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# Female Police Officers and Their Experiences: The Metropolitan Police of Buenos Aires Context

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This research explores the experience of female police officers in the Metropolitan Police of Buenos Aires, which began providing public safety in 2010. The purpose of this research is to better understand the barriers and opportunities female officers are encountering in this new context of community policing in Latin America. With better understanding, law enforcement officials will be better equipped to ensure that female officers achieve at the highest levels in organizations. Responding female officers identified civic duty as a primary reason for joining the force. Female officers did not report significant levels of institutional discrimination but did report informal disparaging treatment, including sexual harassment. The results of this research suggest that as this young police force matures, officials should pay close attention to the emerging culture of the organization, as many common and negative aspects of it have already started to form.

**Keywords** community policing, female police officers, Latin America, Metropolitan Police of Buenos Aires, shared perceptions

## INTRODUCTION

This research examines the shared perceptions of female police officers concerning their work experiences in the Metropolitan Police of Buenos Aires (MPBA). Launched in 2010, the MPBA is the most recently formed force in Argentina and emphasizes professionalism and community policing. Central to these concepts are deliberate efforts to recruit, retain, and train a police force that is representative of the community and to emphasize specialized training that prepares officers to engage with the public and other stakeholders who share responsibility for maintaining a civil society.

In this context, the perceptions of MPBA officers provide insights into the climate of this new police force and, by extension, the implementation and effectiveness of community policing and professionalization efforts. Underlying this investigation into the experiences of female officers is the assumption that their beliefs and values as employees will have a direct effect on their motivation and willingness to engage in organizational citizenship. Such engagement is essential for overcoming the challenges that have plagued other Argentine police forces.

## LITERATURE REVIEW

## Law Enforcement in Argentina

The Argentine Federal Police is the civil police force, under the command of the president, with jurisdiction over the entire country. As a federal republic, Argentina is divided into 23 provinces and one federal district. The Argentine Federal Police is responsible for preventing and investigating federal crimes. The majority of routine police work is carried out by the provincial police (equivalent to state police in the United States), except in the capital city of Buenos Aires, which is the federal district and in which the Argentine Federal Police and the local MPBA jointly assume the role of the local police.

Of the provincial police departments in Argentina, Buenos Aires is the largest (Banco Interamericano de Desarrollo [BID], 2013). It is responsible for policing the province of more than 11 million inhabitants in Greater Buenos Aires (BID, 2013). As the federal district is within the larger province of Buenos Aires, it is excluded from the jurisdiction of the provincial police of Buenos Aires. The federal district has around 4 million inhabitants. The province of Buenos Aires and the federal district account for approximately 40% of the country's population.

The MPBA was originally conceived in 2007 by then mayor of Buenos Aires Mauricio Macri. After a number of political and legal reforms, the federal government authorized the creation of the municipal police force, and it began providing public safety in 2010 with approximately 540 officers in one precinct.<sup>1</sup> At present, there are more than 2,000 officers, and through planned expansion the goal is to reach 16,000 officers by 2020. This new force was originally conceived according to the model of the Catalan police and is based on elements of the British London Metropolitan Police and the New York Police Department (Institute Superior of Public Security, 2014).

The city of Buenos Aires is formally divided into 48 barrios (neighborhoods) that are grouped into 15 *comunas* (communes or precincts), which are defined as “units of decentralized political and administrative management governed by designated residents” (Censo, 2010, p. 23). The MPBA assumed law enforcement responsibility for its first territory in February 2010 in Comuna 12. This precinct consists of the districts Villa Pueyrredón locals, Villa Urquiza, Coghlan, and Saavedra. This *comuna* was chosen for implementation of the new force because, among other determinants, it does not have a football stadium in its territory; it has an average level of conflict (considered acceptable in which to launch a new police institution without experience); and it is located on the border on the north side of the city, which would ensure some support and interaction with the provincial police of Buenos Aires (BID, 2013). Furthermore, the chief of the Metropolitan Police thought that starting with communities other than the center would allow the MPBA to begin with communities where the neighbors had a greater sense of belonging and thus were more likely to have an interest in community policing (BID, 2013). Originally Comuna 12 had 540 officers; currently it has 670 agents (La Policía Metropolitana, 2016). In December 2010, the MPBA began its law enforcement activities in Comuna 15, which includes the neighborhoods Villa Ortúzar, Chas Park, Agronomy, La Paternal, Chacarita, and Villa Crespo. In this precinct there are currently 640 officers (La Policía Metropolitana, 2016). Finally, in August 2011, 510 officers were allocated to District 4, corresponding to the neighborhoods of La Boca, Cabins, Parque Patricios, and New Pompeii. Currently there are 702 deployed there (La Policía Metropolitana, 2016).

