

Consider the Source: The Media's Coverage of Female FBI Agents in the 1970s

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Abstract:

This paper explores the representation of female FBI agents in newspapers throughout the 1970s until the early 1990s. While this subject is not widely discussed, due to lack of exposure and research, this paper reveals how crucial these women were during this period as they redefined how society and male FBI agents viewed women in previously male-dominated fields. In 1970, the media responded to these women with a variety of assumptions and stereotypes defining women as sex objects, physically weak, and mentally unable to handle the dangerous work environment. Through examination of scholarly and primary sources, this paper uncovers the media's integral role in influencing the public's view of women by reinforcing these stereotypes, and explores why the shift in opinions occurred in later decades. In the early 1970s, journalists focused on the women themselves as their attitudes reflected the negative stereotypes about women that Hoover's administration engrained into the bureau and public, while in later periods journalists expressed their concerns with institutional issues within the FBI and the negative perceptions of female agents from their male colleagues. The reason for this shift was that as the decade progressed and Hoover's legacy dwindled, women proved their capabilities in the workforce. As a result, journalists shifted to focusing on whether the FBI complied with these new policies and how the public and male agents adjusted to this transition. This paper is divided into

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two categories: sources in the 1970s and sources in the 1980s to early 1990s which aids readers in observing the clear shift between these two critical decades.

Before the early 1970s, the Federal Bureau of Investigation prohibited women from becoming agents. J. Edgar Hoover, the first Director of the FBI, claimed that a job in this field “was too dangerous for a woman” and turned away applications for potential female agents.¹ Even though women participated in women’s liberation movements to end gender inequality in the early 1960s, it took over a decade for any changes within law enforcement.² It was not until after Hoover’s death and President Richard Nixon’s signing of Executive Order 11478 *Equal Employment Opportunity in the Federal Government* in 1972 that women could work for federal organizations.³ Women took advantage of this new policy and entered several breakthrough careers not only in the FBI but also within other organizations such as the Secret Service, the Drug Enforcement Administration, and the Bureau of Alcohol, Tobacco, and Firearms.⁴ Women finally had the opportunity to prove themselves in careers that men previously dominated.

1 “Will Sue FBI: She Wants to be the First G-Woman,” *Los Angeles Times*, July 24, 1972, <https://ezproxy.lib.calpoly.edu>.

2 Esther J. Koenig, “An Overview of Attitudes toward Women in Law Enforcement,” *Public Administration Review* 38, no. 3 (May-June 1978): 269, <https://www-jstor-org.ezproxy.lib.calpoly.edu>.

3 Helen H. Yu, “Gender and Public Agency Hiring: An Exploratory Analysis of Recruitment Practices in Federal Law Enforcement,” *Public Personnel Management* 47, no. 3 (2018): 248, <http://eds.b.ebscohost.com.ezproxy.edu>.

4 Marlene Cemons, “Women in FBI: Novelty is Over,” *Los Angeles Times*, June 7, 1981, <http://expcom.ezproxy.lib.calpoly.edu>.

As women progressed into these various fields, the strong presence of the media during this period rapidly unleashed an entirely new realm of information to the public. However, the press also had a reputation for associating women with certain stereotypes and gender roles. In Gaye Tuchman’s 1979 article in *Signs*, the leading international journal in women’s and gender studies, she asserted that the media often portrayed women as “sex objects” or “as wives and mothers.”⁵ Tuchman also claimed that the media depicted women as “victims,” and men as the “aggressors.”⁶ As a result, the media played an integral role in influencing how the public viewed women by reinforcing these stereotypes. While the term “media” includes several different outlets, this paper will primarily focus on articles from the *New York Times* and the *Los Angeles Times* to generalize media coverage of female FBI agents. Throughout the 1970s to the beginning of the 1990s, female FBI agents redefined how individuals viewed women in previously male-dominated fields, which garnered media response.

