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**Are women better police officers?**  
Evidence from survey experiments in Uganda

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## **Abstract**

Can the feminization of public services improve quality and lower corruption? The underlying logic of such efforts is the belief that women have higher ethical standards than men. To answer this question, we\* examine the links between gender and policing practice using data from twelve vignette cases assessed by 600 Ugandan police officers. Our empirical strategy is based on a randomized framing experiment, which is designed to isolate the effect of gender from institutional factors and social norms. We find that the gender of the police officer depicted in the cases and victim gender are not related to the judgment of police malpractice, nor to suggested disciplinary measures. However, respondent gender matters for the reporting of misconduct and the perception of the official institutional policy of the police. Men are stricter when assessing cases along these dimensions. The results indicate that simply feminizing the police force is unlikely to enhance service quality.

## **Keywords**

Gender, discrimination, stereotyping, police, survey experiments, Uganda.

## **JEL classification**

C90, J16, O12.

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## 1. Introduction

This paper studies gender, corruption and ethical judgments among police officers in Uganda using randomized survey experiments. We contribute novel evidence that sheds doubt on the assumption that *feminizing* public services, in itself, will improve the quality of services and lower corruption.

Strengthening the role of women in the police is often seen as a silver-bullet in the fight against corruption and crime (Gutierrez, 2003). The line of reasoning is that women are more trustworthy, competent, pro-social and respectful (Gray, 2013; Kahn, 2013; Sichel, 1978). Based on such reasoning, a number of initiatives have been implemented to induct women into law-enforcement activities. One such program that has received considerable international attention is the ‘Black Mambas Anti-Poaching Unit’.<sup>1</sup> This group of young South African women, hunting poachers in Kruger National Park, has received the UN's 2015 Champions of the Earth Award for Inspiration and Action (Wills, 2015). The United Nations Environment Programme (2015) claims that since the Black Mamba Anti-Poaching Unit started its work in 2013, “the number of rhinos lost to poaching has plummeted, snaring and illegal bush-meat incidents have been reduced by 75 per cent, and nine poacher incursions have been detected, leading to the arrests of the offenders.” For the case of Nigeria, where female police officers are also very common, Adebayo (2005) claims that female and older officers are more ‘ethical’. There is similar, anecdotal evidence on the feminization of the police in South America. The World Bank, in its 1994-2000 Transport Rehabilitation Project, championed Peru’s efforts to recruit female police officers to restore the image of the traffic police (Gutierrez, 2003). A decade after the launch of this feminization campaign, female police officers believe that they have contributed to a reduction in low-level corruption, although, they continue to identify corruption as the biggest problem of the Peruvian police (Karim, 2011). In a similar vein, in 1999, the police chief of Mexico City initiated a major anti-corruption initiative by setting up an all-female traffic police force (Moore, 1999).<sup>2</sup> While there is no systematic study of this initiative, casual evidence suggests that female police officers also ask for bribes (Gray, 2013; Kahn, 2013).

Existing evidence on the feminization of the police is intriguing, but purely anecdotal. Rigorous causal evidence on such feminization efforts is scant and it is unclear how much of

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<sup>1</sup> See the website of the group: <http://www.blackmambas.org/> [Accessed October 6, 2015]

<sup>2</sup> Similar efforts have been undertaken in Mexico State, but the female police officers were not allowed to issue tickets, as their unit was not officially approved by the state (Kahn, 2013).

the ‘success’ simply stems from the publicity and scrutiny that comes with such programs. In addition, much of the evidence stems from male-dominated societies and institutions, where women even if they enter male domains, tend to fill positions of lower rank and have less room to engage in fraudulent behavior (Prenzler and Sinclair, 2013).<sup>3</sup>

This paper contributes to the debate on gender and policing by directly examining the underlying logic of feminization campaigns that have been implemented in a number of developing countries. The paper generates novel quantitative evidence based on an original survey of 600 police officers. The case of Uganda is interesting as its police is regarded as particularly corrupt (Transparency International-Kenya, 2011; Flanary and Watt, 1999; Watt et al., 1999; Biddle et al., 1998) and thus lends itself to a study of corruption and gender within a sensitive work environment.

Surveying police officers, especially on gender issues is not straightforward. Ideally we would want to observe actual behavior of police officers in the field by gender of officer, victim and perpetrator. This poses several problems: First, it is not easy to observe and measure illegal policing behavior. Second, quantitative analysis requires many, relatively uniform cases. Third, the gender of the police officer, victim and perpetrator is likely to be endogenous to the case and circumstances. For instance, it is possible that male officers or victims are more likely to be involved in violent crime (Rowe et al., 1995) or female police officers are more likely to be deployed in cases of domestic violence and sexual assault. Police officers could be directly asked about the role of gender in their daily work practice. This, however, raises concerns about over-reporting of socially expected behavior or under-reporting of bad practices in relation to gender.

To address these empirical concerns and add plausibly causal evidence to the literature, we make use of a survey experiment. Police officers were confronted with twelve hypothetical vignette cases carefully tailored to the local context. The cases ranged from traffic offences to robbery and murder. In these cases we randomly changed the gender of the police officer depicted in the case and the gender of the victim/perpetrator.<sup>4</sup> This exogenous variation allows us to estimate the impact of gender ‘framing’ in these cases. It is important to note that police

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<sup>3</sup> In Africa, female police officers are not uncommon. As early as in 1995, women constituted 18 percent of the total South African police which rose to 20 percent in 1998 (Rauch, 2001). In our representative survey from Uganda, 23 percent of the respondents are female. In 2011, in Uganda, 33 percent of the positions in public service were held by women (UNDP, 2012).

<sup>4</sup> We used common Ugandan male and female surnames such as Mary, Charlotte, Joseph, and James.

officers were unaware of the gender angle or framing of the study. An additional novelty of this paper is that it is not a laboratory experiment with students, but that our research involves actual police officers.

