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Eastern Kentucky University

Brains versus Brawn: Militarization and Women in Modern Policing

Honors Thesis Submitted

In Partial Fulfillment

Of The Requirements of HON 420

Spring 2021

By

Emilee Eversole

Faculty Mentor

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College of Justice and Safety

## **Abstract**

### **Brains versus Brawn: Militarization and Women in Modern Policing**

Emilee Eversole

Mentored by Dr. Kristie Blevins

This work explores the paramilitarism that has taken policing by storm over the last few decades, the adverse effects caused by it, and what women in policing do to counteract them. Previous research has shown that some individuals believe this type of militarization of policing has severed the relationship between law enforcement officials and their communities, and false beliefs regarding the ability of women to serve as police officers seem to run rampant. However, newer research suggests that women in policing provide a refreshing contrast to this paramilitarism through less invasive tactics, resulting in a more trusting relationship between officers and the communities they serve. This work will ultimately focus on the harmful effects of the militarization of policing on the police-citizen relationship, how this also impacts female officers, and how tactics often used by women when working in policing may ultimately be one of the defining characteristics that serve to improve the police-citizen relationship.

*Keywords:* honors thesis, women in policing, female police officers, militarization, paramilitarism, militarization of policing, policing

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## **Brains versus Brawn: Militarization and Women in Modern Policing**

The militarization of policing, although relatively new, faces the same problem many types of policing our nation has used in the past endured: the weakening of the police-community relationship. The militarization of policing has normalized the imagery of the masculine police force- those who eliminate problems with force. This phenomenon, in turn, has eroded the trust that used to exist between officers and citizens. However, an overlooked solution can pull back this masculine force and lessen the police-citizen divide with an outstretched hand: women in policing. Often seen as the nurturers of the police force, women in policing counteract this looming force of militarization by using other types of policing that step outside expectations and rely less on threats or force. Although some may see women unfit for policing, female officers will help mend the strained police-citizen relationship.

Due to the nature of the topic, it is imperative to remember a few key details when examining this work. To be clear, the purpose of this work is not a comparison between male and female officers. While most of the data offers a comparison, the main focus of this work is to examine the relationship between paramilitarism and female officers and how women in policing counteract the adverse effects of militarization. If a source offers data, for example, that women are statistically better drivers, it is not in an attempt to imply that men are bad

drivers. Some male officers help lessen the divide created by militarization, and some female officers do not. However, this thesis is based solely on the divide caused by militarization and how women in policing help fix that divide and is not an attempt to bash or discredit male police officers. As Bergman, Walker, and Jean mentioned, sex factors are not an end-all-be-all when examining research. The biological and socialization factors that influence aggressive tendencies are influential and present long before entering the workforce. However, the sex differences documented in police use-of-force and in aggression more broadly suggest that examining how women in policing could provide insights into better models for selection and training purposes that will ultimately reduce shootings of unarmed citizens and incidents involving excessive use of force (2016). Novak et al. also state that subtle yet significant sex differences can hold the key to a better future in policing (2011).

## **Introduction**

In one week, two very different videos depicting police officers went viral. The first video depicts an officer attempting to arrest a female student in a high school in South Carolina (ABC News, 2015). The female student allegedly refused to get out of her seat after her teacher asked her to leave, and an officer was called into the room. School resource officer Ben Fields (who was reportedly referred to as "officer slam" by students concerning incidents before this one)

proceeds to "body slam" the student while she is sitting at her desk. The female student, along with another student who voiced concerns, was arrested. Unnecessary use of force is an indirect effect of militarization. As later mentioned, the militarization of policing makes officers see everyone else as a threat- and trains them to react as such.

The second video depicts a female officer having a dance battle with Aaliyah Taylor, a teenager fighting with another young woman (Inside Edition, 2015). This officer challenged the young woman to a dance battle with simple rules. If she won, the young girls had to stop fighting. If the girl won, the officer would leave, and the girls could stay. Instead of using force to break up the situation, the officer used a unique and unconventional tactic to help diffuse the situation, even though use-of-force likely would have been more justified in this situation, as violence was involved. Of course, the outcome of the dance battle did not matter, as the high tensions were gone. While anecdotal, these examples of militarization versus non-use-of-force tactics that female officers are more likely to use are supported by research. In other words, the statistics later examined align with the outcomes of both videos and the argument that women in policing offer a refreshing contrast to the militarization of policing. As well as using less force overall, women bring imperative qualities to the field of policing. Through tactics ranging from dance battles as de-escalation techniques to their unique ability to better handle the most common calls within policing, female



officers improve policing as a whole. Their contributions to policing, in turn, help rebuild the trust that has been lost within the police-citizen relationship.

