

## **Women on Patrol: An Analysis of Differences in Officer Arrest Behavior**

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### **ABSTRACT**

**Purpose:** The current research examines whether officer gender influences the decision to arrest, and whether correlates of officer decision making vary across gender.

**Design/methodology/approach:** Data on police-public encounters were systematically collected by performing social observations of police officers. Multivariate models were estimated to examine the correlates of arrest for all encounters, encounters involving male officers, and encounters involving female officers. Results were compared and contrasted across officer gender.

**Findings:** Gender has little direct impact on the arrest decision; however, some variation exists depending on citizens' race, gender and demeanor. The most noteworthy differences were observed based upon whether officer actions are conducted in the presence of other members of the organization, and where these other members are in the organizational hierarchy. Female officers were significantly more likely to arrest when observed by supervisors, yet less likely to arrest in the presence of peers. The visibility to other organizational members conditions the decision to arrest differently for female officers.

**Research limitations:** The current research is limited to examining only the decision to arrest. Other discretionary choices made during police-public encounters are not explored.

**Practical implications:** Results have implications for the examination of how social control is exercised across gender, and has implications for how organizations evaluate officer performance.

Originality: This research expands the understanding of the influence of officer gender on arrest decision making.

Keywords: Gender, police, arrest, discretion

Paper type: Research paper

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Gender diversity in police organizations has increased over time, but policing remains a male-dominated occupation. Early police administrators cautioned against full female integration into all aspects of policing, specifically street patrol. Wilson and McClaren (1963), in their influential text on police administration (Walker, 1984), openly resisted equal employment and questioned whether women were capable and qualified to be effective officers. Between common sex-role stereotypes and the ideological emphasis of the law enforcement and crime fighting roles in policing, the prevailing wisdom suggested that females were not as rational, more irritable, less aggressive, less reliable, weaker physically, possessed unstable emotions, and were generally less qualified than males (DeJong, 2004; Garcia, 2003; Miller, 1999; Milton, 1972; Parsons and Jesilow, 2001). Many of the cautions against women on patrol under the Professional Model of policing could not withstand legal or empirical scrutiny, and the systematic exclusion of women has all but disappeared in American law enforcement (Martin and Jurik, 2007). Police departments now publicly encourage gender equality, and females are now actively recruited into policing (Lonsway, 2000; Sklansky, 2006).

Growth in the number of females in policing since the 1970s, and the fact that their presence is greatest at the patrol level, suggests the organizational culture that barred women from law enforcement has changed over time (or at least that women have been increasingly successful in overcoming entry-level barriers to policing). Nevertheless, empirical and policy questions remain about actual differences between male and female officers on patrol, whether there are discernable difference in the behaviors of street level officers due to officer gender, and what influences observed differences. Of note is the limited information on whether female

officers differ from male officers in the use of their fundamental arrest powers, (all else being equal while on routine patrol (National Research Council, 2004).

This study examines arrest behavior by male and female officers working routine patrol in an urban police department to determine whether significant variation exists in their treatment of criminal suspects. Due to the fact that females are still statistical minorities within police organizations, and socially they experience the police culture and workplace differently than their male peers, we argue that officer gender influences arrest outcomes. Specifically, we argue that male and female officers are influenced differently by extra legal factors in police-suspect encounters, that the normative order of policing has different meaning and effect for women officers, and that the organizational visibility of police-suspect encounters will significantly influence arrest outcomes.

## **Women in Policing**

The role of female officers at the beginning of the 20<sup>th</sup> 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). Contemporary policing operates with male and female officers working side-by-side, particularly as patrol officers with equal police powers and responsibilities (Garcia, 2003; Martin and Jurik, 2007; Miller, 1999; Miller and Hodge, 2004). Although women remain an underrepresented group, the number of female officers has risen steadily since the 1970s (Balkin, 1988; Martin, 1989). The percent of women in municipal law enforcement agencies increased from “7.6% in 1987 to nearly 12% in 2007” (Langton, 2010, p. 3), with the greatest increases in large police departments. While official estimates of female representation within supervisory

positions are difficult to determine, the proportion of women administrators and policy makers in policing is well-recognized as considerably lower than the numbers at the front line level (National Center for Women and Policing, 2001). For example, in a survey of 247 agencies employing at least 100 officers, women comprised 9.6% of the supervisory positions and 7.3% of the top administrative positions (National Center for Women and Policing, 2002).

### *Importance of Studying Officer Arrest Behavior*

The history of discrimination and questionable use of discretion by the police, particularly against minorities, has been a significant part of the impetus behind research and reform related to policing. Next to the use of force, the arrest decision is probably the most studied decision of street-level police officers (National Research Council, 2004). While phenomenon related to racial profiling (e.g., stops, searches, ticketing) has dominated the attention of American policy makers, practitioners, and scholars since the late 1990s, officer arrest behavior remains an important inquiry for several reasons.

First, as part of their role within society and the criminal justice system, the police have a mandate to enforce the law. Individual officers routinely make arrest decisions that potentially hold law breakers accountable for wrongdoings, and they make arrest decisions that deprive citizens of their liberty. Arrests bring about the formal initiation of a citizen into the criminal justice system, and decisions made at this initial decision making point can impact the subsequent criminal justice process.

Second, while they have a mandate to enforce the law, police officers wield a great amount of discretion in how their arrest powers are utilized. Arrest is an option all officers have during encounters with citizens. It represents their use of formal authority and is a recognized strategy for handling an encounter with a member of the public. In fact, it is one of the most

punitive responses that street officers have at their disposal (Klinger, 1996a). On the street, however, citizens have little ability or power to contest the legitimacy of an officer's arrest decision. Policing scholars have revealed what policing practitioners have always known: like the use of physical force, the arrest option is rarely utilized, even in situations where officers are legally justified to do so (Black, 1980; Novak et al., 2002; Terrill and Paoline, 2007). Furthermore, while arrest decisions are surely driven by legal factors extra legal factors also influence officer behavior (Worden, 1989), and arrest outcomes can be influenced by the demographic characteristics of the officer (Brown and Frank, 2006). The discretionary nature of arrest makes it a police action that can result in significant disparate and/or discriminatory outcomes.

