

WOMEN POLICING ACROSS THE GLOBE

Shared Challenges and Successes in the
Integration of Women Police Worldwide

CARA RABE-HEMP AND VENESSA GARCIA



"This book fills a void in comparative research about women's integration into policing. It illustrates the difficulties comparing women's and their agencies' expectations of their roles across cultures and national boundaries."

—DOROTHY MOSES SCHULZ, John Jay College of Criminal Justice (CUNY);
author of *Breaking the Brass Ceiling: Women Police Chiefs and Their Paths to the Top*

"This book is a must-read for police practitioners, scholars, and students who want to understand the unique experiences of female officers working in police agencies around the world. The chapters challenge readers to think about how organizational policies and practices influence the workplace experiences of women who wear the badge beyond the borders of the United States."

—CAROL A. ARCHBOLD, North Dakota State University

Women Policing across the Globe provides a cross-cultural comparison of the integration of women in policing across the globe, paying special attention to the unique contributions that women make to the field, along with the shared challenges and resistance they face. Individual chapters within this book provide readers with a snapshot of women in modern police agencies in the countries of the United States, Kuwait, China, the United Kingdom, Australia, the United Arab Emirates, Taiwan, and many more countries worldwide.

This book allows readers to explore the different origins of entry, specialized roles, their shared issues and successes, and effects of historical events that have shaped the experiences of modern women police from across the world. The authors discuss the new gains women are making, despite the obstacles they face, and ways they are transforming how policing is done every day. And, finally, this book closes with collective issues and successes faced by women police worldwide.

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To all of the women who have opened the gates.
We thank you for your sacrifices.

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Chapter Nine

Responding to Crime Victims and Community Needs

Nongendered versus Specialized Women's Units

Sarah Hautzinger

ABSTRACT

When and why does the gender of police come to matter in the policing of gender-based violence, and when is the presence of women accorded particular importance? This chapter addresses these questions across an organizational spectrum examining mainstreamed, gender-neutral specialized units for policing gender-based violence and "women's" police units. I examine developed countries of the Global North and Australia, with a focus on India and Brazil, as well as developing nation contexts in the Global South. Considering Brown's progression model, I argue that nominal women's police units need not necessarily lose utility—for women officers or women victims—over time. Rather, I present considerations for how, in certain settings, such women's police units may prove to hold abiding efficacy without necessarily representing discrimination or impeding women officers' opportunities.

He came at Zizi with his strong arm already raised, rushing to resume the battery. In the background, their son pleaded with his father to stop. Expecting blows and holding up her own arms to protect herself, Zizi blurted quickly, her voice panicked, "You touch me and I'm going straight to the *Delegacia da Mulher* [Portuguese for one of Brazil's Police Stations of/for Women]! I'm not kidding so don't even try it!"

"You don't even know where it is," he sneered down at her, derisively. But, astonishingly, his hand slowed in the air. It dropped as he turned and walked away.

Although his hand would rise against her again, from Zizi I understand that she was never again battered. Eventually, she put a stop even to his slaps and hits by reissuing the threat of going to her city's version of a Brazilian Women's Police Station (hereafter WPS). In this way, without ever actually

seeking police help, Zizi was one of several women who demonstrated the force that merely invoking the existence of the WPS could hold. Ever since she was a prepubescent teen, new to the city and working in a middle-class home, Zizi had continually been harmed and controlled by his violence. Their first child had been rendered developmentally challenged through kicks to her uterus while pregnant, and her washer-woman's spine was permanently injured when he later pushed her down the stairs. Only the plausible validity of her threat to go to the police had tipped the scales in her favor, letting her champion her own safety.

This chapter considers police responses to gender-based violence, particularly violence against women from intimate partners, which is a leading contribution to preventable death and injury to women globally.¹ One in three women (35 percent) worldwide has experienced either physical and/or sexual intimate partner violence or nonpartner sexual violence.² Less developed nations have the highest rates. In Bangladesh, Ethiopia, Peru, and Tanzania, a stunning 50 percent of women reported physical or sexual abuse at the hands of an intimate partner, and in urban Chile and low-income sectors of Ecuador one study found the rate at 60 percent.³ This violence has devastating consequences for survivors and their families. Approximately 42 percent of women who experience intimate partner violence report injury as a consequence. Globally, two-thirds of homicide victims killed by a domestic partner or family member are women. Almost half (47 percent) of all female victims of homicide in 2012 were killed by their intimate partners or family members, while less than 6 percent of male homicide victims were related to intimate partner and family violence.⁴ Of the 13.5 percent of murders that are committed by intimate partners worldwide, women are six times more likely to be murdered by a partner than are men; percentages are highest in high-income countries (14.9 percent) and Southeast Asia (18.8 percent).⁵

In view of this devastating worldwide epidemic, visited disproportionately on women and girls, policing responsive to gender-based violence has emerged as a critical growing edge for specialized policing as a whole. While we find gender-based violence across the globe, we also note cases of Indigenous and small-scale peasant societies in which such violence is rare or unknown and seen as culturally intolerable.⁶ Awareness that gender-based violence is neither natural nor inevitable can encourage and raise expectations about the roles feminist-informed policing can play in inserting the rule of law into the "private," domestic contexts where women are most at risk.

When and why does the gender of police come to matter in the policing of gender-based violence, and when is the presence of women accorded particular importance? This chapter addresses these questions across an

organizational spectrum, from mainstreamed training to gender-neutral specialized units for policing gender-based violence to "women's" police units, in which officers and complainants are nominally women. First, I consider trends shaped by nongendered policy in policing gender-based violence in developed countries of the Global North and Australia. Second, I contrast these with units specifically designated as Women's Police Stations. The two most prominent global cases of such women's police units, India and Brazil, receive special attention here as a means to understand how and why such women's units have emerged, almost exclusively in developing nation contexts in the Global South. Third, I survey the women's police unit offshoots now evident across Asia, Africa, and Latin America.

Are such women's units merely a transitional, developmental phase in the march toward women officers' eventual integration, as Jennifer Brown's progression model⁷ might predict? Are gender-neutral terms essential to achieve the goal of deminoritizing women police? While weighing the merits of this progressivist, liberal-feminist perspective, the chapter stops short of embracing its assumptions. Instead, the final section argues that nominal women's police units need not necessarily lose utility—for women officers or women victims—over time. Rather, I present considerations for how, in certain settings, such women's police units may prove to hold abiding efficacy, without necessarily representing discrimination or impeding women officers' opportunities. Key factors may include that a "women's" unit is not rigidly exclusionary of male officers or trans- or male complainants, that it is not an exclusive wedge for entry of female officers or path to leadership, and that policy and law are informed by feminist research and integrated with women's movement activism.

"NONGENDERED" POLICING OF DOMESTIC VIOLENCE IN THE GLOBAL NORTH AND AUSTRALIA

In the United States, Europe, and Australia, efforts to increase police responsiveness to gender-based violence assume variable forms. Rather than attempt an exhaustive survey of these (but see relevant chapters in this volume), I will instead point briefly to key ideals, goals, and trends across most developed nations. As is the case globally, police forces were historically not only predominantly male police but also marked by cultures that were themselves highly masculinist in orientation, which has been linked to resistance to taking seriously domestic violence, sexual assault, and other crimes based in gender-based violence. Since the 1970s, prominent cases of police failures to intervene that later resulted in domestic homicides created increasing pres-

sure from women's movements and insurance companies to reduce police liability by articulating clearer policy and protocols.⁸

In police departments in most countries, efforts have centered on educating officers, ideally across entire police forces, although this goal has been met with uneven results. Research supporting the efficacy of restraining or no-contact orders, as well as mandatory arrest laws, underlined the difference that police interventions could make in lowering loss of life. Most of these policies refer to on-the-street policing, in which police respond to domestic calls for services. Protocols such as assessing the predominant aggressor and levels of risk to victims, enforcing protection orders, and decisions about arrest are primary points of emphasis in training and execution.⁹

Following such shifts, specialized police units began to emerge in hopes of improving investigations, delivery of cases to court systems, and conviction rates, as well as coordination with criminal justice and social service agencies. These specialized units took variable forms, such as domestic, intimate partner, or family violence units, special victims units, sex crimes units, and/or sexual assault units—and large metropolitan forces may have several of these. In the United States, 48 percent of municipalities had a domestic violence-focused unit by the year 2000, and today it would be difficult to find a midsized city without one.¹⁰ Despite their growing ubiquity, an important lesson gleaned across many cases is that effective policing of gender-based violence requires champions who are genuinely dedicated to the work. Halfhearted efforts implemented merely in response to outside pressures have proved ineffective.

