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The influences of personal background on perceptions of juvenile correctional environments

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Abstract

This study examined whether the individual characteristics of race, sex, and education affect juvenile correctional staff's perceptions of their work environments. Prior to 1970, correctional staff were minimally educated and predominantly comprised of White males. Correctional reformers believed that employing more female, minority, and highly educated staff members would lead to more efficacious correctional environments. The existing research conducted in adult correctional facilities not only calls this belief into question, but also indicates that the hiring of nontraditional staff may have exacerbated existing internal hostilities. These research efforts uniformly examined adult correctional institutions, however. This study examined these issues in a large national sample of juvenile correctional staff. Results revealed that individual characteristics of juvenile correctional staff do significantly affect perceptions. Contrary to the prior research in adult facilities, the current study found few, if any, manifestations of either racial or sexual hostility in juvenile correctional facilities. © 2001 Elsevier Science Ltd. All rights reserved.

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Introduction

The demographic composition of staff in America's correctional institutions has undergone a marked change over the last thirty years. In 1968, 6 percent of adult correctional staff were female, and 3 percent were non-White (Joint Commission on Correctional Manpower and Training, 1968, 27 - 28). By 1995, 29 percent of all correctional staff were female, and 28 percent were non-White (Bureau of Justice Statistics, 1997, v). While female and non-White staff historically have had a considerably larger presence in juvenile than in adult corrections, their proportion in juvenile corrections has also increased. For example, in 1968, 31 percent of juvenile correctional staff were female, and 21 percent were non-White (Joint Commission on Correctional Manpower and Training, 1968, 27 - 28); as of 1995, 41 percent of staff were non-White, 41 percent of staff were female (Camp & Camp, 1995, 49). Recent national statistics on the educational level of correctional staff are nonexistent; however, comparisons between reported educational levels of staff prior to 1974 (National Planning Association, 1976; Joint Commission on Correctional Manpower and Training, 1968) and levels of education reported in recent research reports (including the present study; Camp et al., 1996; Rogers, 1991) indicate that the educational level of correctional staff has increased markedly in the past thirty years.

These changes in correctional staff were the culmination of a confluence of efforts by correctional, civil rights, and prisoners' rights reformers. First, in the late 1950s, an increasing need for correctional staff and the civil rights movement forced correctional administrators to hire non-Whites as line staff (Crouch, 1999). Many more minority staff were hired in the 1970s, as prison and prisoners' rights reformers increased the pressure on correctional administrators to hire minorities (Jacobs & Kraft, 1978; National Advisory Commission on Criminal Justice Standards and Goals, 1973). Then, the 1972 amendment to Title VII of the 1964 Civil Rights Act enabled women to acquire employment in men's prisons (Crouch, 1999; Wright & Saylor, 1991). Finally, in the 1970s and 1980s, in an attempt to repair the battered image of correctional staff, correctional reformers began to emphasize the need for professionalization of corrections staff. Most often, as a means to this end, correctional reformers began

recommending new recruits to have higher levels of education (National Planning Association, 1976; Jurik, 1985a; Jurik & Musheno, 1986; Jurik et al., 1987).

Many correctional reformers believed that hiring more female, minority and highly educated staff members would lead to more humane correctional environments (Jacobs & Kraft, 1978; Jurik, 1985a,b; Jurik & Musheno, 1986). As female and highly educated staff members were thought to be more human service oriented, emphasizing counseling and communication over a traditional custody orientation, and these attributes would lead to more efficacious interactions with inmates (Jurik & Musheno, 1986). Furthermore, reformers noted that many of the complaints alleged against correctional staff were racial in nature (Crouch, 1999). These reformers reasoned that staff from racial minorities, many of whom have similar socio-economic and cultural backgrounds as the increasingly non-White inmate population, would be able to identify, empathize, and communicate with inmates more effectively (some researchers have labeled this as the "identification" theory), which would attenuate many of these racial problems.

