

Promotional Opportunities: How Women in Corrections Perceive their Chances for Advancement at Work

Cassandra Matthews · Elizabeth Monk-Turner ·
Melvina Sumter

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Abstract Utilizing a theoretically derived sample, selected women who worked in corrections were interviewed in order to better understand what barriers women thought most impeded their success in moving up the organizational ladder. This work rests on the qualitative case study methodology. Three major themes emerged from interviews. Women believed that their chances for promotion within corrections were negatively impacted by: a belief that they could not perform the job as well as comparable men, an environment marked by sexual harassment, and problems in balancing work and home responsibilities. Male correctional officers were viewed as dominating the field. Further, there was a belief among these women, who worked in corrections, that comparable men were generally perceived as more capable.

Keywords Corrections · Barriers to promotion · Sexual harassment · Balancing home and work responsibilities

Women are in a distinct minority among correctional officers, especially at more advanced ranks; however, Lambert et al. [22] projected that women would soon comprise half of the correctional workforce. In 2005, male correctional officers outnumbered women by a ratio of 2–1 [30]. The greatest gender disparity in correctional officers was at federal facilities where only 13% of correctional officers were women; however, in state facilities women accounted for 26% of all correctional officers [30]. Much research in criminology and criminal justice has explored the representation of women in corrections; however, less work examines

C. Matthews · E. Monk-Turner (✉) · M. Sumter
Sociology and Criminal Justice, Old Dominion University, Norfolk, VA 23529, USA
e-mail: eturner@odu.edu

how women themselves perceive their opportunities for advancement in the field of corrections.¹ This work aims to add to this growing body of research.

The first female to head a correctional facility in the United States was Mary Weed [26]. Weed filled her husband's position as warden of Philadelphia's Walnut Street Jail after his death, serving as warden from 1793 to 1796 [26]. Traditionally, females served in administrative and clerical roles within the correctional field in gender segregated facilities. In 1970, California became the first state to employ female correctional officers in male institutions [29]. By 1978, Jurik [18] reported that thirty-three states assigned females to work as correctional officers in male's prisons. By the end of the 1980s, the integration of female officers in male institutions had occurred in almost every system [5, 12, 29].

Prior research has documented that women who work in corrections face negative perceptions by co-workers, problems in being a token "woman" within the correctional hierarchy, harassment, and balancing a home life with a work life [6, 19, 24]. Griffin et al. [15] argued that female correctional workers tend to be perceived negatively by male co-workers and supervisors. Especially in institutional settings, some employees hold the perspective that females cannot perform the job as well or in the same manner as their male counterparts [3, 4]. On the other hand, there is also the perception that females who work in corrections are more of a nurturer or caregiver compared to males [3]. In fact, Crewe [8] maintained 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). Further, Crewe [8] argued that male officers oftentimes feel protective of female officers suggesting "that females are naturally less capable than men at doing the job" (397). In the field of corrections, such perceptions could negatively impact success suggesting that women were too soft, pushovers, or in need of protection by others [3].

Kanter (1997) defined tokens as "the numerically rare" or those who are a distinct minority within an organization (viii). Tokenism, the practice of limiting members of a token group, creates a false appearance of inclusive practices whether intentional or not. Compared to the greater population, tokens are more apt to be stereotyped [19]. Even though they are in a minority position, tokens are highly visible group members [32]. Thus, Jurik [18] noted that if a female does not work as hard as a male then she is ostracized "whereas ten incompetent men are not noticed" for the same workmanship (379). Likewise, Zimmer [31] found that bad performances of tokens received more attention than good performances.

