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A Warden or a Ballerina: Examining the Relationship between Gender Socialization, and Occupational Choice among Prison Wardens and Superintendents

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Abstract

This study explores the career experiences of women who hold leadership positions within the field of corrections as Wardens and Superintendents. Specifically the research seeks to examine the personal biographies of these women in an effort to document life experiences shaping their occupational choices. Twenty nine interviews were conducted with wardens and superintendents from 13 states. Subjects were questioned about family, education, perceptions of occupational choice, and career aspirations. Generational differences exist between female wardens in relation to boarder social trends in gender and occupation. The more support women receive from parents and family to pursue education and careers, the more likely they were to have clearly established goals toward that end. The more educational and career opportunities women perceive and being available, the more likely they will pursue those goals. The role of women in the field of corrections has changed dramatically over the past fifty years and women working in corrections are redefining femininity in a masculine organizational culture.

Keywords

Gender, Socialization, Occupations, Work, Wardens, Corrections, Interviews

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Historically, women administered and staffed institutions for females and juveniles, not males (Freedman, 1981). Only in the last twenty years have women been allowed to participate fully in all areas of corrections and forge careers in so-called non-traditional areas of employment, particularly in male facilities (Zimmer, 1986). There are numerous reasons for these changes, ranging from concerns of male and female inmates, legal battles filed by inmates and employees and changing societal attitudes surrounding the status of women in the workforce. "The percentage of women working has risen from 20.6% in 1900 to more than 76 percent in 1995...since 1970 the increase in women's participation has been dramatic" (Kimmel, 2008, p. 173). Despite the increased entry of women into the labor force, occupational segregation still exists, particularly for women who choose to enter into male-dominated fields.

Why Study Gendered Occupations?

Although societal practices and cultural beliefs about the role of women in the workforce are changing, occupations in the United States remain highly stratified along gender lines. In 2012, the leading occupations were secretary or administrative assistant, registered nurse, cashier and elementary and middle school teachers (U.S. Department of Labor, n.d.). Historically, societal norms and laws prevented women from working outside the home. When women did enter the workforce, their choices were limited to jobs that essentially extended their domestic roles. Moreover, "Protective Labor Laws" prevented women from entering into certain occupations, such as factory work, and they restricted the number of hours a woman could work, prohibited women from lifting more than the specified amount of weight,

prohibited women from working at night, and specified jobs that women could and could not hold (Reskin & Padavic, 2002, p. 20).

Clearly then, societal norms and legal practices contributed to the social construction of gender in the workplace and the emergence of rigid organizational cultures. Certain jobs were defined as masculine and appropriate for men, while others were defined as feminine and relegated to women. These definitions had real consequences --masculine occupations were defined as more valuable and consequently highly rewarded. Traditional notions of gender and the traits of masculinity and femininity became associated with certain occupations (Weitzman, 1979). Men are regarded as independent, intelligent, and competent, so they are thought to make good doctors, lawyers, and executives. Women are regarded as dependent, unintelligent, and incapable, should make good nurses and secretaries, subordinate to doctors, lawyers, and executives.

Of course, the social construction of gender does not start in the workplace; but it is perpetuated there. The social construction of gender begins at birth and is embedded in socialization practices throughout the life course. Gender socialization, which differs for males and females, functions in part to maintain male privilege by shaping and restricting the occupational choices of men and women. Some theorists claim that as long as women did not perceive masculine jobs as open and attainable, there was no use in pursuing them, thus perpetuating the stereotype that women are not as ambitious as men (Reskin & Padavic, 2002; Weitzman, 1979). In reality, most jobs that are open to women are low paying jobs with little opportunity for advancement. Much research concluded that women accepted these jobs because work was not their primary focus (Lewin, 1989). They were on the "Mommy Track," that is they planned to work until marriage and then quit to raise a family. Even when women do take on more powerful and prestigious positions, they are often labeled as deviant for rejecting femininity and assuming masculine traits that is for women to be successful at work they must follow a male template for success.

In recent years females have been increasingly entering historically male dominated fields, many with great success, but none without problems. Many women have experienced discrimination and sexual harassment. Women in male dominated fields, particularly in supervisory positions, report that their subordinates challenge their abilities and often raise questions surrounding their advancement (Reskin & Ross, 1992).

Why Study Gendered Work in Prisons?

Traditionally, males have dominated the field of corrections; women were employed in secretarial and clerical positions, but rarely as correctional officers, supervisors, wardens or superintendents. In recent years the number of women working in all areas of corrections has increased tremendously. While many more women are working as correctional officers, there are still very few female supervisors and even fewer female wardens or superintendents. Because the field of corrections is still male dominated, it is important to study gendered work in prisons in light of the changing face of prison -- both in terms of inmates and staff.

Over the past fifty years the number of inmates in U.S. prisons has grown tremendously, particularly the female inmate population. According to a report by the United States Government Accountability Office (2012), the Federal Bureau of Prisons (BOP) population increased from about 145,000 in 2000 to about 217,000 in 2011 and BOP is operating at 38 percent over capacity. Despite these increases, women are still underrepresented in prison work; but their numbers are increasing. These increases are due in large part to the dramatic increase in inmate populations and the attendant need for more corrections officers. Johnson ([1991] 1997) contends that, "a more pragmatic consideration for integrating women into the workplace is corrections' continuing need for competent, qualified workers…if people are

excluded solely on the basis of gender, then half of the adult population cannot be considered for employment, no matter how qualified and motivated they may be" (Johnson, 1997 p. 7). Clearly, there is a demand for correctional workers. Therefore, research should attempt to identify barriers that block women's entry into and opportunities in this area.

Other reasons for hiring women for corrections deal with legal matters and affirmative action. Correctional organizations are now legally compelled to hire qualified women (Collins, 1991). Still, though, gender plays a role in this process. "Male staff would grudgingly admit that women tend to be more skillful at defusing hostility than they…the academic achievement and verbal skills of female recruits tend to be higher than for men, and on the average they wrote better reports and communicated more effectively" (Johnson, 1997, p. 12). The introduction of women into the field or corrections has positive and sometimes unanticipated benefits. Nevertheless, there are still many obstacles for women to overcome in the field of corrections.

Literature Review

Gender and Gender Socialization

In order to understand the experiences of female wardens, we need to understand the nature of gender socialization, particularly in regards to how they may have experienced gender socialization. "Gender refers to the classification that societies construct to exaggerate the differences between males and females" (Reskin & Padavic, 2002, p. 3). Gender then, is socially constructed and differentiates males from females by defining appropriate roles for both sexes. "Societies produce and maintain gender differences—that is, engage in gendering—through several social processes: socialization, the actions of social institutions, and interaction among people" (West & Zimmerman, 1987, p. 125). Through gender role socialization we learn societal expectations of appropriate behaviors and aspirations for each sex.

"Our gender identities are both voluntary--we choose to become what we are--and coerced--we are pressured, forced, sanctioned, and often physically beaten into submission in some roles" (Kimmel, 2008, p. 87). Gender roles are no exception. Rewards and punishments encourage individuals to conform to the socially constructed notions of masculine and feminine. "The typical child seeks the acceptance of parents and peers and wants to avoid their rejection; these motives predispose him or her to shun inappropriate activities and to choose responses that are congruent with sex role standards" (Weitzman, 1979, pp. 17-18). Gender role socialization does not eliminate the disparities between men and women; but rather perpetuates them. Nowhere is the more clearly seen than in the workforce.

"The different socialization of females and males may incline them to seek only jobs that society has deemed acceptable for their sex...also socialization may contribute to a tendency for men and women to hold different values that affect their work lives, such as how important it is to have authority on the job or make lots of money" (Reskin & Padavic, 2002, p. 42). Therefore, gender socialization remains a dominant, yet subtle component in occupational choice and organizational segregation. Reskin and Padavic contend that women chose jobs based on the opportunities available to them, it just so happens that employers and society limit their opportunities (2002). These limited opportunities force women into female dominated occupations. Social influences also affect women's career decisions. "On the whole, mass media and popular fiction continue to portray the career woman as mannish, loose, or both; and the happy ending for the working girl still involves abandoning work, marrying, and having many children-and there the story ends" (Weitzman, 1979, p. 46). For women, success is equated to masculinity, loneliness, and unhappiness, while marriage and family denotes

stability and happiness, the fairy tale come true. Given these structural and social constraints on women who choose to work it is no wonder that women develop what Weitzman calls a "fear of success" (1979). A woman, especially a married woman, cannot be more successful than the men in her family.

Opportunity and Occupational Choice

Individual choices, including occupational choices, are shaped by gender socialization, which pervades every social institution and is reinforced by various cultural gatekeepers within those institutions. Through socialization women have different expectations and aspirations about work. When women enter the workforce it is often viewed as temporary, either until they get married or start a family. Women's careers are more likely than men's to be interrupted by child rearing. These views are not only held by women, but also by employers. Women are also regarded as having lower career aspirations than men, perhaps because of family obligations, the societal expectations placed upon men as the primary breadwinner, and limited career opportunities available to women. Weitzman's study of children's literature supports the idea that there are few career opportunities available to young girls. Weitzman conducted a content analysis of award winning children's literature in 1974 to compare male and female roles. For every one female character there were eleven male characters. Male characters were often portrayed as independent and adventurous, and many occupational categories were present. The female characters represented in the books portrayed mothers, sisters, and housewives engaged in service activities. The only woman represented in the books that held a job was a fairy godmother (Weitzman 1979; Weitzman, Eifler, Hokada, & Ross, 1972). Williams, Verone, Williams, and Malecha, replicated the study in the 1987 and found similar results. There were more female characters represented in the second study; but their roles had not changed much. Only one female character had a job, she was a waitress. These studies indicate to women that their roles are to serve others, especially men, and that the job opportunities available to them are extensions of domestic work, with very little status, prestige or opportunity. Women learn, through socialization, that their roles and are very limited.

While women see their roles as limited they also see their opportunities as limited. Kanter contends that there are structural barriers to women's opportunities, that the majority of women who work are stuck in dead end jobs, which causes a lack of ambition (1977). The types of jobs that women have provide little opportunity for advancement or promotion; they are terminal. "To the extent that women are denied the opportunity to experience psychological success women may be less likely to set difficult goals for themselves...which may lead to actual differences in performances over time due to limitations in self-concept" (Terborg & Ilgen, 1975, p. 372). "Girls are more likely to undervalue their abilities...especially in the more traditionally masculine employment arenas" (Kimmel, 2008, p. 161). Many women [prison guards] have been discouraged from full participation by discriminatory treatment during on the job training, male opposition and harassment, and formal policies that limit women's post assignments...these structural barriers set into motion a psychological cycle of failure that eventually destroys their motivation, desire, and ability to perform all aspects of the job" (Zimmer, 1986, p. 179-180). When women work in traditionally male jobs where they are subjected to substantial male co-worker opposition and sexual harassment, they experience low levels of job commitment, low productivity, physical and emotional health problems, and high rates of absenteeism and job turnover (Zimmer, 1986, p. 182; Gutek & Nakamura, 1982; Rustad, 1982; Merit Systems Protection Board, 1981; Crull, 1979; Goodman, 1978).

Other researchers contend there is a relationship to the type of work women perform and their goals and desires about work. Studies indicate that women workers see intrinsic rewards, such as a pleasant work environment, the opportunity to engage in social interactions

with co-workers, and the opportunity to be of service to others, rather than extrinsic rewards of pay and prestige that guide male choices (Bendig & Stillman, 1958; Centers & Bugental, 1966; Jurgensen, 1947; Singer & Stefflre, 1954; Wagman, 1965; Zimmer, 1986). Hence women do not go to work merely for a paycheck; but for social interaction and personal fulfillment. Holland claims "people make adequate occupational choices to the degree that they chose a job with an environment that corresponds most closely to their own values, interests, skills, role-preferences, and lifestyle" (Holland, 1963, p. 235). It would seem that gender socialization influences occupational choice in terms of the work that males and females engage in as well as the occupational environment. Zimmer contends that negative on the job experiences can influence occupational choice as well (1986). Previous research claims that work environment is more important to women than men. It is not clear, however, if gender socialization determines occupational choice or occupational choice determines gendered behavior. Many argue that women make different choices than men because early socialization has provided them with different traits, skills and abilities, and encouraged them to have lower occupational expectations and aspirations than men (Bern & Bern, 1970; Hetherington & Parke, 1979; Ireson, 1988; Mischel, 1998; Richardson, 1977; Zimmer, 1986). Others argue that the occupational environment determines gendered behavior. Christine Williams' (1989) study of female marines illustrates this. Many of the female marines reported that as marines they were encouraged and expected to engage in feminine behaviors, such as wearing make-up, dresses and being able to use umbrellas, when male marines are not allowed to use umbrellas. There were also policies in place that separated and perpetuated notions of masculinity and femininity (1989). Marini and Greenberger contend that "sex" and "segregation in the occupational structure" determine occupational aspirations and expectations (1978, p. 147).

Other research studies focused on the differences between women when looking at career choice. "Career-oriented women possessed more stereotypically masculine qualities, they tended to be more competitive, more aggressive, and more achievement oriented than women who remained homemakers" (Zimmer, 1986, p. 38; Gysbers, Johnston, & Gust, 1968; Rand, 1968; Wagman, 1965). Jim Crawford researched pioneer women, women who were among the first in their career fields, and traditional women and occupational choice. He found that traditional women had more traditional attitudes about female sexual behavior, female work roles and female family roles than did pioneer women. Crawford concluded, "There is indeed a connection between feminine role perception and vocational choice in females" (Crawford, 1978, p. 136; Zimmer, 1986). A 1976 study reported that the more masculine the occupation, the more masculine or androgynous the female employee (Fitzgerald, 1976; Zimmer, 1986). When Susan Martin (1980) conducted research on female police officers, she found "what may distinguish many police women from other women is the large proportion who describe themselves as having been independent, athletic or tomboys when they were girls" (Martin, 1980, p. 61; Zimmer, 1986). Research on women who work in a variety of non-traditional occupations concluded that these women were independent or self-reliant due to family background and support (Walshok, 1981; Zimmer, 1986). In Zimmer's study of female prison guards, most female guards cited financial reasons for their occupational choice (1986, p. 41). Other studies conducted on women working in non-traditional occupations, such as skilled trades, police work, construction, and mining, support this finding (Baker, 1975; Canada Department of Energy, Mines and Resources, 1976; Ermer, 1978; O'Farrell & Harlan, 1980; Westley, 1982; Zimmer, 1986).

Gender Dominated Occupations and Organizational Culture

"Despite World War II, the women's liberation movement, and affirmative action, the most common occupations for women in 1990 were almost identical to those that employed

the most women in 1940" (Reskin & Padavic 2002, p. 54). For example, the United States Department of Labor reports that in 2001 the leading occupations for women were; secretary, receptionist, nurse, bookkeeper and hairdresser (n.d.). In 2012, the leading occupations were secretary or administrative assistant, registered nurse, cashier, and elementary and middle school teachers (United States Department of Labor, n.d.).

The United States Department of Labor defines an occupation as male or female dominated when more than seventy-five percent of the work force is composed of one or the other (n.d.). "To say that organizations are inherently gendered implies that they have been defined, conceptualized, and structured in terms of a distinction between masculinity and femininity...it is possible to argue that organizations or occupations are gendered to the extent that they are male or female dominated" (Britton, 1997, p. 419). The distinction between male and female domination carries significant social meaning in terms of defining the organizational culture and the nature of the work environment. "Observers speculate that men oppose women's entry into traditionally male jobs…they fear that women's performance may make men look bad, that women may not do their share, that women may use their sex to get out of work, that men may have to clean up their language or change their behavior, and that women's very presence may diminish the prestige of their jobs or undermine the status men derive from doing "real men's" work" (Astrachan, 1986). If a woman is capable of performing the duties of a job that has been defined as masculine, it threatens the achieved masculinity of the male workers. Males view masculinity as an achieved status, not everyone can be masculine or engage in masculine activities. One may conclude that masculinity is more important to males than femininity is to females. Male workers create structural barriers or subcultures to keep women out of the field or at best limit the number of women who enter the field. "Occupations that expose workers to fear or danger in the workplace are especially likely to foster worker subcultures…because overt displays of fear by some members can be detrimental to the entire work group, sub-cultural norms and values stress the importance of overcoming fear through overt displays of masculinity and machismo" (Zimmer, 1986, pp. 24-25). When women enter into a male dominated field it is a threat to the masculine gender identity. "When our gender identities are threatened, we will often retreat to exaggerated displays of hyper-masculinity or exaggerated femininity. And when our sense of others gender identity is disrupted or dislodged, we can become anxious, even violent" (Kimmel, 2008, p. 104).

Females experience many problems entering into male dominated organizational culture. "Female newcomers in heavily male jobs often run into problems with on the job training, because it requires their male coworkers' cooperation. Failing to help train female coworkers is a key way that men resist women's entry into customarily male jobs (Reskin & Padavic, 2002, p. 73). Many women quit out of frustration or are fired from lack of skill and training. Conversely, "too much help can also hinder a woman's success in predominantly male jobs. One way that dominant groups can control and exclude outsiders is through paternalism. An overly protective attitude toward women sets them apart and prevents them from learning their jobs and establishing their ability to succeed" (Reskin & Padavic, 2002, p. 74).

Aside from women being a threat to masculinity, some men oppose their entering male-dominated fields out of a preference for a homogeneous work group, thereby creating an occupational subculture. Occupational subcultures can be functional for employees by increasing solidarity, providing enjoyable social interactions on the job, improving morale, and helping workers find solutions to common problems (Cohen, 1970; Ritzer & Walczak, 1986). However, occupational subcultures in male dominated fields are completely dysfunctional in regards to women, often working to not include them and do not interact with them, with the exception of harassment, decreasing morale and withholding helpful information and training. Many male managers in Kanter's study reported that communication with women was difficult, "there was a decided wish to avoid those people with whom communication was felt to be

uncomfortable…women were decidedly placed in the category of incomprehensible and unpredictable" (1977, p. 58). One woman at an American Correctional Association Conference spoke to that effect. She stated that "when I had an idea I would tell a trusted male coworker, he tells the supervisor as if it were his idea, and it is accepted…I cannot tell the supervisor because I make him uncomfortable." She was more concerned with the goals of the organization than self-promotion.

A careful review of the literature on women who work in corrections indicates a need to determine how gender socialization shaped women's decisions regarding work and occupations. More specifically, the goal of the research is to further explore that impact of gender and gender socialization among women who work in corrections and have achieved a high degree of success in a male dominated field.

Research Design

The goal of this project is to explore the career experiences of women who hold leadership positions within the field of corrections. Specifically, this paper seeks to examine the personal biographies of these women in an effort to document life experiences that shaped their career choices. Participants were asked questions about perceptions of occupational choices, the presence of female role models, parental and familial support, and perceptions of femininity, education and professional aspirations.

This project utilized non-standardized or semi-structured interviews. "Non-standardized (semi-structured) interviews offer different levels of qualitative depth, as depending on the interview form, participants have more or less opportunity to answer questions in their own terms" (May, 2011, pp. 92-94). Participants were asked to answer open-ended questions through in-depth interviews, telephone interviews or through electronic mail correspondence. In-depth interviews allowed the researcher to establish rapport with the subject and gain deeper insight and understanding into the research topic. Telephone interviews allowed the researcher to access a wide geographical area of persons, who would like to participate, but cannot participate in in-depth interviews and would prefer not to participate via email. An email interview has the advantage that it appears identical to all respondents. It is also easy for respondents to complete simply by entering text and clicking a send button when done (Mann & Stewart, 2000). The researcher will be able to follow-up the participant's responses via e-mail.

Gaining Access to Study Participants

Upon receiving approval from the university institutional review board and permission from multiple state departments of corrections, letters of invitation were sent to potential interview subjects. The names and addresses of female wardens/superintendents were compiled from the American Correctional Associations 2001 *Directory of Adult and Juvenile Correctional Departments, Institutions, Agencies, and Probation and Parole Authorities*. The sample was limited to wardens and superintendents of state adult institutions. Assistant and Associate wardens and superintendents were also included. Federal institutions, contract facilities, juvenile facilities and community treatment facilities were excluded. A letter was mailed to each warden or superintendent explaining the research and seeking participation. The letter describes the three methods planned for this study, in-depth interviews, telephone interviews and email interviews. In-depth interviews were limited to a local geographic area due to the time and expense required. The use of multiple methods allows the researcher to gain access to a larger sample.

Description of Participants

A total of twenty-nine interviews were conducted for this research project. There were 17 face-to-face interviews, 5 telephone interviews and 7 email interviews. For 16 of the face-to-face interview the researcher traveled to the facility when possible. Another was held during attendance of a conference for women working in corrections. The average length of the face-to-face interviews was one and one half-hour, the shortest was an hour and the longest was three and one-half hours. The telephone interviews were scheduled in advance and the researcher called each participant at a specified time. The telephone interviews lasted from an hour to an hour and a half. The email interviews were completed at the participant's discretion and often submitted in segments. Most email interviews were 4 to 12 pages in length. Data Collection took place over a 5 month period. Due to the use of multiple methods the participants came from 13 states.

All of the participants were Caucasian with the exception of one who was African American. Women of all ages and races are underrepresented in leadership positions in corrections, according to the *American Correctional Associations 2001 Directory of Institutions* only 75 of the 265 female wardens in the United States belong to racial and ethnic minority groups. Although women's entry into corrections is increasing, it is increasing as a faster rate for white women than for women of color. Their ages ranges from 33 to 62, the majority of respondents, 24 out of 29, were in their forties and fifties, with four in their thirties and one in her sixties.

Seven of the wardens in this study began their careers as caseworkers, five started out as secretaries, seven others began as corrections officers, four started out as probation and parole officers (4), another four started in other areas of corrections or criminal justice and one began in the mental health field. The have worked in corrections as little as five years up to 35 with the average time in corrections being 20 years.

Twenty-one of the wardens who participate in this research worked at male facilities, five at female facilities and three at coed facilities. Two of the facilities were work release facilities, three were minimum security, seven were medium security, six were maximum security, and 11 were multi-level facilities. The minimum number of inmates was 36, the maximum number of inmates was 1,968 and the average number of inmates was 924. In terms of staff the smallest facility had 10 staff members, while the facility with the most staff members had 700, the average number of staff members was 334. Those numbers are more clearly represented in the following tables.

Table I. Institutional Profile

	Work Release	Minimum	Medium	Maximum	Multi-Level	Total
Male	2	3	7	5	4	21
Female	0	0	0	1	4	5
Coed	0	0	0	0	3	3
Total	2	3	7	6	11	29

Table II. Average Number of Inmates and Staff per Institution

	Work Release	Minimum	Medium	Maximum	Multi-Level
Average Number of Inmates	117	480	978	1282	918
Average Number of Staff	111	107	398	396	363

The Interview Guide

While the interview guide focused on several aspects of women working in corrections as wardens and superintendents, the questions addressed in this research center on work experiences and the use of impression management strategies. The work experiences portion of the interview guide will address their experiences working in a non-traditional or male-dominated occupation. How do their coworkers act towards them? What barriers and challenges have they faced in training, on their posts or in the community? Have they been victims of discrimination or harassment? The last section of the interview guide will address specific impression management strategies and seek to determine whether or not they use them in their daily activities. For example, do they pay more attention to their appearance that if they were working in a different environment? How do they deal with conflict? How do they interact with inmates and coworkers? Do they maintain a professional distance?

These questions seek to gain a deeper insight and understanding into the experiences of female wardens and superintendents. They are open ended so that the respondent may elaborate and provide detailed answers. The researcher will also be able to contact the respondents to follow-up to certain responses, further providing insight and understanding.

All participants will be given informed consent. "Informed consent involves giving participants comprehensive and correct information about a research study and ensuring that they understand fully what participation would entail" (Mann & Stewart, 2000, p. 48).

Data Analysis

There are six different ways of looking for patterns in the topic of your research: frequency, magnitude, structure, processes, causes and consequences (Babbie, 1998; Lofland & Lofland, 1995). Frequency considers how often a phenomenon occurs among respondents. Magnitude looks at levels of occurrence, for example mild to severe. Structure determines relationships among phenomenon. Processes look at the ways in which the phenomenon occurs. Causes look at why the phenomenon occurs. And finally, consequences look at how the phenomenon affects the respondents.

In analyzing the data gathered from the online interviews, this study will employ a coding strategy similar to the one outlined by Strauss & Corbin (1990). They suggest that the process of narrowing or reducing data is facilitated through a three-step coding system. First, open coding refers to "the process of breaking down, examining, comparing, conceptualizing and categorizing data" (Strauss & Corbin, 1990, p. 61). This involves looking for differences and similarities, trends and patterns, among and between the responses. Second, axial coding involves "Putting the data back together in new ways after open coding, by making connections between categories. This is done by utilizing a coding paradigm involving conditions, context, action/interactional strategies and consequences" (Strauss & Corbin, 1990, p. 96). In this step, the data is organized into meaningful categories and sub categories. Finally, selective coding occurs when "the process of selecting the core category, systematically relating it to other categories, validating those relationships and filling in categories that need refinement and development" (Strauss & Corbin, 1990, p. 116). This step involves establishing a relationship

between the core category and the subcategories. By employing this strategy, I will be able to discover and describe common themes that emerge from the data.

