



Police Officer Gender and Attitudes toward Intimate Partner Violence: How policy can eliminate stereotypes

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Abstract

This article reviews the existing literature on differences in police response to IPV (intimate partner violence) based on officer gender and suggests policy changes that could address common issues identified in the research. Authors reviewed research on the effect of police officer gender on arrest rates of abusers, the criteria officers consider when making the arrest decision, and whether officers and IPV victims have a gender preference for the officers sent to IPV calls. Due to a lack of existing research, it is unclear if officer gender has a significant effect on arrest rates in IPV cases. However, gender is related to officers' beliefs, stereotypes and reactions to IPV. There is evidence that a masculine police culture affects men officers' belief in negative stereotypes regarding women officers. These gender differences are rooted in widely held beliefs in traditional gender roles and in the masculine police culture that contends that IPV is not a serious crime. Based on a review of scholarly studies and existing policies, we propose interventions to improve both the police response to IPV and the elimination of the masculine police culture, including, but not limited to expansion of (and adherence to) mandatory arrest, sensitivity training to the effects of police response on IPV victims, and improved techniques of recruiting men officers. This is the first policy-oriented article to thoroughly examine research on whether officer gender affects police response to IPV.

Keywords: Intimate Partner Violence, Gender, Law Enforcement Response, Police Recruiting and Training.

Introduction

The victimization of women by their intimate partners is common worldwide. According to the World Health Organization, the prevalence of physical and/or sexual intimate partner violence is highest in the African, Eastern Mediterranean, and South-East Asia regions and second-highest in the Regions of America (including North and South America), where approximately 30% of women report lifetime exposure to intimate partner violence (IPV) (2013). According to Baer and Goldstein (2006), “Even today,

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when 'wife beating' has become 'domestic violence' and often gets wide publicity, law enforcement experts believe that 'wife abuse is the most unreported crime in the United States,' (p.570). IPV remains a serious problem in the U.S. and abroad despite increasing public awareness and law enforcement response. In terms of police response to IPV (e.g., arresting abusers and informing victims of the services available to them), past research has focused primarily on how characteristics of the victims, such as age, race, socioeconomic status (SES), and location, affect arrest rates of the abuser, or how police officers' policing philosophy, location, and attitudes regarding women and their own roles in relationships affect officer response. Few studies have focused specifically on how officer gender can affect police response to IPV (Novak et al., 2011; Stalans & Finn, 2000).

IPV should be a primary concern for police departments around the world. It is a pervasive problem that is propagated by beliefs in traditional gender roles and negative stereotypes about women. These beliefs and stereotypes are especially concerning when they are held by men officers, as some research has suggested that a masculine police culture endures in law enforcement (Dick & Jankowicz, 2001; Rabe-Hemp, 2008), and this environment may reinforce officers' existing traditional gender views. Due to a lack of research on the subject, it is unclear if police officer gender has a significant effect on rates of arresting abusers in IPV cases. However, it does affect their beliefs, stereotypes and reaction to IPV. The masculine police culture affects the stereotypes men officers hold of women officers and of women in general. These gender differences are rooted in widely held beliefs in traditional gender roles (especially masculine gender roles) and a traditional policing ideology inherent in the U.S. police culture. Even as new laws are passed in response to IPV (e.g., the Institute of Justice [2008] reports that twenty-three U.S. states now have some form of a state-wide mandatory arrest policy, six states have preferred arrest provisions, and twenty-two states have discretionary arrest provisions), it is increasingly apparent that prevailing cultural beliefs and individual attitudes of law enforcement officers have directly affected the way that victims and batterers have been regarded and treated over the years.

