

WHEN WOMEN HOLD THE KEYS: GENDER, LEADERSHIP, AND CORRECTIONAL POLICY

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Management & Training Corporation (MTC) is an international corporation dedicated to helping people realize their learning potential. MTC creates nurturing environments in which education is encouraged and recognized. MTC operates 12 contracted correctional facilities across the country with approximately 16,000 beds under contract. MTC also manages and operates 25 Job Corps centers in 18 states for the U.S. Department of Labor, preparing disadvantaged youth for meaningful careers. In addition, MTC has expanded their education and vocational expertise into the international arena, working in countries such as Iraq, Sudan, Tunisia, China, and Mongolia. The MTC Institute is the research division of MTC, which is dedicated to promoting innovations, exemplary practices, and projecting trends that are relevant to job training and corrections. The work of the Institute is geared towards a broad audience including policy makers, educators, researchers, practitioners, state and federal officials, workforce development entities, correctional agencies and Job Corps centers. This report is being cooperatively published as a result of the corporate interest MTC has in promoting and expanding the involvement of women working in the corrections profession.

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When Women Hold the Keys: The Intersection of Gender, Leadership, and Correctional Policy

INTRODUCTION

I began to wonder about the impact women leaders had in the field of corrections one day as I sat in a meeting of the Advisory Task Force on Women Offenders. In Minnesota, we had a new Commissioner of Corrections, Joan Fabian, who assumed that role in 2003. Over the course of several months and then years, I became impressed with the leadership skills she brought to the Department of Corrections and began to more closely observe the characteristics and philosophies she brought to her professional interactions and leadership of the DOC. This perspective caused me to speculate about the more general benefits women leaders might bring to the profession.

The research findings examined in this manuscript provide compelling information about women and leadership as well as include reflections from some of the nation's leading correctional experts. This report answers the questions, does gender influence leadership styles and to what extent gender may play a role in the development and implementation of correctional policy.

Cooper argues that 90% of our leadership potential goes untapped. There are four (4) important elements of that untapped leadership potential.¹ Leaders would be more effective if they focused on enhancing trust, energy, farsightedness and nerve.² Specifically, leaders would reap the benefits (and so would their organizations) if they worked toward building and sustaining relationships within and outside the organization. Similarly, a focus on behaving calmly during stressful situations will result in positive perceptions. Finally, effective leaders think long term (rather than seeking quick fixes to problems) and they work hard to exceed their own and other's expectations regarding their performance.³ Robert Cooper did not differentiate between male and female leaders⁴; however, the concepts he highlights as being critical to unlocking untapped potential are reflected in many of the observations made by the subjects of this study. Of particular interest to me, was Cooper's observation that "most lasting changes are brought about not by intellectual musing but by small but bold gestures that keep confirming that you care."⁵ Relationships in all contexts matter.

Women still face barriers on the path to leadership. And just as clearly, this matters for the society we want to create. We will all be better off if women's life experiences, needs, and values are fully reflected in decision-making positions. The presence of women in those positions is also essential to encourage aspirations among the next generation, and to counter reservations about women's capacity for leadership roles. In an increasingly competitive global environment, no society can afford to hobble half its talent pool. Justice Sandra Day O'Connor – 2007

This study on women leaders turned out to be a timely subject as Senator Hillary Rodham Clinton announced her run for the Democratic nomination for President of the United States. Suddenly, there was an enhanced consideration and dialogue about gender and leadership. Hopefully, this manuscript will contribute to an on-going conversation about this important population of the workforce – especially within the corrections profession.

WHAT DO WE ALREADY KNOW ABOUT LEADERSHIP?

There is an inexhaustible list of books on leadership and probably an equal number of news articles and peer reviewed journal articles on the subject. This report will not attempt to summarize the leadership literature. Instead, I hope to lay a quick foundation of leadership principles, and then see how that relates to women in leadership positions.

Ethical behavior in our leaders is critical, yet often lacking. The Center for Creative Leadership produced the "Five Es of Character Development": example, education, environment, experience and evaluation.⁶ While all five characteristics are important, at least two of them are informative for this study. Women in correctional leadership positions reflect on the importance their presence has on changing the culture of the profession and how many of their leadership strategies incorporate some aspect of inspiring their employees via their willingness to collaborate and focus on finding resolutions through their actions and attitudes.

John Maxwell identified 21 indispensable qualities of a leader; those characteristics included character, commitment, competence, courage, discernment, focus, generosity, listening, passion, problem solving,

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relationships, self-discipline, “servanthood,” “teachability,” and vision.⁷

At the risk of belaboring the point, much of the scholarship related to leadership is not gender neutral. Rather much of the early research of leadership was focused on the perspective of male leaders. Within the last few decades more attention has shifted to the leadership skills and styles of women executives in a number of professions.

WOMEN AND LEADERSHIP

Joyce K. Fletcher in her examination of women leaders in the engineering field found that “when behavior motivated by relational or stereotypically feminine logic of effectiveness was brought into this discourse, it got disappeared as work because it violated the masculine logic of effectiveness that was in operation.”⁸ However, that relational practice was important for the success of the organization; it was simply expected to be performed by the women. Because they tend to perceive themselves as having “power with” rather than “power over” others, the relational principles women bring to the environment can have mutually beneficial consequences for multiple stakeholders.⁹ Women in the work place help build connections rather than hierarchies.¹⁰ However, such benefits get discredited (disappeared) because it fits more with expectations of feminism rather than a more masculine world view.¹¹

In 2005, Catalyst found that women held 14.7% of all Fortune 500 board seats, up from 13.6% in 2003.¹² However, “women of color hold only 3.4% of all Fortune 500 board seats and women are underrepresented as board chairs.¹² “Time and again, I have seen that once women understand the male culture of business, they can thrive in it, enjoy it and achieve great success.”¹³ If they try to act like a man, it will backfire.¹³ For women in leadership positions, power is defined as the ability to get something done.¹⁵ They just need to understand the culture. This perception was echoed by Britton when she noted that women correctional officers must walk a “fine line” in terms of how they play out gender.¹⁶ There are consequences either way if women are too masculine or too feminine in their actions.

In the most recent report from Catalyst (2007), aptly entitled, *Damned or Doomed – Catalyst Study on Gender Stereotyping at Work Uncovers Double-Bind Dilemmas for Women*, it was determined that corporations still underestimate and under utilize women’s leadership abilities.¹⁷ Although previous research sug-

gests men and women utilize similar styles, men are not the victims of gender stereotyping as frequently as are women. Men are the default leaders; women are perceived to be the atypical leaders. Women leaders often find themselves in “double bind dilemmas.”¹⁸ These dilemmas involve extreme perceptions (they are either too tough or too soft), high competence threshold/lower rewards (they face higher standards and are rewarded less – they must work doubly hard to be viewed as competent leaders), and they are believed to be competent but they are disliked (when assertive, they are seen as competent but not likeable).

WOMEN LEADERS IN CORRECTIONS

In January 2003, the Center for Innovative Public Policies, Inc., submitted a report entitled, “Assessment of NIC’s Executive Leadership Training for Women,” to the National Institute of Corrections.¹⁹ This study assessed the executive leadership program NIC had (in 1994) developed for women and initially conducted at the Searles Castle in New Hampshire. A very comprehensive evaluation revealed several noteworthy findings:

- Gender responsive training was important; it helped to have a space to develop leadership knowledge and skills where male perspectives were not the “norm.”
- Participants in this training reported positive changes in their personal and professional lives.
- Respondents reported the training helped them build their professional self-confidence, struggle with work/life tensions and to talk uninhibitedly about their professional strengths and aspirations.

This is supported by Bostock and Seifert who suggest women find learning experiences most beneficial when they are in female only groups.²⁰ Some of the respondents to this particular (NIC) study felt men might have been unwilling to participate in this particular training format.

The Association of Women Executives (AWEC), which sprang from these initial “castle experiences,” and from a desire to keep this momentum growing, set the following as their primary goals: Create safe space for women leaders (1) to network and (2) to mentor the next generation. Subsequently, the group has added, developing a national voice and impacting correctional issues, as organizational goals.

There is no doubt that women have changed the culture of corrections – simply through their presence in the profession. In particular, women employees in cor-

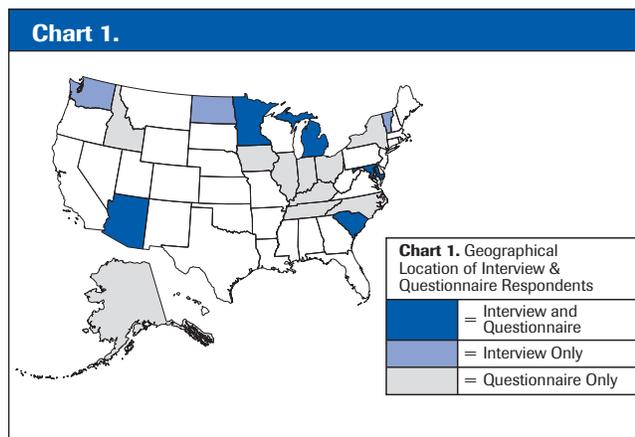
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rectional institutions have had a “normalizing” effect on the milieu. While not initially welcomed in to this correctional context, their effectiveness in that setting is no longer challenged. However, as Britton notes, male prisons are extremely gendered workplaces and female correctional officers may experience more mistreatment from colleagues than from prisoners.²¹ There are still some male correctional officers who question women’s effectiveness in correctional institutions.²² Women have been employed in the corrections profession for decades, but following implementation of change, it often becomes necessary to commit to education and training of all staff members to secure and sustain progress brought about by that change.²³

Effective leaders see themselves as facilitators, engage in collaboration, actively listen, view the world in interconnected ways, are passionate, focus on clear and attainable goals and practice their multi-tasking skills.²⁴ Women possess more of these leadership characteristics.²⁵

METHODOLOGY

This research began in January 2006 while I was on sabbatical from Minnesota State University, Mankato. Initially, the study protocol involved the use of interviews only. The population for the research began with a very loose definition of leadership positions. I knew I wanted to speak with as many women commissioners (directors) of corrections as I could as well as women wardens and women in leadership positions in community corrections. Subsequently, a questionnaire was added to the research protocol and I could then analyze perspectives from another set of women correctional executives, which when combined with the interviews created a more geographically diverse sample. (See Chart 1).



