THE POLICE ROLE: STUDIES OF MALE AND FEMALE POLICE

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Introduction
Many observers believe that men and women bring to policing differences in attitude, values and perceptions that influence the way they do their work. Female police officers have been assumed to have greater commitment to public service, more calming and reassuring demeanours, and less violent encounters with citizens (Bell 1982), and others have recently argued (Martin 1991) that the inclusion of women in policing is particularly relevant to the current emphasis on community policing. More directly, Wilson (1991) asserts that not only should there be more women police, but that there also should be room for women's perspectives on what policing ought to be (which assumes that such perspectives already exist among women, if not yet among women police).

Gilligan (1977) and others (DuBois et al. 1985) maintain that differing socialization experiences of males and females incline men and women to adopt differing perspectives on justice—for men, predominantly a morality of justice, and for women, predominantly a morality of care. For many, this perspective has become a starting point for much of the debate on criminal justice administration including policing (see Jack & Jack 1989; Menkel-Meadow & Diamond 1991; Wilson 1991).

Extrapolations from this theory have led to the assumption that men and women differ in their conception of the police role, with men concentrating on law enforcement and women likely to perceive the role more broadly as service and community oriented. It has also been suggested that men may be more at ease than women with the rules, hierarchy and discipline of police organizations (Worden 1993).

There is little empirical work in the literature confirming the suggested differences between male and female officers' perceptions, attitudes or behaviours, and the author's recent research studies in Queensland do not support the beliefs about differences between male and female police that observers such as Bell (1982) espouse. Nor do they clearly lead one to expect male and female police to exhibit the differences that some have presumed exist. These earlier opinions seem to rely more on stereotypical gender expectations, and differences—for example, in interpersonal styles of relating which are well documented for women generally—rather than on any empirical verification of the existence of differences in beliefs, attitudes or orientation to the police role among male and female police officers.

An examination of the authors recent Queensland findings will show how expectations of police women based upon gender stereotypes are disappointed. The present paper discusses the author's recent studies which examined differences between male and female police in Queensland, in which few significant differences were found. The results are considered within the context of a police culture which is male-dominated and coercive of women. The implications of these findings for the recruitment, education and training of police are discussed. Career, promotion, and operational implications are canvassed.
Gendered Perceptions of the Police Role in Queensland

Role Perceptions and Reasons for Joining

Why do people choose to become police officers? How do they view the role of police, and do they think this role should be different? Do males and females wish to become police officers for the same reasons, or for different reasons? Do males and females have similar perceptions of the police role, or are gender differences reflected in these views? Are there cross-cultural differences in these perspectives?

The study

The rapid increase in numbers of women in the police service; the increase in prior educational achievement amongst police recruits; and changes to the philosophy of policing (an emphasis on community policing and service over law and order issues) are factors which should not be underestimated. It seems likely that not only will conceptions of the police role have changed, but the reasons that recruits hold for joining the police will also have changed. In addition, given the rapid increase in recruitment of women, it is appropriate to ask whether males and females differ in their reasons for wanting to become a police officer, and whether males and females differ in the role perceptions that they have of policing. Moreover, the role perceptions and reasons for joining held by new recruits since 1991 may differ from those of longer serving officers of either gender.

A number of issues informed this study. The project examined the following.

- The way in which recent male and female police recruits view the role of the police with regard to service versus law and order, and whether these perceptions differ from those of longer serving officers.

- The way in which male and female police officers view their role: in particular, whether the emphasis is on service, or law and order, and whether there are gender differences in these perceptions.

- The reasons males and females have for joining the police, and the ways in which they differ; the extent of congruence between personal reasons for joining and perceived reasons held by members of the same sex; the extent of congruence between males' reasons for joining and females' perceptions of males' reasons for joining, and the extent of congruence between females' reasons for joining and male perceptions of female reasons for joining; the ways in which recruits and longer serving officers differ along these dimensions.

- The extent to which male and female recruits, and male and female experienced officers, share the same views of how much time police do spend, or should spend, on various activities which take up the bulk of police time.
• The extent to which the perceptions of police and police recruits in Queensland coincide with or differ on the above dimensions from those of police and police recruits in overseas jurisdictions which also embrace the philosophy of community policing.

Method and Procedure

In this present study, male and female police and recruits in Canada, Queensland and Scotland completed a number of questionnaires. These were:

1. Police Role Perceptions Scale

Respondents indicated their agreement with 26 statements about the police role using a six-point rating from "very strongly agree" to "very strongly disagree" (see Brown 1975). The scale has been previously used to measure respondents' perceptions of the police role in terms of service versus law and order tasks.

