

Gender Similarities and Differences in Correctional Staff Work Attitudes and Perceptions of the Work Environment*

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Abstract. *Over the last few decades, there has been a dramatic increase in the number of women entering the traditionally male-dominated field of corrections. During this time, researchers, using a variety of different methodological techniques, have attempted to disentangle the potential gender differences among correctional personnel. In building on this research, the following study surveyed correctional staff at a Midwestern high security state prison in the fall of 2000 in order to determine whether male and female correctional staff differed in their perceptions of the work environment, as well as their general attitudes toward their jobs. A total of 28 work environment indices were measured, including occupational attitudes not traditionally examined. Bivariate results indicated gender differences in perceptions of dangerousness, role ambiguity, role conflict, input into decision-making, job autonomy, supervision, punishment ideology, and job satisfaction; however, after controlling for age, race, education, position, tenure, and supervisory status, only dangerousness and job satisfaction remained statistically significant. The implications of these contemporary findings for correctional research and practice are also considered.*

Keywords: corrections; prison staff; gender; occupational attitudes.

Introduction

The field of corrections has changed drastically in the past thirty years—sometimes for the better, sometimes not. Since the mid-seventies, there has been about a seven-fold increase in the number of people incarcerated (Schmallegger and Smykla, 2005). Litigation and legal interventions have increased as well. The growth and change in corrections has led to increased research. One area that has received increased scholarly attention has been the perceptions and behaviors of correctional staff. Working in corrections is a unique work experience. Prisons are not involved in processing or the production of inanimate objects, or providing services to willing customers. Instead, prisons deal with humans,

“processing and manipulating them” (Jayewardene and Jayasuriya, 1981:149). Correctional work is often hard and dangerous, and working in a correctional institution holds little prestige in society. At the same time, it is a rather routine, calm job punctuated with periods of crisis. This has led to the realization that studying the perceptions and attitudes of correctional staff is critical.

One positive development in the field of corrections has been a more diverse workforce. Although the majority of correctional staff is white men, the last several decades has seen a dramatic increase in the number of female correctional staff working in men’s prisons (Pollack, 2002). This has led to a growing trend to study whether men and women differ in their perceptions and attitudes of the work environment. Like other areas of criminal

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justice, this research developed primarily because males questioned whether females could handle the physical and emotional strains associated with corrections. Research has found that in some ways male and female correctional employees are similar to one another in their perceptions and attitudes, and in other ways are different. While there is a burgeoning body of literature that has examined the differences between male and female correctional staff, not all the salient dimensions of the work environment have been explored with contemporary personnel. Most studies have examined limited areas of the occupational environment for correctional officers only, and many are outdated, as female representation at the time of these prior studies was very small. The current study attempts to expand the literature by examining a very broad array of occupational perceptions and attitudes among all staff, as correctional members contribute to the work environment irrespective of their assignment. Overall, 28 different correctional staff work environment perceptions and attitudes were measured. Using both bivariate and multivariate analyses, gender differences were tested. Such an expansive study of male and female attitudes among all correctional personnel has not been part of traditional empirical inquiries.

Literature Review

Over the past thirty years, gender differences have been the focal point of social science studies more broadly, as well as within the major criminal justice institutions. As such, there has been a growth in the literature that explores potential differences among correctional staff. The impetus for such inquiries has stemmed from male resistance to female co-workers, and the assumption that women were not able to adapt to the strains of the occupation (Martin and Jurik, 1996). Two theoretical models have guided a majority of the research on assessing views, attitudes, and behaviors of female and male correctional staff. The first model is the “Importation-Differential Experiences Model” (Van Voorhis et al., 1991). The main premise of this model is that a wide array of demographic factors influences a person’s perceptions, views, attitudes, and behaviors. Others have used this model to focus on a single demographic factor that takes precedence over all others. For example, the Gender Model postulates that men and women are socialized differently, and this results in different perceptions and attitudes (Jurik and Halemba, 1984). This leads men and women to differ in their levels of job satisfaction, organizational commitment, and perceptions of the organization.

The second model is referred to as the “Work

Role-Prisonization Model,” where the correctional work environment helps shape employees’ perceptions, views, attitudes, and behaviors, regardless of individual characteristics (Jurik and Halemba, 1984; Van Voorhis et al., 1991). Under the Work Role-Prisonization model, if opportunities are relatively equal, the work environment will transcend gender in terms of shaping correctional employees’ perceptions and attitudes (Kanter, 1977a).

Empirical Support for the Importation Model

In support of the Importation model, research has noted that men are more likely to report seeking a career in corrections for a steady paying job and to secure and control inmates, while women are more likely to choose to work in corrections because they wish to help rehabilitate offenders and to work with others (Jurik, 1985a, 1985b; Jurik and Halemba, 1984; Walters, 1992). In addition, female correctional staff generally report greater support for affirmative action than do male staff (Stohr et al., 1998). This makes sense, considering that women had to fight for the right to work in corrections, particularly in male inmate facilities.

Many studies, especially qualitative studies, have found that women working in corrections confront tremendous obstacles. Female correctional staff often face discrimination and harassment (Carlson, Anson, and Thomas, 2003; Owen, 1988; Pogrebin and Poole, 1997). For example, Zimmer (1986) found that female correctional officers routinely experienced remarks about their appearance, sexual joking and teasing, false rumors about sexual involvement with inmates or other staff, obscene phone calls, and constant reminders of their “female” status. In other work, in-depth interviews with 108 Denver-area female jail officers revealed that sexism and sexual harassment were very common and had caused discomfort and pain for many of the women (Pogrebin and Poole, 1997). In other studies, it was found that women were far more likely to have been victims of sexual harassment from fellow male staff and superiors than were men (Beck and Stohr, 1991; Stohr et al., 1998).