A considerable body of research has been conducted in adult correctional facilities examining whether staff of differing demographic backgrounds perceive offenders and the correctional work experience differently, and whether minority staff experience racial and/or sexual hostility in the workplace (e.g., Blau et al., 1986; Britton, 1997; Crouch, 1985; Jacobs & Kraft, 1978; Jurik, 1985a,b; Jurik et al., 1987; Owen, 1985; Rogers, 1991; Van Voorhis et al., 1991; Wright & Saylor, 1991, 1992; Zimmer, 1986; Zupan, 1986). In juvenile corrections, however, there is a dearth of research examining staff issues in general, and whether the personal background of correctional staff affects interactions with inmates and other staff in particular. There are several reasons to suspect that juvenile correctional staff's perceptions of offenders and the correctional environment will not be comparable to their counterparts in adult facilities, including the longer history of female and minority staff employment in juvenile corrections, the greater emphasis on rehabilitation in juvenile corrections, the age of juvenile residents, and the generally smaller size of juvenile correctional facilities. All of these differences could potentially cause variations in findings to emerge between the adult and juvenile corrections concerning these issues.

The research in adult correctional facilities

Empirical tests of the "identification" theory have been less than conclusive. Several studies have found that minority staff, in comparison to other staff, perceive themselves to be more efficacious in their interactions with inmates or perceive inmates significantly more favorably (Crouch & Alpert, 1982; Van Voorhis et al., 1991; Whitehead & Lindquist, 1989). By contrast, a sizable number of studies have found no differences in perceptions of inmates by race of correctional staff (Cullen et al., 1989; Jacobs & Kraft, 1978; Toch & Klofas, 1982).

The research evaluating the hypothesis that female and highly educated staff would be more human service oriented, would emphasize communication and counseling, and be more efficacious in their interactions with inmates also has been less than fully supportive. Wright and Saylor (1991) failed to find differences by sex of staff in perceptions of efficacy in dealing with inmates. Britton (1997) found no significant differences by sex once controls were introduced. The hypothesis that more education leads to a greater rehabilitation orientation also has found only mixed support in the literature. Research has shown that staff educational level exhibits no statistically significant relationship to perceptions of inmates (Jurik, 1985a). Rogers (1991, 133) however, did find that educational level was significantly related to an interest in counseling: "College graduates in particular indicated a marked preference for counseling over custody."

The integration of these new correctional staff members was not without considerable turmoil. Correctional reformers and administrators failed to realize that their efforts to change their image, by changing the demographics of correctional staff, would produce an "internal crisis" in corrections (Jurik & Musheno, 1986). Certainly, the atmosphere of these correctional facilities already were filled with racial and sexual hostility both among the overwhelmingly White correctional staff and the heterogeneous population of inmates; however, the introduction of large numbers of these new staff members apparently exacerbated these tensions particularly among staff. Qualitative research (usually using staff interviews) conducted after efforts to

diversify correctional staff were implemented uniformly reported that racial and sexual hostility, and discrimination were common (Crouch, 1985; Jacobs & Gear, 1977; Jurik, 1985b; Owen, 1985; Zimmer, 1986).

Studies examining relationships across race and sex of staff utilizing quantitative methods have typically found few indications of either racial or sexual hostility (Jurik & Halemba, 1984; Wright & Saylor, 1991, 1992). Quantitative researchers have examined staff perceptions of job satisfaction and stress by race and gender to determine if racial or sexual hostilities were pervasive in a correctional environment. These researchers hypothesize that if racial and sexual hostilities do exist, then, these phenomena should manifest themselves through lower job satisfaction and higher levels of stress among minority and female staff. Most research have not revealed a relationship between sex or race of staff and lower job satisfaction (Blau et al., 1986; Cullen et al., 1985; Wright & Saylor, 1991). Several studies, however, found that female correctional staff experienced more stress than male staff (Blau et al., 1986; Cullen et al., 1985). The relationship between race and stress is more ambiguous. Most research have shown that minority staff report less stress than their White counterparts (Blau et al., 1986; Cullen et al., 1985; Wright & Saylor, 1991), while other research has found just the opposite (Van Voorhis et al., 1991).

Thus, on the one hand, qualitative studies have found pervasive racial and sexual hostility; yet, on the other hand, quantitative studies have found few manifestations of such phenomena. How does one coalesce these contradictory findings? Some researchers question if the unidimensional scales used by many researchers to measure job satisfaction or stress are capable of accurately detecting manifestations of racial and sexual hostility (Britton, 1997). Perhaps, the factors that produce job satisfaction and stress vary by race and/or sex, and this variation renders unidimensional scales powerless to identify the racial and sexual hostility staff report qualitatively. This would imply that quantitative studies using multidimensional measures analyzed by race and/or sex should be able to detect these hostilities. This argument is bolstered by the fact that at least one quantitative study employing such methods and measures has produced findings similar to those offered by qualitative studies (Britton, 1997).

