

A phenomenological study of female managers in law enforcement: an argument for mentoring

Ashley J. Hampton
Southeastern Oklahoma State University

David Wesley Whitlock
Southeastern Oklahoma State University

ABSTRACT

Gender bias affects women in areas such as career advancement and access to management positions. This phenomenological qualitative study expands upon the theory that women who receive mentoring from men in male-dominated workplaces have more flourishing career advancements and promotions. Six of the 12 female Oklahoma Highway Patrol (OHP) Troopers, including one of the three OHP Lieutenants, were participated in the study, the findings of which fill a gap in literature by demonstrating the lack of formal mentoring programs in law enforcement in connection with the social role theory, role congruity theory, and social networking theory. Findings suggest that mentoring programs would prove beneficial to reducing barriers and increasing females in management roles. Additionally, results show that gender discrimination is still present in law enforcement.

Keywords: mentoring, human resources, law enforcement, employment, promotion, underrepresentation, sex, gender, equality, hiring, women, females

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INTRODUCTION

Gossett and Williams (1998) argued that females face a variety of expectations and barriers that contribute to lower female representation in management. Education level, pregnancy, lack of affordable and quality childcare, access to transportation, work-life balance, systemic neglect, mental health concerns, ageism, sexism, negative work experiences, and uncertainty are examples of the barriers that cause women to endure the downside of the working realm (Clark & Bower, 2016). Although some researchers perceive education as non-influential ((Jeronimo, Florez-Lopez, 2017), females continue to encounter barriers that often restrain a woman's ability to ascend the promotional hierarchy.

Women have a higher probability of being promoted into higher-risk positions, and a lower probability for support and granted authority to accomplish necessary job-related strategic goals (Glass & Cook, 2016). While the Civil Rights Act of 1964 requires organizations to provide fair and equal opportunities, once a woman is promoted, she often experiences shorter tenure as compared to male peers. Therefore, women have a lower probability of holding senior management positions than do men, and they experience lower working hours and lower wages than male counterparts (Holst & Friedrich, 2016).

Since the 1980s, researchers have examined the impact of mentoring on women's gender inequality in career development and workforce diversity (Glass & Cook, 2016). Many perceive mentoring as a beneficial training tool that involves guidance and instruction for individuals and groups of people. However, the challenge for managers in industries and organizations (I/O) consists of properly utilizing mentoring program to develop high-quality employees. This suggests the importance of identifying and reducing barriers that hinder employee advancement. Moreover, since white males continue to dominate I/O's, women have difficulty initiating and maintaining mentor-protégé relationships (Guajardo, 2016). According to McDonald and Westphal (2013), mentoring is emerging as one of the most popular strategies for progressing individuals into management positions. Evidence indicates that mentoring is a powerful tool and that the implementation of mentoring leads to career advancements and promotions (Joo, Yu, & Atwater, 2018; Helms, Arfken, & Bellar, 2016; Dow, 2014; McDonald & Westphal, 2013; Dworkin, Maurer, & Schipani, 2012). Unfortunately, a woman's success within the promotional process varies correspondingly to the preponderance of male counterparts that dominate a given I/O.

As in the case of many I/Os, men have dominated the law enforcement realm since the beginning of police work. A woman's presence in police work began in the late 1800s as matrons to aid incarcerated women as well as juveniles (Riseling, 2011). By 1913, there were only 13 female police officers in the United States. Then, in the 1950s, policewomen grew to 2,600 nationwide (Snow, 2010). In the 1960s, women entered law enforcement and today, more women work in policing than at any time in history. As of 2011, female representation increased from approximately two percent to 12 percent (Schuck, 2014). Despite an increase in the employment of female police officers over the past decades, women still lag in command and management positions in most American law enforcement agencies (Archbold & Hassell, 2009; Sims, Scarborough, & Ahmad, 2003).

According to Snow (2010), women were not allowed to participate in the promotional process until the early 1960s when lawsuits brought about a change in the procedures. This change allowed women to compete with men for higher ranks within the department. Unfortunately, women who have the desire to promote and achieve these management positions

will encounter significant and challenging demands (Yu, 2015; Wolfram & Gratton, 2014). Specifically, the biggest challenge facing female officers is the resistance displayed by male officers in their attitudes toward women in policing (Hughes, 2011).

There is a lack of research regarding female managers in law enforcement. Archbold and Hassell (2009) note limited research exists on the promotion of female police officers. Guajardo (2016) suggested a gap in literature with respect to female officers serving in management positions of police agencies. Little is published on mentoring of females who are promoted within a male-dominated field (Ward & Prenzler, 2016). Ward and Prenzler (2016) stated that through mentoring, managers could apply support networks to focus on issues the officers confront, prepare reasonable adjustments or corrections, and provide advancement through development training to enrich the contributions of women in law enforcement. A support network may possibly reduce policy issues and perceived barriers as well as develop interview skills to improve recruitment, retention, and the progression of women in law enforcement. Furthermore, Cohen and Broschak (2013) suggested that organizations structure jobs specifically for certain employees. For instance, *who* moves in and out of positions as well as *which* positions exist causes an organization's union to react by enacting aggressive tactics to help women and other underrepresented groups fight the barriers (Martin, 2014; Cohen & Broschak, 2013). Organizations must work endlessly to remove obstacles that adversely impact women and other underrepresented groups by applying mentoring.

A male mentor is one who devotes time and support to a female protégé deemed to have the potential skills needed to succeed (Dow, 2014; McDonald & Westphal, 2013). The connection between mentoring and career advancement creates a useful guidance and developmental assistance that women seek to enhance their career. Women who lack mentors experience unfavorable career outcomes such as diminished job performance, restricted careers, and an absence of role models (Flippin, 2017). This underlying principle between the performance of a mentor and protégé helped to advance the academic knowledge in the management field of study. According to Helms et al. (2016), various researchers recommend that mentoring must take place for women to advance within the organization's hierarchy. For women to have equal opportunities for growth, advancement, and promotions, I/O's must reduce barriers and mentoring must occur (Glass & Cook, 2016). This demonstrates the benefits of mentoring that occur every day throughout many industries—not just law enforcement.