Third, at the individual- and agency-level, arrest is commonly used as a measure of performance. Police agencies and the public use counts of arrests when evaluating departmental efficiency (White, 2008). Arrest is also an important and critical outcome for purposes of evaluation within the organization. Officer productivity is often measured by documentable indicators of activity and efficiency (e.g., arrests, citations, seizures, etc.). Individual officers are aware of both agency directives and occupational (social) norms regarding desirable performance, and their discretionary choices in the field can be influenced by such factors (Johnson, 2009; Mastrofski, Ritti and Snipes, 1994). Fully understanding the decision to arrest has implications for law enforcement as a measure of individual officer 'productivity' and as such has implications for supervision, field training and performance evaluation.

### *Female Officer Arrest Behavior*

Due to the historical underrepresentation of women in policing, early research efforts were limited because of difficulties in obtaining sufficient data to facilitate rigorous analysis.

Research conducted female officers on patrol in the 1970s generally found that female officers initiated fewer encounters with citizens, and when they did encounter citizens they made fewer arrests (Balkin, 1988; Bloch and Anderson, 1974; Sherman, 1975). More importantly, while some of the studies of the time were methodologically flawed and potentially biased against female officers (Morash and Greene, 1986), the research helped establish that women were fully capable of performing on par with fellow male officers. As empirical research on arrest and other officer behaviors increased in the 1980s and 1990s, conclusions developed that officer-level correlates in general yielded limited explanatory power in arrest studies after controlling for other factors (Worden, 1989; Riksheim and Chermak, 1993). Such findings have been confirmed by more recent research indicating that male and female officers make similar arrest decisions during encounters with suspects (Feder, 1997; Parsons and Jesilow, 2001; Robinson, 2000; Stalans and Finn, 2000). Similar findings of no effect have also been also reported for the decision to issue a traffic citation (Lundman, 2009), or issuing a citation in lieu of making an arrest (Brown and Frank, 2005). As such, it is common that studies on police-citizen encounters do not include officer gender or other demographic characteristics as an explanatory variable (Brown and Frank, 2006). Nevertheless, gender-specific research on police behavior has continued to progress, but not in the area of arrest.

A broad body of research focusing on whether there are observed behavioral differences for women officers exists (e.g., see Hoffman and Hickey, 2005, and Bazley, Lersch and Mieczkowski, 2007, regarding use of force; Paoline and Terrill, 2004, and Schuck and Rabe-Hemp, 2005, regarding use of coercion; DeJong, 2004, and Rabe-Hemp, 2008, regarding use of comforting or supportive actions). In regards to arrest, the role of officer gender in domestic violence situations has been assessed (Robinson and Chandek, 2000). However, there is a need



for research on women working the frontlines of law enforcement, relative to their male counterparts, and how female officers use their powers of arrest when interacting with criminal suspects during routine encounters.

Some analyses of female officer behavior have focused on composite measures of officer behavior involving the use of force or coercive actions where arrest is part of a multi-action outcome measure. For example, actions involving verbal commands or threats, searches or physical restraint, and arrest are combined to create dichotomous measures indicating controlling behaviors (Rabe-Hemp, 2008) or interval measures of coercion (Sun, 2007). Rabe-Hemp (2008) found that female officers were more likely to engage in “extreme controlling” behavior when police supervisors were involved in the encounter, but were less likely to arrest when peer officers were present. Officers were considered to be utilizing “extreme controlling” behavior if they did any of the following to a citizen: searched, physically restrained, threatened or made an arrest. Sun (2007), however, found no significant difference in the use of controlling actions by female officers and male officers during domestic violence encounters. Control was measured through a seven-item additive scale arrest at high-end of the scale. Such measures have theoretical and practical merit for understanding police use of authority and control, and arrest is a clear exercise of police formal authority and control. Unfortunately, these complex measures do not provide a clear picture on what (if anything) influences the arrest decisions of the officers being studied (Brown, Novak and Frank, 2009; Sun and Payne, 2004).

The extant research pertaining to officer gender does not identify direct effects for gender on officer behavior. However, the research does suggest that male and female officers are not identical or uniform in their behavior towards citizens. It is not clear whether females process situational cues in encounters similar to males when it comes to the arrest decision. Female

officers may come to the same discretionary decisions as males, there may be no significant difference in their overall likelihood to arrest a citizen, but it is likely that the factors influencing the choice to arrest are inconsistent across sexes. Stated differently, just because females may statistically be “no more or less” likely to make an arrest (or issue a citation, or use force) does not mean that they are influenced by situational and organizational correlates in the same manner as males. The current study contribute to this particular body of the literature by examining the relationship between officer gender and arrest and by comparing the correlates of arrest decisions by male and female officers.

### **Theoretical Frameworks**

There are two general perspectives on why (and subsequently how) the behavior of female officers may differ from male officers. The “difference” or predisposition perspective suggests that men and women are biologically different and from infancy are socialized differently in society, and those differences essentially would (do) not disappear at the doors of the training academy or when an officer puts on the badge and uniform (Martin and Jurik, 2007). The sameness or occupational socialization perspective suggests that individual characteristics like gender or race significantly become muted once individuals are assimilated or socialized into police work and the organizational culture of policing (Martin and Jurik, 2007).