The systemic failures of the police in Argentina are well known and well documented (Sain, 2008). Argentine police agencies have historically suffered overall organizational and financial shortcomings, including low wages (which increases the probability of a negative impact on police productivity) and inadequate budgets, a hierarchical structure of command (in the military style), excessive military training, and a lack of agency independence, among other issues (Frühling, 2004; Sain, 2008).

The failure to reform over recent decades has been attributed to intergovernmental disputes between national, provincial, and municipal authorities; officer corruption; and deep ideological divisions within civil society on how to respond to crime appropriately (Eaton, 2008; Hinton, 2006).

Although both the federal and the provincial police have long histories of corruption, including human rights violations, the MPBA (because of its recent creation and different policing practices) has not been marred with these legacies and thus represents a new effort to modernize and professionalize law enforcement in Argentina. The MPBA has embraced elements of community policing, namely, and with an emphasis on, crime prevention, analysis information, and the use of technology (La Policía Metropolitana, 2015). Furthermore, police officers are to be from the community and reflect the values of their neighbors. According to the MPBA Web site, police officers should be

citizens, as any of us, who live in our neighborhoods and know what we feel as neighbours. In the spirit of solidarity, a police officer should be someone with whom you identify. A police officer is someone who defends the interests of all . . . only in this way, will a security force be committed to society and to each of its inhabitants. (La Policía Metropolitana, 2015)

This new perspective on policing represents a dramatic attempt to shift the role and perception of police officers, both internal and external to the force.

### Community Policing

The concept of community policing developed in the late 1960s and early 1970s after police responses to social unrest and activism severely damaged the public's trust and confidence in law enforcement institutions in the United States. Although the original objective of community policing was to increase the legitimacy of and improve citizen satisfaction with police agencies, it has since evolved into an ever-changing array of diverse programs designed to appeal to specific audiences, which makes it nearly impossible to define (Muller, 2010; Ungar & Arias, 2012).

According to the U.S. Department of Justice, community policing is “a philosophy that promotes organizational strategies, which support the systematic use of partnerships and problem-solving techniques, to proactively address the immediate conditions that give rise to public safety issues such as crime, social disorder, and fear of crime” (Community Oriented Policing Services, 2015). Community policing is a joint effort between law enforcement and a community it serves to best determine the policing needs of the community. Groups and individuals (including government agencies, nonprofit organizations, businesses, local media, and community members) all have partnerships with the police, which encourages responsiveness and helps to make communities safer.

Police agencies in the United States began to rapidly expand this new philosophy of policing in the 1980s. These agencies tried to engage community members to jointly address recurring crime and disorder issues through proactive or problem-solving efforts (Diamond & Weiss, 2009). These diffused efforts to change the nature of policing were codified at the federal level in 1994 through the Violent Crime Control and Law Enforcement Act. As a result of federal support, today more than 80% of the U.S. population is served by a law enforcement agency practicing a form of community policing (U.S. Department of Justice, 2015).

### Latin American States and Policing Practices

In response to the rising crime and political and social instability of the 1980s and 1990s, many Latin American countries began experimenting with policing strategies from abroad. One important outcome of this external search has been the import of policing strategies and concepts from Western countries. The most prominent policing imports have been zero tolerance and/or broken windows policing efforts, which contributed to the hegemony of *mano dura* (strong hand) or *tolerancia zero* (zero tolerance) security agendas in many countries of the region (Dammert & Malone, 2006; Muller, 2010; Ungar & Arias, 2012).