Efforts by adult correctional administrators to "professionalize" staff by requiring

new recruits to have higher levels of education appear to have added to the "internal crisis in corrections." Many studies have found that staff with more education have less job satisfaction (Cullen et al., 1985; Jurik & Musheno, 1986; Jurik et al., 1987). Some researchers hypothesize that staff with more education experience alienation from other staff who do not possess a college education, and they perceive staff without college education less favorably; creating tension among staff (Rogers, 1991). Others contend that more educated staff may experience less job satisfaction because of the limited autonomy and promotional opportunities associated with working in paramilitary organizations such as correctional facilities (Jurik et al., 1987).

Researchers operating from a radically different perspective reject the notion that individual characteristics such as race, sex, and educational level are the most salient influences on perceptions of either inmates or work experience. From this perspective, the nature of correctional work over time "homogenizes" staff, regardless of individual differences. This occurs through either socialization or attrition of nonconformists until a correctional subculture with its own values and norms is formed (Jacobs & Gear, 1977; Jacobs & Kraft, 1978; Jurik & Winn, 1987; Van Voorhis et al., 1991). According to this view, individual differences will not exert much, if any, influence on perceptions. Instead, correctional staff, especially those with tenure, will perceive the correctional environment and inmates in a similar fashion, regardless of personal-level factors.

In summary, a growing body of research has accumulated regarding the examination of these issues in adult correctional institutions; yet, a void exists in the literature about whether and how these issues affect interactions in juvenile corrections. The present study is the first attempt to fill this void in the literature.

Research questions and hypotheses

This study addressed four central questions. First, do the individual characteristics of race, sex, and educational level predict juvenile correctional staff's perceptions of the juveniles in their custody? Second, do racial minorities, female correctional staff, and more educated staff members manifest indicators of negative work experiences, such as lower job satisfaction or higher levels of stress, which may

be an indication of discrimination or racial/sexual hostility? Third, are individual characteristics significant predictors of stress? Lastly, are individual-level characteristics significant predictors of perceptions after organizational-level variables and length of employment in the present institution are taken into account?

The dearth of previous research in juvenile facilities addressing these issues, forced the present researchers to formulate hypotheses based upon the research conducted in adult facilities reviewed in the preceding pages and the authors' personal interactions with juvenile correctional staff. The following hypotheses are asserted.

Hypothesis 1: Race is significantly related to perceptions of residents. The bulk of the evidence from adult facilities suggests that African American staff perceive inmates more positively than other staff; conversely, both gender and education are not related to perceptions of offenders.

Hypothesis 2: Race and educational level are associated with lower job satisfaction, while gender is not. In concordance with the research in conducted in adult corrections, it is hypothesized that minority staff and staff with more education will display lower job satisfaction, while female staff will not. In contrast with much of previous research, the present study uses a multidimensional conceptualization of job satisfaction, which the authors believe is capable of detecting manifestations of racial and sexual hostility.

Hypothesis 3: Perceptions of stress will not be associated with any of the demographic characteristics examined. As the authors hypothesize that correctional work is uniformly stressful for all staff, and therefore no differences will exist between staff of different backgrounds.

Hypothesis 4: The individual characteristics of race, sex, and education remain significant predictors of perceptions of juvenile residents and work experiences even after controlling for other relevant factors. The authors believe that an individual's experiences in corrections are in large part mediated by their personal backgrounds, which will produce significant differences in perceptions of both juvenile offenders and the work environment.

Methodology

The data utilized in this article were collected as part of the National Evaluation of Juvenile Correctional Facilities (hereafter referred to as "the National Evaluation"). The National Evaluation was undertaken with the goal of evaluating the quality of correctional confinement in both juvenile boot camps and traditional correctional programs (e.g., detention centers, training schools), in order to identify how well both types of facilities were achieving basic standards of quality juvenile management and programming. The National Evaluation employed four interrelated instruments to examine the quality of confinement of each facility from four different points of view. Two instruments assessed the quality of facility confinement by measuring the perceptions of juvenile residents and facility staff. A third instrument measured the quality of the correctional environment by interviewing facility administrators in order to assess the administrative functioning of each facility. The National Evaluation also included a videotaped inspection of the facilities. The data analyzed in this article came primarily from the staff survey portion of the National Evaluation.

