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An Analysis and Examination of College Undergraduates' Perceptions of Women in Law Enforcement

An Honors Thesis submitted in partial fulfillment of the requirements for Honors in Criminal Justice and Criminology

By
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Under the mentorship of Dr. Adam Bossler

ABSTRACT

Throughout the course of history, various perceptions of gender and the roles that each gender should play have been observed. As Western society has progressed, so have the rights of women in many modern, developed nations. In America, women became an integral part of the workforce during World War II. When the war was over, however, they were expected to return to a more domestic role. Today, the number of women in the workplace continues to increase; however, many disparities continue to exist. Traditionally masculine careers, such as policing, have seen smaller increases in the number of women in these careers compared with other occupations. This study seeks to examine the sociological aspects contributing to less favorable views of women in policing among college undergraduates.

This study surveyed 172 college undergraduates at Georgia Southern University to examine perceptions of women as law enforcement officers in various scenarios. The findings from this research suggest that students with an increased sense of equality of the genders were more likely to prefer female officers in certain scenarios. Feminism and views regarding women in policing were examined in order to gain insight into why students preferred one gender to another. General opinions of police were also measured in order to determine whether negative views overall influenced responses. Gender, race, and level of education completed at Georgia Southern were also evaluated as potential influences on responses.

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Introduction

Various career fields throughout American and other societies have specific notions about the types of people that should be employed. Traditionally, policing has been viewed as a male dominated field in which women played a minor role, most often an administrative one (National Center for Women & Policing, 2001). Shifts in the way that women are perceived in society have begun to take effect and as a result, more women are employed in what are typically deemed “masculine careers” (Norvell, Hills, & Murrin, 1993). Various stereotypes regarding the roles of men and women in the workplace have been perpetuated throughout society for centuries (Wood, 2005). In many Western cultures, men are traditionally viewed as the primary income earners while women play a more important role in child rearing and caretaking.

These barriers have begun to break down in recent history because of various legal and social changes over the last fifty years. Title IX of the Education Amendments of 1972, for example, provided equal opportunities for women and prohibited discrimination based upon sex in programs that receive federal funding. Title IX is commonly cited for the fact that it provided equal athletic opportunities for women; however, it also served to achieve equality in education, decrease sexual violence and harassment, and prevent discrimination toward pregnant women (American Civil Liberties Union, 2014). As a result of the passage of this act, women have surpassed men in rates of educational attainment. Women have consistently achieved higher attainment rates than males since the year 2000. As of 2013, 37 percent of females between the ages of twenty-five and twenty-nine had obtained at least a bachelor’s degree, compared with

only 30 percent of males (U.S. Department of Education, National Center for Education Statistics, 2014).

Beginning in the 1970s, an increase of women in the workplace has been observed. The highest percentage of female labor force participation over the past fifty years occurred in the year 2000, when 59.9 percent of women in the United States were active members of the workforce. Since then, the number has declined slightly to 57.7 percent (United States Department of Labor, 2012). According to the Bureau of Labor Statistics, Current Population Survey, women make up 47 percent of the workforce in the United States.

Of the 697,000 employees serving as patrol officers for police and sheriff's departments throughout the country, however, only 13.4 percent were women (United States Department of Labor, 2013). In the 2001 study examining the status of women in policing (National Center for Women & Policing, 2001), research indicated that the rate at which women were employed as sworn officers had stagnated and possibly reversed. Previous *National Status of Women in Policing Surveys* indicated a slight increase over the previous three years, however the rate at which women were employed as sworn officers began to decrease in 2000. Interestingly, women still make up the vast majority of civilian positions within police departments (67.7%). Unfortunately, these positions do not offer the same opportunities for promotion and pay increases as the sworn patrol positions (National Center for Women & Policing, 2001).

Another important discrepancy between males and females in the labor force is that women, on average, only make seventy-seven cents on the dollar compared to their

male counterparts (The White House, 2014). Recent attention has been brought to the inequalities women face in the workplace, and as a result, President Barack Obama passed the Lilly Ledbetter Fair Pay Act in 2009. This act restored a previous law that individuals experiencing discrimination in pay had the right to bring forth a discrimination claim within 180 days of the discrimination. The Lilly Ledbetter Fair Pay Act also added a provision that the 180 day window would be reset for each discriminatory paycheck received, thus extending the timeframe in which victims of discrimination could exercise their rights (National Women's Law Center, 2013). Although this act cannot provide complete equality in pay to women, it is an important step in the fight for equal rights for all in America.

This study focuses on the perceptions of females in the workplace, but specifically in law enforcement patrol positions in America. College students were surveyed to examine their perceptions of female officers. Students were asked to indicate whether they preferred a male or female officer in five different situations, ranging from a hostage crisis to a speeding ticket. Feminist orientation, general police opinion, and views of women in policing roles were analyzed as potential influences to respondents' gender preferences in the scenarios. Demographic information was collected as well to examine if any correlations existed between respondents' race, gender, or education with regard to preferring one gender to another.

It was hypothesized that students with more feminist beliefs would be more inclined to prefer female officers in the scenarios. It was also theorized that students with a higher level of educational attainment would hold higher views of women and thus would prefer female officers in certain situations. Students were asked about their views

regarding police in order to determine whether students with positive or negative views of the police as a whole preferred one gender to another; this would serve as a control measure in the study.

Literature Review

Workplace discrimination can refer to a host of different, discriminatory practices and behaviors. Gender inequality, however, is embedded in the workplace as a result of expectations set by society regarding the roles of women. In many male dominated fields, women are often denied the opportunities afforded to their male coworkers, and often cannot achieve the same goals purely because the administration does not treat them equally (Gowdy, et al., 2003). Gender roles and expectations have been ingrained into society throughout history; recently, however, various feminist movements have worked to further the advancement of women in the workplace and have begun to break down many of the barriers facing women in modern society. These movements, and the successes therein, have been a major contributing factor to an increase of women in the workplace, and especially in male dominated fields such as policing (Segrave, 1995).

Gender

Gender roles have been extensively examined through various studies examining masculinity, femininity, and the average American's opinions regarding gender (Wood, 2005). Through research, psychologists generally agree that masculine and feminine traits are distinctive entities that should be examined separately rather than compared to one another as if they were at opposite ends of a spectrum (Beere, 1990). It is important to note the distinction between gender and sex. Wood (2005) explains that sex is defined

by biology, while gender is based on social and psychological constructs. This is an important difference because these terms are often used interchangeably, yet they mean two different things entirely. Sex, like race or hair color, is something that cannot be chosen by an individual. Gender, however, is determined by a series of experiences, values, and beliefs acquired from society, parents, and peers. Sex typically does not change throughout the course of life, but an individual's gender may change dependent on how they identify. Gender is much a much more complex categorization, and can be described as, "a complex set of interrelated cultural ideas that stipulate the social *meaning* of sex" (Wood, 2005). What may be deemed masculine in American culture is not necessarily masculine across other cultures. This is not to say that society's constructs of gender are completely rigid and unchanging. Individuals often choose to challenge and reject norms defined by society in favor of their own personal beliefs. Without challenging the prevailing ideas defined by a society, nothing would ever change. The Civil Rights Movement of the 1960s, for example, challenged the status quo and afforded black Americans many opportunities that may not have been possible if it was not for individuals taking a stand against what society deemed to be acceptable.