Relative to men, women are considered to be less physically aggressive, better verbal communicators, and be more nurturing and supporting, and such “traditionally female” characteristics could translate into a distinctive style of policing that would be good for contemporary law enforcement (i.e., community policing) (Rabe-Hemp, 2008). Research to date on officer behavior, however, has not provided much support for the belief that female officer’s conduct with citizens is directly influenced by their “feminine nature” alone, if at all. Studies

looking at officer use of coercive police actions, behaviors more considered to be “masculine”, have generally found no or limited effects for officer gender (Paoline and Terrill, 2004; Rabe-Hemp, 2008; Sun and Payne, 2004). Surprisingly, there has also been little evidence to sustain the belief that women officers are more likely (if at all likely) to engage in comforting or supportive actions with citizens, including victims, which is thought to be a cornerstone of their “feminine nature” (Rabe-Hemp, 2008; Sun, 2007). Indeed, from the literature on officer behavior and police culture it appears the nature of policing and the occupational environment influence officer behavior more significantly than gender alone, but this does not mean that occupational socialization produces the same effects on female and male officers.

There is little doubt that females differentially experience their occupation, including the pressure and stress associated with tokenism, differential socialization into the brotherhood of policing, different aspirations concerning advancement and sexual harassment (Archbold and Schulz, 2008; Archbold, Hassell and Stichman, 2010; Belknap, 2001; Belknap and Shelley, 1993; Daum and Johns, 1994; Fielding, 1994; Franklin, 2005; Haarr, 1997; Haarr and Morash, 1999; Hunt, 1984; Martin, 1989; Martin and Jurik, 2007; Morash and Haarr, 1995; Somvadee and Morash, 2009; Timmins and Hainsworth, 1989). Despite the rhetoric associated with police departments embracing gender diversity, the reality is that females are often marginalized within the gendered police organization. Police departments are gendered, bureaucratic organizations. The impact of differential socialization on females in such organizations and the need to perform according to the expectations of peers and supervisors has not been explored adequately within the literature on the decision to arrest.

### *The Organizational Environment*

A crucial substantive topic in any discussion about women in policing is the formal and informal influence of the organizational environment on the behavior (and attitudes) of female officers (Martin and Jurik, 2007; Archbold, Hassell and Stichman, 2010). Most of the early stereotypes about women as officers have their genesis in the organizational culture of policing and the perception of what police work entails. In addition to being a male dominated occupation, policing reinforces masculinities. As Fielding (1994, p. 47) states, “[i]t is almost cliché that policing is a ‘macho’ occupation”, a perspective that has been forwarded by others (Belknap, 2001; Belknap and Shelley, 1993; Franklin, 2005; Herbert 1997, 1998; Hunt, 1984; Martin, 1989; Martin and Jurik, 2007; Miller 1999; Prokos and Padavic, 2002; Waddington, 1999). While machismo dominates the culture of policing, it is inaccurate to suggest that it creates a monolithic police culture. Research indicates that great variation exists within policing when it comes to cultural values (Paoline, 2003). Nonetheless, the macho emphasis likely has the influence of supporting a crime-fighting orientation, specifically law enforcement centric behaviors like arrest (DeJong, 2004; Herbert 1997; Miller, 1999; Miller and Hodge, 2004). As Fielding (1994, p. 47) continues, the “key question, as in other domains of social life, is the relationship between culture and action.”

Herbert (1997) argues there are pervasive normative orders that give meaning to discretionary behavior. These orders include the (1) adventure and machismo (the demonstration of courage and strength), (2) law (preserving legal regulations), (3) bureaucratic control (maintaining order through the chain of command and differentiation of responsibilities, or functional versus hierarchical differentiation), (4) competency (demonstrating worthiness to others within the organization as well as citizens), (5) safety (the preservation of life), and (6) morality (the triumph of good over evil). We use elements of Herbert’s thesis to guide the

current study, particularly the normative orders pertaining to adventure and machismo, law, bureaucratic control, and competency. While we do not attempt to test Herbert's thesis in this study, we believe it helps explain how the organizational socialization and the working environment of (female) officers can influence behavior in the field, such as arrest.

First, officers value the normative order of adventure and machismo. Officers are encouraged, and often seek out, adventurous calls and situations in order to act out their courage, power and aggressiveness. Despite the fact that police work is largely routine and mundane (Bayley, 1994), the opportunity for adventure, law enforcement, coercion and danger are always present. "Street smarts" are valued, and officers who seek non-street level positions within the organization are often labeled "station queens". Female officers must be comfortable engaging in adventurous/macho behavior in order to be fully accepted within the organization. Herbert (1997) states that the "bias against women is couched in the very terms of the adventure/machismo normative order: women do not possess the necessary strength and tenacity to do combat with the violent enemies of the police. As a result...a woman's fellow officers are endangered because she is unable to protect them" (p. 94).

Second, there is an emphasis on law enforcement, as the law provides a resource for officers as they engage in social control. While the police are responsible for a variety of different tasks (e.g., law enforcement, peacekeeping, and service) it remains true that law enforcement and crime control is their statutory and occupational mandate (Burton, Frank, Langworthy and Barker, 1993; Manning, 1977). The law defines what behaviors are prohibited, and under what conditions the police may engage in formal social control (regardless of officer gender). This normative order goes hand in hand with the adventure/machismo order, as it guides

what types of things are primarily valued by the police (namely, law enforcement and crime fighting).

Third, policing is performed within highly complex bureaucracies that emphasize policy, formal rules, and the chain of command (Herbert 1997; Langworthy, 1986). Bureaucratic ordering not only varies across geography (e.g., space, beats, and jurisdictions) but also within the internal hierarchy of authority (e.g., rank, special units). The command-and-control, punishment orientation of the police bureaucracy encourages routine and predictable outcomes within highly complex situations (Bayley, 1994). Within the hierarchy, members of higher ranks have greater authority than those at lower levels, and (though not always) line-level officers are expected to defer to those at higher rank. However, officers are also sensitive to the norms of others within their subgroup, and these working groups too have the ability to shape and influence behavior of officers (Klinger, 1997). Both peers and supervisors within the bureaucratic organization have the ability to shape behavior.