2. Reasons for Joining the Police Questionnaire

Subjects indicated their extent of agreement regarding 11 statements of possible reasons for choosing policing as a career. Each subject completed this questionnaire three times, once in response to each of the following statements: "I entered policing due to"; "men enter policing due to"; and "women enter policing due to".

These statements were followed by eleven Likert items on a five-point scale ranging from "strongly agree" to "strongly disagree". These eleven items were: the excitement of the job; the opportunity to help people; the security of the job; the chance to fight crime; the prestige of the occupation; the salary and fringe benefits of the job; a relative or close friend being a police officer; the authority and power associated with the job; a lifetime interest in law enforcement; few other job opportunities; and the desire to be part of a male-dominated occupation. Results were scored from 1 ("strongly agree") to 5 ("strongly disagree").

The three questionnaires were bound together in a booklet and administered to each group of subjects. Each group of subjects was tested on a single, separate occasion. Testing conditions were observed and no questions were allowed until all subjects had completed their questionnaires.

Results

Police Role Perceptions

This questionnaire factored into three dimensions. These were Service, Law and Order and Crime. Results indicate that the Queensland sample differs significantly from the other two samples on all three dimensions. Queensland police (but not recruits) are less oriented toward service than are police in Scotland and Canada, and they are less oriented toward service than are recruits in all three locations.
Recruits do not differ across countries on this dimension but score higher than police in all three locations. Only one sex difference emerged in this study. Within the Queensland sample, female recruits and male police did not differ from each other, but together were significantly more oriented toward law and order than were male recruits and female police, who also did not differ from each other.

Differences within the Queensland sample between police and recruits and between males and females appear complex. For males, the fact that police have been enculturated into their profession over a number of years in which the prevailing philosophy was one of order maintenance can explain why male police rate this orientation higher than do male recruits. However, this argument contradicts the finding for females. Here, recruits rated law and order orientation higher than did female police. Again, this finding needs to be understood in its historical context.

The role of women police in Queensland has only recently broadened to include all areas of operational policing. The female police role in Queensland has traditionally been defined along gendered divisions. Longer serving female officers may have their perceptions of the police role conditioned by this history and by their own experience of policing, segregated along divisions dictated by traditional conceptions of sex-appropriate work roles. Female recruits do not have this history of a gendered work experience, nor do their expectations of the police role include an observation that males and females perform different duties according to traditional sex-appropriate role expectations. Female recruits may in fact be more accurate in their estimation of the operational police role with regard to its law and order content than longer serving female officers.

No differences emerged to endorse the popular stereotype of women. For example, female police and recruits do not score higher on orientation towards the service role of police than do male police or recruits.

**Reasons for joining the police**

There were few differences between male and female police in the three locations in their rank ordering of personal reasons for joining. Helping people, job security, lack of other job opportunities and the desire to fight crime were the top four reasons chosen by Scottish and Queensland police. Canadian male police also judged excitement as a less important reason than the other groups, and female Scottish police judged salary and benefits as a more important reason than did the other groups. Canadian male and female police also perceived the chance to fight crime as a less important reason for joining the police than did the other groups. Certainly, stereotypical differences predicted on the basis of popular belief did not occur. However, women, regardless of location, or whether they were recruits or serving officers rated prestige higher than did any group of men.

Differences emerged between men and women in how they perceived men's and women's reasons for joining. Males are more likely than females to perceive men joining for the excitement, prestige and authority of policing, and from a desire to fight crime. Police in Queensland are more likely to perceive men as joining for
authority and power than are recruits. These are stereotypically male motives. Females are more likely than males to perceive men as joining to help people, a stereotypically female motive. Females are more likely than males to judge women as joining for prestige and authority. Females are more likely to judge themselves as joining for prestige than are males, and they perceive women as much more highly motivated by the authority and power associated with the job than do males. All of these are stereotypically male motives.

Both males and females perceived women to be more motivated by the chance to fight crime than they did men. These findings contradict those of Meagher and Yentes (1986) in the United States who argue that "women typically view men entering the law enforcement profession for the highly popularized reasons of being the `tough' or `Dirty Harry' type of officer". However, males did rate men higher on the desire for prestige and authority than did females. It seems likely, as Singer and Love (1988) have argued, that these differences reflect differences in policing style between the United States and other countries.