As stated previously, masculine and feminine traits are not polar opposites as many believe, but rather are distinctive. An individual can embody both types of characteristics. This is known as androgyny, a term derived from the Greek word *andros* (man) combined with the Greek word for woman, *gyne* (Wood, 2005). It is common for men and women to embody traits from both genders. For instance, many people are both compassionate and strong, depending on the situation. According to Wood (2005), many cultures recognize androgyny as a beneficial trait. For example, certain Native American

groups encourage androgyny and offer higher levels of respect for individuals exhibiting both masculine and feminine traits.

Western culture is typically based around the idea of a patriarchal society, or one in which the father is the dominant figure in the household. Men founded many of the modern, Western countries, and thus the laws and structure reflected and reinforced the idea of a male dominated society (Wood, 2005). While many of these practices have been eradicated in American society, it was not long ago that women did not even have the right to vote. We are in a transitional period in American society in which women are gaining more and more traction in political and business arenas. A definite gap still exists, however, between men and women in the workplace (The White House, 2014).

Many theories exist to explain how young people acquire their views on gender. Walter Mischel first developed the idea of social learning theory in 1966 and explained that individuals learn whether to be masculine or feminine based upon societal cues from others, observation, and experimentation. Essentially what this theory states is that children are a product of their environment. Kids often emulate what they experience at home or school and develop ideas based upon what they see on television or in movies (Wood, 2005). Another interesting approach to explain how we acquire our opinions regarding masculinity and femininity is the cognitive development theory. This theory is similar to social learning, however children play a more active role in the learning process in this approach. Kohlberg argues that thoughts concerning gender preclude actions. Boys act like boys because they identify as boys and young girls do the same. In other words, the labels attached to children at an early age influence their behaviors more than by passively observing male and female roles in society around them (Martin,

Ruble, & Szkrybalo, 2002). In a 1988 study, Gilligan and Pollack sought to explain some of the developmental differences between young males and females. They concluded that males are more likely to communicate in more independent ways and prefer self-sufficiency whereas young women are socialized to be caring and communicate at a more personal level.

Another important factor to take into consideration with regard to development of ideas concerning gender are the various cultural theories such as symbolic interactionism and standpoint theory. George Herbert Mead developed symbolic interactionism, which states that we learn who we are by communicating in the society in which we are born. Children are born into the world and the labels attached to them come from their parents and society as a whole. Thus these children are defined, not by themselves, but by the ideals present in any given society. Wood (2005) states, "Learning gender occurs as others define children by sex and link sex to social expectations of gender." Society typically does not make the distinction between gender and sex, as described earlier, and thus being biologically male or female determines which traits and attitudes individuals should exhibit. Peers and teachers at school often reinforce these prevailing societal norms. Phrases such as, "that's not very ladylike" or "I could use a strong, young man to help lift this" perpetuate the notion that one gender is superior to another, and individuals are held to different standards purely based on society's view of gender. This is especially troubling because children often have very little ability to define gender for themselves because they base their ideas on what they see and hear around them. By defining these roles in such black and white manners, we effectively ensure that the same stereotypes will continue to exist in the future.

Roles are another important aspect of cultural theory of gender. Elizabeth Janeway identified two important aspects of roles in 1971. The first was that roles are external to individuals simply because society defines such roles. This does not allow for individual differences, but rather an overarching definition of certain roles. The ideas concerning gender roles stem from the general idea of societal roles, such as women being the primary caretakers of children and men being the primary providers. For simplicity, gender roles attempt to provide a set of ideas that can be generalized to society as a whole rather than examining gender at individual levels. Even mothers who work are often expected to be the parent that takes off in the event of a sick child, and often society expects this from women even if it is easier for a husband to take time from work to care for the child. Society expects men to obtain jobs and provide for the family, while women are expected to fulfill the child rearing duties, often at the sacrifice of their career aspirations. Simply put, women are expected to fulfill both roles if they choose to have a career, while men are only expected to complete the duties at work (Wood, 2005).

Internalization is the second aspect of role that Janeway identified. In order for societal ideas about roles to be effective, individuals must internalize these roles. From a very young age males are taught to be tough, and that men don't cry or show emotion, while females are taught to be sensitive, kind and leave assertiveness to their male counterparts. In today's society, many traits that define women are deemed less valuable than those that define males. Assertiveness and leadership traits exhibited by males are praised and rewarded, while nurturing and caregiving roles are often devalued in American society. If a male exhibits what society deems as feminine characteristics that makes him less of a man and subjects him to ridicule such as being called a sissy or a

variety of other terms. Conversely, females who exhibit masculine traits or preferences are considered to be “butch” among other things. It is through communication and education that these ideals change, and society must recognize the double standards it sets regarding gender roles (Wood, 2005).

Standpoint theory is another cultural theory that helps to explain the differences between genders in society. This theory focuses more on how our place in society is positively or negatively affected by race, class or gender. This theory is similar to symbolic interactionism; however, it takes into account that even though individuals may be members of the same culture, differences in race, gender or socioeconomic status impact individual’s experiences in our society. Even though American society is constructed of multiple racial groups, each group can have many different cultural characteristics, independent of each other. One of the earliest proponents of standpoint theory, Georg Wilhelm Friedrich Hegel (1807), explained that an individual’s position as master or slave completely changed the view toward slavery. This is applicable today, because men cannot truly experience and understand life from a woman’s perspective and vice versa. Hegel concluded that there cannot be a single, accepted perspective regarding social life, because individuals perceive society based upon their classification into social groups (Hegel, 1807).

A significant issue exists with the emphasis society places on gender roles - What happens if a man cannot find work and his wife can? Tyre and McGinn (2003) analyze one such scenario in which a young couple seeks to navigate through a difficult time in their lives. Jonathan, once a successful attorney, was laid off and now spends the majority of his time caring for their child, cleaning the home and preparing dinner, what

society typically views as duties of women. Conversely, Laurie is now the primary income earner and provider for the family, and neither of them are happy about it. The biggest issue with this, is that often times, men do not know how to perform these types of tasks on a daily basis, simply because society has told them they did not need to. Tyre and McGinn point out that fortunately for many couples like Jonathan and Laurie, we live in an era in which women are earning higher education degrees at a higher rate than ever before. In 2001, it was found that 30.7 percent of homes in which both parties work, the wife's earnings exceed her husbands. Many men are discouraged and often feel emasculated because their wives are earning more money than them, and this makes them feel like less of a man by society's standards. This notion is simply not true. If males feel like they are less of a man because they are tasked with raising their children and more domestic duties, they are in effect admitting they held a lesser view of women performing the same tasks. In order to reach true gender equality, the negative connotation associated with stay at home dads must cease to exist as more women are entering the workforce to provide for the family. Raising children and caring for the home are just as important as providing a source of income, because without adequate parenting, our children will continue to believe the gender stereotypes perpetuated by the media and society.

Feminism

Society has many definitions for feminism; each individual has different ideas about what it means to be a feminist. Typically people associate the term "feminism" or "feminist" with anti-male attitudes or other radical ideals. Though there are many definitions of feminism, *The American Heritage Dictionary of the English Language*

defines feminism as, “Belief in the social, political, and economic equality of the sexes.” By this definition, many Americans would be considered feminists, yet our society does not typically view feminism in this light. Baumgardner and Richards (2000) discovered that when feminism is defined in this way, 61% of men and 71% of women agree with the feminist ideology. British author Rebecca West has perhaps one of the most poignant, and painfully true definitions of feminism: “I myself have never been able to find out precisely what feminism is. I only know that people call me a feminist whenever I express sentiments that differentiate me from a doormat.” Though this may seem comical to some, it is truly discouraging that the word feminism carries a negative connotation simply because society declares it so.

