Women in Correctional Institutions: An Exploration into Swiss Correctional Institutions

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1.   Introduction

Institutions are often tremendously resistant to change; they are characterized by stability and slow incremental change (*Zucker*, 1987). This resistance to change is no different in correctional institutions, an institution that has traditionally been slow to adapt to society and its values. However, recently, one can observe significant changes taking place in Swiss correctional institutions. *Baechtold*, *Weber* and *Hostettler* suggested five dominant tendencies that recently shaped the correctional institutions, including better prison conditions, individualization, more open institutions, improvement of legal rights, and the introduction of alternative sanctions (2016, p. 25). Therefore, it can be claimed that Swiss correctional institutions have been changing and adapting, even if rather slowly.

Additionally, a fundamental change that can be observed is how the makeup of staff members has changed, especially with the introduction and notable increase of women working in the field. While women have always been present in the Swiss correctional settings, it was not till the early 2000s that women began playing a significant role in the correctional institutions. While one can observe this recent change in correctional staff makeup, there is very little knowledge about this transition or how women experience their labour in these traditionally male-dominated institutions.

Historically women played a minimal role, if any at all, in Swiss correctional institutions. As highlighted by *Luginbühl* and *Fink* (2015) before 1980, except for women's correctional facilities and the wives of the facility directors, it was rare that women worked in correctional facilities. In the 1990s, there was an effort to recruit women into men's correctional facilities, but the authors also claim that this recruitment was not of significance. The historical absence of women in Swiss correctional facilities is also shown by *Schulthess* (2014), who outlined the history of a Swiss correctional institution, Lenzburg. *Schulthess* suggested that while some women were working in this institution, they were often relegated to doing the housekeeping labour, such as cooking, washing, cleaning, care-work, or working with female inmates. As *Schulthess* further suggests, a lot of women's labour was done in the 'shadows', therefore, historically, very little is known about their work. As *Liebling* stated, "prison officers are in many ways the invisible ghosts of penalty" (2000, p. 337), then, historically, can women's labour in Swiss correctional facilities be seen as the shadows of these invisible ghosts?

It was not until the early 2000s that women were significantly present in Swiss correctional facilities. It is not very clear why this shift happened; for example, there was no legal struggle fought that allowed women to work in corrections. In the United States, for example, as *Britton* (2003) highlights, Court cases such as *Dothard vs. Rawlinson*, 433 U.S 321 (1977), and *Gunther vs. Iowa*, 612 F.2d 1079 (8th Cir., 1980), were fundamental at establishing the right that women would be able to work in correctional facilities. As, she states, "collectively, these cases shattered the barriers to women's employment in men's prisons" (*Britton*, 2003, p.71). In Switzerland, one of the possible explanations for this change is the overall professionalization of correctional work that took place in the early 2000s, especially the formal education that was needed to enter the field of corrections. Staff members needed to undergo formal training, provided by the 'Schweizerisches Ausbildungszentrum für das Strafvollzugspersonal, (SAZ)[1], which gave them a formally recognized degree that allowed them to work in Swiss correctional facilities. In their regulations, it is also stated that the formal training is open to both men and women, and it also clearly stated what the requirements of people needed to be (*Strafvollzugskonkordat der Nordwest- und Innerschweiz*, 2004). These formal regulations and training aimed at professionalizing Swiss correctional facilities and allowed women to be part of these institutions.

With the introduction of women working in the field of correction, there was also much interest in how these women would fit into these institutions. As *Jurik* suggested, as women "enter predominantly male occupational groups, social scientists have

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1   Since 2017 Swiss Centre of Expertise in Prison and Probation (SCEPP) (https://www.skjv.ch/en).

chronicled their struggle to survive amidst often overwhelming resistance" (1988, p. 291). However, as other research suggested (*Batton & Wright*, 2018; *Haney*, 2004; *Burdett, Goulinquer & Poulin*, 2018), more recent research has focused on structural or institutional barriers that women face.

Recently, correctional institutions have undergone tremendous changes, especially in terms of allowing women to work in these institutions. However, at the same, there is very little knowledge about this change. Therefore, this current study aims to shed some light on this situation, specifically to understand who these women are and to examine how they perceive certain aspects of their work and if this differs to their male colleagues.