This article will examine the existing literature on gender differences in police response to IPV and suggest policy changes that can address the issues identified in the research. We review studies from North America; we are aware that different nations and cultures have varying degrees of gender inequality, so we examined only research conducted in the United States and Canada to consider which policies are working or what changes to police policy have been suggested. When reviewing these articles, we focus on findings concerning whether officer gender affects arrest rates of abusers, the criteria an officer considers when making the decision to arrest an abuser, and whether officer gender corresponds with a specific preference for the gender of officers sent to respond to IPV incidents. Based on the findings of this review, we argue that the expansion of (and adherence to) mandatory arrest policies, increased use of crisis intervention teams, improved recruiting and integration of women police officers, sensitivity training to the effects of police response on victims of IPV, and improved recruiting techniques of men officers are strategies with proven empirical or theoretical strength that can be implemented to eliminate the police culture's encouragement of traditional gender role beliefs and ideologies that tolerate IPV.

I. Influence of police officer characteristics on response to and attitudes toward IPV

a. Policing philosophy

Before addressing how police officer gender affects rates of arrest and officers' beliefs, stereotypes, and response to IPV, it is important to briefly examine how officer characteristics in general (i.e., policing philosophy, and attitudes about victims, women in general, and the acceptability of violence) play a role in determining these factors. DeJong, Burgess-Proctor and Elis (2008) studied police officer perceptions of IPV using observational data from police ride-alongs as part of the Project on Policing Neighborhoods (POPEN), examining whether policing philosophy is related to officers' attitudes toward IPV. In order to do this, the researchers examined whether "regular" patrol officers' views on IPV differed from those of officers on a community policing assignment during 461 IPV encounters. Problematic views that officers held included simplification of IPV, victim blaming, patriarchal attitudes toward women, and presumption of victim non-cooperation. Some officers expressed progressive views including recognition of the complexity of IPV, awareness of barriers to leaving, and consideration of IPV as serious and worthy of police intervention. Officers who endorsed community policing ideals also approached IPV situations with a sense of collaboration and caring, while officers who seemed more closely aligned with traditional policing ideals often expressed frustration with IPV calls. DeJong, Burgess-Proctor and Elis conclude that their findings offer tentative support for a relationship between policing philosophy and officers' attitudes toward IPV (2008). Perhaps officers who are more accepting of IPV adhere to not just traditional policing ideologies, but also believe that traditional gender roles should apply in intimate partner relationships.

Evidence of the influence of beliefs in traditional gender roles on police perceptions of IPV is demonstrated by Cormier and Woodworth's 2008 study, which compared student and Royal Canadian Mounted Police (RCMP) officer perceptions of IPV according to the portrayed genders and sexual orientations of victims and perpetrators. They found that both students and RCMP officers perceived scenarios with male perpetrators and female victims to be more serious than scenarios portraying other gender combinations of perpetrator and victim (i.e., when the perpetrator and victim were partners in a same-sex couples or when the victim was a heterosexual male). RCMP officers exhibited fewer gender-based differences in perception than the students. The responses showing these differences were important ones. Like the students, RCMP officers indicated that they were significantly more likely to call the police (if off-duty) when witnessing a man assaulting his wife than when witnessing identical scenes with same-sex victims of IPV (Cormier and Woodworth, 2008). Because both students and officers believed that the genders of victims and perpetrators affected the seriousness of an IPV situation, the persistence of traditional gender roles in relationships continue to influence societal views of IPV. Despite the gender-based differences in perception shown by Cormier and Woodworth, the RCMP is still inclined to take any instance of IPV seriously. However, the levels of seriousness vary.

b. Legal and non-legal factors for the decision to arrest

Avakame and Fyfe (2001) found that not only were police more likely to arrest perpetrators of assaults who were strangers to the victims rather than intimate-partner assaulters, but also that police were more likely to make an arrest when the victim was a white, wealthy, older, suburban female. Research shows that officers rely mostly on legal factors in the arrest decision (e.g. evidence of abuse), but to some extent use factors outside the law (Dolon, Hendricks, and Meagher 1986; Ford 1987; Saunders 1980; and Saunders 1995). External factors that may affect the arrest decision include particular attitudes about victims, women in general, and the acceptability of violence. Saunders (1980) provides similar evidence that attitudes toward women and domestic violence were associated with the extent of officers' interventions (e.g. the intervention of arresting the abuser as opposed to providing a verbal warning), and that officers who held traditional views of women's roles or approved of marital violence were less likely to arrest the offender or to provide crisis counseling to victims. These findings provide further evidence that the existing patriarchal culture heavily influenced officers' attitudes and their subsequent behaviors and interventions in IPV scenarios.

