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Towards a 'Women-Oriented' Approach to Post-Conflict Policing: Interpreting National Experience(s) and Intergovernmental Aspirations

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Abstract

In regard to the United Nations' (UN) framework for promoting gender equality in policing, including women in national police forces remains a global challenge. Even countries possessing a stable history of women's involvement reveal that women are significantly under-represented in policing when compared to other professions—even though prior research has strongly suggested that women are important actors in establishing post-conflict democratic order. This article outlines the political, social and institutional challenges that are faced to achieve significant gender representation in national police forces. It also recommends countering these challenges by using a 'women-oriented' approach. Such an approach does not merely fulfil the aspirational UN goals of achieving greater gender balance, it also yields many practical advantages for improving policing, including 1) leveraging the unique skills that women offer in policing, 2) making better use of force decisions, 3) combatting police corruption and 4) increasing the gender responsiveness of police. Finally, several operational strategies for promoting more women into policing are suggested.

Keywords

Gender equality; policing; police recruitment; police corruption; social protections.

Introduction

Conflict harms many groups and individuals, and in societies emerging from large-scale conflict, women are a particularly abused, exploited and displaced group. Additionally, the solutions for the arduous task of building better police agencies after conflict often involve broad strokes of activities that do not place women in the centre. One may thus ask, what role can increasing women's involvement in policing play in building better police agencies? This was the main question explored at a side event of the 63rd session of the Commission of the Status of Women (CSW)[1] proceedings held in March 2019, which centred on the greater theme of building social protection systems for women and girls.

Social protection includes 'a well-trained police force and a fair and functioning justice system' (UN Women 2019: para. 12). As the CSW has expressed in certain policy documents, the wellbeing of women and girls is threatened by rising inequalities and persistent rates of poverty, austerity measures, a lack of living wages for work or a lack of work, political conflicts, climate change, environmental degradation and the effects of voluntary and involuntary migration (UN Women 2019: paras 6–8, 18).

Social protections link to the larger UN goals of 'achiev[ing] gender quality and empower[ing] all women and girls', the fifth of 17 sustainable development goals (SDGs) adopted by the 193 UN member states in 2015. The goals represent areas of focus that aim for a better and more sustainable future for all. They describe interconnected global challenges, such as social and economic inequality, environmental degradation, prosperity and justice—and the timetable for achieving these goals is the year 2030. For example, goal 5, target 5.4 specifically calls for gender equality and the rights of women in public services, such as in police agencies. Another target seeks to eliminate all forms of violence against women and girls, specifically human trafficking and sexual exploitation. Further, each goal is 'cross-cutting' as well as standalone, similar to how social protections systems cut across the 17 goals (NGO Committee 2019). Other SDGs that can be linked to women's social protection systems are those that address safety and access to justice, such as goal 11 ('make cities inclusive, safe, resilient, and sustainable') and 16 (provide 'access to justice for all and build effective, accountable and inclusive institutions at all levels') (United Nations n.d.).

In addition to these various SDGs, UN Security Council Resolution 1325 (2000) stated that peace cannot be achieved between and among nations post-conflict, without the participation of women at all levels. Specifically, the role that women play in police agencies can significantly improve the delivery of public safety and security, which both form the goal of the resolution's call for gender-sensitive police reform (Barbaret 2015: 194). This means that the inclusion of women renders agencies more sensitive to the needs of women in the communities they serve. This article highlights several ways in which women, as a group, perform better than their male counterparts in many of the police tasks demanded of post-conflict and democratically developing contexts. However, gender-biased social and cultural attitudes within the police profession—and in larger societies—continue to be significant barriers to the recruiting and retaining of women (Lonsway 2001; Rabe-Hemp 2018; Scarborough and Collins 2001: 3; Westmorland 2001).

This article explores the importance of including women in any project of post-conflict democratisation and outlines the challenges that achieving significant gender representation in national police forces faces. This is particularly true for women in security sector positions such as policing; they should be considered a cornerstone of restoring democracy and order after conflict. Taking a 'women-oriented' approach to policing does not merely fulfil the aspirational UN goals of achieving greater gender balance in professions and public life worldwide, it also yields many practical advantages for improving policing, including 1) leveraging the unique skills that women offer in policing, 2) making better use of force decisions, 3) combatting police

corruption and 4) increasing the gender responsiveness of the police. Finally, this article presents several strategies for promoting more women into policing.

Cornerstone of Post-Conflict Democracy: Taking a Women-Oriented Approach to Policing

The notion of 'democratic' policing underpins the academic literature in terms of how to redirect the nature of policing away from being brutal, authoritarian, corrupt and dominated by a particular racial, ethnic or religious group. Democratic policing requires police to possess mechanisms for accountability, to be respectful towards all citizens, to be non-discriminate and to adhere to the rule of law (Bayley 2006; Haberfeld and Gideon 2008). Within this democratic context, the treatment of women pertains in a theoretical sense to the tenets of non-discrimination and universal respect.

Women in general are an essential foundation for democratic change, particularly in locations where official histories have been dominated by male voices. Larger political processes must support this, such as in truth and reconciliation projects, official apologies, records laws that provide greater access to police, security and intelligence information (e.g., 1991 Stasi records law in Germany). These new narratives must consider the experiences of vulnerable people, including women, and their needs in new institutions of public safety and justice. This is particularly true for post-conflict times; war has mostly led to a diminished generation of men who have fought and died in conflict, signifying that the ensuing society that is being reborn will be more female. In many locations, the almost exclusively male voice underpinning a society limits the full imagination of that society.

With the commitment to democratic policing being a larger move towards democratisation in certain national contexts, police leaders often turn to community policing models for the path forward. In policing, a turn to the community is more likely than a turn to gender, in terms of worldwide police reform efforts. However, the latter turn is contained in the former. Community policing charges police with understanding the social problems of diverse peoples, working with the influence of stereotypes on decision-making, incorporating the protection of human rights and developing human resource capacity to diffuse conflicts rather than merely react to them (Grabosky 2009; Haberfeld 2002; Marenin, 2009). A women-oriented policing that better addresses women's needs in the community, particularly in places recently ravaged by conflict and war, is imperative to any community policing effort. For example, a South African study conducted in 2005 of approximately 1,500 police recruits revealed that women recruits were more likely to be positively disposed to fostering community support of policing as part of their profession (Steyn 2007). Additionally, Schuck's (2017) study modelled the relationship between gender diversity and organisational change in the United States (US), also finding that bringing women into policing is correlated with subsequent institutional transitions toward more or better community-oriented police services.

Increasing the number of women in policing involves a greater likelihood of cultural change towards adopting community policing into the framework of democracy and developing democracies. A women-oriented approach to policing begins when police leaders recognise that women are a key component of operational effectiveness in democratic contexts that involve service-oriented policing, rather than policing that is merely an apparatus for use in defence of the state. As this article will discuss, women-oriented policing emphasises the 'resource' benefit of including women in the profession, even before achieving the long-term goal of gender balance or a matching gender ratio between the number of women in society and those in policing (approximately 50 per cent).

Theoretically, people who identify as non-binary or as of other genders are needed to work together to maximise the human resources dedicated to the important tasks of policing in a way that is consistent with representational democracies and developing democracies. However,

given the historical and global trend of male domination in the profession, there is a need to privilege women (and non-binary people and other genders) to overcome the past and establish gender balance in policing.

Gender balance (or gender mainstreaming) involves establishing equal representation of all genders in law enforcement. 'Gender' refers to the social construction of roles, often delineated in the binary of women and men. In contrast, 'sex' refers to biological differences, and 'femininity/masculinity' represents culturally constructed traits and characteristics that are often associated with being either male or female (Barbaret 2014; Valasek 2008). Gender balance has been known to benefit agencies and institutions, not just law enforcement organisations. Additionally, gender-diverse teams score more highly in terms of 'collective intelligence' in numerous tasks when compared to all-male or all-female teams; this quality is separate from individual intelligence, signifying that the sum of gender-diverse parts is an intelligence multiplier (Bohnet 2016: 10; Woolley et al. 2010).

Although gender is traditionally binary (women and men), it should be noted that gender can also be perceived as non-binary (transsexual, intersex, gender variant and others) (Panter 2018). Because policing is an 'extreme manifestation of the dominant cultural values of [binary] genderism' (Panter 2018: 21), a true breaking of that gendered and binary culture would theoretically involve increasing the number of policewomen and officers of other under-represented gender identities. In this sense, a women-oriented approach should eventually yield to the more radical and inclusive approach of being 'non–male oriented' in policing.