Yet, how did media coverage of the progressive integration of women into the FBI shift over time and why? I argue that in the early 1970s, journalists treated female agents as a curiosity and could not imagine how they would fulfill their job in a society that previously prohibited women from male-dominated fields. By the 1980s, the public slowly adjusted to the new work environment that included women and

5 Gaye Tuchman, “Women’s Depiction by the Mass Media,” *Signs* 4, no. 3 (1979): 531, <http://www.jstor.org.ezproxy.lib.calpoly.edu>.

6 Gaye Tuchman, “Women’s Depiction by the Mass Media,” *Signs* 4, no. 3 (1979): 531, <http://www.jstor.org.ezproxy.lib.calpoly.edu>.

journalists expressed their concerns with institutional issues within the FBI and how they treated women under the new discrimination policies issued by Nixon. This shift partially occurred because of the administration change from Hoover to Patrick Gray who revoked a lot of the discriminatory practices Hoover engrained in the Bureau from the 1920s to 1970s. Under Hoover, the FBI kept a tight, close “old boy network” of fathers, sons, nephews, and neighbors and the sudden addition of women caused male agents to develop negative perceptions of their female colleagues.⁷ As the decade progressed and Hoover’s regulations dissolved, newspapers revealed the shift in accepting women in the FBI. At the same time, women also proved they could handle the demands of the job when given the opportunity to succeed which diminished the media’s stereotypical views of the capabilities of women.

Unfortunately, there has been hardly any scholarship on the inclusion of women in the FBI and the media’s response to these specific issues during this period. Research does exist, however, on similar topics such as women in federal law enforcement and women policing. In an article that reviews women in law enforcement broadly, Helen H. Yu of the University of Hawaii at Manoa acknowledged that women were “grossly underrepresented in law enforcement” because several organizations did not always follow through with their proposed policies regarding the integration of women at the time.⁸ Yu showcased a

7 “In Lawsuit, Former Agent Says F.B.I Would Not Promote Her,” *New York Times*, September 9, 1994, <http://ezproxy.lib.calpoly.edu>.

8 Helen H. Yu, “Gender and Public Agency Hiring: An Exploratory Analysis of Recruitment Practices in Federal Law Enforcement,” *Public Personnel Management* 47, no. 3 (2018): 252, <http://eds.b.ebscohost.com.ezproxy.lib.calpoly.edu>.

section of the institutional issues within federal law enforcement, yet she did not specifically mention the FBI, nor address the media’s responses to these problems. Other scholars have researched inequality and discrimination within federal law enforcement. In the article “Difference in the Police Department” from the *Journal of Contemporary Criminal Justice*, Venessa Garcia argues that despite the entrance of females into police departments in the 1970s, women faced constant discrimination and obstacles when advancing their careers.⁹ Garcia explained that for this cycle to change, women had to prove their abilities within the organization.¹⁰ Yu and Garcia acknowledged that there were issues with the representation of women in law enforcement because of various factors such as wage gaps, physical barriers, and negative attitudes toward women. Yu and Garcia revealed the challenges of being a woman in law enforcement, but their research inspires others to study similar issues specifically within the FBI.

Interestingly, despite the limited research on women in the FBI, scholars have engaged far more thoroughly with the media’s portrayal of women in general. In the chapter “Sex/Gender and the Media: From Sex Roles to Social Construction and Beyond” within *The Handbook of Gender, Sex and Media*, Cynthia Carter provided insight on the media’s part in stereotyping the role of women in society.¹¹ Carter sug-

9 Venessa Garcia, “Difference in the Police Department Women, Policing, and Doing Gender,” *Journal of Contemporary Criminal Justice* 19, no. 3 (August 2003): 332, <https://journals.sagepub.com>.

10 Ibid.

11 Cynthia Carter, “Sex/Gender and the Media: From Sex Roles to Social Construction and Beyond,” In the *Handbook of Gender, Sex and Media*, edited by Karen Ross, 28, Oxford: Wiley-Blackwell, 2011, <https://onlinelibrary.wiley.com>.

gested that in the early 1970s, gender experts determined advertisements “as potentially debilitating and demeaning, and as inaccurate reflections of ‘real women.’”¹² While this source demonstrates the media’s history of portraying women in questionable ways, it also reveals how the media has a significant role in influencing others. However, this source lacks any focus on news articles and provides a general overview of women in the media rather than the media’s depiction of women in law enforcement. Therefore, this paper differs from the sources above as it brings together the ideas from previous scholars but focuses on factors that contributed to the shift in media coverage of the acceptance of hiring women in the FBI.