2. Theoretical Reflections and Literature

2.1 Theoretical Reflections

While gender has been part of correctional institutions, it is still a relatively new field of research, mainly due to women not being part of these institutions. At the same time, since women have not been present in correctional institutions for very long, the institutions itself, such as the structures and culture has been male-dominant. To understand what role gender plays in institutions *Acker* (1990; 1992) proposed the theory of 'gendered institutions' which at its core proposes that institutions themselves are gendered and that every aspect of this institution is influenced by gender. As she suggests, "to say that an organization, or any other analytic unit, is gendered means that advantage and disadvantage, exploitation and control, action and emotion, meaning and identity, are patterned through and in terms of a distinction between male and female, masculine and feminine. Gender is not an addition to ongoing processes, conceived as gender-neutral" (*Acker*, 1990, p. 146). As this statement highlights, gender is part of every aspect of an institution, both structural and individual. Importantly, as *Acker* (1990) also suggested, gender is not merely an addition to the processes going on in institutions, but that these processes themselves are gendered. *Acker* suggests key aspects where gendering takes place; division of labour, symbols and images, language and culture, interpersonal inter-actions between and among women and men, and in fundamental organizing elements of creating organizational structures (*Acker*, 1990). It is suggested that gender is not neutral in the processes of institutions, *Acker* (1992) further suggests, gender is always present in these processes of institutions, but importantly, they are defined by the absence of women.

This theory of 'gendered institutions' is important for understanding correctional institutions, especially, since correctional institutions have historically been male-

dominated (see for an application of *Acker's* theory in the Swiss prison context, *Achermann & Hostettler*, 2007). The theory of 'gendered institutions', focusing on correctional institutions, is further supported by the seminal work of *Britton* (2003). As this work highlights, gender is present in all aspects of correctional work. Firstly, it is present in the work that staff members perform with inmates, as *Britton* suggests, "while doing their jobs, however, officers are also doing gender. In the men's prison, notions about women's essential nature underlie their struggle to establish authority and influence the kinds of sexualized harassment to which they are subject" (*Britton*, 2003, p. 164). This idea that staff member, especially women, are forced into specific gender roles is also underlined by *Jurik* (1988) who suggests that women are often forced into negative stereotypes or roles, such as the pet, the seductress, the mother, or the iron maiden.

Furthermore, *Britton* suggests that doing gender and gendered structures are also present in other aspects of correctional work, such as their work with co-workers. This is perfectly illustrated by a quote used by *Britton* (2003) by an African-American women in a men's prison:

> *"The inmate stress I can take because they're there, and not by choice. And I can understand them being a little grouchy, and not happy with their situation. But for the supervisor to create more than 90 percent of the stress, or the COs, no." (Britton, 2003, p. 166)*

As this statement suggests, while inmates are a source of stress for the prison staff, supervisors and staff members are the more significant source. As she further suggests, women have traditionally had less income, were less often in supervisory positions and did a lot of care work, even if they are equally qualified (*Britton*, 2003). Moreover, while women are often structurally at a disadvantage, they are often also discriminated against in terms of institutional culture, as *Britton* (2003) further states, "interactions with co-workers and supervisors draw upon and reinforce stereotypes, as do formally and informally sanctioned policies and practices" (p.167). As suggested by *Jurik* (1988), women are seen as weak and not able to perform the given tasks, or as a seductress that will seduce inmates and staff members with their sexuality. Paradoxically, it is women that experience unwanted harassment from male staff members and inmates and not women seeking to seduce others. As suggested, this constant sexual harassment does not only affect their work but also their social lives; "the culture of corrections is a persistently hypersexualized, hostile environment in which women reported have little reprieve" (*Burdett et al.*, 2018, p. 337). As the theory of 'gendered institutions' suggests, gender is continuously presented in these institutions, both in a structural but also in a personal sense.

