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## Is There a Perception of a Glass Ceiling? The Relationship Between Gender and Promotional Opportunities

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IS THERE A PERCEPTION OF A GLASS CEILING?  
THE RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN GENDER AND PROMOTIONAL  
OPPORTUNITIES

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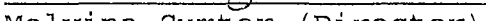
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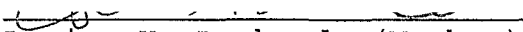
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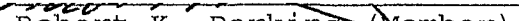
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## ABSTRACT

### IS THERE A PERCEPTION OF A GLASS CEILING? THE RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN GENDER AND PROMOTIONAL OPPORTUNITIES

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Old Dominion University, 2008  
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This thesis is an exploratory study which examines the perceptions of a glass ceiling for females employed in the field of corrections. Interviews with fourteen women who are or have worked in various job rankings in the correctional field provided the data for this study. Participants described their perceptions of barriers facing women seeking a promotion. Themes identified include the balance between their career and their home life, personal encounters with sexual harassment and the amount of interaction with other males and females while employed in the correctional setting.

This research addresses two central research questions:  
1. Is there a perception of a glass ceiling among females employed in corrections? 2. If there is, what can be done to help alleviate some of the barriers that females face when seeking a promotion in the correctional field?

The findings from this study indicate that the women in this study perceive that there is a glass ceiling for females who are employed in the field of corrections. For example,

of the participants interviewed there was a consensus that men employed in the same field receive more promotions.

Also, the findings suggest that some women have difficulty balancing their home life with their career. This causes strain and can in turn affect workmanship and eligibility for promotions.

This thesis is dedicated to my grandma and pops.

They amaze me beyond belief.

One day, I hope to be just like them.

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## CHAPTER I

### INTRODUCTION

The field of corrections has become a more diverse workplace over the years (Lambert et al. 2007). Kehoe (2004) noted that with the retirement of the baby-boomers and the incarceration rate rising, females are entering the correctional field at an increasing rate. He projected that by 2010 females would comprise half of the correctional workforce. Because of this progression, gender differences have become a focal point of social science research on the correctional workforce (Lambert et al. 2007).

The American Correctional Association (1995) notes that in 1994, there were a total of 36,278 female correctional employees in the United States, of that total only 12%, were females in a supervisory job status. The same report indicates that the total male correctional employee population in 1994 was 169,175, with 16% being in supervisory positions (American Correctional Association 1995).

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This thesis follows the format requirements of the *American Sociological Review*.

When looking at the wardens and superintendents of the adult correctional systems, the American Correctional Association (1995) reported that in 1994, there was a total of 1,359 persons with the title of "warden" or "superintendent" in the adult corrections system. Of that population, only 13% were female (American Correctional Association 1995).

In June of 1999, U.S. Department of Justice, Bureau of Statistics (2001), reported that in the United States there were a total of 197,375 correctional officers and jail staff. Of that population, only one-third, 66,974 were female (U.S. Department of Justice 2001). In 1995, the Bureau of Statistics reported that the number of female employees in federal, state, and private correctional facilities was 100,659; while the same statistics showed that there were 246,581 men (80 were not reported). Five years later, in the year 2000, the Bureau of Statistics reported that the population of male employees increased by 41,725, almost 17%, and the population of female employees increased by 41,068, over 40%. This increase over the five years shows that the female correctional employee population is increasing over the years and will to continue to rise. This rise in correctional occupations is attributed to criminal justice legislation such as

sentencing guidelines, mandatory minimums, truth in sentencing, and the elimination of parole. These penal reforms lead to inmates being sentenced to prison for longer periods of time as well as serving more time once incarcerated. These factors lead to the expansion of existing correctional facilities and the building of new prisons, both which increased the need for additional correctional staff.

Over the years affirmative action and the civil rights movement have also resulted in females pursuing occupations and professions where men were traditionally predominately employed. For example, Champion (2001) notes that in 1997, 25 percent of the correctional officers hired in the United States were female. Although there was an increase of female correctional officers, a look at previous statistics and research show that the majority of individuals employed in the correctional field that are promoted are men (Farkas 2000).

#### BRIEF HISTORY OF FEMALES WORKING IN CORRECTIONS

The first female who headed a correctional facility in the United States was Mary Weed (Morton 1980). Weed filled her husband's position as warden of Philadelphia's Walnut

Street Jail after his death, serving as warden from 1793 to 1796 (Morton 1980).

While Weed served as warden, Morton (1980) notes that throughout the 1800's, females traditionally served in administrative and clerical roles within the correctional field. As such, for the most part, females did not work in male facilities and were not assigned the same types of responsibilities as their male counterparts.

In 1970, California was the first state to employ female correctional officers in male institutions (Tewksbury & Collins 2006). By 1978, Jurik (1985) wrote that there were thirty-three states that began assigning females to work as correctional officers in male's prisons. By the early 1980s, females comprised twelve percent of correctional protective service workers within the state corrections programs (Jurik 1985). By the end of the 1980's, the integration of female officers in male institutions had occurred in almost every system, however, the number of female officers remained low (Tewksbury & Collins 2006). Data collected in 1991, revealed that there were only two men's facilities, both in Virginia, that were run by female wardens (Women as Correctional Officers 1991). By 1992, federal policies changed to permit female officers to work in U.S. penitentiaries (Tewksbury &

Collins 2006). Nearing the late 1990's, females made up one third of all prison and jail staff in America (U.S. Department of Justice 2003). From previous research, it can be seen that while small in the beginning, the number of females employed in the correctional field has risen and is expected to continue to increase.

#### PURPOSE OF THE STUDY

This study was designed to examine the relationship between gender and promotional opportunities in the corrections field. The research focused on the following questions:

- Is there a perception of a glass ceiling among females employed in corrections?
- If there is, what can be done to help alleviate some of the barriers that females face when looking toward a promotion in the correctional field?

#### SIGNIFICANCE OF THE STUDY

There are a few studies that have examined the relationship between promotional opportunities and females who are employed in the field of corrections. This research is designed to help fill that void as well as identify the barriers and challenges females encounter when seeking promotions in the field of corrections. This study

will provide insight into the challenges faced by females employed in corrections and the barriers that they must overcome in order to be promoted.

Identification of these barriers will provide correctional administrators insight as to the types of initiatives that can counter the obstacles females encounter as well as recommend initiatives that can be implemented to increase the probability of promotional opportunities for females in the correctional field.

For this study, the term 'corrections' or the 'correctional setting' is conceptualized as being the employment area for the participants, whether it is community, institutional, or administrative. The terms encompass various staff roles that are available; such as counselors, correctional officers, supervisors, superintendents, directors and so forth. Also, in this research the idea referring to promotional opportunities are defined as being job advancements whether or not there is a pay increase and/or supervision of other employees. These promotions can be at a vertical level as well as at a horizontal level.

## CHAPTER II

### LITERATURE REVIEW

The literature review for this study is divided into three main sections. The first section deals with the general barriers and obstacles encountered by many females who are employed in corrections. The second section provides an overview of the empirical studies from the general literature that have explored the relationships between gender and promotional opportunities. These studies are discussed because the specific topic of promotional opportunities or lack thereof for females in corrections has rarely been researched. This research will provide insights into the kinds of barriers that might be encountered in corrections. The final section discusses the limitation of the research and presents the research framework for the study.

#### CHALLENGES FEMALES ENCOUNTER WORKING IN THE FIELD OF CORRECTIONS

A review of the literature shows that females are faced with many common challenges that any male employee experiences; however, research also reveals that females encounter additional obstacles (Champion 2001). Some of



the primary barriers that females encounter in the field of corrections include: tokenism, the negative perceptions by male co-workers, harassment, and balancing a home life with a work life (Kanter 1977; Cassirer & Reskin 2000; McMahon 1999; and Martin & Jurik 1996). Each of these barriers is discussed in more detail below.