STATEMENT OF THE PROBLEM

The problem addressed in this study is that gender bias affects women in areas such as career advancement opportunities and access to management positions in the workplace. This is a persistent challenge for women through in addition to the lack of mentoring programs readily available (Helms et al., 2016). Thus, male mentors need to work with female protégés to reduce this inconsistency which affects the upper management positions in many I/O(s). For example, as of 2016, there are 52,000 female police officers with only one percent holding the rank of Chief in the United States (Coppie & Erb, 2016). If the OHP agency does not address the gender bias issues, then the agency will prevent capable individuals from succeeding (Sims et al., 2003). According to Glass and Cook (2016), women report working harder than men to gain promotions and management roles. Specifically, the OHP, which lacks a diverse gender management team, could benefit from developing support networks for the female employees (Ward & Prenzler, 2016). Women who engage with mentors receive support, extensive professional networks, and

feedback as well as possessing over-achieving qualities (Helms et al., 2016; Bickel, 2014). This research explored factors that influence women who seek mentors for career development and advancement, particularly when employed in a male dominated workplace. When mentoring does not occur, women suffer from the denial and do not overcome the barriers to proceed through their career successively (Glass & Cook, 2016).

The purpose of this phenomenological qualitative single case study is to expand upon the theory that women have more flourishing career advancements and promotions when they are mentored by male co-workers in male dominated workplace. Mentoring is vital as women search for mentors to guide professional careers. This study was conducted in an organization of 762 employees, of which are 16 females and 744 are males, all who reside in the state of Oklahoma. The study was conducted through a semi-structured questionnaire of all willing female police officers designed to better understand the barriers that women overcome in the male-dominated profession of law enforcement.

LITERATURE REVIEW

This study engages theories that provide diverse rationales to explain both barriers and mentoring that impact women. These theories reveal three common patterns. These patterns include (a) women take on more domestic tasks; (b) women and men often have different occupational roles; and (c) women often have a lower ranking status within their occupations. These three patterns associate with three frameworks: (a) social role theory, (b) role congruity theory, and (c) social networking theory. Ultimately, males and females take on the social role associated with specific behaviors. Women often steer towards the traditional feminine social role while men take on the authoritative role (Ye et al., 2016). Thus, both genders socially identify and self-categorize into a particular group. From the social elite to the second class, society labels individuals, which causes the social network theory to emerge if an individual wants to expand socially. These theories generate into the need of a protégé needing a mentor to overcome barriers for career development. Individuals must adequately identify themselves and others while merging in a diverse network to obtain career advancement. Following are brief discussions of the implications of these three frameworks relative to women seeking career advancements and promotions.

Social role theory: A useful expansion on the knowledge about gender gaps in leadership in any field of study derives from the social role theory. According to Diekmann and Schneider (2010), the social role theory exposes the division in gender labor. For example, men and women tend to occupy diverse specific social roles such as different occupational and family roles. Moreover, in work-related areas, many women have lower status roles whereas men have higher status roles (Schock, Gruber, Scherndl, & Ortner, 2018). This is no different in the field of law enforcement where masculine traits dominant the leadership positions.

The gender differences of leaders in law enforcement can be understood by attending to the social roles of men and women. Ye, Wang, Wendt, Wu, and Euwema (2016) argued that a man's social status means that they have more access to power and resources than a woman, and consequently have greater privileges. Men gain career advancements and promotions more easily through applying the masculine social role as compared to women who tend to maintain the preconceived entrapment of the traditional feminine social role. Thus, a male mentor's influence can have a lasting effect on a female protégé's career advancement in positive ways.

Role congruity theory: According to Garcia-Retamero and Lopez-Zafra (2006), women

face discrimination in relation to many leadership positions, especially in those areas of employment that are male-dominated such as law enforcement where positions are perceived as incongruent with women's gender role. The prejudice against females in those employment roles stem from incongruity between expectations about women and about leaders. The expectations create a biasness that causes incongruent relations between the leadership role and the feminine gender role. These gender stereotypes contribute to the biased evaluations in leadership that are pervasive and resilient to gender stereotypes maintaining that women take care and men take charge.

Social network theory: Many researchers question the perception of why an individual may need a mentor to gain a diverse network. Ultimately, different networks allow for the mentor and protégé to have an enhanced status within an organization. Ramaswami, Dreher, Bretz, and Wiethoff's (2010) study focused on the essential insights of where, why, and for whom mentors as supervisors, give access to other senior personnel within the organization. When an individual develops a professional network, the individual is underlying a long-term career enhancement. Moreover, Linehan and Scullion (2008) explored the role of mentoring and networking in the career development of global female managers through social networking theory. Hence, this theory has taught women that networks potentially help in promotions.

Barriers women face in the workplace

Most people have the opinion that law enforcement is a male-dominated occupation because of the physical force, aggressiveness, and dominance that is associated with the crime, danger, and shift work of the job (Batton & Wright, 2018). However, female police officers have been progressively increasing in numbers for years now. Yet, barriers such as institutional structures, bias from male leaders, sex-based harassment, penalties for motherhood, and isolation from high status leaders continue to prevent women from attaining management positions (Kaiser & Spalding, 2015). Many times, police work requires considerable upper body strength. For example, police officers often have to carry an injured people out of dangerous and hazard environments, break down doors, chase criminals, or subdue criminals physically (Snow, 2010). Thus, leading to the accepted belief that women simply are not physically equipped to do these things. Batton and Wright (2018) argued that women will continue to encounter these hurdles that society has portrayed into people's mindset of women lacking the physical abilities, emotional stability, and capacity to do the job.

Other barriers women encounter consists of marriage and family issues. Archbold and Hassell (2009) argued that women who married other sworn police officers often experience a multitude of issues such as conflicting shifts with childcare and domestic responsibilities. These issues prove to be a significant barrier for career advancement. Beyond the schedule issues, research shows that women suffer from a "marriage tax" when they get promoted (Whetsone, 2001). According to Archbold and Hassell (2009), nepotism policies often result in a transfer of job assignment or in restricted promotional opportunities for married couples in law enforcement.

Another difficult barrier arises from the female's uneasiness of handling problematic situations with the male employees. According to Flippin (2017), managers do not discourage others by stating "females do not belong in this organization" or "females will never lead in this organization." Hence, the reasoning behind why most people have the opinion that law enforcement is a male-dominated occupation. Moreover, every action a woman makes is scrutinized and criticized while any slip-up made is broadcasted far and wide (Flippin, 2017).

Within law enforcement agencies, male employees may limit the career success of the female employees. Often, patrol leaders fail to focus on reducing conflicting situations such as the intentional restriction of the female employee's ability to expand and participate in additional duties within the patrol. According to Glass and Cook (2016), women report working harder than men to gain promotions and leadership roles. A conflict of concern for this organization is the consistent denial of acceptance of women in management level positions. Women report feeling excluded from networks and clubs. Thus, the exclusion has a negative impact on women for opportunities to socialize and network informally.

