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*I N V O K E*

V O L . 8

*WOMEN AND THE LAW: MULTIPLE SIDES OF JUSTICE*

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JEWEL CHIDIEBERE

JOURNAL MANAGER

VP MENTORSHIP AND ACADEMIC JOURNAL

# EDITOR’S NOTE

The first people I would like to thank are the multiple undergraduates who handed in their manuscripts to be published, and especially the three that are featured in this issue. With such insightful submissions you have provided incredible in-depth analyses to aid present and future students throughout the department. Thank you to INVOKE’s incredible volunteer group of peer reviewers. Taking time out of your tumultuous student schedules to sift through manuscripts and cope with a frazzled journal manager was no easy feat. Lastly, thank you for the Sociology Undergraduates Student Association (SUSA) and Department of Sociology for their prevailing support.

After the success of Volume 7, my first volume with INVOKE, I am proud to announce the effect it has had on the SUSA academic journal. Just this summer of 2023 we received over double the submissions received all through Winter and Summer 2022. Our reviewer team has ballooned, and more people have been made aware of INVOKE as a project and resource, for which I am forever grateful. Thank you, readers, thank you students, thank you authors. You have truly made what seemed a post-COVID long shot an up and running operation. Dare I say, at risk of sounding cheesy, you have made my dreams for this journal come true.

As always, INVOKE is the student resource it needs to be, here for students, new and old, to use for their academic advantage. It’s an easily accessible journal filled with past students’ work, many subjects present students may need aid in can be found within the pages of INVOKE. I encourage students, sociology or not, to take full advantage of INVOKE, and submit their own manuscripts for future volumes.

Best, and happy reading,

Jewel Chidiebere

# A Universal Issue Analyzing Gender Inequality Through a Sociological Lens

## Laura Box

While its relevance is widely disputed, gender inequality has plagued society for centuries. Though some might argue that women are more inclined to less prestigious jobs and limit themselves to domestic work because of natural feminine instinct, a more accurate explanation is that they choose these occupations as a result of socialization (Holmes, Mooney, Knox, and Schacht 2016, 235). Gender is defined as the social expectations and definitions we ascribe to femininity and masculinity and is separate from sex which is the biological classification of female and male (Holmes et al. 2016, 217).

A song, poem, and two news stories will serve as individual experiences that exemplify the larger issue of gender inequality from both a sociocultural and structural viewpoint as it relates to the female and male experience. For example, “The Man'' explores the sexist double standards between men and women with respect to what is deemed appropriate (Little & Swift 2019). “I Can Testify” considers a woman of colour’s experience of gender oppression and violence, ending with a call to action to reach gender equality (Zawadi 2007). “Workin’ moms: Juggling kids, jobs, and household duties, women fear COVID-19 will ‘deepen’ gender inequality in the workplace” details how the COVID-19 pandemic was problematic for many mothers, as they had to balance work and their households (Saba 2020). Finally, “Toxic masculinity may be quadrupling the suicide rate for Canadian men” articulates the detrimental effect on men when they are socialized to suppress their emotions (Beaulieu 2017).

In this paper, I explore the social problem of gender inequality as it relates to both men and women through a feminist perspective, a symbolic interactionist perspective, and a conflict perspective. I will first outline each perspective’s causes, impacts, and possible solutions. Then, I will conclude by explaining how a conflict and feminist lens are the most appropriate for examining this social problem.

A symbolic interactionist perspective is a micro-perspective that focuses on the interactions of individuals in small groups. At its core, symbolic interactionism highlights the significance of definitions and meanings created and maintained through symbolic interaction with others and heavily influences human behaviour (Holmes et al. 2016, 13). Throughout our lives, we acquire society’s definitions of what is appropriate behaviour based on our gender. As a result, society considers us deviant when we stray from these norms (Holmes et al. 2016, 224). Thus, research shows that men are more likely to experience poor mental health and are less likely to seek out help. This is because it is discouraged to deviate from the stoic archetype prescribed to men, and emotions that aren't linked to aggression are seen as less than favourable (Beaulieu 2017, para 2). For example, men are labelled as “cry-babies” or “feminine” if they do show emotion, which discourages them from doing so in the future.

Consequently, over time men begin to lose touch with their actual feelings, which harms themselves and others (Beaulieu 2017, para 6). For example, Prince Harry spoke out about his inability to properly mourn his mother’s death, which ultimately led to “unmanageable destructive behaviours” (Beaulieu 2017, para 8). The harm caused by repressed emotion may manifest physically, verbally, or turned inward causing depression and suicidal ideation. Hence, men are four times more likely to die by suicide, with eight men committing suicide every day in Canada (Beaulieu 2017, para 6).

To solve this issue through a symbolic interactionist lens, it is essential to challenge the harmful associations we place on aspects of gender. For example, high-profile celebrities being more vocal about mental illness normalizes vulnerability for men and gets rid of stigmas that surround men and certain emotions (Beaulieu 2017, para 8). Furthermore, changing how we socialize young girls and boys into their genders concerning the sort of symbols and expectations exposed to them is necessary to solve this issue through a symbolic interactionist perspective.

At a more institutional level, a conflict theory views society in terms of the struggle between groups in competition for resources and power. Under a conflict lens, the Marxist theory supposes that social problems stem from the inequality inherent to capitalism, creating exploitation, alienation, and corporate violence. Alternatively, the non-Marxist theory looks beyond economic and social class, putting emphasis on the conflict that arises when groups have opposing values and interests, and how the group with the most power has the ability to influence outcomes (Holmes et al. 2016, 12). As a conflict perspective relates to gender inequality, it focuses on male domination and female subordination at an institutional level (Holmes et al. 2016, 220).

Inherently, women’s work isn’t socially valued as much as men’s, which is a driving force of gender inequity. The devaluation hypothesis characterizes this phenomenon (Holmes et al. 2016, 231). Zawadi draws attention to this through her poem, stating “I am so tired of doing so much work and your unfair pay” (2007, ln 1), suggesting that no matter how much work a woman puts in, it will never amount to the work of a man in the eyes of society. Furthermore, “I am so tired of doing so much work” has a double meaning. Though it has become increasingly common for women to get an education and work outside of the home, they are still expected to do the domestic work in the framework of a heterosexual relationship (Holmes et al. 2016, 238). