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Source: *The Sociological Quarterly*, Autumn, 1984, Vol. 25, No. 4 (Autumn, 1984), pp. 551-566

Published by: Taylor & Francis, Ltd.

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# Gender, Working Conditions and the Job Satisfaction of Women in a Non-Traditional Occupation: Female Correctional Officers in Men's Prisons\*

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Despite the recent interest in women working in nontraditional occupations, few analyses have systematically compared the work-related attitudes of such women with those of men holding the same positions. This article presents an exploratory analysis, drawing hypotheses from the "gender" and "job" models described by Feldberg and Glenn (1979), to compare work-related attitudes among male and female correctional officers. Data drawn from a survey of male and female correctional officers working at the same prison facility (three male and one female units) are utilized to contrast the importance of gender, with experiences on the job as determinants of job satisfaction. The results support the job model, which suggests that the attitudes of working women are a function of their position in the organizational structure and immediate working conditions.

Since the late 1960s, women have been slowly infiltrating a greater variety of occupational groups in our society. Their experiences, job orientations, and attitudes have become subjects of intense inquiry by social scientists. Past analyses developed by economists and sociologists identified personal characteristics and family relationships as crucial variables explaining the attitudes and behavior of working women (e.g., age, educational attainment, marital status, number and ages of children). Feldberg and Glenn (1979) referred to this mode of explanation as the "gender model" in the sociology of work. Studies in this vein have argued that because of prior socialization into family roles, female workers are (1) less involved in their work and less committed to their careers than men (Brim, 1958; Psathas, 1968), (2) disinterested in the intrinsic aspects of their work (Kuhler, 1963), (3) more concerned with friendships than organizational influence or other working conditions (Rossi, 1965), and (4) more willing to submit to bureaucratic subordination and less concerned with autonomy than men (Simpson and Simpson, 1969). In contrast, explanations of the work-related attitudes and behavior of men have treated the work performed as a primary explanatory variable. The immediate job situation is frequently found to have an impact on a worker's subjective reaction to his job

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\* The authors wish to acknowledge the suggestions of Michael Musheno and Russ Winn throughout this project. Thanks also go to Gray Cavender, M.A. Bortner, and three anonymous reviewers, for helpful comments. Bernard Boyle was of great assistance in data analysis. Mary Anne Legarski, Jody Horn, Annette Morris and Marcos Andrade were of tremendous help in data collection. Finally, thanks to all the correctional officers willing to take the time to respond to the survey.

in the "job model" of the sociology of work. (See Feldberg and Glenn, 1979, for a discussion of relevant research in this vein.)

More recent studies of women in the workplace have found the reliance on gender as a primary explanation of female work orientation to be misplaced, or at least somewhat simplistic (see Acker and Van Houten, 1974; McIlwee, 1981). From her research on men and women in a corporation, Kanter (1976, 1977) concluded that women's attitudes toward work are more a function of their location in the organizational structure than a consequence of their primary socialization into family roles. If women often have lower job aspirations, less involvement with work, and exhibit greater concern with congenial work environments and peer relations, the reason may be that they find themselves in jobs with limited or blocked mobility. Kanter argued that men who find themselves in such circumstances exhibit similar work-related attitudes.

(S)tructural position can account for what at first glance appear to be "gender differences" and perhaps even explain more of the variance in the behavior of men and women. It becomes more important to understand how women and men get distributed across structural positions and how this differential distribution affects behavior—not how women differ from men . . . (T)he behavior of women at the bottom . . . should be seen as a function of being at the bottom, and not primarily as a function of being a woman (Kanter, 1976:416).