Selection of sites

Forty-nine juvenile correctional facilities from twenty different states were analyzed in the National Evaluation. These facilities were both publicly and privately funded. Twenty-seven of these facilities were boot camps and twenty-two facilities were nonboot camp, traditional facilities. The boot camps were matched to the traditional facilities using the criterion that the traditional facility must be the facility where boot camp residents would have most likely been placed if that particular boot camp were not in operation. There are more boot camps (27) than comparison facilities (22) because several of the traditional facilities were matched to more than one boot camp. In this analysis, however, the facilities were not matched or linked in any manner.

Survey administration

The staff survey was administered by a survey facilitator who worked in each facility, as it was not possible for the investigators to administer the survey to all staff members across all the facilities' varying shifts. The researchers recommended that the survey facilitator distribute the survey packets to all staff members having contact with residents at a staff meeting or role call. All staff having contact with residents were requested to complete a survey, thus, no sampling device was used in this study. The investigators also recommended that staff be given time during their shift to complete the survey. Completed staff surveys were returned to a central location or the survey facilitator. Once all participating staff members had returned their survey packets to the survey facilitator, the surveys were then mailed back to the investigators. The consent form advised staff that participation in the survey was voluntary and all responses would be kept strictly confidential.

The final sample consisted of 1,362 respondents. The overall response rate for all forty-nine correctional facilities was 66 percent. The response rate of boot camps was 72 percent ($N = 775$), while the comparison facilities had a 58 percent response rate ($N = 587$). All of the data were collected between April 1997 and August 1998.

Staff survey

The 216-item staff survey utilized in the National Evaluation captured information on a variety of demographic and occupational characteristics, including age, race, education, prior experience working with juveniles, correctional training, correctional role, length of employment in current facility, and frequency of contact with residents. The survey also contained scales measuring staff perceptions of residents and work experiences. The following is a brief description of those scales that are pertinent to the current analysis:

- The Juvenile Culpability scale consisted of six items measuring staff perceptions of how culpable the residents are for their own misbehavior and how amenable their behavior is to change (a coefficient = 0.61). For example, "Most of these kids are good kids, they have just had a tough life," and "All these kids need is a good home and some love."

- The Job Satisfaction scale used a multidimensional, fifteen-item scale to measure staff's satisfaction with their jobs, coworkers, supervisors, facility administration, and training (a coefficient = 0.89).
- The fourteen-item Stress scale also was a multi-dimensional measure assessing the amount of stress, depression, anxiety, and anger staff members have experienced in the past six months (a coefficient = 0.91).
- The scales utilized in the National Evaluation were not validated measures; therefore, they were factor analyzed and assessed for internal reliability. All of the scales displayed internal reliability scores (Cronbach's α) of at least 0.60, and all the items had a factor score of at least 0.30.¹

Variables and analytic strategy

The Juvenile Culpability, Job Satisfaction, and Stress scales are the dependent variables in this analysis. The independent variables of interest are race, gender, and educational attainment. In this analysis, an interaction term between gender and race was created in order to examine the simultaneous effects of race and gender. The authors chose this conceptualization, due to a belief that employee's experiences are conditioned by both race and gender.

That is, given the same environment the experiences of African American males, for instance, may be quite different than the experiences of either males in general or African American females.²

Staff perceptions of residents (as measured by the Juvenile Culpability scale), job satisfaction, and stress were regressed on educational attainment and the race-gender interactions using ordinary least squares (OLS) regression in order to ascertain whether these independent variables have the hypothesized relationships to staff perceptions and attitudes. Then, the control variables of correctional role, frequency of contact with residents, age, tenure, prior experience working with juveniles, military experience, number of residents in facility, resident to staff ratio, average length of resident stay, population seriousness, type of facility (boot camp or comparison facility), percentage of staff non-White, and percentage of residents non-White were introduced into the

analysis to determine if significant demographic differences persist after other relevant factors are taken into account.

Results

Sample characteristics

Analysis of the demographic data (see Table 1) revealed that 66 percent of the respondent were male (73 percent of line staff were male).³ Sixty-three percent of respondents identified themselves as White, 25 percent identified themselves as African American, 7 percent identified themselves as Hispanic, and 5 percent were classified as belonging to other racial groups (i.e., Asian, Native American, Bi-Racial, and Other). This sample of correctional officers was generally highly educated. The majority of respondents reported having at least a college degree, with 33 percent reporting their highest level of education as a college degree and 23 percent reporting post-graduate studies.

