

The Impact of the "Glass Ceiling" on Women Employed in Florida Jails

Alma R. Cornish

Abstract

Gender inequity in the workplace is deeply ingrained, fueled by social orientation and societal expectations. Despite some progress, women still face major obstacles in such male-dominated areas as law enforcement and corrections and find it difficult to break into the ranks of management. This paper, in a review of related literature, found that women are denied training, lack agency-sponsored opportunities for networking and get stopped by traditional organizational behavior. Surveys show that more than half of the professional and support staff in jails are women, which means women hold the majority of nursing, counseling and secretarial positions. But women comprise just 22 percent of the total number of corrections officers and about 11.5 percent of senior managers, such as directors, captains and lieutenants. Even in the lower rank of first-line supervisor, women hold just 17 percent of the posts compared to men with 84 percent. Yet, by the year 2000, demographic studies show women will comprise 52 percent of the total population. They already are the majority in Florida. Thus, it is necessary, not from a feminist viewpoint but from a human resource perspective, to develop more women to take executive positions in the area of corrections. It is essential that the nation's jails not only make women officers welcome but nurture them and prepare them for leadership roles. The workplace must change organizational cultures that present subtle and not-so-subtle barriers to women managers.

Introduction

"Nature intended women to be our slaves. They are our property. What a mad idea to demand equality for women."

Napoleon

The Emperor Napoleon Bonaparte, well known for his triumphs and defeats, did not always make rational decisions as was evident by the tragedy at Waterloo. Perhaps he also wasn't being rational when he made his statement about women more than a century ago, but such a perception of women seems to have endured through years of stereotypical role definition, socialization and misunderstanding. Such thinking has created many social, political and emotional barriers for today's working woman.

This paper will address: (1) the history of women in the workplace, (2) the social, political and emotional barriers they encounter, (3) the status of women working in jails, (4) the final frontier: pushing through the glass ceilings, and (5) the American workplace in the year 2000, beyond gender.

The American workplace has never provided an equal playing field for males and females in the private or public sectors. Constitutional guarantees to correct inequities have been in effect for two decades, but gender discrimination continues to build invisible barriers that severely limit the playing field for women. The rules of the game were written by men for men.

In the United States, the first crack in the impenetrable male fortress was achieved through a series of government guidelines. Since the early 1970s, a succession of judicial decisions established equal employment for women as a legitimate, enforceable premise. Now that the barriers used to exclude women from the workplace have been breached, women are pouring into the fray (Harragan 1972).

A large number of women have moved into the traditionally male-dominated area of Law Enforcement/ Corrections. Even stereotypical role definitions have not altered or diminished their desire to excel and direct the agencies. They are among the multitudes of women wrestling with the question of self-definition and seeking changes that will give them greater justice, dignity and power. Everyone who truly believes in "Justice for All" will embrace their plight.

Historical Perspective

During the Depression, discrimination against women in the workplace intensified. Most government relief and recovery programs were designed for men. The growth of the labor union movement in the 1930s closed out even more women. The Depression forced postponement of marriage and contributed to a declining birth rate. The consensus hardened around the position that married women should not work outside the home.

The majority of adult women experienced the depression as wives rather than paid workers. More than 90% of all women married, and only 15% of married women were in the labor force. Women were economically dependent upon men in the family unit. They had limited opportunities to influence policies and decisions in the public realm. Their domestic responsibilities and systematic discrimination outside the home sharply limited women's participation in the public sphere.

The critical events of the 1940s reshaped women's lives in as many ways as they did those of men. Women had unprecedented opportunities for employment, making integration of the labor market a reality by performing or trying to perform almost any task in defense work that men could perform (Gorgon 1970).

The post-war period brought a sharp reduction in employment prospects for women. As Johnny came marching home, back to the labor force, Rosie the Riveter marched home to be a wife and mother, even if she did so protesting all the way. Political, economic and social forces wouldn't let her stay in the workforce (Gerber 1998).

During this period, few women publicly admitted to considering Law Enforcement/Corrections as a career. Those women who dared to enter the field were assigned to housekeeping and secretarial duties or became matrons and caretakers for juveniles.