Fourth, officers are to demonstrate competency, both to citizens as well as internal audiences such as peer officers and supervisors. Occupational competency primarily involves being able to command compliance from criminal suspects, and failure of citizens to defer to officers is likely to be met with sanctions. This is consistent with the assertion that hostile or disrespectful citizen demeanor increases the likelihood of arrest. While there are some notable exceptions to this relationship (Klinger 1994, 1996b), most research suggests exhibiting a hostile demeanor significantly increases the likelihood of negative outcomes (Black, 1980; Engel et al., 2000; Lundman, 1994; Sun, 2007; Westley, 1953; Worden and Shepard, 1996; Worden, 1989). Citizen hostility is a threat to officer competency, and officers react accordingly. Officers are

also sensitive to demonstrations of competency within the organization, including other officers and supervisors (Rabe-Hemp, 2008).

Related to the above, officers will engage in actions when they anticipate that there are rewards associated with specified performance. Vroom (1964) argued that according to expectancy theory employees produce outputs if they anticipate these outputs will produce internal rewards, such as positive performance evaluations, promotion, praise and group acceptance (Roberg, Kuykendall and Novak, 2002). Extant research has examined this view using a variety of outputs, and report mixed support (DeJong, Mastrofski and Parks, 2001; Johnson, 2006; Mastrofski, Ritti and Snipes, 1994). There is support for the expectancy perspective if the outputs are measured as formal outputs (Johnson, 2009). Arrest is a traditional law enforcement output. However imperfect it may be for determining value or merits of an officer's overall performance, it is an easily verifiable measure of productivity and is recognized by officers as an important performance indicator.

Taken in totality, the above discussion suggests that officers are encouraged to engage in adventurous/macho behavior while operating within the rules and formal structure of a complex bureaucracy. Further, behaviors that are most encouraged will be consistent with the law enforcement ethos. The need to demonstrate competency is important and this competency must be demonstrated to citizens and to internal organizational actors. It is likely that officers, regardless of gender, will engage in actions that are most likely to elevate their status, actions that will garner desired reactions from members of the organization, particularly from supervisors. Accordingly, the visibility of officer arrest behavior in the field will likely be influenced by organizational peers, particularly supervisors, as it is consistent with the crime fighting image of policing.

Because police departments are gendered organizations, the organizational structure is not gender neutral, and there is gender segregation at work (Acker, 1990). As a complex organization, the police department is a cultural arena where disseminated cultural images of gender are invented and reproduced (such as the “station queen” moniker given to officers who avoid street-level assignments). Women are more likely to be in positions at the bottom of the organizational hierarchy, occupying fewer positions of policy creation or supervision (see National Center for Women and Policing, 2001), resulting in females emphasizing traditional masculine roles within the male dominated organization. Hence, we expect this different experience will manifest itself in subtle but important ways when comparing the behavior of male and female officers.

### **The Current Study**

We argue that while discretionary choices by male and female officers are comparable overall (comparable as far as outcome), there exist subtle, but important, differences across the common correlates of arrest between the sexes. We expect gender differences to be manifested in the common correlates of arrest, particularly during encounters in which other organizational members are present. After controlling for legal factors, citizen characteristics and citizen behaviors, we anticipate the presence of other organizational members during police-public encounters to have differing influences on male and female officers. We believe female officers will use discretion in arrest decisions differently than male officers while being observed by peers or supervisors. To understand better the behavior of female officers, we compare the predictors of their arrest decisions to those of male officers in an effort to assess whether their decisions to arrest differ from similar interactions between male officers and suspects.

### **Methods***Systematic Social Observations*



Data for this study were collected through systematic social observations (SSO) of street level officers of the Cincinnati Police Division (CPD) between April 1997 and April 1998. The Cincinnati Study, next to the Project on Policing Neighborhoods (PPN: Summer 1996 and Summer 1997), is the most recent large-scale data set obtained through SSO. Although systematic social observation is not flawless (see Spano, 2003 for the concern about officer reactivity) it does have the advantage over other approaches of capturing more detailed information on police-citizen interactions over the entire incident. For instance, SSO enables researchers to collect contextual and citizen information surrounding police activities, which are difficult to document through other procedures (e.g., surveys, interviews, vignettes). Most important, SSO data facilitates robust analysis of actual officer and citizen behavior during encounters.

The CPD was a police agency of roughly 1,000 sworn officers in 1997. The SSO involved trained graduate-student observers who accompanied police officers in their natural setting during randomly selected shifts and recorded everything the officers did during their normal work shift. All observers were trained on note taking and how to use coding instruments in a systematic fashion to ensure the collection of reliable and valid data, resulting in uniformity and reliability between observers on how to categorize the social world of police officers. Data on citizen characteristics, such as gender, race, approximate age, and whether they were under the influence of drugs or alcohol, were collected. The observational data also contained contextual information on where the encounter took place, the actions taken by the officer and the citizen while in the presence of one another (such as whether either party was hostile or antagonistic to the other), and other characteristics of the encounter (e.g., the severity of the alleged citizen behavior that prompted the encounter, and the presence of other officers or

supervisors). Researchers conducted 442 shift observations that yielded information on 2,671 encounters between the police and all citizens. We follow prior research on discretion and arrest by focusing only on encounters between the police and citizens who were identified as suspects of criminal activity (see Engel, 2003; Novak, Smith, Frank and Engel, 2002; Paoline and Terrill, 2004; Terrill and Paoline, 2007). Our analyses focus on the 617 encounters with suspects, which is approximately 23.1% of all observed encounters.<sup>1</sup>

### Variables

The current inquiry addresses contextual variation between male and female officers as it relates to the decision to arrest a suspect. Arrest is defined as taking a citizen into custody for the purpose of criminal prosecution, and could occur either at the scene of the encounter or at the police station. This variable was measured as a dichotomy where 0 = no arrest and 1 = arrest. Table 1 provides descriptive statistics for variables used in these analyses.