Overall, we find that cases are judged independently of the gender of the victim/perpetrator and the gender of the police agents depicted in the case. In addition to the randomly changed gender, we also assess the impact of the survey respondents' gender and observe four patterns: (i) In a majority of cases, female and male police officers display the same ethical standards (ii) Male respondents are significantly more likely to indicate that they would report misbehavior and corruption (iii) When it comes to choosing the most appropriate disciplinary measures, we do not observe gender differences (iv) Male police officers are more likely to indicate that the misbehaviors presented in the cases would be considered a violation of official policing rules in their agency. One case stands out: petty theft, which is considered significantly more severe and more likely to be reported if the offending police officer, who illegitimately puts money into their own pocket, is a woman. This is a particularly interesting finding as it is the only case with that pattern. It suggests double standards within the police with female officers having to live up to higher expectations when it comes to situations in which they could gain small personal advantages.

Our findings point to power structures within the police, where men in leading positions are aware of the official rules and know whom to turn to for reports of inappropriate behavior. To put our findings in context it is important to know that at the level of the Ugandan central police station, 79 percent of the administrative positions are held by men (Mutagubya, 2013). Because of their leading positions, male police officers are perhaps more aware of inappropriate behavior according to the official code of conduct. Women hold lower positions, are less aware and more restricted in their responses when observing misbehavior among their colleagues. Overall, our results suggest that the effect of feminization campaigns on service quality is likely to be limited.

The rest of the paper is organized as follows. In section 2 we discuss existing evidence on gender differences in ethical judgments and perceptions. We provide details on the Ugandan background in Section 3. Section 4 describes the survey instruments and data. Section 5 outlines the framing of the survey experiment and the empirical strategy. The results are discussed in Section 6. Section 7 concludes the paper.

## 2. Existing Evidence on Gender Differences

While the body of work on gender and the quality of police services and corruption in the police is limited, there are a number of non-experimental and experimental studies which have shown that women are the ‘better’ sex - women have been found to be less corrupt (Dollar et al., 2001; Swamy et al., 2001), more altruistic (Simmons and Emanuele, 2007; Eckel and Grossman, 1998), more trustworthy (Buchan et al., 2008), more peaceful (Gizelis, 2009; Caprioli, 2000) more equalitarian (Andreoni and Vesterlund, 2001), more likely to reciprocate (Croson and Buchan, 1999) and more likely to favor welfare spending (Gidengil, 1995; Welch and Hibbing, 1992).

However, the entire body of work does not unequivocally support the claim that women are inherently more pro-social and ethical. Women have been found to be neither more nor less socially oriented, but simply more sensitive in accounting for social conditions compared to men (Croson and Gneezy, 2009). When confronted with ethical dilemmas in the form of vignettes, women do not appear to have stronger ethical beliefs (Loo, 2003). With regard to gender and corruption, laboratory evidence suggests that women are not intrinsically more honest, but more opportunistic when they have a chance to break an implicitly corrupt contract. This results in lower corruption in mixed gender teams (Frank et al., 2011). Alatas et al. (2009) conducted corruption experiments with students from four countries (Australia, India, Indonesia, and Singapore). The authors document gender-differences in Australia, but not for the three Asian countries. They conclude that gender differences in attitudes towards corruption are not universal and thus, not only biological but also culturally formed. As opposed to lab experiments, Armantier and Boly (2008) compared gender differences in corruption amongst teachers in Burkina Faso. Experimental subjects had to grade 20 exams of which one exam paper came with a bribe. They found that females and males were equally likely to accept a bribe, but women were more responsive to monitoring and punishment.

The accumulated evidence on women’s willingness to engage in corrupt behaviour suggests that contextual factors matter rather than gender *per se* (Esarey, and Chirillo, 2013; Alatas et al., 2009; Alhassan-Alolo, 2007; Schulze and Frank, 2003; Sung, 2003). For instance, Goetz (2007) argues that most of the findings associated with reduction in corruption and the representation of women are confined to liberal democracies, which are less corrupt in the first place. Additionally, it is a matter of opportunities to engage in corrupt practices and due to the



gendered nature of access to politics and public office women have fewer opportunities to engage in corruption (Goetz, 2007).

### **3. Background: The Uganda National Police**

The Ugandan police force was institutionalized in 1906 (Uganda Police Force, 2007) and in April 2010 was officially named 'Uganda National Police' (Lumu, 2014). It is divided into 20 directorates based on tasks, and in regional and district offices, police stations and posts (Uganda Police, 2015). The head of the Uganda National Police is the Inspector General of Police.

Reliable data on the police and policing activities is scant since the statistical capacity of the administration is not very strong (Uganda Police Force, 2007). In the early 2000s, Uganda had less than 15,000 police officers with considerable year-to-year variation (Commonwealth Human Rights Initiative, 2006a). In 2007, the Ugandan police experienced a major increase and the creation of more directorates in preparation for the Commonwealth Heads of Government Meeting; the police force expanded from approximately 27,000 to 48,000 officers (Xinhua News Agency, 2007). According to data gathered from district level administrative sources, which may not always be accurate, the Ugandan police employed more than 48,000 officers in 2013. This amounts to roughly 128 officers per 100,000 inhabitants and is substantially lower than the average in the European Union.<sup>5</sup> At the end of 2014, the Inspector General announced plans to increase the police force to 65,000 officers (Kakamwa, 2014). Detailed information concerning the types of services provided by police officers is not available.

In 2013, 99,959 crimes were reported in Uganda, resulting in a crime rate of 273 per 100,000. In 2009, 103,000 crimes were recorded (Uganda Police, 2013). Public sector crime investigations have been on the rise. The Ugandan police reported 413 investigations in 2013, compared to 214 in 2012. The annual report by the police does not provide any background information on the type of crime. Thus, it is unclear if police officers are systematically included in these figures. However, official statistics from 2012 indicate that, in at least 19

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<sup>5</sup> The average EU country had about 350 officers per 100,000 inhabitants in 2012. The EU member with the lowest number of officers is Finland with 151 officers per 100,000 population. For more details see EuroStat (2014), [http://ec.europa.eu/eurostat/statisticsexplained/index.php/Crime\\_statistics#Further\\_Eurostat\\_information](http://ec.europa.eu/eurostat/statisticsexplained/index.php/Crime_statistics#Further_Eurostat_information) [Accessed October 13, 2015].

cases, police officers were involved in the crimes that were investigated. The majority of citizens consider the police the most corrupt institution in Uganda. This has been consistently documented in surveys carried out in 1998, 2003 and 2005 (Commonwealth Human Rights Initiative, 2006b).