### *Perceptions*

There are different perceptions regarding females working in the corrections field from men co-workers and/or supervisors, some which are negative (Griffin, Armstrong, & Hepburn 2005). There are some perceptions that females who work in corrections, especially in institutions, are not wanted there. These employees hold the perspective that females cannot perform the job as well or in the same manner as their male counterparts (Camp & Langan 2005). On the other hand, there is also the perception that females who work in corrections are more of a nurturer and/or caregiver (Camp & Langan 2005). In the field of corrections, this can be a negative perception because it may portray a woman to be too soft or as a pushover (Camp & Langan 2005). These perceptions may affect the self-esteem and work performance of a female correctional officer,

which can effect if and how she is promoted (Camp & Langan 2005).

Moreover, Crewe (2006) notes, that male correctional officers "tend to perceive female officers as a calming, moderating, and a normalizing force, in effect suggesting that certain 'feminine' traits may be advantageous to prison officer work" (367). Crewe (2006) argues that "male officers typically look to sexualize and protect female officers in ways that reflect these understandings and suggests that females are naturally less capable than men at doing the job" (397). This statement indicates that if male coworkers do have this specific perception, then a female correctional officer may feel that she is not capable in the job in the same way that a male does. Crewe (2006) also suggests that "male officers frequently express concerns that their female colleagues will get sexually involved with male prisoners, and about their ability to carry out the security and discipline functions of the job" (397). Clearly, negative perceptions by male co-workers can affect a female worker's stress level, esteem, and work performance.

Rader (2005) argues that "male-dominated organizations support patriarchy and justify poor treatment of the females that work within them" (28). Another study

by Lutze and Murphy (1999) supports this same idea, noting that the male prison atmosphere is a gender-stereotyped environment. Moreover, the prison environment "supports notions of male forcefulness and strength of will and informally rewards bravado, aggression, and toughness" (Lutze & Murphy 1999:715). These studies provide support to earlier research with the assumption that females in the correctional field are perceived and treated differently than their male counterparts.

Camp and Langan (2005) found that white males believed that minorities and females have better chances for job advancement. The basis of Camp and Langan's (2005) argument is derived from the Civil Rights Act and Affirmative Action. In the Camp and Langan (2005) study, they note that whites and men hold this particular opinion because females and minorities are protected and encouraged by the law to acquire job advancements. Griffin, Armstrong and Hepburn's (2005) research revealed similar findings to Camp and Langan (2005). In Griffin et al. (2005) study, they found that male officers view females who enter the corrections field as being subject to ridicule, discrimination and harassment. Even so, white male correctional officers saw "policies regarding equal

treatment unnecessary and unfair" (Griffin et al. 2005:198).

However other researchers have findings that differ from Camp and Langan. For example, Carlson, Thomas and Anson (2004) found that female correctional officers perceived their male counterparts as being better supervisors and counselors of both male and female inmates. Likewise, Fry and Glaser (1987) found that female correctional officers have an equal chance for promotion with men, at least on the managerial level. Similarly, Wright and Saylor (1991) found that there was no difference between males and females in terms of their evaluations of supervision, job satisfaction, and personal efficiency in dealing with inmates but these findings were not statistically significant. The only statistically significant finding they reported dealt with the effects of job-related stress and feelings of safety. Wright and Saylor (1991) found that females reported higher levels of stress and felt less safe when compared to men.

### *Harassment*

This section will deal with the obstacle of harassment that females employed in corrections encounter. Examples

of harassment include but are not limited to sexual jokes, sexual innuendos, and/or unwanted physical touching.

Harassment from co-workers is one of the leading causes of burnout among correctional officers (Savicki, Colley & Gjesvold 2003). Savicki and colleagues (2003) examined how harassment based on gender is prominent in male-dominated settings, for example correctional facilities. The researchers found that females in the correctional field are likely to experience sexual harassment in this male-dominant environment (Savicki et al. 2003). They found that "gender was at least four times as likely to be identified as the primary source of harassment over race, national origin, and religion" (Savicki et al. 2003:611). These researchers also found that all of the females in the study indicated gender as being the primary source of harassment (Savicki et al. 2003). Similarly, Kim, Devalve, Devalve, and Johnson (2003) revealed that female correctional officers encounter sexual harassment from both the male prisoners and the male co-workers. Likewise, Rader (2005) writes that the females entering the corrections field deal with sexual harassment, sexual innuendos, and verbal abuse from male prisoners. These forms of harassment can cause a female in the correctional field not to work toward a promotion since it

can affect her work performance and self esteem (Rader 2005).

In the book, *Women on Guard*, McMahon (1999) notes that gender discrimination correlates with sexual harassment among female correctional officers. McMahon (1999) argued that female correctional officers were

subject to obscenities from their 'disgruntled male coworkers' and to persistent curiosity and rumors about their sexual lives. (75)

McMahon (1999), agreeing with Zimmer (1986), found that female officers are teased, insulted and harassed in the workplace. McMahon (1999) also found that for females in the correctional field,

their work is undermined and they are often reported by co-workers for minor rule violations that male workers often ignore. (75)

In both Zimmer (1986) and McMahon's (1999) work, there is a consistent theme that suggests both the male prisoners and male co-workers are sources of harassment for female staff.

### *Balancing Work & Family*

This section of the literature review will discuss the obstacle of balancing a work life, or career, along with a home life, dealing with children, spouses, schooling and such.

Martin and Jurik (1996) explain the idea of gender roles in their book, *Doing Justice, Doing Gender*. Their work describes the gender role theory as:

childhood learning processes that instill different occupational aspirations and capabilities in men and females. (Martin and Jurik 1996: 23)

Female socialization focuses on:

future family roles and encourages the development of nurturance, emotional expressiveness, and physical attractiveness. (Martin & Jurik 1996:23)

With these ideas of gender roles, it is not surprising that females who are employed in a male-dominated field encounter conflict. Cassirer and Reskin's (2000) research reviewed family status, where a female in the workforce still carries on the domestic work and the childcare services in the home. Promotional status for females can be affected by her family roles. Furthermore, Armytage, Martyres and Feiner (2000) noted that females were originally accepted into the correctional field because of their feminine characteristics that favored nurturing and rehabilitating prisoners. However, when it comes to balancing work and family, the nurturing roles result in conflict. Moreover, Lambert, Hogan and Barton's (2004) study found that

work-family conflict is a form of inter-role conflict in which the role pressures from the work and family domains are mutually incompatible in some respect;

specifically, participation in the work role is made more difficult by participation in the family role. (147)

Therefore, Lambert et al. (2004) concluded that the work and family roles remain unbalanced because the roles do not agree with each other. The researchers note that

correctional officers may treat their spouses and children like inmates, barking orders to them and questioning their activities. (Lambert et al. 2004:148)

This work behavior is considered to be different than how they might act under normal circumstances where the females in the household would be compassionate, nurturing and trusting (Lambert et al. 2004). The balance between work and family roles is important to recognize because if females in corrections do not have a balance between the two roles then their chances of obtaining a promotion are reduced (Lambert et al. 2004). Without a balance, a female's stress level may increase which can affect her work performance (Lambert et al. 2004).



### *Tokenism*

Tokenism is defined by Kanter as "the numerically rare" (Kanter 1977:viii). Kanter (1977) defines *tokens* as being "members whose social type constitutes a minority within the organization" (206). Therefore, tokenism can be defined as the practice of limiting members of a token group (or a group that is the minority in a specific population) which creates a false appearance of inclusive practices, which may be intentional or not. Compared to the greater population, tokens are more apt to being stereotyped (Kanter 1977). Kanter (1977) sets the notion that tokens are the highly visible ones in a group even though they take up the least amount of the population. She recognizes that even though tokens are highly visible and prone to stereotyping, tokens do not have "unique, non-stereotypical characteristics" (Kanter 1977:211). This concept of tokenism that was advanced by Kanter in 1977 was studied by Zimmer in 1988.

Zimmer (1988) explained that tokenism occurs when barriers are placed in front of minority employees so that they have difficulty in reaching equality and advancement in the organization.