In addition, Saunders (1980) found that police officers who preferred to arrest a woman portrayed in a vignette were more likely to believe that domestic violence is justified in cases of infidelity and less likely to believe that victims stay for practical reasons. These officers also reported being less comfortable talking with victims. Overall, Saunders found support for the hypothesis that officers' propensity to arrest victims was related to their justification of IPV.

General characteristics of officers affect how they think about and respond to IPV incidents. Adherence to traditional policing ideals and traditional gender roles, in addition to showing support for (or justifying) domestic violence, appear to be facilitating factors toward a masculine police culture that encourages officers to act leniently in their responses to IPV calls. Unfortunately, the effects of these factors are intensified by officers' gender.

II. The Impact of Gender on Officer Response to IPV

While research on general officer characteristics is helpful for explaining differences in views on IPV, the increasing integration of women into the police workforce means that officer gender should be a focus of the research on policing and IPV. This is especially true given the potential that having more women officers holds toward correcting some of the traditional policing mindsets. Unfortunately, there are a limited number of studies focused specifically on how officer gender affects response to IPV incidents. One of the earliest studies on gender differences in officer response to IPV was conducted by Homant and Kennedy (1985), who compared women and men police officers' attitudes toward handling IPV. They distributed a survey to 62 women and 89 men police officers measuring officers' involvement (professional concern about IPV) and perceptions of women officers who handled IPV situations using a Likert-type scale and found that women officers scored significantly higher on the involvement variable than men officers, even after controlling for all other variables. Some evidence demonstrated that identification with a feminist point-of-view and having concern for the victim were significant intervening variables that partially explained why women officers scored higher on involvement. Additionally, men officers tended to view women officers as lacking

assertiveness, while women officers viewed themselves as more patient and understanding, and as less likely to escalate a conflict. Homant and Kennedy (1985) suggested that the results of their study could provide a basis for discussion among mixed groups of police officers concerning various approaches to handling IPV incidents. These discussion groups would require a trained, sensitive leader and should focus on clarifying communication between men and women officers (with respect to what they believe are appropriate responses to IPV). Although this study was conducted before the implementation of most mandatory arrest policies, it provides a good framework for subsequent studies on officer differences in response to IPV.

While Stalans (2007) finds that minority and white officers do not consistently differ in their interpretations or handling of IPV (and that academy training also has little influence), men and women police officers differ in their stereotypes about and responses to domestic violence. They also consider different criteria when responding to domestic violence. Stalans points out that several studies have examined whether women officers are more empathic toward battered women and more likely to enforce the law (2007).

The most comprehensive study on the effect of officer gender on response to IPV was conducted by Stalans and Finn (2000), who studied how men and women police officers perceived and responded to a hypothetical domestic violence situation. Three situations were manipulated, including wife's conduct (normal, hallucinating, drunken), presence of visible injuries on the wife, and antagonism between the wife and husband. They found that female and male officers arrested abusers involved in the hypothetical IPV situations at similar rates. However, they do consider different criteria when making the decision to arrest. Stalans and Finn reported that female officers are less likely to make an arrest if the victim is willing to settle the argument. In contrast, male officers do not consider this criterion. In other words, female officers tend to act in accordance with feminist views and are more willing to arrest when the victim is unwilling to settle the argument. In another study by Robinson and Chandek (2000), data collected from a medium-sized police department in the Midwest found that female officers make arrests in domestic violence situations less often than male officers. Robinson and Chandek speculated that this difference may be due to the overrepresentation of males in the sample, or that female officers were more likely to adhere to victims' preferences than to policy mandates. Given the limited research that has been conducted on differences between male and female officer arrest rates in IPV cases, it is unclear whether officer gender is a significant factor in the decision to arrest abusers. However, the research focusing on police officer gender and the decision to arrest for any crime has shown that male and female officers make similar arrest decisions during encounters with suspects (Novak et al., 2011; Stalans and Finn, 2000).