Police officers are now equipped with military equipment that was designed to be used against foreign threats. However, this equipment is often used against citizens rather than the threat they were designed to be used against. Militarism is not just the act of supplying our police forces with military equipment, however. It is also a state of mind in which officers view themselves as the thin line between order and chaos- where they must stop the threats. They align themselves with the sense of heroism that is often seen within the military- they believe that, if they are not out making arrests for any crime, however minor, our world will fall into chaos. This is where the so-called "macho man" image comes into the mix, where crime-fighting ( with a strong emphasis on fighting) is idolized over serving the community in any other way. This creates and furthers the "us versus them" mentality. This can be seen when reviewing recent protests against police brutality. The videos and photos of these events do not look like officers who are entrusted with protecting our community; they bear more likeness to an army fighting a threat. When viewing photos or videos of police brutality protests, it is not hard to see why militarism has created a rift between officers and their communities. This is partially why policing is considered to be such a controversial topic in today's climate- and the topic has caused a divide throughout the nation. One can walk down the street and hear conflicting chants

of "All cops are bastards" and "back the blue" on either side. The division caused by the militarization of policing seems to be never-ending. However, a solution has been and will continue to pull back this masculine police force and lessen the police-citizen divide with an outstretched hand: women in policing.

### **Militarization of Policing**

To militarize an organization or entity is to conform to or apply the central elements of the military model (Kraska, 2007). Using this information, one can infer that the militarization of policing is "simply the process whereby civilian police increasingly draw from, and pattern themselves around, the tenets of militarism and the military model" (Kraska, 2007). When considering militarization, or the militarization of policing, one may often find that similar images come to mind: armored outfits and vehicles, SWAT (Special Weapons and Tactics) teams, and aggressive policing tactics. With these specific images in mind, it can become increasingly difficult to then imagine a healthy and trusting relationship between these law enforcement officials and the communities they are supposed to protect. When citizens begin to think of officers as a strict ruler who exists to punish with an iron fist rather than a public servant who exists to protect, the trust between the two communities begins to diminish. As will be later

examined, research suggests that a significant impact of the militarization of policing has been the severing of the police-citizen relationship.

The ramifications of turning the force that is supposed to "protect and serve" their respective communities into a second military in which the enemy is the citizens of their own nation continue to be catastrophic. Militarization has truly changed the face of policing, as will be later examined. The reasoning as to why it is referred to as "the problem that was supposed to be the solution" can undoubtedly be seen when examining the current state of policing (Kraska, 2007).

### **History of Militarization**

Militarized police forces became prevalent in the late 1980s, as the War on Drugs gained traction (Kraska, 2007). Thanks to the relationship formed between policing and military entities during this time, police agencies began to adopt the military's philosophies and even their weapons. Policing made room for new tactics that were, at one time, only used by the military; Drug & terrorism control efforts, military weapons training, counter-civil disturbance training, and SWAT training (Kraska, 2007). To make room for these new tactics, however, they removed certain vital aspects of policing. Citizens began to see less service work and general instances of law enforcement positively interacting with the public and more instances of late-night drug raids and patrol officers who resembled military personnel.

These paramilitarism focused agencies began using military equipment on civilians, particularly those believed to be involved with drug trades, and adopted a more aggressive approach. Policy protecting this behavior was then implemented, like no-knock warrants that allowed officers to swarm houses for drug raids rather than performing traditional search warrants. As Kraska asserts, even the language surrounding the militarization of policing has played a role in normalizing the process and behaviors associated with it. Kraska states:

"Metaphors such as the war on drugs, crime, and terrorism play a powerful role in the construction of reality: they shape discursive practices, clarify values and understanding, and guide problem-solving processes. Framing the crime, terrorism, and drug problems using militaristic language, thus, will likely result in thoughts and actions which correspond with the war/military paradigm." (2001)

When paired with research later examined, this statement furthers the argument that the language surrounding the militarization of policing plays a tremendous role in how acceptable it can become within a society affected by it. This statement also draws a parallel between the violence often only associated with the military and how the militarization of policing can lead to similar tactics being adopted into policing. SWAT team raids that were once only used for life-or-death situations skyrocketed as they began using them to serve search warrants for

drug raids. Our police forces became a second military, which then started the whispers of the "us vs. them" mentality that they began teaching in police academics. This mentality and instruction, in turn, led to officers leaving the academy with the idea that everyday citizens were their enemy rather than the population they were supposed to protect. Officers were instructed to see themselves as the thin line between chaos and peace and villainized the general public.

### **Impacts of Militarization**

The move towards militarization, of course, caused tension between police officers and the communities they were trusted to protect. As new officers came out of the academy with the belief that citizens were out to get them, the sense of community-based policing began to vanish. Instead of smiling when they saw an officer, citizens ducked their heads and walked in the other direction for fear of an altercation. Even when smiling and saying hello, officers feared that the citizen would stab in the back the first chance they got. The trust was gone. Police departments have not only "leaned into" the militarization of policing, but they have also glamourized it. Police department recruitment ads now look insanely similar to military recruitment ads, even though a vast majority of a police officer's job does not involve situations like high-speed chases, helicopter rides, and shootouts.

However, these high-stakes situations are becoming slightly more common in policing through their own making. The Pittsburg Police Department, for example, spent \$250,000 on an armored personnel carrier (APC). This vehicle, purchased with a grant from Homeland Security, is used to conduct "street sweeps" in which SWAT officers patrol high-crime areas (Deitch, 2007). The deployment of police paramilitary units (PPUs) has increased at an alarmingly significant rate. This can be examined in both smaller and larger communities. Approximately 89 percent of police departments in the United States serving communities with 50,000 people or more have a PPU as of the late 1990s. This is nearly double the amount of PPUs that existed in the early to mid-1980s. In small-town police departments during the same time, around 20 percent had PPUs. Now, approximately 80 percent have them (Kraska, 2007). Overall deployments and call-outs of these units have also significantly increased. From 1980 to 2000, there was a more than 1,400 percent increase in these PPU deployments. To put this into perspective, the average yearly deployment rate in the 1980s was around 3,000. As of 2001, the annual rate of PPU deployments was estimated at 45,000. This significant increase would be relatively insignificant if these deployments were being used for situations that require such firepower. Kraska best explains the shift in reasons for deployments of PPUs, stating:

"These figures would mean little if this increase in teams and deployments was due to an increase in PPU's traditional and *essential function*- a reactive deployment of high-risk specialists for particularly hazardous events already in progress, such as hostage, sniper, or terrorist situations. Instead, more than 80 percent of these deployments were for proactive drug raids, specifically no-knock and quick-knock dynamic entries into private residences, searching for contraband (drugs, guns, and money) (2007).

This demonstrates that, as policing has become militarized, the qualifications needed for a situation to be considered dire enough to deploy a specialized and highly armed team have relaxed significantly. The shift of these requirements has had dire ramifications, like instances of innocent civilians being harmed or killed in an attempt to carry out a drug raid. Now well-known Brionna Taylor was recently killed in a similar situation, and it poses the question of how often this happens and the general public is not informed.

However, these examples are not to say that all of the militarization of policing is bad and unnecessary. For some situations, we need officers in riot gear protecting communities like hostage or terrorism situations, as previously mentioned. However, research suggests that it has gone too far and that the police-citizen relationship is in shambles. This argument can be further strengthened when considering that instances of the policing shooting unarmed

citizens and excessive use of force skyrocketed, while citizen's trust in the police bottomed out. Before discussing how women in policing are counteracting these adverse effects of policing, one must first understand how militarization impacts them and how it slows down their progress.