An example of tokenism is illustrated in Jurik's (1985) study, where she found that female officers employed

in male prison facilities for the "department of corrections in the western United States" ranged from zero to twenty-six percent (Jurik 1985:375). Jurik (1985) notes if a female does not work as hard as the males, she is ostracized "whereas ten incompetent men are not noticed" for the same workmanship (379). According to Jurik (1985), this is an example of tokenism because the females employed in corrections are typically the minority. Jurik (1985) also found that at times a female's work was not considered to be as good as a man's work. As well, Zimmer (1986) acknowledges how Kanter's idea of tokenism is a problem that females in Corrections encounter. For example, Zimmer (1986) found that bad performances of tokens receive more attention than good performances, and few female employees receive praise from male co-workers.

#### THE RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN PROMOTIONAL OPPORTUNITIES AND GENDER

This section reviews empirical studies that have examined the relationship between promotional opportunities and gender.

### *Promotional Opportunities for Females*

Cassirer and Reskin (2000) focused on explaining the different factors that effect the reason females are not promoted as much as their men counterparts. A primary focus of their study was Kanter's ideas regarding gender differences in work atmospheres. The researchers wanted to look at how organizations encourage or discourage promotion of their employees (Cassirer & Reskin 2000). They examined Kanter's four propositions for their study. The propositions include: (1) the sexes differ in their structural locations at work, (2) structural location affects workers' promotion aspirations, (3) the effects of structural location do not differ for the sexes, and that the (4) net of its link to organizational location, sex does not affect promotion aspirations (Cassirer & Reskin 2000).

Cassirer & Reskin's (2000) research findings were consistent with Kanter's research. For example, Cassirer and Reskin (2000) found that employed men felt that being promoted was of high importance; however, females did not put as much importance on promotions. The research also showed that men's organizational positions and experience were used to gain more promotions (Cassirer & Reskin 2000).

The findings are largely consistent with Kanter's thesis in that

males attached greater importance to promotion than females because they were more likely to be located in organizational positions that encourage workers to hope for a promotion. (Cassirer & Reskin 2000:438)

Camp and Langan's (2005) study examined the job advancement opportunities for blacks and females within the corrections department. Their research focused on the managerial protocol and practices when hiring and advancing employees (Camp & Langan 2005). Their study also examined how the employees perceived the managerial protocol and practices when hiring and advancing (Camp & Langan 2005). The research supported the concept that management does not have an impact on moderating the differences between men and females or between blacks and whites (Camp & Langan 2005). Camp and Langan (2005) found that "whites and men believed that minorities and females had greater opportunities for job advancement" (399). Camp and Langan (2005) also found that the gap in equality varies between organizations and opportunities that arise.

### *Glass Ceilings*

Goodman, Fields and Blum's (2003) study focused on the characteristics of the organizations where females are in management positions. Their study found that the

higher the percentage of lower level management jobs filled by females, the more likely the establishment will have females in top management positions. (Goodman et al. 2003:479)

Goodman and colleagues (2003) also found that the "higher the management turnover, the more likely the establishment will have females in top management positions" (479). Their study showed that the

lower average management salaries, [then] the more likely the establishment will have females in top management positions. (Goodman et al. 2003:480)

Another area that the researchers concentrated on was promotion and development. They found that if there was emphasis on promotional development, the chances of having more females in management would increase (Goodman et al. 2003).

In another study, Maume (1999) examined the occupational segregation on race and gender and its impact on promotions (483). He noted that there have been many research studies regarding occupational segregation in general; however he wanted to focus more on its impact on

promotions within the organizations (Maume 1999). The study examines

the effect of race and gender composition in the origin occupation on movement to a managerial position. (Maume 1999:483)

From his findings, Maume's (1999) research "suggest(s) the impact of a 'glass escalator' for white men, a 'glass ceiling' for others ..." (483).

Moreover, Maume (1999) found that there were some gender differences in the promotion process. Maume's (1999) research notes that men use clerical work as a stepping stone more so than females do. Maume's (1999) study shows

that for men, the percentage of females in the origin occupation positively affected the chances of men moving to a supervisory position. (483)

The researcher also pointed out that white men did not wait as long as white females or black men and females to be promoted to a higher position within a company (Maume 1999).

Both of these studies illustrate a "glass ceiling" effect for females. Both show that females have more and different obstacles to overcome when working toward a promotion when compared to their male counterparts.

### *Promotional Gender Gaps*

Another body of research focuses on promotional gender gaps. Smith (2005) concentrated on

the causes of a promotion gap between females and minorities, relative to white men, and the extent to which the processes that lead to promotion differ among groups. (1157)

He examined the different strategies that females and minorities utilize to receive a promotion, which are explained as being different from those that a white man goes through (Smith 2005). The results indicated that promotional gaps are explained by an employees' past and present performance (Smith 2005). This data also showed that "there was no evidence ... that white men's promotion chances are any greater than those of females and minorities" (Smith 2005:1171). From analysis of this data, "females and white men depend about equally on all other factors to get promotions (Smith 2005:1176)." This study found that race and gender overlap when concerning different promotional results for different groups of people (Smith 2005:1157).

Specifically, promotion gaps between white men and their female and minority counterparts are largely a function of group differences in performance indicators and work commitment. (Smith 2005:1157)

There have been a few studies to examine the promotional opportunities for females who work in

corrections. As such, the general literature was reviewed. Thus, the topics of gender and promotional opportunities have been studied as well as females who work in corrections. But the combination of the two ideas has rarely been examined. For this research, the focus is on the relationship between gender and promotional opportunities in the corrections field; moreover, this research picks up where the previous literature has left off.

#### CENTRAL RESEARCH QUESTIONS

The central research questions that guided this research are:

1. Is there a perception of a glass ceiling among females employed in corrections?
2. If there is, what can be done to help alleviate some of the barriers that females face when looking toward a promotion in the correctional field?

To answer the central research questions, the objective is to not document the perceived barriers that women employed in corrections may have or how many of been promoted. Rather, the objective is to enhance the knowledge the idea that a glass ceiling is perceived by women employed in the correctional field.



## CHAPTER III

### METHODOLOGY

This chapter provides a discussion of the research design, sampling technique, interview questions, interview process, the operationalization of the variables presented, and type of data analysis that was employed.

#### RESEARCH DESIGN

This research is a qualitative study that examines how gender affects promotional opportunities in the field of corrections (community and institutional). The data for this study was collected by conducting in-depth interviews with females who work or have worked in community and/or institutional corrections. The sample population was identified using a snowball sampling technique. The time frame for the study began in December 2007 and continued through June 2008. This research was approved by the College of Arts and Letters Human Subjects Review Committee members as exempt from full review. This is exempt from full review since it is not federally supported financially and the research involves the use of interview procedures where identifying information for the participants is not given.

## QUALITATIVE RESEARCH

This study employed a qualitative research design. Qualitative research involves an in-depth understanding of human behavior and the reasons that govern human behavior (Berg 2001). Unlike quantitative research, qualitative research relies on reasons behind various aspects of behavior, it investigates the why and how of decision making, as compared to what, where, and when of quantitative research (Frankfort-Nachmias & Nachmias 1996). Hence, there is a need for smaller but focused samples rather than large random samples. Qualitative research categorizes data into patterns as the primary basis for organizing and reporting results (Frankfort-Nachmias & Nachmias 1996). Qualitative research is also useful for understanding lived experiences of under-represented groups in sociological literature (Creswell 1994).

Berg (2001) and Frankfort-Nachmias & Nachmias (1996) contend that qualitative research can be used when there is a lack of previous research on a specific topic. The area of females who work in corrections along with the area of females in the work force that deal with a glass ceiling effect has been studied. However, few studies have examined promotional opportunities for females in corrections. This study in particular was designed to give

further insight to promotional opportunities for females in corrections.