The 1960s was a decade of political confrontation over values and institutions and of protest and preoccupation with injustice, prejudice and presumption. After almost 40 years of political quiescence and anonymity, women found voice and cause (Johansen 1984).

Female pioneers struggled for women's rights:

■ In 1960, the National Commission for Women was formed solely to address women's issues,

- In 1964, the women's rights act was passed, and
- In 1966, NOW was formed to fight sex discrimination.

These efforts were instrumental in providing a platform to champion gender equality.

In one decade from 1970 to 1980, a few occupations became female dominated. In 1980, women comprised 60% of insurance adjusters and examiners and 59% of computer operators. In other fields the number of women steadily increased. In 1985, the Bureau of Labor Statistics calculated that women made up 36% of executive, administrative and managerial workers, 44% of accountants and auditors, 36% of financial managers, 48% of underwriters, and 44% of public relations specialists (Trost 1986).

In Law Enforcement/Corrections, many states, including Florida, separated Law Enforcement officers from Jail/Correction officers. This created employment advantages in local jails and prisons. In the decade from 1980 through 1990, women started making greater strides into every level of employment.

Social, Political and Emotional Barriers

The glass ceiling isn't glass -- it's a thick layer of men doing things their way. Those "things" define gender imbalance in the workplace (Jardim and Henning 1990).

A 1992 study by Dr. Marg E. Guy of the University of Alabama in Birmingham revealed: 1) women in state and local government in Alabama got fewer jobs than men, 2) when the same number of men and women were hired for government jobs, women had a more difficult time progressing, and 3) although women have federal legal protection, the unequal practices continue.

Five professors from Arizona, California, Texas, Utah and Wisconsin helped Guy expand the study to determine if there were regional differences in how women are treated, but the results were the same in every state. The six researchers surveyed 1,289 state and local workers over two years and found:

1. On the national level in the past decade, men have been paid increasingly more than women. Men on the average earned \$3,475 more a year than women in 1980 and \$5,439 more a year in 1990.
2. Part-time jobs go more to women. In 1980, 20% more women than men worked part-time. In 1990, women held 10.6% of part-time government jobs.
3. Women in the upper echelon of government jobs were better educated than their male coworkers but held less prestigious positions.

In the 1993 United Nations Human Development report, recently published by the Associated Press, researchers gathering information about the world's status of women said they have not found one country that treats women as well as men. Based on a statistical study of 33 countries throughout the world, women are the neglected majority. Despite a spreading struggle among women for equality that includes changes in

national laws to decrease gender bias, no country treated its women as well as it treats its men.

The United States ranked in the lowest percentile, dropping from sixth to ninth place because of the treatment of women. Discrimination against women in industrial countries is most important in employment and wages, with women usually earning less salary than men.

The same issues were cited two decades ago in the 1972 report of the Florida Commission on the Status of Women. The commission identified two particular women's issues that Florida needs to address: gender balance and pay equity.

Pay Inequity. There is increasing evidence that women's occupations are dominated by sex-segregated characteristics and wage differentials despite the Equal Pay Act of 1963 and Title VII of the Civil Rights Act of 1964. Proponents see working women increasingly caught in a spiral of image and status deflation, holding responsible jobs for less pay because they cannot obtain equal but higher paying positions (Johansen 1984).

Overall, women's average wages are about 60% of men's for full-time jobs. A recent National Academy of Science Reports found that as much as 40% of the earning gap is caused by segregation of women and men into different occupations. However, economists say the newest U.S. Census numbers show a narrowing of the income gap for the first time in three decades.

Some people insist there are several legitimate reasons for women's lower wages:

1. Women's own choice of, or investment in, education and training.
2. Their decision to select jobs that allow them to enter and leave the labor market easily to complement roles as wives and mothers.
3. Women are not part of a competitive labor market; they lack marketable skills and concentrate on a narrow band of low-pay occupations labeled "women's work."

Other commentators assert that women always have worked, but have been segregated by gender into menial or low status occupations, and have been turned into victims of pervasive, systematic, institutionalized discrimination in employment.