In terms of personal biographies of study participants, I will explore the common life experiences, turning points can career paths of female prison wardens and superintendents. The second phase of the analysis will identify the various impression management strategies the respondents employ on a daily basis to continually negotiate their positions in a historically male-dominated profession. Throughout this analysis, the goal of the coding process will be to identify common themes in the data.

Analysis

"A teacher, a nurse, a secretary or a homemaker" Respondents Perceptions of Occupational Choices.

Whether or not the women in this study perceived their career opportunities as limited was directly related to age. One respondent discussed the opportunities that she felt were available to her upon completion of high school.

> Not in my early school years. When I got out of high school you really started to see that transition, when more things were open for girls. It's been a struggle. Folks today have more opportunity than we did when I was growing up. Mom and dad supported whatever I wanted to do, within reason. I never felt along the way that I was stifled. But you didn't think about what you wanted to do. When I got out of high school I gave some thought to being a teacher or doing secretarial work. I was not interested in being a nurse. I didn't have the awareness that the world is wide open; but I didn't feel like anything was closed as a result. It has been a benefit for me that paths started to open up for women.

Another associated her prior educational experiences, parental support, peer relationships and social factors with her perceptions about the opportunities that were available to women:

> I went to a city school with many problems as the race riots just occurred. My secondary education was poor at best. There were no sports for women and my parents did not insist on furthering my education. Many of my friends were getting married and dating with no real career aspirations. Most of them [majors, activities or occupations] were [closed] at the time. It was 1974. Women were not accepted in the working world in non-traditional roles. Sports were not an option either. Women were just beginning to look at non-traditional roles and believe me it was ugly.

Two women stated that they knew they would have a difficult time in the criminal justice field and their opportunities were limited for a variety of reasons, but that they were determined to succeed:

> In 1972 the criminal justice field was limited for women; I was the only female in some of my law enforcement college classes. Police departments were closed to women and veterans' preference points kept females at the bottom of hiring lists.

Perhaps this is because as more women have entered the workforce they have also begun entering occupations that were once closed to women and reserved for men. Consequently, as women became more visible in these positions, younger women perceive a much wider range of occupational choices than in the past. One of the youngest participants in the study made the following statement:

> Dad encouraged us to do whatever we wanted to do. I majored in Criminal Justice with an emphasis in law enforcement and a minor in political science.

Respondents in the older cohort of this study did indicate that they perceived opportunities as limited or recognized that there were very few women in certain fields. Perceptions of occupational choice were also influenced by other factors, such as the presence of female role models, parental and familial support and perceptions of femininity and female roles.

"My mother was the rock of the family": The Importance of Strong Female Role Models

The majority of women interviewed indicated that they considered their mothers to be strong female role models. The number of mothers who stayed at home was the same as the number of mothers who worked outside the home. While many respondents claimed their mothers to be strong female role models they indicated whether or not their mothers worked outside the home. It was not a question on the interview guide. I found this interesting, as if they needed to justify their mother's choice or perhaps their own choices to work when that was not a role that was modeled. A possible explanation for this could be what Marian Thomas calls the Superwoman Syndrome that was propagated in the 1980's and 1990's. The "Superwoman Syndrome" - the have-it-all, be-everything-to-everyone, perfect wife, mother, and successful professional who could have her cake and eat it too. She could single-handedly raise a happy family, keep a perfect household, rise to the top of the corporate world, and still find time to relax and enjoy herself. The glorified "Superwoman" vilified the homemaker, generating negative attitudes towards women who chose to stay at home (1990). Regardless, many of the women in the study reported that their mothers, whether they worked outside the home or not, were strong role models.

> My mother, she stayed home until we were all in high school.

> My mother, she worked outside the home and instilled in me a strong work ethic. She taught me to take work seriously, do more than was expected and go the extra mile.

> My mother was the strongest role model growing up. She always worked hard and reinforced professionalism, education and independence.

One respondent indicated that her mother's influence was far reaching:

> I was reared in a multi-generational home. My mother was a registered nurse...the rock of the family basically making a living for everyone. She was a tower of strength, not only for the family, but also for the church and the community.

Several respondents denoted that they did not have any strong working female role models growing up. The majority of respondents whose mothers were homemakers fell into this

category. They indicated that traditional male and female roles were portrayed in their homes. One respondent's mother instilled the value of education.

> I never thought about it. I come from a traditional family, my mother was always there, and a stay at home mom, everybody's was in those days. She wanted us all to have an education; but a career, not so much.

Another contended that her mother was strong; but her father was the boss.

> Not really, my mom stayed at home and dad worked away, he was only home on the weekends. I did consider my mom strong, she had to run the household while dad was away; but when he came home he was the boss.

Stevens and Boyd suggest that women whose mothers work outside the home are more likely to work themselves (1980). That finding is most likely due to the fact that that is the role being modeled. Despite the fact that half of the mothers stayed at home, these women still worked and pursued careers. Perhaps that is because most indicated that their mothers whether stay at home or worked outside the home served a more dominant role. So perhaps working outside the home is less important than the role played in the home. The women interviewed indicated that regardless of whether or not their mothers worked or stayed home, for the most part they indicated that they worked hard. While many considered their mothers role models, they did not model their behaviors, that is the women in this study chose careers. Weitzman hypothesizes that the little girl becomes quite anxious about being encouraged to perform a series of behaviors that are held in low esteem…she experiences considerable internal conflict when she realizes that her mother, a loved model, receives neither recognition nor satisfaction for such activities, and yet encourages them in her" (1979, p. 15).

"My mother was scared to death of it": The Value of Parental and Familial Support

Many of the women who participated in this study cited parental and familial support as being invaluable to their success. Although some stated that their families had concerns, mostly for their safety, they were supportive. Stevens and Boyd (1980), contend that mothers and fathers occupations must be considered when looking at a daughter's occupational choice, particularly the choice to work in a nontraditional occupation. A study conducted on women who worked in a variety of non-traditional occupations concluded that these women were independent or self-reliant due to family background and support (Zimmer, 1986: Walshok, 1981). In this study all of the women's fathers worked outside the home, some away from home and some in law enforcement, criminal justice and corrections. In some cases, parental support was a contributing factor to choosing a career in corrections. Most reported that although their parents may have had concerns about their career choice, no one discouraged them from pursuing a career in corrections.

> Actually, my dad thought that was a good thing when I went into probation and parole. I think my grandmother at one time thought it might be dangerous carrying a gun. In college they were promoting that degree and the whole career thing.

One woman, whose father worked in corrections, felt like her parents were proud:

> I do not know how my mother truly felt about it, but I think she was pleased with my progress. My dad has been retired [from corrections] for 20 years now. He is very supportive of what I am doing.

Three respondents indicated that their families were concerned about the danger involved working in prisons and working with inmates:

> My dad was not happy; he was a little upset because of the danger. He knew the history of the facility where I was going to work, it had some riots and an officer had been killed. My mother was not too happy either. But they both supported me.

> My family is very supportive, other than my mother who is scared to death of it.

> Basically, my father always wanted to know how much I was around "those people." He never appreciated my working in prisons; but it fed my child and me.

The following respondent contended that her father played a more dominant role due to the fact that he supported and encouraged her aspirations:

> My dad, he encouraged me to do whatever I wanted; he said I could do whatever I wanted.

The role parents played in shaping their daughters futures proved to make a meaningful contribution to their success. Regardless of any problems parents may have had with their daughters career choices they served as a constant source of support. The parents of the women in this study provided support regardless of the fact that their daughters were involved in activities that might be deemed inappropriate. Some respondents indicated that their parents and other family members had concerns about their safety but supported them in spite of those concerns. The importance of parental and familial support in the lives of career women can foster a strong sense of self and self-efficacy.

"I could do anything a guy could do": Respondents Perceptions of Femininity

Perceptions of femininity are important because how a woman perceives her femininity defines a large part of who she is and how she defines her capabilities, her sense of self and self-efficacy. For the women in this study, whether or not they considered themselves tomboys was not as important as the fact that they engaged in both masculine and feminine activities thus blurring the line between femininity and masculinity, girly-girls and tomboys. Those who did and did not consider themselves tomboys were about equal.

The participants in this study indicated that they were neither tomboys nor girly-girls; but engaged in a variety of activities, both masculine and feminine.

> No. I played sports and I was a cheerleader.

Two respondents stated that where a person grew up had a lot to do with the kinds of activities they participated in, thus indicating no clear distinctions in regards to gender:

> No, not really. In the community where I grew up it was not unusual for daughters to do the same chores as the sons.

> No not really. I grew up on a farm so I guess I can't say that. I probably was in more ways than I realized. It was a rural thing more than a tomboy thing.

One respondent indicated that although she enthusiastically engaged in feminine and masculine activities, she did consider herself a tomboy:

> Oh yes. I loved dolls; but I also hunted, frogged and did yard work.

One respondent considered her behavior to be neutral not leaning heavily towards tomboy or sissy.

> Not at all; but I am not girly either.

Another claimed a sense of equality, being able to do the same things as being more important than doing them:

> I don't know so much that I was a tomboy; but I always felt that I could do anything a guy could do except pee on a wall and that's just because I haven't figured out how yet. I never thought there was anything I couldn't do. I don't think I'm better, but equal.

Two respondents, in the older cohort, reported that they were not tomboys and cited clear distinctions between feminine and masculine activities:

> No. I did typical feminine activities. At that time girls still wore dresses to school. I did girl things. Sports were for boys.

> No, as a matter of fact, I loved dolls, playing house, dress-up and I studied ballet until I was 12 years old.

For the most part the women in this study contended that regardless of whether or not they considered themselves girly-girls or tomboys they engaged in both masculine and feminine activities. Involvement in a variety of activities may have contributed to the belief that one in competent and in control. The sense of self-efficacy, convey in the title of this section, "I could do anything a guy could do" was more predominant than feminine role perception, particularly since half of these women in this study did consider themselves tomboys, but half did not and they all ended up in the same career. In this study there is no clear relationship between feminine role perception and vocational choice as found in Crawford's work (1978).