Stalans and Finn (2000) found that female officers responding to domestic violence calls (compared with their male counterparts) were more likely to perceive that wives acted in self-defense and to predict that wives would be the only party injured. Female officers also perceived that husbands acted more often intentionally and without justification. Stalans and Finn assert that these gender differences in stereotypes are related to the extent to which male officers support male-dominating relationships, a result that is consistent with Saunders' 1980 study. Both early and recent studies suggest that women police may be more empathic toward victims of abuse than are policemen. The results of these studies do not, however, provide thorough empirical evidence that police women are more or less likely to enforce IPV related laws.

1. The Influence of Work Experience and Gender on Police Officers' Attitudes

It is important to also look at how the intersection of officers' age (or experience on the job) and sex shape views of and responses to IPV. Stalans and Finn (2000) found that experienced male officers supportive of patriarchal, male-dominated relationships believe that a lower percentage of IPV cases involve wives acting in self-defense. In contrast, female officers' attitudes toward male-dominating relationships are not related to their domestic violence stereotypes. This study suggests that intentionally sending female officers, who show more empathy towards victims, to the scene of IPV situations could be helpful to the victim in several ways. These findings are also consistent with Homant and Kennedy's assertion that identification with a feminist world view assists in explaining female officers' greater concern about IPV.

Rookie male and female officers' views on IPV tend to be quite similar (Stalans & Finn 2000). For example, when it comes to making the arrest decision when confronted with IPV, both rookie male and female officers consider the likelihood of severe injuries to the victim if the husband remained in the home. They also considered the presence of injuries on the victim when making these decisions. Male and female rookie officers typically recommend marriage counseling in cases of spousal abuse and only in one out of five cases refer the battered woman to a shelter. Stalans and Finn's findings complement past research showing that male and female officers hold similar views about their jobs and do not favor involvement in domestic disturbances. The authors argue that through professional socialization, female officers develop perceptions about their law enforcement role similar to those of men officers. Yet, as officers gain experience, their attitudes and levels of confidence in what they can do change. For example, once female officers achieve more experience in their positions and can defend their views, they may act differently towards IPV incidents (e.g., they might act on views that are less supportive of violence and more supportive of the empowerment of victims). Stalans and Finn found that experienced female officers are less likely to recommend marriage counseling and more likely to refer a battered woman to a shelter than are experienced male officers.

Overall, Stalans and Finn (2000) assert that "effective training to increase uniform enforcement of domestic violence statutes requires moving beyond officers' decisions to understanding what questions guide their investigations and how they interpret information and use stereotypes to make inferences" (p. 547). Looking at the underlying societal forces behind officer decisions is crucial to the process of making well-informed and potentially useful policy recommendations. Once again, officers' adherence to traditional gender roles can influence their attitudes about and response to domestic violence.

2. Officer Preferences for Gender of Responding Officers

Research has also examined, officers believe on who should respond to IPV incidents: policewomen, policemen, or a combination of both. Belknap (1996) surveyed 293 male and 20 female officers from a large Midwestern, metropolitan area and (despite the small sample size of female officers) discovered that with the exception of policewomen responding to victims, the support for policewomen acting alone was practically non-existent. She also found that officers were more likely to rank policemen as the preferred sex responding to abusers than they were to rank policewomen as the preferred sex responding to abuse victims. There was considerable support for a male-female

combination of officers, yet departments showed a clear preference for policemen over policewomen, except when responding to the victim. Interestingly, policewomen were much more enthusiastic than policemen in their preferences for policemen and policewomen working together.