2.2 Literature

Multiple studies have suggested that women and their work do have a positive impact on inmates, staff members, and institutions. Female officers can have a normalizing and softening effect and reduce hostility (*Boyd & Grant*, 2005). They tend to be more sensitive, friendly, respectful towards prisoner's needs and better at interacting with the inmates (*Zimmer*, 1986), and in turn, inmates were found to be more verbally aggressive but less physically aggressive towards women officers (*Kissel & Ketsampes*,1980). Generally, women staff members tend to be more professional (*Boyd & Grant*, 2005), and seem overall satisfied with their choice to work in this field and have a positive normalizing effect on the institution (*Hemmens et al.*, 2002; *Collica-Cox & Schulz*, 2018; *Batton & Wright*, 2018).

Differently, an overwhelming amount of studies suggest that women working in corrections face a number of obstacles and discrimination. Women are often confronted with negative stereotypes and roles (*Jurik*, 1988) and are forced into the role of tokenism (*Kanter*, 1977). As *Tait* (2008) highlights, women often experience discrimination in forms of nit-picking, minimal contact with inmates, or being set up for failure. However, as she also suggests, recent studies show that women are becoming more accepted in male prisons, but this does not seem to be supported by all studies (see *Tait*, 2008 for further detail). In part, due to these stereotypes and roles, women experience difficulties working with other staff members and supervisors (*Britton*, 2003). Prison officers are often expected to fill the role of machismo, which is associated with dominance, authoritativeness and aggressiveness, and therefore more sensitive and empathetic persons can be 'steamrolled' (*Tait*, 2008).

Additionally, women tend to have less opportunity for advancement and requirements/controls tend to be higher for women (*Button & Wright*, 2018). Correctional work is considered high-stress work due to the institutions itself and the people in these institutions (for Switzerland, see *Isenhardt & Hostettler*, 2014). On the one hand, research has shown that gender is correlated to work stress (*Cullen et al.*, 1985; *Wright & Saylor*, 1991; *Pelletier, Coutu & Lamonde*, 1996; *Britton*, 1997; *Paoline et al.*, 2015). On the other hand, studies suggested that there is no or very low correlation between gender and work stress (*Triplett, Mullings, Scarborough*, 1996; *Dowden & Tellier*, 2004; *Hurst & Hurst*, 1997).

As the idea of 'gendered institutions' suggests, women often face discrimination and obstacles in their work, which could lead to the assumption that this would impact job satisfaction. Nevertheless, as studies suggest, there is no correlation between gender and job satisfaction (*Lovrich & Stohr*, 1993; *Van Voorhis, Cullen, Link, Wolfe*, 1991; *Lambert et al.*, 2007). Other studies suggest that women perceive their work environment as more negative and have worse relationships with their colleagues

(*Jurik*, 1988; *Zimmer*, 1987; *Britton*, 1997). In addition to women perceiving their work environment as more negative, some studies suggested that they perceive this environment as hostile (*Pogrebin & Poole*, 1998; *Wright & Saylor*, 1991).

3.   Methodology

The results presented in this study are part of a more extensive research project that aims at understanding how staff members experience their work in Swiss correctional institutions. The research project was financed by the Swiss National Science Foundation[2] and was conducted by the Prison Research Group at the University of Bern. The questionnaire was a paper-pencil questionnaire, which was distributed to the staff members by the institutions and took place between June 2017 and September 2017. The project was based on a study conducted in 2012 by the Prison Research Group that focused exclusively on staff members from Swiss correctional institutions (*Isenhardt, Hostettler & Young*, 2014).

In total, 83 correctional institutions were contacted to take part in the study, ultimately staff members from 76 institutions took part in the study. At the time of the study, 4476 persons were working in the participating correctional institutions. From these persons, 1667 staff members took part in the questionnaire, leading to a response rate of 37.1 %. In terms of gender, 29.8 % of the participants were women, and 70.2 % were men.

3.1   Instruments

For the short profile of female staff members, the following dimensions were chosen: age, workload, leadership position, how long they have been working in correctional settings, educational level, in what kind of correctional setting they presently work, satisfaction with further education, support, career opportunities, income, amount and quality of their work. On the one hand, the goal of this section is to gain insight into who these women of the correctional institutions are, on the other hand, it allows a comparison with their male colleagues.

This study also aimed at understanding how these staff members experience certain aspects of their labour. This was measured by looking at four different subscales, including job satisfaction, cooperation with colleagues, cooperation with superiors, and their relationship with the inmates.

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2   http://p3.snf.ch/Project-169495.

Job satisfaction was based on a single item question, where participants were asked to answer the following quest, "How satisfied are you with your work/job on a scale from 1 'completely dissatisfied' to 10 'completely satisfied'?". The scale is based on the Swiss HR Barometer (*Grote & Staffelbach*, 2006).

Cooperation with colleagues was in part developed by the research team and in part, specifically items concerning social cohesion, based on *Frese* (1989). The scale is based on eight items, such as "We really are a good group" or "I can rely on my colleagues". The items were measured on a 5-point Likert type scale, from 1 "Is not true" to 5 "Is very true". The scale shows high internal consistency; Cronbachs α is .913.

The scale "cooperation with superiors" was developed by the research team. The scale is based on nine items, such as "I generally get along well with my superiors" or "I receive recognition for the work that I perform". The items were measured on a 5-point Likert type scale, from 1 "Is not true" to 5 "Is very true". The scale shows high internal consistency; Cronbachs α is .910.

The relationship with inmates was developed by the research team and inspired by *Lehmann* and *Greve* (2006). The scale is based on seven items describing the relationship that staff members have with the inmates, such as "negative vs. positive" or "satisfactory vs. unsatisfactory". The items were measured on a scale from -2 to +2. The scale shows high internal consistency; Cronbachs α for the scale is .900.

3.2   Analysis steps

This study aimed at investigating, in an explorative manner, what the state of women working in Swiss correctional institutions is, and to see if they experience their labour differently than their colleagues. The first part of the analysis is a descriptive analysis of different socio-demographic characteristics and general well-being of women working in corrections and highlighting in which aspects these staff members differ from their male colleagues. Secondly, the analysis will focus on how these staff members differ, in terms of gender, job satisfaction, how they experience their work with colleagues, supervisors, and inmates. This will be done by using T-Tests to compare the different means of the scales, which will give us an insight into if men and women experience these aspects differently. As the theory of gendered institutions might suggest, women often experience these aspects worse than their male colleagues but might also have a better relationship with the inmates.

4.   Results

4.1   Profile of Women Working in Corrections

The aim of the first section is to show who these women are that are working in Swiss correctional institutions. Importantly, since the focus of the current study is to highlight the changes of the makeup of staff members, it is essential to state, historically, one can observe a great increase of women working in these institutions, increasing from 27.5 % to 29.8 %.

Table 1 and 2 highlight different characteristics of these women and shows how, overall, they might differ from male staff members. Firstly, it is clear that women are often younger than men, most women are between the ages of 30 and 50. This is not surprising since women have not been working in correctional institutions for very long and therefore have not had as much time to establish themselves. Additionally, as shown latter, women tend to work in special services, such as social work or healthcare and can begin their work directly after their education. Therefore, they also tend to be younger when starting their career.

When considering the employment conditions (which are shown in Table 1), women often do not work fulltime. Here one can also observe the most significant difference between women and men, while only 49.0 % of women work fulltime, 89.7 % of men do. This difference in working conditions can also be observed if a person has a supervisor role; women state that 20.1 % of them have a supervisor role, compared to 31.4 % of men. This aspect of the working conditions also seems to be the least satisfying for women, as a majority claim that they are either neutral or unhappy with the opportunities of advancements (see Table 2).

Education and formal training are also different between men and women, women's education level being higher than men's, with a large portion of women having obtained a degree in higher education or higher vocational training. As one can see, a large portion of women work in special services (such as health or social care), but they have also been moving into areas such as correctional officers and to a lesser extent work in security. When observing women's satisfaction with the overall working conditions, a majority stated that they are satisfied with the further education and support that they receive. As already stated, they are not satisfied with the opportunities for advancement. On the other hand, they seem satisfied with their income, the amount of work and the content of this work.

As this short profile suggests, overall women seem to be satisfied with most aspects of their work, other than opportunities of advancement, which is also reflected in that they less often have supervisor positions and tend to work part-time. Women also seem to be more educated, younger and more often work in care work compared to men.