#### **4. Survey Instruments and Data**

This paper uses data from a survey of 600 police officers in 10 districts of Uganda.<sup>6</sup> The survey took place in April 2015 and was carried out as part of an impact evaluation of a police-civil society project known as Police Accountability and Reform Project (PARP) that was implemented to foster exchanges between civil society and the police.<sup>7</sup> The project was carried out by the Human Rights Network Uganda (HURINET-U).

The Ugandan police force is organized into 16 police regions, which are further subdivided into police districts. Districts include police stations and posts. We picked ten districts at random, but never more than one district per region to ensure regional coverage. Within each of the selected districts, 60 police officers were selected and requested to participate in a self-administered pen and paper questionnaire in a classroom setting. Individual police officers were picked in a stratified way in collaboration with HURINET-U. To capture officers across all ranks, also officers in leading positions from the overarching regional level were identified based on their position to participate in the survey. Similarly, at the district level, the leading police officers of the headquarters were purposively included in the survey. Police stations within districts were then randomly sampled with half the officers in our sample coming from stations that have no more than 10 officers and 70% of the officers are from stations with up to 25 officers. The day of the survey was randomly picked and police officers from the local stations participated in the survey based on availability or presence. Since the local police stations consist of a small number of officers, we do not expect any systematic selection of participants into our sample. The aim of our sampling procedure was to have a stratified sample of officers that represents the full spectrum of police work, functions, positions and hierarchies. During the survey, each officer was provided enough personal space so as to ensure privacy and confidentiality. To ensure anonymity, officers were not asked to provide their names or addresses and hence it is not possible to identify the individual respondent.

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<sup>6</sup> The districts are Bushenyi, Iganga, Jinja Kabale, Kabarole, Tororo, Luwero, Mbarara, Mityana and Soroti.

<sup>7</sup> Detailed information about PARP is available in Hout et al. (2015).

The survey had two parts. In the first part, officers provided information on socio-economic characteristics. In the second and core part, officers were asked to review a series of twelve vignette cases that were adapted from Klockars et al. (2000). In collaboration with HURINET-U and the Uganda Police Force, the cases were changed to suit the local context, while irrelevant cases were deleted and new context-specific cases were developed.

The vignettes reflect real dilemmas and situations faced by the Ugandan police. In the survey, the cases were presented in no particular sequence to rule out ordering effects. For the analysis, we grouped the cases into five categories:<sup>8</sup> The *first group* of cases looks at the code of conduct among police officers themselves. The *second and largest group* of cases covers undue advantage, bribery and fraud. In particular, the least severe case depicts a situation where officers accept free meals and gifts. The next case (4) clearly mentions the word bribe and sets its value at half the amount of the official fine. Case 5 describes personal enrichment of about a daily wage. The sixth case describes theft, during a burglary investigation, of about a month's pay (see Appendix for details). The *third group* of cases contains situations, in which officers refuse to register a complaint against their colleagues. In the *fourth group*, we include two cases of severe crimes against individuals, which are not followed up by the police. Finally, the *fifth group* contains situations of undue force used by the police against suspects and demonstrators. For the purpose of this study, we further ordered the cases by severity within each of the five categories. This yields the following grouping of the twelve cases:

**Group 1: Code of conduct among police officers**

*Case 1: Police mechanic repairing supervisor's car in exchange for holidays*

*Case 2: Police officer driving drunk and having an accident goes unreported by colleague*

**Group 2: Situations of undue advantage, bribery and fraud**

*Case 3: Acceptance of freely offered meals and small gifts while on duty*

*Case 4: Speeding not reported in exchange for a bribe*

*Case 5: Officer taking money from a found wallet*

*Case 6: Police officer stealing goods while investigating a burglary*

**Group 3: Refusal to register complaints**

*Case 7: Refusal to register a complaint and humiliation of the complainant*

*Case 8: Refusal to register a complaint and a one-week detention for the complainant for false accusation*

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<sup>8</sup> The original ordering of the cases was as follows: Case 3, Case 4, Case 6, Case 9, Case 1, Case 2, Case 7, Case 11, Case 5, Case 10, Case 12, Case 8.

**Group 4: Reported severe crimes against individuals not followed up upon**

*Case 9: Police officer refusing to register wife beating*

*Case 10: Reported murder not being followed up on*

**Group 5: Undue force used by the police**

*Case 11: Foot patrol torturing a thief*

*Case 12: Brutal strike down of a demonstration*

The exact wording of the cases and the questionnaires as administered may be found in the appendix and attachment to the article. In turn, after each case, the police officers answered the following questions that are used in the analysis:

1. *How serious do YOU consider this behavior to be?*
2. *Do you think YOU would report a fellow police officer who engaged in this behavior?*
3. *How serious do MOST POLICE OFFICERS IN YOUR OFFICE consider this behavior to be?*
4. *If an officer in your agency engaged in this behavior and was discovered doing so, what if any discipline do YOU think SHOULD follow?*
5. *Would this behavior be regarded as a violation of official policy in your agency?*

The possible answer categories range on a Likert scale from 1 to 5. Questions 1 and 3 could be answered on a categorical scale from 1 [not at all serious] to 5 [very serious]. Responses to Questions 2 and 5 ranged from ‘definitely not’ [1] to ‘definitely yes’ [5]. Question 4 on disciplinary measures that should follow the discovery of such wrongdoings included the categories ‘none’ [1], ‘verbal reprimand’ [2], ‘written reprimand’ [3], ‘period of suspension without pay’ [4], ‘demotion in rank’ [5] and ‘dismissal’ [6].

Using these twelve hypothetical cases we attempt to obtain an idea of the culture of policing in Uganda. The advantage of using vignettes is that the cases are identical across officers and since we do not ask about the officers’ actual behavior but rather their assessment of theoretical cases in a private and anonymized setting such an approach should be less likely to yield socially desirable responses.

Descriptive statistics of the respondent’s socio-demographic characteristics, as well as all cases and related responses are presented in Tables 1 and 2. Our sample of 600 police officers is representative of the gender-mix of the Ugandan Police Force as 77 percent of the respondents are male. The average age is almost 42 years, indicating that we interviewed experienced police officers. Concerning the household situation of the police officers, 84 percent are married and live in households with an average of between six and seven people.