## RESEARCH SETTING

### *Sampling Technique*

Snowball sampling is the non-probability sampling strategy that was used for the data collection (Berg 2001). For this specific study, it was used due to time restraints and convenience (Berg 2001). Snowball sampling was useful because of the specific population that is being concentrated on. The sampling technique helped gain contact to a variety of different women who work or have worked in the correctional field.

The sample for using the snowball effect incorporated females who were previously or are currently employed in the corrections field in various areas for this study. To help begin my snowball sample, the foundation of the data for this study involved a key informant who was a past president of the American Correctional Association. To make use of the snowball effect, at the end of each interview, the interviewee was asked to give a name and contact information for another female who is or was employed in the correctional field. A total of fourteen

women employed in the correctional setting were interviewed.

In most qualitative research, it is difficult to maintain anonymity because the participants are known to the researchers (Berg 2001). To maintain confidentiality, reasonable steps were taken in order to keep private information confidential. Transcripts and taped interviews were kept in a locked desk drawer and the participants were not asked specifically where they were employed. Anonymity was maintained in this research because names, descriptive characteristics of the participants and the organization they previously or currently worked for were not collected during the interview process. Also, each respondent was given a pseudonym.

During the phone interview, each participant was advised at the beginning of the conversation that the information provided would remain confidential. The participants were also advised that the interview would be taped, unless they decided against being tape recorded. Each contributor was assured that that names and descriptive information would not be recorded on the data form or be accessed publicly.

## DATA COLLECTION

The data was collected using a semi-structured questionnaire and interview. The semi-structure questionnaire was used to obtain specific information as well as some information that may differ for each participant. The interview was semi-structured so that the participant had free reign to discuss their career in the correctional field. Another reason the interviews were semi-structured was to bring about new ideas or different barriers that may be introduced from the participants' answers, which then helped produce other studies and ideas to eventually help alleviate more barriers for women employed within corrections. Yet, the semi-structure interviews allowed the researcher a certain amount of control to ensure that the necessary data will be obtained (Huberman 2002).

### *Interview Questions*

The interview process commenced when human subject approval from the College Committee was granted, which was in March 2008. The questions in the questionnaire and the interview were asked to help answer the following research questions:

1. Is there a perception of a glass ceiling among females employed in corrections?
2. And if there is, what can be done to help alleviate some of the barriers that females face when looking toward a promotion in the correctional field?

Basic demographics were collected in a questionnaire which is structured and primarily closed-ended questions. Questions regarding age, race, marital status, children, section of Department of Corrections, rank, and education were closed ended. The question regarding children had two parts and was open-ended if the respondent answered that she did have children. If the respondent said that she did have children, the number of children was be asked as well as their ages.

After the demographic information was collected, the participants were asked several open-ended questions which were semi-structured. Please see the Appendices for the questionnaire guide and the interview guide.

### *Interview Process*

The women were interviewed over the telephone at an arranged date and time. The interviews were conducted in a closed office setting to ensure confidentiality. Also, the tapes were kept in a locked file cabinet until time for transcription. In addition, the answers to the

questionnaire and the interview were written down during the interview for accurate emotions and language.

#### METHOD FOR ANALYSIS

The descriptive data, such as age, race, education level, marital status, and children and so on, were analyzed using descriptive statistics such as mean, median, and mode to report the frequency of specific variables and to describe the sample data. The qualitative data that was processed was broken down into themes and analyzed. From the detailed notes and audio-taped interviews, the investigator reviewed the information independently and created themes based on the responses to the interview questions. These themes were analyzed to address the central research questions and identify themes for future research.

## CHAPTER IV

### RESULTS & FINDINGS

This chapter describes the results and the findings from the data collected in this study. Each of the themes from the questions is discussed with the data collected. To begin this section, the demographic data and the various themes from the interview questions are discussed.

#### DEMOGRAPHIC DATA

The demographic data collected described various descriptors. Of the fourteen women interviewed, the median age of the participants was 46 with a range of 34-65 years old. The data collected regarding the race of each interviewee showed that out of the population interviewed, there were six 'white', six 'African American', one 'Asian', and one 'Other'. With relation to the marital status of each participant, there was one 'single', one 'single but in a monogamous relationship', seven 'married', one 'married but separated' and four 'divorced'. There were only two participants who did not have children. Of the other women who were mothers, the ages of their children ranged from seven to thirty-seven, with the average age being 24. Regarding the level of education,



all but one participant had received their bachelor's degree; the participant who had not received her bachelor's degree will be graduating later this year.

When asked about their experience with the Department of Corrections, all fourteen work or have worked within the state department. While there were two of the fourteen women who work or have worked in the federal system and one of the fourteen who works or has worked in the local government. There were ten women who work or have worked in the institutional section of corrections and there were five who work or have worked in the community corrections field. In relation to each interviewee's rank or job title, the answers varied from director to assistant superintendent to supervisor to counselor to correctional officer.

#### PROMOTIONAL OPPORTUNITIES

The questions in the interview referenced promotional opportunities. From the questions, it was found that ten of the women had been promoted at least once while employed in the correctional field. Of the four participants that had not been promoted, each said "yes" when asked if they foresaw promotional opportunities in the future. When asked why they perceived promotions in their future, the

most popular answers were that each had satisfied a requirement necessary for a promotion such as additional training to gain more experience or more education. When the ten participants that had been promoted were asked if they expected additional promotions, one did not give an answer, while four said "yes", three said that they were "unsure" and two said "no" because both of them were retired.

The question regarding if there had ever been any person that the participant felt deserved a promotion but did not receive one while working in the correctional setting, thirteen of the participants said "yes", while only one said "no". The participant, Sarah, who said "no", had the following answer, "I feel that everyone that gets a promotion deserves it for one reason or another." The other participants who answered "yes" had similar answers. For example, Jennifer said, "it does help to know the right people." Lucy and Marcia said that promotions can be "political"; specifically, Lucy said that "As I changed positions, it seemed to get more political". Marcia stated,

It seems whenever a new opportunity comes available, you have to play the game, it's all politics.

When asked "In your opinion, which gender has greater opportunities for promotion? And why? ", twelve of the

women answered "men" while, two answered that promotions between genders were "equal". None of the respondents felt that women have the greater opportunities for promotions in the correctional setting. From the contributors who answered, "men", the majority of the responses were a result that men hold more supervisory and managerial positions than the females in the correctional setting. For example, Paige stated, "Men [receive more promotions because], they're more dominant in the field." In agreement, Marcia stated, "I would say males because they outnumber the number of women in corrections." Paige and Marcia's answers relate to the idea that there are more men employed in the correctional field than women. Other answers included that men knew the right people and that there is a "stigma that women cannot do the job as well as a man." For example, Sarah stated,

If I had to choose, I would say men. First, because they do dominate the field and secondly, because they usually have that seriousness to them and can be more intimidating to others and a little more forceful in getting a job done.

Another example is Jody's answer,

From my experience I've seen more men be promoted than women but I don't think that necessarily means that men have more chances than women, I think they might fill the shoes a little better.

When asked if a promotion was important to them, all of the participants said "yes". For example, Kelly explained, "Yes [promotions are important], I want to keep climbing the ladder and try to encourage other to do so." Charlotte echoed similar sentiments when she said, "Yes, [promotions are important], I like the money and responsibility and I'd like more of both."

In review of the data collected, promotions are important to women who are employed in the correctional field. Over half of the participants are in agreement that men employed in the correctional field receive more promotions. While each women stated that promotions are important to each of them and over 50% still see promotions in their future.

#### JOB RANKINGS

Of the fourteen participants, nine were in a higher position of authority; their positions ranged from director to assistant director to assistant superintendent to manager to supervisor, see Table 1 for a breakdown of each position and rank. These nine individuals are classified as being in a higher rank than that other five women where their positions included a correctional officer or an intake counselor because they did supervise others. Of

those in a higher position of authority, they all supervise a number of different employees in the correctional setting, whereas the five participants who were not in a higher rank did not supervise anyone.

Table 1. Rankings and Positions.