Furthermore, female correctional workers may experience “tokenism,” being the numerical minority as compared to men (Kanter, 1977b). Tokenism results in barriers being placed in front of minority employees so that they have difficulty in reaching equality in the organization (Zimmer, 1988). This is evident in the literature when male staff are asked about the ability of women to work in corrections, as they often believe that women are not as capable as men of working in corrections (Crouch, 1985; Hemmens et al., 2002; Jurik, 1985b,

1988; Owen, 1985; Pogrebin and Poole, 1997; Zimmer, 1986). Women, as minorities, may be more likely to receive inadequate training and support, and this in turn can lead to greater role ambiguity, role conflict, and stress (Van Voorhis et al., 1991). In addition, because they are not the numerical majority and do not hold as many positions of power, female correctional workers may feel that they have fewer promotional opportunities or that the current promotional procedures are unfair. Van Voorhis et al. (1991:475-476) argued, "access to equal employment is no guarantee that women and other minorities will receive fair access to the resources, informal networks, and other considerations needed to assure job satisfaction and evidence satisfactory performance and advancement potential." The works of Jurik (1988), Jurik and Halemba (1984), and Zimmer (1986, 1987) all suggest that women correctional employees perceive the work environment in a more negative light than do male correctional workers.

Another area of difference between male and female correctional workers is the level of reported job stress. In two studies of Southern correctional officers, it was found that female correctional workers reported higher levels of stress and tension than did their male counterparts (Cullen et al., 1985; Van Voorhis et al., 1991). A greater level of job stress among women was found even though female correctional officers perceived greater supervisory support than did men (Van Voorhis et al., 1991). Among federal correctional staff, it was found that women's stress levels were higher (Wright and Saylor, 1991). Lovrich and Stohr (1993), in their study of jail staff, also observed that female staff generally reported higher levels of job stress. These findings support the position that there is a gender difference in the work attitude of reported job stress. It is possible that this difference is due to the hostile work environment faced by many female staff.

Conversely, in a study of juvenile counselors in secure Canadian facilities, it was observed that women reported lower levels of stress than did their male counterparts (Pelletier, Coutu, and Lamonde, 1996). Similarly, among Maricopa County, Arizona, jail officers, a significant relationship was found between gender and job satisfaction; female staff generally reported higher levels of job satisfaction when compared to male officers (Griffin, 2001). Among federal correctional staff, it was found that white female officers were more satisfied with their jobs and perceived the quality supervision to be better than did their male counterparts (Britton, 1997). This suggests that even when faced with a hostile work environment, female correctional employees may take greater enjoyment in their jobs. Although contradictory, women may unfortunately expect the hostility, and assess

the work environment only by its job-specific tasks.

There are other areas where female and male correctional workers may differ. In a study of Texas correctional staff, Crouch and Alpert (1982) observed that female staff were less punitive in their views toward inmates than were male staff, and this difference increased over time. Additionally, they found that male officers expressed a greater willingness to use aggressive methods in handling inmates. The opposite was found in a study of Northeastern correctional officers. In hypothetical situations, women were, on average, more aggressive in their responses than were men (Jenne and Kersting, 1996). In a study of staff at six jails, it was found that men had a higher perception of promotional opportunities than did women (Lovrich and Stohr, 1993). Additionally, female staff reported greater skill variety as compared to male staff (Lovrich and Stohr, 1993). Among juvenile counselors in secure Canadian facilities, it was observed that male counselors were more likely to report that supervision was task-oriented, while female counselors were more likely to report that supervision was control-oriented (Pelletier et al., 1996). Thus, there is evidence (although the nature of the relationship is mixed) to support the postulation that men and women correctional staff perceive their work environment in different ways.

Empirical Support for the Work Role-Prisonization Model

There is also empirical evidence which refutes the Importation model and supports the Work Role-Prisonization model. For instance, while some studies have found that job stress varies by gender, not all studies have observed such a relationship. Among correctional officers at three Midwestern prisons, no relationship between gender and job stress was found (Walters, 1992). Likewise, in a study of correctional officers at a Southwestern correctional facility, Triplett, Mullings, and Scarborough (1996) found no significant relationship between gender and job stress. Among correctional officers at a Kentucky medium security prison, while both experienced high levels of stress, there was no significant difference between male and female officers in their level of burnout (Hurst and Hurst, 1997). In a study of Pacific Northwest correctional officers, female and male staff had similar levels of burnout in terms of emotional exhaustion and personal accomplishment (Savicki, Cooley, and Gjesvold, 2003). Moreover, it was found that female and male respondents generally reported the same level of job stress. Finally, Dowden and Tellier (2004), in a meta-analysis, noted that gender only had a weak correla-

tion with job stress for correctional staff.

In other work perceptions, female and male correctional staff appear to be similar as well. A number of studies have noted that female correctional workers do not differ in their level of job satisfaction when compared to their male counterparts (Blau, Light, and Chamlin, 1986; Cullen et al., 1985; Lovrich and Stohr, 1993; Van Voorhis et al., 1991; Walters, 1992; Wright and Saylor, 1991). In addition, Farkas (1999) found that inmate supervisory style did not vary much between male and female correctional officers at two medium-security correctional institutions. Wright and Saylor (1991) found no difference in perceived efficacy with inmates between female and male federal correctional staff. It has been reported that there was no difference between female and male jail officers in their preference of either security based training or service based training (Stohr, Lovrich, and Wood, 1996). In a study of staff at six jails, there was little difference between female and male staff in perceptions of quality of supervision, satisfaction with pay, feedback from the job, or job autonomy (Lovrich and Stohr, 1993). Additionally, there was no reported difference in level of commitment (Lovrich and Stohr, 1993). Among Pacific Northwest correctional officers, men and women did not differ in their perceptions of supervisors and were similar in their level of organizational commitment (Savicki et al., 2003). Further, there was no difference reported in male and female officers' perceptions on defining and responding to conflict situations (Hogan et al., 2004).

Overall, the research on gender differences in corrections, to date, is rather mixed. There is support that men and women differ in some areas, while in other areas, there appears to be no gender difference between correctional officers in their views and work attitudes. While the former is more in line with the Importation model, the latter findings are consistent with the Work Role-Prisonization model. Another reason for the divergent findings could also have to do with the type of methodology conducted or the particular correctional facilities studied. In a review of the literature, Britton (1997) concluded that qualitative studies generally found that gender was important in how correctional staff perceived their work environments, and quantitative studies generally found no differences. However, this is not always the case, as several quantitative studies have found differences. Moreover, even in the same study, differences are observed on some work environment areas but not others. For example, Van Voorhis et al. (1991) found support for both the Importation and Work Role-Prisonization models in their study of Southern correctional officers.

Mixed findings certainly call for further research in

this area. Moreover, the rising number of women joining (and rising up through) the ranks of corrections warrant additional empirical studies. In addition, rules regarding harassment (against women) have been established and enforced, and it is generally taken more seriously today than it was in the past both by those in charge and watchdog agencies. More importantly, much of the prior research has focused heavily on job stress and job satisfaction. The studies which have examined other areas have been limited in their scope by looking on average at six or less dimensions of the work environment. The work environment is very complex and there have been many areas that have not been researched.

The Work Environment

The work environment is the setting, both tangible and intangible, in which the employee carries out his or her job, and there are numerous dimensions of this environment (Cammann et al., 1983). Because the work environment areas are as diverse as they are numerous, it is helpful to break them into two general categories of organizational structure and job characteristics.¹ Organizational structure refers to how an organization arranges, manages, and operates itself (Oldham and Hackman, 1981), and includes centralization, formalization, organizational justice, integration, and instrumental communication (Lincoln and Kalleberg, 1990). Job characteristics relate to a particular job that is being done by a person, and include job variety, skill variety, role conflict, role ambiguity, task significance, task identity, and supervision (Hackman and Lawler, 1971). Therefore, both organizational structure and job characteristics are multi-dimensional. In addition to perceptions of organizational structure and job characteristics, there are work attitudes in general. Work attitudes are psychological states of how an employee feels overall about his or her work experiences. There are several dimensions of work attitudes; the most frequently studied in criminal justice are job stress, job satisfaction, and organizational commitment. More specific correctional work attitudes include job involvement, moral commitment, continuance commitment, and punishment and rehabilitation views.

Rather than look at a few areas, the current study examines a much wider scope of the work environment than has been done in past research on gender differences in corrections. This study included 28 perceptions of both job and structural dimensions of the work environment, as well as work attitudes, among correctional personnel (i.e., not just officers). By examining so many areas of the work environment, a more comprehensive understanding

will be gained about how contemporary male and female correctional staff potentially differ in their perceptions and attitudes.

Given that women are represented in greater numbers at all positions and levels of corrections, compared to thirty years ago, we might expect fewer differences between male and female employees, as suggested by the Work Role-Prisonization Model. Moreover, the institution that was part of this study was led by a rather progressive female warden, who stressed a rehabilitative philosophy for the prison. This too might work to reduce the amount of gender differences, as the traditional thinking that females should not be part of the correctional culture might not survive in such a work environment. In all, we might expect in such a setting that the work environment itself will play a more prominent role in determining correctional staff attitudes over that of gender.

Methods

Survey Administration. In the fall of 2000, 420 staff at a Midwestern, high-security state prison were provided a survey asking about their perceptions of the prison work environment. The prison housed approximately 1,300 adult male inmates. Most of the inmates, who were serving long custodial sentences for drug and violent offenses, were classified at a medium- or maximum-security level. The prison had been in operation for several decades, employing about 450 staff at the time the survey was administered. Due to sick leave, temporary reassignment, annual leave, and so forth, approximately 420 staff members were available at the time of the survey. In a cover letter, the importance of the survey was explained, as was the fact that participation was strictly voluntary and all responses would be anonymous. The survey was distributed with the paychecks issued to all staff who were working at the prison during the week of the survey. A cash raffle, with several cash awards ranging from \$50 to \$100, was used to increase participation. In addition, one follow-up survey was conducted. A total of 272 useable surveys were returned, for a response rate of 64 percent.

Respondents. The respondents represented all areas of the correctional facility (e.g., correctional officers, case managers, medical staff, industry staff, food service workers, and so forth). In terms of position, 50 percent were correctional officers, 6 percent were unit management staff (i.e., counselors, case managers, and unit managers), 5 percent worked in the business office, 4 percent worked in education, 3 percent worked in industry, 3 percent worked in the medical department, 3 percent were part of the administration, and 26 percent worked

in other areas. The respondents also represented various administrative levels of the correctional facility (i.e., line staff, supervisors, and managers). About 24 percent of the respondents supervised other staff at the prison. Women comprised 24 percent of the sample and men 76 percent. In terms of age, the mean age was 42.55 years, the median was 44, and the values ranged from 20 to 61 years of age, with a standard deviation of 8.32. With respect to tenure, the mean was 9.65 years at the prison, the median 9 years, and the values ranged from 0 to 26 years, with a standard deviation of 6.82. Turning next to highest educational level, about 10 percent indicated that they had a high school degree or GED, 50 percent some college but no degree, 20 percent an associate's degree, 16 percent a bachelor's degree, and 5 percent a graduate or professional degree. Approximately 83 percent of the respondents were white, 7 percent were black, 2 percent were Hispanic, 3 percent were Native American, and 5 percent were other. Overall, the respondents appeared to be representative of the staff at the prison. Of the total prison staff (approximately 450), about 77 percent were male, 86 percent were white, and 53 percent were correctional officers. Among the respondents, about 76 percent were male, 83 percent were white, and 50 percent were correctional officers. It appears that the respondents are similar to the overall staff at the prison. Thus, it should be that those who did not respond were due to random chance rather than a systematic reason. In this study, all the respondents were included. This was done to increase the group of respondents studied and to see if a different result would be found from past studies. Past studies have generally only examined correctional officers.

