room lined with what appeared to be an old wooden pew from a church on one side and three computers on the next. The male officer told me to have a seat and he sat down next to me and Kim sat and wrote the report. While we were there several other male officers came in and out of the room laughing and cracking jokes with each other. No one said a word to Kim. Perhaps this was because she was working, but none of them said hello. The male officer introduced me to everyone that walked in and then proceeded to have an impromptu muscle flexing competition with another officer, asking me to judge the winner. I awarded the prize to the officer I wasn’t riding with, to which he responded, “bad decision Carrie, you forget who you was riding with?” We then sat back on the pew and I asked if Kim writes all the
reports she merely said, "yeah" and he went on to tell me that he always drives and Kim writes all the reports because "guys can't type." Now, he may have been kidding, but I believe he was completely serious.

With the report taken we went back on the road, stopping only one more time during the shift to another suspected burglary, yet no one was in the house when we arrived. We hadn’t been on the road more than 45 minutes when we returned to the station to eat lunch. We once again sat in the computer room where Kim wrote the report and the male officer lost the muscle man competition. I sat on the pew, he went to the restroom and Kim went to go heat up her lunch in the microwave. I didn’t eat. Kim returned and gave the male officer his lunch and began eating hers. She had made his lunch! I asked if he was always so lucky to have his lunch made for him and he said that more often than not she does bring him lunch.

Kim talked to me about the recipe of the soup she made, the officer I had interviewed came by and asked how things were going, but beyond that no other conversation took place. We were at the station for about 30 to 40 minutes and then we went back on the road, patrolling for the rest of the shift. In fact we returned to the station with about a half an hour left in the shift because the car had to be gassed up and cleaned before the next shift came on. All in all, it was an uneventful day, however, I was able to observe several stereotypical gender roles being fulfilled such as the male officer’s comment about how “guys can’t type” and therefore Kim always wrote the reports to Kim making lunch for her partner, to the flex-off that the male officers conducted in front of me. I also think that many of these things could be defined as someone just goofing off or being kind enough to make someone lunch, but the way in
which these actions fit into those gendered characteristics so often discussed in policing did not escape me.

Both of the officers seemed completely disinterested in what they were doing. The only time that I sensed any kind of interest in their job was when Kim was taking care of the breaking and entering scene where the burglary took place. Again, this was an example of gender role stereotypes as she was the one comforting the victims. During the time in the house, I began to smell something burning and when I pointed out that it was the toaster oven the male officer said, “well turn it off then.” I thought it was funny that he assumed I knew how to work a toaster oven, but it took me several minutes to figure it out. Several minutes where the bread that was in the oven continued to burn as he watched me struggle trying to find how to turn it off.

Observation Four

My fourth observation took place with one of the women that I interviewed and was also located in Department Two. Catharine had worked the rode for most of her 15-year career but after nearly dying a year earlier in a high-speed chase she was promoted to detective sergeant and transferred to the current location. Essentially her job required her to run investigations and interrogations and oversee five members of a tactical team that worked high profile undercover cases. This unit had their own nickname and wore clothing with it embroidered on the front and back. Throughout the course of the day (I was with Catharine for 12 hours) I had met all of her team and their uniforms, Catharine wore a hate, another wore a jacket, another a polo shirt, yet another with a jacket, another hate, and finally a t-shirt.
Catharine took me around the station and introduced me to everyone, in the course of the 12 hours I estimated that I met 25 people and out of those 25, 5 of them were women. All of them were uniformed officers with the exception of Catharine and a homicide inspector. When Catharine took me into meet her commanding officer she told him that I was researching women officers and he began to go on and on about the importance of women working in the field and what an asset they are. I wasn’t sure if he was telling me this because he felt he had to or because he believed it. But either way he was kind and told me that if needed anything while I was there to see him.

The entire day with Catharine was spent investigating one case, a case that would readily identify the department, location, and potentially the other officers I met, recall that they are undercover. I will say that the case was a murder investigation and I knew who was going to get arrested days before the arrest actually took place. This was exemplary of the amount of information that was discussed around me that was completely confidential. I had no and still have no desire to reveal all of the details that I learned about this case, or know about another high profile case that I was told about on two different occasions no less, but I was shocked that they had no issue talking about these things around me, or carrying on conversations with me about details that I should not have know.

While I can’t and won’t go into detail about my time with Catharine observing every moment of the investigation develop and plan for arrest revealed was exciting, but it also was the biggest example of a women officer working outside of her gender stereotype. It was Catharine that was running the show, she was the one who was instructed her officers what they should be doing and where they should be looking for
the suspect. She did so, not with an iron fist or as a supervisor but as one of them, an officer who had gained so much experience working on the streets. She clearly didn’t ask the men to do anything that she hasn’t done or wouldn’t do.

She told them the area he was most likely hiding based on her past encounters with him in that area, she mapped out exactly where he would be and how the officer should approach the scene to be sure that they apprehended him. When she sent them out to do reconnaissance for the eventual take-down she took that time to work on tracking the number of burglaries in the her zone, locations, dates, and possible suspects, but as I mentioned the majority of the day was dedicated to the one murder investigation. I was reminded of her absolute love of police work when she reminded me that even though she came so close to dying just a year before and it took her the entire year to recover from the accident that the only thing that would stop her from being a police officer is if when in fact she does die. She laughed when she said she’d be working until she can’t work anymore, sitting in an officer somewhere helping the “good guys.”

Observation Five

My final observation in Department Two and fifth and final observation as a whole was the most disappointing of the five observations mostly because very little information was obtained from the 8 hours I spent there. Again, Catharine set up the observation time for me just as she did for the ride-a-long (where I did have to sign a liability waiver, “this just says you won’t sue us if you get shot”) but I didn’t have to sign waivers for the two days I spent in the department. Catharine escorted me around the department again introducing me to the people again, from my previous observation the
employees were the same with the exception of one undercover officer I met you asked me if I wanted to be a police officer. I told him that I wouldn’t be able to pass an agility test even if I did and he announced to me that “you can do anything you put your mind to, look at Catharine!” This comment about Catharine’s recover was further evidence that she was respected in her unit.

Catherine took me down to meet with the homicide inspector who I was going to be observing for the day, she was on the phone and motioned for me to sit down. And in that chair is where I stayed for nearly one hour, it was exactly 53 minutes. She came out and apologized for the wait but that she was working a big case and she wasn’t sure if or when she would be able to “get with me” for the day. So she took me to the desk sergeant and told him whom I was and that I would be walking around the station and that it was okay. So I spent one hour waiting, another three hours wandering around and the final four hours back in Catharine’s office discussing cases that she had worked in the past. All of which she had taken the lead on.

During the three hours of wandering and observing I was disappointed to find little to report on. The male officers at the desk were loud and spent the entire time joking with each other and laughing until a citizen would walk in. When that happened, five times that I observed, the officer who sat at the door, who was female, greeted them and made sure that they went through the metal detector. She then instructed them to go over to the desk sergeant or to leave. Three citizens of the five were instructed to the desk and the other two of the five appeared to be instructed to leave.

What was interesting is that earlier in the day I had observed this same female officer wearing civilian clothes and working for the commanding officer as what
appeared to be an administrative assistant. I wanted to ask her about this but I didn’t have the opportunity. At one point in the observation one of the male officers asked me to come outside so I could meet the station’s pet cat. Just outside the backdoor of the station there were bowls of water and food and just about the friendliest cat I’ve ever met who never stopped meowing, “this is our cat” the officer told me, “his name is Lucky.” He then began to ask me if I liked cats and where I was from and what brought me there for the day. Quite honestly while I didn’t have any issue answering his questions, I was uncomfortable with the officer and decided to go back in. The feeling of unease cannot be explained in any real, tangible sense, but was just a feeling.

I was disappointed in this observation, not only because the inspector was too busy to fulfill her promise but because during the three house of observation before Catharine called be back into her office, there wasn’t anything to report on. The desk was facing some stairs leading to what appeared to be a basement and when I attempted to go down then the desk sergeant yelled at me and said, “you only wanna go down there if you wanna go to jail.” I later found out from Catharine that he wasn’t tell me I was going to get arrested, but joking because it was a holding area and he didn’t want me to go down there. All in all the last observation was, as I said eight hours long, but it felt like sixteen.

Summary

I wanted to conduct these ride-a-longs and observations because I thought that having some experience with woman officers would help me to understand them better and gain a better understanding of what it meant to be a women police officer. What I
observed the most was either women breaking down stereotypes such as Catharine in her leadership role, or women whose actions supported the gender stereotypes we’ve come to believe both societally speaking and in policing such as Kim.

Of the five observations I observed the most from the first two, but what has to be considered it that the calls and experiences of a ride-a-long and an observation will only be as detailed as the day itself, especially in situations such as these. Also, while Judith was very personable and talkative, Sandra was more reserved. This was also true for Kim. While the first ride-a-long with Sandra was revealing because of the interactions with the rape victim such as the observation of the paramedic and the interview of the victim that Sandra conducted later followed by the interview of her friend were revealing more so regarding policing as a whole rather than Sandra specifically. Judith’s interactions and interest in her clients, the citizens of living inside and outside of her zone exemplified her policing style which was more community oriented based and her personality which was also person-focused.

In retrospect conducting more ride-a-longs and observations in several other departments or spending more than one shift with the officers would have been beneficial to the study. As mentioned, these observations were done as a method to supplement the interviews, yet the study would have benefited with more time observing the women or observing more women in other departments. Even still, the observations yielded important results that further highlighted the way in which women officers are perceived on the job.

The observations also reflected the experiences of the women who were interviewed for this project as well as echoed the previous research on women police
officers, and police officers in general. For instance, Sandra’s suspicious and distrust of the people she came into contact with is a direct reflection of the socialization model of policing that states officers are socialized into acting a certain way based on the experiences that they have on the job. Further, her patience and friendliness when it came to the children she gave stickers to at lunch draws attention to gender role stereotypes that women officers face, so much so that her male co-workers called her “girlscout.”

Judith’s style was all across the spectrum on policing strategy. She used her verbal skills with the victims of the calls we went, she was a constant presence in the community and loved by those community members, and she was a talented officer who could turn an informant in minutes flat. Of all the ride-a-longs and observations I went on and the officers I spent time with Judith was the shining example, to me, of what a successful officer looked like. By working her job from all avenues and angles she could she presented herself and confident and even when she wasn’t, she laughed it off, rather than taking it too seriously and increasing a problem.

In general, the number of ride-a-longs and observations should have been increased in order to gain a deeper understanding of on the job experiences of officers and of course, women officers specifically. The lack of actual time with the women and/or the lack or actual calls to go to or cases to explore was a weakness of the study, yet the point of doing the observations was supplemental from the onset, however, it would have been stronger and brought greater depth to the study if the number would have increased.
CHAPTER VIII
DISCUSSION

In this final chapter I will discuss the theories used in explicating the research and the results from the interviews. This chapter will also address implications of this study and I will analyze the findings from the results of the interviews. Finally, the limitations and contributions of this study will be discussed, addressing issues regarding validity, reliability and generalizability. The results as a whole are supported by the previous research on women in policing, however three themes emerged that allow for further exploration, namely the importance the women placed on agility, the experiences of lesbian officers, and how all of the findings taken together result in occupational segregation.

It is impossible to answer all of the questions and reveal every experience the women encountered, but the categories that were included in this project were selected based on the recurrence of the themes and the impact that these themes had on the women. For instance, regarding lesbian officers, even though less than half of the women experienced harassment based on their sexuality the impact on them was intense and therefore important to report on, especially because of the sparse amount of research on the topic. Also bear in mind that even the women who didn’t identify as lesbians mentioned the negative effect that being perceived as such had on them.
Summary of the Research

The purpose of this study was to create a forum for women police officers to have their voices heard; to have the outlet to express their personal experiences of working as police officers without having to encounter any backlash, hence the importance of keeping their identities and their departments confidential. Further, the purpose of this project was to add to and build on the existing literature on women police officers, primarily, topics such as the construction of gender and the organizational structure of policing. The experiences of the women are what informs the study and the literature as a whole, addressing possible explanations as to why the percentage of women police officers remains so low. As researchers we can hypothesize how women police officers are treated based on the aforementioned variables, but it is their personal knowledge of their unique occupation that will allow for us to have a deeper understanding of the occupation as a whole, and the women as both individuals and as a marginalized group. Finally, this project seeks to understand if there is a difference in the ways women and men police officers perform their duties and if differences do exist, then to contextualize the nature of how those differences impact women both personally and professionally.

In order to conduct this study and to better understand these women’s experiences the data was collected using semi-structured, in-depth interviews with twenty women currently working as police officers. In addition to the interviews, I conducted five observations of women police officers on the job. Three of the observations were ride-a-longs and two of the observations were with women detectives and patrol officers working at their station houses in their department. All of the interviews were conducted in person and recorded for accuracy; the shortest interview was just over forty-five
minutes and the longest interview lasted over three hours. I gained access to these women through two established relationships to women officers and in turn the rest of the officers were recruited through a word-of-mouth snowball sampling technique (Reinharz, 1992; Creswell, 2003; Weston, 2004). I developed a list of interview questions and began each interview with the same question, “when did you decide to become a police officer” or some variation of the wording.

The interviews were primarily guided by the participants, however the conversations did follow a sequence-of-events style from their decision to become officers to their experiences in the academy, beyond this the interviews covered a variety of topics including gender perceptions, the organizational structure, their equipment, on-the-job experiences, and their personal relationships to name a few topics. Both the interviews and observations were approached using qualitative methods couched within feminist paradigms of standpoint theory and postmodern feminism as well as phenomenology. The interview guide, informed consent for the participants, and the call for participants can be viewed in the Appendices section.

Most of the women in the study were white, lived in the suburbs, were heterosexual, married with children, worked as detectives in large departments, and had more than fifteen years of on the job experience. The most common themes that emerged from the findings were experiences of discrimination or harassment on the job and in turn how those experiences left the women feeling isolated, marginalized, or as I have defined it, segregated on the job. The way in which the women described their experiences based on the organizational structure of policing lead to what I view as forms of occupational segregation, such as feelings of being outsiders and being ignored when it came to
ensuring that the women were properly fitted with the tools they need to successfully perform their duties.

The observations were conducted in two different departments on five separate occasions. I wanted to observe the women on the job so that I would have a better understanding of what police officers did on a daily basis beyond what I have seen in the media and have read in the literature. For the most part each of the observations gave me some insight into policing and into women police officers specifically. However, in retrospect I would have liked to have gathered more information from them because they were inconsistent. Although the inconsistency should be expected especially because there is no way to predetermine what kind of calls the women would be going to or cases the women would be working on at the time. In short, more observations should have been conducted.

Theoretical Development and Analysis

The results of this study spoke directly to the gendered characteristics assumed in policing, the organizational structure and all of its components. These topics were most salient with the women, telling me about events that resulted in feelings of inadequacy based on these factors. In general, the women also commented that they had to work harder than male officers in order to prove that they could perform the duties of police officers. The factors that contribute to the organizational structure of policing go beyond the hierarchical chain of command, and include the styles of policing that are commonly implemented, the specialized assignments, the devaluing of characteristics that are commonly found in women, the brotherhood of policing that seeks to keep women on the
margins, and the overall discrimination and harassment that the women in this study experienced. While it is important to note all of the implications associated with these feelings, I believe that when taken together they all result in occupational segregation.

Chapter IV: Becoming a Police Officer

Addressing what influenced the women to enter into policing was important because my goal was to give these women a voice and privilege their experiences as officers through their personal narratives. Also because these women’s stories fuel this project, introducing them as they made their decision to become officers is relevant.

Next, in discovering how these women entered the occupation, it was important to include their first steps in the academy because for some of the women this is where they first felt that they were treated differently. For instance, Gloria noted that she instantly felt disliked when she entered the academy and Bell recalled that when she entered the academy she was the “token” female in her class. Simone also felt the stings of tokenism as one of the only African American women in her academy class where there were no women of color working as training officers. As Grube-Farrell (2002) has indicated, occupational segregation remains constant in uniformed professions such as fire fighting and policing and that tokenism is still prevalent in these occupations and in other uniformed occupations such as the military because of the exclusion of women in these fields (Firestone, 1992).

Most of the women were influenced or encouraged to become police officers from male police officers who they had some personal relationship with, such as friends or neighbors. The other factors that the women told me influenced them to become police
officers were family members, their college classes, or their desire to help people. The women told me that they believed that male officers and women officers joined the force for different reasons, primarily the differences in opinions on what being a police officer was all about. For instance many of the women told me that men become police officers because they want to “kick ass” or because there was a general feeling of machismo that came along with policing. Two of the women mentioned the media’s influence on these perceptions; the topic of the media, more specifically, television shows that depicted police officers came up three more times in the interview, however, the bulk of the information was not significant enough to include as an influential factor. Three of the women simply stated that they don’t watch anything that portrays police officers because they (the shows) usually get it wrong and two of the women made jokes about the 1970s cop show, Policewoman. In general, it is important to note that the women became police officers primarily because of a desire to help people, even if they didn’t explicitly state that as a reason for initially becoming a police officer they mentioned the importance of helping others in their interviews.

The desire to help people speaks directly to the concept of policing being a profession that is social work oriented rather than supporting the idea that policing is physically demanding and dangerous job requiring brute strength. When approaching policing as a helping profession the value should be placed on intervention and prevention rather than the traditional policing styles that we have come to associate with successful police work. However, when the women enter into the academy, they soon realize that it is the physical training that takes precedence and it is here where they are most likely to have their first encounters with being tested physically.
The officers are evaluated in several categories including running, obstacle courses, driving, shooting, fighting, defensive tactics, shooting, use of equipment, and in some cases, swimming and diving. None of the women mentioned any value being placed on using verbal skills as a method of deescalation in the field. Further, while the women made note of the physical requirements in the academy all of them discussed driving, defensive tactics, gun and subsequently shooting practice, but none of them discussed using pepper spray, tasers, or batons. Ignoring the importance of communication skills from the genesis of one’s policing career implicitly devalues its importance in the field. So while Lonsway (2003) has argued that if physical requirements were eliminated or changed, the percentage of women police officers would increase, and Garcia (2003) has indicated that the majority of police work is sedentary in nature and utilizes far more social work characteristics than it does physical activity, the policing occupation itself does not agree. Further, Corsianos (2009) suggests that policing should recognize the value of the tools that the officers have with them such as their pepper spray, batons, and tasers, and Wells and Alt (2005:105) also indicated that “verbal skills and equipment that officers now have at their disposal can be utilized in place of physical strength by both men and women to control a difficult situation.”

What is of interest here is that the women in this study all told me that communication skills are of utter importance in the field and that when used correctly verbal skills are invaluable in deescalating potentially dangerous situations. This supports Garcia’s (2003) findings about there being “difference” between women and men officers, but moreover, it reveals that even though women are taught to value physical strength, they do not maintain these values once they become full-fledged
officers, choosing to use communication to control various situations. This is an important finding because it calls into question just how influential the academy is on the cadets. Additionally, the women told me that even though they think being able to talk to a suspect is more powerful than using physical strength, they still valued the instruments on the job and their ability to handle a situation physically. What this says is that while male officers, at least the male officers these women told me about, focus their attention primarily on the physical, women gauge their success on both skill sets, which I believe is evidence of their greater success on the job.

Chapter V: Construction of Gender

Characteristics of women and men are debated within the literature because of how those characteristics are viewed in policing, simply stated, masculinity is valued over femininity on the job (Miller, 1999; Darien, 2002; Garcia, 2003; Rabe-Hemp, 2008). Gender roles relate to these characteristics because gender is something that we are constantly performing both personally and professionally (Butler, 1990; Barak et al., 2007). In turn, the perceptions of these gender roles and characteristics are amplified in the world of policing because it is such a male dominated profession.

All of the women in the study discussed the perceptions of women police officers and their ability to do the job. These ideas began to unfold during their time in the academy, but were discussed in much greater detail regarding their time as full-fledged officers. As mentioned in chapter four, while the women focused on their experiences in the academy and the training they received, it wasn’t until later in the interviews that they discussed specifics about their feelings of having to prove themselves on the job. The
women’s story reflected existing gendered expectations but it was their ability to step outside of those preconceived constructions of gender that were particularly noteworthy. Having the ability to control a situation physically was a necessary for these women to be accepted by the male officers with whom they worked. This provides further support of the literature on what defines being a successful officer.

However, the women also told me that being involved in a physical altercation could also have detrimental effects on women officers, if they were unable to take control, which further separates the officers by sex and gender roles. In fact Darien (2002) has indicated that these worries have an anxiety producing effect on male officers. However, we often fail to recognize that merely because women officers are quick to use their verbal skills on the job this does not mean that they lack the ability to use physical force when it is required (Rabe-Hemp, 2008). In fact, the women highlighted several instances where they did utilize their training, their tools, and their physical agility in order to perform their job.

The women pointed out the necessity to use whatever skills they had to handle a situation and that they rather avoid a physical altercation because they were aware of the size and strength limitations, however, they also made note that smaller men on the job have the same viewpoints. This is something that we often forget when we are clumping all women and men into categories that are based on societal assumptions regarding gender and physical characteristics. What was prevalent was that women were viewed as nurturer caregivers or not viewed as officers at all, but as Catharine stated, as someone’s “mother, sister, or wife.” What these women indicated through their narratives is that in order to be successful they had to be all things to everyone, the other officers, the
citizens, and even the suspects they arrested. They served as therapists when their male partners would unload on them about their personal lives, including their relationships with their wives; enforcers when they pulled their guns and fired, or came to the aid of their male partners in a physical fight taking ultimate control of the situation; nurturers when they had to be the voice of comfort and reassurance when a male partner wavered on his decision making in a volatile situation, and as mothers when a male sergeant thought that taking the lead on an investigation was too dangerous for a mother, because to this sergeant, mothers were more important than fathers.

These feelings speak directly to the view that male officers and society in general have about police officers, that it is acceptable for men to maintain their roles as police officers twenty-four hours a day, but for women officers it is expected that they will remove their uniforms both literally and figuratively when needed and assume their other roles and responsibilities as those mothers, sisters, and wives. (Darien, 2002).

What this chapter revealed was the impact that gender roles continue to have on women police officers, while at the same time dispelling the myths that women are more successful police officers because of their verbal skills only. The training that the police officers receive in the academy was essential to these women when verbal skills were not enough. In direct opposition to suggestions from Lonsway (2003) regarding agility testing, Audre, as an instructor, was adamant about the need for women officers to be able to defend and protect themselves and their partners using physical strength and their training. Although she commented that communication was vital, her argument was that this doesn’t always work, is not always successful, and if you don’t have the training or tools to get physical or use your equipment than people will get hurt. Her opinion is
important because it highlights the importance of the tools that officers have and supports previous findings about the importance of these tools (Wells & Alt, 2005; Corsianos, 2009). Also, it reminds us that while police work may not always be dangerous, the potential for danger is always there and because of that police officers must be willing and able to use physicality.

The findings in this chapter are noteworthy because they value approaches to policing that have often been divided based on constructions of gender. For example, men excel in policing by using their physical strength and women excel in policing because they use their verbal skills. These approaches also spoke to the styles of policing frequently used, commonly reactive instead of proactive in nature and because of the interest in paramilitary tactical units exclusive to male officers. In fact, out of the women interviewed only one had spent any time in a tactical unit, where she proved successful in her performance. Again, these constructions of gender begin when the officers enter the academy, but because of the status of recruits and cadets in the academy the women told me that there was much more integration between the women and men at that level then there was once on the street working as officers.

What the literature has shown us and what the women in this study related to me is that the reactive, traditional style of policing (Alpert et al., 2006) along with the paramilitary structure act to keep women out and devalue the proactive approaches to policing that are often associated with community policing, the style where women officers have been deemed more successful and the style of policing that researchers have suggested the occupation move towards (Skolnick & Bayley, 1988; Miller, 1999; Greene, 2004). The findings in this study do support the importance of implementing a
community policing model, based on the value that the women placed on helping people and being able to relate to people, however, they also valued the methods in traditional policing models. Further, when the existing literature focuses most of their energy on community policing models, this diverts attention from the success women police officers have in the more traditional approaches to policing; when we only focus on one method of policing then we make the same mistake of devaluing one model in favor of another, therefore ignoring the possibility that women can and do perform their duties just as well as male officers. Once more, from the results in this study women quite possibly outperform the male officers they work with because of their ability to work within the entire spectrum of policing rather than occupying space on one end or the other.

If policing must be adaptable as Greene (2004) has suggested then this must go beyond merely implementing community policing styles, instead it must adapt a compromised model where the characteristics of women and men are equally valued as opposed to competitive. In becoming more flexible (Alpert et al., 2006) perhaps this would be the way to lessen the amount of essentialist arguments and look closer at individualized traits of the officers. The women in this study told me time and again that even though we assume women are better at using verbal skills, there are men who are just as successful, this argument is also true when discussing physical strength because even though women typically are not as strong as men, especially in upper body strength there are exceptions to every rule. Even so, there is no evidence to prove without a doubt that women are not physically strong and/or aggressive enough to get the job done. Certainly, if anything, the narratives of the women in chapter five indicate that they are indeed more than capable to fulfill the physical requirements of the job.
When we assume that there is one right way to address how officers do their jobs and that there is only one style of policing that works then we in turn marginalize officers who do not fit into those ways of performing the job. Just because an officer does not use traditional policing styles and may prefer using a community-oriented model doesn’t mean that they won’t be successful. In fact, if the components of community-oriented policing as noted by Cordner (2005) were implemented, we would see all of the approaches to policing come together with variation in reactive and proactive measures based on the decisions of the police officers, rather than the decisions of commanding officers who are far removed from the everyday activities of police officers. This would further support a breakdown in the chain of command paramilitary structure that isolates the officers from the public, their job, and each other.

The construction of gender and the impact that those ideas have on women police officers are directly related to how women are treated as police officers. It’s important to note that all of the findings in this study are related to gender and the organizational structure of policing in some capacity. When we look at the construction of gender as expectations we have about what women and men are “supposed” to do, or how they are “supposed” to act, these feelings are directly related to the societal views of women and men and the categories that we are so apt to put people in, in order for us to make sense of our surroundings. The findings in this chapter reflect these societal views and highlight the importance that postmodern feminism plays in this project.

There is no denying the previous findings in the literature that indicate gendered characteristics regarding both women and men and how characteristics that are more commonly found in men are valued in policing. However, I contend that it is dangerous
for us to continue to assume that all women and all men have characteristics that are exclusive to each of the sexes. The women in this study clearly had physical agility, strength, and fitness and used these skills in tandem with their ability to communicate. However, as researchers we have persisted in looking at the policing profession and police officers through the lens of essentialism. It is nearly impossible to have a discussion about women police officers without talking about gender and the expectations that we all have based on gender; women make good police officers because they can communicate better than men, and that is the most important characteristic to have in policing. Men make good police officers because they are physically strong and that is the most important characteristic to have in policing. Where is the in-between? The women in this study are the in-between, and therefore breakdown those categories that we continue to maintain about women and men in general and more specifically about women and men police officers.

When we continue to place women officers in one specific category we fail to recognize those women who work beyond the category that they have been locked into. Further, we fail to recognize the women officers who excel using traits that are commonly associated with men, and further still we discriminate against those women because they are not “acting like women.” Postmodern feminism’s focus on breaking down categories and understanding that there is no one truth and that maintaining this belief is an “illusion,” can only help us to understand the women and to understand what it means to be a police officer.

I do not contend that there are not commonalities between women officers, certainly this study proves that there are. I do not contend that there are commonalities
based solely on being police officers, beyond women police officers and men police
officers, but I do contend that if we continue to define these women and men on
categorical terms, we fail to recognize what policing can be, and fail to value all of the
characteristics needed to succeed as officers.

