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Assessing Gender-Responsive Approaches to Community Policing: A Comparison between the United States and South Korea

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Abstract
In this article, several assertions regarding women in policing in general, as well as the state of affairs regarding gender responsive policing, in particular, will be presented. In addition, a succinct comparison between two developed countries in two distinctly different areas of the world, South Korea and the United States of America, will be evaluated as a means of showcasing that, while progress for both women in law enforcement and gender responsive policing have occurred, there is a great need for further attention to these two critical issues. Ultimately, many supporting concepts and ideas that connect the notion of gender responsiveness to a community policing paradigm will relate well with the framework of agency cultural competence.

Keywords: Women in Policing; Gender Responsive Policing; South Korea; United States of America; Community Policing

Introduction

The notion of gender-responsiveness being a component of cultural competence can be advanced by providing comparison between the United States of America and South Korea to further reinforce this theme and to provide that, in today's world of globalized policing, an emphasis on multicultural and multinational orientations is relevant to any gender-responsive initiative. Indeed, the international awareness of this notion is made clear by the United Nations Development Program's (UNDP) own Millennium Development Goals (United Nations Development Program, 2011). According to the UNDP, "gender equality and women's empowerment are human rights that are critical to sustainable development" and the achievement of identified goals (2011, p. 1). The UNDP further notes the following three key points that are particularly germane to this issue:

1. Despite the disproportionate impact of international conflict on women, less than three percent of administrative signatories to peace agreements are women.
2. International victimization of women, particularly in terms of sexual abuse and trafficking, has been a longstanding and well recognized problem.
3. Women are underrepresented among top government officials in countries throughout the world, particularly in countries where they are most frequently victimized.

Clearly, the need for women in international peacekeeping and policing is easy to demonstrate. This is equally true on regional, national, and local levels of policing as well, and within both developing and industrialized

nations. This has become increasingly clear in both the academic literature and the literature among professional law enforcement organizations, such as the International Association of Chiefs of Police (IACP), where magazines, books, and other publications continue to emphasize the need for agencies to encourage, recruit, and promote qualified female officers within their ranks.

Finally, community policing as a practice has received widespread support and attention across the international community (Lab & Das, 2003; Hanser, 2008). As is well known, this policing orientation seeks to involve community members directly in the crime control process and also seeks to optimize rapport between citizens and law enforcement agencies. Through this cooperation, it is hoped that crimes will be prevented (i.e. emphasizing prevention rather than reactionary response) due to early information provided by citizens that might involve informal interventions among citizens and police before a crime occurs or escalates. Victims of crimes such as domestic violence, sexual assault, and child abuse are particularly well served by this approach since these types of crimes often happen behind closed doors, in private, and where only the closest of community members may be aware of their occurrence (Edelbacher, 2003). Unless someone steps forward before or early in the commission of these crimes, the incidents are only likely to come to an agency's attention after victimization has escalated. These crimes disproportionally impact women and, therefore, it is easy to see why a gender-responsive approach would be beneficial.

Women in Law Enforcement in the United States

Currently, in the United States the percentage of female police officers is quite low whn compared to male police officers or to the general population. Indeed, throughout the 1990's women in law enforcement have never exceeded 14 percent nationally (Green, 2003) and since then through 2011, only an estimated 15 percent of the entire United States police profession was comprised of women (Shusta, Levine, Wong, Olson, & Harris). However, it would seem that when considering the type of agency and its jurisdiction, there is a good deal of variability. For instance, in local police departments with 2,000 or more sworn personnel, women accounted for an average of 18% of the law enforcement staff (Langton, 2010). This is a welcome observation since, in many cases the majority of community policing programs are in urban areas of the United States. Likewise, part of being gender-responsive in law enforcement practices is a requirement that the police agency adequately represent and be comprised of women. Indeed, the entire notion of gender-responsive approaches dovetails and falls under another broader construct – cultural competency (Dana, Behn, & Ganwa, 1992). Ideally, agencies that are culturally competent (gender competent, in this case) will need to ensure that at

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least a representative proportion of officers mirror in identity that which is found in the jurisdiction of the agency.