Work Environment Indices. The survey instrument was 16 pages long and included 176 questions. Of these questions, nearly 150 dealt with attitudes and perceptions of the work environment. These questions were used to form 28 indices measuring different dimensions of the prison work environment as well as general occupational attitudes. All of the indices used for later analyses were created by summing the responses of the specific items.

In terms of conceptual operationalizations, the *dangerousness* index measured perceived dangerousness of the job (Cullen et al., 1985). *Role ambiguity* is the uncertainty or a lack of information in carrying out the duties and responsibilities of a given job (Rizzo, House and Lirtzman, 1970). *Role conflict* occurs when behaviors for a given job or task are inconsistent with one another job or task (Rizzo et al., 1970). *Instrumental communication* is the "degree to which information about the job is formally transmitted by an organization to its members" (Agho, Mueller, and Price, 1993:1009). *Integration* is

the extent that an organization allows and stresses that different work groups work together with cooperation and coordination to accomplish the major tasks and goals of the organization, or, conversely, pits them against one another to compete for scarce resources (Mueller et al., 1994).

Input into decision-making means one is provided a voice in organizational decisions (Miller and Droge, 1986). *Job autonomy* is defined as the degree of freedom that employees have in making job-related decisions (Agho et al., 1993). The *supervision* index was designed to measure perceptions of quality, open, and supportive supervision. *Job variety* is simply the degree of variation in the job (Price and Mueller, 1986), as some jobs require role performance that is highly repetitive, while other jobs have a significant degree of variety in the required tasks and how they are performed (Mueller et al., 1994). The index of *feedback* measured the degree of worthwhile and timely feedback of job tasks and requirements that are provided to employees. The *promotion* index measured perceived opportunities for promotions that a staff member has with the employing organization (Curry et al., 1986).

Work-family conflict is “a form of inter-role conflict in which the role pressures from the work and family domains are mutually incompatible in some respect. That is, participation in the work (family) role is made more difficult by participation in the family (work) role” (Greenhaus and Beutell, 1985:77). The two major dimensions are work life interfering with family/home life and family/home life interfering with work (Netemeyer, Boles, and McMurrian, 1996). The *work-on-family* index measured the time conflict, strain, and harm to family and home life that can result from working in corrections. The *family-on-work* conflict index measured whether home and social life interfered with work.

Organizational justice deals with the degree of fairness found within an organization. The two major dimensions of organizational justice are distributive and procedural justice. *Distributive justice* is the perception of fairness in distribution and allocation of outcomes within an organization based upon inputs by an employee (Greenberg, 1987). *Procedural justice* is the perceptions of workers on fairness of the processes and procedures used to arrive at organizational outcomes (Greenberg, 1986).

While absenteeism is important to organizations, as it is an inevitable part of work, *how* employees view absenteeism is extremely important to organizations (VandenHeuvel and Wooden, 1995). *Absent views* measured a staff member’s views toward the use of sick leave.

In addition, an *employee’s view of sick leave usage* at the correctional facility and by *fellow staff* was measured. The *punishment* and *rehabilitation* views of respondents were also captured, as both are critical components of correctional personnel occupational worldviews.

In addition to perceptions and views of the work environment, nine additional indices were created and measured—all of which have been part of various prior correctional studies. *Job involvement* is a psychological identification with the importance of work (Kanungo, 1982). *Job stress* is generally defined in the correctional literature as a worker’s feelings of job-related hardness, tension, anxiety, frustration, worry, and distress (Cullen et al., 1985; Van Voorhis et al., 1991). *Job satisfaction* is an emotional, affective response resulting from the extent a person derives pleasure from his or her job (Muchinsky, 1987).

Organizational commitment is the degree of commitment a person has for the employing organization and “not to the job, work group, or belief in the importance of work itself” (Lambert, Barton, and Hogan, 1999:100). In corrections there are generally two unique levels of commitment. One level of commitment is to the *overall agency* (i.e., Department of Corrections), and the other level is to the *particular facility* where the person works, both of which were measured in the current study. Organizational commitment has also been equated to investments an employee has with the organization (Becker, 1960). These investments can cause a worker to become bonded with the organization and have a desire to remain because the costs are too high, and is conceptualized here as *continuance commitment*. The *moral commitment* index measured the degree to which a person felt an obligation or duty to support and be loyal to the organization. An overall affective measure of organizational commitment was utilized, which comprises the core elements of loyalty to the organization, identification with the organization (i.e., pride in the organization and internalization of the goals of the organization), and involvement in the organization (i.e., personal effort made for the sake of the organization) (Mowday, Steers, and Porter, 1979).

Finally, *life satisfaction*, which is a person’s general assessment of the overall quality of his or her life, was measured. With the exception of instrumental communication, all the items used to form the indices were answered on a five-point Likert type of response scale ranging from strongly disagree (coded 1) to strongly agree (coded 5). For instrumental communication, a five point response scale of 1 – not informed at all and 5 – very well informed was used. As previously indicated, all 28 indices were created by summing the responses to

each of the specific survey items.