The categories that we maintain are based on both sex and gender, terms that are
often conflated and therefore the way that women and men perform their gender is based
on expectations of how we present ourselves to others. The individual is accepted when
she works within those expectations, but when she works in direct opposition to those
roles her presentation of self is confusing to others. This is even more important in
policing where even when the word, “cop” is mentioned people imagine a uniform, worn
by a man. Women feel the impact of these perceptions from every available angle,
people’s perceptions of them and even their own perceptions of how they are “supposed”
to act remind them that they are women and women shouldn’t have such a dangerous job.
This speaks directly to the importance that postmodern feminism places on the
As Riley (1988) has indicated, when we continue to categorize people we are in fact,
infringing on an individual’s human agency.

Another vitally important concept here is that these categories and how we define
what makes a successful officer are based on societal perceptions that have been
influenced by a patriarchal society. A society based on male domination and an
occupation that reflects this would, indeed value characteristics that are viewed as
intrinsic to men. Further, because patriarchy is embedded in our society it in turn reflects
our history and culture and contributes to how all of us are socialized (Millet, 1970).
Therefore, women officers face backlash from both sides of the spectrum of policing that they operate in; they are damned if they are successful using tools that male officers are less likely to utilize and damned if they adopt characteristics that are more commonly used by male officers. While it is imperative to deconstruct the categories, it is equally imperative to dismantle the patriarchy if women officers are ever going to be viewed as equally successful in the eyes of the policing occupation.

Therefore, we have to highlight how the categories are detrimental to women and men officers. In theory the deconstruction would work, however, many of us seek to define certain actions and label people who perform those actions in an effort to understand the world around us. We maneuver our way through our lives by understanding who we are and what we do, if I am this, than I am not that. This makes the experience of women police officers that much more important because they are operating within a society and a subculture that continues to tell them that they may be a police officer, but that they are not what a police officer should be. These women indicated that being a police officer is more than what you can say or how fast you can run but both of those things and everything in-between; we cannot continue to value one method of policing over another, regarding both individual’s on the job as well as the styles of policing.

Chapter VI: You Don’t Belong Here

Chapter six focused on several issues related to the organizational structure of policing, the way in which the organization is designed to keep women out. Issues included in the chapter highlighted how women’s lower status in the organization
disallows them the opportunity for certain job assignments and job availability. Other topics in this chapter included the brotherhood in policing that keeps women from becoming fully integrated with their other officers and their response to this – the sisterhood developed among the women. Harassment was another issue covered, along with the hegemonic patterns of practice regarding the equipment that the women have. Finally the chapter discussed the unique problems that lesbian officers faced based solely on their sexual orientation.

The lower status of women in policing has been addressed in the literature, often based on issues dealing with job promotion (Gerber, 2001; Schulz, 2003; Lonsway et al., 2002) These issues extend beyond the policing literature and delve directly into the topic of occupational segregation of women police officers. Policing, considered a regulatory occupation, and a uniformed occupation consistently bars women from advancement giving new meaning to the glass ceiling and instead blocking women’s advancement with “glass walls” (Reskin, 1993; Kilbourne et al., 1994; Wright, Baxter, & Birkelund, 1995; Miller at al., 1999; Grube-Farrell, 2002). Therefore we have women officers who are being removed from their job assignments, lose out on shift bids, are denied promotion, or if they were awarded a promotion, being harassed because they were promoted over a man. These are all reasons why women avoid applying for promotion (Schulz, 2003).

In the interviews the women were either kept from being promoted, harassed when promoted or lost job assignments or shifts or were impacted directly by the brotherhood found within the structure of policing. The brotherhood has been noted in the research as women are denied entrance into the in-group of the male officers either on or off the job (Martin, 1999; Westmarland, 2001; Freedman, 2002; Schram & Koons-
Witt, 2004; Corsianos, 2009). Some of the women are impacted more directly than others, as Westmarland (2001) has indicated, some women have no desire to become integrated with her male officers and this feeling was echoed in the women who told me of the sisterhood they have formed in response. Even the women who mentioned that they are accepted into the brotherhood did not think that they gained complete acceptance because of the differing personalities between the male and female officers.

What was also interesting was the judgment that women officers placed on each other regarding job performance and appearance. This supports Eisenburg’s (2006) research on women officers who told him that women officers were more difficult to work with than male officers because there was constant competition between them. Comments were made about women who could not perform their duties, how many women police officers are “groupies” who go into police work to find a husband, and how some of the women’s abilities are questioned because they are seen as “Barbie dolls.” On the other end of this spectrum was the sisterhood, where other officers would look after the other women and help them adjust to the profession.

What the brotherhood represents is far more than just cliquish behavior that reminds of us a middle school dance with the boys on one side of the gym and the girls on the other, it has far reaching implications that supports sexism, and prevents women from gaining professional respect on the job, therefore resulting in inequality and bias against them (Timmins & Hainsworth, 1990; Grube-Farrell, 2002). This bias and inequality can lead to discrimination and harassment on the job. While many of the women faced some kind of discrimination on the job, all of which could be related to
gender in some capacity, two of the women’s experiences with harassment were the most remarkable stories I have ever encountered.

The harassment that Bell encountered was directly associated with status on the job and the backlash she received for receiving a promotion over a veteran officer who was up for the same job. The indirect and overt threats that she received were especially disheartening because they were done to her through the destruction of her belongings while in the station where her office was located. A station where there were always other officers and specifically a station where the desk sergeant sat directly across from her office. Therefore, Bell felt as though these actions were taken against her with the knowledge of the other male officers she worked with. Bonding them and working further to keep her isolated and in this case, harassed and fearful.

Harriet experienced harassment through hazing rituals conducted by the men in her department, testing her to see how much she could take. The first test came in her changing quarters – since there was no female locker room she was challenged by her male partner to change with the men, which she did, without complaint, until another officer did complain and therefore her commanding officer, who was the main source of her harassment, ordered her to change in a public restroom. This room was used to take urine samples from drunk drivers, therefore leaving the bathroom floors and walls covered in urine and filth. She mentioned that she stood on her tennis shoes while changing in order to avoid having her feet touch the ground. This form of hazing and harassment exemplifies the resistance from male officers to have women officers work side by side with them (Riley, 1999). Harriet’s harassment also included being stalked by
her commanding officer and being investigated for arson and insurance fraud both directly related to her sexual orientation.

The influence of the brotherhood on women police officers goes beyond individual women officers who the male officers just don’t like and rather not be associated with, it persists throughout the departments for most of the women, even the departments the women worked in that has seen some change in the brotherhood still voiced concerns about the isolation of women officers. In these departments the women noted that the brotherhood varies based on the generation of the officers, with the newer women and men officers integrating more often than older officers. Beyond the idea that male officers are socializing while on the job or outside of work, the brotherhood results in an us versus them mentality and therefore could prove detrimental to the women officers. As Harriet and Bell’s stories indicated, they were perceived as threats and the actions taken against them reflected feelings of outward hatred rather than just a feeling of, “we don’t want to have a drink after work.” The women I interviewed told me stories about the brotherhood and how it operates within the organizational structure that went far beyond merely being disliked by their co-workers. These women felt as though their safety was being comprised and no one did anything to prevent it or protect them, beyond subtle warnings that accomplished nothing in the way of support. It seemed that the safety of the women officers was a second thought, which coincides with how the women’s equipment was also an afterthought that I relate to the hegemonic practices in policing.

The hegemonic practices found in the occupation can be seen primarily through the importance the job places on masculinity (Corsianos, 2009), which was found
throughout this project. However, one of the major issues that should be considered regarding the hegemony in policing has to do with the equipment that the officers use on the job. This includes their uniforms, equipment belts and the items on that belt, their guns, and their protective gear such as bulletproof vests. It is clear that there is a move to understand the importance of this equipment; this has been addressed in the discussion on physical agility (Lonsway et al., 2002; Wells & Alt, 2005; Corsianos, 2009). Regardless of the utility of these items when used by the officer, we cannot forget that they have to be able to use them in order for them to work.

I should be clear, the women all could properly work their equipment, but the issues surrounding that equipment is what was discussed. The women told me of uniforms that didn’t fit properly, guns that were too large for their hands, bullet proof vests that were so ill-fitting they either choked women when they sat down or left their stomachs exposed. Belts that positioned the guns higher on their torso which in turn made it difficult for them to pull their gun as quickly as they should, gun holsters that rubbed against their hips so much that they were left with permanent bruising and calluses. These problems represent hegemonic practices that keep women on the margins, not paying attention to their needs as officers and making sure that everything offered to them are not made for them, thus leaving women officers susceptible to injury. All of these continue to reflect occupational segregation for these women, for occupational segregation goes beyond merely wages, even though being denied promotion would directly impact one’s wages. Being forced to work with uniforms and equipment that do not fit, or you are unable to operate properly by no fault of your own, results in unsafe conditions (Riley, 1999).
Finally, 35 percent of the women in this study identified as lesbians, this had significant impact on them and their careers based on being out in their departments. Further, at least three of the women noted the worry they had about being perceived as lesbians even though they were heterosexual and married. While some have found that gay and lesbian police officers feel as though they benefit (Colvin, 2009) from their status on the job, none of the lesbians in this study mentioned anything particularly positive about their experiences about their sexuality being known. I consider these findings to be significant and an emergent topic that adds to the existing research on women police officers.

Since the current study was only on women officers, lesbian officers therefore face barriers that are twice as high and thick than heterosexual women officers. The women reported being harassed based solely on their sexual orientation, of being isolated because they were unsure of whether or not people did accept them or because they knew that they weren’t accepted. The bulk of the research on gay and lesbian officers (although sparse) validates these feelings of marginalization and harassment (Miller, Forest, & Jurik, 2003; Bernstein & Kostelac, 2002). One of the women told me that while she knows many lesbian officers both in and outside of her department, that she has yet to meet one out gay officer because while she knows they exist she doesn’t know any that are out at work because “they wouldn’t make it.” The women who identified as lesbians and the discrimination they faced resulted in them feeling as though they had very few allies in their departments and because of that they have joined a gay and lesbian police officer association to find support. Also, when the women who
participated in this association would post fliers advertising the meetings they were immediately torn down.

Again, since this study was on women only, the information pertains to them as out lesbians in their departments, but because of the heightened discrimination and harassment that they experienced I believe that this is the direction future research should take in documenting the lived experiences of lesbian police officers, and also the experiences of gay male officers who may experience the most unique form of discrimination because policing continues to value hypermasculinity. However, this assumption can prove problematic because it once again addresses issues of essentialism, assuming that one’s sexual orientation directly impacts the way they express their gender. Indeed, three of the women who identified as lesbians commented on their appearance and noted that they present as more masculine than feminine and they viewed this as a benefit to them on the job rather than a detriment (Miller et al., 2003; Corsianos, 2009). However, there was little evidence that the way that they presented themselves physically had a greater impact than the knowledge that they were lesbian. Several women in this study who were heterosexual feared that people would assume they were lesbian and retold stories where they expressed anger when they were assumed to be gay. Beyond this the women told me that the general perception of women officers is either they are looking for husbands or they are lesbians. This was a revealing piece of information because it suggests that there is no middle ground, no perception from others that a woman would be interested in the job because of the job itself; that this was either the best way for a straight woman to find a man or the only kind of job a lesbian would be interested in.
An interesting observation is that the women had little prior knowledge about other women officers’ sexual orientation, with the exception of one woman who was outed by an officer she knew before joining her department. Therefore the only thing that the women and the officers in their departments had to go on in determining sexual orientation (if their lesbian co-officers were not out) were gender stereotypes based on how the women presented themselves. An example of why making these assumptions are often inaccurate can be highlighted by some observations in this study; two women that I interviewed had short, spiky haircuts and wore long suit jackets, nondescript pants and black boots to the interviews. If someone was going to determine their sexuality based on societal assumptions of gender roles than they may classify them as lesbians, however both of them identified as heterosexual and married. Conversely, one of the women I interviewed had long, perfectly styled hair, pedicured nails, impeccable make-up, and wore a tailored suit and heels, so based on societal standards of gender role presentation, many would believe she was straight, however she identified as a lesbian. Therefore assumptions such as these are prejudiced and unreliable at best.

The results chapters highlighted specific categories the interviews uncovered about what brought these women to policing and their experiences on the job. What is clear is that there is significant overlap in the categories; especially regarding issues of gender and the way policing is organized. In order to get a better understanding of the daily duties of police officers I observed women officers on the job. These observations provided some information on the responsibilities of police officers and little insight into what it means to be a woman officer specifically.
Chapter VII: Ride-a-Longs and Observations

The observations in two different departments on five separate occasions added to the current project, but the observations proved somewhat insignificant for the most part. Gender roles were prevalent in most of the observations with the women officers either showing more concern and empathy for victims or conversely showing very little. The division of labor between the male officers and female officers was evident not only on the job but also in common interactions between the officers during briefing, assignments, and on breaks. I observed women running investigations on teams that were made up of all men, while at the same time bring relegated to always writing the reports because “guys don’t type as fast.” I witnessed a female officer and male paramedic objectify and blame the victim of a reported criminal sexual conduct (rape) because the officer told me later that she thinks everyone is lying until they prove different. In this same department on another ride-a-long I observed a female officer spend time giving advice to the victims of domestic violence, stopping to catch up with residents at their local community center and turning a prostitute into an informant. While a male officer sat, disinterested.

These women worked both in and outside of their gender roles and given the opportunity to spend an extended period of time with them I would uncover a wealth of knowledge about them, but perhaps more about them as individuals than about them as officers. As one officer seemed jaded from her years on the job the other appeared to love every minute of her time on the clock. It’s difficult to say, however, and any guess is merely an assumption, that would be impossible to prove because of the inconsistencies of the calls. In closing while I do believe that the observations gave me
important insight into policing in general and some specific insight into the individual
women I as assigned to, the results of the observations are inconclusive.

Limitations and Contributions

Certain limitations to this study exist and are couched primarily within the
methodological framework used to conduct the research. First, the data from the small
sample size would be impossible to generalize, even though the findings in this study
support past research on women police officers, especially regarding gender and
organizational structure. Even still, the qualitative nature of this study does not aim to
obtain generalizability in anyway, but instead the aim here was to contribute richness to
the understanding of, as well as to add to the current research on women in policing.
Further the goal of this project was to open doors to research the topic in order to
discover, describe, and report the experiences of women police officers, which this study
as done.

Additionally, this project seeks to explore the experiences of the women officers,
using their narratives as a form of “excavation” and to highlight where these women are
situated within their own environments (DeVault, 1999). The feminist approach taken in
this project means that the standards that have been historically applied to positivistic
research do not apply to this research project in the same ways. For instance, the
reliability of this project does not require complete replication, however, all of the steps
taken in this project from the way the project was conceived to the steps in developing
the questions and how the data was analyzed are included for transparency, but the
findings in this project are unique to the women who participated, even though there were commonalities between them.

Concerns regarding validity of the “truth” claims of the participants are supported by the standpoint and postmodern approaches to conducting research; the validity of the information comes from the lived experiences and histories of the participants themselves, and as mentioned throughout, these experiences are unique to them. Concerning both reliability and validity the participants’ knowledge, situated in their truth is validation enough for the information that has been provided (Haraway, 1988; Collins, 1991; Naples, 2003). Additionally, the concepts behind reliability, validity, and generalizability, referred to by Kvale (1996), as the “holy trinity” are concepts that have been situated within the world of positivist science.

From a postmodern perspective issues of reliability, validity, and generalizability are sometimes discarded as leftovers from a modernist correspondence theory of truth. There are multiple ways of knowing and multiple truths, and the concept of validity indicates a firm boundary line between truth and nontruth. (p. 231)

Additionally, within any research project the discussion of objectivity and subjectivity may arise. As a feminist researcher I believe that the concept of any research, feminist centered, or otherwise is value-laden rather than value-free (Code, 1991; Wolf, 1996). Therefore, I argue that there is a level of subjectivity in all forms of research, but that it is necessary for myself to understand and admit these potential biases and take steps to limit them. In doing so, I enlisted what Harding (1991) has referred to as strong reflexivity (Shope, 2006) by critically assessing my actions and decisions in this study, which leads to strong objectivity. I practice strong reflexivity as a way to
eliminate biases towards the research topic, participants, and the research findings, allowing for insightful research.

Another weakness in the study was that the women who participated were so similar and therefore it is hard to determine if officers who were younger than these women with less experience than these women had would feel differently about their experiences as women officers. Since the women’s ages ranged from mid-to-late thirties upward to late fifties and 85 percent of the women were white and middle class the opinions and experiences of the women are limited. With a larger sample size this may have changed, yet it is difficult to say, and in fact, unlikely based on the snowball sampling technique used.

The contributions that this study makes are significant in three. First, as detailed in the summary of chapters four and five, the importance that the women themselves placed on physical agility was surprising and uncommon in the research. While the women did support the importance of verbal skills and their equipment which both lends positive support to established theoretical research, the women were also quite clear that physical strength and agility were important when it was necessitated. The level of success that these women had in getting the job done using verbal skills, equipment, and their own physical strength illustrates just how important women police officers are to the policing occupation. Also, while the women noted that many of the skills required in policing are used by officers based on their own individual personality traits, women using all of these tactics as opposed to relying primarily on physical strength indicates that perhaps the characteristics that are commonly attached to women should be considered the most valuable.
While it can be argued that the significant finding here is the importance that the women gave to communication and verbal skills, and in turn their opinions support existing literature, I believe that the importance was that the women also valued agility and in no uncertain terms identified the importance that physicality played in policing. This was not to say that they downplayed communication, in fact they believe it to be a vital component. Valuing communication and validating the importance of it in policing is a way to support a move to more community-oriented procedures and in turn support a move to approach policing on a spectrum or continuum where different styles of policing are equally valued. However, having the women themselves indicate just how important physical agility and the proper use of their equipment highlights the need to implement proper training and proper gear for women and men officers across the board so that each officer can use the skills they excel the most at, in performing their jobs.

Secondly, as indicated in chapter six's summary, the experiences that 35 percent of the women shared with me about the harassment they encountered based on their sexual orientation, as lesbians should be explored further. The previous research on gay and lesbian officers is sparse, certainly this paucity in the research is because of the sensitive nature of the topic and the fear that the officers have about beingouted if they are in fact private about their sexual orientation. The women in this study were all out in their departments and were open about their sexual orientation and the problems that they have faced because of that. Even though some of the women agreed that having qualities that were viewed as masculine had a positive impact on them, they too, experienced some form of discrimination on the job.
The information that these women revealed could have a major impact on the future direction of the study of women police officers. To be able to more fully explore their experiences and how their lesbian identity has affected the way they are perceived as officers. What was interesting about these women's stories is that at least three of them were actively involved in a local organization for lesbian and gay members of law enforcement and when the women posted fliers advertising the meetings they were all torn down and ripped apart, left in the area for these women to know that the information about their organization was not wanted. This in and of itself is threatening and discriminatory especially since the person or people who destroyed the signs were unknown. In fact, the organization on its own is a revelatory finding that if explored on its own could help to create inroads for other lesbian (and gay) officers.