Sources in the 1970s

Journalists have historically covered men in the FBI heavily by acknowledging their successes in the field and showcasing their incredible attributes. Many of the articles discuss male agents who captured hijackers, infiltrated gambling schemes, and prevented bombings.¹³ The articles that praise these victories only include the experiences of men, as the FBI prohibited women from becoming agents until 1972. The *Los Angeles Times* even contained an entire section dedicated to

¹² Ibid.

¹³ See “A Round of Applause for the FBI,” *Los Angeles Times*, April 2, 1970, <https://search-proquestcom.ezproxy.lib.calpoly.edu>; “Cuban Exile Sentenced in Five L.A. Bombings,” *Los Angeles Times*, March 13, 1970, <https://search-proquest-com.ezproxy.lib.calpoly.edu>; “Hijacker of Jet Captured by Ruse: \$100 Million ‘Ransom’ Gets Him to Land,” *Los Angeles Times*, June 5, 1970, <https://search-proquest-com.ezproxy.lib.calpoly.edu>.

“Men and Events” that covered the achievements of men in a variety of fields, from politics, to law enforcement, and business.¹⁴ In the 1970 article “A Round of Applause for the FBI,” a journalist praised male agents for their “tireless determination and highest professional dedication” which differed from the other journalists that investigated the physical characteristics and capabilities of women in male-dominated fields.¹⁵ Although there are a few articles that address some of the controversial discriminatory practices of the FBI in this decade, it was not until the 1980s that journalists began to question male FBI agents and the institutional practices of the Bureau.

Meanwhile, in the 1970s many news outlets saw the potential women possessed in the FBI, but others expressed certain limitations on their ability to succeed as agents. The media’s initial responses to women in the FBI began with publications on the first female agents, Susan Roley Malone and Joanne Pierce. These key figures provided the perfect opportunity for the news to generate reactions to female agents, as Malone and Pierce were pioneers of their time. One such reaction was found in the 1972 *Los Angeles Times* article “FBI Names Ex-Nun, Ex-Marine First Female Agents,” in which the author presented agent Malone and agent Pierce as single.¹⁶ The utilization of the term

¹⁴ “Men and Events,” *Los Angeles Times*, August 16, 1970, <https://search-proquest-com.ezproxy.lib.calpoly.edu>.

¹⁵ “A Round of Applause for the FBI,” *Los Angeles Times*, April 2, 1970, <https://search-proquestcom.ezproxy.lib.calpoly.edu>.

¹⁶ “FBI Names Ex-Nun, Ex-Marine First Female Agents,” *Los Angeles Times*, July 17, 1972, <http://ezproxy.lib.calpoly.edu>.

“single” was significant because during this period, women in the FBI broke away from the expectation of having “housewife” roles and the media assumed that women in the FBI could not be women in traditional ways. The inclusion of “Ex-nun” and “Ex-marine” in this article reveals the beginning of women transitioning from other careers to working for the FBI. However, the title also demonstrates that even though Malone was a former officer of the Marine Corps, which validates her credibility as an FBI agent, she still received hesitations from the media about integrating into this field. Because the FBI prohibited women from the bureau for so long, journalists possessed stereotypical attitudes and biological myths about women which they further spread to the public.

Moreover, while a comment on relationship status seems irrelevant on the surface, the implications undermined the addition of women into the bureau as it assumed that women could not be married or have children if they wanted to become an agent. However, many of the female agents during this period were married and handled the demanding expectations of the job. Even though the job requirements included a lot of overtime, they still managed their relationships with their families at home.¹⁷ Some articles saw the potential of females in the FBI but also expressed their concern with the likelihood of women being able to fulfill their roles as agents. The media’s fascination with the personal lives of these women fueled the public’s curiosity about them as the regulations of not allowing women in the FBI officially dissolved and it was an event the public never previously experienced.