Policing is fiercely gendered—perhaps more than many other professions. In classic studies of gender and policing, the profession was associated with hegemonic masculinity and male privilege (Brown 1997; Brown and Heidensohn 2000; Fielding 1994; Heidensohn 1992; Martin 1980). It remains gendered, despite a growing body of literature supporting the notion that women are just as physically, emotionally and mentally capable as men to perform the job (Barberet 2014; Chan et al. 2010; Garcia 2003). However, in the subculture of policing, physicality, strength, aggression and male camaraderie remain privileged over other policing styles (Barberet 2014: 190; Chan et al. 2010; Garcia 2003). Contemporary scholarship continues to note this overwhelming characteristic of the law enforcement profession, despite the ebb and flow of gender social relations in other professions and in societies over time (Chan et al. 2010; Crank 2014; Garcia 2003; Panter 2018; Rabe-Hemp 2018; Strobl 2010).[2] Chan, Doran and Marel (2010: 426) noted that being female in policing carries 'negative symbolic capital', as hegemonic masculinity acts as a barrier to women's participation and advancement in the field. Garcia (2003: 339) contributed to the growing body of research by highlighting that women may be better at policing than men in some regard; she then solidified her point by asking the question, 'What else is there to prove?', citing the persistence of gendered police occupational culture despite the data. Altogether, it can be surmised that policing institutions are perhaps irrationally committed to traditional gender norms because they are a symbolic nod to male domination, masculinity and patriarchy.

Further to this embedded male-gendered culture in policing, problems of militarisation and brutality within law enforcement are related to the historical and long-standing subcultures of maleness and masculinity within the profession (Goodmark 2015; Crank 2014; Kraska and Kappeler 1997; Via 2010). Chan, Doran and Marel (2010: 426–427) attributed the reason for this to be linked to anthropologist Pierre Bourdieau's notion of the sexual division of labour, which involves cultural scripts that trap both men and women into the constraints of specific masculinities and femininities: in this case, masculine crime fighting in the external world as a contrast to the feminine 'safe' inside work.

Although women may contribute to problems of militarisation and brutality as individuals who conform to masculine environments, accepting a critical mass of women into law enforcement

could potentially break those masculine subcultures by changing the dynamics of gender performance. This can be observed in existing examples of challenges that were directed to the dominant style of policing, which upholds the possibility of change once women gain a critical foothold in the profession. For example, the Black Mambas anti-poaching enforcement group in South Africa consists of 36 women who protect lions, pangolins, elephants and rhinos in the Balule Nature Reserve. According to their members, in addition to protecting wildlife, the force represents the ethos that law enforcement is not just a profession for men (Ellin 2019). Overall, there are several approaches to promoting women in law enforcement worldwide, from relatively strong integration of women in some forces to little or no women in others. Localised social attitudes regarding gender strongly affect women's participation in the profession, which challenges the fulfillment of UN goals in some locations. This is why a cultural understanding of women's inclusion in policing is necessary for imagining how women can be brought into policing in different milieus.

To help model this daunting task, the UN Police has adopted a women-oriented approach through its goal of doubling the number of women in its peacekeeping forces between 2015 and 2020. Among UN Police today, 22 per cent are female officers (UN News 2018). One of these officers' greatest multiplier effects is assisting member countries achieve higher female representation in their national police forces, as part of social representation and community policing efforts that occur in conflict and post-conflict locations.

Doubling women in the UN Police would raise the peacekeeping force to above the 'tipping point' for gender diversity, or gender balance, according to the dominant theory of policewomen's inclusion originally developed by Jennifer Brown (1997). This tipping point denotes the level at which women are approximately one-third of a given force (Brown 1997). However, true gender balance should be marked at approximately 50 per cent, which would match the representation of women in the communities they serve. As will be evidenced below, no police force has ever achieved this level of representation, and only one national force appeared to have approached the tipping point of being one-third female.

The State of Women's Representation in Policing

National police forces in most societies have less than a quarter of their numbers as female officers (see Table 1 below; Gibbs et al 2015); these institutions do not have many female voices among their ranks, and those voices are often concentrated lower in the chain of command. Although the present-day numbers of female officers have probably been the highest throughout history, police forces still remain short of the 50 per cent participation that would reflect the gender balance of the world's population. National police forces display varying percentages of policewomen in their forces (see Table 1). According to UN figures, an average of nine per cent of national police forces are female (UN 2011).

Table 1: Percentage of women police officers in national police forces

Country	Percentage	Source
Estonia	34%	(Resetnikova 2006)
Sweden	29%	(Statista 2019)
Australia	27%	(Prenzler et al. 2010)
United Kingdom	27%	(Robinson 2013)
Norway	24%	(Statista 2019)
Israel	20%	(Gideon et al. 2008: 231)
Canada	20%	(National Post 2016)
Ghana	20%	(Prenzler and Sinclair 2013)
New Zealand	20%	(New Zealand 2019)
Bermuda	20%	(King 2007)
Fiji	19%	(Prenzler and Sinclair 2013)
Jamaica	18%	(Bastick 2008)
Liberia	17%	(Bacon 2017)
Russia	15%	(Roudik 2008: 160)
France	14%	(Boussard et al. 2017)
US	13%	(Statista 2019)
Slovenia	13%	(Lobnikar et al. 2016)
Nigeria	12%	(Prenzler and Sinclair 2013)
Peru	11%	(Karim 2011)
Japan	7%	(Statista 2019)
Taiwan	7%	(Sun and Chu 2008)
India	6%	(Rao 2015)
Kuwait	5%	(Strobl 2016)
Pakistan	1%	(Haider 2015)
Saudi Arabia	0%	(Strobl 2010a)