Only 25 percent of officers have more than secondary education. The large majority of the officers, about 95 percent, indicate that they responded honestly to the questions.

The average assessments are presented in Table 2. The mean value as well as the share of respondents picking the lowest (categories 1 and 2) and highest scores (categories 4 and 5) are presented. None of the offences are seen as trivial. However, we do observe the expected patterns in terms of judging the severity of the cases. The first group of cases pertaining to the code of conduct among the police tends to be judged mildly. One fourth of the respondents are not very critical (answer categories 1 and 2) when a police mechanic repairs a supervisor's car in exchange for holidays or when an inebriated police officer has an accident and is not reported by a colleague. Similarly, the receipt of free meals and small gifts is perceived as a minor offence as indicated by the average score of 3.53. Acceptance of a bribe is considered a serious offence by 85 percent of the officers and the average is 4.37. Taking a small bribe is judged more severely as compared to stealing the equivalent of a day's pay (score of 4.37 versus 4.04) from a lost wallet. Stealing goods, worth about a month's pay, after a burglary, receives the most critical assessment with 87 percent of the respondents judging this as a very serious offence.

Interestingly, even if officers do not judge an offence too harshly they appear to be more inclined to report police officers who engage in an offence. For instance, despite a relatively mild average judgment of 3.72 for a case where a police officer repairs a supervisor's car in exchange for holidays, the average score for reporting such an offence is 4.06. In all except two cases a police officer's own assessment of the severity of offences is higher than the reaction expected by fellow police officers. This suggests overconfidence in the adequacy of one's own behavior. The overestimation of own ability relative to others is a feature well documented in the literature (Dunning et al., 2004; Camerer and Lovallo, 1999; Svenson, 1981). Individuals often think that they are 'better' or above average. Officers are aware that official police policy is likely to be more stringent than their own beliefs. In almost all cases the officers judge that their agency would take a more stringent view of violations as compared to their own views. For instance, the difference between own judgment and perceived agency policy is more than 0.6 for a police officer who refuses to register a complaint by a former arrestee and reported murder that is not being followed up on.

## 5. The Framing of the Survey Experiment and the Empirical Strategy

Our aim is to examine the role of gender in Ugandan policing practice using the hypothetical cases discussed in the previous section. Policing in general, but even more so in combination with gender, is a sensitive issue and asking explicit questions is unlikely to yield credible responses. To elicit responses which permit a credible analysis of gender differences, we designed a survey or framing experiment where we randomly administered four versions of the questionnaires to the police officers. The four versions attached at the end of this article are identical except that in the vignette cases we varied the gender of the depicted police officers, who we will refer to as *rogue officers* in the rest of the paper, and we also varied the gender of the victim/perpetrator. Note that all officers faced male and female-framed cases. In other words, there is within question variation in framing. The randomized gender framing allows us to examine whether the assessment of the severity of the cases and potential ensuing actions depends on the gender of the rogue officer and the victim. Most importantly, the police officers themselves were not aware of the randomized gender framing. In other words, we can identify the causal effect (if any) of gender framing on the survey responses.

Descriptive statistics by type of questionnaire (Table 1) indicate that randomization is well balanced across pre-determined observable characteristics of the respondents. Equality of means cannot be rejected at the 5 percent level for all possible comparisons across groups except one pair-wise comparison. In Table 2 we present the  $p$ -value of the difference-in-means test associated with the largest inter-group difference. Group D has the largest share of men and group C the smallest. Group differences are small and insignificant for age, marital status, household size and education. Average self-reported honesty in responding to the questions varies between 93 and 97 percent but is statistically insignificant.

To examine whether assessments of the severity of the cases and potential actions depend on the gender of the rogue officer, the gender of the victim and the gender of the respondent, we employ an ordered logit model. The model accounts for the ordinal nature of the data, which consists of  $j$  categories. The outcome variable is denoted by  $Y_{id}$  for every individual police officer  $i$  in district  $d$ . The model then looks as follows:

$$P(Y_{id} > j) = g(X_{id} \beta) = \frac{\exp(\alpha_j - X_{id} \beta)}{1 + \exp(\alpha_j - X_{id} \beta)} \quad (1)$$

where,  $X_{id} \beta = \beta_1 \text{rogue\_officer}_{id} + \beta_2 \text{victim}_{id} + \beta_3 \text{gender}_{id} + \text{Ind}_{id}' \beta_4 + \lambda_d$ . The outcome  $Y_{id}$  corresponds to any of the responses given to the questions following every vignette. Equation

(1) describes the probability that the response of the  $i$ th individual is in the  $j$ th or higher category. The cut-off point for each of the five response variables is denoted by  $\alpha_j$ .<sup>9</sup> The gender of the rogue officer which randomly varies across vignettes is represented by  $rogue\_officer_{id}$  and the gender of the victim, which also randomly varies, is given by  $victim_{id}$ . We also include the gender of the respondent, which is denoted by  $gender_{id}$ . We coded our gender variables such that 1 identifies males and 0 females. In addition, the individual level control variables are included in the matrix  $Ind_{id}$ . The specification controls for age, a dummy indicating whether educational attainment is secondary school or lower, a dummy for being married, and household size. In addition the specification controls for district-level characteristics such as differences in local policing cultures by including district dummies  $\lambda_d$ . Standard errors are clustered at the district level.

For each case, we present odds ratios associated with the gender of the rogue officer, if available the gender of the victim, and the gender of the respondent.<sup>10</sup> An odds ratio greater than one indicates that men are more likely to engage in certain types of behavior. Gauging magnitudes of odds ratios is not straightforward. Note that odds ratios may be translated into Cohen's  $d$  to judge effect size (see Borenstein et al. 2009). An odds ratio of 1.44 corresponds to a 'small' but meaningful effect (i.e.  $d=0.2$  of Cohen's standardized effect size for continuous variables in multivariate regressions). Our sample size is large enough to detect odds ratios slightly larger than a 'small' effect of 1.5. We used the power calculations proposed by Whitehead (1993) for proportional odds ordinal logistic model.<sup>11</sup> In addition, the inclusion of co-variates also enhances power.

## 6. Results

The results are reported in Tables 3 and 4. We first discuss the role of gender in influencing the judgment and reporting behavior of the respondent and thereafter the perception of the surveyed police officers about the responses of their colleagues and the appropriate disciplinary action.