### **Militarization Affects Women in Policing?**

Women who are already working in policing and those who hope to one day work in policing are negatively impacted by militarization. As previously mentioned, too many police recruitment advertisements feature fast and flashy cars, high-speed chases, and adrenaline-fueled shootouts. These types of advertisements primarily appeal to male recruits (Spillar, 2015). However, in actuality, police work involves nonviolent activities and service-related interactions with the public 80-90 percent of the time (Spillar, 2015). These interactions are the type that generally appeals to women. However, they are rarely seen in recruitment videos. It is clear that the goal of these advertisements is not necessarily to bring more women into policing. They do not recruit, retain, or promote women anywhere near the same rate as men-- even though "research suggests that if they did, the nation would see far fewer tragedies like the killings of George Floyd, Laquan McDonaldor, or Eric Garner" (Tolan & Fantz, 2020).



These effects of militarization impact women in policing from the moment they see the ad to the moment they retire. However, they have a more challenging time getting into policing academies to begin their career as officers. Women in policing face many unnecessary obstacles. From harassment from male colleagues to fitness tests that tend to emphasize brawn over brains, they are supplied with reason after reason to leave policing (Tolan & Fantz, 2020).

When, despite the lack of effort used to recruit them, women decide to join the police force, they are often met with a poor welcome. Women tend to enter and remain in policing for the same reasons men do: desirable pay and benefits, the challenges associated with policing, and to help others (Janus et al., 1988). However, they often leave the policing profession for reasons very different from men. These include "...problems with coworker gossip, training, lack of promotional opportunity, administrative policies that disadvantage female officers, and pressures to demonstrate their competence beyond what is expected by their male colleagues" (Belknap & Shelley, 1993). These reasons can be the difference between staying in policing or finding a new career. This can be a difficult decision for female officers who want to help the public but are driven away by the effects of the militarization of policing. When considering that the most significant problem reported by female officers is the negative attitude of male colleagues (Christopher, 1991), it becomes a mystery as to why they would

decide to remain in the profession at all. The militarization of policing encourages force and the "macho man" image- it does not leave room for the nurturing female officer. Prokos and Padavic's 'There oughtta be a law against bitches': Masculinity lessons in the police academy training examines police academy training and the culture that accompanies it as well as identifying the masculinity that seems to inherently surround it. The authors argue that there is an "informal 'hidden curriculum'" that exists within policing- namely, the challenges women face within the police academy due to the masculine culture within it. They further expand on this argument by examining the effects of this masculine culture- women are likely to overcompensate to show that they can keep up, and men are likely to devalue the women within the academy (2002). Prokos and Padavic solidify this argument by recalling the phrase that appeared in the academy on an older television show and quickly became frequently used by the men within that academy; "There oughtta be a law against bitches!" This behavior solidifies the argument that the masculine militarization of policing affects policing from the moment trainees walk through the door and enforces this military mindset upon them. Women in policing are urged to walk and talk a certain way to be able to do what they came to do- help others. This inherent masculinity within policing begins at the very start of an officer's career, making it a much larger issue when one considers the ramifications of instilling this "brute force, man's world" complex into cadets before they can even begin their careers.

Women also face misconceptions regarding their ability within policing. Although, these misconceptions could not be farther from the truth. As previously mentioned by David Couper, many people believe that women being somewhat physically inferior to men can prevent them from successfully doing their job as officers. However, research regarding physical strength has never indicated an ability to predict an officer's effectiveness or ability to handle dangerous situations (Spillar, 2015). In fact, there have been "no documented cases of negative outcomes due to lack of strength or aggression exhibited by a female officer" (Charles, 1981). Of course, this is not to say that physical fitness is not essential as an officer; it is just prioritized much more than statistically necessary for the job.

### **Women in Policing**

The viewpoints held concerning female police officers have clearly changed over the years in terms of acceptance- as we are seeing more women than ever decide to serve their country through law enforcement. However, some aspects of outdated viewpoints regarding women in policing remain eerily similar. One of the readings from our class discusses the systematic shunning of stereotypically feminine traits within policing, stating, "Given the ideological preoccupation with masculinity in policing, however, any behavior that appears