Although these concepts have been widely criticized in recent years by academics and researchers for their repressive nature and inequitable application of strategies, community policing continues to appeal to states as an approach against violence and crime. It also increases the legitimacy law enforcement and police action among the public. Such community policing practices have been implemented in Argentina (specifically the Metropolitan Police), Brazil, Chile, Colombia, Costa Rica, the Dominican Republic, Ecuador, El Salvador, Guatemala, Nicaragua, Mexico, Panama, and Peru (Arias & Ungar, 2009; Dammert & Malone, 2006; Frühling, 2004; Frühling & Gallardo, 2012). As Frühling and Gallardo (2012) noted, each of these programs has a different name and format, tenures, and levels of success. Although the adoption of community policing programs in Latin America is generally viewed as positive, Muller (2010) suggested that there are still major obstacles for countries in Latin America that wish to implement successful community policing models, including political, legal, and institutional obstacles.

### Female Police in the Latin American Context

With the emergence of community policing strategies in Latin America, the consideration and inclusion of women in law enforcement has gained prominence. A rich body of literature exists regarding women in policing, including discussions of the historical inclusion of women in law enforcement (Bell, 1982; Horne, 1980; Segrave, 2014); occupational opportunities and challenges, including equal opportunity, stress, discrimination, and harassment (Hassell, Archbold, & Stichman, 2010; Helen, 2015; Thompson, Kirk, & Brown, 2005; Wexler & Logan, 1983); motivation (Martin, 1982; Raganella & White, 2004; Wertsch, 1998); the use of force (Hoffman & Hickey, 2005; Lonsway, 2001; Schuck & Rabe-Hemp, 2007); and, most recently, gendered contributions to policing (Silvestri, 1998; Swan, 2015). However, despite this rich body of literature, a paucity of research exists on female police officers in the Latin American context. The most common discussion of female police officers is in the context of women's police stations.

These stations—as the name suggests—offer information and services specific to the needs of women, including support in cases of sexual and domestic abuse and violence. The first such station was established in Brazil in 1985, and stations have since spread to Argentina, Ecuador, Nicaragua, and Peru (Ellsberg et al., 2015).

Although some scholars have raised issues about the segregation of the needs of women, the use of women’s police stations has been favorably received. As Santos (2005) noted, these stations act as a point of entry for accessing the justice system and specialized services for women. For the present purpose, these stations have been instrumental in making violence against women more visible and making a solid case for female personnel, namely, police officers, who can competently and legitimately investigate crimes against women. Each of the three community policing–based *comunas* in Buenos Aires has devoted staff and other resources to the needs of women and issues related to gender. Table 1 highlights the number of male and female officers and assignments to the department’s gender divisions.

Beyond the women’s police stations, virtually nothing is known about female police officers in the Latin American context, and even less is known about female officers in the Argentine context (Bergman & Flom, 2012; Dammert & Malone, 2002; Estévez, 2014).

### Motivation for Becoming a Police Officer

The factors that motivate individuals to become police officers have been a focus of attention for many years. Research in this area began in the 1960s, when very few visible minorities and women were police officers. Findings from this early research highlighted several consistent themes related to motivation, in particular the attraction of individuals with authoritarian personalities—seeking power, authority, and control—to the profession (Lester, 1983; McNamara, 1967; Niederhoffer, 1967). Job security was also often cited as an important motivator. One study found that 35% of police officers cited job security as the number one reason for joining the force (White, Cooper, Saunders, & Raganella, 2010). The opportunity to help people and a desire to enforce the law were also commonly cited reasons for becoming a police officer (White & Perrone, 2005).