There were no difference in the way men and women rated their own reasons for joining for the opportunity to help people. Males perceived women in general as higher on this motive than did females. But females judged men in general as higher on helping people than did males. For both, opposite sex members are judged higher on this stereotypically female motive. For authority and power, a stereotypically male motive, both males and females judged same sex members as higher than opposite sex members.

Females, particularly in Queensland, judge themselves higher on the desire for prestige than do males. Females also rate women higher on desires for authority and for prestige than do males. These results suggest that in their perceptions of self and other women, female police and recruits are moving closer to the stereotype for males. The present findings differ from earlier studies which have suggested that women tend not to join the police for any perceived power or prestige associated with the police organization (Power 1983).

In this respect, women appear to have become more like men in the intervening years. This may be because of changes to the job specification of women in policing, which have meant that since the early 1980s women have been as likely as men to perform all operational tasks associated with the job. In doing so, they can experience considerable pressure from male colleagues to "become one of the boys" (Graef 1989). Others refer to this pressure as the "Cult of Masculinity" well documented in PSI studies (1983) and Jones (1986). Crucial to acceptance by males is an understanding of the informal norms and values of the police culture (Brogden, Jefferson & Walklate 1988). Female police and recruits in all three countries perceive women as more likely to join for the motives of prestige and authority than do males. Poole and Pogrebin (1988) suggest that prestige represents one of the most salient considerations affecting women's decisions to remain police officers regardless of career stage. Males, on the other hand, see other men as higher on the desire for prestige and the authority and power associated with the job_stereotypically male items_than they judge themselves. This suggests that in their private view of themselves, men are moving away from the masculine
stereotype. That is, men appear to maintain privately a stereotypically masculine view of other men while perceiving themselves to be less so.

Changes to the public image of policing, from being male dominated, confrontationist, action oriented and authoritarian to a more conciliatory and less authoritarian style, may explain how men have moved away from the male stereotype in their personal motives for joining. There is strong public pressure on police to be less macho in their approach. Conversely, for females, moving closer to the masculine stereotype for police in their views of themselves and other women may be a response to strong pressures within the police culture for women police to act more like men. This judgement about female motives is also perhaps a response to their perceptions of the changing demand characteristics of operational policing for women. There is also some evidence in the present study that women, simply by virtue of working in a male sex-typed occupation, may be perceived by their co-workers as more masculine in their motivations (Sterling & Owen 1982).

There is no evidence in the present study that women join the police for stereotypically female motives. Nor is there evidence that females perceive the service role of police any differently to males. Females were no more likely than males to join for the opportunity to help people and there were no differences in male and female ratings of the police service role. Women police and recruits were also as likely as were men to join for authority and power and for the excitement of the job. They were more likely than men to join for the prestige of the occupation.

**Gender Role Conflict**

**Overview**

The aim of this study was to investigate levels of role conflict and role ambiguity and sex role conflict among male and female Queensland police. In addition, it examined the relationship between these variables, perceptions of sex role, and other organizational variables in a structural equations model. These other organizational variables were role conflict, role ambiguity, and job satisfaction, job commitment, job involvement and propensity to leave the organization.

**Gender role conflict**

According to Baron (1983), role conflict theory suggests that individuals experience role conflict when others' expectations for their behaviour are inconsistent with the individual's own expectations. Chusmir and Koberg (1986) propose that such conflict may arise from intra-personal, intra-role or inter-role incongruities. When such conflict, irrespective of the source of the incongruity, results largely from quite different expectations based on gender, the conflict is sex role conflict. Sex role conflict is the degree of conflict expressed between an individual's treatment based on gender versus that person's treatment as an individual (intra-role or inter-role incongruity). It also involves the impact of the private self-concept of the person's sex role versus the self defined by one's society and work organization: Chusmir and Koberg (1986) refer to this as intra-personal incongruity.
In an early study, Martin (1979) first drew attention to the occupational role dilemmas based on gender stereotypes faced by female police. Policewomen emerge as tokens in a male-dominated occupation. They confront a number of dilemmas which arise from the apparent conflict between sex role norms and occupational role norms. These dilemmas include performance pressures, isolation from co-workers, tests of loyalty and entrapment in stereotypic roles. Martin found that policewomen rigidly conform to formal and informal occupational norms, and overachieve in order to prove themselves exceptions among women. Policewomen, however, underachieve as patrol officers, often falling into cycles of demotivation and failure. They accept stereotypic roles, display low work commitment and seek non-patrol assignments. There is also evidence that female police are not accepted as full professional colleagues by male co-workers (Balkin 1988). Evidence from other traditionally male occupations confirms that women experience significantly adverse working conditions and report less satisfaction and more conflict at work than do male co-workers (Mansfield et al. 1991).

There is evidence of both inter-role conflict and intra-role conflict occurring within women entering the police. Lord (1986) argues that women in policing are expected to behave in accordance with police peer group norms, but as they are women, they are expected also to act in a fashion consistent with traditional male-female relationships. Numerous subsequent studies have confirmed the existence of sex role conflict among women entering traditional male occupations (Berg & Budnick 1986; Padavic 1991). Men have traditionally appeared less concerned than women about their sex role overall (Hamner & Tosi 1974; Matthews, Collins & Cobb 1974; Willis 1972; Wiersma 1982). It is suggested, however, that because of changing social expectations of the role of men generally, males are also now beginning to experience sex role conflict. There is recent evidence that rigid adherence to the stereotypically male role is associated with less psychological well-being in men (Sharpe & Heppner 1991).

The effects upon women holding token status in traditionally male-stereotyped occupations is well documented (Kanter 1977; Ott 1989). Negative attitudes of male officers toward female police have been widely described. In one study, 80 per cent of female police reported these negative male co-worker attitudes as important stressors (Wexler & Logan 1983), and minority status has been linked to sex role conflict for women police (Pendergrass & Ostrove 1984).

Concomitant effects upon men of increasing proportions of women in these same occupations is less well studied. Padavic (1991), however, suggests that existing research on the experiences of women introduced into traditionally male occupations provides some insight into what happens to men. She suggests that men hasten to restore a sense of order and meaning, and heightening the salience of gender is a way to do so (see also Swerdlow 1989).

This strategy may be counterproductive, however. Heightening the salience of gender may simply place under scrutiny traditionally male ways of doing things and in itself result in conflict. Wexler and Logan (1983) contend that in some ways the archetypal qualities of policing, strength, bravery and toughness have
stereotypically differentiated males from females. Perhaps this leads many men to question at some level how masculine they are and what are the real differences between males and females. Thus, increasing numbers of women in male occupations would seem to hold the potential for male sex role conflict as well as female sex role conflict.
Results

As predicted, both male and female police experienced sex role conflict. But females experienced significantly more conflict than did males (regardless of rank) for treatment based on gender versus treatment as an individual, and for personal values versus sex and work role values. These findings are consistent with recent studies from non-police occupational cultures (Berg & Budnick 1986; Padvic 1991) which reveal high levels of sex role conflict among women entering traditionally male occupations. They are also consistent with the view expressed by Martin (1979) that female police face significant occupational role dilemmas based on gender which result from conflict between sex role norms and occupational role norms.

One explanation of this conflict is that women in policing must attempt to confirm to two conflicting sets of role expectations. They must attempt to confirm to masculine peer-group performance expectations, but at the same time are pressured by male colleagues to act in a way consistent with traditional male-female relationships (Lord 1986). Koberg and Chusmir (1987) also found that females scored higher on both measures of sex role conflict than did males. Their study found mean sex role conflict scores for females, though higher than those for males, to be relatively low overall (2.7). In the present study, mean scores for females were quite high (SRC I m=3.42, SRC II m=3.45). Koberg and Chusmir (1987) did not identify any of their occupational samples as being from traditionally male-dominated occupations. The present high mean ratings for females on both measures of sex role conflict are likely to reflect factors associated with policing as a traditionally male occupation. Direct comparisons of differently gendered occupations are needed to confirm this.

Norm-supporting Behavior

The present study

It is argued in this study that the interaction between work role expectations and stereotypic gender role expectations are further complicated within police cultures. Policing is an hierarchically organized occupation in which there exist strong expectations of appropriate and inappropriate behaviour based upon rank relationships which may conflict with equally strong or stronger expectations based on gender stereotypes. Since policing relies upon well defined rank relationships and a clear expectation that orders issued by a superior officer will elicit compliance from more junior officers, role-appropriate norm-supporting behaviour may be defined as compliant and non-assertive. Role-inappropriate behaviour may be defined as assertive and non-compliant. However, this can conflict with gender role expectations. For men and for police the stereotypical expectation is of assertive agentic behaviour, but for women the expectation is of compliance and non-assertion. Norms based upon gender role expectations are therefore expected to interact with those based on work role expectations in predicting the outcome of communication between superiors and subordinates when subordinates behave in role-appropriate and role-inappropriate ways.
The present study investigated these relationships. Within a police setting, the study examined how male and female police officers rate in-role and out-of-role behaviour of fellow officers. More specifically, it was predicted that police would be evaluated less favourably when they exhibit out-of-role behaviours but that the sex of the actor would interact with the sex of the supervisor in making this evaluation. It was also predicted that assertive women would be evaluated more favourably than compliant women, but only when the supervisor was female. Male, non-assertive in-role performances would be evaluated negatively when the superior officer was female.