Though feminism has gone through several major cycles throughout history, the current era of feminism in the United States holds many of the same ideals as previous movements. Wood (2005) refers to the present era as the third wave of women’s movements in the United States. It can be argued that this wave of feminism embodies four distinct features. The first emphasizes individuality amongst women. Although women have been treated as a singular group for centuries, many distinct differences can be observed among women within a society. In many past movements, women were viewed as a single group, rather than a stratified amalgamation of individuals sharing a common identity and goal.

A second feature of the modern movement is the incorporation of men and other groups into the feminist movement. Many modern feminists argue that women have exclusively handled the balance between work and family in previous years, yet it is an issue that men and women should share responsibility for in today’s society. This

multifaceted approach toward feminism may in fact strengthen the movement, as it will provide further insight into the struggles experienced by women of different classes, races and sexualities.

The third aspect of the new era feminist movement is to incorporate the things previous feminists have fought for into everyday life. Although many laws have been passed to prevent discrimination, it is still evident in today's society (Jamila, 2002). The biggest goal of this component of the movement is to bring attention to the discrepancy between what is perceived and what is reality.

The final component of the third wave of the feminist movement is that personal actions are the power behind the movement rather than politics, as explained by the second wave feminists. This type of ground up approach will ensure that members of the movement act in ways that reflect their views through everyday life, encouraging others to do the same. Third wave feminists view personal action and political action as two intertwined means of change rather than two separate entities (Wood, 2005).

An additional aspect Wood discusses that may prove to be a component of the third wave movement is the celebration of "girl culture." Although it is too early in the movement to know the impact this may have, the intermingling of pop culture with more serious issues may serve to educate more young men and women on the glaring inequalities faced by women in America. An example of this is the Chevrolet commercial featuring Mo'ne Davis, arguably the most successful female to ever compete in the Little League World Series. In this commercial, Miss Davis explains her passion for sports and expresses her support for other young women who wish to compete with

males in sports. She then says, “I throw seventy miles per hour, that’s throwing like a girl. Sincerely, your daughter, Mo’ne Davis.” Twenty years ago, a commercial like this would not have been possible, and it would most likely have been frowned upon. However, through the work of many women, it is now possible for young women like Mo’ne to push aside society’s views and chase their dreams. In fact, young women entering more male dominated arenas is now celebrated across the nation rather than viewed negatively.

Gender in the workplace

Gender roles have changed immensely in the United States over the past two centuries, from a time when women were not even considered citizens of the United States and had little in the way of rights, to a time where women hold more jobs in the work force than ever before. As of 2012, women make up just under half of the percentage of the civilian labor force, weighing in at 47 percent, a slight increase since 2000 (Bureau of Labor Statistics, 2013). With more and more women becoming involved in the working force of America, certain gender roles must be taken into account. Many would argue that there are certain jobs or tasks that women handle better than men, and vice versa. However, in an increasingly feminist society, should women feel compelled to engage in more “feminine” jobs? Or, should they pursue a career they are interested in, even if it is a male dominated career field?

Until recently, police work has typically been viewed as a male occupation. In the last twenty years, however, the number of women in policing roles has increased drastically (Norvell, Hills, & Murrin, 1993). Although there are not truly inherent

masculine or feminine careers, society's views and stereotypes have created a fairly clear idea of what careers are best suited for men and those more geared toward women.

Wood (2005) identifies four roles that women are often classified into in the workplace: sex object, mother, child and iron maiden. The sex object stereotype defines women by their sexuality and generally focuses on physical attractiveness rather than actual job performance. This stereotype has led to an increase in sexual harassment in the workplace, as women are *expected* to ensure they meet an expectation of sexual attraction while on the job. Two forms of the motherly employee stereotype exist, both figurative and literal. The literal refers to the fact that often, many women in the workplace have children, and thus they are not taken as seriously because their attention is divided between their careers and their children. The second aspect of this stereotype involves women playing a "motherly" role in office settings, such as making coffee or being relegated to a clerical role, rather than a managerial one. The child stereotype of women in the workplace refers to the idea that women are less competent than men, and thus should be taken less seriously. This stereotype is especially damaging to women in that often times, they are not afforded the same opportunities as men because they "must be protected" from dangerous situations. In turn, they do not gain the same experiences necessary for promotion, simply because they are not allowed to participate in more dangerous activities under the guise of protection. If a woman does not fit nicely into any of the other three categories, she is often labeled an "iron maiden." This distinction essentially suggests that these women are too tough and aggressive in the workplace, and should be more concerned with womanly things, such as their appearance. The iron maiden persona is a catch twenty-two for women, because if they want to be successful in

a male dominated world, they must be aggressive in their work; however this can often backfire, as in the case of Ann Hopkins. Hopkins was able to outperform all of her male coworkers at Price Waterhouse; however, she was not named a partner and executives suggested she be less authoritative and more feminine, rather than attempting to perform equally to the men in the company. Hopkins received a judgment from a federal district court ruling that she had been the victim of gender stereotyping and thus she was promoted (Wood, 2005).

Along with the stereotypes of women, men are also labeled in the workforce, generally in one of three categories: the sturdy oak, the fighter, and the breadwinner. These three categories are often intertwined and men typically are viewed as all of the above, rather fitting into one category. The sturdy oak is a man who is resilient and viewed as “a man’s man.” The fighter stereotype refers to a man’s bravery and aggression in the workplace, and thus males are traditionally viewed as more suited for combat and other dangerous occupations. Possibly the most common of the three stereotypes, the breadwinner, identifies men as the primary providers for their family; however, in today’s society, this is increasingly untrue, as many women earn more than their partners (Wood, 2005).

There are many complications involved when a female selects a masculine career path as defined by the average person’s ideas regarding gender and the roles of women in the work force. Additional challenges arise in certain jobs that men or women are more readily equipped to handle; however, many accept this challenge and excel regardless of gender. Women have been an active part of the police force in America dating back to the late 19th century. One of the first females to enter the realm of police work was Lola

Baldwin. Baldwin was a social worker in Portland, Oregon and was hired by the Portland Police Department as a plain clothed officer tasked with street patrol at a festival in Portland in 1905.

Although Baldwin's breakthrough into the male dominated profession was a milestone for women, Alice Wells of Los Angeles, California was much more significant with regards to establishing a place for female officers in local police departments. Wells was appointed to the Los Angeles Police Department (LAPD) in September 1910, and she is regarded by many as the first policewoman in the United States (Schulz, 1995). Interestingly, Wells was a major proponent of the rehabilitative powers that policing could have upon offenders. She believed that the police could reduce crime by helping "cure society's ills." Wells felt that the city needed a policewoman in order to provide protective and preventative services to the citizens. She accomplished this goal by presenting a petition before the mayor. This petition, signed by many influential citizens, requested the appointment of a female officer to the Los Angeles Police Department in order to further the preventative and protective work of the police, especially involving women and children. Wells was responsible for founding the International Association of Policewomen in 1915, a group that would be impactful in advocating female law enforcement officers (Schulz, 1995).