...tied to femininity, weakness, or subjectivity is suspect and denigrated.” (Miller 1998). Miller refers to emotion in the sense that it is seen as a feminine aspect and is frowned upon within policing. It also refers to the physicality (which is considered a masculine trait) of policing. It is believed that women lack this trait; therefore, making them unfit for policing. These views, although still ingrained within policing, are incredibly outdated. Although women have been braving the field of policing for over a century, there is very little research regarding their actual value to the force. When an article argues the value of women in policing, it often scrambles to argue that men and women are completely equal in their policing capabilities without stopping to consider the benefits that female officers bring to the table. Women in policing offer fresh outlooks on age-old troubles of policing, and their usefulness needs to be further explored to understand just how much they can aid policing as a whole. Many male officers recognize that women in policing bring unique skills to the table. David Couper, chief of police in Madison, Wisconsin, states:

“Women in policing make a difference- a big difference- they make for a better police department. Haven't you wondered why women police are not the ones involved in recent officer involved shootings? After all, they are usually smaller, somewhat weaker in physical strength, and yet they don't appear to shoot suspects as often” (Spillar, 2015).

As mentioned by former chief Couper, many wonder why female officers are less likely to use deadly force, even though they are often seen as inferior and less

able to protect themselves. This quote furthers the argument that female officers find less aggressive tactics when policing and are more likely to deescalate a situation. Also, it is important to note that research conducted in many areas (including California, New York City, and St. Louis) found that male and female officers were equally capable of successful performance as patrol officers, regardless of physical fitness (Martin & Jurkin, 2007).

Research comparing the promotional aspirations of male and female officers explains why hiring or promoting "token" female officers can do more harm than good. Archbold, Hassell, and Stichman explore the reasoning behind their findings and argue that police and "token" culture often discourage women's promotional aspirations. The authors expand on this argument by demonstrating how women in policing truly feel about the topic- citing several female officers within the study who elaborated that they do not desire to promote due to being seen as the "token female" who is promoted on the grounds of gender rather than qualifications (2010).

Archbold, Hassell, and Stichman create groundbreaking hypotheses within this study, as the closest studies in relation are scarcely correlated and decades old. Like the Seklecki and Paynich study, the authors find ways to turn the first-hand accounts and opinions of officers into actual data to prove their argument further. The "tokenism" theory is relatively new, and Archbold, Hassell, and Stichman use their research to argue its existence. Although women in policing experience many negative instances within their careers, Archbold,

Hassell, and Stichman demonstrate that selective special treatment and tokenism- while they may seem helpful on the surface- are anything but. The authors reinforce the idea that this behavior does more harm than good when minorities are given special treatment that they never asked for. This type of special treatment can cause resentment between coworkers and create doubt of the officers ability to perform tasks (2010).

In Community policing: a police-citizen partnership, Palmiotto elaborates on the fundamental role of community-oriented policing by putting it into contexts such as public expectations, ethics within law enforcement, and community wellness. The author also provides a history of women in policing and how their primary roles were still that of social workers- nurturing types. The view of these roles can still be somewhat accurate today and helped shape the crime prevention control model, where social work was considered the highest form of policing and women were “inherently better than men at preventing crime” (Palmiotto, 2011).

### **History of Women in Policing**

In the late 1800s and early 1900s, women performed their first "breaking and entering" into policing by utilizing their femininity and roles as mothers to their advantage (Maiorano, 2017). Women in policing were initially referred to as "municipal mothers" or "city mothers." Their roles mainly were acting as mothers for the community, especially when handling cases involving women and

children. In September of 1910, the first policewoman of the United States, Alice Stebbins Wells, was officially sworn into office at the Los Angeles Police Department. While she is recognized as the first official police officer in the country, she is not the first woman to operate as an officer in the United States. Women had been serving as matrons in jails and communities in an unofficial capacity for years (Maiorano, 2017).

In 1856, 23-year-old widow Kate Warne approached Pinkerton founder Allan Pinkerton with interest in becoming a private detective. Admittedly, Allan Pinkerton was skeptical and told her he did not have much interest in hiring a woman. Kate Warne pled her case by explaining that she could be a valuable asset to his company by pointing out that she can befriend wives of targets and go to places where men could not go (Klein, 2021). Pinkerton hired her, and it turned out to be one of the best decisions of his career- as she would go on to handle what is still considered the most significant success in the company's history. In 1861, Kate Warne went undercover and acquired information that saved then-president-elect Abraham Lincoln from an assassination attempt. She came up with an idea to dress him as a disabled man to evade the threat, and he made it through unharmed (Klein, 2021). Three years later, Lincoln would go on to sign the Emancipation Proclamation. Without Kate Warne's fantastic work, the face of the country could look very different today.