Although just one measure of gender and policing, the percentages of policewomen per nation illustrated in Table 1 show how women (and others of non-male identity) are severely under-represented in policing globally. However, this measure fails to qualify the various unique instances of both gender opportunities and limitations. Some policewomen are only permitted in their countries to work in gender-segregated units (e.g., Kuwait and parts of India), while in other countries, there is full integration and a strong culture of female inclusion that has been deliberately cultivated by police leadership and national policies (e.g., Israel, Norway and Estonia).

In addition to cross-country differences, there can also be within-country differences—particularly in the US and commonwealth countries, in which policing is more localised. For example, among developed countries, the US has a relatively low overall rate of female officers at just 13 per cent. However, in some urban locations, their presence is much higher: 30 per cent in Madison (Wisconsin) (Wroge 2017), 22 per cent in the Chicago Police Department (Torres 2016) and 18 per cent in the New York Police Department (Smith 2019). In contrast, some small and rural US police forces with single-digit force numbers do not have any female officers. These statistics also mask the reality that women are concentrated in lower ranks, even when they have gained a foothold in police force numbers. For example, 20 per cent of police officers in Canada are women, but this percentage drops to 12 per cent when considering their numbers in only the senior ranks (Miner 2016). Another example is New Zealand, in which all female officers amount to 20 per cent of the police force, but to only five per cent at the rank of superintendent or higher (New Zealand 2019).

Reliable statistics depicting the true levels of women in policing are difficult to find and thus make cross-national comparisons difficult as well. Although conventional wisdom in police studies

suggests that Western democracies are more likely to have high rates of women in policing, this is not necessarily reflected in the data, which constitutes a major blind spot to understanding policewomen worldwide. The US ranks relatively low among Western countries, and many Eastern European (formerly communist) countries have seemingly higher rates of female participation in policing, suggesting that structural factors like the degree of development or capitalism are unlikely to be the main factors impelling police agencies towards gender inclusion. Rather, the degree of specific cultural change relating to gender that has been accepted by larger societies and within security sector organisations is more predictive. For example, Israel is unique in its history for maximising relatively scant human resources by including women in combat military operations, thus paving the way for similar gender inclusion in policing. Communist countries have also included more women in formerly male-dominated security professions, perhaps as an adjunct to class-based ideological change that first propelled women into the workplace. This gender participation generally extended to the post-communist institutions. Caribbean and Scandinavian countries also reportedly show strong participation levels of women in policing (Bastick 2008; King 2007; Resetnikova 2006).

It is also known that women's inclusion in policing in Western democracies, the Middle East and South Asian countries was articulated in public discourses in response to the needs for public services for women and children. Their original deployment was as non-sworn 'police matrons' who provided institutional mothering to those using police services (Garcia 2003; Natarajan 2008; Strobl 2010a, 2010b). Prior research on policewomen in the Arabian Gulf countries of Bahrain, Kuwait and Oman, reveal that these women often described their roles in these maternal and traditional terms despite their institution's almost 50-year history in the profession (Strobl 2008, 2010a, 2010b). This can be linked to the dominant beliefs of Muslim tradition, in which women are the caregivers and carriers of morality, culture and religion, and in which men oversee the domain of public space and the protection of women and children (Strobl 2008, 2010a, 2010b).

Although often regarded as pioneers by external observers, early police matrons and policewomen were the products of institutions who were reifying gender stereotypes and maintaining the boundaries of what constituted men's work (crime fighting, patrolling and detective work) and what constituted women's work (caring for victims, completing paperwork and making tea and coffee). Despite many Western democracies having a rule of law regarding gender equality in policing today, research continues to show that cultural attitudes perpetuating the male domination of policing routinely undermine these laws (Boussard et al. 2017; Chan et al. 2010; Garcia 2003). The cultural legacy of feminised, matronly policing continues, even as women have proven themselves equal to men—if not more effective, in certain cases—in the profession.