For the next sixty years, little changed involving the roles of women in policing. It was through the various civil rights movements of the 1960s and 1970s that women gained more equality in the workplace, and thus more responsibility in policing (Gowdy, et al., 2003). It was not until 1968, when two Indianapolis police officers, Betty Blankenship and Elizabeth Coffal, went on patrol that women truly began to gain traction

in patrol positions. Honoring a promise he had made several years earlier, Sgt. Churchill of the Indianapolis Police Department sent the two women out on patrol. During their time at the police academy, Blankenship and Coffal suggested that women should be involved in patrol work alongside men. Sgt. Churchill promised them if he were ever named Chief, he would honor their wishes and allow women to undertake patrol positions for the first time in American history (Schulz, 1995). It was through the efforts of these two women that women's roles in policing would be forever changed from an administrative and matronly role to full fledged police officers.

In one century, women have gained a significant increase in social status and along with this, an overall increase in employment opportunities due to shifting ideas about gender roles in the 21st century. More women are employed in law enforcement than ever before; however, the number of women employed by tactical units does not keep up with the trend of an increase of female police officers.

Most Americans would consider elite tactical teams such as SWAT teams to be one of the most traditionally masculine professions, and this could be part of the reason many women are turned away from this career. There are special challenges that women face in entering tactical units such as physical strength requirements, which may discourage some females from applying to these positions (Prussel, 2001). In a 2010 study by Mary Dodge, Laura Valcore and Frances Gomez regarding perceptions of officers of the SWAT units, it was concluded that general opinions regarding the qualifications necessary to participate in SWAT positions were very similar to antiquated views on women in law enforcement. Although we live in a progressive society, SWAT teams are still viewed as male-dominated professions that women have not immersed

themselves into. The study points out that there is agreement among both male and female officers that women should be SWAT team members. The authors of this study hypothesized that these attitudes amongst male officers may be a result of an attempt to conform to the progressive ideas in society, and an attempt to ensure they are not viewed as sexist or discriminatory. Another key observation from this study is that many participants share views about women on SWAT teams with those that felt early female officers needed to have specific roles in the agency. It was proposed in this study that female officers, due to their increased capacity for communication, especially with females and juveniles, could potentially serve as negotiators for SWAT teams (Dodge, Valcore, & Gomez, 2011).

In a 2009 study, attitudes of college students toward women in policing were measured at the University of Texas at Arlington. This study aimed to examine the relationship between feminist orientation and academic major with the attitudes of students regarding female law enforcement officers. This study concluded that overall, college students are supportive of women serving in law enforcement. Not surprisingly, feminist orientation was the most influential factor with regard to opinions on women in policing. Another factor taken into account was the liberalization of college students through higher education. The research presented highlights a correlation between education and an increased liberalizing effect experienced among college students. This may also have significance with regards to the feminist orientation of many of the students in the sample population. The study, along with others, points to young, well educated women as being the most supportive of female law enforcement officers due to

an increased feminist orientation compared to educated males, as well as non-educated males and females (Haba, Sarver III, Dobbs, & Sarver, 2009).

Methods

The data for this study were collected from surveys distributed to college students from Georgia Southern University. Located in Statesboro, Georgia, Georgia Southern University is a Carnegie Doctoral-Research university offering over 100 various degrees at the baccalaureate, master's and doctoral levels. Georgia Southern is a rapidly growing university and has become the largest institute of higher education in Georgia south of Atlanta. With a total enrollment exceeding 20,000 students, Georgia Southern provides a very diverse learning environment for its students. While the majority of enrollees are from the state of Georgia, the university is home to students from 48 states and 89 different countries. Of the more than 20,000 students, 17,904 are undergraduates, with 15,762 of these students considered to be full time. The university is comprised of 51.9 percent female students, and the largest racial group is white (63.1 percent). African Americans make up the largest minority group at 26.4 percent of the student population.

A survey was created utilizing both Likert scale and multiple choice questions adapted from previous studies on the role of women in law enforcement positions in America (Haba, Sarver III, Dobbs, & Sarver, 2009). This survey was distributed to college undergraduates across multiple sections of a variety of courses. Surveys were distributed in multiple sections of the following: Introduction to Criminal Justice (CRJU 1100), World Literature II (ENGL 2112), IT Infrastructure (IT 2333) and International Marketing (MKTG 4136). These courses were selected for two reasons. The first was

out of convenience, as I had previously established a relationship with the professors, and they were willing to allow the surveys to be distributed in their classes. The second reason was to provide a more diverse sample with respect to major and year in school. Both upper level and lower level classes within various majors were surveyed in order to provide generalizability to the larger student body at Georgia Southern University. As previously stated, the survey was constructed using a variety of questions obtained from previous research, as well as scenarios designed to examine student's preferences with regard to the gender of responding officers in various situations. Hard copies of the surveys were distributed during class meeting times after thorough instructions were provided. Students were informed that their participation was entirely voluntary and there would be no consequence for refusal to participate. Informed consent was explained prior to the distribution of the surveys, and each survey detailed that by answering the questions therein, students were agreeing to the informed consent waiver attached to each survey.

Three hundred twenty-nine students were enrolled in the six sections surveyed. A total of 172 completed surveys were collected, indicating that 52 percent of the students enrolled in those courses completed the survey. Due to the nature of the surveys being distributed in the classroom, with no prior notification, many students were not in attendance on the days the surveys were administered. The sample was comprised of 45 percent female respondents, which is slightly lower than the 51.9 percent female enrollment at Georgia Southern, but this can be attributed in part to the lack of female students in two sections of IT Infrastructure. Twenty-five percent (25.3%) of respondents were African American, directly proportional to the number of African American

students enrolled at the university during the 2013-2014 academic year. With regard to classification at Georgia Southern, freshmen were slightly underrepresented at 12.9 percent, with sophomores comprising the largest group of respondents (31.2 percent). Juniors and seniors constituted 27.1 and 28.8 percent of responses, respectively.

MEASURES

Dependent Variables

This study used five distinct questions serving as the dependent variables to further our understanding of college students' perceptions of women in law enforcement. Respondents were instructed to select whether they would prefer a male (coded as 0) or female (coded as 1) officer to respond to five different scenarios. Because this study sought to understand possible reasons why college undergraduates would prefer a specific gender over another, students were forced to choose male or female, rather than a no preference option. In actuality, many students probably would have chosen no response, but in order to draw conclusions these close ended questions were deemed necessary. Two students refused to choose male or female and wrote in that it did not matter. These responses were not included in the analysis. However, all of the other students chose either male or female in each of the scenarios. See Table I for descriptives.

First, students were presented with a scenario involving a traffic stop. The scenario read as, "You just left a friend's apartment where you consumed three beers. You've been pulled over for going 68 mph in a 55 mph zone. Would you prefer the officer to be: A) Male or B) Female?" Responses indicated a slight preference for male officers (61.1 percent) over female officers (38.9 percent).

A second scenario asked, “You wake up to the sound of someone breaking in your home at 2:30 am. You quietly dial 911 and they tell you a unit is in the area. Would you prefer the responding officer to be: A) Male or B) Female?” The overwhelming majority of students indicated they would prefer a male officer over a female officer. 89.3 percent chose male (10.7% female).

Another situation with a potential for danger was described in scenario three. “You have been attacked by a large man trying to rob you. An officer is just down the street coming toward you. Would you prefer that officer to be: A) Male or B) Female?” Consistent with scenario two, respondents indicated a significantly higher desire for the responding officer to be male (92.9 percent).