There is considerable support for Kanter's position in analyses of the relationship between working conditions, gender, and job satisfaction (Grandjean and Bernal, 1979, 1980; McIlwee, 1981; South et al., 1982). Miller (1980), on the other hand, concluded that there are some differences between men and women with respect to their view of particular jobs, even though she also agreed that there is a direct correlation between on-the-job conditions and job satisfaction. For example, men and women both find intrinsic job characteristics (e.g., autonomy, complexity, variety) important. However, her data suggest that men place more importance on job autonomy than women, while women place more importance on job complexity than men. "While complexity and autonomy often go hand-in-hand (especially for men), it seems to be the autonomy associated with complexity that produces job satisfaction for men" (Miller, 1980:363). For women, job satisfaction is often contingent upon how complex and interesting their jobs are. However, Miller suggested that the differences she identified between men and women may be due largely to differing job structures and environments (Miller, 1980:364). For example, women may so rarely have access to jobs with autonomy that they do not rank it among the most important characteristics of their jobs. Unfortunately, Miller did not control for job or occupation in her study.

Given these seemingly inconsistent findings, the crucial issue becomes one of examining the relative importance of the values and expectations that a worker brings into a job vs. that job's particular structure and environment. Women conceivably bring values into a job that are different from men's (Wagman, 1965). However, little is known about the degree to which these values differ (Maurini and Greenberg, 1978) and the effect they have on job satisfaction in a specific job.

This lack of knowledge is especially apparent when we attempt to assess the job satisfaction levels of women working in male-dominated occupations. Cur-

rent research suggests that women in traditionally male occupations enjoy relatively high levels of job satisfaction (Meyer and Lee, 1978; Schreiber, 1979; O'Farrell, 1980). O'Farrell and Harlan (1982) found that women working in traditionally male, blue-collar jobs were significantly more satisfied with their work than their female counterparts employed by the same corporation in traditionally female, white-collar jobs. The women in nontraditional jobs apparently consider the pay and work content attached to their positions to be more satisfying than women in traditional employment situations. (Schreiber, 1979; O'Farrell and Harlan, 1982). However, few existing research efforts have compared the job satisfaction of males and females working in the same position within the same organization.

This paper is an exploratory analysis of the work orientations and job satisfaction levels of female correctional security officers compared to male officers working in the same institution. Respondents to a survey of work-related attitudes are compared along several dimensions: (1) background characteristics, (2) the reasons for choosing employment as a correctional officer, (3) attitudes toward inmates, (4) reactions to perceived working conditions, (5) attitudes toward co-workers, and (6) levels of general job satisfaction.

To date, the prominence given to gender-related variables in research on female correctional officers (e.g., Holland et al., 1979; Kissell and Katasampes, 1980; Bowersox, 1981) has overshadowed the consideration of job characteristics and their impact on work-related attitudes. For example, most studies have focused on the resentment women experience entering correctional security work in male facilities and its *implied* negative consequences for female officer job satisfaction and achievement (Holland, et al. 1979; Kissell and Katasampes, 1980; Peterson, 1982). In particular, Peterson (1982) noted that women are continually confronted with conflicting role expectations held by co-workers and supervisors arising out of the seemingly traditional incompatibility of being female and a correctional officer in male institutions. Further, female officers assigned to male facilities face the likelihood of sexual harassment from both inmates and their predominantly male co-workers and supervisors.

Only one study specifically addressed female officers' work-related attitudes. Crouch and Alpert (1982) reported that during the first six months on the job, male guards became more punitive and aggressive. In contrast, during the same period, female guards became less punitive and aggressive. Although their findings lend support to the significance of gender in officer work orientation, Crouch and Alper failed to include in their sample any female officers working in male facilities. Therefore, it is difficult to determine whether the observed gender differences might be, at least in part, the result of differing organizational characteristics in female, as opposed to male, prisons.

Our data on male and female correctional officers working in line positions within the same institution are excellent for comparing the importance of gender, with experiences on the job as determinants of job satisfaction. The job model examination of work orientation suggests that female and male correctional officers' attitudes toward inmates, co-workers, supervisors, working conditions, and general job satisfaction are explained primarily by their experiences on the job, rather than by prior life experiences. Consequently, male and female correctional officers' attitudes on these work dimensions should be similar. Alter-

natively, the gender model suggests that, relative to their male counterparts, female officers place more emphasis on the social aspects of their workplace than on promotional opportunities or working conditions. These differences would be due primarily to the unique job orientation which female *vis-a-vis* male officers bring to their jobs. Specifically, gender models suggest that women place greater importance than do men on relationships with others in their work environment. Therefore, the quality of such relations would be expected to have a relatively greater impact on female officer job-satisfaction levels.