¹⁷ “FBI Names Ex-Nun, Ex-Marine First Female Agents,” *Los Angeles Times*, July 17, 1972, <http://ezproxy.lib.calpoly.edu>.

Undoubtedly, this shift caused society to question their assumptions about gender roles and break down gender barriers that existed for so long in the workplace.

Similarly, the media also highlighted the controversial issue of whether women were physically capable of becoming an agent. In the 1972 *Los Angeles Times* article “Female G-Men? One Agent Asks: ‘Want Daughter to Pack a .38?’” a staff writer questioned the physical capabilities of women. The title of this article suggested that it was shocking for women to be a part of the FBI and that a woman could never be a “G-man,” a synonym for a male agent. The title also implied that fathers would disapprove of their daughters enlisting in such a career. While there were articles that successfully integrated and prompted women to join the FBI, not all sources had the same intentions. The article featured several statements from anonymous agents about their opinions regarding the addition of females into the bureau. All the comments included in the article discouraged females from joining the FBI. One agent claimed, “The job isn’t for a woman...there’s a lot of danger involved.”¹⁸ Another agent addressed the factor of a woman’s weight and believed that “if a fellow [was] with a 120-pound *girl* he’d have to do most of the job.”¹⁹ Both of these statements demonstrated inherent curiosities about the future dynamic between a male and female agent because they assumed that the male agents would now do twice the work. This article reflected more of the attitudes gener-

¹⁸ “Female G-Men? One Agent Asks: Want Daughter to Pack a ‘.38?’” *Los Angeles Times*, May 19, 1972, <http://ezproxy.lib.calpoly.edu>.

¹⁹ Ibid. Italics added for emphasis.

ated by Hoover's administration as it reveals the fears men possessed about allowing women into their established brotherhood. Furthermore, journalists also focused on the complaints and lawsuits women filed against the FBI. Sandy Nemser, a woman who applied to be the first female agent, sued the FBI in the 1970s.²⁰ For example, in the 1971 *Los Angeles Times* article "She Wants to Be First G-Woman," a staff writer described Nemser's suit against the FBI for not accepting her application to become an agent.²¹ Two FBI representatives told Nemser that a woman could not move around like the male agents and that they would not give her any respect.²² Nemser later expressed her frustration with these comments. When asked about her stance against the FBI, Nemser responded, "I'm not going to burn my bra in protest...I'd rather hit them in the courts where we can win."²³ The inclusion of Nemser's statements provided the opportunity for the media to encourage other women to fight for the right to become agents. Rather than accept defeat or protest with little success, Nemser took action against one of the most influential organizations in the country. The media knew that the public would be curious to see Nemser's position as well as the outcome of the case. Nemser's suit represents a small glimpse into the many women that fought against discrimination through the courts and lawsuits become an essential tenet in later years to understand why the FBI eventually promoted and advertised employment opportunities within the bureau to women. Therefore, the

20 "Will Sue FBI: She Wants to be the First G-Woman," *Los Angeles Times*, July 24, 1972, <https://ezproxy.lib.calpoly.edu>.

21 Ibid.

22 Ibid.

23 "Will Sue FBI: She Wants to be the First G-Woman," *Los Angeles Times*, July 24, 1972, <https://ezproxy.lib.calpoly.edu>.

publication of this lawsuit directly supported Nemser's advancement into the FBI because it gave Nemser a voice. Although she received several discouraging comments from the Bureau about the qualities she lacked as a female agent and the Bureau ultimately denied her application, Nemser proved that she was a force to be reckoned with.