Belknap (1996) also argues that a belief in gender-specific roles for law enforcement officers (as opposed to equal officer status for men and women) seems to be prevalent among police officers surveyed. She therefore asserts that simply recruiting women into law enforcement is not sufficient; rather, it is necessary to recruit men who respect women as equals, and to address gender stereotyping in police training. Once again, officers' adherence to traditional gender roles plays a significant part in their views on both the seriousness of IPV incidents and the extent to which female officers should respond to IPV calls.

In Cormier and Woodworth's 2008 study mentioned earlier, the expected perceptual differences between men and women did not emerge as anticipated. However, they did find that women ranked three of four vignettes (IPV by a man against a woman; IPV by a man against a male partner; and IPV by a woman against a man) as being slightly more serious than did male participants. Despite this, Cormier and Woodworth conclude that these results are not sufficient to claim an effective difference between men and women officers. They add that the means for both genders were very high, which shows that both men and women officers had considerable sensitivity to IPV. Cormier and Woodworth suggest that a future cross-cultural comparison of gender and IPV perceptions may provide valuable insights regarding culturally determined differences in the attitudes of men and women.

If the nature of police work itself is more influential on perceptions of IPV than gender of officers is, this implies that training for all law-enforcement should promote egalitarian gender-role attitudes and knowledge of how victimization experiences affect victims' emotional and behavioral reactions and subsequent adjustment. The consistent theme of adherence to traditional beliefs about police ideology and gender roles affecting officers' attitudes toward IPV (especially male officers' attitudes) indicates that police departments need to implement strategies to change these traditional beliefs if they want IPV to be taken seriously and female officers to be treated as equals.

III. Policy Recommendations: How to change the Police Culture

i. Mandatory arrest policies

Changing the culture of an institution as large as law enforcement is a difficult goal that seems unrealistic at first glance. Yet there are resources and potential avenues via policy change that can be used to promote sensitivity to IPV and eliminate masculine stereotypes. Examination of the literature on police officer response to IPV revealed common thread of a masculine police culture across North America. We now discuss some of the policies that have worked to improve responses to IPV and reduce the gender stereotyping in policing.

The first step is to utilize and expand on a policy that is already widely used: mandatory arrest. Statistics show that officers are more frequently taking official action in cases of IPV. Pozzulo, Bennell, and Forth (2009) report that the recent institution of mandatory arrest policies in Canada and much of the U.S. has led to higher rates of arrest and criminal charges for abusers; arrest rates prior to the 1990's fell between 7% and 15%,

whereas current estimates now range from 30% to 75%. It is clear that the development of mandatory arrest policies leads to more frequent arrest of offenders by police.

Arrests have been shown to deter abusers in past studies. This deterrent effect was seen in the Minneapolis Domestic Violence Experiment (Çelik, 2013; Sherman & Berk, 1984). Replication of the Minneapolis Domestic Violence Experiment has failed to confirm that arrest was the best option for preventing subsequent violence (Lee, Zhang, and Hoover, 2013); however, since the implementation of arrest laws, households in states where arrest is mandated have been less likely to suffer from domestic violence (Çelik, 2013; Dugan, 2003). Mandatory arrest laws also relieve the victim of responsibility for pressing charges, instead requiring police officers to identify and charge the abuser (Carney & Buttell, 2004).

Sometimes mandatory arrest laws create complications for victims of abuse. While the most common form of mandatory arrest policies requires the arrest of the primary aggressor, dual arrest requires that both parties are arrested, leaving the judge to determine which person is the victim (Stalans & Finn, 2000). Issues arise when the adoption of mandatory arrest policies exacerbate officers' tendency to arrest victims, especially in cases where victims of domestic violence argue in front of officers and are arrested for disorderly conduct as a result (Saunders, 1995). The most disturbing unintended consequence of mandatory arrest laws is that the number of murders committed by intimate partners is now significantly higher in states that have mandatory arrest laws compared to states that do not (Çelik, 2013; Iyengar, 2009). Additionally, there was a decline in the reporting of domestic violence incidents after mandatory arrest laws were passed in certain states, which is likely due to fear of potential abuser retaliation (2013). Despite these negative findings, the positive impact of mandatory arrest policies is undeniable.