From the preceding review of the literature, three major areas emerge for comparing male and female correctional officers: (1) demographic and predispositional characteristics; (2) attitudes toward supervisors, coworkers, and inmates; and (3) levels and determinants of job satisfaction—in particular, the relative importance of working conditions and relationships with others in the workplace and their effect on the level of job satisfaction. Through the comparison of male and female correctional officer attitudes in each of these areas, the relevance of job, as opposed to gender, explanations of work-related attitudes will be assessed.

### The Data and Analysis

The data for this analysis are drawn from a study of work- and training-related attitudes among line-level correctional security officers employed in a medium-minimum security prison facility in a western state. There are four self-contained and autonomous units within the facility: two house male inmates classified as medium security risks; the third houses minimum security male inmates; the fourth houses women inmates of varying security classifications. The institution is relatively new (approximately two years old) and is located on the outskirts of a major metropolitan area.

At the time of the study, this facility employed approximately 230 correctional officers. Data were collected through observation and self-administered questionnaires distributed by the investigators and graduate research assistants (see Jurik, 1983, for a description of the qualitative aspects of this research project). We obtained completed questionnaires from 179 guards—40 females and 139 males. These numbers represent an 85 percent response rate from officers working day and swing shifts and a 50 percent response rate from those individuals assigned to graveyard duty. Officers on the day and swing shifts were given time off from work to complete these questionnaires, while graveyard personnel were asked to complete the surveys after their shift or at home. This difference probably accounts for the disparity in response rates between shifts.

Although the response rate for male and female officers was quite high, our analysis must still be viewed as exploratory. The number of female respondents renders our parameter estimates unstable and it is thus more difficult to obtain statistical significance. The small number of females also makes it quite difficult to include relevant control variables in the prediction of job satisfaction. For this reason, most of our report concentrates on bivariate analyses of relevant factors. In addition, we selected a significance level of  $\pm .10$  to alert us to exploratory findings which would be worthy of future investigation. In our sample, 32 women worked in the men's prison units; eight women and two men work-

ed in the women's unit. Analyses to follow were run both including and excluding personnel from the women's unit. There was no appreciable difference in the results. All of the findings reported in this paper include the women's unit personnel. We must admit that the generalizability of findings beyond the institution studied and the time of data collection is limited by unique background factors. The research design is also limited in that the data are all self-reported, with no additional indicators of job satisfaction and related concepts (e.g., absenteeism, grievances filed). However, given the sparsity of both research on women working as correctional officers and data on male and female workers holding the same position within the same organization, our analysis should still prove useful in suggesting avenues for further research.

*The work of a correctional security officer.* Correctional security work involves a variety of ambiguous and sometimes conflicting tasks (see Cressey, 1966). First and foremost, correctional officers are charged with the supervision of residents and the maintenance of security, order, and discipline. Similar to police departments, correctional institutions are typically hierarchical, paramilitary organizations. Our prison was no exception. Much of the work officers performed involved following orders and showing respect for superiors. Concomitantly, these institutions are bureaucratic organizations. Consequently, officers also spent significant amounts of time writing reports and managing records of their activity. More recently, in the prison observed, officers have been charged with inmate service and rehabilitation functions (e.g., providing information to inmates and supervising rehabilitation programs).

The bureaucratic, paramilitary structure of this institution, with its emphasis on hierarchical relations, limited the amount of formal power available to line correctional officers (Lombardo, 1981; Jurik, 1984). Similarly, promotional opportunities have been few. This is due to a combination of internal organizational characteristics and the severe budgetary limitations placed on the department during the latest recession (1981-83).

The department has attempted to professionalize the correctional security officer position by increasing educational and training requirements (Jurik and Halemba, 1984). However, this has had little impact on the organizational structure. The hierarchical, bureaucratic, paramilitary structure has remained dominant. Consequently, the power and opportunity available to correctional officers continue to be limited.