**Results**

Where the superior was male and the subordinate was male or female, work related norms prevailed. Assertive, out of-role behaviour was evaluated less favourably than non-assertive in-role behaviour. Where the superior officer was female, gender norms interacted with work norms. Here, out-of-role behaviour was likely to be judged more favourably than in-role behaviour for females when the superior officer was also female. There appears to be a complex interaction in the present study between work roles which are compliant, and stereotypical sex roles which are compliant and non-assertive for females but assertive for males. Sex of superior interacted with the assertive/compliant dimension and with the sex of the subordinate. Females were judged more competent and more desirable as a work partner when acting in an out-of-role assertive way but only when supervised by a female. Males who were norm-supporting were judged equally desirable as a work partner and equally competent whether there was a male or a female superior. Possibly compliance is more desirable subordinate behaviour and takes precedence over any male tendency to be assertive. Assertiveness toward female superiors was judged to be a more stable response than was compliance for both male and female actors. This raises the question of the perceived authority that female superiors hold. Future research needs to address this issue.

**Superior-subordinate Communication**

Considerable social change has meant that more women are being promoted to senior positions in public and private sector organizations. These developments have occurred despite persistent negative stereotypes about female managers (Grant 1987; Powell & Butterfield 1979), and the numerous career and political obstacles that women confront (Ragins & Sundstrom 1989), especially in traditionally male-dominated organizations.

One explanation being forwarded for the success of female managers is their more person-oriented style that tends to build good interpersonal relations and higher job satisfaction among their staff. Results of a meta-analytic study (Eagley & Johnson 1990) suggest that female managers tend to adopt a more democratic or participative style and a less autocratic or directive style than do male managers. "Proceeding in a participative and collaborative mode may enable many female managers to win acceptance from initially sceptical subordinates and thereby remove one barrier to effectiveness" (Eagley, Makhijani & Klonsky 1992, p. 5). Female managers emerge in several investigations as active listeners who do
encourage discussion, greater self-disclosure, and open communication with their subordinates (Dobbins & Platz 1986; Russell, Rush & Herd 1988; Statham 1987). However, there is much evidence to show that most senior managers and their organizations still believe that a stereotypically masculine style of management with its focus on formality and initiating structure is the basis of successful management (see Bridges 1989). In particular, gender-related contrasts in areas associated with managing and communicating with people continue to be used to reinforce the boundaries which exist between men and women (see Scase & Goffee 1990). The same leadership behaviour, performed by a woman, may be viewed less favourably than when performed by a man (Eagley, Makhijani & Klonsky 1992).

One aim of the present study was to investigate such gender-related contrasts in how male and female superiors and subordinates judge their communication with each other within a police organizational context. The extent to which subordinates' perceptions, and the congruence in superior-subordinate perceptions, is linked to the job satisfaction of male and female subordinates was also investigated.

**The present study**

Study Four investigated the impact of role status upon the nature of communication in same-sex and opposite-sex dyads. One aim of the research was to investigate similarities and differences in the perceptions of superiors and their subordinates about the nature of their communication with each other. On the basis of previous research, it was expected that managers of both sexes would report that they communicated more often with their subordinates than would be indicated by the subordinates themselves. Another purpose of the research was to further examine the influence of superior and subordinate sex upon perceptions of the communication between superiors and subordinates. Female superiors were expected to report devoting more time and effort to communication, being more attentive, and disclosing more to subordinates. Also, more relationship-oriented superiors were expected to report that superior-subordinate communication was more frequent, open and disclosing compared to task-oriented leaders. Finally, the study investigated the influence of subordinates' perceptions of their communication with superiors, and the congruence between superior-subordinate perceptions upon subordinates' reports of their levels of job satisfaction. In general, higher levels of communication congruence were expected to be associated with subordinates being more satisfied with their jobs.

