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# Assessing Militarized Masculinities in California's Law Enforcement Agencies

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**Abstract**

This paper uses original data obtained from 10 California law enforcement agencies (police and sheriff's departments), drawing from literature on social psychology, feminist IR theory, and police culture and militarization, to further understandings of the 'cult of masculinity' that has long been associated with policing. I begin by defining and adapting the concept of militarized masculinities, or the notion that masculinity can be acquired by becoming a soldier or in this case, a law enforcement officer. I argue that this concept can be readily applied to police departments as well as militaries. Due to historical gender norms in policing and society at large, the belief that the ideal police officer is male persists, despite female contributions to police-work throughout history. The militarized masculinities within police culture departments are a promising starting point to further understanding of why police-work remains a predominantly male enterprise in the U.S. (87 percent of sworn officers nationwide identify as male, compared to only 38 percent of civilian staff identifying as male). In addition, militarized masculinity may contribute to violent escalation in police encounters, and decreased public trust in law enforcement. Changing police culture to reduce militarized masculinity can help departments attract a greater number and diversity of applicants, build community support for and greater investment in public safety, and help reimagine policing as we know it into a more inclusive and effective endeavor.

**Introduction**

This paper seeks to answer the following fundamental questions. To what extent does the concept of militarized masculinity apply to California's police and sheriff departments, and to what degree is this shaped by police culture and training? How has the increased militarization of

police forces affected the social construction of militarized masculinities within these departments? Do militarized masculinities reinforce the cult of masculinity that has come to be associated with police work? To accomplish this task, I begin by defining three core concepts to my argument: the difference between sex and gender, the performative nature of gender expression, and hegemonic masculinity. These concepts come from feminine studies and masculinity studies, which have recently begun to engage with each other more as the fields merge into gender studies. I then review literature from social psychology, international security, police studies, and more gender studies to ground my argument that militarized masculinities are the norm in California's police departments, and are responsible for the lack of women employed in sworn-officer roles, and could also correlate with police use of force. Use of force is certainly correlated with department specific cultures, and the demographics of both the department and community in general. For example, departments working in more urban areas tend to have higher budgets and stronger training standards than rural departments. I then describe my methodology, and present evidence to support my claims, including a gendered breakdown of each departments' sworn-officers and leadership team, a quantitative analysis of 1,000 social media posts (100 from each department), and a qualitative assessment of select social media posts, the hiring practices and training standards of each department, and finally, documented uses of lethal force. Through this analysis, I then conclude with recommendations for all departments and ideas for future research.

## Definitions

### *Sex vs.Gender*

The concept of gender is foundational to understanding hegemonic and militarized masculinity. As previous research on gender has stressed, there is a difference between biological sex and gender. According to Judith Butler, sex has traditionally been understood as the biological traits one is born with. Gender differs in that "whatever biological intractability sex appears to have, gender is culturally constructed: hence, gender is neither the causal result of sex nor as seemingly fixed as sex" (Butler 1998 paragraph 6). Given this distinction, differences between the sexes will not be the focus of this paper, but rather the social construction of differences that are gendered as either masculine or feminine. The notion that socially constructed gender identities shape police culture, rather than inherently sex-based differences, is key to my argument that the police cult of masculinity is being arbitrarily preserved through traditional and enduring gendered hierarchies.

### *Performing Gender vs Performative Gender*

Another concept from gender studies grounds the claim that gender is socially constructed with the assertion that individuals perform their gender, in that they are acting to achieve their desired gender identity. This is paired with the claim that gender is also performative, in that through performing gender, additional effects are produced that further solidify one's gender identity (Butler 2011). The way society reacts to one's performative gender can either reinforce or diminish their gender identity, and can ultimately amount to social pressure on individuals to conform to a gender identity that feels unnatural to them.

*Hegemonic Masculinity*

This paper also builds on the concept of hegemonic masculinity, using R.W. Connell's widely cited paper on the subject. Connell begins with the original definition of hegemonic masculinity, defining it as "the pattern of practice (i.e., things done, not just a set of role expectations or an identity) that allowed men's dominance over women to continue" (Connell 2005, 832). She then responds to criticism of the concept, ultimately reconceiving the term as a fluid practice that differs based on time and place. A common argument in the gender studies literature is studying masculinities and femininities in the plural, because rigid gender types do not generalize. With this understanding, the term has value, but rather than applying a strict definition of hegemonic masculinity, this paper will explore the variety of hegemonic masculinities present in 10 California law enforcement agencies. The evidence I will provide supports the fact that hegemonic masculinities are especially prevalent in police culture and can potentially explain the continued male dominance of police work nationwide.

**Literature Review**

Drawing from the literature on social psychology, gender studies, and international security, this paper employs gendered analysis to examine the extent of militarized masculinity in California's police departments. Militarized masculinities have been well studied in traditional military organizations, but are understudied in private security and, especially, police organizations. Feminist international relations scholar Maya Eichler defines militarized masculinity as "the assertion that traits stereotypically associated with masculinity can be acquired and proven through military service or action, and combat in particular" (Eichler 2014, p. 81). This narrow view contributes to a problematic social pressure for those seeking to acquire

or perform some standard of masculinity to engage in violence as a feat of strength. She further states, “The association of women with pacifism and of men with militarism remains strong despite changes in the gender makeup of militaries during the twentieth and early twenty-first centuries.” (Eichler 2014, p. 82) Such associations are not limited to military organizations but appear in most societies around the world. Militarized masculinities have been identified as obstacles to gender mainstreaming, or the widespread adoption of gender equality norms, in UN peacekeeping, and my claim is that they will pose a similar challenge to achieving gender equality in police culture.

In 1972, the U.S. Congress passed an amendment to Title VII of the Civil Rights Act, requiring police departments to hire and assign women on an equal basis to their male counterparts. The results of this led to more women joining police departments, and conducting street patrols, among other duties that had traditionally been viewed as a “man’s job”. A 1974 study on the Metropolitan Police Department of the District of Columbia found that, contrary to the expectations of administrators at the time, women on patrol were more effective at de-escalating potentially violent situations, were less likely than men to engage in serious misconduct, and that citizens held the same levels of respect for both male and female officers (Bloch 1974). Since 1972, women have not only joined police forces in greater numbers but have also broken barriers into combat roles in the military and are fulfilling more leadership roles across these institutions as well. Even so, the number of women holding these jobs today has not substantially grown since they were first admitted into policing and combat roles.

This paper was also motivated by an article from Marissa Silvestri that explored what’s come to be known as the ‘cult of masculinity’ that is police work. Despite more women joining military and police organizations over the last few decades, the cult of masculinity has endured,

and received widespread attention “as the cause and effect of police misbehavior” (Silvestri 2017, 291). Both gender and police scholars have now come out to criticize this deterministic and oversimplistic view of police culture, arguing that greater value can be found through more nuanced analysis that go beyond viewing gender as a binary, and viewing police culture as monolithic. The goal of this paper is to add more nuance to the debate around militarized masculinities in police culture by documenting binary gendered views that are still widely held across departments, and by reimagining how police cultures might change through adopting gender mainstreaming.

While women have been involved in non-sworn police roles since 1854, and contemporary research has established the benefits of hiring more female law enforcement officers (Miller and Segal 2014, 10), the belief that policing is a masculine job persists, with men continuing to occupy nearly 90 percent of the sworn officer positions nationwide, while women are still rare in leadership positions (Statistica 2020). Although women, and gender nonconformists, face additional social and cultural barriers in order to participate in policing, many have found success in non-sworn roles working as administrators, dispatchers, or as support staff generally. The experience women have acquired from these jobs is invaluable to the work of sworn police officers and could provide new insight into effective communication and de-escalation practices if police departments chose to re-examine their role and reify the guardian mentality by taking additional steps to avert violence.

In an analysis of militarized masculinity in Canada’s special forces, Amanda Chisholm highlights the overlap that exists between sex and gender resulting from social expectations of gender that are linked to one’s biological sex. While gender is a socially constructed concept, biological sex is inherently linked to male or female bodies. As a result, one’s biological sex

determines how society genders them, but not that individual's gender identity. This distinction between the range of individual genders that exist, and the ideal masculine gender type that is desired by police departments, is crucial to understanding how militarized masculinities are maintained in California's police departments. In her analysis, Chisholm describes masculinity as a range of behaviors that are historically or culturally associated with masculinity. She borrows the term hegemonic masculinities, putting it to use as an ideal masculine type that is specific to the social group in question (Chisholm 2016; Butler 1998). Hegemonic masculinity is only achieved by a few men, and virtually no women, resulting in a perpetuation of the "ideal" masculine type as the goal for all of the organization's members to strive toward. The concept of hegemonic masculinity transfers well between militaries and police organizations, which are both effectively paramilitaries. In police departments, the gendered view of an ideal, and masculine, officer has been perpetuated by both historical and cultural norms and beliefs throughout Western society.

Chisholm also provides a description of how discursive narratives reinforce gender identities; she cites the Western rationale for the War on Terror, which she claims is an example of militarized masculinity (Chisholm 2007 10). Hunt is cited in Amanda Chisholm's analysis of the West's post 9/11 war narrative: "This war narrative is centered in "gendered tropes and notions of masculinity and femininity" explaining women's need to be protected and men's reasons to fight (Hunt and Rygiel 2006: 4)." In this narrative, men went to war with their reasons to fight, as women grieved their losses and worked to rebuild their lives after war.

Amidst the cultural narratives of the War on Terror, increased gender consciousness, and calls for police reform, another major trend affecting militarized masculinities is the increased militarization of police departments. Due in part to the excess weapon production that has fueled

America's military overseas, police departments have continuously acquired military grade rifles, armored vehicles, and other technology that is likely excessive for the stated mission of police officers to keep the peace. A study from Jonathan Mummolo overcame the notoriously obscure data limitations on police activity and examined the SWAT deployments of Maryland police. Contrary to the claim that a militarized police force is more effective, Mummolo shows that SWAT teams are most often sent to communities of color but seem to have no effect on officer safety or violent crime reduction. He then presents survey data that shows what the true effects of a militarized police force are, because seeing heavily armored security on the streets and in the news does nothing to increase community support for policing (Mummolo 2018, 9183-4). These findings suggest that increased police militarism is the wrong direction for departments, and a return to community outreach and policing efforts could not only reduce criticism of police, but also build trust with the public, potentially causing an increase in the effectiveness of police departments, and perhaps even more investment into police budgets.

Another link between military and police culture comes from veterans who leave combat roles and join law enforcement. The Marshall Project has investigated the question of how well veterans perform as police officers, given the distinctions between soldiering and policing. The immediate question they pose is whether or not veterans are more likely to use force, but data on this topic has been inconclusive so far (Weichselbaum, Schwartzapfel, and Meagher 2017). It is not unreasonable to presume that veterans may show greater discipline and mastery over uses of force, but the combined stress of serving in a warzone and then switching to police life can be overwhelming; people encounter severe emotional stress from taking on just one of these roles. In their handbook on de-escalation, the California Commission on Peace Officer Standards and Training (POST) outlines the difference between the warrior mentality and that of the guardian, a

distinction that has also been identified in the literature as a crime fighting mandate versus a peacekeeping mandate (Brown 2013, 2-4). While the focus of the warrior and the crime-fighter is on defeating or capturing the enemy, the guardian and the peacekeeper is focused on protecting allies. Though not always at odds, this dual role of policing creates a tension for officers that is muddled by mixed messaging from police leadership on what the role of law enforcement should be. Additionally, officers must trust one another with their lives in the event of a violent police-civilian encounter, creating a preference among officers to be more warrior-like. A common phrase heard across police departments when discussing the use of force is, "I'd rather be tried by twelve than carried by six." In other words, the phrase reflects the preference among officers for facing a jury of twelve to review use of force rather than risk dying and being carried by six pallbearers. The trust officers put in each other, and their justifications for uses of force, are also opposed to their other duty, which is to report each other's misconduct when warranted. Given the multiple roles and conflicting duties law enforcement agencies are charged with, it is evident that policing not only includes physical labor, but a great deal of emotional labor as well (Martin 1999, 112).

The militarization of police in the United States has received much attention in recent years, with critics pointing out the tension that exists between the dual roles of police officers as both peacekeepers and symbols of coercive state power, as both guardians and warriors (POST 2020). California's POST requires that departments have, at minimum, 132 hours of training for arrest and control, and firearms and chemical weapons, but only mandate de-escalation training be included in 16 hours of training on the use of force (California Commission on Peace Officer Standards and Training 2021). POST recommends de-escalation be woven into each part of the training process, since there are always opportunities to step back and evaluate alternative

methods while in training. While POST has a firm standard of 664 hours of total training to be certified as a peace officer, analyses of sheriff and police departments across the state suggest that most California law enforcement agencies are not in compliance with POST standards. As a result, police training in California varies by department, with some agencies training to higher standards than others. Implementing statewide standards for policing is much easier said than done, and California's POST may be learning firsthand the difference between what is practical and what is possible. It is clear that while many suggested reforms to training have received official approval in California, actually adopting and implementing training reforms has been a significant challenge. One major cause is budgetary constraints faced by departments, and another is the political obstruction of reforms. Sheriff's departments, in particular, tend to resist reform, and are notably more male-dominated than municipal departments, who seem more responsive to public opinion, and willing to work closely with municipal governments in the execution of their duties. Conversely, sheriffs as elected officials are unlikely to yield to higher authority unless they absolutely must because voters expect sheriffs not to bend to political pressure.

Militarized masculinities within U.S. culture not only come from performances of gender and gender policing, overt cultural narratives, and police militarization, but also from informal ques that are present from pre-schools to the police academy. Police training, like school, involves formal curriculum, departmental specific training, and a "hidden curriculum" that is a part of the culturalization of police officers as well (Prokos 2002; Bowles and Gintis 1976; K. Martin 1998). The hidden curriculum of police training can reveal itself in a multitude of ways. Insidious comments made by academy instructors telegraph the sorts of behaviors that are acceptable and valued by the department's culture. Cadets conform to the culture's accepted

norms to fit in to this group, which they will be relying on for their protection through the academy and on patrol.

Hidden curriculum has sometimes presented itself as the overt sexism and harassment which many, cadets, especially women, have faced when trying to join police forces. In 1997, a female researcher completed five months of police academy training, while concealing the fact that she was a researcher from her instructors and cohort (Prokos 2002, 445). The account she provided described an adverse environment for women, in which her mostly male colleagues, consciously or unconsciously, based their treatment of her and other female cadets generally on stereotypical expectations. This presented itself in many ways, including instructors missing key points for searching female suspects that he had been sure to mention for safely searching men. Additionally, her male colleagues often made overtly sexual comments, and then apologized to her, pushing her further out of the ingroup and suggesting some male cadets felt they had to change their behavior in her presence. Prokos named her paper after an episode of the show *Cops* that had been shown in one of her first classes in the academy, in which a suspect yelled "There oughtta be a law against bitches," before being detained on a domestic violence call. This became an inside joke among her male cohort, and it was regularly repeated whenever the male cadets deemed something both feminine and negative. The unauthorized, improvised curriculum is just as formative and influential for police cadets as the formal curriculum. Recognizing the ways in which police culture is inhospitable for non-males provides a clear path to make policing a more attractive career for women, and gender nonconformists, rather than continually reinforcing values that obstruct effective policing, and require gender nonconformists to adapt in nearly impossible ways. Conversely, the behaviors that contribute to the construction of militarized masculinities have also been understood as coping mechanisms for officers handling

the stresses of police work (Martin 1999, 122). The question then remains of whether police culture can be changed. We need to ask if the emotional weight and physical stress of law enforcement work forces police into a defensive posture. Either way, finding ways to increase participation in policing from a greater diversity of people would surely help to alleviate some of the stress caused by the job by providing more employees, if nothing else.

In addition to the formal and informal curriculums that maintain binary gender norms across U.S. institutions, popular culture and media also shape public expectations of police behavior, from the show *Cops* (Prokos, 2002) to depictions of police masculinities throughout history (Reel 2012, 181). The themes present in media coverage of police work since the 19th century suggest the modern moment of high public skepticism of police, and many police officers feeling defensive and unsupported, is neither a unique nor a new phenomenon, but perhaps one that is coming to a head. Reel's analysis of the 19th century caricatures of sheriffs, portrayed as Western heroes and tamers of the wild, contrasted greatly with that of the detective, an urbanite sleuth and user of reason. These characteristics are clearly oversimplistic, but they do have some validity in the cultural differences between rural sheriff departments and urban police departments that can still be seen today.

Though police culture and activity has been a topic of debate and target of scrutiny for some time, it is difficult to study due to limited data problems, and departments fear of transparency. A study from Goerger, Mummolo, and Westwood exploring barriers to evidence-based policymaking found that police departments were reluctant to participate in research programs when any measure of police performance was mentioned (Goerger, Mummolo, and Westwood 2020). These findings are concerning in that they show a lack of reflexiveness and

transparency from police, who are charged with protecting the public, but increasingly find themselves at odds with the communities they serve.

Further debates on the role of gender in policing highlight the strength of female officers' communication skills, and their predominance in non-sworn, dispatcher, and community outreach roles. There has even been research into the question of whether male officers escalate violence when their masculinity is threatened, but contrary to the researcher's hypothesis, their evidence suggested officers are well trained not to escalate when verbally threatened (Alston 2017, 69-72). It is more likely that violent escalation occurs when officers encounter physical, not verbal threats. The experience of female officers shows promise for demonstrating better ways to verbally de-escalate potentially violent situations. There have been studies exploring whether or not police encounters become masculinity contests (Cooper 2009), and research linking police masculinity to domestic violence and spousal abuse (Goodmark 2015). While Goodmark makes a strong case for the link between authoritarian policing attitudes and abuse, her conception of gender, calling policing a masculine job is objectionable. Policing is not inherently masculine, but the masculinities that have come to be associated with policing perpetuate the belief that the job is the purview of men.

**Argument**

My argument is that militarized masculinities persist as a dominant cultural force in California's police departments as a result of historical gender norms, departmental hiring practices, leadership, community outreach efforts, and from training and reactions to police reforms. Reducing the strictly binary gendered culture of law enforcement agencies, especially police and sheriff departments, will help law enforcement attract a more diverse workforce and

adapt to modern tactics like de-escalation and community policing. This is supported by the fact that the militarized masculine culture of police has declined with the increasing presence of other genders. For example, Pacific Grove Police Department is exclusively led by women, and this shows through the department's public messaging, which avoids the use of strictly gendered language to describe police work. Public messaging is the main way law enforcement communicates with the communities that they serve, and if that messaging is not inclusive, a significant portion of the public will not engage with it, or actively oppose it. Further, de-escalation requires some degree of personal connection with a suspect in order to be effective, and a more diverse police force will be more able to make those connections. On a similar note, community policing requires public engagement and trust, which are less likely to happen if law enforcement messaging is rigid and dictatorial. Traditionally masculine gendered behaviors, such as protective behavior which often presents through physical aggression and dominance, may cause an increased likelihood for violent outcomes in police interactions, but certainly contribute to the maintenance of the so called "cult of masculinity" within law enforcement, and obstruct efforts in support of gender mainstreaming, or even prevent the less ambitious goal of degendering police work. The militarized masculinities of California's law enforcement agencies also associate men with militarism and women with pacifism. By analyzing expressions of masculinity, femininity, and nonbinary expressions of gender that occur throughout California's police and sheriff departments, I find that militarized masculinities have existed historically in policing and have persisted in dominating police culture as a whole, preventing those with nonconforming expressions of gender from participating in many aspects of law enforcement.

The line between policing and soldiering is muddy today given the changing security environment in the wake of the attacks of September 11th, and the ensuing War on Terror. Since

then, much of soldiering has transformed into policing and counter-terrorism efforts, while policing has become increasingly militarized with the purchasing of overflow military equipment, and general arming of police forces in recent decades. While these concrete changes took place within military and police organizations, a cultural narrative of the War on Terror, discussed above, began to emerge in Western nations that rationalized the war, but also assigned various expectations on different social groups living in the west. Perhaps the strongest of these expectations was the call to military service placed on young men as a surefire path to performing and achieving idealized masculinity. Many more cultural narratives and views on gender have emerged since the War on Terror began, such as the increasing prominence and controversy of the Thin Blue Line. The Thin Blue Line narrative suggests to the public that a militarized, and masculine, police force is the only thing protecting people from violent disorder. The "Line" itself is even a reference to the front line of a battlefield. However, the construction of such narratives, as Chisholm points out, are designed not to be accurate, but to exclude people with differing identities and viewpoints from the discourse, and to preserve existing power structures. If nothing else, today's narrative around policing accounts for the decline in applicants law enforcement agencies are seeing across the country (Cassady 2020).

These narratives provide a strong basis for the concept of militarized masculinity I use here, in which women are portrayed as needing protection, while men are portrayed as needing to fight. In my analysis of the data below, I find that such a cultural narrative exists within California's police, and especially sheriff's departments. It is lessened where women are in charge, and most evident in sheriff's departments that are almost exclusively male. By comparing departments by their degree of militarized masculinity, I find correlations with various degrees of success in policing, such as hiring and community outreach efforts, social

media and PR presence, officer involved complaints and uses of force, and the overall quality of training.

The idea that the ideal police officer is male is perpetuated by media messaging from law enforcement and at large, popular culture, and police training and culture. This belief is further reinforced by the history of female-exclusion from police work. Additionally, ingroup outgroup psychology suggests that the onboarding of new officers is a process of de-otherizing them from civilian, and especially criminal groups, while onboarding them into a new ingroup. This leads to a distinction between officers, civilians, and criminals, with the police ingroup adopting morally superior attitudes, while the latter two groups are increasingly conflated with the potential for disaster. Police training is also a process of de-otherizing cadets from fellow recruits, prioritizing conformity to the police ingroup above all else. Police uniforms can be seen as an effort to solidify ingroup socialization, but instead of reducing gender-binary culture they reinforce it, with female uniforms traditionally, and even today, including skirts and preferring, if not requiring, short hair, while male uniforms have always been the standard. The more that men continue to dominate police work, the more justified the belief that policing is a "man's job" becomes.

Given that views on gender are socially constructed and reinforced, one challenge to the traditional binary gender view is the notion that gender is a spectrum, with individuals having varying degrees of what is understood as femininity or masculinity regardless of their biological sex. Binary gender views, which view gender as being either strictly masculine or feminine, are held by most military organizations around the world, and by paramilitary and police organizations as well, and are preserved by a slow-changing culture that stems from the patriarchal nature of military, police, and Western history. Despite clear applications, the concept

of militarized masculinities in U.S. police departments is notably understudied. With the increasing militarization of U.S. police departments amidst calls to reimagine policing, applying the concept of militarized masculinity to U.S. police is especially warranted.

A common theme in debates over militarized masculine police culture is "machismo," or the excessive sense of masculine pride associated with policing. Machismo is an unofficially desirable trait among police departments, because hegemonic masculinities deemed ideal for police-work adhere to their historically reinforced binary gender view and maintain the belief that expressing dominance and toughness is key to maintaining control as a peace officer. Though it is sometimes necessary to keep the peace by taking control, de-escalation, tactical non-pursuits, and attempting more cautious engagement with armed suspects, employing the element of surprise where possible, could make the difference between a peaceful resolution and a violent altercation. Police machismo in popular culture also contributes to the romanticization of masculine officers as the ideal standard for law enforcement officers and is further reinforced by modern television shows like *True Detective*, to famous films like *Dirty Harry*. Female officers are often portrayed as support staff in these depictions of policing as well, unable to escape their gender roles even in fiction. Male officers depicted in these shows have both personal and professional issues related to masculinity, such as expressing aggression and physical dominance, and increased risk-taking, including breaking the law, and violating civil rights. Depicting these behaviors as normal may shape susceptible viewers' perceptions of police, and these actions could even be deemed permissible by some viewers who mistake vengeance for justice. Viewers who do not challenge these issues or see them as inherently problematic may come to accept these behaviors, reinforcing their expectations for how police should behave in the real world. Ideally, police officers would lead the charge against this kind of behavior, and

choose to abandon abusive practices, leaving it as nothing more than material for television writers.

Finally, what is clear across analyses of each department is the high level of stress faced by law enforcement on a daily basis, from everyday problems like extended shifts, limited staff, and limited family leave, to unique stresses like responding to uncertain and potentially violent circumstances. Officers must be ready to distinguish between everyday interaction with civilians and a life-threatening situation within seconds in what is often referred to as a "shoot-don't-shoot" scenario. The knowledge that the officer may be compelled to take a life, or may do so accidentally can weigh heavily on officers, reinforcing the mentality of the warrior over the guardian. The role of the warrior crime fighter provides a higher degree of masculinity and is often in opposition to the role of the guardian peacekeeper. Patrolling areas with high crime rates and looking to intervene could amount to an escalation in and of itself. The militarized masculine instinct to protect and intervene may not always make the community safer. As I explain later, the presence of police officers can cause fearful and irrational reactions from suspects, potentially causing them to act out or panic.

Police should not turn a blind eye on threats to public safety but could consider ways to reduce the threat they pose to the community, and attempt more verbal persuasion, which is more likely to succeed than screaming lawful commands. This is a result of the fact that anyone posing a lethal threat to an officer is very likely to attack when cornered, but if an officer instead used active listening, responding to the specific and identifiable emotional needs of a suspect, a potentially lethal encounter could prove to be a non-issue. If nothing else, adopting more verbal training and prioritizing de-escalation significantly more than current POST standards do, could reduce the amount of mentally ill people killed by police. Most of the 10 departments that I

examine below lump the training for handling of mentally ill persons together with training on arrests and control of suspects. The conflation of the mentally ill with criminal suspects is an undervalued issue within police culture both historically and today. Militarized masculinities are preserved in police departments by otherizing the mentally ill to criminal status, and rejecting their identities in the same way that police culture rejects feminine depictions of police work. Militarized masculinities require subordinate people to protect or dominate in order to preserve the privilege of masculine identity within a social hierarchy. This can take the form of masculinity contests among officers or between officers and civilians, and can be seen in the depictions of mostly male officers protecting mostly female civilians seen across the 10 cases examined below. The mistreatment of mentally ill people is also due in part to the fact that most municipalities in the U.S. lack proper facilities and training to care for mentally ill people, so police have no other choice but to detain them, or worse.

Whether it is consciously, unconsciously, or both, all 10 departments examined below adhere to an overall binary gender view of policing, with this being most apparent in sheriff's departments and least apparent in municipalities, especially where women are in charge. While most sheriff departments utilize public messaging to perform and express masculinity in a manner that suggests they hope to deter crime, some departments are much more conscious and strategic with their messaging, engaging the public on their own terms with events and messaging that speak to community-specific concerns.

**Methodology**

This study employs a qualitative case comparison of 10 California police and sheriff's departments, and a quantitative assessment of police public messaging on verified Facebook

accounts. The departments were randomly selected from an alphabetized list of law enforcement agencies, obtained from California's POST (Peace Officer Standard and Training) website, using a random number generator. Two cases were replaced due to their irrelevance to police work and one was replaced due to lack of data.[i] These three cases were re-selected by choosing the next police or sheriff department on the list. I then obtained an estimated breakdown of the gender of sworn officers and the leadership employed by each department based on data from Transparent California. Next, I quantitatively assessed their social media outreach based on data obtained from the department's Facebook pages, and qualitatively assessed their hiring practices and department-specific training, based on data obtained from their hiring materials, websites, and department-specific reports from the U.S. Department of Justice and other researchers. I also quantify the number of recent complaints and officer involved shootings for each department. Through my analysis of the data provided, I find the degree of militarized masculinity across California's police forces is significant.

**Evidence**

In this section, I present the data described above in three tables. The first table shows the gender breakdown of sworn officers, and the gender breakdown of each department's leadership team. The gender estimates of each case examined below are taken from Transparent California and from police and sheriff departments' websites and have been assumed by officer's names. While this assumption is significant, names are a chosen means of gender expression, and the fact that California's law enforcement remains male-dominated is not affected by this assumption. The second table shows the data obtained from each departments' Facebook posts, and qualifies each departments' culture as either predominantly masculine, predominantly

feminine, or nonbinary. In Table 2, masculine posts depict police work through the lens of traditionally masculine aspects of the job, especially men protecting women and children, on patrol, and making arrests. Feminine posts depict police work through the lens of traditionally feminine aspects of the job, especially working in relaxed uniforms or civilian clothes as dispatchers or communication officers. Nonbinary posts do not conform to a strictly masculine or feminine culture and are capable of reaching a larger audience and encouraging a greater number and diversity of people to support police work. While most of the posts examined qualify as nonbinary, the majority of those posts are public service announcements, mug shots, and pictures of inanimate objects, like evidence or badges. Only a few nonbinary posts from each department challenge traditional binary gender views by showing, for example, male officers in relaxed uniforms cooking and cleaning, and uniformed female officers on patrol. Notably, very few posts could qualify as feminine, lending further credence to the cult of masculinity. The third table qualitatively assesses each department's hiring materials, affirms the decline in applicants faced by most police departments, and grounds my examination of police training and use of force. I will then conclude by examining six cases of officer involved shootings by the Riverside County Sheriff Department.

Table 1. *Gender Breakdown*

| **Department Name** | **Sworn Officers Employed**[ii] | **Sworn Officer Gender Ratio (M:F)** | **Leadership Gender Ratio (M:F)** | **Complaints Filed**[iii] | **Complaints Sustained** |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Calexico Police Department | 22 | 20:2 | 1:0 | 32 | 19% |
| El Dorado County Sheriff's Department | 138 | 129:9 | 5:1 | 120 since 2016 | 8% |
| Etna Police Department | 4 | 4:0 | 2:0 | N/A | N/A |
| Mendocino County Sheriff's Department | 68 | 65:3 | 12:2 | 31 since 2016 | 23% |
| Pacific Grove Police Department | 26 | 16:10 | 0:3 | 8 since 2016 | 0% |
| Palm Springs Police Department | 107 | 93 : 14 | 2:1 | 29 since 2016 | 4% |
| Riverside County Sheriff's Department | 50 | 48:2 | 11:1 | 227 since 2016 | 20% |
| Sonoma County Sheriff's Office | 252 | 240 : 12 | 6:1 | 163 since 2016 | 4% |
| Sutter County Sheriff's Office | 60 | 57:3 | 9:3 | 10 since 2016 | 30% |
| Tulare County Sheriff's Department | 24 | 21:3 | 8:1 | 53 since 2016 | 28% |

It is immediately clear from Table 1 that policing remains a male dominated field. Of the 10 departments surveyed, women make up only 8 percent of the sworn-officer population, and only the Pacific Grove Police Department is exclusively led by women, which is not only rare in California, but nationwide. The majority of sworn officers in the United States are men, and

according to Statistica, “In 2019, 67.1 percent of full-time civilian law enforcement employees in the United States were female. Only 12.8 percent of full-time law enforcement officers were female, while 87.2 percent of law enforcement officers were male” (Statistica 2020). Focusing on the gender gap in sworn roles lends strong support for the notion that militarized masculinities are dominant in police culture, with men taking on the most physically demanding and aggressive roles, and women tasked with nurturing police officers instead of becoming them. Given the history of women’s contributions to police work, and their increased representation among sworn officers, the ability for women, and gender nonconformists, to be effective peace officers is apparent, but limited opportunities and discouragement from cultural cues likely deter many from competing for such jobs. This loss is more harmful to police departments than to those who refuse to conform to militarized masculinity, because diversifying sworn officers can only lead to greater understanding of effective policing by bringing new perspectives and techniques to the table.

A particularly interesting trend from the data above is a correlation between the gender breakdown of departments and complaints filed by civilians. My findings show that the most masculine department examined, the Riverside County Sheriff’s Department, had the greatest number of complaints filed against them, while Pacific Grove Police Department, the most feminine department and the only one to be run by women, had the least number of complaints. While the difference in population size of the communities served is one likely explanation for this correlation, further analysis of each department’s social media presence, and data on officer involved shootings, elucidate the differences between Riverside’s masculine and aggressive history, and Pacific Grove’s more feminine and responsive policing efforts. The number of

complaints and gender of these departments also shows a strong correlation with the number of lethal officer involved shootings, which I will discuss in greater detail along with Table 3.

Table 2. *Social Media*

| **Department Name** | **Masculine posts** | **Feminine posts** | **Nonbinary posts** | **(Masculine, Feminine, Netural?)** |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| Calexico Police Department | 85 | 1 | 14 | Masculine |
| El Dorado County Sheriff's Department | 34 | 11 | 55 | Masculine |
| Etna Police Department | 25 | 0 | 75 | Masculine |
| Mendocino County Sheriff's Department | 20 | 1 | 79 | Nonbinary |
| Pacific Grove Police Department | 12 | 3 | 85 | Nonbinary |
| Palm Springs Police Department | 30 | 2 | 68 | Masculine |
| Riverside County Sheriff's Department | 47 | 8 | 45 | Masculine |
| Sonoma County Sheriff's Office | 30 | 4 | 66 | Masculine |
| Sutter County Sheriff's Office | 45 | 4 | 51 | Masculine |
| Tulare County Sheriff's Department | 32 | 5 | 63 | Masculine |

Table 2 was assembled by verifying the Facebook pages of 9 of the 10 departments, and qualitatively assessing the past 100 posts for each page. The exception was the Calexico Police Department, which is represented online by the Calexico Police Association. The association also speaks regularly to the media and lobby's the city on behalf of the department (*The Desert Review* 2020). Police associations have a reputation for being quite political, and the difference

clearly stood out in both my quantitative and qualitative analysis of posts. As can be seen above, the Calexico Police Department made far more masculine posts than any other department. Because of the political nature of the association, this page demonstrated how select images and representations of policing can be used to shape public perception. Most of the posts depicted only male officers making arrests, or mugshots of criminal suspects, or evidence, and much of it invoked the fearful and violent side of policing. Women were only depicted as crime victims and only 1 post was deemed feminine, with 85 being masculine and the rest qualifying as nonbinary because they depicted inanimate objects like weapons or evidence.

As can be seen in Table 2, eight departments were qualified as masculine in their overall social media presence and only two departments were qualified as nonbinary. Virtually no department expressed an overall feminine culture, despite some having fairly low numbers of masculine posts. Compared to the police association's page, the other departments masculine posts seemed dialed back. There were still many masculine images and messages, but presented in a more professional manner, placing a greater emphasis on public opinion. The second most masculine Facebook page was the Riverside County Sheriff's Department, with 47 masculine posts. Riverside is an interesting case for many reasons: it is the 10th largest county in the United States, its sworn officers are 96 percent male, and its leadership team is 91 percent male, and they have the highest number of officers involved shootings and complaints filed against them out of these 10 cases. A significant difference to Riverside's Facebook page was the posting of videos from the sheriff himself in order to inform the public of investigations into officer involved shootings. In 2021, male Riverside County deputies shot and killed 6 criminal suspects, all of whom were residents of the county. While I expand more on some of these shootings later, these posts were the epitome of militarized masculine culture, both demonstrating male

dominance and highlighting the most violent aspects of the job. The department's response to these shootings, posting informational videos with body cam footage, has become so routine that it is not apparent how officers are reviewing these violent interactions to avoid similar altercations in the future.

The Etna Police Department was the smallest department that I examined, with only 4 sworn officers in the whole city. Etna PD has a high number of nonbinary posts, but this is largely a result of most of their posts depicting animals, returned pets, and lost and found objects. The other Facebook pages were similar to one another, with most of the nonbinary posts being inanimate, or being used to celebrate victories or deter crime, like announcing arrests and posting mugshots. The ideal police messaging would be conscious of traditional gender norms, but strive not to reconstruct them, instead finding ways to showcase the true diversity of gender on their forces and in the public at large. Some good examples of this can be seen on both the Palm Springs Police Department's page, and the Mendocino County Sheriff's page. Palm Springs made an appreciative post of female officers on International Women's Day (Palm Springs PD 03/08/2021), and the chief holds regular community meetings, with specific calls to the LGBTQ+ community (Palm Springs PD 03/28/2021). Mendocino County made a clear effort in their posts to cater to a wider audience than just men, with posts avoiding the use of binary gendered language, and including females in uniform in the majority of their photos of officers. As a result, a notable portion of their nonbinary posts are not just PSAs or photographed evidence but can serve as good examples to other departments of gender mainstreaming, and how incremental changes to public messaging can make a significant difference over time.

Image 1. *Masculine Post Example*


Image 1 was obtained from the Sutter County Sheriff's Office official Facebook page, and serves as an example of how police culture preserves its traditional gender hierarchy (Sutter County SO 03/09/2021). In this image, the deputy of the year, the volunteer of the year, and the corrections officer of the year are all holding up their awards. While the two sworn officers in the photo are males in full uniform, the volunteer is female and in civilian attire. Not pictured but also honored in the post is a fourth, non-sworn, employee who is female. This post shows male officers being awarded for their sworn duties, while the females are represented as secondary support staff. Because the department only has 3 sworn female officers to 57 sworn male officers, it is almost certain that these awards for sworn roles would go to male officers each year. While records of this award are limited, the department's annual reports show that the sworn officer of the year awards have gone to all males each year since at least 2017 (Sutter County Sheriff July, 2021). The consequence of this is maintaining the perception that sworn roles should be the domain of men, even though women are doing the same work. By actively recruiting more female sworn officers, this pattern would begin to fade over time, and women

would have more opportunities to compete for recognition. The more women are recognized for their abilities as sworn peacekeepers, the more women will seek out police work. Making efforts to recruit women into sworn roles will lead to gradual changes in police culture and improved policing outcomes.

Image 2. *Feminine Post Example*

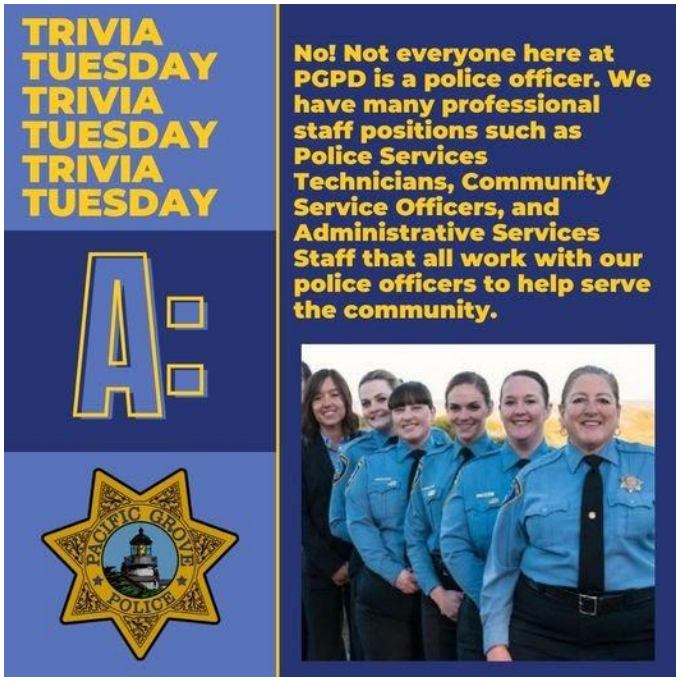


Image 2 was posted by the Pacific Grove Police Department, and serves as a generalizable example of a feminine post, where women are only shown performing roles that are traditionally more feminine (Pacific Grove PD, 05/25/2021). This picture shows the department's support staff, which happen to all be women. The image fits the trend seen across all departments' Facebook pages, where the majority of women that are shown are either civilian or non-sworn employees, especially dispatchers. The fact that this post is presented as a trivia answer further reinforces the perspective that non-sworn roles should be filled by women.

Image 3. *Nonbinary Post Example*


Image 3 was posted by the Palm Springs Police Department, and is an ideal example of a nonbinary gender perspective of police work (Palm Springs PD, 04/04/2021). The traditional gendered hierarchy of policing is deconstructed in this image with all three officers in equal uniforms and with equal authority. It differs from both the masculine and feminine posts because the officers are not performing their differing genders by doing different work. Posts like this are rare across all accounts measured, accounting for less than half of the total nonbinary posts evaluated above.

Some common themes across departments' social media posts included the depiction of men in full uniform or making arrests, and women in communications roles and civilian clothing. Furthermore, images of female sworn officers were rare, and most images of sworn officers showed either exclusively men, or a minority of women. Solo pictures of male officers in uniform were far more common than solo pictures of female officers. All departments made

masculine holiday posts for Independence Day, Memorial Day, and Father's Day, and feminine posts for Mother's Day, adding further to the constructed gender-binary culture. Finally, all departments made posts acknowledging police officers killed in the line of duty, regardless of whether any connection between the officer and department existed beyond a shared job with a sense of shared risk. In May of 2021, Sergeant Dominic Vaca of San Bernadino County Sheriff's Department was killed in the line of duty. Tribute posts to Sergeant Vaca can be found on every department's social media pages that I examined, in addition to many others throughout the country. The Palm Springs Police Department has also made multiple posts of officers killed in years as far back as 1961 and 1962 (Palm Springs PD 01/18/2021 and 01/01/2021), raising the salience of the risks of police work despite the decline in officer deaths over the last three decades (Task Force on Policing 2020). This supports the notion that while police culture should not be treated like a monolith, and is somewhat department specific, it is also linked by the shared experience of the officers doing police work. Given recent protests and public scrutiny of police departments, this solidarity between police will likely continue to grow, and, in effect, continue to preserve militarized masculinities within most departments.