"A warden or a ballerina": Professional Aspirations of Respondents

As previously stated, the media portrayal of the manly career woman and the happy homemaker continue to influence women's aspirations. For women marriage and family is equated to happiness and fulfillment. These portrayals may affect women's future goals regarding career, marriage and family. Many women interrupt their careers for marriage and family, and thus view their careers as temporary, in turn affecting their goals and aspirations. The title of this section, "A warden or a ballerina" is a wonderful statement about the career

goals that young women aspire to. The statement was made by the six-year-old granddaughter of one of the participants in this study. It is indicative of the changes that have occurred in gender-socialization of women regarding career aspirations and perceived opportunity. Women today perceive more opportunities as available to them and thus establish career goals based on those perceptions. Those changes are evident in this research. The majority women I interviewed who were in their thirties indicated that it was their goal to become a warden when they began their careers in corrections. They said:

> Yes, I wanted to go to the top.

> Yes, that was my goal.

Another woman in her thirties sees her career going even further:

> Sure. Actually I often ponder about being governor. I am driven to do more to be more to positively affect the lives of those around me as well as my own.

Common responses for women in their forties and fifties suggested becoming a warden was not a career goal but realized that once they began working in the field that promotion was a possibility:

> When I started I thought, let me get through this when I did get through I would start looking ahead. It was a slow, gradual process, a slow graduation.

One respondent began her career in corrections after high school.

> Initially, I wanted to be the best secretary anybody had ever had. I made up my mind in high school that that is what I wanted to be. I saw what the program assistants were doing and I thought I could do a better job. That is when I decided I could do it. I was elated to become and assistant superintendent.

Two respondents entered corrections because they wanted a career change:

> Never, I just wanted a different job something with benefits. Two and one half years in I knew I wanted to be an officer [I became an officer]. [After I worked as an officer] I did not want to stay in the custody arena. I knew there was something else I was interested in, something to try to move into. Casework and management were expanding and there was more opportunity. I was in the right place at the right time. Corrections' has become a profession, a professional job.

> No. I just wanted a nine to five job; but eventually I got bored being a secretary and I saw how successful my friend was.

Another respondent stated that she did not plan on a career in corrections:

> No. If someone had told me I would still be with the agency 27 years later I probably wouldn't have believed that. I certainly would not be at an institution and certainly not a warden. I did not envision a career when I started.

One participant advanced as opportunities that became available to her:

> No. I had no particular goals. As opportunity came by, I made decisions about whether or not to apply for them. Most of the time I was asked to take another job, they sought me out.

The only respondent in her sixties claimed her parents sent her to college because they loved her but she did not have any career goals:

> No. My parents sent me to college. After that, I just wanted to work until I got married.

The majority of respondents did not establish career goals prior to entering the field of corrections, but over time, as they progressed in their careers and as opportunities were presented to them. It is interesting to consider the relationship between goals and opportunities. The literature contends that women who do not perceive opportunities as available to them do not set goals for fear that they will never achieve those goals. This data indicates that women take a passive role in career advancement that is they begin their careers with no clearly established career goals. Perhaps, career advancement is often sought following entry into the field, allowing the female to become comfortable in her environment and secure in her career choice before making claim to goals. A woman must also consider her plans regarding marriage and family when establishing career goals, what is the point of career goals when society seems that as a woman you will have to give yours up in support of your husbands. This is also a possible explanation for seeking advancement once a career has been established; women are constantly assessing and reassessing their goals in response to the demands of caring for a home and a family. One can conclude that women do have career aspirations, but for various reasons alter them on a regular basis.

Discussion

Gender socialization can either be a mechanism of social control that limits people's potential and perpetuates gender inequality or it can be a resource that expands opportunities and allows people to realize their full potential. While cultural barriers still exist and gender socialization continues to limit the aspirations of young women, those who participated in this study clearly demonstrated that those barriers can be overcome. They had strong role models growing up, they had the support of their parents and families, and they have proven that they can do anything their male counterparts in the field of corrections can do.

The women in this study chose a career in corrections over being a homemaker, although for some being a homemaker was not an option. It was interesting that most identify their mothers as strong female role models and as the more dominant parent; but felt the need justify their mother's decisions to be homemakers. As Stevens and Boyd suggests that women whose mothers work outside the home are more likely to work themselves (1980), however the participants in this study indicated that regardless of whether or not their mothers worked outside the home, they worked hard. This is indicative of greater social influences and the perpetuation of the "Superwoman Syndrome" that a woman can be a wife, mother, and have a successful career. It also recognizes the value of parental and familial support on career choices.

Parents who offer unconditional support and encourage their daughters to participate in a wide range of activities play a major role in shaping their daughters future career decisions and her success in those chosen careers. Half of the women in this study came from traditional families, a father who worked outside the home and a mother who was a homemaker.

Weitzman hypothesizes that the little girl becomes quite anxious about being encouraged to perform a series of behaviors that are held in low esteem…she experiences considerable internal conflict when she realizes that her mother, a loved model, receives neither recognition nor satisfaction for such activities, and yet encourages them in her" (1979, p. 15). Notwithstanding traditional gender socialization, many were encouraged and supported in terms of activities, education and career choices, although those choices were non-traditional. Corroboration and support created a strong sense of competency or self-efficacy in the women in this study. The majority claimed that it was not their goal to become a warden. They eventually arrived at that goal, after they had been working in the field of corrections; but not upon entry. For many, the field of corrections was a job with benefits, a nine-to-five job, a job until something better came along, or a job until marriage. At some point in their lives, their jobs became careers, more opportunities became available and goals were established.

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