Interviewee	Ranking	Position Title
Lucy	3	Director (retired)
Kelly	3	Correctional Manager
Jennifer	2	Supervisor
Marcia	2	Senior Correctional Officer
Sarah	2	Security Manager
Angelina	3	Correctional Sergeant
Nicole	3	Assistant Director (retired)
Britney	3	Asst. Superintendent
Natasha	1	Correctional Officer
Paige	1	Correctional Officer
Stella	2	Security Manager/ Supervisor
Jody	2	Correctional Officer (Security III)
Charlotte	1	Counselor/Intake
Candice	1	Correctional Officer

1: Introductory Level

2: Supervisor

3: Top Management

From the data collected, the participants were split into two groups, one being labeled, 'general position' which included the correctional officers and the intake counselor. The other group was labeled, 'management

position,' which included the participants who supervised others, along with the fact that each of them has been promoted at least once in the field of corrections (see Table 2). Within the 'general position' group, all saw a promotion in their future. Each said that in order to get this promotion, more training or education was needed. The women classified in the 'management position' group all supervised others in their duties and four of them still see further promotions in their future, while three are "unsure", one did not answer, and two are retired. When both groups were asked about knowing someone who deserved a promotion and did not receive it, everyone but Natasha, who was classified as being in a 'general position', said "yes." Natasha's explanation to this answer was that "I feel that everyone that gets a promotion deserves it for one reason or another." Her explanation, one opinion of fourteen, describes the idea that men and women in the correctional field are equal. Although later, Natasha said that men are promoted more frequently than women. Of the other answers for this question, the participants recognized that it depended on the person and Angelina and Jennifer believe that it helped to "know the right people"; these can be interpreted that there is a possibility that

the women employed in corrections who do not necessarily "know the right people" may be surpassed for a promotion.

Table 2. General Position vs. Management Position.

General Position	Management Position
Lucy	Natasha
Kelly	Paige
Jennifer	Charlotte
Marcia	Candice
Sarah	
Angelina	
Nicole	
Britney	
Stella	
Jody	

When asked the question about which gender has greater promotional opportunities, none of the participants answered women. Of the fourteen participants, only two participants said that the opportunities for receiving promotions were equal between the genders. Kelly and Britney both stated that the chances for a promotion were "equal" between the two genders. The other twelve interviewees answered that "men" have a greater chance of receiving a promotion. As mentioned previously, their reasoning for their view dealt with a few different explanations but the two explanations that were shared in

many of the answers dealt with the idea that the male employees out numbered the women and that there is and always will be a stigma that women cannot do the job as well as men. This reasoning reflects a glass ceiling because of societal beliefs or norms and that some women feel they cannot complete the job like their male counterparts. This also brings about the question: If there is a glass ceiling, who makes it, men or women? This question will be addressed in latter part of the next chapter.

#### BALANCING CAREER & HOME LIFE

The main question was:

On a scale of 1 - 10, 10 being the most difficult and 1 being the less difficult, how difficult is it to balance work and home? And why?

None of the participants rated the balance between work and home a "four" or lower. In Table 3, the reasoning for the difficulty in balancing a career and a home life are similar in which almost every participant notes scheduling difficulties and difficulties with childcare and such. While the actual numerical scoring ranges from six to ten, all of the explanations overlap. For example, four of the answers rely on a single mom situation and how it adds to the difficulty of balancing career and home life. Eight of



the explanations for the difficulty refer to scheduling. Examples of these scheduling conflicts include school, child care, taking their children to and from school, and family get-togethers.

Table 3. Balance between Home and Career.

Interviewee	10-8	7-5
Lucy	"A 10, absolutely difficult; definitely since I was a single mom too."	
Kelly		"I would say a 7 or 8. It's hard, you know scheduling gets tough but you can always work around it. I just deal with it as it comes."
Jennifer	"Oh a 10, shift changes and dealing with scheduling and kids and family get-togethers get tough. It wouldn't be so hard if the shifts would stay constant"	
Marcia	"Maybe an 8. Scheduling tends to be the most difficult thing to adjust to. It was hard when my kids were still in school. It's tough being a single mom when everything is going on at the same time. Since my kids have grown, it's a little easier managing things but with holidays and birthdays it can get a little hard at times."	

Table 3. Continued.

Sarah	<p>"I'd say about an 8, I would say that everything's get difficult with any job. Like babysitters, school, birthdays, that kind of stuff. And well now a days, some of that has taken care of itself since my kids have gotten older."</p>	
Angelina		<p>"Maybe a 7, I think I had it easier than some, it can be hard at times but my husband has always helped out."</p>
Nicole	<p>"A 10, when my kids were younger and still growing up, it was hard to make sure everyone eats none the less eat together as a family, It was hard to make sure they got to school on time and we got to work on time, not to mention doctor's appointments and birthdays. As my kids have gotten older, it's gotten a little easier around here but there's still a struggle with juggling work and our marriage at times."</p>	
Britney		<p>"I'd have to say about a 7- there was always some sort of scheduling problem or something out of the ordinary would pop up and need to be taken care of but some how it always just worked out some how."</p>

Table 3. Continued.

Natasha	<p>"A 10- when I first started I had a 2 year old and if it weren't for my friends and family I'm not sure how I would've done it. It's still hard now but it's become some what of a routine to balance things and my boyfriend now has a more flexible schedule than I do which also helps out."</p>	
Paige	<p>"Maybe a 10, it's tough being a single mom. It's hard raising a kid and working full time and going to school. It's always a little stressful."</p>	
Stella	<p>"A 9, I guess, nothing has happened yet that couldn't be fixed but things get tough like anything else."</p>	
Jody	<p>"An 8, I guess, nothing's too difficult, I mean I try to plan things in advance and stay on top of things rather than wait for things to happen."</p>	
Charlotte		<p>"It really isn't that bad, maybe a 6. It's not too bad balancing things. It's a little more difficult when balancing family and in-laws and birthdays but it's never hindered anything."</p>
Candice		<p>"I would go with a 6 or 7, sometimes it gets hard but it's just like any other job."</p>

The women in the study were asked to rank the difficulty balancing their career and their home life. Nine of the participants ranked the difficulty at being an eight, nine, or ten; while five others rated it being a little less difficult by scoring it a six or a seven. The reasons for the difficulty which was shared throughout the interviewees were that some were single moms; their children had a big impact and the task of scheduling things such as birthdays, doctor's appointments, and child care.

From the data, women who have already been promoted and women who had not yet been promoted intermingled with their rankings of how difficult it is or was to balance their career and their home life. The results indicate that the women who scored a higher number have a better awareness of the difficulty and take that into account with their daily lives. For instance, a woman that has been promoted to a supervisory level, has probably dealt with child care issues and scheduling dilemmas; with that experience it could be said that she has more awareness of the struggle between their career and their home life. Only three of the nine participants who scored a higher number on the difficulty level have not yet been promoted. But on the other hand, only two of the five others who did not rank the difficulty as high have not yet been promoted.

Those women who have been promoted have more responsibility because of their promotions and new job descriptions that may cause a strain on the balancing act of their home life and their career. For example, a promotion might lead to different or more work hours which may affect the woman's schedule and can produce more stress when balancing the new work hours and her home hours to take care of the cooking, the cleaning, and the childcare.

#### INTERACTION WITH MALE CO-WORKERS

The participants were asked two questions in relation to the amount of interaction while at work with male co-workers. First, each woman was asked, how often they worked with women and men in the correctional setting. For the second question, the interviewees were also asked to rank their interactions with men and women in the correctional setting on a scale of one to ten, with one being a strictly professional relationship and ten being extremely friendly relationship.

From the first question, all of the women stated that they work with both, men and women, on a daily basis. Although their answers showed that they worked with women on a daily basis, the majority of the interactions while at

work in a correctional setting were with men. For example, Jennifer stated that she worked "pretty much daily [with women], but we're always outnumbered by the men." Another participant, Lucy, said, that she worked with women "pretty frequently. But there was always more interaction with men."