In the 1992 edition of The Economics of Women, Men, and Work, economist Francine Blau and Marianne Feber took a close look at the new human-capital theory (that women have been paid less because they've been less educated, less experienced and less committed). Their findings: less than 50 percent of the pay gap can be readily explained by differences in schooling and experience. Instead, says Blau, "the evidence suggests that discrimination may explain half or more of the pay difference between men and women" (Working Woman, April 1993).

In Florida, Judge A. Plunkett reported in The Miami Herald that women's salaries across the state increased from 62 cents for every dollar men made in 1980 to 70 cents in 1992, compared to the nationwide increase from 60 cents to 68 cents. That represents significant progress.

According to Blau, women had been stuck at about 60 cents on the dollar since

1960, the year the census began reporting women's salaries. "In the last 10 years, we've seen a burst of real change, and its continuing into the '90s," she said.

Metropolitan areas within Florida show vast differences in pay for men and women. In Dade County, women earned 76 cents for every dollar men made, compared to 70 cents in Broward and 68 cents in Palm Beach County. Miami is larger than its northern neighbors and has more low-paying service jobs, which would bring its average salary down for both genders.

The evidence of continuing discrimination isn't just anecdotal. Research shows that the wage gap for nearly all women was actually narrower in 1955 than it was in 1984. In 1955, women were earning, on an average, 63.9 cents for every dollar a man made; in 1984, they earned 63.7 cents. If you compare white women with white men, women didn't come close to their 1955 position until 1987.

How Female Managers Are Perceived By Other Women. In a poll by Working Woman magazine in February 1993, with 2,250 readers participating, the most significant findings showed not only how far women have come but how the experience, performance and finally the sheer numbers of women bosses are shattering many of the stereotypes.

Even before there were career women, there were negative images of women with power. They were dragon ladies, iron maidens, temptresses; evil manipulators who schemed and connived their way to the top. In the 1970s when women began entering management in significant numbers, it wasn't surprising that many women consistently said in surveys that they would rather work for a man.

A decade later, as management experts discovered the "female management style," a more flattering picture of women bosses emerged: they were kinder, gentler, more flexible and less ego invested. A majority of those surveyed by Working Woman in 1993 said they did not prefer male bosses. In fact, 61% said a supervisor's gender made no difference. Eighty-five percent of the readers surveyed have had women bosses, and the experience has made about one-third of them more negative. The most common gripes among women who had at least one female supervisor were that women are tougher on female employees (34%) and they are picky (38%). Those who disparaged women bosses most were at the bottom of the pay, job and education scales. Perhaps some women, consciously or unconsciously, associate men with power and professionalism.

Though the Working Woman survey revealed that attitudes toward female bosses are changing, another finding showed clearly that, fair or not, there are higher expectations of women managers. Living with that double standard, even for women who fully agree with it, can be complicated.

The Attitude Toward Women in Law Enforcement/Corrections. Prior research has shown that the attitudes of police and civilians toward women in Law Enforcement/Corrections include the following:

- distrust and hostility
- they intrude into an all-male domain
- they're unable to physically perform necessary tasks

Table A
Number and Percent of Jail Employees by Gender and Rank

Rank	Male	Female
Chief Administrators (Jail Directors/Workers)	90% (211)	10% (24)
Mid Level Managers (Captains/Lieutenants)	87% (1,040)	13% (153)
First Line Supervisors (Sergeants)	84% (2,290)	17% (450)
Correction Officers (Deputies)	79% (19,457)	22% (5,335)
Professional Staff (Counselors/Nurses)	41% (1,250)	59% (1,793)
Support Staff (Secretaries/Cooks, Janitors)	40% (1,997)	60% (3,043)

- they're inferior to males
- they're too emotional, irrational, illogical and lacking in objectivity to deal with the day-to-day problems of the profession (Lichtman 1981).

Such stereotyping comes from a deeply ingrained view of life, often with little relation to reality. Thus, when a woman succeeds in Law Enforcement/Corrections, she still has little chance of gaining recognition of her professional competence. She may be regarded by her coworkers as bitchy, castrating or lesbian (Janus, Janus, Lord, Power 1990).