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<sup>9</sup> For a detailed description of the ordered logit model and its application, see Williams (2006).

<sup>10</sup> In the main tables 1 and 2, we present odds ratios and denote statistical significance at the usual levels with stars. We can provide point estimates along with standard errors on request. As introduced in section 3, we include additional co-variates in the analysis. For the sake of brevity, we do not present these coefficients. These are available upon request.

<sup>11</sup>As usual, we set power to 0.8 and type I error 0.05. When we assume equal proportions across the five answer categories, as well as equal group size, sample size is 597. Our estimation sample size is 598.

### *Judgment and Reporting*

To start with we consider the role of the gender of the rogue officer in influencing a respondent's judgment about the severity of different practices. As shown in Table 3, column 1, except for one case, there is no effect of the gender of the rogue officer on the *judgment* of the respondents (Table 3, Column 1). Similarly, except for two cases, the gender of the rogue officer does not influence the *reporting* of bad practices (Table 3, Column 4). For the two cases that display gender differences we find opposite results. If the rogue officer depicted in the case that deals with refusing to register a complaint by a former arrestee (Table 3, Column 4, Case 7) is a man, the likelihood that his misconduct gets reported is significantly higher. The odds ratio is 1.76. Yet in case 5, a rogue female officer taking money from a wallet is more likely to be reported as compared to her male counterparts as can be seen from the odds ratio of 0.61.

For several cases (cases 2, 7, 8, 10, 11) we provide estimates of the effect of the victim's gender in influencing the judgment of police officers. These estimates indicate that judgment of the severity of the cases is independent of the gender of the victim. Except for one case, the same is true with regard to the likelihood of reporting. Across cases, odds ratios are close to one and there are no systematic patterns.

Finally, we examine the effect of the *respondent's gender* on their judgment of the severity of the various cases (Table 3, Column 3) and on reporting behavior (Table 3, Column 6). Male and female police officers tend to evaluate the severity of the different situations in the same way. That is, in most cases odds ratios are not statistically different from one. Only in two cases do male respondents think that the offence is more serious as compared to the perception of their female colleagues (Table 3, Column 3, Cases 1 and 6). These are cases which deal with a police mechanic repairing a supervisor's car in exchange for holidays and a fellow police officer stealing goods while investigating a burglary. Respondent gender has a clear influence when it comes to *reporting* of bad policing practices (Table 3, column 6). In six out of 12 cases, male respondents are more likely to report fellow police officers who engage in bad practices. In these six cases gender differences are statistically significant at the 1 or 5 percent level. In one other case the p-value is 12 percent. The gender differences tend to be pronounced for severe misconduct such as acceptance of bribes, stealing while investigating, torturing a thief, refusal to register a complaint by a former arrestee and the brutal strike down of a demonstration.

To summarize, there are no gender differences in terms of judging the severity of various cases, which suggests that both male and female police officers have similar ethical



standards. However, these similar standards do not translate into similar reporting behavior as male police officers indicate that would be more likely to report their colleagues as compared to female police officers. One interpretation of this pattern, and an issue to which we will return later, is that women may feel less secure in their jobs and/or they may occupy relatively lower positions in the police hierarchy and hence maybe ‘afraid to speak up’ and report their mainly male, senior colleagues. To be more specific, there are 137 women in our sample of 600 respondents indicating that in absolute numbers women are underrepresented in the police force. Only 3 women hold a high-ranking post compared to 31 men, i.e. more than 90% of the high rank positions are held by males. Conversely, the percentages of women “within” medium and low-ranked position (21% and 27%) are roughly in line with the proportion of female respondents (23%).

#### *Judgment of Other Police Officers, Disciplinary Punishment and Official Policy*

To examine differences in respondents’ views between their own judgment of cases and their perception about the judgment and the integrity of their colleagues, we also asked “*how serious do most police officers in your office consider this behavior to be?*” As discussed earlier (see Table 2), there is evidence that respondents tend to think that they have higher ethical standards than their colleagues. Estimates of gender differences in such responses are presented in Table 4, Columns 1 to 3. With regard to the gender of the rogue officer the estimates indicate that in three cases respondents think that the judgment of their colleagues will be affected by the gender of the rogue officer. This may be contrasted with their own judgment which is gender sensitive in the case of only one vignette. Based on the estimates we may infer that respondents think that their colleagues will be less likely to consider non-reporting of speeding (and taking a bribe) or taking money from a wallet as a bad practice (Cases 4 and 5) if the rogue officer is male. In contrast, respondents indicate that if a male (rogue) officer refuses to register wife beating their colleagues are more likely to consider it a serious offence as compared to a situation where a female rogue officer refuses to register a complaint (Table 4, Column 9). Respondents indicate that the gender of the victims depicted in the cases is unlikely to affect the judgment of their colleagues (Table 4, Column 2). Furthermore, the gender of the respondents has no bearing on their judgment of the ethical standards of their colleagues (Table 4, Column 3).

Estimates of the effect of gender on the disciplinary measures that respondents think should be taken if a police officer engages in malpractice are provided in Table 4, Columns 4 to 6. By and large, the severity of the disciplinary measure does not depend on the gender of

either the rogue officer or the victim (Table 4, Columns 4 and 5). There are two exceptions: according to respondents, male officers torturing a thief should be more severely punished compared to female officers (Table 4, Columns 4, Case 8) and if an officer, independent of the gender, refuses to register the complaint of a woman, he or she should be more severely punished according to the respondents (Table 4, Columns 5, Case 8). Estimates of the impact of the gender of the respondent on the level of the disciplinary measure are reported in Table 4, Column 6. As shown earlier, in Table 3, male respondents are more likely to report malpractice. Despite this higher reporting propensity, except for two cases, there are limited gender differences in opinions about disciplinary measures. Two cases stand out, female respondents indicate that officers should get more severely disciplined if they try to cover up for a colleague who has had a car accident while inebriated (Table 4, Column 6, Case 2). Male respondents suggest more severe punishment for officers who steal money from a wallet that they have found (Table 4, Column 6, Case 5). On average, however, we find an odds ratio close to 1 for the disciplinary measure and thus no systematic gender differences.