Prior research on police-citizen encounters has identified a number of theoretically relevant situational control variables that can be categorized across several dimensions. Two legal variables were used in this analysis: offense seriousness and quantity of evidence. Offense seriousness pertains to the criminal act in which the citizen was allegedly involved and was the reason for the encounter with the observed officer. Offenses were measured on a 3-point ordinal scale, where 0 = no offense, 1 = misdemeanors/minor offenses, and 2 = felonies/serious offenses. The evidence variable measured the quantity of evidence available to the officer indicating that the citizen had committed a criminal offense. It is an additive scale involving different types of evidence: whether the officer observed the citizen engage in an illegal act or viewed circumstantial evidence of an illegal act; whether the officer observed physical evidence that implicated the citizen in an offense; whether the officer heard claims from others which

implicated the citizen in an offense; and, whether the officer heard the citizen confess to the offense. A point is calculated for each of the four criteria present in the encounter. Therefore, evidence is measured on a scale from zero to four, with higher values indicating higher quantities of evidence (Novak et al., 2002).

---- TABLE 1 ABOUT HERE ----

Citizen characteristics were all measured as dichotomous variables: gender (0 = male and 1 = female), race (0 = non-Black, 1 = Black), and age (0 = adult, 1 = under eighteen years of age). Certain citizen behaviors during the encounter may increase the likelihood of arrest. Citizen demeanor was measured as whether citizens were civil or deferential to officers or if they were moderately or highly disrespectful to the police during the encounter. In addition to citizen demeanor, it was important to control for criminal behavior committed in the presence of the officer (Engel et al., 2000; Klinger, 1994, 1996a, 1996b; Worden and Shepard, 1996). In accordance with this research, a control variable (interaction-phase crime) was included (0 = no crime, 1 = a criminal act committed by the citizen in the presence of the observed officer). Also, whether there were visible signs of citizen intoxication due to either alcohol or drugs (0 = no signs of intoxication and 1 = any signs of intoxication on the part of the citizen) was included as a control variable.

Based upon existing research, we believe the presence of other organizational members during field encounters reinforces the normative aspects noted by Herbert (1997). Two variables captured this visibility, specifically, whether other officers were present at the encounter (0=no other officers present, 1 = other officers present) and whether supervisors (e.g., sergeants) were present (0 = no supervisors at encounter, 1 = presence of supervisors at encounter). Rank of organizational employees is important because it delineates whether the officers were observed

by their peers (i.e., other officers) or those at a higher rank in the bureaucratic organization (i.e., supervisors).

## **Analysis and Findings**

The analytic approach utilized in this study is similar to the gender-specific studies on officer use of coercion (Paoline and Terrill, 2004), officer actions during domestic violence encounters (Sun, 2007), and ticketing behavior in traffic encounters (Lundman, 2009). Table 2 provides logistic regression models where the arrest decision was regressed across the suspected correlates. Model A provides the estimates for the main model, with officer gender represented as a dichotomous independent variable. Conditional models for male officers and female officers are represented in Models B and C.

Officer gender does not appear to have a direct impact on the arrest decision. Female officers are no more or less likely to arrest suspects after controlling for other causal variables (Model A). The remaining variables in Model A demonstrate an influence on arrest that is consistent with extant research. Factors that increase the likelihood of arrest include offense seriousness and the presence of evidence of criminal activity. Male suspects, black suspects, and juveniles are more likely to be arrested than their female, white, or adult counterparts. Signs of intoxication also increase the odds of arrest. Regarding visibility of the encounter, other officers at the scene of the encounter increases the likelihood of arrest; however, supervisor presence at the scene demonstrates no influence on arrest.

---- TABLE 2 ABOUT HERE ----

### *Similarities across Officer Gender Models*

There are a few significant correlates of arrest for male officers and female officers that largely mirror those described in the main model, and each other (Models B & C). The likelihood

of arrest increases, regardless of officer gender, when offenses that are more serious are committed or when more evidence of a crime is observed. Male suspects and intoxicated suspects are also more likely to be arrested. These similarities between male and female officer are not surprising as they are consistent with the literature on officer use of arrest.

### *Differences across Officer Gender Models*

Several inconsistencies are revealed when we compare our male and female officer models (B & C) to each other. Specifically, female officers are no more likely to arrest juvenile suspects, but male officers are 2.5 times more likely to use arrest when encountering juvenile suspects. Race of a suspect exhibited no effect on arrest when the encounter involved a male officer, but this was not the case with female officers. The women officers in our sample were significantly more likely to arrest black citizens, and the odds of arrest increase by 14.49 during encounters between black citizens and female officers. Similarly, non-deferential suspects are more than 26 times more likely to be arrested during encounters with female officers (which was also not observed in the model involving male officers).

Focusing on the visibility of the encounter to other organizational members, the presence of other organizational members influences arrest outcomes in all of our analyses, but it appears to affect women and men in different ways. Female officers are significantly *less* likely to arrest citizens when other (peer) officers are present versus encounters where they are the only officer at the encounter. This is in stark contrast to encounters involving male officers where the presence of peers *increases* the likelihood of arrest. A comparison of coefficients between the models indicates there is a significantly different impact of this variable across the models ( $t=3.49$ ;  $p<.01$ ). Also dissimilar to the male officer model is the finding that presence of supervisors at the encounter dramatically increases the odds of arrest (by 78.67 times).