Table 1
Demographic descriptive statistics and coding

Main effects	<i>N</i>	Valid %
Gender by race	1326 ^a	100
African American females	120	9.0
Hispanic females	17	1.3
White females	298	22.5
Other females	22	1.7
Total females	457	34.5
African American males	216	16.3
Hispanic males	73	5.7
White males ^b	535	40.3
Other males	45	3.4
Total males	869	65.7
Total African American	336	25.3
Total Hispanic	90	6.8
Total White	833	62.8
Total Other race	67	5.1
Education	1342	100
High school or technical training ^b	203	15.1
Some college	382	28.5
College degree	447	33.3
Graduate study	310	23.1

^a Race and/or sex data missing for 3% of the sample (*N*=36).

^b Reference category.

As seen in Table 2, majority of the respondents (57.1 percent) were employed as line staff, 10.4 percent indicated having administrative positions, 18.7 percent identified their role as teachers, and 13.7 percent of staff indicated having other correctional roles. This sample of correctional staff reported a considerable amount of experience, with an average of 1.5 years of prior experience working with juveniles (before current position) and an average 4.4 years of experience working in their current facility. Respondents' ages ranged from 20 to 70, with an average age of 37.6 years.

Regression analysis

Hypothesis 1 predicted that race of staff is significantly related to staff perceptions of residents, while gender and education are not. More specifically, it was

hypothesized that African American staff would perceive residents more positively than White male staff.

The results are presented in Table 3 (standardized regression coefficients are displayed). The first column of Table 3 presents the results of the analysis of staff perceptions of residents without controls. Based upon model 1, Hypothesis 1 appears to be supported. African American staff, both male and female, perceived residents as being significantly less culpable in their criminality than White male staff. African American staff were more likely than White male staff to believe that the criminality of juvenile offenders was due to poor parenting or a result of having had a "tough life." Furthermore, Hispanic males and Other race females also perceived residents more positively than White male staff. Neither educational attainment nor sex of staff (generally; i.e., after taking race into account) were significantly related to perceptions of residents.

Even after the control variables were introduced (see model 2), all of the racial differences in perceptions of residents persist. It is interesting to note that several of the control variables were also significantly related to perceptions of residents. Administrative staff (in comparison to line staff), older staff, staff working in facilities with larger resident to staff ratios, and boot camp staff (in comparison to traditional facility staff) all perceived residents as being less culpable in their own criminality. Staff with more previous experience working with juveniles (not in the current facility) and staff working in larger facilities perceived juvenile residents less favorably.

Hypothesis 2 predicted that race and education are significantly related to job satisfaction. The previous research conducted in adult facilities suggests that racial minorities and staff with more education will be significantly less satisfied with working in correctional facilities than White or less-educated staff. This hypothesis is only partially substantiated by the data. Model 3 (Table 3, third column) revealed that education was significantly related to job satisfaction, with increases in educational level decreasing the level of job satisfaction. Race, however, did not bear a consistent relationship to job satisfaction. Hispanic females and males from the Other race group reported significantly higher levels of job satisfaction than White male staff, while neither Hispanic males nor females from the Other race group reported similar perceptions.

Table 2
Control and dependent variables descriptive statistics and coding

Control variables	<i>N</i>	Valid %
Job title	1304	100
Line staff ^a	745	57.1
Administrative staff	136	10.4
Teacher	244	18.7
Other	179	13.7
Frequency of contact	1351	100
Less than daily	77	5.7
Daily ^a	1274	94.3
Type of facility	1362	100
Boot camp	775	56.9
Comparison facility ^a	587	43.1
	<i>N</i>	Mean (S.D.)
<i>Personal factors</i>		
Age	1283	37.6 (10.3)
Tenure	1309	4.4 (5.9)
Length of prior experience with juveniles	1280	1.5 (3.7)
<i>Facility-level factors</i>		
Number of residents in facility (size) ^b	1151	109.1 (109.2)
Resident to staff ratio	1151	3.4 (6.2)
Average length of inmate sentence (in months, AVGLoS)	1331	6.9 (2.1)
Population Seriousness Index ^c	1362	1.2 (0.5)
Percentage of non-White staff working in facility	1362	37 (2)
Percentage of residents non-White	1362	67 (2)
<i>Dependent variables</i>		
Juvenile culpability	1273	2.7 (0.6)
Job satisfaction	1276	3.7 (0.6)
Stress	1276	2.0 (0.7)

^a Reference category.