In addition to negative perceptions and tokenism, harassment at work is a central concern for women in corrections. Griffin et al. [15] found that male officers viewed females who enter corrections as subject to ridicule, discrimination and harassment. In fact, Savicki et al. [28] argued that harassment from co-workers was a primary

¹ In this work, 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, or directors. Promotional opportunities are defined as job advancements which may or may not include a pay increase and/or supervision of other employees. These promotions can be at a vertical level as well as at a horizontal level.

reason people left the field of corrections. Examples of harassment include but are not limited to sexual jokes, sexual innuendos, and/or unwanted physical touching. Savicki et al. [28] found that females in the correctional field were likely to experience sexual harassment in this male-dominant environment [28]. 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” (611). Similarly, Kim et al. [20] maintained that female correctional officers encounter sexual harassment from both male prisoners and male co-workers. Likewise, Rader [27] argued that women experience sexual harassment, sexual innuendos, and verbal abuse from male prisoners. Such harassment may affect work performance and self esteem which impacts promotional opportunities [24, 27, 31].

Female correctional officers face unique problems in balancing work and home life [14]. Cassirer and Reskin [6] argued that employed women continue to feel responsible for domestic work and childcare [1, 16, 18]. Lambert et al. [21] concluded that work and family roles remain unbalanced, especially for women in corrections, because these roles are in conflict. Lambert et al. [21] argued that “correctional officers may treat their spouses and children like inmates, barking orders to them and questioning their activities” (148). Further, Lambert et al. [21] maintained that if women correctional officers do not successfully balance home and work roles then their chance of obtaining a promotion are reduced. Further, given the responsibilities of home work, some women may not wish to seek promotions since advancement at work would most likely entail less flexible work hours and additional work responsibilities [21].

Promotional Opportunities

Goodman et al. [13] argued that the higher the percentage of lower level management jobs filled by women, the more likely an organization will have women in top management positions. Goodman et al. [13] also found that high turnover in management tended to increase the likelihood that women would be in top management positions. Further, women were more likely to be in top management positions if organizational salaries were lower than average [13]. Notably, if an organization emphasized promotion and development then the chances of having more females in management increased [13].

Maume [23] found that women managers had fewer promotional opportunities in female than male-dominated job environments. Notably, women who worked with men were more likely to be promoted than those who worked mostly with other women. Maume’s [23] work is essentially at odds with Kanter’s [19] reasoning that gender promotional gaps should be widest in male-dominated work environments. In sum, Maume [23] argued that promotional opportunities came easier for white men than others. Specifically, Maume [23] said one could think of “a ‘glass escalator’ for white men, a ‘glass ceiling’ for others ...” when conceptualizing promotional opportunities by gender and race (483).

The glass ceiling hypothesis proposed than an invisible barrier blocks women’s upward mobility into the higher reaches of occupational hierarchies [17, 25].

England and Farkas [10] explored structured mobility ladders or internal labor markets. Their work expanded the discussion of promotional gaps by recognizing that mobility opportunities in certain jobs are structurally restricted. In other words, regardless of the quality of work one does or individual motivation to advance at work the chances for upward mobility are poor if the ladders to advance within the organization are not in place [9]. The primary focus of this study is to better understand how women who work in corrections perceive promotional opportunities in the field (both community and institutional).

Methods

This work utilizes a qualitative method, namely multiple case studies, in order to better understand how women perceive promotional opportunities in corrections. A theoretically derived sample, as defined by Creswell [7], was drawn for this work. Basically, theoretically derived samples are samples that researchers believe are best suited to understanding the problem at hand. Such samples tend to be targeted at a few individuals that are thought to have critical insight on the research question; therefore, they tend to be small samples [7]. After gaining human subject approval, semi-structured phone interviews with women who work or have worked in community and/or institutional corrections in the state of Virginia were conducted between December 2007 and June 2008. Initially a gatekeeper was identified which allowed us to gain access to additional women who worked in the field. Thus, from this key individual a snowball sample ensured. Individuals in the sample represent women who work in city, federal, and state correctional facilities. Further, they include women who work at various ranks within corrections including correctional officers, managers and supervisors, and directors.

Qualitative research allows for an in-depth understanding of human behavior and the reasons that govern human behavior [2]. 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 [11]. This work rests on a multiple case study approach, focusing on a primary issue (perceptions of promotional opportunities), in order to capture how women understand opportunities for advancement in this field. Qualitative research is useful for understanding lived experiences of under-represented groups [7]. Berg [2] and Frankfort-Nachmias and Nachmias [11] contend that qualitative research is particularly powerful when there is a lack of previous research on a specific topic.

Each of the women identified agreed to be interviewed. To maintain confidentiality, 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. Each participant was advised at the beginning of the conversation that the information provided would remain confidential. Participants were also advised, and all agreed, that the interview would be taped. Data was collected using a semi-structured interviewing schedule. Respondents were asked a series of questions in order to better understand

how women perceived promotional opportunities in the field of corrections. Focus centered on better understanding perceptions regarding promotion in general, how gender differences in the workplace shaped perceptions of promotional opportunities, how women felt about harassment issues at work, and how they perceived problems in balancing home and work life.

Limitations of Methods and Data

Qualitative research techniques allow researchers to better understand problems from the point of view of those offering the information or data. Instead of asking many respondents a multitude of questions, usually with closed-ended response options, qualitative researchers aim to collect more detailed data from a relatively few individuals. The goal in qualitative work is to get to the heart of the matter at hand—to really understand something well as opposed to a superficial gloss of a problem. Thus, qualitative work typically relies on small samples which poses a thorny issue for methodologists; however, as Creswell [7] writes, one really understands qualitative methods when they know that there is no answer to the question of how large the sample should be. Thus, the primary focus of this work is to better understand, from the perspective of a few female correctional officers, how they understand and feel about opportunities for advancement at work. Clearly, by opting to gather detailed information from a few respondents, this work rests on a convenience sample that was not randomly drawn. Therefore, it is important for the reader to keep in mind that the experiences of these women cannot be generalized to the population of all female correctional officers. Nevertheless, the richness and complexities of experiences these women have related help us all better understand issues related to women's advancement in corrections.

Findings

Of the fourteen women interviewed, the median age was 46 with a range of 34–65 years old. Equal numbers (6 each) of respondents identified their racial background as white and African-American/black. One respondent identified as Asian and another in the other race category. One respondent reported being single, another was single but in a monogamous relationship, seven were married, another was separated and four were divorced. The vast majority (12) of participants had children. The age of these women's children ranged from seven to thirty-seven, with the average age being 24. 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. Two women work or have worked in the federal system and one of the fourteen works or has worked in the local government. Ten women work or have worked in the institutional section

of corrections and another five work or have worked in the community corrections field.

Promotional Experiences

Most (10) of the women in the sample 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, most said that they 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 were retired.

When asked if there had ever been any person that they felt deserved a promotion but did not receive one while working in the correctional setting, thirteen of the participants said “yes.” Most respondents felt that deserving individuals had not been promoted primarily because the process was political and that, for women, the odds of being promoted were simply against them because of their gender. 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.” Likewise Marcia stated, “It seems whenever a new opportunity comes available, you have to play the game, it’s all politics.” 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.”

Most (12) respondents felt men had greater promotional opportunities compared to women. Only two women felt promotional opportunities were equal between the genders. None of the respondents felt that women have greater opportunities for promotions in the correctional setting.

Respondents felt men were promoted more than women because they dominated supervisory and managerial positions. 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.” Others responded 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.

Jody agreed with the idea that men might be promoted more because they were perceived as capable stating:

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 others 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.”

To better understand how the type of job held shaped a woman’s feeling about promotional opportunities, responses were broken down into several broad categories. Of the fourteen respondents, ten were in a higher position of authority (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). All of these women supervised others (management positions). The other four women in our sample were correctional officers (and one intake counselor) with no supervisory responsibilities (general positions).

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. Four women in management positions were unsure about further promotions (three were unsure, one did not answer, and two were retired). Everyone except Natasha, who was classified as being in a general position, reported that they knew someone who desired a promotion but did not get it.

Of the fourteen respondents, the two (Kelly and Britney) who thought that men and women had equal opportunities for advancement were both in a general position. The other twelve felt that men have a greater chance of receiving a promotion. Again, the recurring theme as to why men had greater opportunities for promotion than women was that men simply outnumbered women and that there is and always would be a stigma that women cannot do the job as well as men.