The Practical Advantages: Women Offer What Post-Conflict Policing Demands

As previously mentioned, there is a correlation between agencies' focus on recruiting and retaining women police officers and the development of community policing—or the responsiveness to community needs and co-production of safety and security (Schuck 2017). Including women can consequently be considered a key factor for propelling organisational change in law enforcement. It fosters an alternative cultural ethos that better responds to institutional and community needs, based on the quality of complementarity. That is, having women's experiences represented in policy and operational decision-making allows women to make organisations more balanced and complete (Barberet 2014: 192). However, because women are significantly under-represented, achieving complementarity would involve committing to strong pro-women policies in the short-term. For example, the path-breaking Madison Police Department in the state of Wisconsin was at the forefront of gender inclusion, commencing the approach as part of its community policing effort in the 1980s. It continues to be recognised as a leader in alternative approaches to policing that leverage community co-

production of safety, with gender diversity being a cornerstone of those approaches (Carlson 2017).

Essentialising Women is Merely a Strategy to Help Achieve the Goal

Postcolonial feminist theory helps examine what may on the surface be a problematic essentialisation: that a gender identity automatically connotes certain individual talents and capacities. However, essentialisation may be a necessary stepping stone to a future that ultimately transcends essentialised categories and that increases social inclusivity and variation. By championing the effects of the social construction of gender and gender socialisation that women carry into male-dominated spaces, gender transformation is possible—for both men and women. Theorist Gayatri Chakraborty Spivak (2006) described the project of transcending hierarchical gender differences as one that achieves an ultimate goal of gender liberation through an intermediary goal of promoting the under-represented group in a more essentialist way. In brief, only by being determinedly pro-women can the trend of patriarchy be broken to benefit all genders in society. In line with this theoretical assumption—and until police forces worldwide have roughly 50 per cent female inclusion rates—a women-oriented approach will be needed. This intermediary, essentialising approach has the advantage of better countering the dominant, patriarchal attitudes underlying gender differences in fractured societies, while concurrently maintaining the more liberated goal of transcending gender categories. This approach can be related to what Chan, Doran and Marel (2010) identified as strategies for 'doing gender' in policing. Women navigate the male-dominated profession in ways that both conform to gendered stereotypes and that challenge them, which signifies that being female 'can be both a resource and a constraint' (Chan, Doran and Marel 2010: 442). Women-oriented policing emphasises the 'resource' benefit in the short-term, even before the long-term goal of gender balance may be achieved. The immediate gains that women contribute to policing are highlighted in the ensuing paragraphs.

Leveraging Women's Talents and Skills

The argument that women only offer skills to policing that are stereotypically feminine may promote a negative discourse. Qualities such as empathy, communication skills, non-violent approaches, inclusivity and emotion have been linked to providing a service-oriented, pro-democratic approach to policing; however, they may also feed into the stereotypes about women. Without care, such a conflation of gender and femininity can lead to its own form of discrimination and tokenism. For example, research on women's police stations in Brazil found that being a female officer did not necessarily equate to being more empathetic. Rather, the important factor was the type of training received within communities in practice, such as a background in social work (Osterman 2003).

However, most research supports the notion that women are generally more likely than their male counterparts to offer a public service orientation to the profession; in many societies (most likely due to cultural patterns of socialisation), women are more likely to carry the feminine characteristics of promoting dialogue and problem-solving (Barberet 2014: 193; Rabe-Hemp 2008). One advantage associated with women police involves communication skills, which are particularly important in conflict and post-conflict societies. Some police leaders have indicated their beliefs that policewomen are generally better able to diffuse and de-escalate the situations they encounter because they are less authoritarian that policemen. Research from the US and other countries indicates that the style of policing that women tend to employ as a de-escalation strategy involves less physical force and more verbal communication. Policewomen more often diffuse and de-escalate and generally possess more effective communication skills, which results in more easily earning the cooperation and trust required to police a community (Bastick 2008). When in police leadership roles, they are more likely to exhibit transformational leadership: participation, consultation and inclusion (Barbaret 2014: 135). Overall, policewomen have a

calming effect on police–citizen interactions, are more effective at de-escalation in dangerous situations and provide better comfort to crime victims (Rabe-Hemp 2018: 120).

Women's communication skills also promote crime prevention within the framework of community-oriented policing. Although not necessarily by design, female officers and female Roma leaders in Slovenia emerged as the prime example for healthier police–community relations after Roma and non-Roma people experienced ethnic conflict and community violence. The Slovenian National Police developed a nation-wide, multicultural joint training program for police in which Roma leaders acted as co-trainers for community policing units. This program's primary innovation was that the curriculum was jointly taught by police and Roma. Although the program was intended to counter ethnic discrimination through language and cultural training, the inclusion of women significantly helped decrease cross-cultural conflict by increasing social networks that focused on crime prevention. Due to positive media coverage of a participating Roma policewoman and female Roma leaders several years after the program's debut, there was excitement about the change in police. What was once a brutal top-down force during Yugoslavian days evolved into a democratic framework in independent Slovenia (Strobl et al. 2014, 2015).