Women, like men, have identified job security and the opportunity to help others as the most important reasons for entering the profession (Hassell, Archbold, & Stichman, 2011). In addition, Ridgeway et al. (2008) found that applicants (men and women) to the San Diego Police

TABLE 1  
Number of Male and Female Officers in Each Precinct

<i>Precinct</i>	<i>Females</i>		<i>Males</i>		<i>Total men and women</i>
	<i>Number of officers</i>	<i>Number assigned to women’s station</i>	<i>Number of officers</i>	<i>Number assigned to women’s station</i>	
Comuna 4	219	16	489	12	708
Comuna 12	257	19	413	8	670
Comuna 15	224	12	419	15	643
Total	700	47	1,321	35	2,021

Department reported a desire to help others and/or the community (72%), followed by reasons such as stable employment (53%), job status (46%), and salary and benefits (46%).

Raganella and White (2004) studied motivations for becoming a police officer within the context of race and sex. They found that motivations for entering police work were consistent regardless of sex or race. Overall, recruits indicated that the opportunity to help others, job security, and benefits were the most important reasons for becoming a police officer. Recruits also consistently identified the least influential motivating items, regardless of officer race or sex, including salary, a lack of other career alternatives, military structure, and the power and authority of the job (Raganella & White, 2004). This more recent (and representative) literature on officers' motivations parallels the shift from traditional policing to problem-based and community policing.

### Gathering Officer Experiences and Perceptions

As suggested earlier, shared perceptions among employees in the workplace can have a profound effect on an organization. These shared perceptions are often the result of individual experiences of employees. An employee who feels that he or she has been unfairly treated within the organization may share his or her dissatisfaction with a sympathetic coworker. The coworker may repeat the story to another employee, who may in turn repeat it to a third. Before long, many employees know the story—understand it as fact—and react accordingly. Their reactions can include uncertainty, loss of work satisfaction, on-the-job distraction, and reduced motivation. In the worst case scenario, employees can drag down the organization's performance or subvert its mission. Thus, organizations that fail to monitor and respond to shared perceptions and experiences risk mission failure.

This article reports data concerning the shared perceptions and experiences of female police officers in the MPBA. Their opinions and perceptions—as women and as officers—in the new force will contribute to the success or failure of the agency. For example, a shared perception among the officers that community policing is a worthwhile approach to law enforcement should increase the likelihood that it will not be supplanted by old policing habits. The aggregated data provide a solid picture of the work environment for these officers. These data will provide a more complete understanding of both community policing practices and shared perceptions about the MPBA as a work environment. Undoubtedly, challenges still remain for these new officers in a new force, but if they share the perception that policing also provides benefits, then organizational failures are less likely.

## METHODOLOGY

### Survey of Police Officers in Buenos Aires

The survey represents an effort to better understand the work environment of precinct officers and their experiences with community policing. The design of the survey instrument was based on surveys conducted for previous studies on the shared perceptions of officers in law enforcement and the U.S. Department of Justice's community policing self-assessment tool for law

enforcement agencies (Bolton, 2003; Colvin, 2012; U.S. Department of Justice, 2015). The self-assessment tool is a Web-based agency-wide survey that helps law enforcement agencies measure their progress in implementing community policing (U.S. Department of Justice, 2015). It confidentially captures information concerning community partnerships, problem solving, and the organizational impact of community policing efforts. According to the U.S. Department of Justice (2015), community partnerships are collaborative partnerships between a law enforcement agency and the individuals and organizations it serves in order to develop solutions to problems and increase trust in the police. Problem solving is the process of engaging in the proactive and systematic examination of identified problems to develop effective responses that are evaluated rigorously. Finally, organizational transformation is the alignment of organizational management, structure, personnel, and information systems to support community partnerships and proactive problem solving. Although the full self-assessment tool considers all parts and members of the law enforcement agency, only the elements related to officers' assessment were included in this study.

I translated the survey instrument and associated documents into Spanish for the police officers of the MPBA. The clarity of the questions was confirmed with the help of two native Spanish speakers at the University of Buenos Aires. This version was then approved by a certified translation professional. The approved version of the survey instrument was completed in November 2014. Both a paper version and an online version of the survey were developed.