In the past, as a condition for employment, activities requiring brute strength were part of the entrance exam. The ploy eliminated most females. Case studies and pending legislation have been instrumental in removing such barriers, making intellect, skill and physical fitness the qualities sought in candidates for Law Enforcement/Corrections.

But trying to rise in the ranks and bumping into the glass ceiling could be excruciatingly painful, especially for women who were early pioneers in local jails. Women who evolved from matrons into highly educated, well-trained professionals were often viewed as threats by the male ego. When attending conferences, training and professional meetings, such women were usually ignored or patronized. Their input, if solicited, wasn't seriously considered.

Today's major policy changes are still being decided mostly by men, regardless of the woman's title or position. Some women who are just beginning their management careers, or who have climbed quickly through the ranks, believe that changing times eventually will shatter the glass ceiling.

Status of Women in Local Jails

In a survey designed to provide a more comprehensive picture of the women employed in jails, data was collected from counties with a population of 250,000 or

Table B
 Number and Percent of Employees by Gender and Race in Selective Florida Jails

<u>County</u>	<u>Sex</u>	<u>Overall</u>	<u>Senior Management</u>
Orange	Male	75%	74%
	Female	25%	26%
Escambia	Male	70%	85%
	Female	30%	15%
Leon	Male	73%	90%
	Female	27%	10%
Hillsborough	Male	73%	75%
	Female	28%	25%
Alachua	Male	80%	93%
	Female	20%	7%
Pasco	Male	80%	90%
	Female	20%	10%

more (Zupan 1991). Prior to this study, substantive data on female jail workers were practically non-existent. Fortunately, the Bureau of Justice collected and published a census of local jails in 1988. This report contained the first data on the number of women employed in jails. These statistics, and others to follow, will be invaluable in monitoring and forecasting the changing role of women employed in the nation's jails.

Of 143 jails or jail systems sent surveys, 75% returned completed and usable data.

Table A lists the number and percent of males and females by rank. Women comprise more than half of the professional and support staff in the jails that responded to the survey. This fact is not surprising, given that women comprise a large majority of workers in nursing, counseling and secretarial occupations outside the jail cells.

In the traditionally male positions involving security, the percent of women is much smaller. Women constitute 22% of the total corrections officer force. The percent of women corrections officers in the jail is higher than the percent of women in other uniformed criminal justice occupations.

The proportion of women corrections officers in individual jails and jail systems varies considerably. In one jail system in Georgia, a full 42% of the correction officer force is female. In 14 (13%) of the jails, women comprise more than 30% of the officer force. Interestingly, many of these facilities are located in the southeast region of the country. On the other end of the spectrum, one jail employs no female officers. In eight jails, women comprise less than 10% of the total force of corrections officers.

The number of female inmates housed in a jail appears to have only a weak influence on the number of women officers employed at a jail. There are a number of anomalies. For example, one jail that houses no female inmates has women making up 38% of its corrections officers.

Table A also demonstrates that the percentage of women in uniformed positions decreases with rank. In the sampled jails, 17% of the first line supervisors, 13% of mid-level managers, and 10% of top administrators are females. In 22 (21%) jails, there are no first-line supervisors. There are no female administrators in the top ranks in 41% of the jails (Zupan 1991).

In the field of corrections, women are frequently confronted by special problems: sex discrimination, double standards, lack of confidence from male coworkers to respond and react appropriately to danger, perceived lack of femininity, accused of taking jobs away from males and being hired because of gender to meet quotas, and accused of inappropriate sexual behavior with male inmates and male officers.

The female corrections officer must constantly prove she is not only a matron, a term generally applied to women having care and supervision of women and juveniles. Other females in law enforcement sometimes believe themselves smarter and better trained than the female corrections officer.

Changes in the Jail Workplace. Despite the intense interest in the employment of women in the criminal justice system, the status of women employed in local jails has been all but ignored. Women workers in jails are neither a recent nor novel innovation, contrary to their history in police and prison organizations. Women have worked in jails, often performing custodial duties, from as far back as the 1800s. (Gerber, 1988; Zupan, 1991).