*Background characteristics of officers.* The individuals interviewed at this facility did not fit the stereotype so frequently utilized in the media to characterize correctional officers. That is, as a group, they were not rural and uneducated "good ole boys." Approximately 20 percent were women. Almost 55 percent of the respondents reported that they had earned degrees from community or four-year colleges/universities. Nearly 80 percent had more than 13 years of schooling. An overwhelming majority (88.8 percent) lived in urban areas east of the facility. Table 1 summarizes the differences in background characteristics that men and women brought to the correctional officer job.



Table 1: Demographic Characteristics by Gender

	Male %(n)	Female %(n)
<u>Age</u>		
18-25	20.5% ( 27)	24.3% ( 9)
26-35	40.9% ( 54)	37.8% ( 14)
36-45	18.2% ( 24)	32.4% ( 12)
46 plus	20.5% ( 27)	5.4% ( 2)
<u>Residence</u>		
Urban	87.0% (121)	95.0% ( 38)
Rural	13.0% ( 18)	5.0% ( 2)
<u>Marital Status</u>		
Single	22.6% ( 31)	32.5% ( 13)
Divorced or Separated	16.1% ( 22)	42.5% ( 17)
Married	61.3% ( 84)	25.0% ( 10)
<u>Highest Degree Completed</u>		
H.S. or GED	43.4% ( 59)	27.5% ( 11)
A.A.	22.8% ( 31)	25.0% ( 10)
B.S. or M.S.	27.9% ( 38)	42.5% ( 17)
VOC/Tech or other	5.9% ( 8)	5.0% ( 2)
<u>Field in Which Degree Obtained</u>		
Criminal Justice, Law Enforcement, Police Science	44.7% ( 34)	30.0% ( 9)
Social Welfare, Sociology, Psychology, Counseling, Education	29.0% ( 22)	50.0% ( 15)
Other	26.3% ( 20)	20.0% ( 6)
<u>Parents' Occupation</u>		
Either parent professional/managerial or self-employed	47.0% ( 62)	63.2% ( 24)
Neither parent professional/managerial or self-employed	53.0% ( 70)	36.8% ( 14)
<u>Military Service</u>		
Yes	59.7% ( 83)	.0% ( 0)
No	40.2% ( 56)	100.0% ( 40)
<u>Previous Law Enforcement Experience</u>		
Yes	68.1% ( 94)	37.8% ( 14)
No	31.9% ( 44)	62.2% ( 23)

Relative to their male counterparts, female officers were more likely to live in urban areas; to come from families where at least one parent held a professional or managerial job; and to be divorced, separated, or single. Further, as groups, women were more highly educated than men. Although the same percentage of male and female officers held Associate of Arts degrees, a higher percentage of women held bachelor's and master's degrees. Male and female officers

also had different degree specialties, with men more likely to hold degrees in criminal justice-related fields and women holding degrees in other social science disciplines. Finally, female officers were far less likely than male officers to have military or prior law enforcement-related experience.

*Reasons for taking the job.* Given that these background differences existed between male and female officers, it was plausible to posit that they had somewhat differing reasons for seeking employment as a correctional officer. Three questions in our instrument addressed this dimension. Respondents were asked to choose from a long list of reasons which best explained why they took their jobs as correctional officers. They were asked to check the most important, second-most important, and third-most important reason.

Table 2 presents a rank-ordering of the reasons listed by female and male respondents as *the most important* reason for taking the job. The most striking difference in these data is that 55 percent of the female officers stated that their primary reason for assuming the job was an interest in either human service work or inmate rehabilitation. In contrast, only 20 percent of male officer respondents gave this as their primary reason for employment. Ten percent of both male and female officers listed an interest in security work as their primary reason for taking the C.O. position. As a group, male officers were more likely than female officers to list other, more extrinsic reasons for employment (e.g., job security, fringe benefits).