INTERVIEWS

I began by educating myself on the topic of leadership, generally, and then began to narrow my focus to leadership development in the field of corrections. After reflection and consideration, I determined that I wanted to talk with respondents about the following range of topics: their career paths, the culture of corrections, opportunities and roadblocks, communication styles, collaboration with other agencies, strategic planning, leadership styles, policy issues, and the intersections of gender, leadership and correctional policy. As noted previously, my primary research questions were:

Does gender influence leadership styles? If so, how does this occur? Do women in leadership positions impact changes in correctional policy? If so, in what ways are correctional policies different?

Interview Sample

Ultimately, I interviewed a total of 25 women leaders in corrections. These women occupied positions ranging from Commissioner (or Director or Secretary) of the Department of Corrections, Wardens of Correctional Institutions, Directors of Field Operations (Community Corrections to Administrators of Non-Profit Organizations). They represented states from around the country (See Table 1). Following transcription of the interviews, the data were then read and analyzed performing content analysis.²⁶

Arizona	Connecticut
Maryland	Minnesota
Michigan	North Dakota
South Carolina	Washington
Washington D.C.	

PARTICIPATION OF AWEC

Meeting members of AWEC in September 2006 and gaining their assistance with this project proved to be a critical moment in the process because it allowed me to present the study to the very individuals I was hoping to better understand. In the end, I collaborated with the AWEC research subcommittee in developing a questionnaire and disseminating it to the organization’s membership. An email message was sent to 180 AWEC members across the country. Within approximately 6

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weeks, 61 individuals had submitted at least a portion of the questionnaire, for a return rate of 34%. From that response, I had 51 complete questionnaires (respondents had answered at least 75% of the questions and had provided enough demographic information so the sample could be described).

Questions posed on the questionnaire followed the topics highlighted in the interviews. I was curious about the same idea but wanted to obtain observations from a larger, possibly more diverse, audience.

Questionnaire Sample

Questionnaire responses came from a fairly representative sample regionally. The positions they held included: Deputy Commissioners, Wardens, Directors of Probation, Training Administrators, Program Specialists, and Directors of Research and Analysis. The majority of those who responded to the questionnaire were Caucasian (See Table 2).

TABLE 2. RACE OF QUESTIONNAIRE RESPONDENTS	
Caucasian	41
African American	7
Other	3

With respect to age, 64 percent were 50 years of age or more (See Table 3).

TABLE 3. AGE OF QUESTIONNAIRE RESPONDENTS	
30-39 years	2
40-49 years	16
50-59 years	21
60-69 years	11

The women who completed the questionnaire had been employed a significant amount of time within the corrections profession with 73 percent having a tenure of more than 20 years (See Table 4).

TABLE 4. YEARS OF SERVICE OF QUESTIONNAIRE RESPONDENTS	
1-10 years	1
11-20 years	11
21-30 years	23
31-40 years	9

I analyzed the data contained in the questionnaires much the same way I did with the interviews (content analysis). Most of the questions, beyond the demographics,

were open ended questions and many of the women provided long, nuanced responses. Both the interviews and the questionnaires provided deep, rich data.

In the findings of this report, respondents are designated a little differently depending on whether they participated in an interview with me or provided answers to the questionnaire. For individuals who were interviewed, I provided them with a pseudonym and acknowledged their job title. For participants in the questionnaire, I identified their job title and the region of the country where they were employed.

The knowledge and experiences shared by this group of women was overwhelming initially. The breadth and depth of perspective volunteered was rich and textured. The greatest difficulty for me, as a researcher, was figuring out how to report the findings in a way that would be most meaningful and respectful to reader and respondent alike. What follows is my best attempt to share the wisdom and perspectives of the women leaders who responded to my questions without losing any of the important observations. The findings from the data were broken into three (3) broad themes: one on the barriers respondents first encountered in the profession, one on mentoring received and performed, and one on the intersection of leadership and gender. This manuscript will primarily focus on leadership and gender.

BREAKING IN TO CORRECTIONS: WHEN WOMEN WERE NOT WELCOMED

Many of the women who participated in this study were mavericks who entered correctional systems in the 1960s and 1970s when female employees were not welcomed into the profession. Early in their careers, many of these women subsequently found themselves employed, to varying degrees, in a hostile work environment.

HOSTILE RECEPTION

The following descriptions of their introduction to the profession highlight the cold reception they received from some of their male colleagues:

Yeah, they didn't appreciate it a bit; some people filed law suits against me being there. So there was direct animosity from day one. But again, the thing I think gave me a good experience was, I went in and I told them, I don't know things, I know this a burden on you to teach me, but I need you, and I won't always be a burden on you. I am going to help you too; it is just a matter of when we get there. (Johnson - Deputy Commissioner)

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The Warden and Associate Warden at [name of institution] had been removed for [creating a] hostile work environment, sexual harassment lawsuit, and I got sent there to fix it. I was scared to death to tell you the truth. [Name of Prison] at that time was the most macho, the most entrenched institution. So then I come as the first woman warden, it was a huge media blitz which was kind of uncomfortable. And then you had some staff who felt I was sent there just because I was a woman. It was like walking into a very sick family. (Robertson - Warden)

I was asked whether I was practicing birth control. One of the interviewers asked "Well, you're Catholic, aren't you? Am I going to have to worry about maternity leave?" They certainly sent the message: "You should be home with the kids, little lady." (Shaffer - Commissioner)

Many of the women who participated in this study were mavericks who entered correctional systems in the 1960s and 1970s when female employees were not welcomed into the profession.

He (former warden) was I guess, his style of leadership was a dictator; it was his way. And the house of corrections at the time probably required that type of leadership. There was another woman and myself - he said, "you aren't going to get any preferential treatment, you are going to walk the tiers; you are not going to get escorts." Actually I think they tried to make it much more difficult than the males actually had it. Hoping that we would decide that wasn't for us. (Waskul - Warden).

GOOD OLE' BOY NETWORK

In addition to a hostile work environment and discriminatory treatment, many of these women encountered and had to navigate the "Good Ole' Boy" Network. There were obvious benefits to belonging to this social network and obvious consequences for those women who might not be able to access or circumvent that network. Some women were called upon to help solve problems that arose out of such a climate. For example, one woman reported she was promoted to respond to sexual harassment lawsuits and solve the underlying problems.

Well because of the old boys network up here there was a lot of trash talk going on about stupid stuff, you know sex stuff, sex toys, and crap like that, really inappropriate stuff - in addition to women feeling oppressed by the environment. And rightly so, I mean I'm not going to deny it; the environment was totally male dominated in the agency and they had had it. There were about twenty people who

came forward and they filed a suit on sexual harassment. And they had all of these pockets of minorities, women, and everybody, who were starting to say we are not going to tolerate this anymore. (Rogne - Commissioner)

In some states, the good ole boy network served to keep women wardens in some of the more rural institutions or less sought after positions.

It was okay for all the women to start at the up north institutions-all the white males got promoted at their own facility. I don't think anyone did it on purpose but it was noticeable. I didn't grow up in that paramilitary chain of command macho structure. Sometimes I'm at a loss not having had those experiences that others have but you know I'm kind of glad I didn't. (Robertson - Warden)

Without membership in this network, women learned to modify their interaction styles.

No I don't think it's a level playing field, not yet, but it's getting better its getting closer. There are still enough of those residual, I don't want to use the term good old boys, but there is still enough of the male leadership that was so prevalent before left that I think you still need to be a little careful on how you present things. And men will perceive being assertive as a good quality in a guy, [but for women] they will still say "oh, she's such a bitch." So you need to couch what you're saying a little differently so as not to offend these poor guys over here. I know that sounds bad but in many cases it's true and I do it today. I mean I will still say in a group of men, "what do you guys think about...whatever? I don't come out and say "we should do this." I always say "what do you think about, how do you think this would work?" (Vassar - Warden)

Some of the negative treatment women received was not based solely on gender. This respondent shared a particularly upsetting interaction wherein her cultural heritage was demeaned.

In the first prison that I worked in, I was standing waiting for the gates to open, to come out at night. And the guys lined up behind me, and this was in the 80's and making comments like "I wouldn't have any of those jap cars" and they just went on and on like that. They were deliberately doing that because I am standing there, so there was this point where I really felt like I could relate better to the inmates than I could the staff, so when people talk about how it is that staff become compromised, I always have to speak up and go wait a minute, we do this to ourselves; we set people up this way, because I can remember this very clearly happening to me. I did not believe for a minute that if something went down that those staff members had

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my back, but there were a few inmates that I would have trusted with it, now that is bad. (Posas - Warden)

Because they faced these kinds of attitudes and experienced blatant discrimination, many of the women leaders believed they had to far exceed the expectations placed on the male peers. They had to be twice as good as the men in order to survive and succeed in their careers. This continues to be one of the “double-bind dilemmas” experienced by women leaders.²⁷ In her new book, Dee Dee Myers, former press secretary to President Bill Clinton, cites a Catalyst study which found that women are evaluated on their performance whereas men are often assessed professionally on their potential.²⁸

TWO TIMES AS GOOD

Again, this perception that women must exceed expectations but are still rewarded less often²⁹, unfortunately was not resolved in the early days of the women’s movement.

Women are evaluated on their performance whereas men are often assessed professionally on their potential.

I think probably still today, but much more so back then, to be a female you had to do twice the workload, you had to be twice as good as any male, even to get them to say you were doing an okay job. (Waskul – Warden)

I’ll tell you that the former commissioner was kind of funny, because I interviewed for it, and I love him to death, but he was also a straight shooter. He said “I’m in a win, win situation.” He said “if you f[uck] up, I can say, I told you so, women ain’t got no business...if you do well, hey I’m a pioneer.” And I said, “you don’t have to worry, I won’t f[uck] up.” (Waskul - Warden)

My mentor really helped me out; so as it goes I did the deputy warden thing there. I did everything there; I was on the escape team, the chase team. I did it all, because I wanted to learn every aspect of corrections. I was blocked every which way you can imagine; they didn’t want me to be on the escape team, there had never been a woman on the escape team. They made me do things that they didn’t make the guys do, like I had to repel off of a building, and I had to do all kinds of crazy stuff, but I was determined! (Johnson – Deputy Commissioner)

In many cases, a number of years later, these women now occupy senior leadership positions in federal and

state government as well as nonprofit organizations in the corrections field. Given their early experiences in the profession, they have an interesting vantage point from which to reflect on the past and envision the future of corrections.

INTERSECTION OF LEADERSHIP AND GENDER

DEVELOPMENT OF LEADERSHIP STYLES

Reflecting on their leadership roles in corrections, these women leaders provided insights covering a wide expanse. While their experiences might vary, common themes did emerge. Most of these leaders had not received much training specific to developing such leadership skills, but rather developed their styles while on the job.

I’ve always been straight forward. I probably have gotten some softer people skills over the years. When I first came in, you had to be a hard ass, or you didn’t survive. You would not survive if you weren’t a hard ass. Meaning really by the book, firm, whatever. Over the years, I think I am still pretty firm, but I have softer people skills....The higher you go, the more flexibility you have to change that. Like if I was still a case manager I wouldn’t be able to do that, but being a warden, and being an assistant warden, put me in a position where I got to decide what the tone and what the environment was going to be. Rather than having to play the game. (Waskul - Warden)

NIC executive women’s training that I went to was a turning point for me, that was in [Year]. That came at a great time for me, because I was in a lot of crisis, personally and in my job, and that really helped me start getting my priorities straightened out and for me to start seeing life differently and from a different perspective. Probably every year I have grown a little bit in that direction, since that training. (Johnson – Assistant Commissioner)

I think that I’m not a reactionary kind of person. We have so many situations that can go from 0 to 60 in just a moment and everything becomes a crisis. And because of the potential of that, I think that it’s easy to fall into the habit of leading like that and it’s just not my style. I’d rather be kind of thoughtful and more planned and let’s figure out contingencies and anticipate what can come. I think that adds some stability to the facilities - as a leader I recognize this place is not about me. (Thompson - Warden)

I’m not saying I’m good at it, but, I know it’s necessary because unless you have some concept of the details of delivery your vision may be a little too broad or too far

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out there for anybody to get there and you don't want to frustrate folks. You don't want to give them mission impossible. But having said that, my other mentor [Name] always pushed us way beyond where we thought we could go - he'd say "well I want so and so by tomorrow morning" and we'd be saying "there's no way we can do this" but guess what? We did it because you go back and you have to start thinking through new ways, different ways, otherwise if you do it the same old way you will not get there. If you think a different way of getting there you will get there and so I try to do the same kind of thing with the troops here. (Thomas - Commissioner)

Clearly some of the people that I watched were women. There's a woman now who is the state superintendent of schools who is very strong. I can't think of a time when she didn't end up getting her way, may not have always been on the path she chose, she may have had to divert momentarily but she always gets her way, but she is soft spoken and builds consensus, she is very politically astute and so I watched her for a long time. (Olson - Director of Community Services)

LEADERSHIP STYLE

Respondents who completed the questionnaire were asked, "does gender affect leadership style?" The majority or 80 percent of those responding to the questionnaire and those who were interviewed said that gender does affect leadership style (See Table 5).

TABLE 5. DOES GENDER AFFECT LEADERSHIP STYLE?	
Questionnaire Group	
Yes	40
Yes, Sometimes	6
Does not matter	4
Interview Group	
Yes	20
Don't know	5

One woman interviewed for this study had an interesting perspective when she talked about what it is women leaders bring to the corrections field. She thought about her answer before responding and then said that people from all marginalized groups develop special skills, in that they must learn to see the world from not only their own vantage point but also from the perspective of the dominant group. They learn to recognize and confront complexities in a number of contexts. Their ability to grapple with complex situa-

tions and understand the perspectives from multiple stakeholders makes many women effective leaders.

Respondents described a wide range of leadership styles; many indicated having several styles with one or two predominating. Context and purpose seemed to determine choice of leadership style.

Of the questionnaires returned, some responded with multiple leadership approaches depending on the situation. The majority (33) listed "participatory style" as a dominant approach. Fifteen (15) reported a directive style, eleven (11) opted more often for a democratic style, seven (7) were negotiators, and five (5) saw themselves as authoritarian. The participants reported leadership styles that were primarily collaborative, participatory and democratic rather than directive or authoritarian (See Table 6).

TABLE 6. DOMINANT LEADERSHIP APPROACH	
Participatory	33
Directive	15
Democratic	11
Negotiator	7
Authoritarian	5

Participative, I believe that the more input I can get from staff the better the solution and the better the buy in upon implementation. I believe it is my responsibility to ensure all of my staff members have the greatest opportunity possible to maximize their potential. Thus, I have to put them in leadership roles at every available opportunity. (Warden from the West)

Dependent upon the circumstances; my leadership style has been reflective of all styles listed. I would say, however, there has been more of an emphasis on directive and participative due to the implementation of a new philosophy/programming at my current assignment. (Warden from the East)

The style I use is situational. I find I am not effective unless I have established a trusting and supportive professional relationship. I also compliment my style with positive feedback and recognition as well as professional candor regarding improvement opportunities. (Warden from the Midwest)

Many of the women executives talked about the importance of collaboration and felt this was an important component of most women's leadership strategies. No one suggested male leaders do not col-

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laborate, but they saw it as a more prominent aspect of women's leadership style.