Table 3. *Hiring, Training, and Use of Force*

| **Department Name** | **Hiring materials** | **Ideal candidate** | **Decline in Applicants?** | **Officers Involved in Lethal Shootings[iv]** | **No attempt at Non-Lethal Force?[v]** |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Calexico Police Department | Hiring flyer depicts only male officers. States: "Do you have the strength to serve?"[vi] | Masculine | Yes[vii] | 0 since 2013 | N/A |
| El Dorado County Sheriff's Department | Hiring page depicts only males. Calls for candidates to be leaders and serve and support their community.[viii] | Masculine | N/A | 1 since 2013 | 100% |
| Etna Police Department | Very small department - no active hiring. Women are only employed in non-sworn officer roles.[ix] | Masculine | N/A | 1 in 2021 | 100% |
| Mendocino County Sheriff's Department | Uniformed male and female officer depicted on hiring flyer, no use of traditionally gendered language.[x] | Nonbinary | Yes[xi] | 3 since 2013 | 75% |
| Pacific Grove Police Department | Hiring flyer depicts 2 female and 2 male officers. Hiring page lists other municipal jobs.[xii] | Nonbinary | N/A | 0 since 2013 | N/A |
| Palm Springs Police Department | Hiring flyer depicts two males in uniform on patrol with a K9. No females are present.[xiii] | Masculine | Yes[xiv] | 1 since 2013 | 33% |
| Riverside County Sheriff's Department | Hiring flyer depicts a military-style bootcamp with mostly male cadets.[xv] | Masculine | Yes[xvi] | 54 since 2013. | 98% |
| Sonoma County Sheriff's Office | Hiring page emphasizes women and avoids strictly gendered | Nonbinary | Yes[xviii] | 8 since 2013 | 80% |

| | | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| | language in their calls to service.[xvii] | | | | |
| Sutter County Sheriff's Office | Hiring page contains no images, and text refrains from using strictly gendered language.[xix] | Nonbinary | N/A | 1 since 2013 | N/A |
| Tulare County Sheriff's Department | Hiring page depicts mostly men in uniform. Some women in uniform are visible in the background.[xx] | Masculine | N/A | 5 since 2013 | 50% |

Data on hiring in Table 3 was obtained from departments websites and social media pages where hiring materials were posted, in addition to data on decline in applicants coming from public announcements or media reports. Data on the use of lethal force was obtained from Police Scorecard.

Although the Sonoma County Sheriff's social media presence is notably masculine, their hiring messaging speaks to a much wider audience due to its emphasis placed on showcasing the department's diversity in hiring photos. The first image on their hiring page is of a woman in uniform, and the majority of the other photos depict all aspects of police work being done by men and women alike. In addition, none of the language used in hiring is overtly gendered, which is just as important as diversifying police representation in pictures. The Sutter County Sheriff's Office, the Mendocino Sheriff's Department, and the Pacific Grove Police Department, follow similar steps to reduce strict gender norms, earning these 4 departments a "nonbinary" rating of their hiring process, while the other 6 continue to seek out their ideal masculine type with clearly gendered and overtly masculine hiring materials. Images and messages that apply pressure on people to conform to a binary gender view will deter potential applicants, especially those from communities that continue to be underrepresented in policing.

California's POST Commission requires officers to meet a minimum of 664 hours of training to be qualified as a sworn officer, and all 10 departments include some reference to POST requirements in their hiring process (California Commission on Peace Officer Standards and Training 2021). Despite POST's efforts to standardize police training across the state, a media report states that officers in the Imperial Valley, which encompasses Calexico and borders Riverside and Palm Springs, can become sworn officers with only 533 hours of training (Renteria 2018). POST also requires a personal history statement from candidates, which amounts to 25 pages listing relatives, education, employment history, and personal questions that help support the background check required to work as a California Peace Officer.

In a report on the Calexico Police Department from the Department of Justice's Community Oriented Policing Services (COPS), a number of issues were identified with adhering to POST standards, suggesting that some departments, especially in more rural areas, may reject or fail to implement these standards due to practical, or personal, objections. In their assessment, the researchers "found no such training related to community policing, procedural justice, or fair and impartial policing" in use by the department (Bouche et al 2016, 28). The findings of this report likely apply to many police departments throughout California, because implementing and enforcing state-wide training standards leaves no room for error and is dependent on local cooperation to be effective. Through my examination of the other 9 departments training standards, I find no case where POST standards are fully in effect. Instead, they seem to act more as guidelines that each departments strives to follow, to a limit. Though the chief of Calexico Police Department is quoted in the report as being supportive of POST standards, budgetary constraints, hiring shortages, and the demand to train officers quickly, among other practical problems, have stood in the way of optimizing police training (Bouche et

al 2016, 2). Given the challenges of meeting POST standards, law enforcement agencies should remain open to creating their own de-escalation training program, which POST suggests should be woven into the training process throughout a cadet's time in the academy.

While violent escalation is the exception to most police-civilian encounters, instances of police use of force are worth critically evaluating in order to justify or discount the documented violence that occurred, and to learn from the encounter to potentially avoid future escalations. Thanks to the increasingly widespread use of body cams, such encounters are now recorded and occasionally made available to the public. According to data obtained from Police Scorecard, and additional data provided by the Riverside County Sheriff's Department on their Facebook page, this department has been involved in 54 officer involved fatal shootings since 2013, with 6 occurring in 2021. 53 of the 54 shootings (98 percent) occurred when non-lethal force was not attempted first. After reviewing body camera footage from the 6 shootings this year, I found one exception where non-lethal force was attempted first before officers opened fire. In the footage, a lone officer began pursuing a suspect armed with a crowbar into a barren field. After issuing several lawful commands which were ignored, the officer discharged his taser in an attempt to subdue the suspect, but the taser had no visible effect whatsoever. Shortly after this, the officer's backup joined him in the field, and after the suspect reached into his pocket, ignoring additional lawful commands from both officers, the officers fired multiple rounds at the suspect, who died at the scene. This case is significant in that non-lethal force was attempted first, but also shown to be completely ineffective. Such accounts of suspects remaining aggressive despite being tasered, and in some cases in spite of being shot, are common among police officers, and reinforce the belief that using a gun is an officer's safest option in an uncertain and violent situation.

One of the most disturbing cases involved deputies responding to a call of an armed suspect who had threatened the caller from his vehicle with a firearm. The first deputy to arrive on the scene pulled up behind the suspect's car, which was stopped near a country club. After matching the vehicle description with dispatch and identifying a suspect was indeed in the vehicle, the deputy instructed the suspect to remain in the vehicle and asked over his radio how much time it would take his backup to arrive, which was two minutes. Knowing that the suspect was armed, the deputy made an appropriate call to wait before attempting to detain the suspect alone, but neglected the fact that he had already cornered them. As soon as the second police car arrived on scene, the suspect emerged from his vehicle empty handed, yelling at the first officer, "Shoot me or I will shoot you" before drawing a handgun from his jacket. After ignoring lawful commands to remain in their vehicle, and additional commands to get on the ground, the officers opened fire, killing the suspect (Riverside County Sheriff's Department February 2021). Situations like this one, in which a suspect tries to compel a police officer into using lethal force, are commonly referred to as a "death-by-cop" scenario. This is one of the most salient threats to officer safety related to mentally ill persons, as suicidal behavior is a sure sign of mental illness. The lumping of control of persons training with mental health training is justified by the possibility of this kind of scenario, but the more officers are trained to recognize signs of mental illness, the more control they may be able to gain over these situations. In the case above, the weapon the suspect had turned out to be a BB gun, which was indistinguishable from a fully-functional handgun, and further suggests this individual was suicidal, and not necessarily homicidal. While use of lethal force to prevent homicide is logical and justifiable, use of lethal force to prevent suicide will always be ineffective. Distinguishing between a suicidal and homicidal suspect is extremely difficult, especially when weapons they may or may not possess

appear real, but this distinction could change the outcome of many deadly police interactions. In addition, police should present themselves at the last possible moment when approaching an armed and dangerous suspect. Not only is detaining a suspect difficult when alone but pulling a car over and then waiting for backup gives suspects time to think, plan, or panic. The element of surprise can potentially disarm a suspect but could also prevent an opportunity for the suspect to display aggression altogether. A major caveat to this is whether officers can obtain enough information to know that they can safely arrest the suspect before engaging them.