While questions about the physical abilities of women concerned many journalists, they also covered changes in policy and style within the FBI. After Hoover's death, the recruitment process for women and minorities became a priority under Hoover's successor Patrick Gray. Gray demanded that several advertisements, radio stations, and newspapers should promote the FBI as a workspace that supported women.²⁴ For example, in the 1972 *New York Times* article, "Gray Plans Wide Change in F.B.I Policy and Style," by Robert Smith, the author described the proposed policies in the bureau.²⁵ These policy changes included recruiting more women and minorities, altering dress code, and making committees more focused on recruitment.²⁶ However, this article also revealed that Gray worried about women performing their duties in dangerous situations.²⁷ Despite the advances Gray made to improve policies regarding women, an underlying hesitation about women being able to handle a job as an agent remained. Thus, while

24 Rita Ciolli, "FBI's Most Wanted List: More Female and Minority Agents," *Los Angeles Times*, March 10, 1985, <http://ezproxy.lib.calpoly.edu>.

25 Robert Smith, "Gray Plans Wide Change in F.B.I Policy and Style," *New York Times*, May 12, 1972, <https://ezproxy.lib.calpoly.edu>.

26 Robert Smith, "Gray Plans Wide Change in F.B.I Policy and Style," *New York Times*, May 12, 1972, <https://ezproxy.lib.calpoly.edu>.

27 Ibid.

this source had a promising headline, the author revealed that the FBI still expressed concerns about the physical capabilities of women, which undermined their integration into the Bureau.

Sources in the 1980s Through the Early 1990s

By the late 1980s to early 1990s, there was a significant change in the media's representation of women. More journalists no longer questioned the abilities of women as agents, as women had proved that they could handle the job under the new policies implemented by Patrick Gray. For example, Marlene Cimons, a woman, wrote an article in 1981 titled "Women in FBI: Novelty is Over."²⁸ Cimons's utilization of the word "novelty" revealed that the public no longer viewed female agents as unusual or as a new addition to the bureau. The curiosity that sparked many of the initial assumptions about women was now in the past as women proved they could handle the job's requirements and Hoover's discriminatory legacy slowly faded away. The majority of work within the FBI consisted of interrogation and conducting research, and women performed just as well, if not better than, their male counterparts.²⁹ The integration of women into the FBI paralleled the increase of women in other previously male-dominated fields, but now journalists recognized their achievements and abilities rather than hindering them. Over time, Cimons's support for the progression of women became stronger as she dedicated her reports to the advancement of these female agents from the 1970s to the 1980s. She

²⁸ Marlene Cimons, "Women in FBI: Novelty is Over," *Los Angeles Times*, June 7, 1981, <http://expcom.ezproxy.lib.calpoly.edu>.

²⁹ Ibid.

wanted the public to see how these women redefined the way others viewed them, and that people could no longer question the abilities of women in the FBI.

But even so, other journalists still had doubts about the agency's true intentions despite many of the progressive plans and programs the FBI advertised. In the 1985 *Los Angeles Times* article "FBI's Most Wanted List: More Women and Minority Agents," author Rita Ciolli supported the advancement of women into the FBI, but also admitted that it was a slow process and ultimately a public image boost.³⁰ While this article mentioned that other news outlets proclaimed that women made an average salary of \$28,998, this was not the case.³¹ Women who had college degrees and proved their capabilities within the FBI had meager wages compared to their male counterparts.³² The FBI may have been in the process of changing its old habits, but the organization was far from respecting women to the highest standard. While the FBI portrayed women as a priority to the institution, Ciolli asserted that it was just a "cosmetic uplift" so they could please the public.³³

³⁰ Rita Ciolli, "FBI's Most Wanted List: More Female and Minority Agents," *Los Angeles Times*, March 10, 1985, <http://ezproxy.lib.calpoly.edu>.

³¹ Ibid.

³² U.S. Department of Education, Association of American Colleges Project on the Status and Education of Women, *Looking for More Than a Few Good Women in Traditionally Male Fields*, Julie Kuhn Ehrhart and Bernice R. Sandler, Washington, DC: Government Printing Office, 1987, <http://eds.a.ebscohost.com.ezproxy.lib.calpoly.edu>.

³³ Rita Ciolli, "FBI's Most Wanted List: More Female and Minority Agents," *Los Angeles Times*, March 10, 1985, <http://ezproxy.lib.calpoly.edu/login?url=https://search-proquest-com.exp.roxy.lib.calpoly.edu>.