Because of the varied forms that specialized units have taken, there is no aggregated statistical information about the percentages of women officers serving in such units as compared to conventional units. In fact, the absence of any *mention* of female leadership or the presence of female officers across all literature surveyed is striking. A rare exception came in one of Hagemann-White's case studies of Germany. Complaining of the disrespect and insensitivity she received from police, the survivor noted, "Maybe they lack training or can't cope with these issues well; maybe there should be a woman in the police to respond to this kind of problems [*sic*]."¹¹

What discussion or debate emerges about gender in relation to policing gender-based violence interestingly does not center on the gender of police officers. Rather, attention goes to specifying the importance of an inclusive, "nongendered" body of law for determining victims that, according to Buzawa and Buzawa, "at least in theory, protects not only women but also extends protection to male victims of female violence, victims of violence in same-sex relationships, and other family members victimized within the family structure."¹²

A parallel nongendered approach applies, albeit implicitly, to the omission of the gender of police in relevant literature and documentation. Fears that such an emphasis would backfire stem from understandings that women police officers are already subject to negative biases and discrimination by civilians and fellow police alike. Moreover, women may unwittingly find themselves pushed to specialized units, even in the absence of any training, expertise, or desire to focus on such work. Program development specialists for international policing associations told me that to date, there is no evidence that female officers are more responsive to gender-based violence-related calls. Neither is there evidence that victims have preferences for women police officers; rather, they prioritize respectful treatment and taking their cases seriously.

In sum, even when specialization emerges, nongendered policing of gender-based violence is intended to prevent exclusion from services, to hold conventional police accountable, and to provide fair access to opportunity and advancement in police careers. The nongendered thrust reflects liberal-feminist models prevalent in more developed nations, which look to equal rights, access, and opportunity in legal and policy terms to resolve gender-based inequities and oppression.

ALL-WOMEN'S POLICE STATIONS IN INDIA

Contrasting these more developed nations' nongendered trends, nominally "women's" police units for policing gender-based violence have been created in a number of developing nations, with India leading the way. Beginning in 1973, India's first WPSs were installed in the southern states of Kerala and Tamil Nadu. By 2015, over forty years later, that state alone counted 199 WPSs—but these comprised nearly half of the 518 by that time in the country as a whole.¹³

The WPSs were intended to respond to cultural and social barriers to victims receiving police support. In numerous South Asian social contexts, an unattached woman fleeing a violent home has historically often been understood as socially "dead." Thus, in India, with most women especially reluctant to seek separation, early efforts to create shelters for battered women failed. A police-based response, some feminist activists hoped, would prove more effective. Natarajan observes that the all-WPSs were not created primarily as a result of feminist pressure to criminalize violence against women *per se* but instead around a more broadly shared concern about dowry deaths in which brides were threatened and harmed to force dowry payment.¹⁴ This is a problem tied to a highly particular, patrilocal, patrilineal kinship and economic

patterns. As a result, crimes related to dowry practices—bride burnings, dowry deaths, and bride suicides—occupy women's police throughout India. With husbands' families integrally involved, it can be equally understood as family violence as much as intimate partner violence.

A second major factor in India leading to calls for a women's police presence was related to handling female protestors and other circumstances requiring physical contact with women and children as well as based in taboos against such male-female interaction. In Kerala, a need for women police was first felt in order to "arrest and disperse women demonstrators," reflecting ethnic tensions and violence in the region, and "for keeping women prisoners in custody, [to] search them and [to] raid cat houses."¹⁵ The all-female commandos and thousand-woman battalion created in the early 2000s similarly responded to needs for women police who could physically manage, search, and hold in custody fellow women and bore "no focus on improving policing" in gender-specific ways.¹⁶

Beyond the two principal emphases on dowry crimes and physical management, additional concerns about crimes against women emerged as charges for police. These reflected diverse local concerns: eve-teasing (harassment of girls) is a significant hazard in many places, but most notably in Delhi, where the city council criminalized it and charged the Women's Police Cell with enforcement.¹⁷ When a new WPS was installed in Ranchi, Jharkhand, where more than seven hundred women had lost their lives over a ten-year period after being called witches, witchcraft accusations quickly became a focus.¹⁸ Finally, Indian realities have required some WPSs to focus on trafficking in girls and women.¹⁹