Independent and Control Variables. Gender was measured as a dichotomous variable with women coded as 0 and men coded as 1. For the purposes of multi-variate analyses, age, race, educational level, position, tenure, and supervisory status were included in the study as control variables. Age was measured in continuous years. The measure of race was collapsed from an ordinal-level measure to a dichotomous-level measure of White or Nonwhite. The ordinal level of highest educational level was changed to a dichotomous variable representing whether the respondent did or did not have a college degree (i.e., associate, bachelor, or graduate). The position variable was coded as 0 – did not work in a custody position (i.e., correctional officer) and 1 – worked in a custody position. Tenure at the prison was measured in continuous years. Supervisory status measured whether the respondent supervised other staff (coded as 1) or did not (coded as 0).

Results

Brief descriptions, sources of individual survey items, and descriptive statistics for the 28 indices are presented in Table 1. There appears to be significant variation in each of the measures. Moreover, for each variable, the median and mean are similar, which indicates that the variables are normally distributed. Cronbach's alpha (Cronbach, 1951), a measure of internal reliability, is also reported in Table 1. Cronbach's alpha values of .60 or higher are generally viewed as acceptable (Gronlund, 1981). An examination of Table 1 reveals that all 28 indices have an alpha value equal to or greater than .60.

The independent *t*-test was used to examine whether there was a statistically significant difference between the views of female and male staff on the 28 work environment indices. The results are presented in Table 2. Across the 28 indices, there was a statistically significant difference between men and women on seven work environment measures. Men were more likely to feel that they worked a dangerous job than were women, and also reported higher levels of role ambiguity than did their female counterparts. On average, women were more likely to report having input into decision-making at the correctional facility, to perceive a higher level of job autonomy, and to perceive a higher level of quality, supportive supervision. In general, men held more punitive attitudes than women, while female employees reported a higher level of job satisfaction when compared to male workers.

Because there were more male respondents than fe-

male respondents, the non-parametric Two Independent Samples (using the Mann-Whitney statistic) and K-Independent Samples (using the Kruskal-Wallis statistic) tests were used. Both nonparametric tests found that there was a statistically significant difference between men and women on the same seven indices of dangerousness, role ambiguity, input into decision-making, job autonomy, supervision, punishment, and job satisfaction. In addition, both nonparametric tests indicated that there was a significant difference between male and female correctional staff in their perceptions of instrumental communication and integration. Women scored higher on both indices. While these two indices did not make the cut-point level of $p \leq .05$ for the Independent *t*-test, the probability level for each was close. For the instrumental communication, the probability level for the *t*-value was $p = .052$, and for the integration index, the probability level for the *t*-value was $p = .056$.

In order to examine differences between women and men independent of the effects of age, race, educational level, position, tenure, and supervisory status, multivariate analysis using Ordinary Least Squares (OLS) regression was conducted. Twenty-eight OLS regression equations with each of the indices as the dependent variable were analyzed. Gender, age, race, educational level, position, tenure, and supervisory status were entered as the independent variables. The results are presented in Table 3. Because of the large number of dependent variables, a different regression results table was constructed than is typically reported. The dependent variables are reported in the far left column and the seven independent variables (i.e., the demographic measures) are reported in the top columns. Finally, R-squared, a measure of explained variance, is reported in the far right column.

An examination of Table 3 reveals that gender had only a significant impact on two of the twenty-four indices. Even after controlling for age, race, educational level, position, tenure, and supervisory status, women were less likely to feel that they worked in a dangerous job as compared to men. Additionally, female staff generally reported higher levels of job satisfaction than their male counterparts. For the other indices in which gender was observed to have significant effects in the bivariate tests, multi-variate analyses showed no significant difference. Moreover, position and supervisory status had the largest number of significant relationships with the indices. Both had statistically significant effects with 14 of the 28 work environment measures. Age had significant effects on six of the indices, and tenure had significant relationships with five of the indices. Respondent race had four significant associations. Finally, educational level had