As of December 2014, the MPBA had assumed command of three out of 15 *comunas* or precincts in the city of Buenos Aires. The survey was administered in Comuna 15, which includes the neighborhoods of Chacarita, Villa Crespo, Paternal, Villa Ortúzar, Agronomía, and Parque Chas. The paper version of the survey was used at this location. Copies were made available for 1 week, in the first week of December. Officers encountered the survey in the common space of the precinct, where the majority of officers begin their shifts. There were 640 officers assigned to this *comuna* at the time of the survey (BID, 2013).

The survey included four major components:

1. Questions capturing demographic data on the officers, their status in law enforcement, and reasons for entering law enforcement
2. Questions eliciting the officers' perceptions of their workplace environment. Female officers were asked about barriers and access points to equal employment opportunities (e.g., whether they received their first-choice assignments)
3. Questions focusing on elements of work specific to the law enforcement environment, including questions concerning workplace relationships with external and internal actors (e.g., whether they had good relationships with their coworkers)
4. Perceptions of community policing, its current status in the force, and its effectiveness as applied in Comuna 15 (e.g., whether they were given sufficient time to build relationships with community members)

## RESULTS

A total of 61 out of 640 police officers of the MPBA in Comuna 15 completed the survey. This is a 9% response rate. Of the 61 responding officers, 29 were women. This represents 47.5% of the responding officers. Table 2 shows demographic data for the respondents.

TABLE 2  
Basic Demographic Information for Responding Officers

<i>Demographic variable</i>	<i>Males</i>	<i>Females</i>
Average age	30.8	26.5
Relationship status (married or in a relationship)	48.3	24.1
No children	50	48.8
Education (university degree)	9.4	13.8
Policing—years of service		
Police service	3.7	2.9
MPBA service	2.2	2

*Note:* Data are percentages. MPBA = Metropolitan Police of Buenos Aires.

The demographic information highlights the recentness of the force in Buenos Aires. Central to their recruitment efforts is the inclusion of women. Almost half of the respondents to this survey were female officers. The female officers on average were younger, were less likely to be married or in a relationship, and were more educated than their male counterparts. In terms of comparison, the general population matched in terms of gender but not on other factors. According to the most recent census data from 2010, the *comunas* within the jurisdiction averaged 47.6% male. The general population was older (47.5%), had less schooling (12.6%), and had higher rates of marriage (54.5%).

Although it is not surprising that the bulk of the respondents were at the rank of patrol officer, more than 75% of respondents had less than 2 years of experience, and 50% had less than 2 years of experience beyond the MPBA. Female officers had slightly less experience than male officers. These numbers correspond with the recruitment efforts of the force, which include finding a balance between recruiting new officers and more senior and experienced officers to grow the force. At its start, the MPBA recruited heavy from the federal and provincial forces. Most likely, these external recruits were men and skewed the average age of the male respondents upward. In summary, the respondents to the survey were younger male and female officers beginning their careers in law enforcement. They were the new recruits of the new force. With the exception of relationship status and education, female and male respondents were demographically similar.

The majority of the female officers indicated that civic duty (58.6%) motivated them to enter into law enforcement. The next most popular reasons selected were for job security (51.7%) and career opportunities and advancement (37.9%). The least common known reason for entering law enforcement was for adventure (see Table 3).<sup>2</sup>

The majority of female officers appeared to have favorable perceptions themselves and their work on the force. Women were perceived as assets in helping other women in the justice system. Their positive treatment of both suspects and prisoners (51.7%) and victims and witnesses (62.1%) was noted (see Table 4).