Supervisor presence at the encounter had no measurable impact on suspect encounters for male officers. However, it appears their presence provides the greatest explanatory value for encounters involving female officers. These results, taken in totality, indicate that other police department personnel at the encounter dramatically impact the discretionary choice of female officers to make an arrest. But *who* is observing the encounter is critical: peer officers decrease the estimated odds ratio of arrest, whereas supervisors dramatically increase the likelihood of an arrest.

## Discussion

The current study explores the discretionary decision to arrest suspects across male and female officers in order to determine whether female officers utilize the same situational cues when deciding whether to arrest suspects. It was determined that officer gender alone does not significantly impact the decision to arrest. This study disaggregated encounters across officer gender to determine whether legal factors, citizen characteristics, citizen behaviors and visibility of the encounter to other organizational members exert consistent influences on male and female officers.

Legal factors exert similar influence on the decision to arrest for both male and female officers. As the seriousness of the offense increases, and as the amount of evidence that criminal activity is afoot increases, so too does the likelihood of arrest. But female officers are *more* influenced by quantity of evidence than their male counterparts. We surmise female officers are more concerned than males with making arrests on ‘strong’ cases where there is an abundance of evidence so as to avoid appearing incompetent by having ‘weak’ cases dismissed.

Several noteworthy relationships involving citizen characteristics are observed when the sample is disaggregated by gender. Male suspects are more likely to be arrested, regardless of

officer gender, but it appears female officers are even more likely to make arrests during these encounters. Female officers are more than 50 times more likely to arrest male suspects, where male officers are 'only' 2.27 times more likely to do so. Meanwhile, female officers are 14.49 times more likely to arrest black suspects; however suspect race exerts no significant influence on the arrest decisions of male officers. Suspects' juvenile status increases the likelihood of arrest during encounters with male officers, but not for female officers. Of particular interest regarding citizen behaviors is the influence of citizen demeanor. Non-deferential citizens are no more or less likely to be arrested by males, yet are 26.49 times more likely to be arrested by female officers. Hostile demeanor toward female officers is being interpreted by the officer as a greater threat that deserves sanctions. As Herbert (1997) suggests, hostile demeanor is a threat to officer competency, especially since female officers are acutely aware of the fact that their behavior is scrutinized closely by their peers and the public (Belknap, 2001). Together these factors may explain why female officers are so much less tolerant of non-deferential citizen behavior than their male counterparts, and are more willing to employ a formal law enforcement response. The findings that female officers are more likely to arrest blacks, males, and verbally hostile citizens implies that suspects with these characteristics are more threatening to officer status during encounters with female officers than male officers, and the result is greater applications of formal social control. It should be noted that the magnitude of this difference is slight, but female officers may be influenced by demographic and behavioral extralegal factors in arrest situations. Female officer arrest decisions are also not immune to situational aspects of the encounter that involve visibility to other organizational members.

The presence of other officers impacts male and female officer behavior differently, with male officers being more likely to arrest when peer officers are present. Female officers, on the

other hand, are significantly less likely to enact the law in the form of arrest when peers are present. This finding is consistent with other research (Rabe-Hemp, 2008) and the difference between male and female officers is statistically significant ( $t=3.49$ ;  $p<.01$ ). While officers typically operate in low visibility situations, when their actions are being observed by peers, the outcome of the encounter varies dramatically by officer gender. But given the discussion of how female officers may be more compelled to emphasize the crime fighting role during these encounters, the results reported here initially appear counter-intuitive. There are at least three plausible explanations for the observed relationship. First, female officers feel less pressured to demonstrate the aggressive, macho, crime fighting image than previously thought. But this explanation is tempered by the fact that if this were the case, then it would be more likely that the presence of other officers would offer *no* measurable influence, rather than significantly less influence. Second, female officers may be less likely to arrest when male peers are present because they are deferring to male officers at the scene. This might be a means to allow the male officer to increase their arrest totals and thus increase their productivity for evaluation purposes. In this situation, female officers feel it is necessary to be a 'team player', even though this behavior may negatively influence their own performance evaluations and ultimately promotional opportunities. But our results do not suggest this was the case. Though our data do not allow us to determine whether the peer officers were male or female, we can assume the majority of officers were in fact male simply because of the gender distribution within the police organization as a whole. Future research may be needed to determine the exact impact of inter- versus intra-gender police officer tandems. Third, it is plausible that female officers are less likely to make arrests when observed by peers because they are complying with traditional female gender roles within policing (e.g., passivity, social worker image). Recognizing that



camaraderie and ‘fitting in’ are critical within policing, female officers are more likely to act congruent with the stereotypical feminine role when observed by peers. This is done to gain acceptance and survive within the police organization. Females experience different and unequal socialization into policing (Haarr, 1997), and under enforcement of the law, particularly when being observed by peers may be viewed as a way to minimize not fitting in or to gain acceptance.

The influence of organizational visibility is complicated by the fact that supervisors’ presence at the encounter exerts differential influence across gender. Female officers are significantly more likely to make an arrest when a supervisor is present, and this relationship is not observed for male officers. The results here suggest that female officers, more so than their male counterparts, feel pressure to demonstrate their law enforcement competency during encounters when their supervisor is present. As crime fighting remains the dominant role for officers, and one by which they are evaluated, it appears that female officers take advantage of their organizational audience to demonstrate their law enforcement proficiency. It is clear that female officers are significantly influenced by the organizational audience, particularly by the status of audience members. The hierarchical composition of the audience has significant impact on female officer decision making: The presence of peers decreases the likelihood of arrest whereas the presence of supervisors increases arrest behavior.