There is evidence to suggest that employment and promotional opportunities for women in the nation's jails are slowly expanding. Women corrections officers employed by the New York City Department of Corrections, for example, were only assigned to work at the women's house of detention and the jail ward of Elmhurst Hospital prior to 1980. They were prohibited from working in the city's male-only facilities. The restrictions in assignment severely limited the number of entry-level and promotional possibilities for women.

In 1981, the department instituted a policy that allows female correction officers to work in all positions, even in the jails that house only male inmates. The only restrictions instituted keep women out of areas where male inmates shower and where they are strip-searched. The policy change came as a result of a court decision requiring the New York State Department of Correctional Services to deploy females in male prisons.

Following the ruling, the percentage of women in uniformed positions in the New York City Department of Corrections increased from 10% of the total officer force to almost 25%. By 1989, the percentage of uniformed women employees in corrections exceeded all other uniformed New York City departments. Women comprised only 11.8% of the New York City Police Department's uniformed officers, 9% of the transit police, and 1% of the fire department's officers.

The change in the New York City policy also affected the number of women hired by the department. Between October 1987 and October 1988, 417 women and 898 men were hired, about one woman for every two males. Although New York City is certainly one of the largest jail systems in the country to revise employment policies regarding female correction officers, it is not the only jurisdiction to do so.

Recent surveys show that a majority of male officers believe women made special contributions, increased the livability of the facility and increased their own enjoyment of

the job. Likewise, a majority of inmates think that the presence of the women officers increased the livability of the institution.

The Final Frontier

According to statistics compiled by the Florida Department of Law Enforcement, there are 12,000 women employed in Florida's jails, prisons and police departments. Many have progressed rapidly to middle management, but less than one-tenth of one percent has succeeded in breaking through the last frontier of management. Repeated studies have shown that women in this profession equal or surpass their male counterparts in job performance (Balkin, 1988; Kipnis, 1992).

In the state of Florida, as well as most states in America, the biggest obstacles women face are also the most intangible. Men at the top in Corrections/Law Enforcement tend to feel uncomfortable with women beside them (Zupan, 1991).

A caste system exists in the jails with men at the top and women lower down. Women who seem very close to the top concede that they don't have a shot at sitting in the chief executive chair. The caste system is difficult and slow to crack.

Most females hit a barrier at the middle-management level. It often happens when a woman approaches a key management position where she will affect departmental policy. Up to a certain point, brains and competence are enough, but "fitting in" becomes more important as women reach toward the CEO level.

Often, people who have achieved the highest ranks want to know that their achievements -- the work they have done and the reputation they have built -- will remain intact. They want their successor to be almost an extension of themselves, someone they have bonded with through the years. For most men, this has meant another man, and for many it always will. Their traditions are rooted in hierarchical organizations, in rituals and dominance and masculine competition, in status and differentiation and the rewards of both. And their fears? Their worst fear may be that women will make them look ridiculous (Jardim & Henning, 1990).

There are male executives capable of making the psychic transition to female successors. These executives often seem to be men with daughters or men known to be unconventional in their actions and choices.

In spite of what some researchers term extraordinary progress, female managers frequently find themselves pressing up against a glass ceiling. They also find themselves on display under the glass. Often the lone woman at the top level, the management woman worries not just about job performance but about political views and even the jokes she tells or laughs at on the job (Gerber, 1988) (Wickhan, 1993).

Behind every senior woman manager is a man who thinks she got the job only because she's a woman. As men find themselves competing with more women and minorities for choice management jobs -- and sometimes losing to them -- backlash is inevitable. Most men have grown up in an environment which described the competition as being other white males. Losing a promotion to a woman or a minority can be a bigger blow than losing out to another man. Some male managers haven't accepted that a woman might be better qualified; as a result, the man blames his failure to succeed on the affirmative action program.

Truly significant numbers of women will not reach the very senior levels of American business until the end of the 1990s, if then. This is because the men currently

in charge will have to retire, take their traditions and fears to the sidelines with them as they go, and be replaced by others who have had quite different sets of experience.

