

# Special Issue: Women at Work in Criminal Justice Organizations

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One of the more enduring feminist concerns is why women remain disadvantaged and oppressed in the workplace. In criminal justice professions, this debate is shaped not only by research into the division of labor between men and women in society but also by the assumptions about gender norms for women working in male-dominated occupations. Before the 1970s, almost all criminal justice employees in the world were men. Media representations, job descriptions, and institutional policies were gendered and tied to the male working-class culture. Over the past 40 years, equal opportunity legislation has sparked a series of legal challenges that discouraged discriminatory or prejudicial behavior, creating opportunities for women. As women across the world entered and integrated into criminal justice professions, they were met with discrimination, harassment, and concern (Brown & Heidensohn, 2000; Hunt, 1990). Research of this era focused on increasing the numeric representation of women in criminal justice agencies, to move beyond the “token status” of women in organizations.

Coined in 1977 to explain the unique experiences of women in the business world, Kanter’s theory of tokenism argued that numeric tokens (i.e., 15% or less of a workforce) face challenges not experienced by the majority group, including heightened visibility, isolation from the dominant group, and role encapsulation. Applied to criminal justice professions, Kanter’s tokenism framework has faced critique for not taking into account the idea that women in male-dominated professions may experience discrimination, sexual harassment, and segregation not because of a lack of numeric representation, but because they are simply women, and as such, their mere presence in the workplace violates gender norms regarding work (Kanter, 1977/1993).

More recent scholarship recognizes the complexities of inequality and access to power in criminal justice organizations. The idea that female officers negotiate the roles associated with their gender and work through a backdrop of hegemonic masculinity, which reinforces the power of men both on the cultural and collective levels (Martin & Jurik, 2007), acknowledges that hegemonic masculinity is maintained in criminal justice agencies through authority, heterosexism, the ability to display force, and the subordination of women (Chan, Doran, & Marel, 2010; Connell, 1995; Martin, 1994; Messerschmidt, 1993). Most recently, Acker (2006) introduced the framework of inequality regimes, arguing that workplace inequalities are connected to the disadvantaging of members of certain social and economic groups through processes that socially construct the requirements of work which favor the powerful, support organizational class hierarchies embedded with inequality, and bureaucratic decision making in which inequalities are reproduced.

Within these modern frameworks, recent research shows how the overt practices of sexual harassment and violence have been replaced with less overt practices, such as the social exclusion of women from informal access to power structures and decision making within the organization, the gendering of the division of labor which results in the marginalization of offenses that disproportionately affect women such as those related to the processing of sexual assault and domestic violence cases (Garcia, 2003; Jordan, 2002; Miller, 1999; Padavic & Reskin, 2002; Rabe-Hemp, 2018; Shelley, Morabito, & Tobin-Gurley, 2011), and policies intended to make the workplace equal, such as light duty policies, haircut policies, and the emphasis on physical strength, all which devalue and fail to accommodate the female body (Kringen & Novich, 2017; Rabe-Hemp & Humiston-Sears, 2015; Schulze, 2010).

In the international arena, many issues raised in western models of policing are exacerbated for police agencies in developing countries because of cultural values and traditions that are threatened, particularly norms related to gender roles (Natarajan, 2008). Globally, terrorism, security, and xenophobia challenge criminal justice institutions and create movement away from innovative practices of crime control, egalitarian principles of diversity within hiring practices, commitments to community policing, victim-centered justice, and restorative justice. In her book, *Women, Crime and Criminal Justice: A Global Enquiry*, Rosemary Barberet (2014) challenges us to consider our expectations of women who thrive in these increasingly difficult environments: "They are expected to complement men's failings, yet do their jobs as well as men. They are also expected to keep the men under control. Is this justice for women in the justice professions?" (p. 202).

Despite these barriers, women continue to make gains in male-dominated criminal justice professions. The numeric representations of women in policing, corrections, and law have remains steady (Prenzler & Sinclair, 2013; Tahmindjis, 1998). In addition to the numeric representations, there is growing research that women, by their presence in agencies, serve as change catalysts in organizations, challenging hegemonic institutional structures and dynamics of power by integrating diverse knowledge bases and differences in socialization experiences. When faced with challenges to the status quo, organizations are forced to rethink their avenues to information and resources and make structural changes accordingly. Moving beyond the "add women and stir" response, this restructuring is associated with formalization and innovation in policy, increased creativity in problem-solving and improved decision making within organizations (Miller, Forest, & Jurik, 2003; Schuck, 2014; Schuck & Rabe-Hemp, 2014; Silvestri, 2000).

In this special issue, we explore the feminist critique of the underrepresentation of women at work and the gendering of the division of labor in criminal justice professions. To accomplish this goal, we sought articles that addressed the processes that socially construct the requirements of work which favor the powerful, support organizational class hierarchies embedded with inequality, and bureaucratic decision making in which inequalities are reproduced. Accordingly, the five articles presented in this special issue all consider the consequences of the underrepresentation of women in criminal justice agencies and the potential for enduring change in criminal justice agencies through the inclusion and advancement of women.