Glass ceilings and glass walls

According to Batton and Wright (2018), an organization's structure expands vertically and horizontally. However, in law enforcement, gender equality does not structurally expand vertically or horizontally which results in gender segregation. The vertical gender segregation presents a biased favor for men at all levels of management. Hence, the metaphoric term, *glass ceiling*, refers to the invisible barrier that keeps women from being promoted or advancing the organizational ladder (Johns, 2013). The glass ceiling impedes the progress causing women to remain significantly underrepresented in law enforcement managerial positions.

Horizontal segregation is a phenomenon within a structure that hinders women across an occupation. For example, the phenomenon, coined *glass walls*, shields women from moving laterally within organizations (Batton & Wright, 2018). As history has indicated, women in law enforcement encountered glass wall barriers prior to confronting the glass ceiling obstacle.

Eagly and Karau (2002) stated that the glass ceiling barrier stems from the rarity of women in major leadership and management positions. The rarity issue lead Congress established the Glass Ceiling Commission in 1991 for the purpose of studying the process that businesses utilize to hire, ways the business nurture and train employees for advancement as well as rewards and compensation methods, and ways the business promotes a diverse workforce at all management levels (Johns, 2013). Unfortunately, women are still encountering the invincible glass ceiling and glass wall barriers. Women need someone to go to bat for them and help them climb the organizational ladder and break the glass ceiling (Johns, 2013).

Lack of female role models

Within a male-dominated field such as law enforcement, and much like in the military, women tend to align themselves with other high-performing successful men and women (Brownson, 2014). Women utilize the alignment to develop their identity by finding positive traits to follow throughout their career. However, men and women mentors offer various guidance and direction. Women mentors provide more psychosocial support than male mentors, especially when mentoring same sex protégés (Kao, Rogers, Spitzmueller, Lin, & Lin, 2014). Many feminist researchers argue that without the guidance and presence of female veterans in the workforce, younger female officers foster feelings of isolation in their organization. Moreover, agencies with higher percentages of sworn female officers and female administrative leadership provide female officers with greater promotional opportunities and aid with retention of female officers (Yu, 2015). Females leading females will help break the cycle of low ambitions and expectations. However, women do not have many female mentors because there are so few women who are in the top leadership roles. Worden (1993) argued that as women

received less support and encouragement, they were likely to minimize their investment and aspirations for their career.

Many women lose the desire because of the obstacles and barriers encountered. Some female leaders undermine the advancement of those who could follow them. Kaiser and Spalding (2015) argued that bias from a female leader will lead to favoring men over women which hinders another women's advancement. A recent phenomenon, known as "climbing and kicking," suggested that women in management will attempt to prevent future generations from success. Sabotaging a women's career is done by those who get promoted and are unwilling to advocate on behalf of other females. Often, many assume that women who advance within organizations will advocate on behalf of other women. Unfortunately, emerging research indicates that sometimes women deny support to other women. Furthermore, Maack and Passet (1994) argued that a woman does not have to have another female as a mentor, but a woman is more likely to have a negative experience with a male mentor instead of a female mentor. If the woman is mentored by a man, the woman is more likely to be trained to dress, talk, and make decisions like a man (Bower, 2016). Therefore, as the numbers of women at the top of male-dominated fields stall, more psychosocial support to women is necessary (Okurame, 2007).

Mentoring

The problem of the females not having the support and encouragement to seek promotions, strains the patrol in totality. According to Bennett (1984), women report having difficulty gaining support and acceptance by fellow officers. When male coworkers discourage the females from attempting to progress, the females' motivation decreases. Motivation of advancement, additional duties, and working harder linger to barely thriving. Females will withdraw and decline in learning and developing the necessary law enforcement job skills to become competent for promotion (Worden, 1993). Ultimately, women pursue other working opportunities to improve and develop a worthier quality of work life.

Ultimately, a productive mentoring program requires particular features such as organizational assistance which is a key element. When developing a successful mentoring program, administration should provide training and role definitions to the selected mentors and protégés as well as providing the proper structure and guidance for the entire duration of the mentoring relationship (Corner, 2014). However, agencies that have an organizational strategy to initiate a formal mentoring program must be measurable and held accountable. An established policy and procedures manual pertaining to a formal mentoring program will provide the entire organization guidance. Within the manual should be the characteristics and elements of a professional mentoring relationship such as designated timeframes, meeting locations, and content (Corner, 2014). Whether the lack of female role models or the absence of opportunities and mobilities, organizations can apply mentoring programs to confront the gender inequality in management positions.

METHODOLOGY

A semi-structured, in-depth electronic survey was utilized for data collection. This approach allowed a thorough analysis into the understanding of the participant's lived experiences by giving female police officers the ability to provide a systematic account into their reality of workplace barriers, as well as their perceptions of the needed characteristics of a

mentoring program. Collection of data concerning encountered barriers assisted in describing the reasons for underrepresentation of females in law enforcement management. Perceptions of the female police officers constitute the primary source of data. Utilization of Computer-Aided Qualitative Data Analysis Software (CAQDAS) benefited this study's data collection by classifying and ranking the data. From the experiences, beliefs, thoughts, and concerns, as well as insight into the participant's perspectives, the objective was to examine the barriers and impact of mentoring programs on a women's career progress in a male-dominated work field. A descriptive interpretive meaning of the female police officer's perspectives and experiences enabled categorization of the responses in order to obtain a better understanding of the phenomenon. Additionally, the qualitative approach enabled the incorporation of the female police officer's perspectives of the importance of a mentoring program relative to recruitment, retention, and promotion of women within a male-dominated work field.

The phenomenological approach examined the lived experiences of the OHP female employees who have gained or attempted to gain access to management positions within a male-dominated profession. Rather than utilizing a deductive design which is theory-driven, the researcher applied an inductive design that is driven from the data (Merriam & Tisdell, 2016). According to Bloomberg and Volpe (2018), the inductive design leads to holistic, richly descriptive findings as compared to an embedded, hypothesis testing deductive design. A bottom-up approach of an inductive design forms the structure for this research study. Furthermore, the researcher applied the study to a single case. According to Yin (2014), a single-case study can confirm, challenge, or extend a theory by contributing to knowledge and theory building. Besides, a single-case study can help to redirect methods and designs of future investigations in an entire area of study (Bloomberg & Volpe, 2018). After the participants completed all questionnaires, application of pattern matching, and explanation building was conducted. Additionally thematic analysis as described by Braun and Clarke (2013) was applied.