Collaboration

Hands on, hands on, definitely a people person, I learned a long time ago that I am not a walking policy manual, I know a little bit about a whole lot of things, and five or six or ten or twelve heads are better than one. So I am very hands on, inclusive, the negative side of that, once in a while that gets perceived as being a little passive. (Graham - Warden)

I found that women manage in circular fashion with each woman depending on the strengths of other women while men manage in a top down fashion. There appears to be a need to be "king" among men where women are more collaborative. (Administrator in Government and Community Relations from the West)

I believe we are articulate, humanistic, consensus-building, collaborative, creative, driven, and resilient. I also believe we "soften" the world of corrections enabling men to focus on and strengthen their soft skills (communication, team building and negotiating). (Director of Probation from the East)

I think that we bring certain things, because if you grow up in this system you have to learn to survive, and you have to learn to survive not based on your size or based on your ability to intimidate. You have to do it through consensus; that is how you get things done. The old warden who sits in the office and is the god, you can't do that anymore; that doesn't work anymore. (Rogne - Commissioner)

Throughout the interviews and data analysis (of both interviews and questionnaires), one consistent theme was repeated many times. Respondents believed women view power differently than some of their male counterparts. While they were quick to avoid stereotyping their male colleagues, they did indicate repeatedly that, in general, it was their observation that women executives tend not to become enamored with power or status, but rather, they focus more on the process of accomplishing outcomes. Stated differently, they enjoy the process of their jobs and pay less attention to the status of their leadership positions. This is highly consistent with Miller's observation long ago that women tend to share power with others rather than seeking power over others.³⁰

Process vs. Power

I have been in situation with four men and myself trying to negotiate criminal justice changes. It took almost a year to learn to leave egos at the door before we could actually

work on the issues. In another situation with four women and one man, we accomplished the same thing in our second meeting. (Warden on the East Coast)

I think there is a difference in power, so men have power as a result of physical strength and aggression, and women have power as a result of having to think around men's physical strength and aggression, and that is what is called manipulation. I don't think that is manipulation at all, I think that is power. We survive and thrive in the world; we have learned to use our brains in a way that is different, and our communication, in a way that is different from how men do it. (Posas - Associate Warden)

People have to be able to walk in the room and go "that doesn't make sense." And what I see is that a lot of my male colleagues are not comfortable with the work environment where people can walk in the room and say "that doesn't make sense." Now I'm not abandoning the structure you know once we talk it out and we agree this is our policy and procedure then yeah everybody has to do what it says in the manual, but how you get to the contents of the manual is how you get buy in and how you get the best product and I see that a lot of men are just not comfortable with that approach. (Olson - Director of Community Corrections)

We get so caught up in this sort of standard notion, and we believe somehow or another that this standard notion is neutral, and it is not neutral, it has never been neutral, this standard notion is something that men devised and they devised it to deal with other men who they were competitive with. (Posas - Associate Warden)

Millennials

Many of the respondents were aware of the challenges faced by, as well as posed by, the next generation. Several women specifically referenced to "Millennials" or "Generations Nexters" in their discussions. Just two examples of those comments are:

We talked a little bit earlier about Generation Xers. You really have to spend some time getting them to buy into stuff. Some of the people that have worked there for a while, they may do more grumbling behind my back, but they will do it whereas the Generation Xers we really need to explain why we are doing this, "this is what's happening." There's a lot more time invested in that piece of it which is probably a good thing; they are getting their buy in and making them feel like they are a part of it. (Prew - Associate Warden)

Yes [gender matters] but I think that distinction is fading with the new employees of the "X" or "millennium" generation, where cooperation and loose collaboration seem

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to be the norm. Gender still matters in some “command and control” environments where some men still find it difficult to grasp that women can be directive and forceful. Women greatly value long-term relationships in general and in business as well. Hence, I believe that we work on finding solutions so everyone in the process leaves with dignity and some satisfaction. (Community Corrections on the West Coast)

Respondents were aware that while this generation has the potential to be the “next greatest generation,” they also will pose significant challenges to employers.³¹ For example, Millennials represent a very small population; therefore, all corporations and organizations will be competing for a relatively small number of future workers. There will be more “baby boomer” retirements, than there will be Millennials to replace them.³² In addition to their small numbers, Millennials have a different world view which will make it difficult for the corrections profession to recruit, train and retain them in sufficient numbers. I believe the particular skills women leaders bring to the profession, are precisely the ones that will resonate with “Gen Xers” and “Millennials.” Workers from these two generations want a great deal of autonomy, want to achieve work-life balance, and possess a healthy sense of entitlement (and therefore are not impressed by the notion of seniority). Women leaders’ abilities to form healthy relationships, collaborate on projects, and understand that struggle between personal and professional success may well serve the profession in recruiting, training and retaining future generations of corrections professionals.