The experience in Slovenia dovetails with reports on the police reform in Liberia. Pressured by civil society groups in 2006 and 2007, the Liberian National Police created a women's and children's protection system, accompanied by the adoption of a 20 per cent quota for women's inclusion in policing and the armed forces. The effort involved envisioning a broader perspective of human security after the civil wars (1989–2003) and of subsequent widespread insecurity and crime (particularly gender-based violence). Specifically, women were regarded as being able to better manage security risks in the society relating to gender-based violence, given their skills in promoting local reconciliation among groups in conflict and in reaching at-risk youths (Bastick 2008). They were more likely to engage in 'vertical linkages of communication' between the security sector agencies, other governmental agencies and civil society groups and communities (Bastick 2008: 159). The implication here is that in Liberia, men's domination of policing had maintained patterns of insularity within police agencies that do not advance the interests of post-conflict security.

Better Use of Force Decision-Making

Research from the US reveals that, on average, women make better use of force decisions (they are more likely to be legal) when compared to male officers. Studies from 2004 to 2014 involving the Denver, Indianapolis, Washington, DC and Kansas City police departments reveal that policewomen are significantly less likely than policemen to have excessive force complaints filed against them (Gibbs et al. 2015)—even when accounting for the fact that most police-involved shootings are at the hands of male officers (Brown and Lagan 2001). Moreover, studies have shown that although women use less force on average, they have similar or better outcomes than men. One study even demonstrated that countries with a high percentage of policewomen (18 per cent and higher) are less likely to devolve into civil unrest or civil war (Gibbs et al. 2015). In a famous roundtable at the National Center for Women and Policing in 2001, academics and practitioners discussed how women are less likely to use excessive force on the job, based on the combined practical experience and then-limited data on justified and unjustified police homicides. Participants agreed that female officers were not reluctant to use force, but rather that they had demonstrated a capacity to use it wisely (based on community policing curricula at police academies) (Lonsway 2001). Consequently, hiring more women was offered as a solution to forces in the US that were experiencing problems with excessive force (Lonsway 2002; Lonsway and Spillar 2002; Rabe-Hemp 2018).

There is less available research outside the US on the outcomes of police officers of different genders using force. However, the Stockholm International Peace Research Institute reported that international trends in use of force point to the same conclusion: Women officers' style of

policing uses less force, is less likely to use it to excess and is better at diffusing and de-escalating potentially violence confrontations with citizens. (Bastick 2008: 162).

Lower Levels of Corruption and Other Abuses of Power

Research also suggests that women in policing can help counter corruption and other abuses of power. In Tamil Nadu, India, Natarajan (2008) found that policewomen were less likely to be involved in incidents involving abuse of power. A similar observation was made about Taiwanese policewomen—however, the effect could not be clearly separated from the lack of opportunity for corruption, when women are concentrated in lower ranks and are in less sensitive deployments (Sun and Chu 2008). In Uganda, women are frequently appointed to head corruption investigations in the police force due to the perception that they are less likely to be socially or politically connected to the alleged wrongdoers (Goetz 2007). In the US, a study by the National Center for Women and Policing in 2002 revealed that policewomen are two to three times less likely than their male counterparts to have civilian complaints filed against them, which could be fairly interpreted as women having lower incidents of perceived abuse of power.

An example of this interpretation outside the US is the Peruvian National Police, who also observed that Peruvian policewomen were less likely to perpetuate corruption. After the World Bank and other international organisations criticised the levels of police corruption during the tenure of President Alberto Fujimori's government (1990–2000), studies analysing the social networks of corruption and individual personality tests revealed that Peruvian policewomen were more likely to be honest, disciplined and trustworthy than male officers (Jones 2000). Consequently, the Peruvian National Police heavily recruited women into the traffic police to break the cycle of police bribery and other abuses of trust. In 2011, 90 per cent of the traffic police were women, which was higher by 10 per cent than the rate two years prior. Although public opinion polls agree that policewomen have helped reduce police corruption, the women themselves and other women's civil society groups highlight that their opportunities for promotion into more prestigious roles within the organisation are scant (Karim 2011).

Corsianos (2012) interpreted the gendered patterns of police corruption in the US as being intimately connected to the culture of hegemonic masculinity within policing, further suggesting that abuse of power stems from conforming to peer groups as well as to exhibiting toughness and authority. By working outside this culture, women's approach to policing is less corruption prone. Barnes, Beaulieu and Saxton (2018) tested the public's perception of policewomen's relative lack of corruption and found that their outsider status (relative to men) was desirable to the public. In an online survey based on a scenario similar to that of the Peruvian National Police, respondents were asked to evaluate the desirability of hiring policewomen for traffic enforcement in Mexico City to break patterns of corruption. In addition to their outsider status, perceptions that women were less risk-adverse also factored into the public's support for the hypothetical initiative. Importantly, stereotypes regarding women being more honest and ethical were not drivers of support for the desire to hire women police.