Population and Sample

The targeted population for this study was the Oklahoma Highway Patrol, which at the time of the study had 762 employees—744 males and 16 females. The sample was 15 of the 16 actively sworn female employees of the agency. Of the 15 selected participants, three were Lieutenants and 12 were Troopers. Since there was a limited number who meet the criteria of being an active sworn female OHP member, this research did not randomly select the participants for this study (see Bloomberg & Volpe, 2018). Merriam and Tisdell (2016) argued that purposeful sampling is the preferred method of choice for most qualitative research studies. The population and sample were appropriate since the organization represents a unique sample based on atypical, distinct scarce characteristics.

Data Analysis

By relying on theoretical analysis, a process of identifying patterns or themes within the qualitative data (Maguire & Delahunt, 2017) was conducted. The researcher coded first, then the patterns or themes were acknowledged. The researcher applied pattern matching for analyzing the findings as well as explaining the phenomenon through a narrative form. By corroborating, modifying, rejecting, or otherwise advancing theoretical concepts that are referenced in this study's design, the researcher analyzed the data to show the research questions are answered. According to Braun and Clarke (2013), thematic analysis (TA) is a method for identifying

themes and patterns of meaning across a dataset in relation to the research questions. The researcher applied a thorough, inclusive, and comprehensive six-step process. Within this six-step process, the researcher begins with transcription of the data through (1) reading and familiarization and (2) assigning initial codes, then (3) sorting the codes into themes. Next (4), the researcher reviews and refines the generated themes followed by (5) defining and naming the themes. Finally (6), the researcher produces a final analysis of the themes (Braun & Clarke, 2013). Furthermore, this research applied a theoretical TA with the guidance of social role theory, role congruity theory, and social network theory.

Limitations and Delimitations

The first limitation was analyzing only the Oklahoma Highway Patrol agency. Second, only the female employees were surveyed, and the third limitation was utilizing only two forms of data collection. The low female sample size was an additional limitation. Results may not be generalizable for all other law enforcement agencies nor an accurate representation of women within law enforcement in totality. Likewise, limited to law enforcement, the results may not be generalizable to management positions in other industries and organizations.

Male employees and other law enforcement agencies were the major delimitations to the scope of this study and therefore may limit this study's generalizability to law enforcement agencies across the United States or to other industries and organizations..

RESEARCH QUESTIONS

The central question focused on in this study was, "How can a mentoring program foster and prepare women for management positions?" The following six questions were the basis for the qualitative inquiry:

- RQ1. What type of obstacles or barriers did you overcome while progressing through your career?
- RQ2. What were the primary characteristics that contributed to your career advancements?
- RQ3. How can men mentor women with regards to career functions such as promotions and advancements?
- RQ4. What primary characteristics of a mentor did the OHP women seek to assist in their career advancements?
- RQ5. What role did a mentor program/relationship assist and prepare the OHP women for management positions?
- RQ6. What recommendations do OHP women have for the patrol to develop a recruiting, mentoring, and retention program to better the organization?

FINDINGS

Participants answered ten demographic questions in a questionnaire. Individual data collected pertained to age, race, job rank and assignment, marital status, education level, and job longevity. All participants were female or identified as female as well as all participants revealed their race/ethnicity information as Caucasian. The participants were asked their education level as noted in Figure 4 (see Figure 4). Three had a master's degree and three had a bachelor's degree while one had some college (62 hours). The ages of the participants varied from 29 to 49

years old (see Figure 3). Three participants are assigned to Troop A (Oklahoma City area), two are assigned to the Executive Service Detail for the Governor, one is assigned to the Traffic Homicide Unit, and one participant assigned to the Marine Enforcement Division.

Figure 3. Participant's ages.

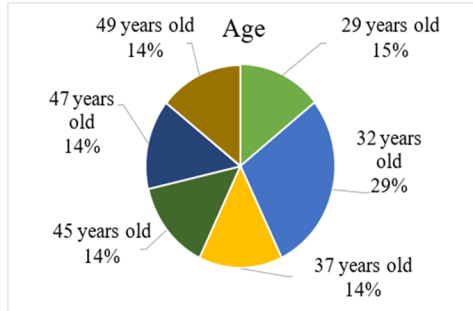
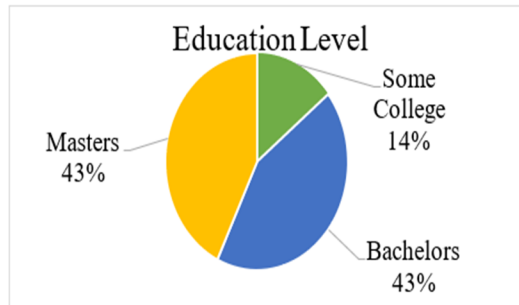
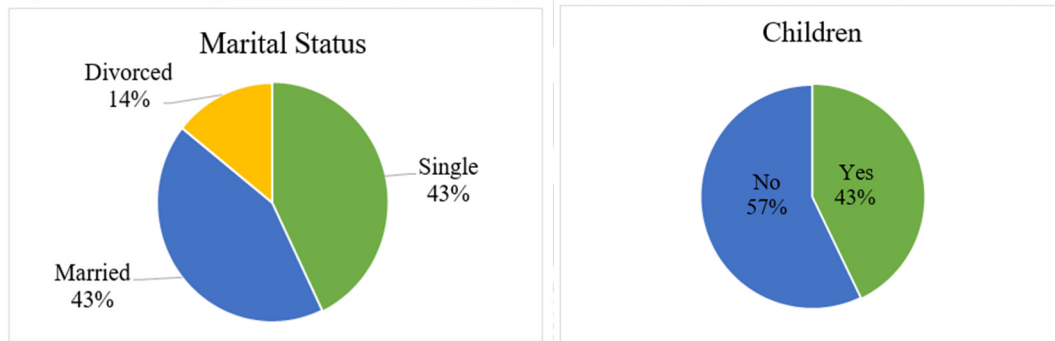


Figure 4. Participant's education level.



Participants were asked about their marital status (see Figure 5). Three participants were single, three participants were married, and one participant was divorced. Four participants indicated that they did not have children. Three participants stated they did have children (see Figure 6).

Figure 5. Participant's marital status Figure 6. Participant's with or without children



The years of service varied greatly for the participants (see Figure 7). Participants were asked about their job ranking within the patrol (see Figure 8). One participant declared the rank of Lieutenant while six affirmed the rank of Trooper.