Referencing the second question, where the women had to rank their interactions with men and other women while in the correctional setting, while most of the interactions with men were kept professional there were a few participants who were friendlier with some officers because a friendship was formed outside of work, see Table 4. For instance, Kelly stated, that

They're [her interactions with men are] almost always kept professional but there are a few men I work with that I became friends with outside of work and those usually are more friendly.

Another interviewee, Paige, said that,

There are some officers that intermingle outside of work and become friend but while on duty everyone stays professional for the most part. It could be dangerous if we're not.

When interactions with men were compared to interactions with other women in the correctional setting, the participants acknowledged that interactions with women were more friendly than with men and some felt more comfortable around other women. Angelina stated in her interview that,

They're [her interactions with women are] usually more friendly than with men for the most part but we're still all there for a job so we try to keep things professional.

And Paige stated that

I tend to be friendlier or just more comfortable with women sometimes than men but it tends to stay professional also.

Table 4. Rankings of Interactions.

Interviewee	Interactions with Men	Interactions with Women
Lucy	"A 3-it's usually strictly professional, of course, but over time, there are a few men I work with that I get along with better than others"	"8- I always seemed a little more at ease when I am around women at work"
Kelly	"4-they're almost always kept professional but there are a few men I work with that I became friends with outside of work and those usually are more friendly."	"10-I am definitely more friendly with the females I get to work with"
Jennifer	"5-I work with men so much, it's become more friendly I guess just getting to know how others work and their work ethic, but don't get me wrong, when it's time to work, it's time to work."	"I would have to say a 5 again."
Marcia	"1-I work is always strictly professional."	"I would say an 8 or 9"

Table 4. Continued.

Sarah	"8-I try to keep everything professional but there are a few male co-workers that I've become friends with outside of work. But while on the clock, we all work together professionally."	"I would say a 5, it's kept pretty professional but friendly at the same time"
Angelina	"5-they tend to be not as friendly as the women."	"6-they're usually more friendly than men for the most part but we're still all there for a job so we try to keep things professional."
Nicole	"1-I tried to keep everything professional"	"10-I always tried to maintain professionalism with everyone- it didn't matter their rank, gender, race, anything."
Britney	"6- Things were kept cordial and professional. With my supervisors, pretty much everything was kept professional but over the years we became friends"	"6-I never saw much difference when I worked with men and women, everything was kept professional as it could. Friendships formed over the years but while I was on duty or getting a job done, even though we were friendly with each other, everything maintained professionally."
Natasha	"5-it is always professional while I'm at work but it's also pretty friendly. Nothing like we all hang out after work but we all look out for each other."	"5-there's not much difference, we all work professionally together but we try to be friendly with everyone."



Table 4. Continued.

Paige	"3-there are some officers that intermingle outside of work and become friend but while on duty everyone stays professional for the most part. It could be dangerous if we're not."	"7-I tend to be friendlier or just more comfortable with women sometimes than men but it tends to stay professional also."
Stella	"4- Everything is professional but again it stays pretty friendly and everyone respects others."	"5-everyone treats other professionally and usually it's pretty friendly at the same time"
Jody	"2- I mean really everyone is pretty much friendly but we have to stay professional for our safety and well being."	"2-I try to stay friendly to a degree but we have to stay professional for our own security."
Charlotte	"5- Typically everything remains professional but also it's friendly with everyone. There's usually nothing out the ordinary."	"5, it's kept professional but it's also pretty friendly between coworkers"
Candice	"5-I try to stay professional with everyone all the time but there are a few times that being friendly can help you get more things done."	"A 5"

The data collected from each interviewee revealed that the subjects had daily interactions with men and women staff members, however, the majority of the participants felt more comfortable working with women while interactions with men remained strictly professional. There were two participants who said that they had made friends with male colleagues outside of work, but while on duty, their interactions remained professional.

The data helped show only that the interactions with men were kept professional throughout all of the women interviewed. Although each woman interviewed worked with both men and women on a daily basis, the consensus is that interactions with other women were more comfortable and friendlier than those with men.

#### SEXUAL HARASSMENT

The participants were first asked to define their idea of sexual harassment. While almost every answer was different, the following were consistent with each of their definitions: "sexist jokes", "unwanted touching", "sexual comments", "sexual innuendos", and "unwanted sexual encounters" (see Table 5). Table 5 shows the most common answers. Below each answer a list of woman who included it in their definition of sexual harassment.

Table 5. Sexual Harassment Definitions.

Sexual Jokes	Sexual Innuendos	Sexist Comments	Unwanted Touching	Unwanted Sexual Encounters
Lucy	Kelly	Lucy	Lucy	Jennifer
Kelly	Natasha	Jennifer	Marcia	Natasha
Jennifer	Stella	Angelina	Sarah	Jody
Marcia	Jody	Nicole	Angelina	Candice
Angelina	Charlotte	Britney	Nicole	
Nicole	Candice	Stella	Natasha	
Britney		Jody	Paige	
Natasha			Stella	
Charlotte			Candice	
Candice				

When asked about any times sexual harassment has been witnessed, a variety of answers were collected. Of the subjects, 50% stated that they had been a witness to sexual harassment whether it happened to them or to another person. Table 6 summarizes each participants' answers to this question. The witnesses and victims of sexual harassment ranged from those persons who had already been promoted to those who had not yet received any kind of promotion. This helps depict that women, whether or not they have been promoted, encounter sexual harassment on typical the same basis, either as a witness or as a victim. Much of the explanations dealt with the sexist jokes and comments that were encountered. Although there was one interviewee, Britney, who said she's not

"been a witness to sexual harassment but has overheard stories regarding the topic." Her example of a sexual harassment situation was one

Where the woman in the situation was criticized by a male co-worker for being a woman and that her advice to an offender was not going to be understood.

This is the only example that was given where there was an actual confrontation. See Table 6 for further information.

Table 6. Witness to Sexual Harassment.

Interviewee	Witnessed it?	Example/Explanation
Lucy	No	"But I know it went on. When I was director, sexual harassment was not tolerated. I know it happened but it never happened in front of me and I was a bit slow at realizing it if it did."
Kelly	Yes	"Well, who hasn't in this day and age? The jokes are pretty common, you know, in the locker room or the break room. Um, I wouldn't say I hear them everyday but I would say at least once a week there's always some dirty joke buzzing around. They're not really taken too seriously; I think people know they're not there to hurt anyone's feelings."
Jennifer	No	"I've never personally witnessed anything. I've overheard jokes and heard officers and other colleagues talking amongst themselves - but that was probably me eavesdropping when I shouldn't have."
Marcia	Yes	"Well, who hasn't? Of course in a male dominated field have heard the raunchy jokes and sexist comments- I have seen the unnecessary flirting and such."
Sarah	Yes	"I've noticed other co-workers deal with it from other co-workers, but I've never seen an offender step out of line. Um, like the touching or I guess grabbing or like a pat on another person's rear."
Angelina	Yes	"I've heard the jokes and the sexist comments; I doubt those will ever go away. Well, I had this one time, a long time ago, where a male correctional officer said something like, 'oh I'll do it, since the woman doesn't want to.'"
Nicole	No	"I've never personally witnessed it but I don't doubt that it never happened."
Paige	No	*

Table 6. Continued.

Natasha	Yes	"I've heard some sexual jokes at work but that's not uncommon, you know. I haven't heard anything that I have really found too offensive. And I haven't seen or heard of anything dealing with unnecessary touching or anything like that off the top of my head."
Stella	No	"I've never witnessed anything like that- I've had my suspicions but I don't know if it does actually happen"
Jody	No	"I've heard the stories or the rumors really but I've never witnesses anything like that."
Charlotte	Yes	"I've heard jokes around the office every so often."
Candice	Yes	"Of course, I've heard the jokes and I've seen hugging and friendly touching among other workers but I'm not sure if those people were or are in a relationship or not, I think maybe they were but I don't know."
Britney	No	"I have never personally witnessed it. I've heard the stories and been to the trainings at work about it. I heard the stories that buzz around. Well, one story I've heard is when a counseling session was going on, it was a juvenile offender, his family and a two officers, well, they are more like counselors then but it was one male and a female counselor. But during this meeting the male counselor said something to the effect of your just a woman- the boy isn't going to see it your way- he said this to the other female counselor. I think they were talking to the offender and his family on what the juvenile can do to stay out of trouble and excel in school. I'm pretty sure he made his comment in front of the family and the offender. I know the female counselor filed a complaint but I'm not sure if anything ever came of it. But that's what heard happened and I heard it down the line a bit so I'm not exactly positive what exactly happened."