These analyses do not represent a test of expectancy theory, but the tenets of this theoretical framework have relevance here. Since supervisors are the ones who evaluate officers, and because the evaluation of officers is firmly grounded in their ability to enact the law, this helps to explain why female officers are more likely to make arrests (all else being equal) when directly observed by supervisors. It appears that females minimize images of incompetence or passivity when in eyeshot of superiors. Instead, they accentuate the law enforcement function of

the job by making “strong” arrests (hence the effects of evidence on arrest decisions) and by responding formally to potential threats or challenges (hence the increased odds of arrest for male suspects and suspects who are disrespectful). This is consistent with research indicating that female officers feel the need to work harder than similarly situated male officers, while conforming to supervisor expectations to perform at a level and in a manner that will result in success and ultimately promotion (Archbold and Schulz, 2008). Female officers were more likely to make arrests when observed by supervisors. However, the fact that they made proportionately fewer arrests (i.e., male officers made arrests in 18% of encounters, and female officers arrested in 12% of encounters – see Table 1) has potential implications for promotion. While promotions are based on a variety of factors, law enforcement productivity remains an important component of the evaluation process. Female officers’ law enforcement productivity is quantitatively less than males, for reasons that are beyond the scope of the current inquiry. Supervisors have tremendous influence on performance evaluations and promotional recommendations. As such, female officers may believe that the way supervisors make decisions may be more influenced by what they personally observe than mere counts of arrests.

Collectively this suggests female officers reinforce their legitimacy among peers by engaging in less aggressive behavior during arrest-eligible encounters, in this manner, emphasizing the *policewoman* role, and the formal (aggressive) *policewoman* role while being observed in the field by hierarchical superiors (Martin, 1979). But female officers abandon this approach when observed by hierarchical superiors, and seek to gain their approval by emphasizing formal social control through arrest. This is done in order to gain organizational approval. Relevant here is Reuss-Ianni’s recognition of the divergent views of police managers and street cops, but also the influence of gender among street cops. One of the street cops’ code

is knowing “what your supervisor and other managers expect” (Reuss-Ianni, 1983, p. 16), which the evidence here suggests means something different for female officers than for their male counterparts.

The data used for this analysis is relevant and appropriate, despite the fact that it is ten years old. The findings are relevant to present day issues in policing research and practice and provides an opportunity to recommend future lines of inquiry. The landscape of women in policing has not significantly changed, and that using these data to examine the current question is appropriate. The study presented here has relevance for examining the status of female officer behavior in the late 1990s and can be generalized to current police practices. First, representation of females within policing has changed little since the time these data were collected. Females in local law enforcement comprise approximately 12% of sworn officers, compared to 10% in 1997 when these data were collected (Langton, 2010; Hickman and Reaves, 2006). While police departments may be slightly more diversified than in previous decades as far as officer gender is concerned, it has been a slow process and in fact, police agencies remain gendered and tokenism remains prevalent (Archbold and Schultz, 2008; Stichman, Hassell and Archbold, 2010). Second, these data represent the most recent large-scale observational study of street-level officers. Large systematic social observation studies of the police are conducted infrequently, largely due to the costs and time associated with this data collection strategy. However, these efforts produce extremely robust contextual information surrounding police-citizen interactions that is not available using other methodological strategies. Further, these data provide opportunities to examine police behavior that are not possible using official agency data. Observation projects like the Cincinnati Study and POPN produce incredible detail on policing in America and unique insight into the police-public encounter. Furthermore it is not

unusual to utilize these rich archival data to examine enduring police practices or social issues a decade or more after the data were collected (see recently Foley and Terrill, 2008; Lundman, 1998; Paoline and Terrill, 2007; Terrill and Paoline, 2007; Poteyeva and Sun, 2009; Rydberg and Terrill, 2010; Sobol, 2010; Wu, Sun and Triplett, 2009; Sun and Triplett, 2008; Sun, Payne and Wu, 2008; Brown et al. 2009).

### Limitations

There are several limitations to the current study that may prove helpful for future inquiries. First, this study does not consider non-law enforcement behavior. Terrill and Paoline (2007) correctly noted that much of what officers do does not end in formal arrest and understanding these outcomes are important when considering the range of possible police-public encounters. Female officers may be engaging in behaviors other than arrest (e.g., verbal coercion, negotiation, and threats) which would not be captured by the dichotomous arrest/no arrest, “all-or-nothing” measurement of the outcome variable. The results presented here, while valid, are perhaps incomplete. Previous research has argued for more sophisticated measures of police coercion and authority than arrest, and non-arrest or multi-dimensional behavioral measures should be explored for differences across male and female officers (see Brown, et. al., 2009; Klinger, 1996a; Sun and Payne, 2004).

Second, it may be important to examine whether the gender of other organizational audience members shapes officer behavior. For example, do female officers make different law enforcement decisions when being observed by female peers (rather than male peers), or female supervisors (rather than male supervisors)? Such intra- versus inter-gender dynamics are not adequately explored here, but given the findings here and in other studies (Rabe-Hemp, 2008) it appears to be deserving of future inquiry.

### Directions for Future Research

In order to more fully understand the arrest decisions of male and female officers researchers might collect decision making data using protocol analysis. This methodology, while time consuming, would require the researcher to debrief officers about the decisions they make. Male and female officers would be interviewed about the impact of various situational (i.e., seriousness of the offense, quantity of evidence, and race of the suspect) and organizational cues (presence of supervisors and peers) on their decision making process. This would then permit the examination of how these situational and organization cues are translated by officers into choices (Worden, 1989; Worden and Brandl, 1990). While the analyses presented here identified significant behavioral variation across officer gender, a protocol analysis would provide an additional opportunity to examine these identified relationships.