Increased Gender Responsiveness

Gender responsiveness refers to the capacity of law enforcement agencies to respond to the unique needs of women in the communities that they serve. We already know that the needs of women and children are more likely to be met by law enforcement when it invests in involving women in policing. The UN Women's *Progress of the World's Women: In Pursuit of Justice* (2011–2012: 60) report provides data that, in the 39 countries examined, there was a correlation between relatively high rates of female inclusion in policing and an increased reporting of sexual assaults against women and children. UN peacekeepers also report that there is more responsiveness to reports of domestic violence from police agencies that employ female police officers (Asquith 2006). In the US, Schuck (2018) found that a greater number of women in

policing is linked to higher reporting rates for rape incidents—as well as higher clearance rates for rape cases—based on cross-sectional and longitudinal data from 1997 to 2013.

The Liberian National Police's improved handling of sexual and gender-based violence (SGBV) cases has also been attributed to its concerted efforts to increase its numbers of policewomen (from two to 17 per cent over 10 years). Liberian policewomen ushered in a speedier response to SGBV incidents and an improved institutional pursuit of SGBV-targeted foreign development assistance (Bacon 2017). Similarly, the Rwanda National Police reportedly increased the gender balance of their force to promote the gender responsiveness of their agency in relation to SGBV cases (Williscroft 2013).

Policewomen units engage with a certain type of social caring for victims, children and the disadvantaged, in a way that all societies need—particularly post-conflict ones. In many countries, there is evidence to suggest that gender-responsive services would not exist without the inclusion of policewomen. Women generally increase an agency's capacity to effectively help marginalised populations by increasing the social work aspect of policing. For example, since their inception in 1971 in Bahrain, female police created all specific programs for addressing intimate partner violence, child abuse and juvenile delinquency. Policewomen were widely considered to have increased the police force's overall ability and willingness to investigate sex crimes (Strobl 2008, 2010a).

In field work with policewomen in Bahrain and Oman, the women expressed a more palpable pride in being gender responsive than in all other facets of their jobs (Strobl 2008, 2010a). Although most Bahraini police in a survey in 2005 revealed that they preferred segregated female units of policing rather than the prospect of full integration (Strobl and Sung 2009), such gender-specific conceptions of women in policing can act as a stepping stone to a more inclusive future. Women can gain more confidence in their policing abilities while policemen and larger society can concurrently come to appreciate their contributions (Natarajan 2008). A similar conclusion was reached by Chu and Abdulla (2014) in their survey of policewomen and their prospects for gender integration into the Dubai Police. Female peer socialisation in a specialised female unit within the male-dominated profession helped promote positive self-efficacy, which then spurred professional competence.

It is important to understand that the national presence of female police officers is not automatically commensurate with international ideas about the equal status of women and other minorities (Strobl 2008, 2010a, 2010b, 2016; Strobl and Sung 2009). For example, one primary deployment for Kuwaiti policewomen is patrolling shopping malls for transgressions of gender norms (e.g., enforcing prohibitions against cross-dressing as a proxy for policing gay youths). In these roles, Kuwaiti policewomen are enforcing traditional gender expression and gender taboo, which contradicts international human rights standards (Strobl 2016). This is not to say that the recent inclusion of women in Kuwait policing 10 years ago is not a positive development from a UN perceptive. A select few women can also be observed moving into major crime investigation roles in the criminal investigation division, and two of the women have even been promoted to the role of detective (Strobl 2016, 2019).

Including more women in policing may mean accepting that some societies will be most comfortable with gender-specific units and that some of those units will limit the police careers of its women. This suggests a paradox for achieving UN goals: Are gender-specific police deployments failures of gender equality, even as they promote increased health and safety in women and children? Is it more important for policewomen to have access to the same career opportunities as their male counterparts, or for the larger society to have access to female police officers who are gender responsive, particularly in the face of serious crimes such as sexual assault and human trafficking? More research is needed to empirically explore this paradox in

post-conflict spaces to determine whether it is indeed the difficult choice that must be made in more traditional countries.