The ability to acknowledge the value in the way women manage can make the difference in whether or not women are able to make the leap into the male territory -- the top level of senior management. Women entering the realm of chief executive must be strong and accept their roles as pathfinders and all the challenges that attach to that role.

Women Managers in Florida Jails. Out of 67 county jails in the state of Florida, only three are managed by females. The Florida Department of Law Enforcement Executive and Leadership Development programs, whose vision and purpose is to prepare criminal justice executives for the future, has graduated three females out of a total of 60 participants as of 1992. A very low number of females ever have been recommended to attend by mostly male chief executive officers.

Women in jail management must be empowered through training, mentoring programs and other education to be equipped to enter the final frontier. Some think it's just a matter of time before enough qualified women are lined up to take over top positions. Others argue that sexism, pure and simple, is to blame. If there is a shortage of experienced women, they say, it's because so many women have left the organizations after realizing important positions were reserved for men.

Nationally, 50,000 women represent nine percent of the country's Law Enforcement officers. According to statistics from the Florida Department of Law Enforcement, there are more than 12,000 females employed in the state in Law Enforcement/Corrections. Less than two percent have transcended the last frontier into the executive realm.

Year 2000, Beyond Gender: A Conclusion

Gender inequity in the American work place is deeply ingrained, fueled by social orientation and societal expectations. Gender stereotype traits are typically assigned to men and women, with the male as the leader. This inequity mirrors the status of female workers in American jails.

If America is to successfully compete in the global economy in the year 2000 and beyond, it must utilize all of its resources. Our country cannot continue to jeopardize its strength by persisting in its present posture of gender discrimination. Unless we begin training larger numbers of women to be able to compete successfully with men, equality cannot be obtained.

Women must remain optimistic. They must continue to use their special skills, talent and expertise to ultimately prove to anyone that women can achieve and survive in the executive realm. The thaw has begun, but meltdown will be painfully slow and mentally taxing. Women are cracking the glass ceiling, but with relatively few exceptions, they pale in number and influence compared with the majority of those who manage and make decisions: older white males.

To reach top positions around the year 2000, women in their late 30s and 40s must begin now to think like the CEOs they never planned or dreamed they could be. Regina Henzlinger points out that it takes 35 years of business experience to sit in the CEO chair (Naisbitt & Aburdene, 1990).

For women to successfully compete, they must be trained. In Law

Enforcement/Corrections, an organization that has been among the last to accept women as equal to men, women officers must not only be welcomed but nurtured and prepared for leadership roles. The workplace must change organizational cultures that present subtle and not-so-subtle barriers to women managers.

Such change is essential, not from a feminist viewpoint but from a human resource perspective. Intense recruiting and a growing labor shortage means women will take two thirds of the new jobs created in the 1990s (Naisbitt & Aburdene, 1990). How prepared they will be depends on how managers train them to compete in an environment that favors men.

There is no logic in discrimination and legal precedents have produced minuscule progress. Resolution must be sought through raised consciousness and activism. Women must assume an activist role, at the risk of being labeled militant, to enlighten an otherwise dimly lit world about their contributions, worth and constitutional rights to be treated equally by all elements of society.

Naisbitt and Aburdene in Megatrends 2000 say that in the first decades of the third millennium we and our children will look back at the last half of the 20th Century and remark on how quaint were the days when women were excluded from the top echelons of business, political and organizational leadership, much as we today recall when women could not vote. "How naive were the men and women of the 1980s and early 1990s," we will say, "those people who believed in something called a 'glass ceiling' and thought it would forever exclude women from the top."

Alma Cornish has been a corrections officer since 1977, and is a Captain with the Escambia County Department of Corrections. Prior to her work in corrections, Alma had a career as a licensed practical nurse. She holds two associate's degrees from Pensacola Junior College, where she now teaches part-time as an adjunct instructor in the law enforcement department. During 1993, Alma received a bachelor's degree from Troy State University; she is now studying for a master's degree. Alma also is a graduate of the National Academy of Corrections.

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