**Table 2: Rank Ordering of *Primary* Reason for Taking Job as a Correctional Officer**

Females		%	Males		%
1.	Interested in human service work or in inmate rehabilitation	55%	1.	Interested in human service work or in inmate rehabilitation	23%
2.	It was the entry level position for other jobs in this dept.	16%	2.	It was the entry level position for other jobs in this dept.	21%
3.	Salary	13%	3.	Job security	20%
4.	Interest in security work	10%	4.	No alternative work available	14%
5.	No alternative work available	3%	5.	Interested in security work	10%
6.	Other	3%	6.	Salary	8%
			7.	Fringe Benefits	2%
			8.	Other	2%

An index was also created out of these three items measuring intrinsic vs. extrinsic reasons for seeking such employment. If a respondent indicated that s/he primarily sought employment as a correctional officer because of interest in inmate rehabilitation, human service work, or security work, or because it



was an entry level position for a career in corrections, a score indicating intrinsic reasons for employment was assigned. An extrinsic score was assigned to those respondents indicating that they primarily sought employment because of job security, salary, fringe benefits, or because no other work was available.

Male and female officers differed considerably with respect to their reasons for seeking such employment. Women were more apt than men to give primarily intrinsic reasons for seeking prison employment. A sizeable correlation was generated ( $\text{gamma} = -.322$ ) between this index and gender. Even controlling for the respondents' education did not wash out this relationship. The relationship became stronger among respondents with only a high school diploma or A.A. degree (partial  $\text{gamma}$  of  $-.538$  and  $-.479$ , respectively). However, the relationship between gender and intrinsic reasons for employment vanished among respondents with a bachelor's or master's degree ( $\text{gamma} = -.179$ ).

*Attitudes toward inmates, co-workers and superiors.* A number of other indices were created to measure correctional officers' attitudes towards inmates, co-workers, and superiors. (See Babbie, 1983, with regard to index construction procedures.) The attitude-toward-inmates index measured the degree to which officers held negative (punitive) attitudes toward inmates. The degree of association between these indices and gender are revealed in Table 3. No significant relationship was discovered between gender and attitudes toward inmates. This finding refutes the stereotype that women would be more sensitive to the needs of inmates than men (see Crouch and Alpert, 1982).

Table 3: Degree of Association Between Attitudes Toward Others in Work Environment and Gender.

Attitudes Toward . . .	Gamma <sup>a</sup>
Inmates (Index)	+.07
Supervisors & Admin (Index)	+.10
Co-workers (Index)	-.35**

<sup>a</sup>Gamma is a measure of association that assumes ordinal scaling; no association = 0, perfect association = 1. A negative sign indicates more negative attitudes for women, compared to men. A positive sign indicates more positive attitudes for women relative to men as a group.

\* Coefficient significant,  $p \leq .10$   
\*\*  $p \leq .05$   
\*\*\*  $p \leq .01$

It does seem, however, that women expected themselves to be more sensitive to inmates. When gender was used to predict responses to the question, "I show more sensitivity to the needs of inmates than most of my co-workers," a significant ( $p \leq .03$ ) gamma of  $-.272$  was generated. The strength of the relationship

was weakened because a large percentage of women (45 percent) opted for the middle response (neither agree or disagree). This neutral response may indicate a reluctance by female officers to separate themselves too strongly from their male colleagues.

Respondents' attitudes toward co-workers were examined by constructing an index which consisted of items that addressed how well an officer liked the people s/he worked with, how helpful and friendly colleagues were, and how much opportunity there was to develop friendships with co-workers. An interesting finding emerged: there was a sizeable correlation between gender and attitudes toward co-workers ( $\gamma = .355$ ,  $p \leq .05$ ) (See Table 3). Women were more likely than men to express negative attitudes toward co-workers (40.0 percent vs. 24.1 percent respectively). Also, female officers were more inclined than men to state that the majority of problems they encountered at work were caused by their co-workers (40.6 percent vs. 12.3 percent, respectively) (see Table 4).