Figure 7. Years of service

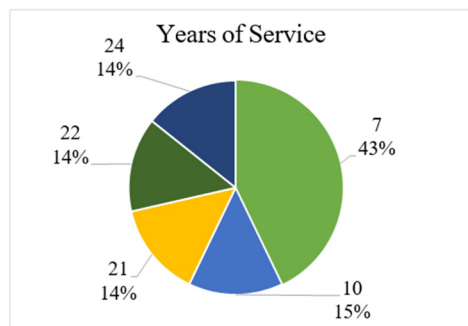
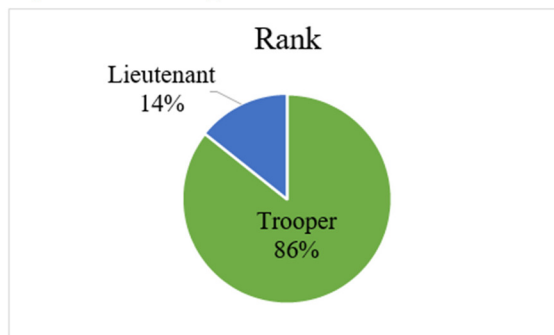


Figure 8. Participant's rank



The data collected from the questionnaires is presented with excerpts taken verbatim from the questionnaires. Questionnaires were best suited due to different work schedules which allowed the feasibility of completing the questionnaire at the participant's discretion. To maintain anonymity, the participant's names were not included in the results. Each participant was assigned a designated code such as Subject Matter Expert (SME), Participant 1 (P1), Participant 2 (P2), Participant 3 (P3), Participant 4 (P4), Participant 5 (P5), Participant 6 (P6), and Participant 7 (P7). If the participant gave a name, the name was marked out for confidentiality. Participants were asked a question that prompted them to evaluate any barriers they have encountered or experienced throughout their career. According to Hariton (2019), barriers are subjective, and accordingly, everyone perceives barriers and obstacles differently. Therefore, significant descriptions of barriers and the experiences of participants are presented. The SME and four participants have encountered various barriers. One participant does not perceive barriers or obstacles within her career. SME defined her gender bias as:

Being one of the first female troopers on O.H.P. It was made clear it was a man's world and they really didn't want any females on the department. Some of the cadets were told by older troopers that they needed to make sure we didn't make it through the academy. There was older brass that told their troopers that as long as they were around that none of their troopers would have to work for a woman. (SME).

Participant 4 stated there was "gender bias from every rank within the Patrol." Two participants asserted to being treated differently from their male employees. Participant 6 stated "The main barrier I have encountered throughout my career is the basis of the organization is to look at females differently than males. There is a stigma about females within the organization that cannot be changed overnight. I do not believe you can get every male within the organization to accept females into the organization." Another participant, P3, expressed "I feel that when I have a work injury that I am treated differently from my male counterparts when they are injured." Participant 5 expressed her barrier as "I experienced problems due to my gender during my Field Training program and for the next couple years at that assigned Troop." Participant 7 stated "treat us different as if we cannot do the job." While Participant 1 did not reveal encountering any personable obstacles or barriers but did present a potential reason of why women as well as men are held back within law enforcement:

I have not really encountered any barriers at this point in my career. The field troop to which I was assigned out the academy was led by [name withheld] who encouraged me in all my pursuits. My immediate supervisor also encouraged any classes and continuing education I sought and did his best to ensure I had the opportunity to take on additional duties and move forward on my professional path. The only occasional barrier I encountered was manpower, as there were times I simply couldn't go to a class or training because of the schedule; however, I was not the only person in my troop affected by this. Many of the Troop I troopers had to wait for other classes, opportunities, etc., due to staffing. In my current assignment [name withheld] and [name withheld] have afforded me every opportunity to move my career forward, including approving my request to go to Defensive Tactics Instructor school for 4 weeks and participate in the upcoming academy, all of which makes me unavailable for my regular assignments. (P1).

Participant 2 presented a contrasting point of view regarding gender bias while encountering obstacles or barriers:

None that I noticed. I feel that I was given fair treatment or even better treatment and allowed to be involved in many special assignments to include cadet lawman, EMSU, Dive team, Officer Assistance, executive security assignment. There have been very few times that I requested a class or training or assignment that I wasn't allowed to attend. Many times, it was because of manpower or scheduling and not because I was a female. (P2).

A person's response can be impulsive and abrupt without thinking of the consequences. These responses can set the manner in how a person is treated. The SME stated that her response to her barrier was "it made me more forced to make it through the academy and aim to become a Lieutenant. I finally requested to see the chief and commissioner after being a trooper for 20 years and ask them why I hadn't been promoted since my job performance and test scores were better than some of the males that had been promoted."

Responding to barriers in the same manner might seem reasonable to some people. However, others would respond in a different manner if they encountered the same obstacle or barrier again. The SME claimed that she would have reacted differently by stating, "I would have done it several years before I did." Participant 3 simply stated "Suck it up and move on" as her response to being treated differently than her male co-workers. Participant 4 had a different response to her barriers. She expressed "anger. However, I try very hard not to let it show or effect my overall job performance." Participant 5 claimed that her "response was to notify an individual that I trust within the organization." Participant 6 reflected on her response as "I work hard and understand I'm not going to change or "fix" those barriers overnight." Participant 7 described her response as "I am not surprised that females are treated that way [problems due to gender] in this agency. Basically, just accepting it. Men won't change. It is like it is embedded into all the men from day one."

However, other people feel that they would respond in a different manner if they encountered the same obstacle or barrier again. The SME stated, "I would have done it several years before I did." When responding in the same manner, Participant 2 expressed "Maybe" while Participant 2, Participant 4, and Participant 5 stated "No." Participant 3 simply stated "Yes." Participant 6 affirmed that she is "constantly learning and adapting to the environment and try to react in a way that I feel is the best for me now, as well as in the future. It's a constant struggle and always changing." A few participants stated they would have managed their responses differently. Participant 2 stated "I would have made more of noise about the situation. Now, I take action by standing up for myself." Participant 4 claimed that she "probably would have filed grievances, demanded change, filed lawsuits." Participant 5 maintained that she "would of [sic] still notified an individual that I trusted within the Patrol; however, I would of [sic] pushed the issue and possibly filed a discrimination complaint." Finally, Participant 6 asserted that she "continually change and adapt to make the situation the best for myself now and in the future."