Table 1 Rankings and positions of women in sample (pseudonyms used)

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

Interactions with Others at Work

Respondents were asked about the amount of interaction while at work with male co-workers. All of these women worked with both men and women on a daily basis; however, the majority of interactions while at work were with men. For example, Jennifer stated that she worked:

“pretty much daily [with women], but we’re always out numbered by the men.” Another participant, Lucy, said, that she worked with women “pretty frequently. But there was always more interaction with men.”

Most interactions with men at work were strictly professional; however, some respondents were friendlier with male officers because a friendship was formed outside of work. For instance, Kelly (in a management position) 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 (in a general position), said,

There are some officers that intermingle outside of work and become friends 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, respondents reported being more comfortable and friendlier with other women workers. Angelina (in a management position) put it this way,

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.

Women, in our sample, clearly felt in a minority, or token, position in workplace consistently reporting a sense that men were dominant in corrections.

Understandings of Sexual Harassment

Respondents were asked to define sexual harassment. While responses differed, most respondents included the terms sexist jokes, unwanted touching, sexual comments, sexual innuendos, and unwanted sexual encounters in their definitions (see Table 2).

Respondents were asked if they had ever experienced sexual harassment. Of the fourteen women in our sample, eight said that they had experienced sexual harassment while employed in the correctional setting. Two of these eight women reported that these encounters of sexual harassment affected their perceptions of

Table 2 Witness and definitions of sexual harassment and position

Interviewee managerial position	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 I 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.” “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.’”
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 witnessed anything like that.”
Nicole	No	“I’ve never personally witnessed it but I don’t doubt that it never happened.”
Britney	No	“I have never personally witnessed it. I’ve heard the stories and been to the trainings at work about it. I’ve 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 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 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 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 I heard happened and I heard it down the line a bit so I’m not exactly positive what exactly happened.”
General position		
Paige	No	*
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.”

Table 2 continued

Interviewee managerial position	Witnessed it?	Example/explanation
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."

* No answer

promotional opportunities in the correctional setting. Sarah and Marcia, both in management positions, felt that if they had said something about a sexual harassment encounter that the male co-workers would have looked down on them and they 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.

Previous literature held that sexual harassment was the most common form of harassment women encounter [28]. This holds for the women in this sample as all have heard about instances of harassment and/or been a victim of sexual harassment. Britney related her concerns about harassment in this way,

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...

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's replying to the question, "have you ever witnessed another female encountering sexual harassment in the correctional setting"; she stated, "Well, who hasn't?" Her response also suggests that sexual harassment and negative perceptions about women in the correctional field are common. Results support Rader [27] and McMahon [24] who both argued that women were 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.

Work and Home Responsibilities

Respondents were asked about the challenges of combining home and work responsibilities on a scale of 1–10 with 10 being most difficult. None of the respondents rated the balance between work and home a four or lower. Most respondents noted scheduling difficulties and difficulties with childcare. For single mothers, all reported extreme difficulty in balancing career and home life. Many of these women referred to problems with scheduling their time. Examples of these scheduling conflicts included school, child care, taking their children to and from school, and family get-togethers. Jennifer, for example, put it this way “On 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.” This sentiment was echoed by many women, especially single mothers. These issues may be exacerbated in the field of corrections as officers undergo shift changes periodically. Being able to plan how time may be spent, and being able to count that this schedule will hold over a period of time, appears lacking among these women.

Borrowing from gender role theory, Martin and Jurik (1996) argued that women tend to maintain the role of the wife and mother taking care of her family’s needs regardless of responsibilities 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...” Notably, 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 of maintaining a balance between a career and a home life could be more challenging. For example, Britney 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.

It is understood in the field of corrections that officers undergo shift changes periodically.

Discussion and Policy Implications

Most (12) of the women in the sample felt that men were promoted more than women in the correctional field. For instance, when asked who had 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.

None of the women felt that women were in an advantaged position with regard to being promoted at work. Cassirer and Reskin [6] found that women did not place as much importance on promotions as men did. Their research was consistent with Kanter’s [19] thesis that men placed a greater emphasis on promotions than women.