^b Missing data for both inmate to staff ratio and number of staff in facility were replaced with the mean for that type of facility, in order to prevent staff working in certain facilities from being excluded. Imputing this data did not change any of the substantive results.

^c The Population Seriousness Index consists of a series of questions regarding whether the facility accepts certain types of offenders (e.g., violent offenders, sex offenders, arsonists, etc.) values are 0 (does not accept), 1 (accepts, a limited number), and 2 (accepts); higher values represent a more serious population.

Table 3
Results of OLS regression analysis standardized regression coefficients

Independent variables	Juvenile culpability		Job satisfaction		Stress	
<i>Race by gender</i>						
African American females	-0.12**	-0.11**	0.01	0.05	0.04	0.04
Hispanic females	0.02	0.03	0.06**	0.06*	-0.03	-0.03
White females	-0.04	-0.03	-0.01	-0.02	0.11**	0.12**
Other females	-0.07**	-0.11**	-0.02	-0.01	0.04	0.03
African American males	-0.12**	-0.11**	0.01	0.08**	-0.10**	-0.09**
Hispanic males	-0.06**	-0.07**	0.02	0.07**	-0.03	-0.04
Other males	0.01	0.02	0.09**	0.09**	-0.05*	-0.05
<i>Education</i>						
Some college	0.04	0.05	0.01	0.01	-0.01	-0.02
College graduates	0.03	-0.01	-0.11**	-0.09**	0.03	-0.04
Graduate study	0.03	0.06	-0.14**	-0.12**	0.01	-0.02
<i>Correctional role</i>						
Administrative staff		-0.10**		0.10**		-0.01
Teacher		-0.04		0.01		-0.01
Other staff		-0.04		0.01		-0.01
<i>Personal-level factors</i>						
Tenure		-0.01		-0.12**		0.12**
Prior experience working with juveniles (in years)		0.10**		-0.04		0.02
Age		-0.10**		0.08**		-0.11**
Military experience		-0.03		-0.04		-0.01
<i>Frequency of contact</i>						
Less than daily contact		-0.01		0.03		-0.04
<i>Facility-level factors</i>						
Inmate to staff ratio		-0.09**		-0.03		0.13**
Population seriousness		0.03		-0.01		-0.06
AVGLOS		0.04		-0.13**		0.09**
Size		0.08**		-0.06*		0.03
Type of facility		-0.12**		0.12**		-0.19**
Percentage of non-White staff		-0.07		-0.14**		0.05
Percentage of non-White residents		0.03		0.02		-0.04
<i>Model statistics</i>						
N	1236	1065	1239	1067	1241	1069
R ²	.03	.12	.04	.12	.04	.10

* $P < .10$.

** $P < .05$.

The control variables did not mediate or intervene in any of these relationships; instead, the control variables exacerbated differences among staff (see model 4). Whereas the affects of educational level on job satisfaction remained substantively unchanged in model 4, the affects of race changed substantially, but not in the manner

predicted. After adjusting for the controls, in comparison to White male staff, all non-White male staff and Hispanic female staff were significantly more satisfied with their positions. Additionally, model 4 shows that several of the control variables were significantly related to job satisfaction. Specifically, administrative, older, and boot camp staff all reported higher job satisfaction. On the other hand, staff with more tenure, staff working in facilities with longer average length of stay, staff working in larger facilities, and staff working in facilities with higher percentages of non-White staff all reported lower job satisfaction. Thus, the researchers concluded that education did bear the hypothesized relationship to job satisfaction, however, race did not.

According to Hypothesis 3, it was expected that levels of stress would not vary by demographic background of staff. Model 5 indicates that White female staff were significantly more stressed than White male staff; however, African American females and females from the Other race group reported levels of stress which were nonsignificantly higher than White male staff. Yet, African American and males from the Other race category (at the .10 level) both indicated significantly lower levels of stress than White male staff. Furthermore, model 6 shows that staff with more tenure, staff working in facilities with larger resident to staff ratios, and staff working in larger facilities perceived more stress, while younger staff and boot camp staff both reported less stress.⁴ Thus, the hypothesis that staff experience stress uniformly is not supported, certain groups of staff clearly do perceive the correctional environment as more or less stressful than White male staff.