**Discussion**

While there was considerable similarity in perceptions, superiors and subordinates differed in some important aspects of their perceptions about communication with each other. As others have found, superiors perceived the communicative relationship to be much healthier than did subordinates. They believed that there was frequent discussion, with considerable disclosure by subordinates and recognition by superiors of subordinates' opinions (see Jablin's 1982 review). These perceptions applied to both male and female managers of either leadership style. As frequent communication is judged by managers to be a feature of effective management (Luthans, Hodgetts & Rosenkranz 1988; Mintzberg 1973), it is not surprising that superiors in managerial roles in the police force believe that they are
communicating more than do their subordinates. It is also possible, however, that subordinates are more negative about the nature of superior-subordinate communication because subordinate role expectations in most organizational settings are less clear about the need for frequent communication with superiors as a major part of a subordinate's job role. Female superiors reported more disclosure to them by subordinates than did male superiors. At the same time, female superiors did not judge themselves to be any more self-disclosing than their male counterparts. Being warm, expressive and self-disclosing are identified as more stereotypically female characteristics (Bem 1981), and the expression of these behaviours is judged to be an asset that women bring to managerial and leadership roles. Possibly because of role expectations about their ability to establish more open relationships with their subordinates, female superiors are more likely to believe they receive, and to actually receive, more disclosure from their subordinates than do male superiors. These findings support other evidence about the characteristics of the person-oriented leader (see Yukl 1989). Other factors not examined in this study, however, might also be influencing this relationship, especially evidence that the sense of trust in the superior-subordinate relationship influences subordinate perceptions (for example, Jablin 1982).

Task-oriented female superiors reported that they made more use of dominance in discussions with subordinates than did more relationship-oriented female superiors. However, male superiors of different leadership styles did not differ in their use of dominance. It is not clear why dominance in communication emerges as the single feature of the eight communication forms that discriminates between female superiors of the two leadership styles. One explanation is evidence in support of the sex role congruency hypothesis that women in middle management positions are often judged, rightly or wrongly, to be highly motivated, aggressive and more dominant (Adler & Israeli 1988; Russell, Rush & Herd 1988; Statham 1987). Some male subordinates are less satisfied with female superiors who use dominant communication styles and female subordinates report considerable problems in relating to female superiors who choose to adopt more task-oriented leadership styles (Brenner, Tomkiewicz & Schein 1989).

Perceptions of more communication with their female supervisors corresponded to lower levels of job satisfaction among these male subordinates. This finding supports quite considerable evidence that male subordinates can have some difficulty in their relations with female superiors (Bartol & Butterfield 1976; Scase & Goffee 1990) particularly when female leaders occupy male-dominated roles (Eagley, Makhijani & Klonsky 1992).

The theoretical framework provided by Tannen (1990) may explain this difficulty quite simply. She suggests that through communication, males and females are giving expression to quite different needs. Females communicate in order to establish connections and to develop rapport, whereas males communicate in order to establish independence, competence and status. Males in subordinate roles, perceiving more communication with female superiors attempting to meet needs for connection and rapport, have less for their needs for independence and status being met. Possibly this effect is even stronger in male-dominated quasi-military organizations like the police in which females traditionally are not expected to lead
males. At the same time, similar to previous studies (for example, Lamude, Daniels & Graham 1988), the results are not highly conclusive about the role of gender in perceptions of satisfaction with superior-subordinate communication.

One explanation of the apparent negative relation between male perceptions of communication with female superiors and their reported level of job satisfaction may have less to do with communication per se and more to do with sex role and work role stereotypes. Communal behaviour which includes a concern for communication is stereotypically associated with the female role (Broverman et al. 1972; Eagley & Steffan 1984). Male-stereotypic expectations of leader behaviour tend to be more task-oriented and dominating (Cann & Siegfried 1990). In the present study, female leaders who are perceived as communicating more with their male subordinates are behaving in a manner consistent with the female role stereotype. Because this contradicts expectations of leadership behaviour, it may be construed by male subordinates as inappropriate behaviour for a superior. This contradiction would support a tendency toward bias against female leaders and managers in general (this reported bias is comprehensively reviewed by Eagley, Makhijani & Klonsky 1992). Present reports of lower job satisfaction among male subordinates with female superiors who communicate more, may reflect a more general male police dissatisfaction with having a female superior who behaves in a stereotypically female manner.

**Ability to Decode Emotional Messages**

**Sex differences in decoding emotional messages**

According to Noller (1986), despite much controversy concerning sex differences, there is ample research evidence to support the view that females are superior to males in decoding emotional messages. In an early review, Hall (1975) summarized 75 previous studies that reported accuracy for females and males at decoding non-verbal communication. Results revealed that more studies showed female advantage than would occur by chance. The average effect was of moderate magnitude but was significantly larger than zero. More studies reached a conventional level of significance than would be expected by chance, and studies favouring males were quite rare. The magnitude of the gender effect did not vary reliably with sample size, age of judges, sex of stimulus person(s), or age of stimulus person(s). Later studies have confirmed this female superiority (for example, Noller 1980; Gallois & Callan 1986).