Women's representation in the Indian force as a whole has risen only slowly, but at an increasing rate, reaching 7.28 percent in 2018, forty-five years after the creation of the first WPS, but up from 2.09 percent of the entire police force in 2003.²⁰ This increasing rate reflects commitments to bringing women's presence up, such as a 2015 goal to aim for women at 33 percent in Delhi and the Union Territories.²¹ Some perceived this goal to be unrealistic, however, in that even some of the better levels of representation—10 percent in Delhi and 15 percent in Maharashtra (also the sole state lacking even a women's police desk)—still leave a formidable gap to close.²² A study comparing two cohorts of Indian women police, those serving in WPSs and those placed in regular battalions, found for the earliest period (1980s) considerable dissatisfaction in both cohorts, attributed to women's low status positions in Indian society overall.²³ This suggests that for the WPSs to support breakthrough opportunities for Indian women police officers' careers is indeed a formidable, long-term challenge.

Some critics have decried that despite their significance and visibility, the Indian WPS project has stalled; as of 2012 thirteen of India's twenty-nine

states were reported to lack full WPSs (though they might have WP desks) altogether.²⁴ If we were to measure the efficacy of the WPSs purely by percentages of investigated cases recommended for action to the judiciary, we would conclude their impact is weak. Reports of stations that register just handfuls of complaints per year or even declining numbers, and even in sites where complaints were in the thousands, those recommended for judicial sentencing were just 14.5 percent, while 55 percent of cases coming to the station were not registered at all.²⁵ At the same time, reducing the WPS's impact on the production of criminal sentencing misses key areas of impact: 72 percent of complainants, for example, reported receiving family counseling, and 68 percent of these were pleased with the counseling. Sixty-eight percent reported being able to "successfully negotiate with their husband's families," and 50 percent felt their husbands' violence was reduced as a result of the WPS's intervention.²⁶

Comparative criminologist Mangai Natarajan's analysis of the implications of gender-specialized policing for Indian policewomen themselves is among the more compelling aspects of her twenty years of studying the WPS, mostly in Tamil Nadu state. While in 1988 she found WPS discontent with their assignments, by 1996 they had found their stride, now preferring a "modified" (gender-specialized) role to "traditional" assignments, integrated in conventional units, because of the greater opportunities to handle cases independently and assume full responsibility for investigation. When the state created a 33-percent quota for women among all new recruits, male officers threatened to strike unless female recruits would undergo the same rigorous six-year training. Newly instated women officers in conventional battalions were far less satisfied ("dislik[ing] the regimented physical exercise and the routine crowd control and political escort duties") than their counterparts in WPS, who showed "increased confidence and assertiveness."²⁷ By 2007, women in conventional battalion training showed more comfort with traditional policing but preferred WPS assignments. These findings caused Natarajan to change her expectation that women police in developing countries should follow the same trajectory of gradual integration into conventional forces largely seen in "Western countries" (or the Global North). "Rather, integration policy for any particular country must take account of the special roles and needs of women in that culture, and the special contribution they make to policing."²⁸

THE BRAZILIAN WOMEN'S POLICE STATIONS

Brazil's *Delegacias da Mulher*, or WPSs, were first created 1985 in São Paulo, the country's largest city. This was just as the nation began to emerge from decades of authoritarian rule and was a key symbolic product of social

movements and civil society taking a role in reshaping governance. Over thirty years later, in 2016, Brazil could claim 461 such stations in the country as a whole, having been installed in all twenty-three Brazilian states. The WPSs are still concentrated in larger municipalities, however, and demands for their installation to serve smaller cities, towns, and rural areas are ongoing.²⁹ This section explores rationales for their creation and then reviews three historical periods: the deeply challenged period of initial implementation (1985–1996), followed by a middle period that prioritized efficiency but “under-criminalized” gender-based violent crimes (1996–2006), and most recently by the overall successes since the implementation of the Maria da Penha law (2006–present). This historical groundwork is necessary to support my postcolonial, nonevolutionary critique, developed in the final section.

Designed expressly for the purpose of registering, investigating, and prosecuting diverse forms of male violence against women, the stations were created in response to agitation by Brazilian women’s groups outraged at seeing men acquitted of wife murder charges, while conjugal sexual assault and wife beating and battery were normalized and tolerated. Critics accused conventional police of revictimizing women complainants or subjecting them to secondary ordeals by disbelieving their denunciations, placing them in the role of the accused to be scrutinized and punished.³⁰ Ensuring that women complainants were attended by female police, it was hoped, would alleviate the predominant male bias among police that kept complaints—the starting point of any criminal proceeding—from being taken seriously.