Variable	Description	Women	Men	N
Age				1642
	Under 30	13.7	6.4	
	30-40	25.6	24.9	
	41-50	27.4	31.8	
	51-60	29.2	29.4	
	60+	4.1	7.5	
Workload				1641
	Full-time 90%+	49.0	89.7	
	Part-time 50-89%	43.0	8.3	
	Part-time up to 49%	6.6	1.6	
	Hourly (up to 5h a week)	1.4	0,.3	
Supervisor				1640
	No	79.9	68.6	
	Yes	20.1	31.4	
Time worked in corrections				1639
	Less than 6 months	4.7	2.3	
	6 months to 1 year	10.2	5.0	
	More than 1 to 5 years	43.2	28.9	
	More than 5 to 10 years	21.9	23.1	
	More than 10 to 15 years	10.7	13.3	
	More than 15 to 20 years	4.9	11.4	
	More than 20 years	4.3	16.1	
Education				1625
	Mandatory School	1.2	2.9	
	Vocational Training	35.2	51.4	
	Professional Matriculation	9.2	7.4	
	Higher Vocational Training	24.2	25.9	
	Higher Education	28.1	11.3	
	Other	2.0	1.1	
Area of Work				1585
	Supervision and Support	33.1	41.1	
	Institute Operation	7.9	21.8	
	Security	3.3	13.9	
	Administration	20.5	6.6	
	Special Service	24.4	6.5	
	Education	4.3	3.3	
	Other	6.6	6.8	
Level of Security				1585
	Open	33.6	29.1	
	Closed	60.6	64.2	
	High	5.8	6.7	

Table 1: Descriptive characteristics of Staff Members (Part 1) (in per cent)

Variable	Description	Women	Men	N
Satisfaction with training				1636
	Very Unhappy	7.6	6.3	
	Unhappy	10.1	14.5	
	Neutral	29.5	29.0	
	Happy	31.2	33.9	
	Very Happy	21.5	16.3	
Satisfaction with support				1637
	Very Unhappy	8.3	8.2	
	Unhappy	13.2	18.4	
	Neutral	26.4	25.0	
	Happy	28.9	31.7	
	Very Happy	23.1	16.8	
Satisfaction with advancement				1623
	Very Unhappy	13.2	14.4	
	Unhappy	21.2	24.7	
	Neutral	40.5	36.0	
	Happy	18.4	18.2	
	Very Happy	6.7	6.8	
Satisfaction with income				1640
	Very Unhappy	5.1	7.0	
	Unhappy	16.7	20.8	
	Neutral	34.8	32.4	
	Happy	32.7	31.0	
	Very Happy	10.7	8.8	
Satisfaction with amount of work				1639
	Underchallenged	1.8	1.0	
	Slightly Underchallenged	14.0	11.6	
	Just Right	61.0	65.2	
	Slightly Overloaded	22.6	19.4	
	Overloaded	0.6	2.8	
Satisfaction with contents of work				1616
	Underchallenged	3.5	1.8	
	Slightly Underchallenged	17.1	16.4	
	Just Right	67.2	69.7	
	Slightly Overloaded	11.9	10.6	
	Overloaded	0.2	1.4	

Table 2: Descriptive characteristics of Staff Members (Part 2) (in per cent)

4.2 Difference of how women experience work

As one can observe from the previous section, there are apparent differences between women and men. In the following section, the focus is on how they experience certain aspects of their work, including job satisfaction, cooperation with colleagues and supervisors, and their relationship with inmates. In addition to seeing how women experience these dimensions of work, it will also be observed if there are differences between women and men, as seen in Table 3.

In terms of job satisfaction, both women and men rated their general job satisfaction as relatively high, women (Mean = 7.47 (SD: 1.699)) rated it slightly higher than their male colleagues (Mean= 7.37 (SD:1.780)). While women rated it slightly higher, the difference was not significant.

Similar results can be observed in how staff members perceive their cooperation with colleagues, again, for both women (Mean = 3.83 (SD: 0.803)) and men (Mean= 3.79 (SD: 0.751)) evaluated their cooperation with colleagues as somewhat positive. But again, the difference is not significant.