There is also evidence that decoding differences between males and females is linked to the sex of the encoder (Davitz 1964; Noller 1981; Tagiuri 1969). Women tend to lose their advantage over men as they get older or where channels of communication are inconsistent (Blanck & Rosenthal 1982; DePaulo et al. 1982). At the same time, they become more and more superior to males for more conventional channels (Blanck & Rosenthal 1982). Males may be superior to females where the encoder is known personally, while women's scores stay much the same whether they know the encoder or not (Zuckerman et al. 1975). Females may lose their advantage over males in decoding deception (DePaulo & Rosenthal 1979). Here, although there is no difference between males and females in
accuracy of decoding, males are more confident of their judgements (Hurd & Noller 1988). In considering modality of presentation of stimulus materials, Hall (1975) noted that the effect size in studies using both auditory and visual channels tended to be much larger. Later studies (for example, Walbot & Scherer 1986) have confirmed this channel effect. They found that visual only and audiovisual modes of presentation were associated with significantly increased accuracy of decoding by females. They also found highly significant interactions between channel, condition, actor, and type of emotion portrayed.

There is strong evidence that women are better communicators than men overall, and in some areas in particular. However, role demands of policing exert pressures on women police to conform to male expectations of role-appropriate behaviour. There is also much evidence that work roles are related to how emotional expression is managed on the job. Different occupations require different levels of emotion management from workers (for a review, see Wharton & Erickson 1993). Boundary spanning roles like policing and especially those in organizations in which workers seek to establish authority over the target of their emotion management efforts, require a large amount of emotion masking. Because authority is socially associated with an unemotional persona, affective neutrality reinforces professionals' power and keeps clients from challenging them (Smith & Kleinman 1989).

One of the traditional role demands of police is the maintenance of an unemotional persona. For many males this also implies being suspicious and cautious in showing feelings_responses which are incompatible with empathy. Affective neutrality may also require people who perform such roles to mask their reception of emotional cues and thus make neutrality easier. For men, this accords with their lower ability to decode emotional messages. Women, however, may be required to actively adopt strategies which may not only mask the expression of emotional empathy, but also dull their responses to the emotional messages sent by the people with whom they interact.

The study

This study employed video-taped vignettes to examine the ability of male and female police, and male and female non-police, to decode emotional messages of a positive, negative and neutral intent. It examined the accuracy and certainty with which correct judgements were made, the certainty with which incorrect judgements were made, and also the nature of incorrect judgements made in response to these three types of emotional messages.

Discussion

The prediction that women would be superior to men in decoding emotional messages was supported. However, most of this effect for women's accuracy scores was accounted for by female non-police. The prediction that non-police would be superior overall to police in decoding emotional messages was also supported. These findings may indicate that women's superiority in emotional decoding can be eroded by job-related factors and specific role demands. It has been suggested that
when confronted with decoding tasks, men tend to rely on emotion perception, but women rely on the more sophisticated skill of emotion cognition (Buck 1984). Familiarity with the encoder increases male decoding ability (Zuckerman et al. 1975) by making the task easier for less sophisticated males. In a similar way, females' ability may be eroded precisely because of their sophistication when the task demands of specific communication situations require a different response, such as impassivity and a degree of emotional detachment. This is consistent with the proposition that women's superiority on this task is a result of social learning and as such may be flexible, depending upon perceived rules associated with particular kinds of social interaction.

Women police experience pressure to perform like men. Highly prescriptive boundary roles such as policing require an extreme degree of emotional masking. This requirement may act to minimize sex differences on emotional decoding tasks, particularly if, as has been suggested, women dampen their superior decoding skills in order to achieve the necessary level of impassivity. Also, the use of police encoders in the present study may emphasize the role-specific nature of the task for police. A more rigorous test of these interpretations would require further study of ability to decode emotional messages among women in different occupational groups.

**General Discussion**

Taken together, these studies reveal that few differences between males and females, predicted on the basis of sex role stereotypes actually exist between men and women in the Queensland Police Service. Differences between males and females that did emerge are more likely to reflect pressures existing within the male dominated culture of policing. This is particularly so, for example, in the case of communication between superiors and subordinates where the superior officer is female, in the erosion of authority held by superior female officers and in the way in which superior female abilities, such as the ability to respond to and identify the emotional content of messages sent by others can be eroded by role demands.