Notably, all of the women said that a promotion was important to them. 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.

Women perceived that men received more promotions and were more likely to be promoted than women. Notably, several women said they felt that if they complained about harassment their male colleagues would look down on them and they may not be promoted because of that. Also of concern, women related that the belief continues to hold that men fill the shoes better when in position of higher authority. Nicole put it this way:

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.

This work provides support for Griffin, Armstrong and Hepburn’s [15] argument that harassment at work was problematic for women in corrections. All of women in this sample were either a victim and/or a witness of sexual harassment. Further, for some, there was a sense that if such harassment was reported then the chance for a promotion in corrections would be diminished. It appears essential for correctional institutions to be sensitive to potential sexual harassment problems at work. Regular workshops focusing on this issue would be worthwhile. Supporting those who bring concerns forward is critical if women are to feel comfortable expressing problems at work. Clearly, women who wish to advance in correctional careers should not be penalized for ever having raised sexual harassment concerns.

Women reported difficulty in combining home and work responsibilities thus supporting prior research. Ideally, on-site child care may help alleviate child care issues for women that work in corrections. Again, this issue impacts female correctional officers in particular. If work sites do not address concerns of working mothers in corrections, then the ability of women to successfully combine these roles is made more difficult. Additionally, correctional institutions might reconsider shift work and how shift work changes. Addressing basic work issues like this may well make work environments more hospitable to women in corrections.

Given that women represent a distinct minority among correctional officers, it seems imperative for policy makers to initiate programs to help advance women into these positions. Several initiatives like the following might make a difference. First, women who hold positions of leadership in correctional institutions might officially “mentor” other women and help them think about different promotional opportunities. They could share how they have reached the position they currently hold and what they believed helped in attaining this position. Second, women who express an interest in moving up the career ladder in correctional institutions might receive educational incentives to help attain this goal. Some institutions help those who wish to advance the opportunity to attain more education, by providing financial support and attractive work schedules, in return for a time commitment (once the education is complete) to the supporting institution. Finally, if the lack of representation appears entrenched and no improvement in gender diversity is seen

across time, it might be appropriate to set guidelines and timetables to reach the goal of gender diversity in corrections. Implementing educational and child care support, such as suggested above, might ensure that women enter these positions which would then lead to other women seeing themselves in such positions and following in their steps. Little research in the correctional field addresses how women feel about their promotional opportunities. This study helps provide some insight and adds to current literature in the field.

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Author Biographies

Cassandra L. McDade (Matthews) is a current graduate student in the Public Administration Department at Old Dominion University in Norfolk, Virginia as well as a full-time paralegal at the Virginia Beach Office of the Commonwealth's Attorney in Virginia Beach, Virginia. Her research interests includes work on such issues as women studies, criminal prosecution procedures, gang policy and policy administration, prosecution of gang members, and the use of courtroom technology.

Elizabeth Monk-Turner is professor of sociology and criminal justice at Old Dominion University. Dr. Monk-Turner's current research focuses on intersections between subjective well being and crime and fear of crime; subjective well being differences in difficult to reach samples specifically Thai female commercial sex workers; and issues in qualitative methodology and epistemology. She has published widely including in *The American Sociological Review*, *the Journal of Interpersonal Violence*, *Corrections Today*, *Gender Issues*, and *Feminist Economics*.

Melvina T. Sumter, Ph.D. is an Associate Professor in the Department of Sociology and Criminal Justice at Old Dominion University and Director of the Institute for the Study of Race and Ethnicity and African American and African Studies Program. Dr. Sumter's current research focus involves studies of religion and crime; examining strategies to make field experience pedagogically successful in criminal justice; examining key issues relevant to the role of women and minority workers in the field of criminal justice, with a specific focus on corrections; prisoner re-entry and risk reduction strategies among offenders in the Caribbean; and female drug trafficking in the Caribbean. Her articles have recently appeared in *Criminology and Public Policy*, *Justice Quarterly*, *Journal of Criminal Justice Education*, *Education*, *College Student Journal* and *Journal of Health and Human Services Administration*.