Despite being considered an organizational asset—in terms of helping women—female officers were still treated differently by their male colleagues. These differences were not perceived or observed in significant numbers in terms of equal employment efforts but were perceived in the informal, cultural sense. For example, 27.5% of female respondents cited exposure to sexual harassment. Equally troubling is the one third (34.5%) of women citing some other negative

TABLE 3  
Reasons Given by Female Officers for Entering Law Enforcement

<i>Reason</i>	<i>%</i>
Civic duty	58.6
Job security	51.7
Career opportunities and advancement	37.9
Pay and benefits	17.2
Family tradition	13.8
Sense of adventure	3.4
Other reasons	0.0

*Note:* Scores are cumulative.

treatment at work. Although not captured in this survey, such negative treatment could include bullying, being subjected to rumors or gossip, feelings of inconsequentiality, postings or general assignments, or a general hostile work environment (see Table 5).

Officers were asked their level of agreement with several statements about community policing as worded in the U.S. Department of Justice self-assessment tool. Officers were to respond using a scale of 1 to 5 (1 = *completely agree*, 5 = *completely disagree*). Officers were in the most agreement in their understanding of their role in the Department's community policing effort. In addition, female officers were in general agreement with statements that officers are trained in community problem solving (1.73), officers are trained in developing community partnerships (1.82), and the officer's role is well-defined within the community policing context (1.82). Officers agreed (less so than with other statements) that personnel (officers, staff, leadership) are involved in community policing efforts (2.17). Finally, the availability of sufficient uncommitted time for officers participating in community policing generated the least agreement among officers (2.57). As noted earlier, uncommitted time allows police officers to engage in activities with the community that are not related to law enforcement. This might include participating in anti-crime community-based efforts; participating in youth-related sports or other activities; meeting community members; attending events in support of the community; and creating partnerships with local businesses, religious institutions, and other community groups (see Table 6).

When asked about working relationships internal and external to policing, women were slightly more pessimistic than men. In fact, female officers did not agree at the same levels about equal treatment in the MPBA. In addition, they were less likely to report incidents as being handled properly when they involved homosexuals or women. Female and male officers

TABLE 4  
Female Officers' Perceptions Concerning Women in Law Enforcement

<i>Female officers work better than men with . . .</i>	<i>%</i>
Female suspects and prisoners	51.7
Female victims and witnesses	62.1

*Note:* Data are the percentage of female officers who agreed with the statement.

TABLE 5  
Different Treatment

<i>Treatment perceived by female officers</i>	%
Other	34.5
Harassment	27.5
Sexual conversations	13.8
Considered an outsider	10.3
Retaliation	10.3
Property damage	10.3
Social exclusion	6.9
None of the above	3.4

reported at the same levels that external relations (with residents) were good, but females found internal relations (with colleagues, superiors, and staff) less favorable. This could be influenced by the negative treatment, including sexual harassment, that many female officers reported. Finally, and paradoxically, female officers on average were more likely to recommend policing as a career option to others (see Table 7).

TABLE 6  
Female Officers' Perceptions of Community Policing

<i>Statement</i>	<i>M</i>
My agency requires demonstrated competency in community policing (e.g., ability to form productive partnerships, completion of a successful problem-solving project) for promotion.	2.44
Police officers in my agency are trained in problem-solving.	1.73
Police officers in my agency are trained in developing community partnerships.	1.82
Community policing is an agency-wide effort involving all police officers, staff and management.	2.17
My role in community policing is well defined by your law enforcement agency.	1.82
Police officers in my agency are given adequate uncommitted time to proactively work with the community.	2.57

*Note:* Responses were on a scale of 1 to 5 (1 = *completely agree*, 5 = *completely disagree*).

TABLE 7  
Perceptions of the Organization and Work

<i>About working in the Metropolitan Police of Buenos Aires</i>	<i>Men</i>	<i>Women</i>
My opportunities to advance are the same as other officers in the Metropolitan Police.	2.12	2.32
I have good professional relationships with my work colleagues, superiors and staff.	1.35	1.53
I have a good professional relation with the residents of the community in which I serve.	1.48	1.53
My precinct responds well to critical incidents that involve homosexuals.	1.83	2.07
My precinct responds well to critical incidents that involve women.	2.73	3
I would recommend police service as a career option to others.	1.61	1.39

*Note:* Responses were on a scale of 1 to 5 (1 = *completely agree*, 5 = *completely disagree*).