Scenario four, an equally dangerous situation, but one in which physical prowess was less important, was presented to students as such, “You’ve been held hostage during a bank robbery gone bad. Would you prefer the lead negotiator to be: A) Male or B) Female?” Roughly half of the students indicated a female officer (54.4 percent) and half would prefer a male officer (45.6 percent).

The fifth and final scenario involved a domestic violence situation and stated, “You’re a victim of domestic violence and the police are on the way. Would you prefer the first officer on the scene to be: A) Male or B) Female?” Sixty-two percent (62.6 percent) of students expressed a preference for the responding officer to be male.

Independent Variables

To help to further examine college students’ perceptions of women in law enforcement, a variety of Likert scale questions were utilized in order to construct

multiple scales measuring students' attitudes regarding two factors that could predict support for female officers: (1) feminist views; and (2) opinions of female officers. The survey also contained a section to obtain demographic information about respondents, as well as a control section measuring the students' general views of the police. See Table I below for descriptives.

Feminist views.

Eleven questions drawn from Haba, Sarver, Dobbs, and Sarver (2009) were utilized to measure respondents' views of women in politics, women's rights, and women in the workforce. These questions followed the typical Likert scale methodology in which students indicated their agreement with a statement (1 = Strongly Disagree; 2 = Disagree; 3 = No Opinion; 4 = Agree; 5 = Strongly Agree). First, students were asked if they felt that women had enough influence in American politics. Second, students were asked if women should leave running the country up to men. The third question asked students if they considered themselves to be feminists. Fourth, participants evaluated this statement: "It is better for everyone if the man is the achiever outside the home and the woman takes care of the home and children." Question five asked whether there are some jobs and professions that are more suited for men than women. Conversely, question six asked respondents if there were some jobs and professions that are more suited for women than men. The seventh question asked if women should worry less about their rights and more about becoming good wives and mothers. Question eight provided a scenario that if a husband and wife each have equally good job offers in separate cities, the man should accept his offer and the wife should follow. The ninth question stated, "For a woman, marriage and home life should be more important than

having a career.” Question number ten asked if women’s rights are important to the respondents. The final question asked respondents to evaluate the following statement: “I often pay attention to issues that especially affect women when reading, watching, or listening to the news.” From this section, questions two, four, and seven through nine were reverse coded because the lower end of the scale (1) indicated feminist beliefs whereas in the other questions, a higher number indicated stronger feminist orientation. The results were combined into a scale that took the average of the responses to determine overall feminist orientation of each respondent. This scale comprised of the eleven questions created a reliable measure of feminist views amongst respondents indicated by a Cronbach’s Alpha of .802.

Role of women in policing.

A series of eleven questions were asked of the respondents to assess their views regarding the role of women in police departments, especially concerning patrol work. This section also made use of Likert scale questions drawn from previous research to measure college students’ level of agreement with certain statements about women in patrol work (Haba, Sarver III, Dobbs, & Sarver, 2009). The scale was constructed similarly to the previous section of questions and asked students to indicate their level of agreement (1 = Strongly Disagree to 5 = Strongly Agree). First, students were asked whether they felt police work was an appropriate career for a female. The second question asked if a female could be as good of a police officer as a male. Question number three from this section asked if respondents felt that females have the physical skills to carry out the duties of patrol work. The next question asked if women are emotionally equipped to handle the stress of being a patrol officer. Fifth, respondents

were asked to evaluate the following: “I feel some female officers are capable of handling patrol work duties because being male or female does not determine your skills for patrol.” The sixth question asked if police work was too dangerous for a female. Next, students were asked if more women need to be recruited as patrol officers. Conversely, question eight asked if females should be taken out of patrol positions. Question nine asked if female police officers are effective on the street as patrol officers. The tenth question asked if female officers should be promoted to supervisory positions if merited. Lastly, students were asked to weigh in on whether or not they would give a female officer the same degree of respect they would give a male officer. From this section, only the 6th and 8th items were reverse coded as the lower number indicated stronger support for women in policing. In the other questions, a higher level of agreement signified a higher level of support for women in policing. Similar to the feminism scale, these eleven questions were combined and averaged to create a scale measuring the overall opinions of students regarding females in law enforcement patrol positions. These measures created a reliable scale of students’ attitudes toward women in policing ($\alpha=.87$)

Demographics.

In order to obtain demographic information about the participants, a separate section containing three basic demographic questions was constructed. The first question asked students whether they were male (0) or female (1). Second, students were asked to indicate their race as either: A) African American; B) Asian; C) Caucasian; D) Native American; E) Pacific Islander; or F) Other. Due to the limited variation, this measure was collapsed into a dichotomous measure - (0 = Non-African-American; 1 = Black).

The final demographic question asked students to identify their year in school: freshmen (0); sophomores (1); juniors (2); or seniors (3).

Control.

In order to control for an important factor that may impact respondents' views, five questions measuring general views of police was included. As before, these five questions were drawn from a previous study to control for bias for or against the police as a whole (Haba, Sarver III, Dobbs, & Sarver, 2009). The first question asked if respondents felt the police are open to the opinions of citizens. Second, students were asked if they felt the police responded to citizens' calls for service in a timely manner. The third control question measured the effectiveness of police on the street. Fourth, students were asked if they felt that the police reduced crime. The final control question asked students to assess whether or not they felt the police treated people fairly. These five measures were averaged and this created a reliable scale ($\alpha=.775$).

Analyses Strategy

The analyses consisted of three stages. First, descriptive statistics were examined to assess how often female officers were preferred in each of the five scenarios (speeding, home invasion, robbery, hostage, and domestic violence).

Second, correlation analyses were conducted in order to examine the univariate relationships between the independent and dependent measures. For this study, a value of significance less than $p < .05$ indicated a significant relationship between variables. Due to the small sample size, attention was also paid to any correlation with a significance value less than $p < .1$.

Finally, logistic regression models were run in order to examine which of the factors significantly predicted whether respondents would prefer a female officer in each of the five scenarios while controlling for other factors. Logistic regression is used as another means of predicting whether or not certain independent variables combine to predict membership patterns as related to the dependent variables examined (Mertler & Vannatta, 2004). In other words, logistic regression models serve to predict the probability (between 0 and 1) of a certain occurrence, in this case, selecting female officers in the various scenarios. Unlike other techniques used in statistical analysis, logistic regression does not require researchers to assume any type of relationship between independent variables (i.e. normal distribution, linear relations, equal variances, etc). Another positive of logistic regression is its flexibility in that it can analyze continuous, discrete and dichotomous variables, and produce nonlinear models.

Models constructed using logistic regression provide multiple outputs used to analyze datasets. The first output of significance results in a section measuring the reliability of the data, measured by Chi-square test, -2 log likelihood and the Nagelkerke R square. The model Chi-square test attempts to determine whether or not there is a discrepancy between predicted and observed frequencies of a particular category. The Chi-square test provides three measures: (1) chi-square, or the sum of squared deviations between actual and predicted frequencies; (2) the degrees of freedom measure indicates values that are free to vary; (3) and significance, which indicates whether or not the model significantly predicts the membership to a group. Odds ratios less than 1 ($\text{Exp}(B) < 1$) indicate a negative relationship between variables, while an $\text{Exp}(B)$ value over 1 indicates a positive relationship.