Despite these practical considerations, and the degree to which masculine ideals of dominance and control contribute to escalations of police encounters, my analysis of the six officer involved shootings by the Riverside County Sheriff Department makes clear the intense stress and variety of potential threats officers face. Yet it also shows evidence of exaggerated or uncertain dangers and opportunities for de-escalating the situation. In one case, officers believed they were under fire from a rifle, when in reality the suspect had a semi-automatic handgun. While a seemingly minor difference, the threat posed by a rifle is significantly greater than a handgun because rifles have greater range and accuracy. This assumption resulted in an abundance of caution as officers remained pinned in cover and amplified the officers' stress and fear levels (Riverside County Sheriff's Department March 2021). In another case, officers mistook a plastic water bottle full of a dark purple liquid for a handgun, reacting to the posture of the suspect rather than the clear identification of a weapon. Police are trained to read body language for signs of a threat, to be wary of suspect's pockets and waistbands that could conceal weapons, and to keep a distance of at least 21 feet from an armed suspect, which is the minimum distance required to guarantee officers have time to react defensively. As such, these six officer involved shootings are in line with standard police training, but viewing the footage begs the

question of whether opportunities to de-escalate were missed, such as deciding against pursuing an armed suspect into an abandoned field alone, and recognizing that the mere presence of uniformed police and squad cars can cause situations to escalate.

Given the breadth of life-threatening situations officers could face, there is also something to be said about the salience of threats that departments with a high degree of officer involved shootings, like the Riverside Sheriff's Department, face. The high level of engagement that departments have with each other on social media, especially through posts in remembrance of fallen officers, supports the notion that the trauma faced by one officer is shared, at least in part, by their department, if not across multiple departments. If officers become more aware of the potential threats that they may face, even though such threats are rare, it may change the mentality they police with, urging them to be more warrior than guardian. Further, it is worth considering that the more often police use deadly force, the more readily their colleagues may come to view it as necessary. While police training and discipline would likely reduce this tendency, it is apparent that some departments employ significantly more violence than others. Of the 6 shootings by the Riverside County Sheriff's Office this year, all officers and suspects involved were male, multiple shots were fired in each instance, and no suspects survived. While Riverside County has overseen significantly more officer involved shootings than any other case I examined, analysis of their most recent shootings would not be possible without the department adopting body cameras and posting the videos to their Facebook page in a commendable effort to be transparent.

**Conclusions**

This study explored multiple concepts of gender as they relate to policing, especially militarized masculinities, the variety of possible genders, and performative gender. In my analysis of each department, I attempted to apply a gender mainstream view, imagining the possibilities of how policing could be improved by becoming more conscious of gender in order to reduce the strict binary gender view that departments still hold today. After demonstrating the presence of militarized masculinity in departments across California, and qualifying each department's hiring and social media messaging to show department-specific types of militarized masculinities, I suggest departments take the following measures to diversify. Both sheriff departments and municipal departments alike should eliminate the use of binary definitions of gender, increase the gender diversity of their sworn officers and leadership teams, reduce differential deployments based on gender through active hiring and re-training, make public relations gestures that speak to underrepresented communities, add paternity leave and other policies that help shift the expectations around family leave to be nonbinary, and consider ways to improve the utilization of part time workers to reduce overwork culture and engage more of the community in public safety. By adopting some of these measures, departments will gradually transform, continuing the detente of strict gendered cultures already underway across the country. As a result, departments may receive a greater number and diversity of applicants, becoming more representative of the communities that they serve. Greater understanding of the complex ways in which gender and expressions of gender relate to policing must come from as many voices as possible, and given the data above with officers identifying as women outnumbered at least 10:1 in almost every department observed, especially in leadership

positions, it is clear that the cult of masculinity continues to dominate the conversation on what makes good policing.

**Future Research**

Further research on gendered police culture and police militarization should pursue the following questions. First, additional evidence is needed to identify whether or not the gender of officers correlates with escalation of force. Studying this is complicated because males continue to occupy the majority of sworn officer roles, and account for most violent police interactions due to this fact. This question also faces data limitations, as information on officer involved shootings is usually hard to obtain. But as it becomes increasingly available through the widespread adoption of body cameras, unequivocally answering this question may finally become possible. Second, does the hiring and training of veterans differ from civilian hiring, and are veterans who become law enforcement officers more likely to use force? Department specific data on the hiring of veterans was difficult to find, but data from the federal level could be helpful in answering this question. Third, while California's POST Commission is among the leading organizations of its kind in the nation, it still has seemingly struggled to implement and enforce statewide police standards given the great variety of law enforcement agencies it oversees. Observing standard police training in other states, and especially at the department specific level will prove fruitful in breaking down the monolithic view of police culture, and lead to better understandings of how militarized masculinities are created locally. Fourth, surveys could provide significant insights into the experiences of police officers and add nuance to the concept of police culture. Surveys of women and gender nonconformists who feel safe to share openly would be excellent sources for effective cultural reforms. Lastly, future researchers should use additional gendered analyses that also takes an intersectional approach. Considering

race and class-based factors as well, may yield a greater understanding of the various ways individual identities shape, and are shaped by police culture. Studying the relationship between police culture and gender is especially challenging, but the potential gains from bettering our understanding of the experiences of law enforcement officers could not only reduce the significant stress and workload that comes with the job, but potentially save lives as well.

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[i] The first two that were replaced were the Sutter County Health and Human Services department and the California National Guard. The third case replaced was the San Jacinto Police Department, which is overseen by the Riverside County Sheriff.
[ii] These estimates of the gender of sworn officers and leadership were obtained from the department's listed staff on Transparent California's website.
[iii] The data here was obtained from the Police Scorecard research project.
[iv] Data in this column was obtained from Police Scorecard.
[v] Police Scorecard.
[vi] Calexico Police Department 2021.
[vii] Soto 2021.
[viii] El Dorado County Sheriff's Department 2021.
[ix] City of Etna 2021.
[x] Mendocino County Sheriff's Department 2021.
[xi] Wear 2020.
[xii] Pacific Grove Police Department 2020.
[xiii] City of Palm Springs 2021.
[xiv] Damien 2020.
[xv] Riverside County Sheriff's Department July, 2021.
[xvi] Robinson 2018.
[xvii] Sonoma County Sheriff's Office 2021.
[xviii] Williams 2019.
[xix] Sutter County Sheriff's Office May 2021.
[xx] Tulare County Sheriff's Department 2021.

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