## DISCUSSION OF RESULTS

The results of the survey reveal much about the experiences of young female police officers in the MPBA. The data suggest that these women join the police service for similar reasons as their female predecessors in terms of job security (Seklecki & Paynich, 2007). This is especially the case if one collapses the ideas of joining and continuing in police service. More important is that the shift to civic responsibility and career opportunities is a leading cause for joining policing. Although women have traditionally entered the profession for reasons other than job security, the survey results suggest that men also view police work in the MPBA as more than just a job. Both civic responsibility and career opportunities suggest a deeper investment in law enforcement and, by extension, community policing.

Although the work roles of men and women in policing should be equal, historically and culturally female officers have been perceived differently in law enforcement. This is a phenomenon not only in Argentina but throughout most of the policing world. Women who first entered into law enforcement in the 19th century were designated to carry out police service but not serve as officers. Female officers were relegated to caring for female prisoners. In the modern-day police service, women carry out police work and provide enhanced services to women in the criminal justice system. In the case of the MPBA, a vast majority of women valued the specialized activities of female officers and their work with other women in the criminal justice system. The value of women in policing—beyond working with other female victims and suspects—has been well documented in other studies (Kennedy & Homant, 1983; Sleath & Bull, 2012). However, these results suggest some residual stereotyping of female officers in the workplace. Although women's police stations have been positively received for their client support, it is not clear that female officers have benefited from this approach. Female officers aspiring to advance in the organization may find themselves on the wrong track for promotion or may be seen as only able to engage in the softer elements of policing.

The most important aspects of this survey are the responses that female officers provided regarding community policing. Of the six statements given about community policing, on average officers were in positive agreement with all of the statements. Officers were in the most agreement with their individual roles in community policing, which can be interpreted as understanding their jobs and daily responsibilities. Officers were in second most agreement concerning the training in problem solving they had received. Agreement on these two statements suggests that officers understand their street-level responsibilities regarding community policing—at their level of the organization. Given that most respondents were patrol officers, the high level of understanding for the street-level aspects of community policing makes sense.

Although officers understand their responsibilities on the ground, they are less cohesive in their agreement regarding the capacity of the organization as a whole. This was made evident by the statements with the highest levels of discordance, regarding the agency's time committed to neighborhood-level nonpolice work in the community. Female officers did not feel that the agency provided officers with enough time to build a relationship with the community that was not related to law enforcement. However, these officers were more confident about the filtration of community policing values to other parts of the organization.

Female officers in Argentina join a long and sad tradition of being treated differently in the workplace. Just as Bolton (2003) documented racial discrimination and harassment of police officers of African descent, and Colvin (2009) highlighted discrimination and harassment of

police officers based on sexual orientation, this research shows harassment based on sex for Latina officers in the MPBA. This disparate treatment of minority officers highlights the difficulty of changing police culture.

## IMPLICATIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Although not representative, this study and its results create an opportunity to discuss some important implications and recommendations for the MPBA as it matures as a police force. The study suggests implications for both female officers and the MPBA as an organization. The women of the MPBA are in a position to guide and influence the culture of the force. This is possible simply based on the number of women who are already part of the force. As noted earlier, the MPBA has made a concerted effort to recruit and retain a police force that is representative of the communities it serves. This has been most evident with the recruitment and retention of women. On average, women have been about 50% of each cadet academy class, and currently they represent about 30% of the police force (La Policía Metropolitana, 2016). Unlike many other efforts at inclusion, women in the MPBA are not tokenized or isolated or thinly spread throughout the organization. At 30%, enough women exist in the organization to influence the social, professional, and cultural environment of the workplace. As confirmed via this research, few of the respondents reported feeling like an outsider or being excluded socially.