Future research should also explore the impact of supervisor and peer gender on officer behavior. Our data did not allow for an assessment of the impact of the gender of other police officers present during an encounter on officer decision making. In the future, as more and more women assume supervisory positions within agencies this type of analysis may be possible. Future analyses should examine whether the relationships observed here hold when the officer is observed by a supervisor or peer of the same gender or someone of the opposite sex.

Related, future research might also explore the impact of both officer race and gender on the arrest decision process, and would extend the present inquiry. Examining combinations officer race and gender, citizen race and gender, and perhaps even supervisor race and gender would provide a more comprehensive follow up strategy to fully understand the dynamics these factors have across various dimensions.

In conclusion, male and female officers do make different discretionary decisions when it comes to the decision to arrest. The results presented here indicate gender differences manifest themselves when officers are being observed by others within the police organization. This is because female police officers must navigate complex roles and that they need to know when to defer to male peers, yet prove themselves to supervisors. This has to be accomplished while maintaining competency in the eyes of suspects. Male officers do not have this dual role, and behave similarly regardless of whether they are being observed by supervisors. The male officer does not have to prove himself when being observed by hierarchical superiors. He is already thought of as a 'good cop' because of his gender in the male dominated policing industry. But if females are complying with traditional female gender roles when in the presence of peers, then how does this help them demonstrate competency to these male peers? It is likely that there is pressure to appear as a less adventurous, less macho 'team player', and this approach is less threatening to male officers in terms of arrest productivity. These gender differences could have implications for officer performance indicators and promotional criteria. Finally, the tenets of community policing are thought of as 'non-masculine' in part because it goes against adventurous crime fighting image. Female behavior is consistent with the tenets of community policing when in the presence of fellow officers, but then take on the more masculine role when being evaluated by a supervisor.

**Table 1. Descriptive Statistics**

	<b>Main Model</b>		<b>Male Officers</b>		<b>Female Officers</b>	
	<b>Mean</b>	<b>S.D.</b>	<b>Mean</b>	<b>S.D.</b>	<b>Mean</b>	<b>S.D.</b>
<b>Dependent Variable</b>						
Arrest (1=yes)	0.17	0.38	0.18	0.39	0.12	0.32
<b>Independent Variables</b>						
Officer Female (1=yes)	0.17	0.37				
<b>Legal Factors</b>						
Offense Seriousness (0-3)	0.55	0.66	0.56	0.66	0.51	0.68
Evidence (0-4)	1.21	1.13	1.23	1.14	1.13	1.04
<b>Citizen Characteristics</b>						
Citizen Female (1=yes)	0.27	0.44	0.27	0.44	0.29	0.46
Citizen Black (1=yes)	0.63	0.48	0.63	0.48	0.63	0.49
Citizen Juvenile (1=yes)	0.28	0.45	0.28	0.45	0.28	0.45
<b>Citizen Behaviors</b>						
Citizen Non-Deferential (1=yes)	0.16	0.37	0.17	0.38	0.13	0.33
In-Presence Crime (1=yes)	0.06	0.25	0.07	0.26	0.03	0.17
Citizen Intoxicated (1=yes)	0.15	0.36	0.16	0.37	0.11	0.31
<b>Organizational Visibility</b>						
Other officer present (1=yes)	0.51	0.50	0.50	0.50	0.59	0.49
Supervisor Present (1=yes)	0.04	0.19	0.03	0.18	0.07	0.25

Table 2: Logistic Regression Models Predicting Arrest

	Main Model			Male Officers			Female Officers		
	B	S.E.	Exp(B)	B	S.E.	Exp(B)	B	S.E.	Exp(B)
Officer Female	-0.16	0.37	0.85						
<b>Legal Factors</b>									
Offense Seriousness	1.18 ***	0.20	3.27	1.40 ***	0.23	4.04	1.79 *	0.80	5.98
Evidence	0.50 ***	0.12	1.64	0.45 ***	0.14	1.57	1.65 ***	0.55	5.22
<b>Citizen Characteristics</b>									
Citizen Female	-1.04 ***	0.38	0.35	-0.81 *	0.41	0.44	-3.85 *	1.68	0.02
Citizen Black	0.74 ***	0.29	2.10	0.57	0.32	1.76	2.67 *	1.23	14.49
Citizen Juvenile	0.92 ***	0.29	2.50	0.94 ***	0.32	2.56	2.20	1.23	9.01
<b>Citizen Behaviors</b>									
Citizen Non-Deferential	0.60	0.33	1.82	0.56	0.36	1.75	3.28 *	1.48	26.49
In-Presence Crime	1.65 ***	0.43	5.20	1.77 ***	0.47	5.90	-1.21	1.51	0.30
Citizen Intoxicated	1.61 ***	0.33	5.00	1.67 ***	0.37	5.34	3.07 *	1.43	21.51
<b>Organizational Visibility</b>									
Other officer present	1.08 ***	0.29	2.93	1.71 ***	0.34	5.52	-4.26 **	1.67	0.01
Supervisor Present	0.51	0.60	1.67	0.35	0.70	1.42	4.37 *	2.23	78.67
Constant	-5.01 ***	0.46		-5.47 ***	0.54		-7.16 ***	1.91	
Nagelkerke R-Square	0.420			0.479			0.541		
n	617			513			104		

\*p<.05; \*\* p < .01; \*\*\*p< .001



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<sup>1</sup> As mentioned suspects were defined as those citizens who were disturbing the peace, a wrongdoer or a person that another citizen indicated had committed a crime. The majority of observed police contacts were with victims, service recipients, helpless persons, third parties, witnesses and occupational acquaintances. In these encounters the option to arrest was not likely to be within the officer's available strategies (no probable cause indicating illegal activity) and thus the officers were likely to effectuate an arrest as one of the various courses of action during the excluded interactions.