More importantly, this “cosmetic uplift” possibly stemmed from the FBI having to pay over a million dollars to dozens of women who filed class-action discrimination lawsuits in the 1970s after Hoover rejected their applications on the basis of sex.³⁴ With all of the negative publicity the FBI received from this, the Bureau realized that promoting the FBI as a beneficial workplace for women helped their public image. Ciolli made a direct attack on the FBI’s true intentions behind the addition of more women into the FBI. Although some of the other articles published in the 1980s showed development, Ciolli made it clear that there would always be a fight no matter how much changed because of the “manufactured elitism” and brotherhood Hoover established. Ultimately, the majority of journalists no longer expressed concerns about women handling dangerous situations or overcoming physical requirements, but instead focused on the institutional failures of the FBI.

In addition, other journalists revealed that the FBI also failed to acknowledge complaints from female agents about discrimination in the bureau. By 1981, more than two thousand women joined together as part of a sex-discrimination class-action suit against the FBI, which inspired other women to take action.³⁵ For example, in the 1986 *Los Angeles Times* article “Women FBI Agents in L.A. Get Hearing,” William Overend documented responses to the recent ban of nude posters of women on the walls of male agent’s quarters after women filed

34 Ibid.

35 “FBI to Recruit More Women,” *Los Angeles Times*, July 30, 1981 <http://zproxy.lib.calpoly.edu>.

complaints against the Los Angeles FBI office.³⁶ The office had the reputation of male agents making degrading and inappropriate comments towards women. Overend mentioned that several male agents referred to women as “cupcakes” and “broad agents.”³⁷ While women ignored these comments, they took a stand against the nude posters and blatantly expressed their complaints concerning the degrading work environment. This article demonstrates that while the FBI attempted to make dramatic changes to the administration after Hoover’s death, many instances of discrimination persisted.

Moreover, while several of the male agents Overend interviewed prevented women from feeling comfortable in the workplace, Overend also questioned, Richard Bretzing, the head of the Los Angeles FBI office. According to Overend, Bretzing stated that the women in his office had little to complain about.³⁸ While this ban of posters was a historic moment of progress for women in the FBI, Bretzing questioned whether or not these women had legitimate claims. Therefore, when the female agents spoke out, there was a very different response than when Bretzing commented on the issue. The author’s inclusion of Bretzing’s response to the issue undermined the progress women made as the audience saw the Bureau’s resistance to integrate women into their offices. Despite these women proving their capabilities as agents and fighting against discrimination, the FBI failed to acknowledge their concerns and covered up any issues regarding discrimination.

36 William Overend, “Women FBI Agents in L.A. Get Hearing,” *Los Angeles Times*, April 20, 1986, <http://ezproxy.lib.calpoly.edu> (accessed May 1, 2019).

37 Ibid.

38 Ibid.

Subsequently, in the early 1990s the media covered another lawsuit filed by Joanne Pierce, who was one of the first female agents in the 1970s. In 1994, a staff writer for the *New York Times* published the article “In Lawsuit, Former Agent Says F.B.I. Would Not Promote Her,” which responded to the lawsuit with comments from Pierce’s attorney Leon Friedman, a professor at Hofstra University Law School.³⁹ The lawyer claimed that even though agent Pierce performed well in all of her assignments, the FBI did not promote her because of the “old boy network.”⁴⁰ The “old boy network” defined the gender-exclusive nature of the FBI before the 1970s, as there were only male agents. Many of them feared that with the addition of women, they would lose their brotherly bond. The author also included in his article that the spokesmen for the FBI refused to comment on the situation because he was unaware of the existence of the case, which showed the FBI’s problems as an institution.⁴¹ This article revealed that several men within the Bureau did not support this change and that the organization prevented women from advancing further in the FBI. Even though women proved they performed well in the Bureau, women like Pierce did not get promoted, while many of her male colleagues did. Thus, the staff writer demonstrated that over time, journalists shifted their articles to include the institutional issues within the FBI rather than the women themselves as they were curious if the FBI would follow through with its progressive policies.