Despite being a significant minority within the police force, women officers should not take their status for granted. Without diligent commitment to inclusion, women may find themselves relegated to lower ranks or assignments within the organization. Women may find themselves the recipients of policies, rules, and regulations that directly affect their work lives but over which they had little input. To combat these possible scenarios, female officers should work to develop female-driven support networks, including connections with female police associations and groups. Closer and concerted efforts by female officers in other settings have proved to be fruitful. For example, police officers of color in the United States and elsewhere have used associations to augment the recruitment of minority officers within their communities. They have been instrumental in helping minority officers prepare for advancement in the organization (Bolton, 2003; Holdaway, 1997; Leinen, 1984). Lesbian and gay police associations have been instrumental in developing inclusive trainings for academy cadets and police officers on the force (Colvin, 2015). Collective action through associations or groups would help female officers to frame and prioritize important issues. Thus, women in the MPBA could act as an influential force within the city's police force to ensure that the organization remains open and adaptive to the needs of all officers and the public.

In terms of personnel issues, the responses of female officers were also insightful. Female officers scored their second highest level of disagreement on the statement connecting community policing to employment actions, specifically promotion. Officers understand their role in community policing and have been trained in community problem solving but do not see a connection between these activities and their future career opportunities. These links are important and positive for community policing and its efforts. For these officers, advancement in the organization is *not* connected to the organization's central policing philosophy. Such a connection would increase the motivation for patrol officers to adhere to the principles of community policing.

There are also some opportunities to leverage the study results on an organizational level. First, the data suggest that civic duty and job security are driving motivators for women. These motivators are different from the motivators for men; therefore, the MPBA should emphasize these themes in its recruitment efforts. Focusing on these elements not only is more likely to convince women to apply but also increases the likelihood that the MPBA will recruit women who will be more receptive to the community policing model.

Second, beyond recruitment the MPBA could improve retention of female officers by ensuring zero tolerance of antisocial behavior among officers on the force. Specifically, the MPBA should address the informal different treatment that female officers experience, like sexual harassment. In the current environment, such negative treatment can create a shared perception among women that the MPBA is not a female-friendly workplace. By not addressing these antisocial behaviors, the force risks alienating potential cadets as well as current officers who have become unsatisfied with the workplace.

Finally, the results suggest that the MPBA should do more to ensure that the principles of community policing are permeating the entire organization. Two data points highlight the importance of better training in this area. First, female officers indicated that women and homosexuals are not treated equally when requesting police services. This is contrary to the many policing strategies of community policing, a community-focused model. Both male and female officers who support community policing might be disenfranchised by unequal treatment. Second, and more important, is the indication that female officers do not have sufficient time to engage with community members. This is at the heart of community policing and ties closely to the civic duty that motivates female officers. If officers do not have time to engage citizens, businesses, community groups, and others, they will not be able to build relations, nor will they be connected to the community they serve. To this end, the MPBA will need to adjust the work of patrol officers to include unrestricted time to engage their communities. Without active engagement, the MPBA hinders its ability to meet its mission. Residents feel more comfortable and officers are more humane when officers are working locally in the communities. When residents feel more comfortable, they are more likely to report criminal activities and more likely to work with police to solve community-based problems. As the U.S. Department of Justice (2016) noted, "Community policing means working proactively and building relationships in the face of tension and issues."

## CONCLUSION

It is impossible to know the extent of the respondents' representativeness based on this survey, as the data collected were not random and only encompassed one of three precincts. Although this initial investigation offers some important insights, there are many limitations to this exploratory research. Future research should consider the other ways in which female officers are made tokens or outsiders. In this study, more than a third of females responded affirmatively to exposure to negative treatment. Furthermore, the effects of being treated as more competent when helping other women also need unpacking. Although women's police stations might have positive implications for female residents, there might be negative consequences for the careers of female officers. On a broad scale, the definition of community policing and the specific strategies that constitute this effort in Buenos Aires should also be considered.

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## NOTES

1. For a full discussion of the political and legal development of the MPBA, please see Ríos (2014) and Anitua (2010).

2. Respondents were allowed to select more than one reason. The responses presented are cumulative.

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