Female Police Officers in South Korea

In 2006, Yoon-sung Oh provided a wealth of data on the state of affairs for women in policing in South Korea. What is also interesting is she compared this data to that obtained from other nations around the world and also demonstrated how the history of women in policing in South Korea has seen an increase but, like the United States, this increase has been slow to develop. In fact, there has been a history of imbalanced promotion opportunities between men and women that has mimicked the problems cited by the UNDP (2011) regarding women as top administrators in governmental positions. This problem has occurred at upper, middle, and lower levels of management among female law enforcement officers in South Korea.

Compared to the United States, women in policing in South Korea consist of an even smaller proportion of the total officer count. Indeed, the latest available statistics reveal that only an approximate 3.8 percent of all South Korean police were women. However, even this low proportion of female police has been identified as being an improvement in South Korea (Oh, 2006). However, despite the advances of women in South Korean society, the nation's gender equality measurement (GEM), which provides a ranking of positions held by women in the labor market, ranked extremely low at 61st out of 64 nations (Oh, 2006). Likewise, further supporting the observations of the United Nations Development Program's 2011 report, it has been revealed that the percentage of high-level management and chief executive officers in South Korea involved only a miniscule 0.3 percent (not even a full percent) of women in such positions. This is obviously very low and is well under what other nations such as the United States (13.9 percent) report. Oh (2006) has made specific mention of the graying population within South Korea, as well as increased social awareness in that nation of issues related to domestic violence, sexual assault, and so forth. The implication is that in the future areas of police response considered appropriate and even ideally suited for women will continue to increase in need. This calls for gender-responsive approaches for specialized populations and circumstances where research has shown that women have a capacity to be more effective due to a less pronounced proclivity to physical force and due to the matron-like approach associated with female police by South Korean society. While this is good, in one respect, it does also demonstrate discriminatory views toward women when a society looks to them to stay within the bounds of 'gender appropriate' and commonly accepted norms. One could interpret this as not being an indicator of progressive policing and, because of this, Oh (2006) has implored agencies to improve their

selection, promotion, and public relations procedures regarding women in policing.

Community Policing, Women, and Gender Responsiveness

As has been noted earlier in this article, community policing is not a new concept. Indeed, the term was a major buzzword in the law enforcement profession as early as the 1980s. During this time period, departments throughout the United States adopted community policing and community crime prevention models that led to permanent changes in the way that law enforcement was conducted and also placed a new emphasis on police-community relations. Though most everyone involved in the field of law enforcement understands the basic concepts to community policing, there exists a wide variety of definitions and priorities attributed to this approach that make it somewhat difficult to standardize. According to Horne (2006), community policing is:

> "essentially a department-wide philosophy and management approach that promotes community, government, and police partnerships and proactive problem solving to address crime, fear of crime, social and physical disorder, and quality of life. It shifts the focus of police work from handling random calls to solving ongoing community problems" (p. 57).

The emphasis on solving ongoing community problems and addressing quality of life issues is one that entails more just a pure crime-fighting approach. It is more comprehensive and requires police to be deployed directly within the community and to be easily approachable by citizens in that area. In fact, citizens should *feel comfortable* when having encounters with the police under this model. This is, of course, referring to the common law-abiding citizens who are the agency's allies in the fight against crime.

The need for citizens to feel comfortable and to perceive police as approachable includes both male and female citizens. If we are to consider the need for effective gender response to be similar in concept to the need for effective interracial response in policing, and if we put the entire concept of gender-responsiveness within the context of a culturally competent agency, then it is important for our law enforcement personnel to mirror and represent the population that it serves, at least to the most reasonable extent that is possible. Furthermore, women are routinely victims of a wide variety of crimes, just like men and, it is likely that having a good representation of women would foster more routine reporting and would also create a sense of agency legitimacy and a more open rapport with the surrounding community.