39 “In Lawsuit, Former Agent Says F.B.I Would Not Promote Her,” *New York Times*, September 9, 1994, <http://ezproxy.lib.calpoly.edu>.

40 Ibid.

41 Ibid.

On the other hand, some women received promotions in the FBI even though the process took decades. For instance, in the 1994 *Los Angeles Times* article “Promotion Heightens Her Profile,” by Nicholas Riccardi, he discussed Kathleen McChesney, a former policewoman who received a promotion to the highest-ranking female agent in the 1990s.⁴² This article detailed how McChesney overcame obstacles, such as physical requirements and discrimination, throughout her journey in federal law enforcement. She also spent seven years as a detective working on the Ted Bundy case.⁴³ While she started her journey in the FBI in 1978, it was not until the 1990s that she received a promotion.⁴⁴ Riccardi noted that in the past the public knew McChesney as the woman who “had to gain seven pounds to go on patrol,” but now the focus was on her promotion.⁴⁵ Riccardi’s article revealed that news outlets transitioned from focusing on the concerns of a woman becoming an agent to exposing how difficult it was to advance a woman’s career within the FBI. Although McChesney had fulfilled all the requirements and outperformed her role as an agent, the Bureau failed to acknowledge her accomplishments for over a decade.

Overall, the examination of the topics that journalists and respondents covered in a few decades provides a new perspective of the progressive changes that occurred within the FBI in the 1970s and the decades that followed. However, these issues revealed something far more

42 Nicholas Riccardi, “Promotion Heightens Her Profile,” *Los Angeles Times*, September 20, 1994, <http://ezproxy.lib.calpoly.edu>.

43 Ibid.

44 Ibid.

45 Ibid.

significant than just the media's representation of female FBI agents. There was a dramatic shift in the media's portrayal of these agents, as in the early 1970s journalists focused on the women themselves, while in later periods journalists investigated how the FBI adjusted to the different work environment and how they treated women after anti-discrimination policies passed. While Hoover's legacy includes many successes and victories for the FBI, women could not become FBI agents until after his death. The FBI's new administration coupled with the federal government's initiatives to provide women with more opportunities in the workplace reflected only the beginning of a long battle for equal treatment in previously male-dominated fields.

Even though several female agents in the 1970s proved that becoming a member of the FBI was not an impossibility, there is still a severe underrepresentation of women in federal law enforcement today.⁴⁶ In 2015, only fifteen percent of all law enforcement officers were women.⁴⁷ By 2018, the percentages were still low but the U.S. Equal Employment Opportunity Commission, an organization that enforces federal laws that make discrimination against potential job applicants illegal, continues to work on implementing policies to recruit more

46 Helen H. Yu, "Gender and Public Agency Hiring: An Exploratory Analysis of Recruitment Practices in Federal Law Enforcement," *Public Personnel Management* 47, no. 3 (2018): 252, <http://eds.b.ebscohost.com.ezproxy.lib.calpoly.edu> (accessed May 8, 2019).

47 U.S. Equal Employment Opportunity Commission, *Program Evaluation: Recruitment and Hiring Gender Disparities in Public Safety Occupations*, Washington, DC: Government Printing Office, 2018, <https://www.eeoc.gov/federal/reports/upload/pspe.pdf> (accessed June 6, 2019).

women in law enforcement.⁴⁸ The concerns that journalists expressed in the 1970s revealed that not everyone supported the progression of women into the FBI and that many news outlets undermined the abilities of women in previously male-dominated fields. While several journalists had a common goal of reporting various events, they also revealed fascinating trends about the curiosities within society. They showcased how these female agents redefined societal norms and challenged history, regardless of their positive or negative opinions towards women. Therefore, when reading news articles or viewing broadcasts on television about the underrepresentation of women in law enforcement, be sure to consider the source.

48 U.S. Equal Employment Opportunity Commission, *Program Evaluation: Recruitment and Hiring Gender Disparities in Public Safety Occupations*, Washington, DC: Government Printing Office, 2018, <https://www.eeoc.gov/federal/reports/upload/pspe.pdf> (accessed June 6, 2019).

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