The -2 log likelihood measure is used to determine whether or not a model fits the data. Lower values for the -2 log likelihood, or -2LL, indicate a stronger fit with the model and the dataset being examined. Combined with the Nagelkerke R square, which measures the proportion of variance within the dependent variable predicted, a strong predictive model can be created.

Logistic regression, although a strong statistical tool, does have its weaknesses. If there are not enough cases with regard to the number of variables in the data, many problems can occur. Errors and inaccurate estimates are possible in the case of too many variables without enough cases. Another potential cause for concern is if the data does not fit the model, as indicated by the goodness-of-fit test. Multicollinearity can affect logistic regression models also, resulting in increased errors of coefficients, altering significance.

For each scenario, four separate logistic regression models were run. The first model included demographic information and the control variable in order to create a base model. In order to examine the effect of the feminism scale on whether students would prefer a female officer in different scenarios, the feminism scale was added in the second logistic regression model along with the demographic and control measures. To examine whether students' more specific views of women in policing were significantly related to their preference in officer gender, the third model included the women in policing scale along with the demographic and control measures. Finally, the fourth model included both scales along with the demographic and control measures.

Results

Following the collection and analyses of the data, descriptive statistics regarding respondents' gender preferences in each of the five scenarios were examined (see Table I). There were multiple scenarios in which students preferred male officers to female officers. Arguably the most violent and threatening scenario, involving armed robbery (Scenario 3), indicated the highest preference for male officers (92.9 percent). The home invasion scenario indicated the second largest percentage of responses preferring a male officer at 89.3 percent. The fifth scenario was also indicative of a slight preference for a male officer in the situation involving domestic violence. 62.6 percent of respondents indicated that they would prefer a male officer to a female officer (37.4 percent). The speeding scenario (Scenario 1) continued the pattern of preferring a male officer to a female officer with only 38.9 percent of students indicating they would like a female officer to respond, while 61.1 percent favored a male. The fourth situation, a bank robbery gone wrong, was the only scenario in which students indicated they would prefer a female officer to a male. Slightly over half (54.4 percent) of students chose a female negotiator, while 45.6 percent still felt more comfortable with a male taking the lead. Of the five scenarios, students strongly indicated their preference for male officers in two of the five, and a slight inclination toward males in two of the others.

Table I. Descriptive Statistics for Frequencies of variables

	Mean	Std. Dev.	Min.	Max.	n
Dependent Variables:					
1) Scenario 1: Speeding	0.39	0.49	0	1	167
2) Scenario 2: Home Invasion	0.11	0.31	0	1	168
3) Scenario 3: Robbery	0.07	0.26	0	1	169
4) Scenario 4: Hostage	0.54	0.50	0	1	169
5) Scenario 5: Domestic Violence	0.37	0.49	0	1	155
Independent Variables:					
1) Feminism	3.35	0.60	1.27	4.82	161
2) Role of Women in Policing	3.79	0.60	2.55	5.00	119
Demographics:					
1) Female	0.45	0.50	0	1	170
2) Black	0.25	0.44	0	1	169
3) Year in school	1.72	1.02	0	3	170
4) View of police	2.92	0.78	1	4.80	167

Correlations

Univariate analysis indicated that several measures examined indicated significant relationships with the five dependent variables. See Table II for correlation matrix.

Preference regarding the gender of the officer was significantly related to independent measures in three of the five scenarios. No independent measures were significantly correlated with gender preference in the home invasion (scenario two) and robbery scenarios (scenario three). Scenario one (speeding) demonstrated significant correlations with three independent variables. Scenarios four and five provided significant correlations with four of the six independent measures used in the study.

Being female was significantly correlated with preferring a female officer in three of the five scenarios. The strongest correlation between gender of the respondent (female) and gender preference of the officer was observed in the domestic violence scenario (scenario 5) ($r = .31$). Being female was also correlated with preferring a female officer in the speeding ($r = .14$) and hostage ($r = .13$) scenarios. African-American students were more likely to prefer female officers in two of the scenarios. Black respondents were more likely to choose a female officer in the speeding ($r = .19$) and domestic violence ($r = .20$) scenarios. The respondents' year in school was not significantly correlated with gender preferences in any of the scenarios.

Having favorable views of the police in general, however, was significantly correlated with both scenario 1 (speeding/drinking) and scenario 4 (hostage situation). In scenario 1, having a favorable opinion of the police was negatively correlated with

preferring a female officer ($r = -.16$). Respondents with favorable views of the police in general were also more likely to prefer male officers in hostage situations ($r = -.18$).

Both independent scales were positively correlated with two of the scenarios. The feminism scale was positively correlated with scenarios four (hostage scenario) ($r = .34$) and five (domestic violence) ($r = .25$). Students who had views supportive of females being treated equally were more likely to prefer female officers in hostage and domestic violence situations. The scale measuring respondent's views of women in policing was also positively correlated with both scenarios four ($r=.30$) and five ($r=.30$). Undergraduates who were generally more supportive of females in policing were typically more inclined to prefer a female in both of these scenarios.

Table II. Correlation Matrix

	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11
1. Scenario 1: Speeding	--										
2. Scenario 2: Home Invasion	.00	--									
3. Scenario 3: Robbery	.06	.14#	--								
4. Scenario 4: Hostage	-.01	.01	.07	--							
5. Scenario 5: Domestic Violence	.13	.09	.10	.21*	--						
6. Female	-.14#	-.00	-.02	.13#	.31*	--					
7. Black	.19*	-.12	.12	.10	.20*	.05	--				
8. Classification at GSU	.08	-.01	.03	.07	.00	-.02	-.01	--			
9. General opinion of police	-.16*	.01	-.01	-.18*	-.06	-.08	-.15#	-.09	--		
10. Feminism	-.08	.09	.04	.34*	.25*	.58*	.15#	.06	-.24*	--	
11. Role of women in policing	.08	.03	.02	.30*	.30*	.35*	.12	.05	-.04	.54*	--

Note: * $p \leq .05$; # $p \leq .1$

Logistic Regression Models

The univariate analyses indicated that significant predictors existed with preferring a female officer in three of the five scenarios, suggesting that more complex analyses would be appropriate. Multicollinearity analyses indicated that multicollinearity was not a factor as the strongest correlation between any two measures was 0.58, tolerance levels were all above 0.2 (lowest tolerance level was 0.516), and the highest variance inflation factor (VIF) was 1.938 (Mertler & Vannatta, 2004).

Scenario one asked students to indicate their preference in the event they were pulled over for speeding after consuming three beers. See Table III for scenario one logistic regression results. Model 1 was able to predict responses better than by random chance (i.e. flipping a coin). Females were less likely to prefer a female in the speeding scenario ($\text{Exp}(B) = .469$). Being female begins to lose its significance in this scenario as additional independent variables were added into the succeeding models (see models 2 – 4). Conversely, being African American increased the likelihood of selecting a female officer in this situation. Being Black remained significant across all four models. The addition of variables in succeeding models made being African American a stronger predictor of selecting females across models. Respondent's year in school was not significant across any of the models, as noted in Table III below. In addition, it appears that individuals with a favorable view of police in general were less likely to prefer a female officer. This effect, however, only existed in model one and was not present when students' views of women in general (model 2) and in policing (model 3) were included. When the feminism scale was added into the logistic regression model (Model 2), the addition of this scale did not improve the model since feminist views was not a

significant predictor and the Nagelkerke R^2 remained unchanged. Feminist views were insignificant in both models two and four. Although the R^2 increased slightly, students' perceptions of women in policing was not significantly related with gender preference (see models 3 – 4).