The first two articles in this special issue focus on the consequences of the marginalization of women, specific to American law enforcement agencies. Amie M. Schuck explores the question Kanter raised: Is it enough to increase the representation of women in policing or does the organization itself have to change? She utilizes the theory of representative bureaucracy to determine whether greater diversity in the workforce results in higher rape reporting and clearance rates and more victim-centered responses by police. Increased diversity of police forces would more closely resemble the community in which they serve, facilitating greater trust, cooperation and participation by citizens, and agencies with more female officers could be more effective in identifying and clearing sexual violence cases. Using cross-sectional and longitudinal data from a large number of diverse law enforcement agencies, Schuck finds that the relationship between female representation and the reporting and processing of rape cases is moderated by the presence of a police union and mediated by resources for victims and community policing. Her work offers policy suggestions for how organizational structures and institutional rules can create changes in police delivery of services, particularly for victims of sexual violence.

Next, utilizing the framework of procedural fairness and police legitimacy, outlined by Tyler (2006), Madeleine Novich, Anne Li Kringen, and Geoffrey Hunt illustrate how the underrepresentation of women in police work leads to perceptions of procedural unfairness of gang members in San Francisco. Interviews with 253 gang members revealed that because police officers were required, by departmental policy, to search only suspects of the same gender, and the police force was so male-dominated, it affected gang member's perceptions of fair policing. In other words, gang members reported that they believed that police unfairly enforced the law to the detriment of the men in the study in two ways: (a) male police targeted male gang members to the omission of women and (b) if women were stopped, they were frequently released. Their findings suggest that the gender composition of the police force is important in shaping attitudes toward equitable enforcement of the law and procedural fairness. The inclusion of women is fundamentally necessary to perceptions of procedural fairness.

The next two articles in the special issue examine the potential in criminal justice agencies through the advancement of women. Tara O'Connor Shelley and Melissa Morabito explore the underrepresentation of women in leadership in American police agencies to inform the scant research that examines the mechanisms by which some women successfully navigate the police bureaucracy to advancement. Applied to promotion, Shelley and Morabito utilized the constrained agency theory to identify kairotic moments, or the intersection between agency and authority, to identify the conditions and opportunities that result in the advancement of women in policing. Their results, based on semistructured interviews with 47 female officers from 30 law enforcement agencies across seven states, suggest that female police officers can overcome structural and social impediments to promotion by monopolizing on opportunities and conditions for advancement, such as family support, a female chief or role model, education, lawsuits, and mentoring. In closing, the authors argue that as the number of women in police leadership in the U.S. plateaus, systematically identifying

and monopolizing on kairotic moments will be important in retaining and promoting the next generation of female police officers.

Next, Marisa Silvestri's work turns our attention to women in police leadership positions in England and Wales to determine whether efforts such as Direct Entry, a program designed to facilitate greater diversity within leadership ranks, are successful in interrupting the traditional ideology of internal recruitment and "male" career models that characterize British policing. In this theoretical piece, she explores the ways in which cultural and structural constructions of the "ideal" police leader are gendered, how they manifest in different ways within leadership scripts, and how Direct Entry has the potential to disrupt traditional ideas of policing and be a catalyst for increasing leadership diversity. Silvestri looks beyond the gendered nature of policing and masculinity documented in scholarship focused on the rank-and-file to expand understandings of how Direct Entry challenges entrenched practices by creating more opportunities for women in leadership positions while simultaneously creating resistance to change.

Finally, turning from policing to another paramilitary, male-dominated institution, corrections, Freda Burdett, Lynne Gouliquer, and Carmen Poulin explore gender performativity of women correctional officers working in 29 different correctional facilities, housing only male inmates, in Ontario, Canada in the last article in the special issue. Using common themes emerging from in-depth interviews with 36 women correctional officers, the authors challenge the assumption that as the number of women working in corrections has increased, progress has been made. The women's experiences reveal a host of enduring challenges, inequities, and cultural complications, in addition to the strategies and skills women develop in resistance to such working conditions. Burdett, Gouliquer, and Poulin offer numerous policy implications of their findings that powerfully advocate for social, institutional, political, and cultural changes.

In conclusion, each of the five articles included in this special issue address the marginalization of female criminal justice professionals. Not surprising, one consequence of this marginalization is the social exclusion of women from the process of defining how work is structured in the criminal justice workplace, resulting in overtly masculine social constructions of criminal justice work. Taken together, these articles make a compelling case for the need to celebrate the accomplishments and successes of female criminal justice professionals as well as a strong look at the continued benefits of diversifying the criminal justice professions.

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**Cara E. Rabe-Hemp** is a professor in the Department of Criminal Justice Sciences at Illinois State University. Her research interests include: gender and policing, citizen perceptions of the police and police deviance. Her recent publications have appeared in the *Feminist Criminology*, *Women and Criminal Justice*, *Police Quarterly*, *Journal of Criminal Justice*, and *Policing*. In 2014, Cara was inducted into the College of Applied Sciences and Technology Academy of Achievement and in 2016 she awarded the CAST Outstanding Researcher Award in the tenured category. Rabe-Hemp is the author of the book, *Thriving in an All Boys Club: Women Police and Their Fight for Equality*.

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