Many people seek guidance and direction from leaders while others figure out how to advance their career on their own. Thus, the participants were asked about which characteristics they felt contributed most to their career advancements. The SME stated, "I think as a female you have to believe in yourself and know that you can accomplish whatever you set your mind to do." Participant 4 claimed that "no guidance" was given by anyone to help her career

advancement. She stated that she was “handed a 1,000 page policy book and told to study.” Participant 7 defined her career advancement opportunities as “annoying and confusing” due to the perplexed promotional process. Participant 2 advised that she “didn’t study enough of the right material.” Other participants (P1 and P5) indicated that they did not have any primary attributes that contributed to their career advancement. Participant 6 did not give an answer and Participant 3 has never attempted to advance her career. When seeking a mentor, particular characteristics can attract or appeal to an individual. The SME stated she found someone who was “supportive” and “believed in her.” She stated that “he believed that if you were qualified that you should had the opportunity to promote as any male.” Participant 5 indicated that her mentor had “honesty, reliable, and trustworthy” personal traits since “he told me to read certain policies.” Participant 3 stated she looked for someone who was “assertive and an encourager.” Participant 4 stated “truthful, honorable” as her preference of worthy mentors. Her mentor “provided guidance for how to answer questions.” Participant 1 stated “sincere with their work” and “intelligent and candid” as being characteristics of choice.

She explained her mentor:

Explained to me the role of the field supervisor, as well as the practical, day to day responsibilities. He also made sure I understood the most important aspects of our policies, such as the pursuit policy, discipline, and use of force. While I had read these for myself, he helped me understand the procedures for investigation and clarified what processes involved in some of the policies, such as discipline. (P1).

Participant 7 prefers someone who is “knowledgeable and applies common sense.” Her mentor “provided a reading list which showed her the way. He was willing to share.”

Participant 2 did not give any preferable traits. She explained that:

Since I began working at age 15, I have had good supervisors and have had bad supervisors that had qualities or leadership styles that I didn’t like or want to emulate. I think I learned as much from “crappy” supervisors as I did from “good supervisors. (P2).

Lastly, Participant 6 declared she prefers someone who is “ambitious, respectable, and ethical” in their decision making. The majority of participants stated that they had a mentor with these characteristics and traits at some point in their career. The SME and Participants 1, 2, 3, 4, 5, and 7 revealed an indication of having a mentor. Participant 6 is the only participant to state that she did not have a mentor and felt like she “was just “released” to the public with little guidance for my career ongoing.” Participant 4 stated that her husband is her mentor.

Actually, my spouse is. He’s a retired 1LT or Captain, now days. He’s always been a wonderful mentor. He retired the same year we transitioned, though so I never worked with him. (P4).

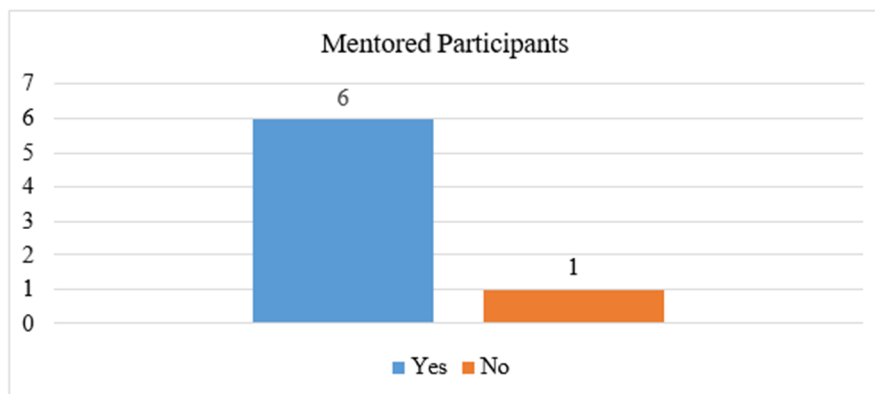


Figure 9. Participants who have been mentored.

The SME and participants P2, P4, and P7 revealed the gender of their mentor as being male. Participant 3 indicated to have two mentors, one male and one female. Participant 2, Participant 5, and Participant 6 did not indicate the gender of their mentor. No participant had a female only mentor. The SME and six participants revealed that they have attempted to mentor another employee through informal relations. Participant 1 did not comment on providing mentoring to individuals. SME revealed her mentoring mannerism by “sharing what I went through and help them realize that they can accomplish what they want.” Participant 3 gave a similar response of “I reinforced them that they were capable of doing their job.” Participant 4 stated that she has “tried to mentor several troopers and officers” by suggesting:

Reading certain policies, brushing up on laws pertaining to their job, I’d encourage them to watch videos of oral interviews so they knew how to present themselves and respond appropriately to questions, I’d encourage them to seek further civilian and LE training and education, I’d allow my subordinates to assist me in their yearly review (PMP) so they could see from a supervisory position how the process works, I’d show them on the computer how the crashes stacked up in Paris and the amount of paperwork of supervisors, I’ve walked people through the process of obtaining funds for various projects, classes, and equipment with the State’s purchase order process. Lastly, I’ve tried to be the kind of supervisor/mentor I always wanted and needed by being open, honest, and approachable. (P4).

Participant 6 stated she mentored: “...by providing guidance to younger Troopers especially when approached with questions. If approached and asked a question(s) I will gladly give my advice or opinion. If it’s something I do not know I will do further research or contact someone who does know. (P6).” Participant 7 revealed that she makes “herself available to assist in decision making, the processing information, and scenario-based discussion” whereas Participant 5 mentored through the “FTT process and currently as a recruiter. The actions taken were checking on the applicant or Trooper and answering any questions or concerns that he or she may have.” Lastly, Participant 2 stated that she mentors others by being “an employee that sets a good example and have a work quality that others would admire and respect. I believe in treating others the way I want to be treated.” The SME and Participant 5 felt that the OHP agency did not have a mentoring program. Participant 7 did not give an answer. Participant 1, Participant 2, Participant 3, Participant 4, and Participant 6 acknowledged the Field Trooper Training (FTT)

Program as a mentoring program. Participant 1 stated “The program is appropriate because it is designed to teach newly appointed troopers how to do their jobs in the real world. The FTT program creates proficiency and experience as a trooper that cannot be created in the academy setting.” Participant 6 stated that the “Break in [FTT] is required to be able to do the job, so I would say yes, it is appropriate. It provides the real life on the job training needed to do the job.” Participant 3 gave a similar answer “It [FTT] helps builds confidence and job knowledge.” Participant 2 claimed that there was “No true mentoring program unless the FTT program counts. It is only a limited time. Nothing further for guidance.”