Political and symbolic elements shaped the WPSs’ origins. Politically, the gender-specialized police offered a chance to give security forces—still freshly associated with human rights offenses and brutality against civilians—an image makeover as more humane, legitimate, and progressive representatives of a just, civilian state. The fact that most states already had other forms of specialized stations, for robbery and burglary or drugs and toxics, for example, provided preexisting organizational models for specialization as well. Symbolically, the ways that the all-women stations resonated with myths of fierce Amazonian warriorresses mattered as a powerful factor in their emergence. Stories of strong-armed women avenging their victimized sisters abounded, and a television drama series *Delegacia da Mulher* even ran for two years in the early 1990s, featuring heroic policewomen deeply identifying with complainants and enjoying unconstrained time and resources to pursue justice for each. Early presentations of the stations underlined that they provided “a special kind of service, provided exclusively by women . . . [that] inspires *confiança* (trust/confidence) in women made victims of violence and helps eliminate the fear and shame that they generally feel.”³¹

In reality, from the outset, demand for policing gender-based violence far outstripped expectations. Roughly 80 percent of the flood of complaints involved some form of domestic violence, including beating, battery, stalking, and, very rarely, marital rape, registered variously as physical aggression, moral aggression, or death threats. Other crimes included statutory rape, rape, abduction or sexual coercion, and illegal use of arms. Complaints in WPSs nationally continue to rise today, appearing quickly to super-saturate as many designated *delegacias* as are made available.³²

Though corroborating the necessity of the WPS mission, the unanticipated demand meant that nearly all stations saw overcrowding and a backlog of cases, exacerbated by inadequate staffing and insufficient material resources and infrastructure: physical space, firearms and police cars, and basic clerical materials like paper, pens, and files.³³ Meanwhile, police in conventional stations might ignore their ongoing duty to register complaints of domestic violence or other gendered crimes, often misdirecting complainants to WPSs. This created inadvertent “ghettoizing” effects—meaning that the overburdened stations forced police assigned in them to process as many as double the number of complaints as officers in comparable stations.³⁴ The need for extensive complainant contact time and the high volume of paperwork needing processing meant police found WPS work more desk bound than that in other stations. The WPSs’ backlog eroded the efficiency of these in-house activities as well, delaying investigation and hearings and thus prolonging the high-alert period during which an abused woman is most vulnerable, when the probability of homicide for women pursuing separation escalates.

Some policewomen felt traumatized, and others desensitized, by hearing one *audiência* account of violence and abuse after another and reported feeling impotent to effectively intervene, punish, or prevent offenses. Initial educational preparation along with ongoing training and regular contact with professionals involved in gender-based violence have fortified policewomen’s resolve and sense of purpose, when and where they have occurred, but this has been uneven. When absent, feeling unprepared and unsupported only exacerbated policewomen’s alienation and resentment. Policewomen who saw the work as unfairly burdensome, especially those who lacked training or volition for the specialized work, understood their time in the WPS as diverging from “mainstream” police experiences, losing mobility potential.

While some policewomen empathized with female victims, for others their hard-won, (masculinized) occupational identities as police lead to active disidentification with female complainants, whom they might view as weak and helpless victims. The essentialist presumptions of a female-female affinity that would make the stations special was also something many policewomen felt ultimately worked against their career goals, as the WPSs could be seen

as “a woman’s place” and even the “kitchen of the police . . . where women gather to cry over their sorrows.”³⁵ Finally, policewomen could feel constrained by the contradiction of their assignment, in which impartial enforcers of the law were simultaneously expected to advocate for women, as women.

During the first years of the WPSs (1985–1996), the percentage of reported cases that were formally investigated and sent to the court system pending prosecution was rarely higher than 2 percent in Bahia; the national figure for 1999 was just 6 percent.³⁶ Of these, a much smaller percentage resulted in prosecution and conviction. Not surprisingly, this limited the offenses formally prosecuted and punished the most serious: primarily battery causing gravely serious injury and occasionally rape when reliable witnesses were available.