Table III. Logistic Models predicting Scenario 1: Speeding

	Model 1	Model 2	Model 3	Model 4
<i>Demographics</i>				
Female	0.469*	0.488#	0.470#	0.465
Black	2.569*	2.421*	3.625*	3.590*
Year in School	1.118	1.053	1.161	1.097
View of police	0.693#	0.663#	0.781	0.724
<i>Independent Variables</i>				
Feminism	--	0.826	--	0.762
Role of women in policing	--	--	1.519	1.833
Constant	1.648	3.840	0.260	0.426
$\chi^2(df)$	14.789(4)*	14.043(4)*	11.692 (5)*	11.121(6)
-2LL	204.596	192.869	145.209	136.656
R^2	0.117	0.117	0.130	0.131
n	164	156	115	109

Notes: Standardized odds ratios presented; # $p < .1$; * $p < .05$; R^2 is Nagelkerke R square

None of the models across scenario two were significant as indicated by the insignificant chi-squares (see Table IV). This is likely due to the little variation in the

dependent variable, as only 11% of respondents indicated a preference for a female officer in this scenario.

Table IV. Logistic Models predicting Scenario 2: Home Invasion

	Model 1	Model 2	Model 3	Model 4	
<i>Demographics</i>					
Female	1.037	0.756	1.709	1.061	
Black	0.334	0.183	0.323	0.405	
Year in School	0.954	0.976	0.921	0.916	
View of police	0.967	1.179	0.767	0.952	
<i>Independent Variables</i>					
Feminism	--	2.305	--	3.422	
Role of women in policing	--	--	1.104	0.748	
Constant	0.175	.006	0.189	0.008	
	$\chi^2(df)$	2.557(4)	5.900(5)	2.675(5)	4.995(6)
	-2LL	111.395	97.702	78.715	70.819
	R ²	0.031	0.076	0.045	0.089
	n	166	158	116	110

Notes: Standardized odds ratios presented: # p < .1; * p < .05; R² is Nagelkerke R square

Similar to scenario two, the Chi-square measure across all four models indicated no significant relationship between the models and responses to the robbery scenario (see Table V). Being black, however, increased the likelihood of preferring a female officer by 4.214 times. This relationship, however, was only present in models three and four.

The lack of significant variables in this scenario is also likely attributed to only 7.1% of students indicating they would prefer a female in the event of a robbery.

Table V. Logistic Models predicting Scenario 3: Robbery

	Model 1	Model 2	Model 3	Model 4	
<i>Demographics</i>					
Female	0.647	0.275	0.889	0.685	
Black	2.760	2.385	4.214*	3.936#	
Year in School	1.015	1.043	1.049	1.193	
View of police	1.014	1.055	0.934	0.871	
<i>Independent Variables</i>					
Feminism	--	2.088	--	1.035	
Role of women in policing	--	--	1.119	1.002	
Constant	0.056	0.006	0.043	0.063	
	$\chi^2(df)$	2.720(4)	4.119(5)	3.766(5)	3.151(6)
	-2LL	78.245	70.435	59.531	54.189
	R ²	0.042	0.068	0.076	0.07
	n	166	158	116	110

Notes: Standardized odds ratios presented; # p < .1; * p < .05; R² is Nagelkerke R square

All four models for scenario four were significant as indicated by the significant chi-squares (see Table VI). Model one helped to significantly predict whether students preferred females in the event they were held hostage in a bank robbery gone wrong. Although it is possible that being female was a predictor in model one, with females being 1.718 times more likely to choose a female officer, it was not observed across the

other three models. Students with generally positive views of police were less likely to select female officers in this scenario; this was significant in models 1, 3 and 4. Students with stronger feminist views (models 2 and 4) were more likely to prefer a female officer. The effect of favorable views of police lost its significance when the feminism scale was introduced in model 2. Model three showed that individuals that were more comfortable with women in policing had increased odds of preferring a female officer on scene as the lead negotiator.

Table VI. Logistic Models predicting Scenario 4: Hostage Situation

	Model 1	Model 2	Model 3	Model 4
<i>Demographics</i>				
Female	1.718#	0.818	1.085	0.720
Black	1.340	1.086	1.052	1.110
Year in School	1.161	1.182	0.967	0.941
View of police	0.651*	0.740	0.519*	0.606#
<i>Independent Variables</i>				
Feminism	--	3.622*	--	2.468#
Role of women in policing	--	--	2.923*	2.027
Constant	2.371	0.031	0.137	0.022
$\chi^2(df)$	9.982(4)*	22.355(5)*	16.380(5)*	17.975(6)*
-2LL	218.961	195.768	143.878	133.935
R ²	0.078	0.176	0.176	0.201
n	166	158	116	110

Notes: Standardized odds ratios presented; # p < .1; * p < .05; R² is Nagelkerke R square

All five models for scenario five were significant (see Table VII). Model one indicated that being female increased the odds of preferring a female officer in a domestic violence situation by 3.391 times; however, this effect diminished in model two and was not shown in models three and four. Being black was also indicative of an increased likelihood of choosing a female officer. In model one, being black increased the chance of selecting a female by 2.527. As additional variables were added, being African American retained its significance across all four models. When the role of women in policing scale was introduced in model three, black respondents were 4.612 times more likely to prefer a female. Having supportive views of gender equal rights was not significantly related with preferring a female officer in a domestic violence situation (see models 2 and 4). Conversely, students with more supportive views of women in policing were more likely to prefer female officers in these situations (model 3).

Table VII. Logistic Models predicting Scenario 5: Domestic Violence

	Model 1	Model 2	Model 3	Model 4
<i>Demographics</i>				
Female	3.391*	2.329#	1.865	1.554
Black	2.527*	2.213#	4.612*	3.645*
Year in School	1.032	1.009	0.864	0.879
View of police	1.006	1.066	0.834	0.878
<i>Independent Variables</i>				
Feminism	--	1.614	--	1.494
Role of women in policing	--	--	2.407*	1.849
Constant	0.236	0.050	0.020	0.013
χ^2 (df)	18.991(4)*	17.238(5)*	20.541(5)*	15.261(6)*
-2LL	183.060	175.156	119.125	116.191
R ²	0.159	0.152	0.238	0.190
n	153	146	109	104

Notes: Standardized odds ratios presented; # p < .1; * p < .05; R² is Nagelkerke R square

Discussion

With the exception of the hostage situation, respondents were more likely to prefer a male officer in each scenario. Scenarios two and three, involving more

threatening situations, indicated the largest preference for male officers. This is likely due to many people's perceptions of gender roles in law enforcement. Males are typically seen more as protectors, while women are often viewed as more compassionate and empathetic than their male counterparts (Wood, 2005). However, with respect to the hostage situation presented in scenario four, respondents indicated a higher preference for a female officer. This can be attributed to the notion that females are often better communicators than males, and thus make better hostage negotiators (Dodge, Valcore, & Gomez, 2011). The other two scenarios, speeding and domestic violence, indicated a slight preference for males, but less so than the more violent scenarios. The speeding scenario was used as a baseline scenario due to the fact that the respondents were clearly violating the law and the gender of the officer should not be important. Scenario five, however, presented a domestic violence situation, and students indicated that they preferred a male (63%). This may be due to the notion that males may be viewed as being able to physically handle violent circumstances better than females. Females, however, are typically better at diffusing tense situations simply because of the relational attitudes observed among women compared with the content oriented (direct) approach males typically take (Wood, 2005). It may also be attributed to the fact that 55 percent of respondents were male and may not think of themselves as potential victims of domestic violence.