DISCUSSION

The vast majority of respondents (both interviewees and those women who completed a questionnaire), indicated they believed that gender does influence leadership styles. Research participants reported leadership styles that were primarily collaborative, participatory and democratic rather than directive or authoritarian. As leaders, they believed women were more likely to focus on the process (outcomes) than to place much emphasis on their status or the power that came with the position. They believed women leaders were motivated by the process of problem solving rather than the concept of prestige.

The answer to the second research question (do women in leadership positions impact changes in correctional policy and if so, in what ways are correctional policies different?) was a little harder for me

to tease out. There was not overwhelming agreement on this issue. Respondents seemed to have more difficulty answering this question. In general, several of these women leaders were not convinced that gender results in a difference in development of correctional policy. Many individuals thought that “good correctional policy was good correctional policy” and the gender of the leaders would not influence that outcome. However, they readily acknowledged that because women tend to interact differently with their staff members, implementation of correctional policy was definitely influenced by gender of the leader. After analyzing the data, I was inclined to believe that if the management styles differ, it only seems reasonable to conclude that policy development might also be influenced through the process (i.e., they might also reach different policy conclusions). As women reported being more collaborative and inclusive during the decision making process, it seems quite plausible that policy outcomes might be different than when they occur in a more authoritarian and hierarchical environment.

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Even though most of these women began their careers in corrections during a time when women were not especially welcomed in the profession, several individuals remained hesitant to talk about their experiences from a vantage point of gender. Many times, comments or remarks began with, “I don’t want this to sound bad...” and they would proceed to describe the gender discrimination they encountered in those early years and how those experiences shaped their careers and development of their leadership styles. It seemed as though they were reluctant to speculate that gender might result in different correctional policy. Perhaps they did not want to be perceived as promoting gender differences. On the other hand, an equal number of research participants readily concluded that such differences in leadership style could result in different correctional policies. This is an area worthy of further consideration and study.

Certainly, such discrepancy in perceptions is understandable. For example, Hill speculates that women

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judges make a difference in the courts.³³ But she also acknowledges that while Madame Justice Bertha Wilson (first woman on Canada's Supreme Court) argued that "because of women's gendered experiences, they were more willing to contextualize the law and its processes than were men," our own female Supreme Court Justices, O'Connor and Ginsberg, "reject the notion that their gender guides their judicial decision making."³⁴ Pittinsky, Bacon and Welle (2007) argue for "degendering" leadership.³⁵ While that goal sounds great on the surface, it is readily apparent that leadership has always been gendered – it has been based on a male standard of leadership. Pittinsky et. al make the point that if women leaders are put on a pedestal for their leadership skills, this may in the long run be detrimental to their careers.³⁶ Pittinsky et. al believe that the "Good Woman Theory" will be counterproductive for women executives.³⁷ "Arguments that women are caring, nurturing, collaborative, and inclusive, thereby predisposing them to be effective leaders"³⁸ places them on a precarious pedestal. They believe this assigns stereotypical feminine traits to women and then calls them great leaders for possessing those very skills.³⁹

Women Leaders do not want to be stereotyped.

Based on the findings from this research project, I have concerns about the "Good Woman Theory" as well as calls for "degendering" leadership, which both discredit the leadership abilities of women by attributing those skills to stereotypically feminine traits and overlooking the gendered nature of leadership. As these women recounted in their responses, the leadership skills they developed were based on their lived experiences – and for many of them this involved navigating and negotiating their professional

careers through a less than supportive or responsive workplace. They developed leadership abilities that were successful and effective at managing correctional professionals – and many of these "first women" have a greater ability to contextualize professional experiences and recognize the complexities in the system. Perhaps these are not feminine characteristics so much as they are effective management skills honed during their early days in the field and in correctional institutions. This idea is supported throughout many of the responses highlighted in this manuscript where participants describe their initiation into the profession as well as reflect on development of their leadership styles; but, I have saved one quote to emphasize this idea.

The knowledge that cooperation and collaboration is much more beneficial to any endeavor in the long run and that whereas conflict in goals and ideas is inevitable, it must be managed carefully so that no one leaves bitter and uninvolved. Women bring the power of equal relationships, by treating everyone as if he or she has something to offer to the achievement of the goal; women bring a "civilized" presence to work, whereas most of us are careful about language or actions which disparage others or make them uncomfortable; women have been victims of discrimination and harassment so we are sensitive to those employees or colleagues in those situations. (Executive Director from the West)

Given the challenges corrections professionals face with rising prison populations, skyrocketing supervision caseloads, increasing technological advances, diminishing budgets, and recruiting a multigenerational workforce, it would seem wise for correctional leaders to recognize both the current and potential contributions made by women leaders and to support opportunities for their continued professional development.