The researcher presented a question concerning the participants’ mentoring relationship status. Formal and informal mentoring was defined for the participants within the questionnaire for clarity. The SME and all participants who indicated that they had a mentor stated that the mentoring relationship was informal in nature.

Participants were asked for recommendations for OHP to consider for developing a recruiting, mentoring, and retention program to help better the organization. The SME, Participant 6, and Participant 7 recommended a mentoring program for the agency. Unfortunately, Participant 6 believes that the barrier of acceptance for women will never “completely be resolved” can be lessened by “positive steps of inclusion” She argued for “developing a mentoring program with senior members of the organization that mix males and females I think could have a positive impact.” Participant 7 indicated that “a cultural change within the agency is needed” while Participant 1 stated that “any changes need to agency wide, not just directed at women.” Participant 7 further stated “I don’t know that our department cares enough to put in that kind of effort and for the most part, the females are not in assignments close to one another for support and to be brutally honest, I don’t want to be mentored by most of the females already promoted.”

Four participants suggested that a change is need in the promotional process. Participant 1 “believes the promotional process does need to focus more on peer review and performance and less on memorizing policy and procedure.” Participant 3 recommended “allowing more females on the interview board.” Participant 4 proposed that OHP “could hire an outside agency to handle promotions. Maybe an agency from another state. A progressive state, like Texas or New York. An outside, state law enforcement agency which could handle the entire process and provide an equal playing field for all applicants, not just females, but an agency that has females throughout their command structure.” Additionally, Participant 5 suggested that “The agency needs to make the process fair. It seems like the agency intentionally doesn't promote females. Agency needs to realize females are just as capable of being a supervisor as the men.” Participant 1 and Participant 2 had a different point of view concerning the OHP agency developing a recruiting, mentoring, and retention program. Participant 1 stated “I do believe more could be done to prepare women recruits for the academy. Most of the academy staff is male, although there are females on staff. The young women entering the academy need a better understanding of the nature of the job and academy, as well as the challenges they specifically will face as troopers.” Participant 2 stated that “I wouldn’t say that anything specifically needs to be done for female employees as the standards should be the same regardless of sex and leadership qualities are the same regardless of sex.

Emergent themes

As indicated by the participants' answers to the questionnaires, OHP female Troopers face a number of different challenges, obstacles, and barriers even though some participants do not perceive that they have encountered any difficulties. Therefore, the participant's experiences are comparable to results of previous research studies. The researcher determined the themes from the categories based on the number of times specific codes were described by the participants. In totality, three themes emerged from the categories. Previous studies on gender differences in policing have shown that female and male officers are treated differently in accordance with gender stereotypes (Morash & Haarr, 2012; Kakar, 2002).

The first emergent theme of *barriers* has been widespread throughout the years since the introduction of the first female in the OHP agency. The SME indicated barriers to promotion which has continued to keep female Troopers from ascending the ranks currently. According to Morash and Haarr, (2012) as well as Seklecki and Paynich (2007), female officers encounter discrimination and inequality because many law enforcement agencies view women as unable to successfully complete the same duties as male officers. Therefore, the lived experiences of this study's participants are consistent with comparable law enforcement agencies. Furthermore, the *barrier* theme is built upon gender bias and manpower. These two categories have formed a limitation to the female Trooper's acceptance, inclusion, and advancement of hierarchy status. Seklecki and Paynich (2007) and Kakar (2002) argued that men view a woman's competence as being physically weaker and incapable of using force in risky situations. Likewise, Rabe-Hemp (2008) advised that researchers revealed male police officers perceive female police officers as emotionally weak, naïve, and passive which leads the men to believe that women are unsuited for engaging in street patrols.

Nonetheless, participants in this study expressed encountering gender unfairness in assignments, training, and promotions. Excuses such as manpower or scheduling conflicts kept females from attending training which would have helped build their resumes for a promotion. Barriers formulate many hurdles that women encounter throughout their careers. Women report having to work twice as hard as the men to prove their right to wear the uniform (Kaiser & Spalding, 2015). Unfortunately, this barrier will continue to exist in this predominately male workplace as long as society allows for this type of behavior. On the contrary, this research study had two participants who did not perceive that they were treated differently. Morash and Haarr (2012) conducted a study composing of female police officers who stated that they did not believe gender differences existed in their work. However, since only two participants felt this way, the majority of this studies participants did believe that gender differences exist within the OHP agency. This belief of gender differences in OHP is consistent with findings of Rabe-Hemp (2009) and Schulz (2004) that women who seek law enforcement careers are frequently exposed to prejudicial behaviors by men.

Table 2

<i>Emergent Themes</i>	<u>Category</u>
<u>Emergent Themes</u>	
Barriers	Gender Bias Manpower
Management Responsibility	Lack of Communication Lack of Guidance Lack of Support
Support Networks	Mentors Supervisors Spouse

Note. *Emergent themes with associated categories.*

The second theme that emerged from the data analysis was the absence of *management responsibility*. Every agency's management has specific roles that contribute to the overall organizational success. However, majority of this study's participants indicated that the OHP administration lacks communication, guidance, support, and acceptance towards the female Troopers. These categories lead to the theme that management needs to accept responsibility of setting the tone for the department. The OHP administration needs improvement in many areas that will ultimately change the persona and perceptions regarding female Troopers. Based on the participant's perceptions of the OHP administration, *management responsibility* has been absent since the SME attended began her career in 1978. Years of specific behavior has filtered down throughout the hierarchical rankings which leads to attitudes and perceptions of not wanting to communicate, guide, support, and accept female Troopers.

Lastly, the third theme that emerged from the data analysis is *social networking* through mentors such as supervisors and spouses. Participants identified mentors as an integral element of their support networks with as positive influences for promotional opportunities. According to Stones (2005), mentors are particularly helpful with supporting women by changing their perspectives about their experiences and creating new individual schemas. Mentors can provide self-worth by modeling effective behavior and enhance their protégé's social identity by providing social exposure and supporting advancement through training. The participants of this study indicated how a mentoring program might contribute to the career advancement of potential female leaders. However, one participant stated that she did not want to be mentored by any of the currently promoted females. The appropriate mentor and protégé matching would be an important aspect that the OHP administration should consider when developing a formal mentoring program.