It would be helpful for police administrators to ensure that mandatory arrest laws are consistently followed to achieve uniformity in arrest rates regardless of arresting officer characteristics. This would also emphasize the significance of responding to and taking official action in cases of IPV, which could result in officers taking IPV incidents more seriously. To further this effect, stronger mandatory arrest laws should replace preferred and discretionary policies in states where arrest of abusers is encouraged rather than required. By requiring police to arrest abusers when evidence of physical violence is present, the message will be conveyed to abusers that society condemns their behavior and is willing to take official legal action to stop it. It is important to note that to be effective, mandatory arrests should only be carried out when there is probable cause that an assault occurred (Lee, Zhang, and Hoover, 2013).

ii. A crisis intervention approach to IPV

Crisis intervention teams (also known as domestic violence coordinated response teams) aid police officers in enforcing mandatory arrest policies while providing assistance to the victim (Adler, 1998). These teams typically consist of police officers and social workers who work together to prevent future abuse. Services provided by these teams include referrals to shelters, counseling, legal aid and advocacy.

Corcoran, Stephenson, Perryman and Allen (2001) studied police officer perceptions and utilization of a domestic violence response team (DVRT). This team involved social workers and trained volunteers providing crisis intervention at the scene of domestic violence crimes. The ultimate goal of this DVRT was to increase the cooperation of

victims of domestic violence in arrest and prosecution. Another goal was to increase the efficiency and effectiveness of domestic violence investigations. From a social work perspective, the DVRT's central goal was to provide crisis intervention services to ensure the victim's continued safety and stability, including legal referrals, initiating offense reports, and providing information about criminal justice system policies and procedures. Out of 219 police officers surveyed, the majority (55%) utilized the team by calling them between 2-10 times over the course of the study. Of these officers, 79% thought the response team was helpful. In terms of suggestions for improvement, 47% of officers suggested that the team should provide continuing education to officers.

These researchers conclude that the overwhelmingly positive response to the survey by police indicates that the DVRT seems to be effective in achieving its goals. They emphasize that by working cooperatively with the officer at the scene of domestic violence, the DVRT is able to impact victims at the point of crisis when they may be most amenable to services and change (Corcoran, Stephenson, Perryman and Allen, 2001).

In another 2001 study, Whetstone found that a specialized domestic violence unit (or DVU; consisting of police, victim advocates, and personnel from probation, parole and corrections services) performed significantly better than the control district in terms of arrest, prosecution, and conviction rates. Whetstone concludes that the qualitative findings indicate overwhelming support for the unit. He mentions that victims reported a greater sense of empowerment and were more comfortable interfacing with the courts and with other criminal justice system actors. Similar to the officers' suggestions in Corcoran and colleagues' study, Whetstone (2001) recommends that members of the DVU provide ongoing and enhanced training for officers in methods for investigating domestic violence. Greater use of crisis intervention teams in IPV cases could result in improved intervention and better training for all officers on issues such as gender sensitivity, having empathy for victims, and taking IPV seriously. In police departments where it is unfeasible to have women officers respond to all IPV in tandem with men officers, women members of crisis intervention teams could provide some level of comfort to women victims.

iii. Increasing integration of women officers to change gender stereotypes

Given Belknap's 1996 assertion that simply increasing integration of women into law enforcement is not sufficient, "rather it is necessary to recruit men who respect women as equals, and to address gender stereotyping in police training," (p. 230), it seems fair to conclude that changes in recruitment strategies and training should be a primary focus of police departments aiming to eliminate negative stereotypes about women victims and officers. However, hiring a greater number of women officers may influence stereotypes more than previously thought. The U.S. military and police departments share many characteristics in terms of their traditionally patriarchal power structures and commonly held negative stereotypes regarding women's professionalism and performance. Boldry, Wood and Kashy (2001) investigated perceptions of men and women in the Texas A&M Corps of Cadets and found that negative gender stereotypes persisted, which held that 'women cadets possessed feminine attributes that impaired their military performance'. These stereotypes were prominent despite findings that men and women did not differ on objective measures of military performance.