\* No Answer

The participants were also asked if they had ever been a victim of sexual harassment. Of the fourteen women, eight claimed to be a victim at one time or another of sexual harassment while employed in the correctional setting. The women were also asked if they felt that the encounters of sexual harassment affected their perceptions of any promotional opportunities for them in the correctional setting. Only two of the interviewees answered "yes" to this question. Nicole said that

Men do the job that a man can do- there are not a lot of times where a man will admit that a woman can do the same job especially in this field.

Her answer deals with the idea that some women who are qualified for promotions are passed up because of their gender; two other participants, Sarah and Marcia agreed that they felt that if they had said something about her sexual harassment encounter that the male co-workers would have looked down on her and she probably would not have been promoted. For instance, Sarah said,

I think if I would've fought back or just did something that would look like I could out do a male counterpart, I don't think I would've been promoted.

While Marcia agreed,

I think maybe going back to the question you just asked me, if I would've done something like file a complaint or something, I'm not sure if I would've been promoted. In my experience, it's better to keep a tight lip about some things and just deal with it.

I think if I would've done something then I don't know if I would've been trusted to have a higher rank.

The data collected in relation to the encounters of sexual harassment indicates that each of the interviewees were either a witness and/or victim of sexual harassment. The data gives no clear indication to support or opposition to the previous literature.

#### IN SUMMARY

Among the women interviewed, some do foresee further promotions and most believed that the best avenue to receive those promotions was to gain more training and education.

For women balancing their career and their home life, explanations concentrated on the troubles of shift changes such as the second shift, scheduling problems, and child care issues. Women who have previously been promoted and women who have not been promoted share a concern about maintaining a balance between their home life and their career.

With regard to the amount of interaction with male co-workers, the data helped show only that the interactions with men were kept professional throughout all of the women interviewed. The data did not suggest that women with more



interactions with men perceived fewer barriers for promotions.

Each of the women interviewed had encountered sexual harassment in the correctional setting. The data gives no clear indication of support to previous literature since there was no variation and each of the women interviewed were a witness and/or victim of sexual harassment at one point in time while employed in the correctional field.

## CHAPTER V

### CONCLUSIONS & FUTURE RECOMMENDATIONS

This chapter discusses the results from the qualitative analysis and includes themes that arose from the findings and conclude with the limitations of the study as well as future recommendations.

This purpose of this research was to answer the following questions:

- Is there a perception of a glass ceiling among females employed in corrections?
- And if there is, what can be done to help alleviate some of the barriers that females face when looking toward a promotion in the correctional field?

After the discussion of the themes from the data, the central research questions are addressed. The previous literature, as well as the collected data, shared concepts regarding obstacles that women encounter when working the correctional field, which includes but is not limited to sexual harassment, tokenism, balancing a home life with a career, and promotional opportunities in general. These shared concepts helped to form the themes brought out in the data which will be discussed later in this chapter.

## THEMES

Specific themes arose from the data collection that relate to the previous literature. These themes include the pressure of balancing a home life and a career, dealing with promotional gender gaps, the concept of sexual harassment, negative perceptions by male co-workers, and the importance of promotions to women. Each of these themes is discussed below.

### *Pressure of Balancing Work and Home*

One theme that stood out when analyzing the data was the difficulty that arises when a woman employed in the correctional field has a difficulty balancing their home life with their career. In previous literature, Martin and Jurik (1996) explain their gender role theory, which states that women tend to maintain the role of the wife and mother taking care of her family's needs when she is not at work. For example, Jennifer said in her interview that it was difficult because of "the shift changes and my [her] responsibilities at work and home gets hard sometimes..." This is consistent with the idea that Martin and Jurik (1996) put forth, stating that a woman even though she works outside the home still has a job within the home.

It should also be noted that the majority of the women who have been promoted in the past rated the balance between home and career to be the most difficult. With a promotion comes more responsibility, more work duties and more or different work hours so the difficulty level for maintaining a balance between a career and a home life could be increase. For example, in Britney's interview she stated that

I tended to put work before everything else even when I know I shouldn't of. That's probably why balancing a family and work and everything would be so hard at times. But I would say it was probably that dedication that helped me be promoted. I'd have to say that promotions come with sacrifice.

Another factor is that women are in most circumstances the primary care giver in the family. This supports the idea that promotions come with more responsibility and more commitment to a career for men and women however; men do not have the same challenges of balancing work and home.

Another concern is that of being a single parent increases the difficulty of balancing work and home whether or not that person has been promoted or not. For example, Paige stated

It's tough being a single mom. It's hard raising a kid and working full time and going to school. It's always a little stressful.

Again, these comments along with the other data collected are consistent with the previous literature and support the idea that many women employed in corrections may have difficulty balancing their home life along with their career.

This theme of balancing home and work brings up the issue of the second shift. This second shift refers to the non-traditional work hours that women might endure while working in the correctional setting. It prohibits the mothers who work in this shift from preparing dinner for the family or making sure the children get their homework done or even reading a bedtime story to her children. This second shift causes strain on the women's home life as well as her career. It is understood that in the field of corrections, officers undergo shift changes periodically, meaning that women do not have a choice to which shift each would prefer. In addition to the second shift, the women who have been promoted have the added responsibility if they are in an essential position meaning that in inclement weather, instead of evacuating with their family or ensuring her family's security, those women must go to work. These are additional burdens and stressors that men employed in corrections do not have to deal with. Even though it can be difficult for both men and women, women

are usually the primary caregiver in the family and this adds to the burden.

### *Promotional Gender Gaps*

Smith (2005) found that white men do not have greater chances of being promoted when compared to other races and genders. The data collected differs from Smith's (2005) findings. Moreover, this study found that nine of the fourteen women stated that "men" are promoted more than women in the correctional field. For instance, when asked the question regarding which gender has greater opportunities for promotions, Lucy stated,

I would say men because the field is male dominated and there will always be that idea; that stigma that women cannot do the job as well as a man.

Although this study deals with a small sample, twelve of the participants stated that more men are promoted in the correctional field, which does not support Smith's theory. The other two participants stated that promotional opportunities were equal between the genders. However, none of the women interviewed for this study stated that females receive more promotions than males. This is consistent with previous research that a promotional gender gap exists.

*Challenges with Sexual Harassment & Negative Perceptions*

Another theme that was imminent when analyzing the data dealt with the idea of harassment and negative perceptions of women in the correctional field. As noted in Chapter Two, Rader (2005) argues that male dominated organizations, in this case, the correctional setting, support patriarchy and justify the poor treatment of the females who work within them. The idea of patriarchy and poor treatment of women does encompass more than sexual harassment. However, previous literature describes that sexual harassment is the most common form of harassment women encounter (Savicki et al. 2003). The data collected supports Rader's (2005) findings since each one of the women interviewed has been either a witness and/or a victim to sexual harassment. More specifically, in Britney's interview, her answer to the question of ever witnessing another female encountering harassment was referencing,

A counseling session [that] was going on; it was a juvenile offender, his family and a two officers...one male and a female counselor. During this meeting the male counselor said something to the effect of 'you're just a woman'- 'the boy isn't going to see it your way'- he said this to the other female counselor. I think they were talking to the offender and his family on what he can do to stay out of trouble and excel in school...

This is just one example, where a female employed in the correctional field has endured harassment that was uncalled

for. The data also supports Lutze and Murphy's (1999) idea that the prison environment encourages male forcefulness. Another case in point is Stella's interview, where she stated that she

Was discouraged by some people I [she] worked with not to go after promotions or anything like that because I couldn't do it as good as someone else.