Likewise, community policing requires officers to become adept at cognitive problem-solving, citizen team building, citizen awareness, as well as

public and personal communication skills (Horne, 2006; Shusta, Levine, Wong, Olson, & Harris, 2011). Research has shown that women tend to be effective communicators and that they are less prone to have communications escalate into a physical response (Horne, 2006; Shusta et al., 2011). Women have also been identified as being good social problem solvers, having high levels of creativity, and having less judgmental attributions than men in numerous social contexts (Garcia, 2003; International Association of Women Police, 2010; Shusta et al., 2011). Thus, it should be clear that agencies that select more women, retain them, and promote them through various administrative levels, will likely strengthen the community policing paradigm and enhance their own relations within their respective neighborhoods.

Female Victims, Female Police & Gendered Response

During the past two decades, in both the United States and South Korea, awareness of female victimization has greatly increased (Office on Violence Against Women, 2011; Song, 1996; World Forum of Women's Rights in South Korea, 2008). It is very safe to conclude that these crimes are a serious concern within both countries (Horne, 2006; Song, 1996). It is also easy to see that both nations have created widespread public campaigns in response to these types of victimization (Kim, 2007; Office on Violence Against Women, 2011; World Forum of Women's Rights in South Korea, 2008). Thus, the inclusion of a more gender responsive strategy has been adopted in both of these countries, regardless of whether the nomenclature involved specifically addresses these public campaigns as being gender-responsive.

A disturbing point that needs to be highlighted is the fact that most violent crimes against women go unreported; this is true in the United States and in South Korea (Horne, 2006; Kim, 2007; Kim, Gerber, & Kim, 2007; Shusta et al., 2011). This is especially true in cases involving domestic disputes as well as sexual assaults. Further still, consider that in the United States, among Korean immigrants, this is even more apparent than among the remaining U.S. population, due mainly to family codes of honor that are brought from their country of origin (Song, 1996; Hanser, 2008). Among Asian immigrants in the United States, it may be that many of these women are simply not aware of the services and interventions that are available (Shusta, 2011). Indeed, it has been found that many Asian women simply use "self-help" forms of coping. In addition, Song (1996) found that roughly 70 percent of battered Asian women reported having little or no knowledge of the services available to them prior to the detection of the perpetrator's actions. As Shusta (2011) notes, "the role of the peace officers in detecting, assessing, and intervening in family violence situations within Asian/Pacific American communities is a critical one…" (p.147). This is particularly true when considering the social constraints against reporting, the fact that many of these

women may not be fluent in English, and that they may have little understanding of the United States social service system given that their birthplace is likely to be in their country of origin.

While this may be the case in the U.S. among the female South Korean population due to unfamiliarity with the American social service system, it still may be just as true for women in South Korea, where family honor and privacy are held even more sacred and where women are less 'Americanized' than those who have successfully made the trek to the United States (Kim, 2007; Kim, Gerber, & Kim, 2007; Song, 1996; Hanser, 2008). In fact, research on the Special Domestic Violence Act in Korea, as well as interviews with victim service workers in South Korea have corroborated this (Kim, 2007; World Forum of Women's Rights in South Korea, 2008). Therefore, though the specific reasons for underreporting may, or may not, be the same, the outcome has still resulted in underreporting.

Horne (2006) has noted that, even when cultural issues do not impede reporting, female victims are sometimes reluctant to call the police because they believe that officers will not help them or they are suspicious that male officers will likely give lenience to the male perpetrator. Because of these observations, researchers and practitioners alike have advocated for increases in female police personnel to handle domestic violence complaints and to improve law enforcement response to these recurring problems. Prior research has shown that women are more sympathetic and understanding of issues related to domestic disputes. Therefore, it is likely that an increase in the number of female police at all levels and in all operational capacities would improve the handling of domestic violence and sexual assault cases. Horne also noted that "it would also encourage female victims of violence to report such incidents to the police because they will be more confident that their pleas for help will be treated seriously" (2006, p. 58).