Finally, we asked whether the behavior described in the cases would be regarded as violations of official police policy (Table 4, Columns 7 to 9). Once again, although there are some variations, the effect associated with the randomly changed gender of the rogue officer and the victim is small. There are three deviations. First, covering for an inebriated colleague involved in a car accident is more likely to be seen as a violation of official policy if the officer is male (Table 4, Column 7, Case 2). Second, if the drunken colleague, i.e. the victim, is a man, respondents are more likely to consider this practice a violation of official rules (Table 4, Column 8, Case 2). Third, torturing a thief is more likely to be considered a violation of the rules if the officer is a woman (Table 4, Column 7, Case 11). More interesting is the effect of respondent gender on the evaluation of official policy. Male police officers are more likely to evaluate the misconduct depicted in the cases as violation of the official rules of policing (Table 4, Column 9). Except for one case, the odds ratio is larger than 1 and in five cases the coefficients are statistically significant at conventional levels and in another two cases are imprecisely estimated with a  $p$ -value of about 20 percent.

#### *Case-specific finding: Case 5*

Across all but one case, we find that neither victims, nor perpetrators nor misbehaving police agents are judged differently depending on their gender. This suggests similar ethical standards

across both sexes. However, across the various cases, Case 5, *Officer taking money from a found wallet*, stands out. The gender of the rogue officer influences the judgment of the respondent, the reporting behavior and the perceived judgment of others. Petty theft, as depicted in this case, is considered significantly more severe if the offending police officer is a woman (Table 3, Column 1). Rogue male officers are less likely to be judged harshly for stealing money. This is interesting, because we also find that male respondents are more likely to report this behavior (Table 3, Column 6), but less likely to do so if the rogue officer is male (Table 3, Column 4). In addition, the survey experiment reveals that *all* police officers perceive that women will be more critically judged among their fellow office colleagues if they misappropriate money (Table 4, Column 1). Moreover, it is the male respondents who opt for a more severe punishment of officers who take money from a wallet (Table 4, Column 6). These patterns raise the possibility of double standards within the police. Female officers who engage in petty theft are more likely to be judged severely and are also more likely to be reported.

## **7. Discussion and Conclusion**

This research contributes new evidence to the debate on the feminization of public services. More generally, we add evidence to the literature on gender perceptions and stereotyping. Earlier studies about gender bias tended to treat gender as a residual category or black box, without disentangling the underlying institutional and cultural factors that shape gendered realities (Dollar et al., 2001; Swamy et al., 2001). Since then many gender myths have been repudiated. Even the widely held belief that women are more emotional has been challenged (Feldman Barrett et al., 1998).

We examined gender perceptions in the context of the Ugandan police force. We surveyed 600 Ugandan police officers exposing them to hypothetical cases of policing behavior within a framing experiment that randomly varied the gender of the individuals depicted in the cases. Across all but one case, we found that gender framing does not influence responses. The one exception is petty theft as depicted in Case 5, which is considered significantly more severe and more likely to be reported if the rogue police officer is a woman. This suggests that, at times, petty theft may be judged more harshly if it is committed by female police officers. Overall, we conclude that women have similar ethical standards as men, but their willingness to report misbehavior is lower.

The differences in reporting behavior may *in part* be attributed to differences in the relative positions of men and women in the Ugandan police hierarchy. According to a report

put together by the Centre for Women in Governance (2010) only two of the top 14 positions in the Ugandan police force were held by women. In our sample, only 8.8% of high-ranked posts are held by women. Given the Ugandan context it is perhaps not surprising female police officers, who are in the minority, are less likely to report misbehavior as it essentially means filing complaints about their senior male colleagues. Female police officers might also be less familiar with the official rules and regulations of the agency. Overall, our research supports the idea that it is naïve to think that women are inherently more ethical or better police officers.

How much do the case assessments by police officers tell us about actual policing practices? While this question has not been answered in the context of police work, the medical literature makes considerable use of vignette techniques and has documented the consistency between hypothetical cases and actual behavior for both doctors' diagnostic skills and patients' tendency to consult a doctor (Peabody et al., 2000; Van der Meer and Mackenbach, 1998). Vignette cases and virtual patients are seen as a way of training and assessing medical skills, which ultimately have a bearing on the life and death of patients (Triola et al., 2006).

Future work on gender and police could perhaps employ both vignettes and direct observation to assess consistency between the two approaches or a combination of paper vignettes with a more behavioral approach in the form of hypothetical plays involving actors who engage in the kinds of behavior depicted in the vignettes as is extensively used in medical research (Das et al., 2008; Gibbons et al., 2002; Barrows, 1993). Finally it is worth pointing out that the methods in this paper lend themselves to study behavioral responses to other sensitive topics such as discrimination on grounds of sexual orientation.<sup>12</sup>

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<sup>12</sup> The established and widely used list questions inferring discriminating behavior against ethnical or sexual minorities may be adapted as well (Rayburn et al., 2003; Kuklinski et al., 1997a; Kuklinski et al., 1997b).

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## Tables

**Table 1:** Descriptive statistics and randomization balance

Variable	Mean	SD	Min	Max	Mean by Questionnaire Version				DiM <i>p</i> -value
					A (N=152)	B (N=150)	C (N=147)	D (N=151)	
Male respondent	0.77		0	1	0.76	0.77	0.71	0.84	0.006
Age	41.77	9.44	21	60	41.35	41.45	41.72	42.54	0.741
Married	0.84		0	1	0.88	0.85	0.80	0.84	0.061
Household size	6.67	3.99	1	25	6.68	6.89	6.56	6.56	0.476
Secondary education or less	0.75		0	1	0.74	0.72	0.79	0.76	0.168
Honest reporting	0.95		0	1	0.93	0.97	0.94	0.94	0.107

**Notes:** 600 respondents across 10 districts. The age of two respondents is missing. DiM denotes, difference in means. It is the difference between the largest and the smallest average value across the four groups. The associated *p*-value is reported.