Interestingly, it was found that integration of women into the corps was associated with more favorable stereotypical judgments of women (when compared to the period prior to integration) and did not result in a backlash against women despite the prevailing male-

dominated setting of the military (Boldry, Wood, & Kashy, 2001). The model of integrating women into a military academy should be applied to police departments and their academies because having a greater number of women police officers (who are more fully integrated into all duties and training of police) could result in similar changes in stereotypes to those seen at A & M. The importance of both hiring more women and fully integrating them into all duties of police officers cannot be emphasized enough.

iv. Impact of differing response on victims of IPV

Victim satisfaction with police response to IPV is an important measure of the success of pro-arrest policy and police effectiveness. Martin (1997) conducted a study on domestic violence victim satisfaction through evaluations of police response and mandatory arrest policy. She found that helping behaviors of the police appeared to be the most important factor in victim satisfaction. In regard to how officer gender may affect helping behaviors, Stalans and Finn claim that “women victims are more satisfied with women officers; thus, although women officers do not arrest perpetrators more often, they are more likely to provide support and information to victims and are less likely to hold gender biased attitudes or stereotypes” (Stalans & Finn, 2000, p. 547). This is consistent with findings by Wolf, Ly, Hobart and Kernic (2003) which show that women working in social service agencies that help victims of IPV believe that there should be more women police officers responding to IPV incidents. One of the reasons for this belief is that in cases of IPV involving rape or physical abuse to private parts of the female victim’s body, the idea of being subjected to physical examination by male police officers was scary for some women.

In cases where the victim of abuse is a woman, it is possible that having women officers respond to the IPV call (or at least women and men officers together) may be preferred to having only men officers respond. Improved communication between officers and women victims may serve to increase victim satisfaction with police response to IPV; Richardson-Foster, Stanley, Miller and Thomson (2012) found this to be true in regard to communication between police officers and children present at domestic violence incidents. Good communication (and increased engagement) can provide the officer with a chance to link the child to relevant support services. It can also increase the likelihood that victims and children will call the police when needed in the future and that they will provide better quality information to frontline officers (2012). In regard to officer gender, more research is needed to assess victims’ preferences regarding whether women, men, or a combination of women and men officers respond to their calls for help when being abused.

Given the significant impact that differential police responses can have on victims of IPV, officers should receive training in the police academy on how victims of IPV are affected by their responses to IPV calls. Perhaps the crisis intervention team training of police in several studies mentioned above could integrate a component that demonstrates this information. This type of training could increase empathy for the victim amongst both women and men officers. It could also help to eliminate some of the negative stereotypes about IPV victims that are held by officers who adhere to a traditional policing ideology. Ideally, this type of training would be given to officers repeatedly rather than just once while they are in the academy.

Specialized IPV training could follow the template of past successful efforts. Blaney (2010) studied 30 police officers' views of a specialized IPV training program. This program involved a partnership between academics and the police agency to develop a training program with the objectives of providing police with a better understanding of the nature, impact (of IPV on victims), and reality of IPV; the role of police officers in responding to IPV calls; and the impact of IPV on police officers. The training was 2-3 days in length and was based on a train-the-trainer format, which allowed police officers that already received IPV training to instruct their peers. The success of the training was attributed to the partnership between IPV experts, the specific sector being trained, and members of the larger community (e.g., members of the government and non-profit agencies). Specialized IPV training should replicate the collaborative approach seen in the training from Blaney's 2010 study. It should complement existing police training initiatives while involving academics, various members of the community, and crisis intervention teams (when available) to provide officers with the knowledge they need to be sensitive to the complex issues involved in responding to IPV.