	N	Mean Women	Mean Men	t (SD)	Sig. (2-tailed)	Mean difference
Job Satisfaction	1636	7.47 (1.699)	7.37 (1.780)	.982 (1634)	.326	.093
Cooperation with colleagues	1636	3.83 (.803)	3.79 (.751)	.614 (1634)	.539	.021
Cooperation with Supervisors	1635	3.91 (.871)	3.74 (.863)	2.285(1633)	.022*	.031
Relationship with Inmates	1579	3.59 (.776)	3.34 (.827)	5.485(1577)	0.00*	.249

Table 3: Differences of Means of the four Dimensions

Next, the cooperation with supervisors was examined, specifically how participants experienced their work with their supervisor and how supported they felt. It is here that one can observe the first significant difference. While both women (Mean= 3.91(.871)) and men (Mean= 3.74(.863)) perceive their cooperation with supervisors as mostly positive, women perceive this relationship as being significantly better than their male counterparts.

Lastly, it was also examined how the participants perceived their relationship with the inmates, either positively or negatively. Here once again, one can observe a difference between women (Mean= 3.59 (.776)) and men (Mean= 3.34 (.827)), which is also significant. This is also the largest difference compared to all other dimensions.

Overall, the results presented here are somewhat surprising; overall women seem to perceive these four dimensions as rather positively and similarly to their male colleagues. When differences are seen, such as in the cooperation with supervisors and their relationship with inmates, women tended to evaluate them significantly better than men. These results contribute to a field of literature that seems to be full of contradiction, on a theoretical level it seems clear that women experienced obstacles and disadvantages. However, as previous research shows and the present research also underlines, this does not seem to be as transparent as one might suggest.

5.   Discussion

As the results from the previous section highlight, there are differences between how women and men experience some aspects of their work, in addition to the difference in the profile of women and men. As previous research also highlighted (*Matthews, Monk-Turner & Sumter*, 2010) women tend to work in the care sector of these institutions, such as in healthcare and social work, which was also shown in the present results. This could also in part explain why women tend to have a higher education level compared to men, due to these jobs often demanding higher levels of education, such as a social worker.

It is also important to highlight that the role of correctional officers has been changing, internationally but especially in Switzerland, in recent decades—they are often not seen as guards anymore, but more as correctional officers that are there to support the inmates. As *Crawley* highlights, "prison work also demands a range of interactional skills, including an ability to communicate, a willingness to negotiate" (*Crawley*, 2004, p. 95).

The role of modern prison officers has dramatically changed, while they still must perform their custodial tasks; one of the primary skills that they need today are interpersonal skills. This demand for a new kind of prison officers is also reflected in the role of the institution, which more recently focuses on resocialization and rehabilitation. While this role often is in contrast with traditional ideas of correctional institutions, Swiss correctional institutions are shifting towards these priorities. With women moving into these more non-traditional sections, one might also observe an additional gradual shift in that direction.

One of the more significant differences between men and women working in Swiss correctional institutions is their employment conditions. While this has traditionally also been the case outside of correctional work, in Switzerland, in 2017, around 59 % of women worked part-time compared to about 17 % of all men (*BFS*, 2019). This is a dimension of women's work that might need to change, due to, as already suggested, correctional work demanding that staff members build up relationships and inter-personal connections with inmates. Related to their employment conditions, is the percentage of women staff members that are in supervisory roles, while only 20.1 % of women are in supervisory roles, 31.4 % of men are in these roles. As a tremendous amount of previous literature (such as *Collica-Cox & Schulz*, 2018) suggests, supervisors and leadership are important for a functioning institution, and they also have a significant impact on the culture and structure of these institutions.