"The role of female officers at the beginning of the 20th century was to aid (and not replace) male officers by performing duties deemed to be 'unmasculine' or 'not true police work,' such as supervising juveniles in custody and clerical work. The demographic landscape of local American police departments has undergone notable change since the 1980s" (Sklansky, 2006).

This quote describes the landscape of this period and how some still feel towards women in policing, that they are doing a man's job. However, when reviewing data regarding female officers, it is clear that this belief is far from the truth. Research conducted by Snortum and Beyers found no meaningful difference between male and female officers in their activities or productivity on patrol (1983).

Darien's "The alter ego of the patrolman? Policewomen and the discourse of difference in the NYPD" explores both the historical and current role of women in policing and argues that women in policing obtained equal roles within policing by playing to their strengths; namely, the fact that they are different from their male counterparts. Darien examines how female officers presented themselves, particularly as the "feminine alter ego" to the stereotypical male officer (Darien, 2002). When considering this with NYPD's own admittance that some jobs considered to be "a policeman's role" were better fulfilled by women, the



argument that women in policing are not the same as men in policing is further solidified. Many are quick to come to the aid of women in policing by stating that they are unequivocally equal to their male counterparts. However, Darien's viewpoint urges the reader to challenge this notion and note that the femininity of women in policing carries a positive connotation instead of a negative one.

Although Darien focuses more so on the past of women in policing, Seklecki and Paynich's "A national survey of female police officers an overview of findings" strengthens the argument that female officers bring unique qualities to policing in modern times. The two authors examine a national study of female police officers and use this data to further their argument regarding the motivations, treatment, and willingness to use force among women in policing. According to this article, the primary motivation for a woman entering law enforcement is the desire to help people (2007). However, a significant percentage of respondents revealed that they were "made to feel less welcome than males... and they were treated worse than male officers when they first began their careers in law enforcement." These accounts strengthen the argument that female officers bring a nurturing quality to the table and the argument regarding the masculine police force.

## Women in Policing Statistics

Of course, when examining a topic such as this one, it is vital to ensure an opinion is formed upon statistics rather than preconceived notions about sex or gender roles. Statistically, women are less likely to use force and even less likely to use excessive force than their male colleagues- even though they face the same amount of dangerous situations on average (Bocar et al., 2021). It is also essential to note that there is a difference between use of force and excessive use of force. Use of force are simply instances where an officer uses force in an arrest or altercation. Excessive use of force is when, as the name describes, an officer uses an excessive amount of force. In a study surrounding Chicago, Illinois, from 2012-2015, there were 1,339,069 police officers on the force. Women made up almost 20 percent, with 264,526 officers. There were 7,949 use of force incidents, with women being responsible for 1,125- or around 14 percent (Bocar et al., 2021). Women in policing tend to use force fewer times, precisely 0.09 fewer times than their male counterparts (Bocar et al., 2021). At the Los Angeles Police Department, men made up approximately 80 percent of the patrol force in the 1990s. However, these men were responsible for 96 percent of payouts in excessive force cases. Conversely, women composed about 20 percent of the patrol force and were responsible for only 4 percent of payouts in excessive force cases (Bergman et al., 2016).

As previously mentioned, women in policing use force 0.09 fewer times than their male counterparts. While this may seem like an insignificant amount, it can have a rather significant impact. Bergman, Walker, and Jean state:

"...given the ratio of male to female officers, this means that for every 100 times that *one* female officer used force, just over *six* male officers used force 111 times *each* or about 705 times in *total*. This means that the somewhat small elevation in the use of force by male officers compared with female officers results in an extra 105 instances of force than would happen if male officers used force at the same rate that female officers do" (2016).

This introduces the notion that, although the difference of use-of-force incidences between male and female officers may seem insignificant, they can have a lasting impact on the communities they serve.