- ¹ Cooper, Robert. 2001. *The Other 90%: How to Unlock Your Vast Untapped Potential for Leadership and Life*.
- ² Ibid.
- ³ Ibid.
- ⁴ Ibid.
- ⁵ Ibid. p. 201.
- ⁶ Center for Creative Leadership. 2004. "Five Es of Character Development." www.ccl.org/leadership/enewsletter/2004.
- ⁷ Maxwell, John C. 1999. *The 21 Indispensable Qualities of A Leader: Becoming the Person Others Will Want to Follow*. Nashville, TN: Thomas Nelson Publishers.
- ⁸ Fletcher, Joyce K. 1999. *Disappearing Acts: Gender, Race and Relational Practice at Work*. MA: Massachusetts Institute of Technology. p.91.
- ⁹ Fletcher, Joyce K. 1999. *Disappearing Acts: Gender, Race and Relational Practice at Work*. MA: Massachusetts Institute of Technology. Miller, Jean Baker. 1976. *Towards A New Psychology of Women*. Boston, MA: Beacon Press.
- ¹⁰ Fletcher, Joyce K. 1999. *Disappearing Acts: Gender, Race and Relational Practice at Work*. MA: Massachusetts Institute of Technology.
- ¹¹ Ibid.
- ¹² Catalyst. 2006. "2005 Catalyst Census of Women Board Directors of the Fortune 500 Shows 10-Year Trend of Slow Progress and Persistent Challenges." <http://www.catalyst.org/>.
- ¹³ Heim, Pat and Susan Golant. 2005. *Hardball for Women: Winning at the Game of Business.* Revised Edition. New York: Plume Books. p. 7.
- ¹⁴ Ibid.
- ¹⁵ Ibid.
- ¹⁶ Britton, Dana. 2003. *At Work in the Iron Cage: The Prison as Gendered Organization*. NY: New York University Press. p. 177.
- ¹⁷ Catalyst. 2007. "Damned or Doomed – Catalyst Study on Gender Stereotyping at Work Uncovers Double Bind Dilemmas for Women." Retrieved from <http://www.catalystwomen.org/pressroom/pressdoubleblind.shtml/>.
- ¹⁸ Ibid. p. 1.
- ¹⁹ Center for Innovative Public Policies, Inc. 2003. *Assessment of NIC's Executive Leadership Training for Women*. National Institute of Corrections FY 2001 Cooperative Agreement #10PGIR05.
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- ²¹ Britton, Dana. 2003. *At Work in the Iron Cage: The Prison as Gendered Organization*. NY: New York University Press.
- ²² Ibid.
- ²³ Nink, Carl. 2008. Editorial Remark.
- ²⁴ Mankiller, Wilma. 2006. Presentation in Phoenix, Arizona to the Women Working in Corrections and Juvenile Justice conference, September, 2006.
- ²⁵ Ibid.
- ²⁶ Bogdan, Robert C. and Sari Knopp Biklen. 1992. *Qualitative Research for Education*. 2nd edition. Boston: Allyn and Bacon. Lofland, John and Lyn H. Lofland. 1995. *Analyzing Social Settings: A Guide to Qualitative Observation and Analysis*. 3rd edition. Belmont, CA: Wadsworth. Maxwell, Joseph A. 1996. *Qualitative Research Design: An Interactive Approach*. Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage. Miles, Matthew B. and A. Michael Huberman. 1994. *Qualitative Data Analysis: An Expanded Sourcebook*. 2nd edition. Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage. Patton, Michael Quinn. 1990. *Qualitative Evaluation and Research Methods*. 2nd edition. Newbury Park, CA: Sage. Strauss, Anselm. 1987. *Qualitative Analysis for Social Scientists*. New York: Cambridge University Press. Stauss, Anselm and Juliet Corbin. 1990. *Basics of Qualitative*

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Additional information (As Patton (1990:381) noted, "content analysis is the process of identifying, coding, and categorizing the primary patterns in the data." This analysis reflected a continuous process that began after the first interview had been conducted and was not completed until long after the last interview had been concluded (Maxwell 1996). The average transcribed interview was 20 pages, resulting in a total of 550 pages of data to analyze.

- ²⁷ Carli, Linda L. and Alice H. Eagly. 2007. "Overcoming Resistance to Women Leaders: The Importance of Leadership Style." p. 127-148 in *Women and Leadership: The State of Play and Strategies for Change*. Edited by Barbara Kellerman and Deborah L. Rhodee. San Francisco, CA: Jossey-Bass. Catalyst. 2007. "Damned or Doomed – Catalyst Study on Gender Stereotyping at Work Uncovers Double Bind Dilemmas for Women. Retrieved from <http://www.catalystwomen.org/pressroom/pressdoubleblind.shtml/>.
- ²⁸ Myers, Dee Dee. 2008. *Why Women Should Rule the World*. New York, NY: Harper Collins.
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- ³³ Hill, Anita F. 2007. "What Difference Will Women Judges Make? Looking Once More at the 'Woman Question.'" Pp. 175-194 in *Women and Leadership: The State of Play and Strategies for Change*. Edited by Barbara Kellerman and Deborah L. Rhodee. San Francisco, CA: Jossey-Bass. p. 178.
- ³⁴ Ibid. p. 184.
- ³⁵ Pittinsky, Todd, Laura M. Bacon, and Brian Welle. 2007. "The Great Women Theory of Leadership: Perils of Positive Stereotypes and Precarious Pedestals." Pp. 93-125 in *Women and Leadership: The State of Play and Strategies for Change*. Edited by Barbara Kellerman and Deborah L. Rhodee. San Francisco, CA: Jossey-Bass.
- ³⁶ Ibid.
- ³⁷ Ibid.
- ³⁸ Ibid. p. 94.
- ³⁹ Ibid.

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