**Table 2:** Case summary statistics – Means and proportions of responses

	<i>How serious do YOU consider this behavior to be? [not at all serious 1-5 very serious]</i>			<i>Do you think YOU would report a fellow police officer who engaged in this behavior? [definitely not 1-5 definitely yes]</i>			<i>How serious do MOST POLICE OFFICERS IN YOUR OFFICE consider this behavior to be? [not at all serious 1-5 very serious]</i>			<i>If an officer in your agency engaged in this behavior and was discovered doing so, what if any discipline do YOU think SHOULD follow? [none 1-6 dismissal]</i>			<i>Would this behavior be regarded as a violation of official policy in your agency? [definitely not 1-5 definitely yes]</i>		
	Mean	Bottom of scale	Top of scale	Mean	Bottom of scale	Top of scale	Mean	Bottom of scale	Top of scale	Mean	Bottom of scale	Top of Scale	Mean	Bottom of scale	Top of scale
<i>Group 1: Code of conduct among the police officers</i>															
1. Police mechanic repairing supervisor’s car in exchange for holidays	3.72	0.25	0.67	4.06	0.26	0.54	3.69	0.22	0.63	3.80	0.17	0.54	4.24	0.14	0.81
2. Police officer driving drunk and having an accident goes unreported by colleague	3.71	0.26	0.65	3.92	0.32	0.50	3.60	0.26	0.58	3.65	0.23	0.52	4.11	0.17	0.77
<i>Group 2: Situations of undue advantage, bribery and fraud</i>															
3. Acceptance of freely offered meals and small gifts while on duty	3.53	0.28	0.59	3.17	0.38	0.45	3.45	0.30	0.55	3.15	0.37	0.33	3.96	0.20	0.72
4. Speeding not reported in exchange for a bribe	4.37	0.13	0.85	4.25	0.26	0.54	3.92	0.20	0.70	4.31	0.06	0.70	4.54	0.09	0.89
5. Officer taking money from a found wallet	4.04	0.20	0.75	4.27	0.25	0.56	3.80	0.21	0.65	4.11	0.13	0.64	4.43	0.10	0.86
6. Police officer stealing goods while investigating a burglary	4.47	0.11	0.87	4.60	0.15	0.69	4.33	0.10	0.83	5.07	0.04	0.88	4.64	0.06	0.92
<i>Group 3: Refusal to register complaints</i>															
7. Police officer refusing to register a complaint by a former arrestee	3.62	0.28	0.65	4.05	0.26	0.57	3.54	0.26	0.57	3.48	0.23	0.42	4.31	0.12	0.83
8. Refusal to register complaint instead keeping victim in detention	4.01	0.27	0.69	4.47	0.10	0.83	3.97	0.22	0.71	4.12	0.11	0.62	4.56	0.09	0.89
<i>Group 4: Reported severe crimes against individuals not followed up upon</i>															
9. Police officer refusing to register wife beating	4.28	0.16	0.83	4.47	0.15	0.70	4.13	0.14	0.79	4.01	0.11	0.58	4.59	0.06	0.90
10. Reported murder not being followed up	3.92	0.24	0.73	4.47	0.07	0.86	4.10	0.15	0.77	2.73	0.67	0.25	4.53	0.08	0.89
<i>Group 5: Undue force used by the police</i>															
11. Foot patrol torturing a thief	3.9	0.22	0.71	4.08	0.25	0.54	3.78	0.21	0.66	3.88	0.18	0.57	4.35	0.12	0.84
12. Brutal strike down of a demonstration	4.12	0.20	0.78	4.05	0.20	0.75	4.24	0.14	0.81	3.92	0.32	0.63	4.51	0.10	0.88

Note: N=600. Bottom of scale refers to responses 1 and 2 on the Likert scale while top of scale refers to responses 4 and 5 on the Likert scale.

**Table 3: Gender effects on police officer judgment and reporting**

	<i>How serious do YOU consider this behavior to be?[not at all serious 1-5 very serious]</i>			<i>Do you think YOU would report a fellow police officer who engaged in this behavior?[definitely no 1-5 definitely yes]</i>		
	Gender (Male=1; Female=0)					
	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	(5)	(6)
Order Logit Model - Odds Ratios	Rogue Officer	Victim	Respondent	Rogue Officer	Victim	Respondent
<i>Group 1: Code of conduct among the police officers</i>						
1. Police mechanic repairing supervisor's car in exchange for holidays	0.95		1.50**	0.86		1.39°
2. Police officer driving drunk and having an accident goes unreported by colleague	0.74	0.88	1.03	0.92	0.95	1.13
<i>Group 2: Situations of undue advantage, bribery and fraud</i>						
3. Acceptance of freely offered meals and small gifts while on duty	1.22		0.92	0.87		0.85
4. Speeding not reported in exchange for a bribe	1.14		1.41	1.02		1.48**
5. Officer taking money from a found wallet	0.60**		1.16	0.61**		2.25***
6. Police officer stealing goods while investigating a burglary	0.72		1.73**	0.88		1.67**
<i>Group 3: Refusal to register complaints</i>						
7. Police officer refusing to register a complaint by a former arrestee	0.98	0.9	1.26	1.76***	0.57***	1.57**
8. Refusal to register complaint instead keeping victim in detention		0.92	1.31		0.77	1.36
<i>Group 4: Reported severe crimes against individuals not followed up upon</i>						
9. Police officer refusing to register wife beating	0.92		1.12	1.24		1.13
10. Reported murder not being followed up		0.83	1.03		0.84	1.37
<i>Group 5: Undue force used by the police</i>						
11. Foot patrol torturing a thief	1.2	1.24	0.87	1.26	1.03	1.78***
12. Brutal strike down of a demonstration			1.01			1.75**
Simple average of odds ratios in the column	0.94	0.95	1.2	1.05	0.83	1.49

Note: Covariates include age, marital status, level of education, household size and district dummies. Sample size is 598. Standard errors are clustered at the district level. \*,\*\*, and \*\*\* denote statistical significance associated with the odds ratios at the 10%, 5%, and 1% level, respectively. ° denotes statistical significance at the 12% level. In case 8 we compare female officers to two ungendered rogue officers.