One of the aims of the current study was to show how women in Swiss correctional institutions experience their work, limited to a few dimensions. As the theoretical understanding of 'gendered institutions' suggests, women often experience their work differently than men; specifically, women experience disadvantages and obstacles. As the results highlight, this is not necessarily the case in Swiss correctional institutions. Both women and men generally claimed that their job satisfaction and cooperation with colleagues are generally good and do not significantly differ. This stands in contrast to some previous research that suggests that women tend to have low job satisfaction, due to numerous disadvantageous variables that women face. However, it is suggested that this is also changing (*Hemmens et al.*, 2002; *Collica-Cox & Schulz*, 2018; *Batton & Wright*, 2018). In addition, previous research also suggested that women often have a worse relationship with their colleagues and often experience discrimination or a hostile work environment (*Britton*, 2003; *Tait*, 2008). Further, while both women and men perceive their cooperation with supervisors and the relationships with inmates as positive, women seem to perceive these dimensions as significantly more positive than men. This contrasts with the theoretical understandings of 'gendered institutions' and some previous studies. On the other hand, relationships with inmates is also the one dimension that showed similar results compared to previous studies. Specifically, studies that suggested that women tend to have better relationships with inmates, since they often show more sympathy, empathy, and tend not to express their authority through coercion (*Zimmer*, 1986). However, there is also a tremendous amount of research that shows that there are no correlations or very weak correlations between gender and how staff members experience their labour. The field of research does not seem to have a definite conclusion that fully supports the theory of the 'gendered institution'.

While it is not possible to suggest a reason why the current results are in contrast with other studies and theoretical understandings, one can suggest possible reasons

for the differences. One aspect that might have contributed to the experience of women could be the relatively short history of women in Swiss correctional institutions. Women were mostly not present in these institutions till the early 2000s, and as women began entering this field of work, the work itself was also changing. Over the past few decades, the idea of a prison officer has dramatically changed, and this was no different in Switzerland. This changing role took place while women entered the field of work. One of the more significant changes was the professionalization of correctional work that went in tandem with formal education for becoming a correctional officer. Therefore, one could suggest that the past discrimination and obstacles that women experienced have changed with more women entering the field. Nonetheless, it would be reckless to come to a definite conclusion from this present investigation.

Further, as suggested by *Jurik* (1988), while women have traditionally been placed in stereotypical roles, women have also utilized a variety of strategies that can change their perception within an institution. Such as projecting a professional image, demonstrating unique skills, emphasizing a team approach, using humour as a distracting device, and using sponsorship to enhance positive visibility (*Jurik*, 1988, pp. 296-302). The success of these strategies is very much dependent on the individual persons, and with the absence of institutional change and support, this would be very difficult. However, as *Jurik* later also empathizes, "the ability of employees to shape their work environment must not be overemphasized. The gender-related stress experienced by the female officers as they attempt to maintain a balanced image illustrates the validity of Kanter's assertion that organizational characteristics significantly constrain worker behaviour" (1998, p. 304).

Maybe, in Swiss correctional institutions, both these aspects were taking place, the institution has been changing and becoming more professional, but women have been successful at challenging these traditional roles.

6.   Conclusion

The Swiss history of women working in correctional institutions is rather short; it was not until the early 2000s that women began working in corrections at a significant number, due in part to professionalization. Because correctional institutions have been male-dominated, in terms of inmates and staff members, it would be fair to assume that it is a 'gendered institution', with structures and norms benefiting male staff members. At the same time, it is also tremendously difficult to support this assumption, because, before this professionalization of correctional work, women were not present in these institutions.

This uncertainty about a conclusion is also present in previous literature, some showing that women do experience part of their work worse and others not. The results presented in this paper do also not necessarily support the idea that women experience their work and relationships worse than men. On the contrary, in terms of cooperation with their supervisors and the relation with the inmates, women in Swiss correctional institutions seem to experience them better than their male counterparts. At the same time, no significant differences could be shown for work satisfaction and cooperation with colleagues.

However, it would be hasty to come to those conclusions solely on the presented variables. The first part of the analysis shows, in part, a slightly different conclusion, explicitly showing that women in parts do experience disadvantages. A large percentage of women work only part-time, and more often do not have a supervisory role.

As women become more present in Swiss correctional institutions, these are essential dimensions to research, not only how they experience their work but also what impact they have on the institution. It is crucial to understand if the present historical stereotypes are still present in these 'gendered institutions' and more specifically, how women challenge these stereotypes. Additionally, since this study was not specifically designed to understand gender in correctional institutions, it is necessary to perform further research that aims explicitly at understanding how gender is experienced in these institutions and to understand which dimensions affect women's work and gender in Swiss correctional institutions.

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