Table 1. Descriptive Information for the Work Indices

Index name	Description of index & item source	# of items	Standard			Minimum value	Maximum value	Alpha
			Mean	deviation	Median			
Dangerousness	Measures perceived dangerousness at work (Cullen et al., 1985)	4	13.58	3.54	14	4	20	.82
Role ambiguity	Measures degree of perceived role ambiguity (i.e., clarity of what is expected) (Ivancevich and Matteson, 1980)	4	8.67	2.41	8	4	18	.62
Role conflict	Measures the degree of perceived role conflict (i.e., degree of confusing and conflicting tasks/roles at work) (Ivancevich and Matteson, 1980; Triplett et al, 1996)	4	10.76	2.76	10	4	19	.70
Institutional communication	Measures instrumental communication (i.e, receiving timely and useful communication and information for the job) (Curry et al., 1986)	5	17.65	3.69	18	5	25	.85
Integration	Measures perceived degree of integration (i.e., cooperation and joint efforts) at work between different work groups (Miller and Droge, 1986).	5	13.44	3.04	14	5	22	.73
Input into decision-making	Measures amount of input allowed in decision-making (Curry et al., 1986)	5	14.08	4.12	14	5	25	.81
Job autonomy	Measures perceived degree of job autonomy (i.e., say in how job is done) (Curry et al., 1986)	2	6.50	1.80	7	2	10	.66
Supervision	Measures perception of supportive, quality supervision (Wright and Saylor, 1992)	3	9.51	2.79	10	3	15	.77
Job variety	Measures the degree of job variety (i.e., variety of job tasks) (Curry et al., 1986)	5	15.74	3.91	16	5	24	.76
Feedback	Measures the timeliness and useful feedback a person receives for his/her job (Wright and Saylor, 1992)	2	6.74	1.61	7	2	10	.64
Promotion	Measures perceptions of future promotional opportunities (Triplett et al., 1996).	3	8.74	3.03	9	3	15	.81
Work on family conflict	Measures the degree that work problems cause conflicts at home (Bacharach, Bamberger, and Conley, 1991; Bohlen and Viveros-Long, 1981; Higgins and Duxbury, 1992)	9	21.74	5.41	21	10	37	.79
Family of work conflict	Measures the degree that family issues cause conflicts at work (Bacharach et al., 1991)	2	3.66	1.37	4	2	10	.77
Distributive justice	Measures perceived distributive justice (i.e., fairness of outcome) in terms of performance evaluation (Wright and Saylor, 1992)	2	7.22	1.73	8	3	15	.73
Procedural justice	Measures perceived procedural justice (i.e., the fairness of procedures) in terms of promotions (Wright and Saylor, 1992)	3	7.88	2.88	8	3	15	.84
Absent views	Measures views on use of sick leave (VandenHeuvel and Wooden, 1995)	2	6.21	2.00	6	2	10	.60
Views of absent staff	Measures the views of use of sick leave by fellow employees (Johns, 1994)	3	9.93	2.37	10	4	15	.81
Punishment	Measures attitude toward punishment of inmates (Cullen et al., 1989)	9	27.26	6.49	27	10	45	.84
Rehabilitation	Measures attitude towards treatment/rehabilitation of inmates (Cullen et al., 1989)	8	24.39	5.64	25	8	39	.84
Job involvement	Measures the degree of identification with a particular line of work or career (Lawler and Hall, 1970)	3	4.75	1.70	4	3	12	.74
Job stress	Measures perceived job stress (Crank et al., 1995)	4	10.51	3.26	10	4	20	.78
Job satisfaction	Global measure of overall job satisfaction (Brayfield and Rothe, 1951).	5	17.50	4.29	18	5	25	.89
Agency commitment	Measures commitment to the agency (i.e., the degree of commitment to the DOC) (Wright and Saylor, 1992)	4	13.18	2.69	14	5	20	.74
Institutional commitment	Measures commitment to the institution (i.e., the prison) (Wright and Saylor, 1992)	3	9.20	2.28	9	3	15	.67
Continuance commitment	Measures view that the person must remain with the agency because has too much at stake (Jaros et al., 1993)	3	10.73	2.56	11	3	15	.70
Moral commitment	Measures the belief that must be loyal to an employer (Jaros et al., 1993)	3	9.23	2.40	10	3	15	.65
Organizational commitment	Overall measure of affective organizational commitment (Mowday, Porter and Steers, 1982)	9	29.75	6.64	31	9	45	.88
Life satisfaction	Measures the degree satisfied with overall life (Quinn and Staines, 1979).	2	4.11	1.09	4	2	6	.87

Table 2. Independent T-test Results for the Differences Between Female and Male Correctional Staff in Their Perceptions of the Work Environment and Work Attitudes

(N = 272)

Index Name	Women		Men		t-value
	Mean	Standard deviation	Mean	Standard deviation	
Dangerousness	12.11	4.04	14.06	3.24	-3.97 **
Role ambiguity	8.12	1.91	8.80	2.52	-1.98 *
Role conflict	10.25	2.62	10.87	2.74	-1.61
Instrumental communication	18.46	3.80	17.44	3.63	1.95 †
Integration	14.11	3.24	13.27	2.97	1.92 †
Input into decision-making	15.02	3.78	13.82	4.22	2.03 *
Job autonomy	6.91	1.69	6.39	1.81	2.04 *
Supervision	10.26	2.66	9.32	2.80	2.39 *
Job variety	16.34	4.17	15.53	3.84	1.45
Feedback	6.91	1.66	6.70	1.56	0.89
Promotion	9.33	2.96	8.60	3.01	1.69
Work on family conflict	20.69	5.23	22.02	5.28	-1.77
Family on work conflict	3.62	1.24	3.69	1.42	-0.39
Distributive justice	7.25	1.78	7.23	1.69	0.07
Procedural justice	8.20	2.88	7.80	2.88	0.98
Absent views	6.02	1.63	6.23	2.10	-0.75
Views of absent staff	9.97	2.42	9.92	2.38	0.14
Punishment	25.84	6.93	27.72	6.27	-2.03 *
Rehabilitation	25.40	5.82	24.14	5.42	1.60
Job involvement	4.77	1.63	4.77	1.74	0.01
Job stress	10.57	3.42	10.43	3.19	0.29
Job satisfaction	18.71	3.76	17.15	4.41	2.55 *
Agency commitment	13.31	2.65	13.21	2.64	0.26
Institutional commitment	8.75	2.38	9.38	2.25	-1.93
Continuance commitment	10.63	2.40	10.80	2.62	-0.45
Moral commitment	9.46	2.13	9.20	2.45	0.76
Organizational commitment	30.91	6.57	29.56	6.50	1.45
Life satisfaction	4.26	1.03	4.08	1.09	1.15

* $p \leq 0.05$ ** $p \leq 0.01$

† Significant using the non-parametric of Two Independent Samples (using the Mann-Whitney statistic) and K-Independent Samples (using the Kruskal-Wallis statistic) tests but not for the Independent t-test.

only two significant impacts on the 28 work environment indices.²

Discussion

The aim of this study was to determine what, if any, differences there were between male and female correctional staff in their perceptions of the work environment. In bivariate tests, there were differences on seven to nine of the indices, depending on the whether the Independent t-test or non-parametric statistics were used. This suggests that there is some difference between men and women in their perceptions and attitudes, but the difference was limited. For 19 of the 21 indices, there were no

gender differences. This means that men and women are similar in their perceptions and attitudes in many of the areas of the work environment.