The amount of backlash and the feelings of double jeopardy that these lesbian officers faced goes beyond just a new finding in the literature, but speaks directly to the disinterest in diversifying policing as a whole. The findings on how these lesbian officers were treated is the future of research on police officers, not only on lesbians but on gay male officers as well, perhaps revealing a new kind of discrimination and level of harassment that the women faced.

Finally, the information that these women shared with me, the differential treatment in the academy, the negative impact of the organizational structure, the harassment and discrimination, the hazing, the disinterest in providing the women with proper gear, and the institutionalized homophobia, all relate to gender in some capacity and in turn produce an environment that breeds occupational segregation, keeping women officers on the margins and isolated. Further, because of the differential treatment and
the value placed on characteristics that are deemed male (even though these findings indicate that women can maintain these characteristics as well) falsely assume that women are not capable of performing the job. The structure and relationships that are produced from it such as the brotherhood make it difficult if not impossible for women to explore different job duties and assignments beyond mid-range promotions or lateral moves, therefore impacting their salary, and consequently expanding the wage gap between women and men officers.

Male officers continue to resist integration with women officers; this is detrimental because men dominate the profession. Therefore, most of the positions of power within the policing occupation will be held by men and because of the importance that policing places on the paramilitary model, it is unlikely that women police officers will feel any significant relief from the brotherhood until more women become officers and the older generations retire.

There has been little written about occupational or gender segregation that is wholly focused on women police officers. In highlighting the impact that the organizational structure of policing has on women and working specifically to focus on the many ways women police officers are isolated on the job could lead to further research in the field, crossing into more work-related specialties and therefore expanding the information and making well known in other disciplines. The issue here is not only that masculine traits are valued in policing it is that feminine traits are devalued. There is little if any at all credit given to any qualities that women and men officers have that are perceived as feminine, even though the officers interviewed in this study have praised those skills. Instead of only focusing on one set of skill sets, we have to look at many
different skills that are implemented and need to be learned by all officers regardless of sex or gender expression. Further, even though the women in this study have indicated that they had to prove themselves by using physical force on the job and that they believe in its importance, their abilities to do the job are still ignored, disallowing them to enter into higher-ranking positions. Conversely, men who work in jobs that are traditionally more populated with women advance at a quicker pace, this adds to the lack of attention we place on working women and their worth on the job (Williams, 1992).

With all this taken into account one could understand why the percentage of women police officers hasn’t increased significantly in over a decade, but it doesn’t explain how women working in a comparable position in the law enforcement field of corrections still have higher numbers of women working as officers, in some cases doubling the percentage of women police officers. It is difficult to answer this question without researching women correctional officers and gaining their knowledge and experiences in their field. What we do know, however is just as police officers in general feel a level of isolation from others outside of police work, corrections workers feel this same kind of alienation (Johnson, 2003). It is unclear why there is a significantly higher percentage of women correctional officers than women police officers, although research has indicated heightened feelings of gender discrimination and stress for women correctional officers as well (Voorhis et al., 1991). One could speculate that there are more opportunities for women to enter into correctional work and once they enter the field the jobs vary but the job title doesn’t. For example correctional officers work in prisons that vary based on security level, location, and prisoner population including juveniles.
In sum, the most prevalent findings in this study that build on the existing literature begin with the feelings the women expressed about not only communication skills being vitally important to being a successful officer but also the importance of physical agility as well. This finding supports the literature that has called for implementation of community policing models and has suggested that women police officers would excel in this style of policing based on their desire to help others and using their verbal skills to deescalate potentially dangerous situations. While adding to those findings and suggesting that women officers do value physical agility as well, if this is the case, and many of these women felt that it was, than it questions the research that calls for changing standards in the agility testing done in the academy.

Two of the women specifically told me that it was important for officers to keep themselves in shape if they are going to be police officers, however, we don’t see this as a requirement in any of the departments these women worked in. So while the women I talked to value physical fitness and the ability to use physical aggression when needed, since the departments don’t equally value this, this sends a message that it isn’t as important as they make it seem in the academy. Therefore, the question of just how important physical agility is a valid.

Next, lesbian officers in this study suffered multiple levels of discrimination and harassment based on their gender and their sexual orientation. They encountered threats, stalking, and overt and covert harassment. This is the most important finding in the project and clearly the most emergent theme from the interviews. The women informed me of an organization for lesbian and gay members of the law enforcement community and three of them expressed anger, fear, and disappointment in their colleagues as they
tore down signs for the organizations meetings. Since the literature on lesbian and gay officers is so sparse I believe that this information will prove valuable and should be explored in further detail, with special focus on the organization itself and the response to the organization. It would be valuable to move the policing research in this direction to explore the experiences of these officers, again both women and men; to examine if they are harassed and discriminated on the job because of their sexual orientation. This is particularly important because police officers are viewed as the people who we give authority to in society, both as means of social control and protection. Therefore, if these officers are being threatened, as the women in this study have been, what does that say about the authority and perceived professionalism of the policing occupation as a whole?

Beyond agility and the experiences of lesbian officers, I believe that all of the information in this study exemplifies occupational gender segregation, leaving the women officers marginalized and isolated on the job. A job that is organized to keep women out and devalue their performance and the general skill sets that many of the women bring with them. While this may not be true for all of the women in this study or all women officers it is important to look at these feelings from all angles and analyze the way that the job makes them feel and in turn work to make changes on an institutional level to change the organizational structure and allow for more women to enter the occupation. In turn begin to place value on the individual officer and not the way that they police, allowing them to use whatever methods needed to be successful as long as those methods do not isolate themselves from each other or the communities in which they work.
Not all of the women in this study experienced some form of gender discrimination or harassment, but 90 percent of them did and therefore highlighted the commonalities that these women share on the job. There were far more common factors between these women then there were differences however, all of their experiences were unique to them, some laughed as they recalled stories that would bring others to tears, and there were certainly moments when the women cried as they shared their stories with me. It seemed to me that the woman who was most outwardly impacted by her experiences was Simone. She was one of two African American women in this study, but the only one of the two who expressed any differential treatment because of her race. She referred to other officers both women and men referring to her as a “black bitch” and a “nigger” but in the same breath reminded me that it was these same people that came to her when they couldn’t solve their cases or get suspects to confess during interrogation.

Implementing feminist standpoint and phenomenology allowed for the women to tell me stories like Simone told me hers, it allowed for me to recognize that it was their voices I was privileging and that every word they told me was something that I wanted to hear because they needed to say the things they did. Time and again women told me that they were surprised anyone would want to do a research project like this because they were so used to being ignored. There have been and continue to be limitations women face regarding male dominated fields and upon entering these fields women remain marginalized, so much so that their stories, their histories are rarely told (Smith, 1987, 2004). The importance of using standpoint theory and epistemology in this study was to ensure that the women are heard and that we as the researchers and the ones who come to read their stories understand that power plays a role in how people come to “know” their
surroundings and develop their “truths” (Naples, 2003). Power dynamics play a major role in policing, especially because of the low percentage of women in the field. Therefore when women do reach higher-ranking positions they often face backlash because of their promotions, as witnessed in Bell’s case. On the other hand because of the power that men have in policing when women are eligible for promotion they may be passed over in favor of a man or even reassigned.

Women remain the marginalized group in policing, this project has shown that lesbian officers experience even further isolation on the job and it will not be until more women enter the field and sexual orientation is not seen as a detriment to the job that there will be real change in the power dynamic in policing. The women who voiced surprise in my interest to study them may have been empowered by participating in this project, for some of them this may have been the first time that they were able to express their feelings about the job (Bar On, 1993). It comes to no surprise, however, that the women were unsure as to what needed to be done to increase the percentage of women police officers. Most of them concluded that they just don’t think girls grow up wanting to be cops because they don’t see those images. One woman specifically said that she didn’t want her daughter to be a police officer, not necessarily because of her experiences, but because there are a lot of “cooler” jobs for her to do.

Women officers now are working their jobs because of the women officers who came before them, past generations of women like so many in this study who were the very first women ever assigned to their stations or departments as a whole. Women who fought for equal rights for the women and their assignments, or lesbian officers who aren’t afraid to be who they are, refusing to live in silence, all of these women fighting
for the jobs that they sometimes hate, but always love (with the exception of Patricia who knew exactly how many days she had until retirement) even if they suffer backlash for it. These women are fully aware of the power differential they face in their jobs but refuse to have that power shape what people know about them (Smith, 1990) and that is why approaching this topic using feminist standpoint and postmodern theories was of the utmost importance, because it allowed for them to tell their stories and to make this study what it has become; an outlet for them to be known, not just the experiences, but them as individuals.

In tandem with these theories, using phenomenological methods allowed for the women’s perceptions to be further recognized. While interpretation and analysis was used in this project, by privileging the women’s own experiences, the use of transcendental phenomenology (Moustakas, 1994; Creswell, 2003) was important, as I allowed for the women themselves to define and characterize their own thoughts and feelings on the subject. The women for the most part were quite aware of the discrimination they faced, even when they made comments in defense of the way their male counterparts treated them during a certain event they later would speak to how wrong their actions were, Harriet went as far as to define the actions her partners took as gang-like behavior and bullying. It was important for me to let the women speak and process the information they were telling me, therefore deciding to let them “go off the record” if they chose to do so helped to establish trust with them and I believe made them feel comfortable knowing that I wouldn’t use anything they didn’t want me to use. This method worked well with standpoint and postmodern feminism because of the importance placed on the meanings that the women place on their experiences; the
phenomena of policing in general allows for some common ground among all of the women, but the focus on individual meanings is a key insight as it directly relates to postmodern feminism.