A middle-period (1996–2000) response to the constrained efficacy of the WPSs was Brazil’s version of a fast-track court for domestic violence and other crimes considered less “potentially offensive.” The “JECrims” system—short for *Juizados Especiais Criminais*, or Special Criminal Judge-ships—was created throughout the late 1990s as a means “to substitute repressive penalties for alternatives (monetary compensation, community service and conciliation) in the case of ‘penal infractions of less potential offense’”³⁷ that would normally receive sentences of less than one year in detention. In such cases, it was deemed that a full simplified inquiry could be substituted for a full police investigation, culminating in a legal judgment. A major effect of the JECrims was to relieve the WPSs of playing the quasi-judicial and extra-legal roles described earlier. The JECrims quickly ended up processing the “greater portion” of the complaints registered in São Paulo’s WPSs; the two largest categories of complaints, “light” bodily lesions (25 percent) and criminal threats (20 percent), qualified for the JECrim fast track.³⁸

Feminist critics decried the JECrims as feeding men’s impunity by taking away much of the “pressure power” from the WPSs and putting it into the hands of judges, the majority of who are men with no specialization in gender violence. JECrim judges overemphasized reconciling couples and imposed irrelevant penalties: “Often a husband aggressor has to give a food basket for some charitable institution, something which does not fail to be quite humiliating for the woman,” observers reported.³⁹ In short, the JECrims were seen with similar defects to pre-WPS policing in that a male-dominated, nonfeminist judiciary minimized and naturalized violence.⁴⁰ Diverse feminist analysts decried the decriminalization of forms of gender-based violence still in the process of being criminalized in the first place.⁴¹

Responses to these concerns ushered in the contemporary period for the WPSs (2006–present) when a coalition of feminist nongovernmental organizations (NGOs), legislators, and activists succeeded in passing the Maria da

Penha law (11.340/2006), now widely heralded for “revolutionizing the fight against domestic violence.”⁴² The law retracted the JECrims’ authority to mete out light punishments in the case of physical assault with injury. It created a new fast-track court system with express specialization in domestic and family violence and mandated instead that judges follow the criminal code in sentencing. Until 2009, the law was interpreted as mandating prosecution for any kind of bodily injury, whereas a Supreme Court decision in that year—quite controversially for feminists—directed that “light” bodily injury would not be prosecuted without the complainant actively pressing charges. The WPSs adapted to the new relationships with specialized courts, requiring new training and expertise.

Four important characteristics of the contemporary period are crucial to highlight. First, the Maria da Penha law specifies that WPSs now register complaints from women-identified transgendered individuals, as well as women assaulted within lesbian relationships, and gay men.⁴³ Reports of men seeking help for aggression from wives are not uncommon, though men are largely directed toward conventional stations.⁴⁴ The Maria da Penha law has recently been applied “by analogy” by some judges to heighten the protections already tacitly afforded to men who are victims of a female intimate partner’s violence.⁴⁵

Second, most WPSs historically have had some male police on staff and continue to do so. Reasons range from not enough female police having skills such as driving to female-male pairs being seen as more effective for tasks such as delivering summonses to homes, or administrators simply rejecting the commitment to all-women staffing. Few police seem invested in a strictly all-women environment, pointing out that individual policemen might excel at and embrace the work and that male officers’ presence mitigated senses that policemen got off the hook from dealing with gender-based violence crimes, as if these were exclusively of concern for women police.

Third, women complainants continue to seek the stations in droves. Conviction rates are the highest they have ever been. New evidence indicates that establishing a women’s police station in a Brazilian metropolitan municipality is associated with a reduction in the female homicide rate by approximately 17 percent.⁴⁶

Fourth and most important, women continue to ascend in increasing numbers into leadership positions in Brazilian policing (including leading state secretariats of public security, as well as new military police programs that “accompany” gender-based violence victims long term). Pathways to such executive positions appear to run *simultaneously* through assignments in the WPSs as well as through other assignments unrelated to gender-based violence.⁴⁷ Moreover, women officers’ percentages continue to slowly and steadily rise. This

means that, especially in states where women are relatively well represented outside the WPS, WPS assignments need not be experienced as constricting.

Therefore, the symbolic marking and the prioritizing of female leadership and officers can be neither as exclusive nor as rigidly segregated as the nominally “of Women” titles suggest. The concerns that women officers as a group would face career impediments so long as women’s presence and leadership in gender-based violence policing is given nominal value is, therefore, open to question.