**Table 4: Majority of Problems Correctional Officers Experience Can Be Attributed to, by Gender**

	Male	Female
	% (n)	% (n)
Inmates	36.1 ( 44)	3.0 ( 1)
Co-workers	12.3 ( 15)	40.6 ( 13)
Supervisors/Administrators	51.6 ( 63)	56.3 ( 18)
	100. % (122)	100. % ( 32)
Cramer's V = .367		
p ≤ .001		

A number of items addressed correctional officers' assessments of supervisory and administrative personnel. A similar percentage of male and female officers (51.6 percent and 56.3 percent, respectively) felt that administrators and supervisors were at the root of a majority of their problems (see Table 4). Parallel results were obtained when a five-item attitudes-toward-supervisors/administrators index was examined (see Table 3). While men were more apt than women to express solidly negative attitudes (34.7 percent vs. 15.4 percent respectively) an almost equal percentage of male and female officers (77.0 percent and 76.6 percent, respectively) expressed, at minimum, somewhat negative feelings toward supervisors and administrators.

*Reactions to perceived working conditions.* Items eliciting responses regarding perceived promotional opportunities, increasing one's knowledge and skills, the amount of variety and authority on the job, and influence with regard to policy matters did not produce any significant differences between male and female respondents (see Table 5). Those officers who marked negative or somewhat negative responses for such items were then asked how frequently this bothered them. An examination of the relationship between these items and gender also produced no correlations.

Table 5: Degree of Association Between Perceived Working Conditions and Gender<sup>a</sup>

Perceived Working Conditions	Gamma <sup>b</sup>
Advancement Opportunities (no real chance to get ahead vs. average to excellent chances to get ahead)	-.04
Opportunities for learning more about my work or increasing my skill	-.18
Variety	+.19
Influence	+.20
Authority	+.03
Discretion	-.09

<sup>a</sup>Perceived Workings are coded as (1) little or none of the relevant characteristic and (2) an average to great amount of that characteristic.

<sup>b</sup>Gamma is a measure of association that assumes ordinal scaling; no association = 0, perfect association = 1. A negative gamma indicates that women perceive their jobs as having less of that particular characteristic than do men; a positive sign suggests that women perceive that characteristic to be more pervasive in their jobs than do men. None of the coefficients in this table were statistically significant.

The only differences found with regard to the perceptions of male and female correctional officers about their jobs lay in the area of need for discretion on the job. While there were no significant gender-specific differences in response to the question, "How frequently do you have to use your own discretion to get a job done," there were gender differences in the responses to another discretion-related question. This question required them to assess their need for more, the same, or less discretion on their job. Eighteen percent of the male officers felt that they didn't have enough discretion to do their job properly. Only one female officer (2.8 percent) concurred. However, 27.8 percent of the women felt that they needed more structure to do their jobs properly, as contrasted to 17.2 percent of the men.

*Job satisfaction.* One final attitudinal index was created to measure general job satisfaction among correctional officers. The questions which made up the index were drawn from Sheppard and Herrick (1972). A factor analysis of the survey questions dealing with general job satisfaction (Harman, 1976) yielded a weighted five-item index which included the following (responses listed in parentheses):

- (1) The job you have now is the best one you've ever had. (Disagree, Somewhat disagree, Neither agree nor disagree, Somewhat agree, Agree).
- (2) How often have you thought very seriously about making a real effort to enter a different occupation? (Very often, Once in a while, Hardly ever, Never).
- (3) Check one of the following statements which best describes how you feel about your job . . .

- (a) I would quit my job right now if any other job opportunity presented itself.
  - (b) I would take almost any other job in which I could earn as much as I am earning now.
  - (c) My job is as good as the average and I would just as soon have it as any other job, but would change jobs if I could make more money.
  - (d) I am not eager to change jobs but would do so if I could make substantially more money.
  - (e) I do not want to change jobs for more money, because the one I have is a good one.
- (4) How well would you say your job measures up to the kind of job you wanted when you first took it? Is it very much like the kind of job you wanted? Somewhat like the job you wanted? *Or* not very much like the kind you wanted? (Very much, somewhat, not very much.)
- (5) How much of the time are you satisfied with your position? (Most of the time, A good deal of the time, About half of the time, Occasionally, Hardly ever, Never.)

After finding that there was no significant correlation between this index and gender, several predictors of job satisfaction were drawn from the Sociological literature in this area (Kalleberg, 1977; Gruenberg, 1980; Miller, 1980) and correlated with the index while simultaneously controlling for gender. These independent variables were indices of the following dimensions: (1) educational background, (2) perceived working conditions, (3) perceived opportunities for advancement, and (4) relations with inmates, co-workers, and superiors.

