

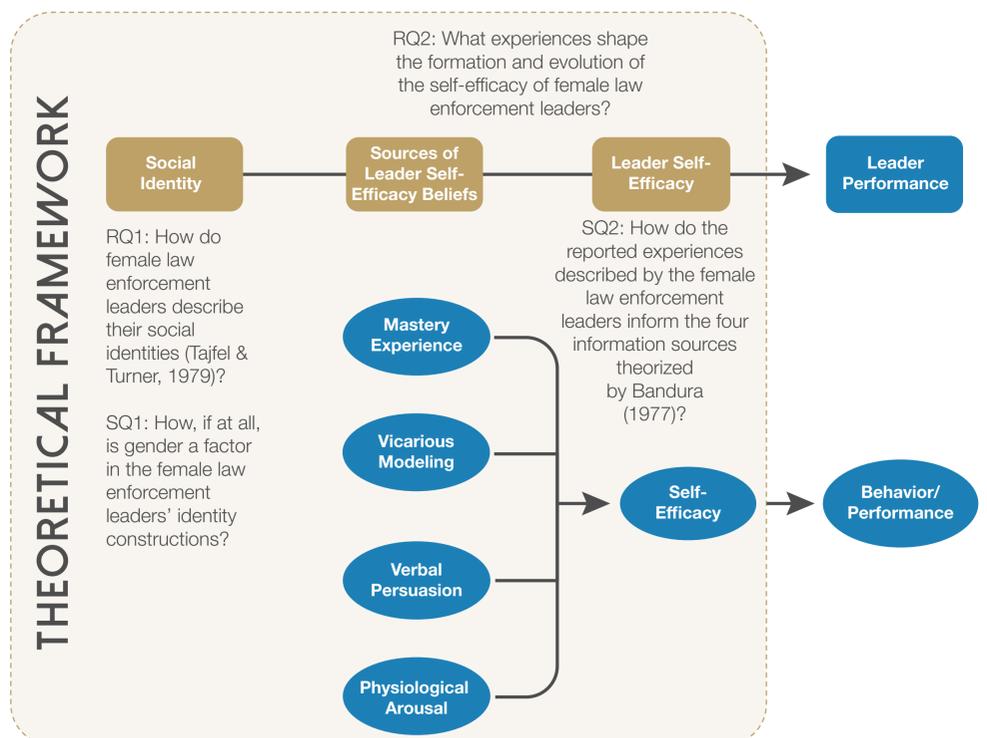
# PROTECTING AND SERVING HER WAY



A QUALITATIVE INQUIRY OF FEMALE LAW ENFORCEMENT LEADERS' SOCIAL IDENTITY AND LEADER SELF-EFFICACY

PURPOSES	WHO	HOW	WHEN
(1) To better understand how female law enforcement leaders described the construction of their social identities and (2) influences on their leader self-efficacy (or confidence, to lead)	Sixteen (16) leaders at Lieutenant rank or above (or equivalent) in federal, state, county, and city law enforcement organizations	Qualitative research study (Merriam & Tisdell, 2016) using semistructured 60- to 90-minute individual in-person interviews	Interviews took place September and October 2017. Dissertation defense completed May 21, 2018.

A belief is not merely an idea the mind possesses; it is an idea that possesses the mind.



## RESULTS OF THE DATA ANALYSIS



### THEME 1

## GENDER BIAS

The first theme that emerged from the data analysis is that gender bias constrained the women's acceptance, inclusion, and effectiveness as law enforcement leaders.

**FINDING 1**

Participants believe women have a greater burden to balance personal and professional choices because they remain the primary caregivers for their families and this higher burden has adverse consequences on women's interest in a career in law enforcement and their interest in promoting to leadership positions.

**FINDING 4**

Participants believe women have a higher burden to prove competence and worth against male standards early in their careers. However, age and experience tend to relax these perceptions.

**FINDING 5**

Participants indicated the promotion process can adversely impact women's self-efficacy by raising questions about the degree to which promotions are merit based.

**FINDING 6**

Participants believe women feel a greater burden to maintain professional and personal boundaries. This higher burden results in their forming support and social relationships outside of their current organizations.

### THEME 2

## FEMININE INFLUENCES

The second theme that emerged was that women have a positive influence on organizational culture and organizational performance outcomes.

**FINDING 2**

When describing differences between men and women, the participants generally described women more favorably than men and used more feminine characteristics (Bem, 1974) when describing their leadership styles.

**FINDING 3**

Participants espoused beliefs that women bring unique skills, attitudes, and perspectives that improve organizational outcomes.

**FINDING 9**

Participants described their self-efficacy as most strongly influenced by their successes on the job.

### THEME 3

## FEMALE INTERACTIONS

The third theme that emerged from the data analysis described the impact of interactions with other women.

**FINDING 7**

Participants feel the climate in which female law enforcement leaders lead has become increasingly more inclusive and professional, but more work remains to be done.

**FINDING 11**

Participants see mentors as role models who enhanced their self-efficacy by modeling effective behavior, offering constructive feedback, and serving as evidence of the possible.

**FINDING 14**

Participants believe women sometimes create for one another, while there is a strong desire to experience more support and encouragement from women in the organization.

### THEME 4

## SUPPORT NETWORKS

The final theme emerging from the data analysis is that support networks build confidence. The essence of this theme is the importance of community – both in terms of the participants' sense of belonging and as a source of confidence.

**FINDING 8**

Participants believe that peer support affords women a sense of belonging and provides access to support from colleagues who understand the challenges of being a law enforcement leader.

**FINDING 10**

Participants identified family as an integral element of their support networks with positive influences on their self-perceptions of competence, capability, and self-efficacy.

**FINDING 12**

Participants believe sponsors and supervisors enhanced their social identity and self-efficacy by providing exposure and supporting advancement into leadership positions.

**FINDING 13**

Participants described support from subordinates as validating and their self-efficacy.

## CONTACT

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