This is not intended to imply that all female officers are perfect and beyond speculation of their actions if they are not upholding the standards required of law enforcement officials. Instead, these statistics and their presentation are intended to highlight the trend between female officers and lower force rates. The following quote is an account of the shooting of Terence Crutcher, as told by William & Dickerson:

"Betty Jo Shelby drew her gun and warned the man to stop walking. But Terence Crutcher continued moving toward his S.U.V., which he had left in

the middle of the road, the driver's side door open and the engine running. He was mumbling to himself, but his hands were raised in the air. Moments later, officer Shelby fired a single shot, leaving Mr. Crutcher dead in the street. She told investigators she believed he had a weapon. But he was unarmed. Prosecutors indicted her on Thursday on a charge of "first-degree murder" (2016).

The recount of this incident supports the idea that women should still be held accountable for their actions as police officers. As previously mentioned, the thesis and goal of this work do not dispute that idea. The goal is to highlight the lower likelihood of incidents like these occurring when a female officer is involved in the situation. From 2005-2019, there were 77 police officers charged with murder or manslaughter for a shooting that occurred while the officer was on duty. Including officer Shelby, as mentioned above, only three of these charges involved a female officer. The other two female officers were not convicted (Stinson et al., 2019). This demonstrates that women are not as likely to use force. Instead, they are more likely to find different ways to handle situations- and doing this helps lessen the divide between police officers and the communities they serve.

## Women in Policing Techniques

Female officers bring unique qualities to policing in modern times. Many studies find that, despite similar activities and effectiveness, female officers are more likely to use a less authoritarian method of policing that does not rely on physical force (Grennan 1987). In 1974, Price found that female police executives were found to be "more flexible, emotionally independent, self-assertive, self-confident, proactive, and creative" than their male counterparts. On the other hand, male police executives were found to be more authoritarian and prejudiced than their female counterparts. The National Center for Women in Policing (NCWP) found:

"...women officers often possess better communication skills than their male counterparts and are better able to facilitate the cooperation and trust required to implement a community policing model. They are better at defusing violent confrontations with citizens and less likely to become involved in problems with use of excessive force."

Though anecdotal, this viewpoint and the outcomes of the previous videos bear a striking resemblance. As previously mentioned, female officers are much less likely to be involved in an excessive force lawsuit (Bergman et al., 2016). Hiring and retaining more female officers is thought to be an effective means of

preventing costly lawsuits and protecting citizens by decreasing overall use of force and citizen complaints (Lonsway, 2000).

Women in policing also tend to respond more effectively to incidents of violence against women (Lonsway, 2000). These types of calls are the largest category of calls made to police departments each year within the United States (Spillar et al., 1993). Research shows that anywhere from two to three million women are physically assaulted by their male partners each year in the United States (Straus & Gelles, 1991). As one would generally suspect, women would often prefer not to sort through the details of her assault with a male officer right after another man has assaulted her. While it makes sense that, after a woman is a victim of violence, she is much more likely to prefer the presence of a female officer than a male officer- it is proven that female officers handle these situations much more effectively than their male counterparts. Not only are women better suited for this type of situation simply because of their gender, but they have long been seen as more effective than their male counterparts in this area (Shulz, 1995). To further this point, a 1985 study reported that women in policing demonstrated more concern, understanding, and patience than their male counterparts when responding to calls related to domestic violence (Homnant & Kennedy, 1985). The domestic violence victims involved in the same study rated the police response as more helpful when they made contact with a female officer. They also had more favorable ratings for those female officers (Homnant

& Kennedy, 1985). As the research suggests, women in policing often best handle these types of situations. This ability is essential to consider, as it is the most common type of call to police departments. A consistent response towards battered women similar to the one female officers deliver can tremendously help women who have been assaulted, as it has been shown to improve their self-esteem (Brown, 1994).

As earlier discussed, women in policing are less likely to use force or excessive force. However, regardless of routine activity, female officers are still significantly less likely to be involved in incidents of both deadly and excessive force (Horvath, 1987). These statistics can assist in drawing a parallel when attempting to understand how women in policing counteract the adverse effects of militarization. Barlett & Rosenblum state:

"Community policing represents a new approach to modern law enforcement, emphasizing communication and cooperation with citizens as well as informal problem-solving. It is therefore important to note that women officers receive more favorable evaluations and fewer citizen complaints than their male counterparts" (1988).