Implications

The future of an effective and efficient law enforcement organization is critical if an agency wants to provide worthy public safety. Administrators must work to identify potential future leaders, male and female, to prepare for the future management positions. In law enforcement, women have battled various constraints imposed on them since the late 1800s (Riseling, 2011). The research identified the theme, *barriers*, to include gender bias and manpower. Participants described the OHP agency having biased male leaders who continue to discriminate against female Troopers. Participant 6 explicitly stated "the basis of the organization

is to look at females differently than males. There is a stigma about females within the organization that cannot be changed overnight.” The conclusion from this quotation confers that the female Troopers encounter disparity from male co-workers and leaders with a fixed preconceived standpoint that is “embedded into all the men from day one,” as stated by Participant 7.

Participants’ responses asserted similar, yet different obstructions that have stalled their law enforcement careers. Even though two participants did not identify and acknowledge any known barriers, the existence of barriers was the overall given participant response. *Barriers*, as described by Budworth and Mann (2010), are any invisible or artificial obstacles that hinder a female from advancing or promoting within the OHP agency. Barriers are also known as challenges or obstacles which keep a female police officer from having *career development* that leads to *career advancement* through a *promotion*.

The findings in this study suggest that the *glass ceiling* barrier is still flourishing in law enforcement. Per the participant’s responses, there is an absence of opportunity and mobility to climb the hierarchy OHP ladder. The OHP administration has denied the female Troopers educational training opportunities that would have helped provide a solid foundation to their resume for promotional candidacy. Manpower or scheduling conflicts do not justify completely denying female Troopers their opportunity to seek intellectual knowledge. Thus, the participants indicated that the advancement of females in the OHP’s hierarchy is at a standstill unless the agency takes the initiative to advocate the incorporation of female Troopers. Inclusively, five out of the eight participants claimed that they have encountered barriers. Therefore, this overall result concurs with previous research studies of continued gender discrimination.

In 1978, the OHP was confronted with a challenge of how to manage the blending of male and female Troopers in a predominately male workforce. As the SME stated, “Being one of the first female troopers on O.H.P., it was made clear it was a man’s world and they really didn’t want any females in the department. Some of the cadets were told by older troopers that they needed to make sure we didn’t make it through the academy.” Her remarks clearly demonstrate gender discrimination as well as the lack of acceptance and support from the administration. Similar comments are still made towards female Troopers. From sexual harassment to contempt, women continue to encounter disparaging behavior from male co-workers and leaders. This study’s findings reinforce that an organization’s management must identify and acknowledge the agency’s responsibility to work at eliminating the negative conduct. Failure to do so will likely lead to a reduction in female Troopers. As the OHP confronts the gender inequality problem, female Troopers will still be confronted with extensive demands, and particularly, promotional issues. Ward and Prenzler’s (2016) research recommended law enforcement agencies establish support networks for women. Support networks can confront issues such as promotional policy issues, perceived barriers, and boost awareness of reasonable adjustments necessary for accommodating women in law enforcement. Ultimately, the findings indicate that a support network such as a mentoring program can have the potential to impact the entire OHP agency, positively. Acknowledging the complexities that women face is important to the future of the patrol.

OHP administrators should attempt to increase the number of women by providing a worthwhile mentoring program. Failing to provide meaningful progress will only result in the patrol regressing and the repercussions will only deteriorate the progress that has been made since 1978. The findings from this study coincide with previous research studies in the areas of gender discrimination and lack of acceptance. Therefore, a mentoring program should be in place

for women in law enforcement. The patrol administrators need a mentoring program to help guide women in their careers. Moreover, the implications from this research study are important if society as a whole has the desire to move forward with the incorporation of females in management positions.

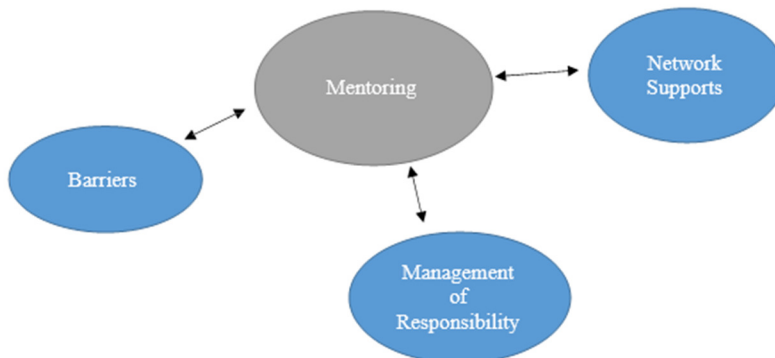


Figure 10. Implications from study's results.

RECOMMENDATIONS

Female Troopers in this study identified an isolation barrier from the OHP camaraderie. This separating aspect of the patrol causes the female's advancement to be marginalized. Fortunately, the OHP administration can confront the isolation issue by developing a professional networking association such as a mentoring program. This recommendation would allow for the female Troopers to network amongst the most influential leaders who can provide valuable support and guidance. Furthermore, mentoring programs can help resolve organizational problems such as the lack of qualified female leaders (Newby & Heide, 2013). As participants indicated, a mentoring program would be a positive step towards attracting, retaining, and developing potential female leaders. The application of promotional policies in male-dominated agencies serve as a barrier to woman's career progression. Therefore, a recommendation for practice is for the OHP agency to redesign the promotional policy and process. The process should consider an applicant's demonstrated knowledge and competencies instead of an unwritten subjective standard. This redesign may consist of utilizing an outside agency to assist in developing new promotional policies and processes that will help to eliminate gender biasness. Future research should include analyses of other law enforcement agencies as well as the corporate environment. Additional and different challenges, obstacles, or barriers may present themselves in studying other agencies. By conducting supplementary studies throughout law enforcement agencies, researchers could help aid in expanding the literature concerning female police officers. Additional research is recommended on an analysis of the mentor role theory. One participant stated that her spouse was her mentor. She stated that he had previously worked for the same agency, but they never had the opportunity to work together. Further research might focus on the viewpoint that there is greater support for career progression if a female police officer is married to or partners with another law enforcement officer or a whose partner is employed within the same agency.

CONCLUSION

Women have faced various issues such as sexual harassment, gender discrimination, and gender inequality since the beginning of women joining law enforcement. These confrontations are the foundation to the limited number of policewomen across the United States. Society and administrators must identify and acknowledge the constraints that confront and constrain females. Yu (2015) along Wolfram and Gratton (2014) argued that the level of masculinity in the law enforcement occupation must reduce if women are to exceed and conquer the daily struggles and barriers they face in police work. This study suggests that implementing a mentoring program for women in law enforcement is worthy of serious consideration. Mentoring makes a difference in the self-perceptions, confidence, and career success experienced by females seeking managerial responsibilities and advancement.



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