These findings have fairly far reaching organisational implications. One solution is to quickly increase the proportion of female officers in all jurisdictions. Coupled with this is the necessity of ensuring that the proportion of women in senior management positions within the various police services reflect at least their overall proportions within each organisation. Recommendations of the Fitzgerald Commission (FitzGerald, 1989) included the requirement that the Queensland Police Service increase recruitment of women. Reference was also made to the need for more women holding commissioned rank. The relationship which was found, between sex role conflict, role ambiguity and intention to leave policing, particularly in women, may have both short- and long-term organizational consequences. Higher turnover rates for women would mean that in the short term it will be difficult to significantly increase the proportion of women police.

It also points to the necessity within the police organization to re-evaluate role demands that may be counterproductive, such as the extreme requirement to hide feelings. This requirement affects all role incumbents but may have different
effects on men and women. Work roles in the police have often been highly gendered and even as women assume full operational duties, work in other management areas suggests that organizational decisions in assigning women to positions are becoming more covert and less easily understood (Hitt & Barr 1989).

Women in policing have to contend with the demands of two often opposing role demands, those based on male sex-typed work expectations and those based on expectations appropriate to their gender. Differences within the police between men's and women's emotional management responsibilities may place greater demands on women than on men. This is because the two sets of role demands are antagonistic. Greater demands for emotion management experienced by women may erode not only women's superior ability to take the role of the other, to display empathy and to communicate solidarity, but may also affect the superior emotional decoding skills of women. All of these skills have been shown to be associated with better outcomes in police citizen encounters. These female advantages need to be preserved if the police both organizationally and as individuals are to achieve philosophic goals which involve a de-emphasis of confrontationist strategies and an affirmation of a police/public partnership. Further, males within the police need to be encouraged to regain eroded interpersonal communication skills.

The Queensland Police Service has few women in management positions, and this situation has been slow to change. The present studies revealed that where superiors were women, good and frequent communication between female superiors and male subordinates was associated with lower job satisfaction for male subordinates. In addition, where there was a female superior, subordinates who were norm-violating were more positively viewed by both male and female observers than where there was a male superior. Indeed, where the higher ranking officer was female, norm-violation was rated as more stable behaviour. These findings point to a need for the police service to acknowledge and understand the particular difficulties facing women managers. This is particularly so if, as the present studies suggest, not only are the communicative relationships between female managers and their subordinates problematical, but women managers may also be perceived as holding less authority than male managers.

It has been suggested that women may bring to policing gender related qualities that will enhance policing. Present evidence suggested that few differences between male and female police, presumed on the basis of gender linked abilities, existed in the samples studied. In Queensland, Scotland and Canada, male and female police and recruits are very similar in their role perceptions, their personal reasons for joining the police and in the amount of time they think police should spend on various activities. Indeed, within the Queensland sample in particular, females were more likely to see themselves and other women as joining the police for prestige, power and authority. If the police organization wishes to preserve gender differences found amongst men and women in general, it needs to become aware of a number of issues pertinent to recruitment and training that may affect the outcomes reported here.

Firstly, it should consider how the image of the police in the community may influence prospective recruits. For women especially, do only those with more
stereotypically masculine characteristics perceive a fit between themselves and the organization? Secondly, it should consider how organizational selection processes may reject candidates not seen as potentially fitting the work role stereotype held by members of recruiting panels. To what extent are panel members themselves guided by stereotypical masculine notions of the police role? Thirdly, it needs to be aware how the dominant police culture may exert an homogenizing influence on police men and women alike. What cultural pressures are exerted on female recruits in the Queensland Police Service which result in eventual conformity to prevailing masculine norms, and how might these be minimized?

These measures themselves may not be enough to ensure that the pressures to conform to gendered male expectations within a male dominated profession are minimised. For example, simply increasing numbers without changing conditions is not enough. At the heart of the matter is the nature of the police culture itself. At the heart of the matter is male police attitudes. These attitudes maintain what has been variously described as "The Cult of Masculinity" (PSI, 1983), "The Blue Wall", or 'The Brotherhood" (MacDonald, 1989). Call them what you will. The entrenched machismo culture of policing has been identified time and again as instrumental in maintaining attitudes which are cynical, sexist, racist and corrupt. At an official level, the police culture has been criticised by FitzGerald (1988), Woods (1996) and Bingham (1996). What is to be done to change it?

References