This explanation demonstrates the parallel between female officers and the trust within their communities. By utilizing non-aggressive tactics like communication and informal problem solving (like having a dance battle, as earlier mentioned), women in policing are better able to form tighter bonds with the citizens they

serve. Women in policing are also more likely and better able to express empathy towards others and interact with the public in a manner that does not set out to "prove" something, unlike their male counterparts (Pike, 1985). This ability to express emotions and refrain from aggression is sometimes seen as too "feminine" for policing. However, this is actually a critical part of how women in policing counteract militarization.

Possessing these stereotypical feminine features is also proven to correlate with better communications skills and can facilitate trust in a more effective manner (NCWP). These traits can help the officer de-escalate a situation that would have otherwise resulted in a physical altercation, or even a fatal one. Although these traits are often looked down on within policing, they strengthen the police-citizen relationship and keep officers safe. Typically, when an everyday citizen thinks of an officer "staying safe," they generally imagine an officer being able to handle themselves physically. This notion is constant with the "macho man" physical altercations we see on policing themed television shows. While this is somewhat true, it is proven that female police officers are much better at preventing a situation from escalating to a point where they have to defend themselves in the first place. However, suppose the situation still becomes a physical one. In that case, it is essential to remember that female officers would not have qualified to become an officer if they could not defend themselves. Still, female officers are much more likely to prevent these incidents



from occurring. The Bureau of Justice Assistance states, “Research conducted both in the U.S. and internationally clearly demonstrates that women police officers use a style of policing that relies less on physical force” (NCWP).

### **Conclusion**

In conclusion, the militarization of policing has had a vicious impact on the relationship between officers and their communities. However, women in policing are leading the charge to lessen this divide. These women are not doing it to help lower the use of force numbers or fill a quota; they are in the field of policing because they are there to help people- and they have been doing it long before officers were a frequent topic of the news. Women seem to be our past, present, and future to policing, but more needs to be done. In the name of equality, many articles stress that male and female officers are essentially the same. However, by doing this, they are harming the reputation of female officers. Women in policing are unique in their own way, making them better equipped to handle certain situations. These situations can include anything from deciding whether to use force to care for women who were victims of violence. The argument that women in policing are different from their male counterparts and will ultimately help strengthen the police-community relationship is crucial because it highlights the unique traits that female officers bring to policing. It is imperative to understand what aspects of policing that female officers are better at so they can

be used to handle those situations and help further the reach of policing as a whole. This is not to suggest that female officers should take over every aspect of policing. Instead, it is to suggest that administrators examine what women in policing are doing right, and then work to implement that into the rest of policing. For example, since female officers are often better at communication and de-escalation skills and this lowers their rates of excessive use of force, administrators should examine this and provide agency-wide training on these skills. The divide between police officers and their communities is arguably worse than it has ever been. The only way we can begin to strengthen it is by allowing women to counteract the brute force approach used by a militarized police force. Often seen as the nurturers of the police force, women in policing counteract this looming force of militarization by using other types of policing that step outside expectations and rely less on threats or force. Although some may see women unfit for policing, female officers will help mend the strained police-citizen relationship.

Although the militarization of policing first began in the early 1980s with the War on Drugs, citizens still see and experience the effects of paramilitarism today. These effects can be anything from the glamorization of unrealistic job descriptions of law enforcement officials to the lack of recruitment and promotions for women in policing. Women in policing also feel the wrath of militarization, especially when considering the "macho man" persona many

female officers feel is required to fit in or hearing phrases like "There oughtta be a law against bitches."

Despite some still holding onto outdated beliefs of female officers doing a "man's job," policing is finally starting to see more women join the force. As time progresses, female officers and their administrators alike are starting to realize that women in policing can still be feminine and protect their community. This femininity can help female officers connect with their citizens, especially battered women who need them the most.

Although policing is undoubtedly making steps in the right direction, it still has much progress to make. To truly begin to work towards a future in policing in which women can feel comfortable in the policing profession and citizens can trust the officers meant to protect them, women must be recruited, retained, and promoted at the same rates as men. Comprehensive studies should be performed to examine what tactics women use in policing, so others can learn from them. If the field of policing can manage to become more accepting in these ways, we will indeed see a better world both for the field of policing and those affected by it.

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