Hypothesis 4 predicted that significant differences in staff perceptions would remain even after controlling for other relevant factors. Models 2, 4, and 6 indicated that, while several of the control variables were predictors of the dependent variables, these controls generally did not mediate or intervene in the relationships between staff perceptions and various personal characteristics. Therefore, Hypothesis 4 was fully substantiated by the data.

Discussion and conclusions

The current study's findings bear similarities and dissimilarities to research

conducted in adult facilities. In concordance with the adult correctional literature, the present findings provide no support for the expectations that female staff (in general) and highly educated staff are more rehabilitation-oriented. The findings presented here do support the expectation that minority staff, especially African American staff, perceive residents more favorably than White staff. While many studies conducted in adult facilities have not revealed a similar relationship when controlling for competing factors (Britton, 1997; Cullen et al., 1989; Toch & Klofas, 1982), this study joins a growing body of literature, which does support the identification hypothesis (Crouch & Alpert, 1982; Van Voorhis et al., 1991; Whitehead & Lindquist, 1989).

The finding that perceptions of residents are affected by the demographic background of staff are of utmost importance for juvenile correctional administrators, as, unlike adult corrections, rehabilitation is still the underlying philosophy for most juvenile justice agencies in America. Undoubtedly, how staff perceive the juvenile residents affects their interactions with these young people. If staff believe that the behavior of the juvenile residents in their custody is not open to change and rehabilitation, then, these staff are less likely to fully implement and adhere to the rehabilitative philosophy of juvenile corrections. The findings presented here suggest that perhaps correctional staff are in need of training aimed at bridging the cultural gap between offenders, increasing staff empathy and staff confidence in correctional rehabilitation.

The finding that highly educated staff reported significantly more dissatisfaction with correctional work than staff with less education also agrees with the adult correctional literature. Some researchers have suggested that this relationship is a result of the limited autonomy associated with working in a paramilitary organizations such as correctional institutions (Jurik et al., 1987). From this perspective, these exceedingly able correctional staff are not being asked to perform up to their level of ability, which leads to frustration, alienation, and then attrition. Other researchers believe that the lack of promotional opportunities among staff leads to dissatisfaction especially among highly educated staff (Rogers, 1991). Future research needs to focus on ascertaining why educated staff are so often dissatisfied with correctional work and develop methods to alleviate this dissatisfaction.

The current study revealed few, if any, indications that minority or female staff reported negative work relations, as many adult researchers have found (Britton, 1997; Jacobs & Kraft, 1978; Owens, 1988; Zimmer, 1986). In fact, once the control variables were taken into account, racial minorities in general reported levels of job satisfaction and stress equal to or more favorable than White male staff. Furthermore, female correctional staff reported levels of job satisfaction and stress roughly the same as male staff. Only one significant difference was found between females and White males. Specifically, Hispanic female staff reported significantly more job satisfaction than White male staff. In regards to stress, the researchers found only one sex difference: White females reported significantly more stress than White males.

While the current analysis did not reveal that minority or female staff report negative work experiences any more often than White male staff, other research examining voluntary turnover in juvenile corrections has found that minority, female, and highly educated staff all exhibited significantly higher rates of voluntary turnover, which is another manifestation of negative work experiences (see Mitchell et al., in press). Hence, the present study's findings are far from a definitive answer to the research questions posed.

Lastly, the dissimilarities in findings between adult and juvenile corrections described in the above could be due to the longer history of minority and female staff working within juvenile corrections, or the philosophical orientation of juvenile corrections. It is also possible that juvenile correctional staff issues simply are not comparable to those in adult corrections. If this last conclusion is correct, then, clearly, more research needs to be conducted with juvenile correctional staff.

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Notes

1. The results of the scale analyses and the scale items are available from the authors.
2. White males were used as the reference category as they comprise the largest demographic group of staff and are the staff "traditionally" employed in corrections.
3. It should be noted that the bivariate associations between the race- sex interaction terms, education, and the organizational-level variables were all weak (contingency coefficients ranged from 0.02 to 0.27); with the exception of the relationship between education and correctional role where the bivariate association was stronger (contingency coefficient = 0.39).
4. Parenthetically, the results consistently revealed significant differences between boot camp and traditional facility staff on all three outcome measures. That is, boot camp staff report more job satisfaction, less stress, and perceive the residents in their custody as less culpable in their behavior than traditional staff. These findings are not central to the focus of this article; however, these findings and their implications are fully discussed in other research (see Mitchell et al., 1999).

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