Table 6 summarizes the relationship between perceived working conditions and general job satisfaction for males and females. Perceived variety on the job appears to have a positive impact on general job satisfaction for both women and men ( $\gamma = .56$  and  $.54$ , respectively). The same is true for perceived opportunities for learning on the job. This effect may be even larger for females ( $\gamma = .60$  for women and  $.47$  for men). Perceived frequency of using discretion appears to have no significant impact on either male or female job satisfaction. However, for both women and men, perceived input toward the running of their institution significantly increased general job satisfaction ( $\gamma = .68$  and  $.53$ , respectively).

Finally, for both women and men, perceptions of average or excellent opportunities for advancement within the department were associated with higher levels of job satisfaction. Because of the small number of women in our sample, the  $\gamma$  of  $.47$  was not significant. However, it was of a magnitude similar to the coefficient for the males ( $\gamma = .54$ ), which was significant.

The preceding findings tend to support a job model of worker attitudes. In contrast with expectations deduced from a gender model, there is very little indication that women are less concerned than men with the conditions under which they must work, or that these factors have less impact on female than on male officer job satisfaction.

Table 7 allows us to assess the impact of relationships with inmates, co-workers, and superiors on the job satisfaction of females relative to male correctional officers. Attitudes toward inmates appear to exert an equal effect on

Table 6: Degree of Association Between Perceived Working Conditions and General Job Satisfaction Scores Controlling on Gender.

Perceived Working Condition <sup>a</sup>	Gamma for	Gamma for
	Females	Males
Variety	.56*	.54***
Opportunity for learning	.60***	.47**
Opportunity to use discretion	.06	.30
Influence on running of institution	.68**	.53***
Opportunity for advancement	.47	.54***

<sup>a</sup>see note a Table 5

\*coefficient significant at  $p \leq .10$

\*\* $p \leq .05$

\*\*\* $p \leq .01$

both genders' levels of job satisfaction (gammas=.56 for women and .52 for men).

In assessing the impact of attitudes toward coworkers and superiors on job satisfaction, we found some apparent differences between male and female officers. For males, favorable attitudes toward superiors appeared to significantly

Table 7: Degree of Association Between Attitudes Toward Others in Work Environment and General Job Satisfaction Controlling on Gender.

Attitudes Toward Others	Gamma for	Gamma for
	Females <sup>a</sup>	Males <sup>a</sup>
Inmates (Index)	.56*	.52***
Supervisors and Administrators (Index)	.30	.60***
Co-workers (Index)	.08	.51***

<sup>a</sup> see note a, Table 5

\*coefficient significant at  $p \leq .10$

\*\*coefficient significant at  $p \leq .05$

\*\*\*coefficient significant at  $p \leq .01$

increase job satisfaction (gamma=.60). However, for females, the impact was about half that for males. The gamma of .30 is not significant.

Similarly, favorable attitudes toward co-workers had a significant, positive effect on male correctional officers' levels of job satisfaction (gamma=.51). In contrast, among female officers, attitudes toward co-workers had no discernable effect on job satisfaction (gamma=.08). Again, these data appear to refute the gender model expectation that favorable relations with co-workers are a major determinant of female work-related job satisfaction. If anything, male officers are more concerned with this aspect of the job.

Finally, ordinary least squares regression procedures were used to estimate a more comprehensive model of general job satisfaction. This model included a dummy variable for gender. The significant determinants of general job satisfaction for this sample of correctional officers will be elaborated elsewhere (see Jurik and Halemba, 1984). For this discussion, it suffices to say that the model revealed no significant differences in the level of job satisfaction for female officers, even when other important determinants were held constant (see Table 8). (See Kalleberg, 1974; Gruenberg, 1980; Miller, 1980; and O'Farrell and Harlan, 1982, for discussions of important determinants of job satisfaction.)