Moreover, almost all the significant bivariate relationships disappeared in the multi-variate analyses when other demographic characteristics were controlled. Only two of the indices maintained statistical significance when controls were introduced. More specifically, perceptions of dangerousness and job satisfaction differed between men and women. The finding that male correctional staff were more likely to feel that they worked at a dangerousness job is interesting, considering the picture of harassment and mistreat faced by many female correctional staff that has been noted by many past researchers. It could be

Table 3. OLS Regression Results with the Standardized Regression Coefficient Reported

Dependent variable	Gender	Age	Race	Educational		Tenure	Supervisory status	R ²
				level	Position			
Dangerousness	.17 **	-.02	-.14 *	-.10	.31 **	-.03	.01	.19 **
Role ambiguity	.11	.03	-.12	.02	-.01	.17 *	-.16 *	.08 **
Role conflict	.07	.08	-.13 *	-.02	.07	.09	-.11	.06 *
Instrumental communication	-.11	-.05	.04	-.01	-.09	-.10	.04	.05
Integration	-.07	-.01	.06	.11	-.09	-.12	.09	.07 **
Input into decision	-.06	-.12	.09	.05	-.25 **	-.09	.27 **	.21 **
Job autonomy	-.04	-.20 **	.05	.03	-.28 **	-.10	.18 **	.19 **
Supervision	-.08	-.10	.13 *	-.02	-.39 **	.06	.16 **	.23 **
Job variety	-.03	.02	.02	.06	-.16 *	-.25 **	.16 *	.14 **
Feedback	-.03	-.08	.16 **	-.03	-.17 *	.04	.04	.06 *
Promotion	-.08	-.19 **	-.01	-.03	.04	-.20 **	.16 *	.12 **
Work on family conflict	.05	-.03	-.09	-.05	.32 **	-.07	.05	.12 **
Family on work conflict	.00	-.04	.06	.05	.04	.07	.00	.01
Distributive justice	.03	-.05	.09	-.06	-.22 **	.02	.08	.07 *
Procedural justice	-.05	-.10	.08	-.06	-.07	-.12	.22 **	.08 **
Absent views	.03	-.20 **	-.11	-.05	.14 *	.07	-.19 **	.15 **
Views of absent staff	-.02	-.13 *	-.04	-.06	-.14 *	.26 **	.11	.10 **
Punishment	.10	-.07	-.08	-.16 *	.16 *	.01	-.22 **	.19 **
Rehabilitation	-.07	.12	.01	.24 **	-.12	.00	.12	.15 **
Job involvement	.01	.05	-.04	-.01	-.06	-.12	.12	.04
Job stress	-.02	.16 *	-.07	.02	.03	-.03	.01	.03
Job satisfaction	-.15 *	-.01	.03	-.01	-.11	-.13	.21 **	.12 **
Agency commitment	-.01	-.11	.04	-.03	-.05	-.09	.16 *	.05
Institutional commitment	.00	-.08	.07	-.12	.23 **	.09	.13 *	.10 **
Continuance commitment	-.04	.03	.02	-.03	.18 *	.04	.14 *	.04
Moral commitment	-.03	.03	.12	.02	-.17 *	-.04	.12	.08 **
Organizational commitment	-.08	-.05	.07	.02	-.07	-.16 *	.28 **	.13 **
Life satisfaction	-.09	-.15 *	-.09	.13	.01	.09	-.03	.05

Note. For a description of the indices (i.e., dependent variables), see Table 1. Gender was measured as 0=female and 1=male. Age was measured in continuous years. Race was measured as 0=Nonwhite and 1=White. Educational level was measured as 0=no college degree and 1=college degree. Tenure at the prison was measured in continuous years. Supervisory status was measured as 0=non-supervisor and 1=supervisor of other correctional staff. Position was measured as 0=non-C.O. and 1=C.O.

* $p \leq 0.05$ ** $p \leq 0.01$

that women feel that they are less likely to be assaulted by inmates. Two of the authors of the current study have prior correctional experience, and both witnessed an informal inmate code of chivalry. Male inmates who assaulted children or women were held in low regard by other inmates. In addition, many male inmates went out of their way to be around female staff and were generally more polite to female staff. The issue of whether or not a code of chivalry influences female staff perceptions of dangerousness has yet to be part of empirical studies of corrections. What is known is that women in this study felt that their jobs were not as dangerous compared to the male respondents. This is consistent with other research that found that female federal correctional staff perceived prisons to be safer than did male staff (Wright and Saylor, 1991).

Another possible explanation is that men help define

their own masculinity by their occupation. The underlying theme in corrections has been the accentuation of men's ability to control violent confrontations and using force. As Jurik and Martin (2001:265) argue:

The social control functions and perceived danger of police and corrections work have led to the association between competence in these jobs and culturally dominant notions of masculinity. Thus, the successful handling of danger and administering of social control offer specific men an opportunity to construct their masculinity in ways that conform to dominant social expectations.

Likewise, the literature suggests that men are more likely see a job as more dangerous than it really is, especially when compared to women (Britton, 2003).

The other index in which there was a significant gender difference in multi-variate analysis was job satisfaction. Overall, women liked their jobs more than their male counterparts. This appears to be a paradoxical finding in light that the literature reports that women experience greater obstacles and harassment in the correctional workplace than do men. It could be that female staff are more satisfied with their jobs because they are working in a non-traditional field. In non-correctional research, higher job satisfaction has been found for women working in non-traditional roles or fields (Kroes, 1983; O'Farrell and Harlan, 1982). As previously noted in the literature review, women are generally attracted to working in corrections because they are interested in rehabilitation and working with others. At the surveyed institution, the warden was a woman who strongly pushed rehabilitation programs. The warden also stressed fairness, professionalism, and performance. Based upon interviews with staff at the prison and outside the prison, the warden was well respected. Thus, female staff at this prison may be more satisfied in their jobs because of the tone of rehabilitation and fairness set by the warden at the prison. Moreover, there is a long and rich literature across many occupations which has found that women tend to be more satisfied with their jobs in general.