Police departments cannot control the socialization of cadets before they begin serving on the force. However, the literature cited above clarifies that a gender sensitivity course is necessary for all potential officers. UNESCO (2004) developed a gender sensitivity training manual for use in various organizational contexts. This document claims to create awareness in men and women about their own stereotypes and the consequences of these beliefs, with the goal of eliminating biases and changing behaviors. This training could be expanded to include analysis of officers' ideas about the appropriate roles of men and women in law enforcement. Without knowledge about gender, the aforementioned practical changes will have little chance of succeeding.

Conclusion

The existing research regarding effects of officer gender on response to IPV incidents and arrest rates of abusers is sparse and has yielded mixed results. Nevertheless, officer gender has proven to be an important factor in officers' beliefs, stereotypes and reactions to IPV. Thus, more research is needed. Future studies need to focus on officer gender and arrest rates in IPV cases. First-hand data collection might be necessary since certain information (including incident classification as IPV and the arresting officer's gender) is not available on databases such as the FBI's National Incident-Based Reporting System (NIBRS). Studies of officer gender and arrest rates are needed because officers' arrest behaviors serve as measures of job performance, and it is important to evaluate public officials who enforce the law by using their discretion to make arrests (Novak *et al.* 2011). With more women working in law enforcement, it is important to know whether they respond differently than men officers to IPV incidents so that training and standard operating procedures can be modified to create better outcomes. The policy recommendations made in this article shows how positive changes can be made to change the masculine police culture, despite a lack of research on how officer gender affects arrest rates of abusers.

Law enforcement's response to and concern about IPV has improved over the past half-century with the implementation of mandatory arrest laws and improved training. Yet research on differences in officer response to IPV shows that even today, adherence to traditional policing ideals and traditional gender roles (as well as support for male-dominated or violent relationships) are facilitating a masculine police culture that does not

regard IPV as a serious crime. Evidence for this effect is seen in the fact that officers' propensity to arrest victims was related to their justification of IPV (Saunders, 1980). Expansion of and continued adherence to mandatory arrest laws is vital toward maintaining equal arrest rates of abusers between women and men officers. Adherence to these laws continually reinforces the idea that IPV is a serious crime that needs to be addressed with official legal action. It may be impossible to create a quick, sweeping change that eliminates a masculine police culture, but research points to several factors that could help move towards a more egalitarian workplace. First, the fact that women officers may be more empathic toward victims of abuse than men officers, and that women officers may be the preferred party to respond to the scene by victims of IPV (or at least in combination with men officers), indicates that training can be improved to make all police more empathetic to victims. It is clear that critical intervention teams can help to train officers on the impact of their response on victims and sensitivity to victims in general, as well as helping those officers to provide necessary resources and information to victims.

Second, recruiting more women into law enforcement is important, especially in terms of changing existing negative stereotypes that men officers hold about their women counterparts. However, since women officers develop similar perceptions about their law enforcement roles relative to men officers (through professional socialization), and men still control the professional environment of policing via their administrative roles and a traditional framework of beliefs, it is necessary (as Belknap suggests) to place a higher emphasis on recruiting men who respect women as equals into policing. Respect for women as equals should be a factor of heightened importance in the evaluation of men going through the recruiting process. This could be evaluated by including more questions about beliefs regarding gender roles in written tests, polygraph examinations, and interviews at each stage of the process. Gender sensitivity training would assure that men and women officers were respecting both their colleagues and the general public. These small modifications could fundamentally change the traditional policing ideology in favor of an ideology more sensitive to IPV and women victims.

The reforms addressed in this article will help police departments enforce IPV laws both fairly and effectively. Law enforcement, along with social workers, educators, and the courts, must agree upon definitions of what is considered IPV and the severity of the offense. Consistency in the enforcement of laws, transforming police department culture, and improving methods of recruiting officers are crucial steps not only towards bringing justice to the victims of IPV, but also towards the elimination of IPV as a severe social problem.

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