Women police officers know more than most of us who have never spent one minute, one second doing their jobs. We can use theory and analysis to code and categorize what they are telling us, but without their knowledge and their experiences there would be nothing to theorize about or codes, or categories, or analysis. What we know comes from what they know, and for all parties involved what we know is socially situated (Harding, 1991). Also, even though these women continue to face discrimination and barriers in the policing occupation they have certainly made significant gains as police officers during their time on the job. Keep in mind that more than half of the women were detectives, one of the women worked in a tactical unit, another was undercover. I interviewed sergeants, a lieutenant, a captain, and two of the women were union leaders. These women have established themselves in their careers, and while it is frustrating and even infuriating that they have made these strides yet still encounter sexism, they still achieved goals that they set out for themselves, regardless of the backlash they faced.

These women are not victims, they are survivors overcoming the barriers and politicized environments in which they work, that passively aggressively supports institutionalized discrimination, harassment, and homophobia. However, it is equally important to note that not every male officer or supervisor these women encountered was a conduit of hate-filled behavior. Many of these women noted that actions and reactions depend on the individual rather than the entire policing subculture. Yet still, the way in
which the organizational structure has been developed and implemented continues to reflect discrimination on a broader institutionalized level. For instance, what happens in a situation where a woman officer is called to a scene and it requires her to use her flashlight, yet, she doesn’t have her flashlight because there isn’t enough room on her equipment belt for it to fit, and there isn’t enough time to go to the car and retrieve it? If she asks to use someone else’s, most likely a male officer’s, based on numbers alone, then she is likely viewed as the less prepared, incompetent officer. Rather than an officer who had to remove the flashlight because wanted to make room for her pepper spray. Having to make decisions like this could result in a life-threatening situation. Now, certainly, an individual male officer may understand this, a woman officer surely would, but the reason why she has to make these decisions is because of a disinterested organization that treats women officers as an afterthought. And even if uniform and equipment difficulties are not overtly saying, “we don’t care about your safety,” or “we don’t want you here,” covertly, that is absolutely what that says.

It is difficult to hypothesize just what needs to be done to increase the percentage of women officers. If the interest simply is not there, then there is little that can be done. However, I fail to see this as a valid explanation because if there is lack of interest we have to understand why that is. We have increased percentages of women in corrections and have even seen an increase of women in the military, yet we are to believe that women just aren’t interested in becoming cops? Women in jobs that are predominately male feel increased levels of stress and alienation, yet percentages still rise in occupations other than policing. This suggests that there is something unique about policing that continues to keep women out. I believe that it is the organizational structure and all of
the components that go along with it that work in a unique way to keep women from entering the field or staying in the field one they have entered.

The move to recruit more women officers is paramount in increasing the numbers of women working in the field and in turn, having the women present may force those who maintain the mentality that women can’t do the job to reevaluate their reasoning. In 2002, four departments in the United States more than doubled their female recruits and one of those four, in San Jose, California went from a recruit school with 8 percent women to 50 percent. Two departments increased the percentage of women officers, in Seattle the percentage of women officers was doubled from 7 percent to 14 percent and Durham, North Carolina increased the women officers in their department by 3 percent reaching 15 percent (Milgram, 2002).

However, recruitment won’t work if women are having difficulty passing the physical requirements of the job (Holguin, 1987; Harrington & Moore; Lonsway et al., 2002; Corsianos, 2009). Recruitment strategies must take into account issues that impact women differently than men and must focus on parts of the agility testing that are specific to the job. Rather than militarizing the academy, the focus should be entirely on tactics and properly using equipment tat anyone can be successful at if they are trained properly. The women in this study, were properly trained and valued the importance of using physical aggression when and if a situation called for it, therefore we can’t simply eliminate these training requirements, but we can alter them so that both women and men are focusing on the most important aspects of training. If physical agility testing continues to be changed only to recruit more women or only for women, this may
increase the percentage of women officers, but it also may increase the backlash and isolation they face if male officers believe that they had to work harder to get the job.

The problem that persists is that the number of women policing officers hasn’t seen a significant increase in the last decade. What’s more is that the women in this study who work as police officers and women officers who have been researched in the previous literature continue to be discriminated against based on gender, and clearly from this study, based on their sexuality as well. We should care about these issues because in order to for police departments to be representative of the people they work for, to “protect and to serve” there must be a move towards department diversification, not only in increasing women, but increasing other minority populations as well. This will only help to better understand the populations in which the officers work, especially in large departments.

Policing continues to be a challenging career path for women, but we have seen significant changes since the first matron entered the scene. The title of this project came from the mother of one of the women I interviewed. Simone went to her mother’s house on a particularly rough day on the job, she had just been passed over for a promotion that she deserved, and she had been accused by one of her co-workers wives of trying to cheat with her husband. She sat on the front porch of her mother’s house, her childhood home, the same place where she knew at 13 that she didn’t just want to be a cop, but a detective and told her mother that she didn’t think she could do it – that she didn’t think she could continue working as a police officer, that it was just too hard. Her mother, Simone’s best friend told her in no uncertain terms, “honey, don’t let the job change you, you change the job.”
REFERENCES


Appendix A

Question Guide
Question Guide

I am interested in gaining insight and knowledge on women in the policing field. More specifically, I have chosen this topic in order to gain knowledge as to why women have chosen to enter the policing profession, the experiences of women in policing once entering the field.

I. General Questions
   A. Have you always wanted to become a police officer?
   B. When was your first memory of wanting to become a police officer?
   C. Can you think of any influencing factors that lead to you wanting to become a police officer?
   D. Did any media images such as television shows or movies influence your decision to want to become a police officer? If so, can you remember the names of the shows or movies and what character(s) influenced you? Who? How? Why?
   E. When did you make your personal decisions to become a police officer? What lead you to this decision? Was it a difficult decision to make? If so, what were some of the factors that made this a difficult decision? Was being a female one of the reasons?
   F. Do you have any family members or friends who are police officers?

II. Entrance/Training
   A. When were you in the academy?
   B. What were your most positive/fondest memories in the academy?
   C. What were your most negative/least fondest memories in the academy?
   D. Do you have any other memorable experiences?
   E. How was your overall experience in the academy?
   F. In your opinion, do you think that you were treated any differently in the academy because you are a woman? If so, please explain and/or provide examples of this differential treatment. If not, please provide examples of comparability.
   G. Were there different standards expected for female and male police candidates/applicants, such as physical agility testing?

III. Probationary Period
   A. Did you have a probationary period as a rookie officer?
   B. During this time were you assigned a senior officer to work with?
   C. Was this officer male or female?
   D. What were your experiences with this officer? Did they differ from what you had learned in the academy? If yes, how so?
   E. Did you think and/or observe different treatment from other male rookies, similarity or differential treatment of other female rookies?
   F. Were there any differences in the standards and/or requirements of female and male officers such as dress code, e.g. earrings, grooming, clothing?
   G. How long was the probationary period? Was it the same time for females and males?
IV. On-The-Job Experiences

A. After having moved from probationary status, what are some of your experiences on the job that have been most memorable to you?

B. Have you experienced any differential treatment from male officers related solely to the fact that you are a woman?

C. Have you ever felt that you were/are treated differently by your fellow officers, supervisors, and/or the public or citizens based on your sex?

D. Is there a brotherhood? Do you feel you are part of it, do you feel as though you have been kept out of the brotherhood? Do you feel you need to be a part of it? Is there a sisterhood?

E. How would you describe the structure in your department? Do you feel as though the way that policing is structured has positive or negative results?

F. Do you currently or in the past have/had a partner? If so, what is the sex of that partner? Are women ever partnered together? Are women being partnered together looked down on? How often have your partners changed?

G. Do you feel like you are seen as an equal on the job with your male co-workers? Supervisors? Citizens? Or do the males act differently around the females? What about your awareness if any to negative actions or comments by male officers against female officers or yourself personally? What do men think about women in policing?

H. Are there any female only activities that the female officers participate in? Are the outside activities that take place male-centered? Is there integration at these events?

I. What kind of policing style is used in your department? PPU? Community?

J. Do you think that men and women police differently? If so, how so? If so, what is your opinion on who makes a better police officer, men or women and why?

K. Do you believe that you have had the same opportunities for advancement as your male counterparts? Which units generate more money, overtime, court appearances? If you don’t feel female officers have the same opportunities, then why do you stay?

L. Do you believe that there are differential expectations? Are you as a female expected to do more or less? Are promotions decided without prejudice based on sex?

M. Do you fear any repercussions if you are a female officer in a higher-ranking position than your male counterparts, such as not having our orders followed?

N. Have you ever been the victim of sexual harassment on the job? If so, how so? Did you report it? If so, was it followed up?

O. Why do you think the percentage of women in policing is so low?

P. How do you define masculinity and femininity? How are you perceived in the policing field as a female? What are some of the stereotypes of female police officers? Does being more masculine or perceived as such equate to being perceived as a more successful police officer/if femininity seen as being less successful?
Q. In general do you feel as though the police department is hostile or welcoming to female officers? Or indifferent? What about female officers who become pregnant? Are there maternity uniforms? Uniforms for women? Rotating shifts or fixed shifts? On-site day care? Are male officers what the standards are based on? Further, can you chose your own firearm, e.g. smaller gun/different gun grip for female officers?

R. Do you feel that your department is more militaristic or more community policing oriented? Which do you think is beneficial to officers and the community? Do you think that female officers excel in one over the other?