Female Offenders, Female Police, & Gendered Responsive

The need for gender-responsive strategies for female offenders has been a topic of discussion for quite some time (Bloom, Owen, & Covington, 2003). This particularly became true in the United States during the 1990's when media personnel and researchers highlighted the rise in female perpetrated crime. However, it is important to note that in both the United States and South Korea, when it comes to violent crime, there is a huge disparity between male and female offenders (Kim, Park, & Lee, 2004). Simply put, female offenders do not commit violent crimes with great frequency. Most crimes revolve around larceny, theft, and fraud. Of those women who do commit homicides, the vast majority involve the killing of intimates usually in self-defense or in retaliatory response to long-term abusive relationships (McCampbell, 2005). In both countries, when both genders are compared, men

are likely to be sentenced to prison for violent, property, and drug offenses while women were likely to be sentenced to prison for drug offenses and property crimes (Kim, Gerber, & Kim, 2007). Likewise, in both nations, a small minority of prison sentences are given to female offenders due to violent offenses (Kim, Gerber, & Kim, 2007; Kim, Park, & Lee, 2004).

In the United States, the vast majority of female offenders are also the primary caretakers of young children. As a result, when they are incarcerated, there is a separation between the mother and the child that can be and usually is traumatic. This separation between mother and child causes what has been called *collateral damage* to children and society by the current incarceration trends of female offenders who typically commit property and/or drug crimes (Crawford, 2003). Though female offenders separated from their children are at an increased risk of later recidivism, the damage done to the children is probably more serious than to the adult when a parent is incarcerated (Crawford, 2003; Kim, Park, & Lee, 2004). A number of children display symptoms of post-traumatic stress disorder, namely depression, feelings of anger and guilt, flashbacks about their mother's crimes or arrests, and the experience of hearing their mother's voice. These effects can be very pronounced and show how an intergenerational transmission of criminality can occur if proper interventions are not provided.

As has been noted, abuse of women tends to be more common than officially reported. Furthermore, among female offenders, this is even more frequently true than the non-offending female population (Bloom, et al., 2003). Given the high rates of abuse that the female offending population experiences (both in childhood and adulthood), the female offender is commonly referred to as the *victim-turned offender* (Bloom, et al., 2003; McCampbell, 2005). The prior victimization of female victims, particularly through domestic violence and sexual assault is held as a primary causal factor in predicting female criminal behavior in both the United States and South Korea (Kim, Park, & Lee, 2004; Kim, Gerber, & Kim, 2007; Slowikowski, 2010).

While female offenders are a small proportion of the offending population they are a rapidly growing group of criminals. It is becoming increasingly clear that services for female offenders are inadequate, both within institutional and community intervention programs. There is a need to address specific social ills that are fairly unique to female offenders since this population is likely to continue to grow in numbers. Among these social ills are domestic violence, sexual abuse, drug use, prostitution, sexually transmitted diseases, and child-custody issues, and in South Korea, human trafficking (Bloom, et al., 2003; Crawford, 2003; Kim, Park, & Lee, 2004). Many of the problems associated with female offenders have hidden costs that affect the rest of society in a multi-faceted manner. Any failure to improve responses to this offending population will simply ensure that future generations likewise adopt

criminogenic patterns of social coping. When thinking long-term, it becomes both socially and economically sound practice to provide gender-responsive services for female offenders.

Conclusion

In conclusion, it has been established that there is international consensus that gender responsive policing is necessary. This is supported and promoted at the global level by the United Nations and the International Association of Chiefs of Police and at the national level by government and law enforcement leaders in both the United States and South Korea. This has also been established as a needed initiative for South Korean immigrants in the United States.

The fact that women are disproportionate victims of domestic violence and sexual assault and the fact that these crimes go underreported makes it abundantly clear that other methods of crime prevention and crime detection should be implemented. While community policing approaches have been adopted in both countries in wholesale fashion, further refinement of this process to be gender-responsive is required to further address that dark figure of crime that exists in the data associated with these types of violent behaviors. Providing more gender-responsive strategies within a community policing model will help to alleviate this problem and will also enhance the cultural competence of that law enforcement agency.

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