ADDITIONAL “WOMEN’S” POLICE UNITS IN DEVELOPING NATIONS

The notion of specialized police units being staffed and led by women officers has spread beyond India and Brazil to other settings in the developing world, most notably in South Asia, Africa, and Latin America. The stories of origin for different countries vary considerably. Especially in view of their eventual convergence around intimate partner and family violence, which appear to emerge as priorities everywhere, the local themes that produce visions of creating all-women units as a way to express and effect cultural shifts are strikingly diverse. Rape and sexual harassment—which are often expected at the outset to generate more complaints than intimate partner and family violence—continue to call disproportionate public attention, yet complaints prove numerically far less prevalent.

Asia, as the world region accounting for nearly half of the world’s femicides linked to intimate partner and family violence in 2012, provided pressing need for focused police responses.⁴⁸ In Southeast Asia, the Philippines has required “women’s desks” in all police stations since 1993.⁴⁹ In South Asia, Pakistan began creating all-women police stations in 1994, following India’s model. By 2015, Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Province alone counted sixty-five women’s desks in conventional stations, its capital city of Peshawar counting seven. Unfortunately, critics broadly viewed them as marginally effective, as after twenty-one years the sole all-women full-service had never initiated a single official investigation.⁵⁰ Neighboring Bangladesh, Afghanistan, Sri Lanka, and Nepal also began implementing women’s units in the late 1990s and early 2000s.⁵¹

African nations joined in when a women’s police station was installed in Nairobi, Kenya, in 2004.⁵² That same year, a women-only motorbike squad emerged in South Africa; the focus was not on gendered crimes but the positive role models set by competent, all-women law enforcement.⁵³ Ghana, Liberia, Sierra Leone, Uganda, and Zambia have since followed suit.⁵⁴ Trans-

nationally, when Liberia hosted nine units of all-women Indian police who served as UN peacekeeping forces, they not only aided the stabilization of rule of law and security but also brought greater police attention to gender-based violence cases and taught women’s self-defense. Their inspiring example was credited with raising the rate of Liberian women in the police force from 6 to 17 percent over the 2007–2016 period of the rotations.⁵⁵

In the Americas, Argentina, Bolivia, Colombia, Nicaragua, Peru, Ecuador, and Uruguay all have now joined Brazil in installing specialized stations or juridical units.⁵⁶ The “juridical model” is most notably used in Peru, and to a lesser extent Brazil and Nicaragua, where the stations can also deliver judicial verdicts.⁵⁷ In line with materialist feminist analyses so influential in Latin America, the WPS examples in Peru, Ecuador, and Uruguay share specialization in “*La Mujer e La Familia*”—women and family—that definitively link gender inequality to women’s productive and reproductive ties to family. (Colombia’s are simply “*Familia*” stations but also concentrate on serving women.) This emphasis is especially evident in Nicaragua, where the *Comisarias de Mujer y la Niñez*—Women and Childhood Commisariats—went from 27 offices nationally in 2007 to 162 by 2014, and where police recruits receive a six-month course in the academy on sexual inequality.⁵⁸ “Mainly for the edification of men,” the program focuses on “the structure of poverty that results from discrimination against women and popular ignorance about family planning.”⁵⁹

This profusion of women’s police units underlines their attraction as an intervention in predominantly male forces minimizing the criminalization of gender-based violence. In economies with fewer resources, there may be efficiencies gained by explicitly prioritizing policing by and for women. This framing may serve a clearer and higher profile, as well as underline the stalwart, undiluted feminist commitments such organizing bespeaks. The next section takes up the implications of such a profusion for women’s nominal and official presence as a factor to enhance responsiveness to crimes shaped by gender.

ARE WOMEN’S POLICE UNITS A TRANSITIONAL PHASE?

Jennifer Brown’s European model for women’s progression into policing includes six phases: entry, separate restricted development, integration, take-off, reform, and tip-over.⁶⁰ Brown’s model is progressivist and “evolutionary” in its expectation once policewomen are integrated across police forces that “separation” will disappear. Brown’s model is also aspirational, insofar as the “tip-over” ideal, in which women achieve 20 to 25 percent representation, has

been achieved in few cases: the United Kingdom counts 28 percent women on their police forces nationally, as compared to just 13 percent for both the United States and Brazil, and 7 percent for India.

The Indian, Brazilian, and other developing nations' WPSs considered here would appear to correspond most closely with the second phase, "separate restricted development." As the analyses of Indian, Brazilian, and other developing nations' cases discussed earlier make clear, policewomen's advocates everywhere share concerns with equity, women's advancement, and avoiding essentialist stereotypes about women as providing gentler or more sympathetic law enforcement.