S. What do you believe needs to be done in order to increase the number of women in the policing field?

V. Demographic and closing comments
A. What year were you born?
B. What is your racial/ethnic identity?
C. What is your highest level of education?
D. In what types of environment, e.g. city do you currently reside in?
E. What is your sexual orientation?
F. What is your current relationship status?
G. Do you have children if yes, how many and what are their ages?
H. Is there anything that you would change about your experiences?
I. What if any changes do you think need to be made for women in policing?
J. What would you like the academic community to know about women in policing? Other fellow officers? Supervisors? Citizens?
K. Anything else regarding this interview that you would like to add in anyway?
L. Are there any other stories, or information that you would like to share regarding your time as a police officer?
Appendix B

Informed Consent
Informed Consent

Western Michigan University
Sociology Department

Principal Investigator: Dr. Susan Caringella
Student Investigator: Carrie Buist
Title of Study: Exploring the Lived Experiences of Female Police Officers.

You have been invited to participate in a research project titled "Exploring the Lived Experiences of Female Police Officers." This project will serve as Carrie Buist's dissertation for the requirements of the degree of Doctor of Philosophy in Sociology. This consent document will explain the purpose of this research project and will go over all of the time commitments, the procedures used in the study, and the risks and benefits of participating in this research project. Please read this consent form carefully and completely and please ask any questions if you need more clarification.

What are we trying to find out in this study?
The purpose of this study is to gain an understanding of the personal experiences of female police officers. Past research that has been conducted on the policing occupation has drawn attention to women working in the field, however, rarely has the past research on women in policing focused on the personal experiences of individual women who have spent time working as police officers.

The past research has found that the percentage of women working in policing is low and has not increased much in the last ten to twenty years. The research has purposed that this low percentage of women working in policing may be contributed to the structure of the policing occupation as well as with society’s ideas about women working in what have been traditionally male dominated fields.

Who can participate in this study?
Participants in this study must currently be employed as police officers and must be female. However, one’s specific assignment as a police officer can vary (i.e. patrol or frontline officer, detective, et cetera).

If any potential participant for this study is unable or unwilling to meet any of the requirements mentioned she will be excluded from the study.

Where will this study take place?
The interviews will take place at a location determined by you. I will only suggest a private location to conduct the interview if you are unable to.

If you decide to be apart of the ride-a-long portion of this research project, the location will also be determined by you. I, as the researcher will not determine where the observations of a female officer on patrol will take place.
What is the time commitment for participating in this study?
Those participating in the study will have to commit to one face-to-face interview that will last, approximately 1-2 hours. Additionally, participants will have two different opportunities to revisit the initial interview. The first opportunity will be directly after the interview. The second opportunity will be no more than two weeks (14 days) after the initial interview. In short, the time commitment to this study should be no more than one to two hours, however, this may vary depending on the amount of information each individual participant has to share and depending on the want or need for a participant to revisit their interviews for revision or clarification.

There are no specific time commitments regarding the two opportunities to revisit the information from the initial interviews.

What will you be asked to do if you choose to participate in this study?
You will be asked a variety of questions about your experiences in policing, i.e. your decision to enter policing, the academy, probationary period, and on-the-job experiences. You may also be asked if you are willing to allow the researcher to conduct a ride-a-long with you in order to observe a female officer in the field. You are under NO obligation to agree to this.

What information is being measured during the study?
The information that will be obtained from participating in this study will be your own stories pertaining to your relationship and experiences within the policing occupation.

What are the risks of participating in this study and how will these risks be minimized?
Possible risks that one may encounter as a participant in this research may involve the sensitive nature of some of the questions being asked, inasmuch as each individual participant may have some experiences that were painful during their time before deciding to become a police officer, while one was in the academy, or working as a probationary officer, or as an officer. Risks such as becoming distressed, saddened, angry, anxious, or becoming frustrated or generally upset are but some of the possible risks. While the possibility of these risks is present, the possible risks will be attempted to be minimized during the process and in the subsequent opportunities that will follow the initial interview that will allow for the participants to amend or clarify any of the statements made.

What are the benefits of participating in this study?
Possible benefits that an individual participant may experience by participating in this study may stem from the knowledge that one has contributed to the existing research on the topic of women in policing in a way that has yet to be explored at this level and expanding the knowledge on women in policing and their possible unique experiences working within the field.
Are there any costs associated with participating in this study?
There are no costs associated with participating in this study other than the use of your time.

Is there any compensation for participating in this study?
Participates in this study will not be compensated in any way.

Who will have access to the information collected during this study?
Only the researchers will have access to the information collected during this study.
You may decide to cease your participation in this study at any time without prejudice or penalty. You will experiences NO consequences either personally or professionally if you choose to withdraw from this study. Additionally, I (Carrie Buist) can decide to stop your participation in the study without your consent.

Should you have any questions prior to or during the study, you can contact the primary investigator, Carrie Buist at (743) 673-5997 or carrie.l.buist@wmich.edu or Dr. Susan Caringella (my doctoral dissertation chair) (269) 387-5270. You may also contact the Chair, Human Subjects Institutional Review Board at 269-387-8293 or the Vice President for Research at 269-387-8298 if questions arise during the course of the study.

This consent document has been approved for use for one year by the Human Subjects Institutional Review Board (HSIRB) as indicated by the stamped date and signature of the board chair in the upper right corner. Do not participate in this study if the stamped date is older than one year.

I have read this informed consent document. The risks and benefits have been explained to me. I agree to take part in this study.

Please Print Your Name

Participant’s signature

Date
Appendix C

Letter/Call for Participants
I WANT TO HEAR YOUR STORIES!

I would like to invite you to participate in a research project on the experiences of female police officers.

I am a graduate student at Western Michigan University studying Women in Policing. My dissertation is entitled, *Exploring the Lived Experiences of Female Police Officers*. I am in search for female police officers who would like to tell me about what lead you to become a police officer and your experiences since entering the policing occupation. Research in the past has focused on gender, the policing organization and policing styles, and occupational segregation regarding women in the field, but rarely if ever, have researchers used the personal narratives or descriptive stories of female police officers to gain insight into the world of female policing.

These are but only some of the reasons why I need you to share what we do and do not understand about what it is like to be a female cop working in a male dominated field.

If you agree to participate in this research project you must meet the following requirements and know the following information:

1) I will be tape-recording the interviews. However, I will also destroy the recordings after I have transcribed the interview.
2) Your information is confidential. I will be the only person who will know your real name. You will be asked to select a pseudonym that will be used as the only identifier for your personal narratives. ABSOLUTELY NONE OF YOUR PERSONAL INFORMATION WILL BE USED IN ANY OF MY RESEARCH FINDINGS.
3) These will be one face-to-face interviews lasting on average one to two hours, with two additional opportunities for you to revisit the interview information if you so desire.
4) You are currently employed as a police officer

If you are interested in participating in this project and having your voice heard please contact me, Carrie Buist by phone (734) 673-5997 or email me at carrie.l.buist@wmich.edu. We will set up a time and place that is convenient for you to hole the interview.

If you have any further questions or concerns you can contact Carrie Buist (734) 673-5997) or Dr. Susan Caringella (my doctoral dissertation chair) (269) 387-5270. You may also contact the Western Michigan University Human Subjects Review Board (269) 387-8293 if any questions/concerns/problems occur during the study.

Thank you for your time and I look forward to hearing your stories!
Appendix D

Coding and Categories
Coding and Categories

Interview Coding

*Initial codes from the women officers' interviews to categories and identifying colors*

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<th>From</th>
<th>To</th>
<th>Color</th>
</tr>
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<td>What/who influenced officer; Experience in academy</td>
<td>“Becoming a Police Officer”</td>
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<tr>
<td>Physical agility; Training; Communication; Work harder/prove ability; Femininity; Macho/masculinity; Dating; Sex; Nurturer/Care-giver; Citizens</td>
<td>“Constructions of Gender”</td>
<td>Green</td>
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<tr>
<td>Un:',forms; Guns; Equipment; Brotherhood/sisterhood; Hegemony; Threats; Gender discrimination; Harassment; Politics; Structure; Sexuality</td>
<td>“You Don’t Belong Here”</td>
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Appendix E

Participant Matrix
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<th>LOC</th>
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D/SGT – Detective sergeant
CAP – Captain
SGT – Sergeant
PAT – Patrol
LT – Lieutenant
B – Black; African American
W – White; Caucasian
PR – Puerto Rican
S – Suburb
R – Rural
C – City
H – Heterosexual; straight
L – Lesbian; gay
SI – Single
M – Married
P – Partner
N – No
Y – Yes
Appendix F

HSIRB Approval Letter
Date: August 20, 2010

To: Susan Caringella, Principal Investigator
    Carrie Boist, Student Investigator for dissertation

From: Amy Naugle, Ph.D., Chair

Re: HSIRB Project Number: 10-08-02

This letter will serve as confirmation that your research project titled "Exploring the Lived Experiences of Female Police Officers" has been approved under the expedited category of review by the Human Subjects Institutional Review Board. The conditions and duration of this approval are specified in the Policies of Western Michigan University. You may now begin to implement the research as described in the application.

Please note that you may only conduct this research exactly in the form it was approved. You must seek specific board approval for any changes in this project. You must also seek reapproval if the project extends beyond the termination date noted below. In addition if there are any unanticipated adverse reactions or unanticipated events associated with the conduct of this research, you should immediately suspend the project and contact the Chair of the HSIRB for consultation.

The Board wishes you success in the pursuit of your research goals.

Approval Termination: August 20, 2011