As shown in the previous study (Haba, Sarver III, Dobbs, & Sarver, 2009), females generally were more likely to prefer a female officer in the various scenarios. This is likely due to the fact that women typically hold more feminist views than males and are generally more supportive of females in the work force. The preference for a

female officer was most clearly demonstrated in scenario 5, where female respondents were over three times more likely to want a female officer in a domestic violence situation. A moderate correlation was also demonstrated ($r = .31$). This is likely due to the idea that female officers are more sympathetic toward female victims in domestic abuse situations and can relate to female victims better than male officers (Wells & Alt, 2005). In scenario one, however, females were significantly less likely to choose a female officer in the event they were pulled over for a traffic stop. This may be attributed to the stereotypical idea that male officers offer more leniencies toward female traffic violators and female officers take a tougher stance (Blalock, DeVaro, Levanthal, & Simon, 2011). Another possible explanation is that female officers often feel that they must take a tougher stance in a male-dominated profession. As pointed out by Parsons and Jesilow (2001), policewomen often feel that they must act tougher and suppress their feminine attitudes in exchange for a more masculine approach toward their job.

Although it was not determined to be significant across all models, African American respondents were more likely to prefer female officers in all but one scenario. This could possibly be caused by African American respondents holding a different view of female officers and their role in police work. Scenarios one, three, and five demonstrated that African Americans were more likely to prefer a female officer. In scenario three, however, race was only significant once the role of women in policing scale was accounted for in model 3. Thus, it is more likely that respondents' views and opinions regarding female's roles in policing are a stronger predictor than race alone. As Wood (2005) points out, people are shaped by multiple standpoints that are intertwined rather than independent of one another. An example Wood cites is that an African

American man is shaped not only by his race and gender, but also by his sexual orientation and culture. The combinations of various factors are most likely more responsible for views of women in policing rather than any single factor.

It was hypothesized that students with a higher level of educational attainment would be more likely to select female officers as evidenced in the previous study (Haba, Sarver III, Dobbs, & Sarver, 2009). The results, however, did not support this hypothesis. In fact, it was determined that year in school had little effect on student's preferences regarding the gender of the responding officer. Year in school was not significant in any of the four models for each of the five scenarios. This was surprising because typically college education tends to have a liberalizing effect on students. It would therefore seem that students with higher education would be more supportive of female officers. This study, however, did not account for various other factors affecting the decision between preferring a male over a female or vice versa. Considering over 50 percent of the respondents were juniors or seniors at Georgia Southern, it was clear that in this study, an individual's year in school was insignificant in their decision between a male or female officer in each of the five scenarios.

Similar to the study conducted at the University of Texas Arlington (Haba, Sarver III, Dobbs, & Sarver, 2009), the feminism scale was a significant predictor of respondents' likelihood to prefer female officers in the various scenarios. Students with stronger feminist views were more likely to prefer female officers. This scale proved to be a very strong predictor in all but scenario one. This is likely due to the lack of significance that the officer's gender would play in the event of a traffic stop. Feminist

views among respondents were determined to be extremely significant in the hostage scenario.

The scale constructed from the eleven questions measuring students' opinions of women in policing was a significant predictor in both scenarios four and five. Generally, respondents with a more progressive view of women in law enforcement indicated that they would prefer a female officer in both the hostage and domestic violence situations. This makes sense because students that felt women deserved equal treatment in the workplace probably had a better understanding of the benefits of females as police officers due to their ability to communicate more effectively than many of their male co-workers. As Wood (2005) points out, women are traditionally more relationally oriented whereas males are typically content oriented and thus, more abrupt and direct in their communication style. Students recognized the communication differences between males and females, and this helps to explain why females were preferred in the hostage situation.

Limitations

There were certain limitations evidenced throughout the course of this study. First, because the survey was only administered at one university in the state of Georgia, the generalizability to the nation, as a whole, is limited. It is possible that many of the opinions of students regarding gender in law enforcement were affected by their enrollment at Georgia Southern University, and thus this must be taken into account. A small sample size was another drawback in this study. Because this was a convenience sample, and many students were not in class on the days the surveys were administered,

the sample size was smaller than expected. Although the size was small, it was representative of the various demographic makeups of students enrolled at Georgia Southern. A third limitation to the present study was the fact that surveys were only administered to college students, and the perceptions they held may not be representative of the general population of the United States. Another limitation was the fact that there were only a few variables examined during this study. Many other variables may have accounted for students views regarding women in law enforcement. This study did not encompass all of the possible reasons students may prefer one gender to another. It should also be considered that students were forced to choose between male or female officers and were not given a “no preference” option. Many students may not have truly preferred one gender to the other.

Policy Implications

As evidenced by the results of the study, many students still do not feel that women hold an equal place in law enforcement related careers. Although research indicates the need for women, particularly in certain situations, this is not reflected by the views of the college students surveyed. Also, judging by the mean of the feminism scale (3.35), many students did not identify themselves as feminists, but did not oppose feminism either. It is possible that this may be due to a lack of understanding and education regarding the definition of feminism and the various ideals that comprise feminist beliefs. An increase in education regarding feminism and what it stands for in society today may be an important measure to further student’s understanding and develop more well-rounded individuals, particularly for criminal justice and criminology

majors. Although this study did not examine law enforcement officers, this increase in understanding among students will foster new ways of thinking that will enter the realm of law enforcement and may bring about more conversations about the role of women in the future.

In order to further educate the public on the roles of women in the workforce and society as a whole, we must begin with grade school and continue to introduce students to various ideas regarding gender throughout high school and into college. As Wood (2005) points out, males occupy many of the supervisory and high-ranking positions in education, and thus a “hidden curriculum” exists all the way from elementary school up to the collegiate level. Another important factor that should be addressed is the unequal attention teachers give to female students compared to males. In a 1982 study, it was discovered that teachers are less encouraging and attentive toward female students. This devalues female students, and reinforces many of the negative stereotypes of women throughout the education system (Hall & Sandler, 1982). Without reform, our educational system will continue to perpetuate these stereotypes, effectively reversing the work of many women’s rights activists.

Future Research

As previously stated, this survey had several limitations; however, many of these could be addressed and resolved through future research. It is important for future studies to examine multiple variables related to predicting responses regarding gender preferences of law enforcement officers. Another necessity in future research is a larger sample size of respondents. A larger sample size along with more scenarios comprising

typical situations that police respond to may lead to more insight on students' perceptions of female officers. It is pertinent to examine law enforcement officers' views regarding women in policing as well. Future studies should be directed toward the causes of many of the gender preferences and identifying underlying stereotypes and where they come from, rather than simply examining feminist orientation and views of police. Future research should also examine the relationship between race and feminist orientation. A more in-depth analysis of cultural differences between the various racial groups could provide more insight into why African-American students were more likely to prefer females in several of the scenarios. As previously stated, various factors such as race, sexuality, gender and cultural background contribute to people's views. Future studies could include focus groups analyzing cultural differences among students and comparing these various factors with respondents' views regarding women in policing. Further investigation into racial and cultural differences is crucial to understanding not only variations in views regarding women, but to ensure a better understanding of society as a whole.

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