Table 8: Standardized Regression Coefficient for the Prediction of Job Satisfaction Score (N=179)

Dep. Var.: Job Satisfaction (Index)

$r^2 = .352$   $p \leq .0001$

Independent Variable	Beta Value
Intercept	0
Age	.016
Minority (dummy)	.019
Female (dummy)	.087
Prior Law Enforcement	-.030
Experience (dummy)	
Years of Education	-.197**
Attitudes Toward inmates (Index)	.185***
Attitudes Toward Co-workers (Index)	-.167**
Attitudes Toward Supervisors (Index)	.158
Perceived Working Conditions:	.192***
index: variety	
authority	
discretion	
Perceived Promotional Opportunities	.139*
Months Employed in the Department	.134***

\* $p \leq .10$

\*\* $p \leq .05$

\*\*\* $p \leq .01$

### Discussion And Conclusions

The preceding discussion has presented an exploratory analysis drawing hypotheses from the gender and job models described by Feldberg and Glenn (1979) to compare work-related attitudes among male and female correctional officers. Our conclusions here are limited by the small sample of officers drawn from only one prison facility. The validity of our findings is also weakened by the single source of self-reported survey data. The results fail to demonstrate much support for the utilization of gender as a *primary* explanatory variable



of correctional officer job satisfaction. Generally, our findings support the job model, which suggests that the attitudes of working women (female correctional officers, in this case) are a function of their position in the organizational structure and immediate working conditions.

However, there are some interesting differences between female and male correctional officers. Male and female correctional officers can be differentiated on a number of demographic dimensions. Women respondents tended to be more highly educated (and in different fields), come from more professional and urban family backgrounds, and have a substantially greater tendency to be divorced or separated. Finally, they have contrasting occupational backgrounds. A majority of men had previous law enforcement and/or military experience. None of the female respondents had been in the military, and only slightly more than a third had previous law enforcement experience.

Despite such apparent predispositional differences, as a group, women exhibited largely the same attitudes toward their work as did male officers. These women did not exhibit less ambition and career commitment than men (Psathas, 1968; Maurini and Greenberg, 1978). Our data indicate that female respondents, more often than men, cited intrinsic reasons for employment in corrections. They were *less* likely than men to report entering corrections work because of a desire for increased job security, benefits, or salary (see Table 2). Given the large percentage of female officers who were divorced or separated and therefore dependent on their own means for economic support, this finding is especially interesting. This relationship between gender and reasons for correctional employment is only partially explained by education. When controlling for education, women continued to exhibit a stronger inclination to cite intrinsic reasons in the lower educational categories.

It appears that the increasing availability of correctional security work for women (that is, the extension of opportunities to work in men's prisons) has resulted in the recruitment of female officers who are both more highly educated and more oriented toward the intrinsic characteristics of a career in corrections than their male counterparts. This pattern may be the result of restricted labor market opportunities for even more highly educated women in our society. Alternatively, it may be the result of more careful screening of female, relative to male, applicants by corrections hiring committees.

Perceived working conditions significantly affected female as well as male general job satisfaction. Also, those male and female respondents who perceived that there was little or no job variety, promotional opportunity, or opportunity to increase their knowledge and skills did not differ in how frequently this bothered them. Although there were several indications (see Jurik, 1984) that females experienced more difficulties than males with their predominantly male co-workers, attitudes toward co-workers exerted no significant impact on females' job satisfaction levels! From these data, one would be hard pressed to argue that women place more emphasis on cordial relations with colleagues than do men. Of course, our generalizations regarding the determinants of female *vis-a-vis* male worker orientations must be restricted to females employed in the traditionally male occupation of correctional officer.

Future research efforts in this vein should include larger and more representative samples of workers. For instance, comparisons should be made between

males and females holding the same position in a wider variety of occupational groups. Further, data should be drawn from a wider variety of sources—in particular, more information on the subjects' past work history, multiple indicators of job satisfaction, and information on the structural characteristics of local labor markets (i.e., male and female unemployment rates in related fields) should be considered. These structural factors are quite likely to differentially affect the work orientations of men and women. While the job model certainly appears more relevant to an understanding of correctional officer work orientations than the gender model, it is important to consider wider structural characteristics of the labor market, as well as immediate working conditions.

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