At the same time, both the Indian and Brazilian case studies suggest we stop short of understanding them as transitional at best, or at worst persistently "stuck" in an early "separate" and "restricted" phase. For starters, whenever we see models that enshrine wealthier and whiter nations of the Global North (plus Australia) as exemplifying the most advanced and progressive pathways, we should proceed with caution, mindful of the ethnocentric and postcolonial biases that may color our lenses. While I've drawn on a more developed versus less developed contrast here, recall that these are broad stroke differences encompassing myriad differing histories and socio-cultural circumstances. Avoiding reifying these constructs, or treating them as if they map neatly onto even more problematic dichotomies as Western versus non-Western, or modern versus "traditional," remains vital. To the extent that the scarcer resources of nations of the Global South may place constraints on institutionalized police responses to gender-based violence, stations marked as by and for women may simply afford clearer and more impactful messaging about the criminalization of this violence. Moreover, highlighting policewomen's roles and agency in leading this charge can arguably be cast as bold, forward thinking, and progressive, especially in cultural, decolonial, or of-color feminist terms (in which gender differences may be understood as deeper than merely legal or institutional).

Perhaps the primary sense in which the Indian and Brazilian cases may contradict Brown's assumptions arise in stage 1 of the model, in which women are initiated into police work because of some "crisis" in men's handling of crimes related to gender-based violence or to children. The staunch resistance to expunging the use of "women" in favor of more neutral language like "domestic violence" can be linked to arguments that violence against women is not an evanescent "crisis" (though acquittals for crimes may be) but an ongoing challenge shaped by the gendered, cultural landscape. Many feminists find that gender-neutral frameworks minimize or ignore the broader social context and power differentials between women and men, diluting the feminist—and symbolic—force behind the intervention. In this

sense, WPSs can be likened to all institutional forms that recognize that citizenries are not composed of neutral individuals but by those shaped by gender, ethnicity/race, class, religious, and other cultural orientations. At the same time, many police are uncomfortable with the notion of protection from domestic violence being unavailable to men, as it violates their commitment to impartial attendance to all citizens, even as they acknowledge that male-to-female violence constitutes the preponderance of couple violence.

Throughout this chapter, I have used the word "gender-specialized" rather than "segregated" when discussing WPSs and underlined the ways in which these may be less exclusionary of men or restrictive of female police than a model like Brown's might expect. In chapter 2 of this volume, Gail Sears Humiston and Cara E. Rabe-Hemp wonder if rethinking the model to account for a hybridized "coexistence of gender integration and gender segregation" might be in order. This review affirms that call in view of the steadily if slowly rising percentages of women officers in these developing nation contexts and the parallel, and possibly mutually, amplifying paths to leadership apparent in the Indian and Brazilian cases. Add the fact that as each project gains greater maturity officers with both desire and training increasingly opt for such assignments and find them satisfying.

Visionaries saw projects like Brazil and India's WPS units as initial forays into multidimensional processes that could culminate in major social transformation. Over four decades later, gender-specialized policing projects show no signs of disappearing, and yet there are important lessons to take forward. The South Asian experiences suggest that this intervention is very much in its beginnings. Brazil, by contrast, may be tipping in the direction of police organization seen in North America, Europe, and Australia, by contrast, where rigid sex segregation in law enforcement has not proved attractive. At the same time the marked "women's" framing of the WPSs in the developing world doesn't appear to be going away any time soon. Ideally, progressive democratic states draw from both radical/separatist and liberal/mainstreaming elements, each in turn reinforcing the other and enabling meaningful progress in addressing gender-based violence.

The challenges created by the overwhelming demand for police roles in confronting gender-based intimate partner violence, far from suggesting that specialized police responses are not merited, underline the value of sustaining specialized units, both nongendered and specifically by and for women. Future research should weigh the measurable deterrent effects for gender specialization with sensitivities to needs as shaped by cultural patterning and compare this with nonsegregated gender-based violence specialization, which has also proved effective.⁶¹ Comparative work that weighs the interconnected effects of exposure reduction (via no-contact orders, arrest, and specialized

prosecution) and the stimulus to retaliation that criminalization can bring is also needed. Where gender-specialization remains attractive, avoiding boxing policewomen across the force into such specialization, and simultaneously promoting the promotion of women officers into leadership roles, is critical. Externally, specialized stations facilitate police cultivating stronger relationships with burgeoning networks of cognate state organs, women's movement groups, and NGOs responding to gender-based violence.

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