With these examples in mind, harassment and negative perceptions are apparent with women employed in corrections and it can effect if and how women in corrections are promoted; in this case, Stella had been promoted in the past.

Another area of harassment that was discussed specifically was sexual harassment. Each of the respondents had been a witness and/or a victim of sexual harassment which provides support to Savicki et al. (2003) findings that gender is more likely the source of harassment as opposed to race or religion or national origin. For instance, half of the women interviewed had encountered sexist jokes and/or comments on a weekly or sometimes daily basis. For example, in Marcia's interview, she almost sounds sarcastic when she replying to the question, "have you ever witnessed another female encountering sexual harassment in the correctional setting"; she stated, "Well, who hasn't?" This is



consistent with the notion that females employed in corrections deal with sexual harassment on a daily basis. Her answer also suggests that sexual harassment and negative perceptions about women in the correctional field are common. Referencing back to Rader (2005) and McMahon (1999), both argue that women are teased, verbally abused and harassed by male co-workers because of their gender and this by itself can affect the promotional opportunities for women in the correctional field.

#### *Importance of Promotions*

Cassirer and Reskin (2000) found that women did not place as much importance on promotions than men. Their research was consistent with Kanter's (1977) thesis that men place a greater emphasis on promotions than women do. An examination of the data revealed that fourteen women were asked, "Is a promotion important to you?" Each of the fourteen said "yes". For example, Angelina said, "Yes, without a doubt." Sarah stated, "Yes, of course..." and Jennifer affirmed,

Oh yes...when I supervise some officers, I push them-I try to encourage officers... [to] work toward being promoted.

There was not one participant who was unsure of her answer or stated that a promotion was not important to them. This

was a small sample which cannot represent every woman employed in the correctional field, but it does not agree with the previous research which states that women do not place importance on promotion.

Although Cassirer and Reskin's (2000) work applies to promotions outside of the field of corrections, the findings collected for this research study provides evidence that women do place importance on being promoted and does not support Kanter's thesis or Cassirer and Reskin's argument that women do not place any importance on being promoted.

#### ADDRESSING THE CENTRAL RESEARCH QUESTIONS

With relation to the central research questions:

- Is there a perception of a glass ceiling among females employed in corrections?
- And if there is, what can be done to help alleviate some of the barriers that females face when looking toward a promotion in the correctional field?

The data supports the first central research question, meaning there is a glass ceiling when it comes to females employed in corrections. For example, nearly all interviewees stated that men receive most promotions. However, it is noted that there are more males who work in the correctional field, so the responses are not sufficient

to make any general assumptions, as the proportion of promotions might be equal. Women also noted that a promotion is important. Additional support can be found in the subjects regarding sexual harassment, where two of the women said that if they had complained about harassment their male colleagues would look down on them and they may not have been promoted.

Addressing the second central research question, there are many routes that can be taken to help alleviate some of the barriers that females face seeking a promotion in the correctional field. For instance, more training and education can be provided to help encourage females to achieve promotions. This training might focus on dealing with confrontation or conflict, or problem solving, better communication skills. Also, if funding allowed, child care could be arranged on site to help alleviate any child care issues that may increase an employee's stress and while at work in the correctional setting. Another avenue that could help encourage females to enter the correctional field is to have programs available at city or college job fairs to help promote the field to women. There are many different courses of action that could be taken to help the female staff population in the correctional setting to strive for and achieve more promotional opportunities.

## LIMITATIONS OF THE STUDY

There are limitations in the research design. The first limitation relates to the use of a snowball sampling technique. There was little real control over who participated in the interviews. If all women in one correctional setting could have been interviewed and confidentiality maintained, that would have been preferred. There was little real control over the rankings and positions of the women interviewed as well as where each worked in corrections. But the sample of women who are or have been employed in the correctional field is limited by itself. In addition, the sample size was small. Although as mentioned in chapter three, smaller samples are preferred for qualitative research; the fourteen interviewed for this study is a very small sample when compared to the actual amount of women employed in corrections.

## IMPLICATIONS FOR FUTURE RESEARCH

Since the literature concerning women in the correctional field and their promotional opportunities is minute, this study helps provide insight and hopes to fill a void where the previous literature left off. For future implications, this study can help in a couple of areas.

First, it draws attention to this issue of the glass ceiling for women employed in correctional settings. Secondly, this research provides a foundation for future research on this and other related areas.

Future research should include interviews with both, male and female correctional workers so answers could be compared and contrasted. By interviewing both genders, new ideas can be generated from their answers.

Earlier the following question was raised: If there is a glass ceiling, who makes it, Men or Women? This question is important because a portion of the answers from this data show that the women may want equal treatment and rights in the correctional field but some of their explanations to the questions suggest some support for limiting stereotypes. For example, some subjects suggested that men fill the shoes better when in higher authority. This is important because a social stigma may be apparent but it should not be the reason why a woman employed in corrections can not be promoted.

Concerning the encounters with sexual harassment, the data collected did not provide support or challenges to previous literature. Each women interviewed had been a witness and/or a victim of sexual harassment at some point while employed in the correctional setting. With this

topic alone, there are numerous areas to explore. For instance, if possible, a future study could collect similar data but measure it quantitatively.

Future research could explore this issue by interviewing specific groups: male employees, those men and women at introductory and/or management levels. Each of these groups could bring new insight to the issue of sexual harassment. Future research may also incorporate a different operational definition of sexual harassment. For example, the term 'sexual harassment' could be defined for the participants and they could use the given definition to rate its occurrence. There should be further research done so that there can be more explanation and one day change to help women employed in corrections at least deal with the subject which may in turn increase promotional opportunities for women.

This exploratory study examined the glass ceiling among women employed in the correctional field. The data collected, combined with the past research, provides support for the existence of a glass ceiling. This study also provides additional insight that can influence future research. With an awareness of this perception, future studies and further research can build off of this present

study to one day help shatter the perception of a glass ceiling.

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APPENDICES  
QUESTIONNAIRE GUIDE

Your participation in this study is voluntary and you may withdraw at any time without prejudice. You can refuse to answer any question or stop the interview at any time.

Thank you.

What is your age? \_\_\_\_\_

What is your race? (Please choose one)

- ☐ White
- ☐ Black or African American
- ☐ American Indian/Alaska Native
- ☐ Asian
- ☐ Native Hawaiian/Pacific Islander
- ☐ Other

What is your martial status? (Please choose one)

- ☐ Single
- ☐ Single but in a monogamous relationship
- ☐ Married
- ☐ Married but separate
- ☐ Divorced
- ☐ Widowed

Do you have any children? If so, how many and what are their ages?

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What section of the Department of Corrections do you work with?

- ☐ Federal
- ☐ State
- ☐ Local

What section of the Department of Corrections do you work with?

- ☐ Institutional Corrections
- ☐ Community Corrections

If currently employed in the corrections, what is your current rank/job title?

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What is the highest level of education you have completed?  
(Please choose one)

- ☐ High school (or less)
- ☐ Associate's Degree
- ☐ Bachelor's Degree
- ☐ Master's or Doctoral Degree



## INTERVIEW GUIDE

Your participation in this study is voluntary and you may withdraw at any time without prejudice. You can refuse to answer any question or stop the interview at any time.

Thank you.

Is there an alias or different name you would like to go by?

Have you ever been promoted while working the correctional field?

If no, do you foresee any promotional opportunities in your future? And why?

If yes, what kind of promotion did you receive and how long ago was it?

If yes, do you foresee any other promotions in your future? And why or why not?

What is your position?

Do you supervise anyone?

In an organizational hierarchy, where do you fit in?

How long have you been in your current position?

On a scale of 1 - 10, 10 being the most difficult and 1 being the less difficult, how difficult is it to balance work and home? And why?

Are you a mother?

If yes, is it hard to balance your home life and your career?

If no, is it hard to balance your personal life and your career?

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