For example, there are no female police or corrections officers in Saudi Arabia, but there are female matrons in women's prisons who provide services to the inmates. Those matrons do not have, and are unlikely to achieve, gender equality in their work, as compared to their male counterparts in sworn officer positions; however, their work is critical to the health and safety of incarcerated Saudi women (Strobl 2010a). Future research should also examine how intergovernmental organisations should manage their expectations in light of this paradox. From a harm-reduction perspective, exploited women and children's access to police services seemingly alleviates more human suffering, when compared to the probable suffering of policewomen in gendered jobs. However, this uncomfortable concession undermines the overall project of gender equality as prescribed by SDG 5 and SDG 8 (specifically target 8.5, which calls for social inclusivity in workplaces and equal pay for equal work).

Conclusion: Strategies for Women-Oriented Policing After Conflict

Although bold, the claim that including women improves policing for local communities has been receiving empirical support. Women compose agencies with less brutality and more conflict resolution and communication, and they respond more effectively to the problems of exploitation experienced by women and children. This claim embraces socially construed gender differences rather than commonalities, which can uncomfortably contradict the UN's gender equality framework. However, knowing how gender relations are culturally constructed in a post-conflict environment could be critical to establishing efficient public safety for women and children. If female policing becomes too overtly counter-cultural and is perceived as bucking up against gender norms too dramatically, then efforts to help women and children may backfire. In short, female police officers perform excellent work in improving police organisations, but they should not be expected to completely transform gender relations; they may underwhelm their international observers in their capacity to promote large-scale gender reform without the additional strategies to confront the relevant cultural barriers in societies. However, female police officers—even in small numbers and with limited deployments—are fundamental for increasing gender responsiveness and for contributing necessary talents and skills for effective democratic and community-oriented policing. Accounting for the local culture that underlies gender relations is critical for predicting the proper scope and goals of the women-oriented policing project in the short-term, even as the hope for fulfilling UN goals remains the long-term target.

The Democratic Control of Armed Forces' *Gender and Security Sector Reform Toolkit* (Valasek 2008) provides detailed planning and operational advice that would be consistent with a women-oriented police reform. Importantly, women's civil society groups can help support women in policing. Drawing on a type of feminist demand-based model (Barberet 2014: 193), women's civil society groups worldwide have organised platforms for pressuring governments towards gender-responsive policing, particularly in the areas of sexual violence, domestic violence, child abuse and human trafficking (Bastick 2008: 157–158; Valasek 2008: 9–10). Grassroots women's groups particularly focus on previously ignored problems, such as the environmental effects of military activities and the sexual harassment of women by military personnel (Valasek 2008). Based on a review of the role that gender-based organisations can play in the gender responsiveness of the security sector, the Democratic Control of the Armed Forces lists the following benefits: 1) building the capacity of security sector institutions and personnel to better respond to the security needs of victimised women (e.g., in cases of human trafficking), 2) providing better services to victims of violence (e.g., safe houses for victims of domestic violence) and 3) providing psychological support for victims of torture (Valasek 2008).

Additionally, core training modules on gender responsiveness for all police forces would help frame the women-orientation approach as being everyone's goal, not merely one for the domain of a specific group of policewomen (Valasek 2008: 22). Further, national, provincial and local police agencies should simultaneously embrace women-oriented policing units as a starting point and then work towards allowing women to deploy across the full range of policing roles, tasks, departments and ranks, so that the UN gender equality goals can be advanced. To do this, policy planning for the recruitment and retention of women should be undertaken with a focus on the unique needs of women in the workplace, such as childcare and shift-scheduling options. Monitoring and evaluating the outcomes of key democratic policing measures—such as those mentioned involving civilian complaints and use of force—will help document the changes in police effectiveness as women enter and develop within the police force.

Finally, all changes should aim for transparency and utilise local governance. Public information campaigns may help the public understand the key role that women play to keep this key component of democracy established and growing. As many gender and policing scholars have noted, the true obstacle to women and policing is not women's interest in the profession, their capacity, nor even a lack of intergovernmental treaties, national policies nor the rule of law. The issue of gender and policing is cultural, whether within the profession or within society at large. In that regard, the inclusion of women in policing is necessary in complex societies, but also highly aspirational.

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[1] Empowering women and promoting gender equality is the main thrust of the CSW, an intergovernmental UN body. Its mission is broadly framed by the overarching UN General Assembly and its Economic and Social Council. Further, this mission is specifically agreed upon by a strong majority of UN member states through the *Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women* treaty. In addition, the CSW has adopted the Beijing Platform for Action as a policy aspiration, though it is not legally binding. Both these agreements attribute women's rights as being intrinsic to the realisation of comprehensive human rights (NGO Committee 2019: 16).

[2] Although much scholarship exists on gender and law enforcement, it is dominated by Anglo-American studies. This means that there is a potential Western, democratic and English-speaking bias in our knowledge about the interplay of gender and law enforcement.

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