While there were two gender differences in the multi-variate analyses, for the other 26 indices there were no differences. The bulk of the results strongly suggest that female and male correctional staff are more similar than dissimilar in their work perceptions and attitudes. This conclusion is supported by the works of Jurik and Britton. Jurik's (1985a) study of Western correctional officers concluded that work factors were more important than demographic characteristics. Likewise, Britton (1997) concluded that there is evidence that the correctional work environment is more important in shaping employees views and attitudes than are demographic characteristics, including that of gender. Thus, the results of this study mostly support the Work Role-Prisonization model rather than the Importation model. The institutional/socialization effect is also evident when only correctional officers (i.e., line staff) were studied. While not reported, similar results were observed. There was very little difference between male and female correctional officers in their perceptions of the work environment and in their job attitudes.

The literature contends that the organization has the power to shape and constrain worker behavior (Martin and Jurik, 1996). The nature of prison work, the potential for injury to both staff and inmates, and liability issues cause administrators to emphasize adherence to policies

and procedures. All workers are subject to disciplinary action for a violation of the rules. Further, extensive training is provided to ensure all workers respond in a similar manner. At the same time, most correctional facilities are unionized, which further requires all workers to be treated the same. These factors may neutralize the differences between men and women by pushing a "lock-step" mentality in all facets of the organization, where difference is not rewarded. Thus, both men and women may view the work environment in very similar terms.

The fact that men and women view the occupational world similarly also has implications for critics of women in corrections who suggest that they are unable to handle the various demands of the job. The findings of the current study dispel this myth by finding not only that women and men were more alike than different, but that women perceived the working environment to be less dangerous and were satisfied with their job than their male counterparts.

It is very important to point out that this study only examined differences in levels of perceptions and attitudes. It did not test to see if the different dimensions of the work environment affect men and women differently. For example, it could be that distributive justice is more important in shaping the job satisfaction of men, while procedural justice could be more important in shaping the organizational commitment of women. There is empirical evidence to suggest that while the perceptions of the work environment may be the same, female and male correctional staff respond differently to these work forces (Savicki et al., 2003; Walters, 1993). For example, it was found in a study of staff at a Southwestern correctional facility, that work-family conflict was an important contributor to job stress for female staff but not for male employees (Triplett, Mullings, and Scarborough, 1999). In their study of officers at a medium security Kentucky prison, Hurst and Hurst (1997:121) found that while both female and male staff reported similar levels of job stress, in comparison to males, it was more likely that female officers "processed stress by seeking social support, while male officers more frequently than female officers processed stress by planful problem solving." It is important that research be done to see if different dimensions of the work environment affect men and women differently. It is an area that needs further empirical attention.

Finally, this study is not without its limitations. First, the current research only involved one correctional facility, and one that was rather unique as it was lead by a female warden that stressed a rehabilitative philosophy. In this sense, the findings from this study might not generalize well to many "traditional" prisons operating today,

but as women rise through the correctional ranks and as philosophies differ, might serve as a possible benchmark for more contemporary studies of corrections. Future research would benefit from examining correctional settings that exhibit such diversity. The more institutions studied, the better, as cumulative research is how knowledge building occurs. In addition, future research may wish to over-sample female staff so more in-depth analyses can be conducted, such as the intersection of gender and race as was done by Britton (1997) or the interaction effects of gender and position as was done by Wright and Saylor (1991). This was not possible in this study because there were too few female respondents to allow for more complex analyses. While many areas of the work environment were measured, there are many other areas which were not. Future research should examine other components of the correctional environment that were not part of the current study (e.g., loyalty to occupational peers, perceptions of inmates, etc.) to see what, if any, gender differences exist. Future research may wish to increase the response rate. In this study the response rate was 64 percent, which may have been lowered because the length of the survey. While this response rate is acceptable, it is possible that those who did not respond had different perceptions of the work environment and/or job attitudes. Additionally, future research should obtain a larger number of respondents to see if gendered views differ by different types of positions.

In closing, this study found that women and men were more similar than dissimilar in their work perceptions and attitudes. In this sense, gender differences or unique inability to deal with correctional work by females was not noted. In fact, the opposite was true; the only differences that did emerge found that women viewed the occupational environment as less dangerous and were also more satisfied with their job.

Endnotes

1. The separation of the work environment into two categories is done to simplify the description of work environment as it is frequently done in the literature. It does not imply that no other dimensions of the work environment exist, such as the physical or the social dimensions.

2. While the VIF and Tolerance statistics did not indicate any collinearity or multi-collinearity problems, the personal characteristics do share some overlap with one another. For example, age and tenure are usually correlated with one another. In order to have higher tenure, one has to be older. The correlation was .40 between the

two. The correlations of the other characteristics with one another ranged from .01 to .33, which while suggesting some overlap, does not indicate a problem for the regression results. A reviewer suggested that instead of the continuous measures of age and tenure, categorical variables might result in different results. Dummy coded variables for those aged 35 to 45 and 46 and older were created, with the reference group being those 35 and younger. Likewise, two dummy coded variables were created for those with 6 to 12 years tenure and 13 or more years. The reference group was those with 5 or less years of tenure. The categorical (i.e., dummy coded) variables were used in place of the continuous measures of age and tenure in the regression equations. The new variables produced similar results in statistical significance for gender to those reported in Table 3. While not the focus of the study, there was some difference of the effects of age and tenure on some of the measures. The specific results are available upon request.

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