**Table 4:** Gender effects on police officer view about colleagues, disciplinary measures and official institutional policy

	<i>How serious do MOST POLICE OFFICERS IN YOUR OFFICE consider this behavior to be? [not at all serious 1-5 very serious]</i>			<i>If an officer in your agency engaged in this behavior and was discovered doing so, what if any discipline do YOU think SHOULD follow?[none 1-6 dismissal]</i>			<i>Would this behavior be regarded as a violation of official policy in your agency? [definitely not 1-5 definitely yes]</i>		
	Gender (Male=1; Female=0)								
	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	(5)	(6)	(7)	(8)	(9)
Order Logit Model - Odds Ratios	Rogue Officer	Victim	Resp.	Rogue Officer	Victim	Resp.	Rogue Officer	Victim	Resp.
<i>Group 1: Code of conduct among the police officers</i>									
1. Police mechanic repairing supervisor's car in exchange for holidays	0.9		1.29	0.82		1.16	1.03		1.74***
2. Police officer driving drunk and having an accident goes unreported by colleague	0.95	0.76	0.84	0.9	1.08	0.66**	1.63**	1.46*	1.04
<i>Group 2: Situations of undue advantage, bribery and fraud</i>									
3. Acceptance of freely offered meals and small gifts while on duty	0.99		1.07	0.83		0.75	1.05		0.91
4. Speeding not reported in exchange for a bribe	0.71*		1.1	1.06		1.11	0.77		1.05
5. Officer taking money from a found wallet	0.63**		1.36	1.18		1.46*	0.74		2.12***
6. Police officer stealing goods while investigating a burglary	1.42		1.14	1		1.22	1.07		1.58*
<i>Group 3: Refusal to register complaints</i>									
7. Police officer refusing to register a complaint by a former arrestee	1.07	0.87	1.29	0.92	0.9	1.22	0.99	1.3	1.36+
8. Refusal to register complaint instead keeping victim in detention		0.9	1.18		0.75*	1.08		0.84	1.42+
<i>Group 4: Reported severe crimes against individuals not followed up upon</i>									
9. Police officer refusing to register wife beating	1.42**		1.08	0.88		0.83	0.98		1.53*
10. Reported murder not being followed up		0.91	1.09		0.87	0.77		1.05	1.82**
<i>Group 5: Undue force used by the police</i>									
11. Foot patrol torturing a thief	1.03	1.18	0.86	1.57**	0.79	0.96	0.50***	0.76	1.2
12. Brutal strike down of a demonstration			1.04			1.32			1.33
Simple average of odds ratios in the column	1.01	0.92	1.11	1.02	0.88	1.05	0.97	1.08	1.43

Note: Covariates include age, marital status, level of education, household size and district dummies. Sample size is 598. Standard errors are clustered at the district level. \*, \*\*, and \*\*\* denote statistical significance associated with the odds ratios at the 10%, 5%, and 1% level, respectively. + denotes significance at the 20% level. In case 8 we compare female officers to two ungendered rogue officers.

## **Appendix**

The survey experiment made use of four “gendered” versions of below cases. The four questionnaires as administered are attached to this article.

### **The 12 cases**

#### **Group 1: Code of conduct among the police officers**

*Case 1: A police officer, who happens to be a very good auto mechanic, is scheduled to work during coming holidays. The supervisor Catherine offers to give him these days off, if he agrees to repair her personal car. Evaluate the supervisor’s behavior.*

*Case 2: At 2:00 a.m., a police officer, who is on duty, is driving his patrol car on a deserted road. He sees a vehicle that has been driven off the road and is stuck in a ditch. He approaches the vehicle and observes that the driver is not hurt but is obviously drunk. He also finds that the driver is a police officer. He transports the driver to her home. Evaluate the behavior of the police officer on duty.*

#### **Group 2: Situations of undue advantage, bribery and fraud**

*Case 3: A police officer routinely accepts free meals, cigarettes, and other items of small value from merchants on his duty. She does not solicit these gifts and is careful not to abuse the generosity of those who give gifts to her.*

*Case 4: The police officer Godfrey stops a motorist for speeding. The officer agrees to accept a personal gift of half of the amount of the fine in exchange for not taking the offending motorist to court to answer to charges for the traffic offence.*

*Case 5: A police officer finds a wallet in a parking lot. It contains an amount of money equivalent to a full day’s pay for that officer. She reports the wallet as lost property but keeps the money for herself.*

*Case 6: The police officer Glory discovers a burglary of a general merchandise shop. The display cases are smashed, and it is obvious that many items have been taken. While searching the shop, she takes 10 jerricans of cooking oil and 1 sack of posho of 100 kilograms worth about a month’s pay for that officer. She reports that the items had been stolen during the burglary.*



### **Group 3: Refusal to register complaints**

*Case 7: A formerly arrested man comes to the police station and wants to fill in a complaint form. He claims that he was not treated properly during his arrest. The police officer Sarah who is in charge laughs at him and sends him away.*

*Case 8: Samwel goes to a police station to register a complaint over one of their officers who had beaten and tortured him. At the station he finds a friend of the officer who tortured him. The friend refuses to register his complaint and instead decides to detain him for a week over giving false information to the police. Evaluate the behavior of the friend.*

### **Group 4: Reported severe crimes against individuals not followed up upon**

*Case 9: Mary goes to the police station to report a case where her husband has been beating her for the last one year. She lost one of her teeth and has a damaged eye due to the beating. The police officer on duty thinks this is a mere family dispute and not a crime for the police to handle. He refuses to register the case.*

*Case 10: A police officer on duty receives a woman who wants to register a case of murder of her child by a neighbor. The officer registers the case and promises to follow up and arrest the suspect in a few hours' time. Two days down the road, the suspect has not been arrested and was sending messages threatening to harm the complainant. The woman went back to the same police station to report the scenario and the suspect was arrested and detained at the police station. However, the suspect was released immediately on account that there was not enough evidence to convict him. Evaluate the behavior of the police officer who first received the woman.*

### **Group 5: Undue force used by the police**

*Case 11: Two police officers on foot patrol surprise a man who is attempting to break into a shop. The man flees. They chase him for about ½ a kilometer before apprehending him by tackling him and wrestling him to the ground. After he is under control, both officers punch him a couple of times in the stomach and step on his back several times as punishment for fleeing and resisting.*

*Case 12: A subdistrict has a challenge of water shortage for a period of four months. The area leader together with residents decide to petition national water for the poor services and failure to deliver. However, the situation continues for two more months. The area leader and the residents opt to stage a peaceful demonstration as a way of showing their dissatisfaction. No sooner had the demonstration started than the District Police Commander deployed a team of officers with teargas and firing of live ammunitions killing 20 of the demonstrators including the area leader. Evaluate the District Police Commander's behavior.*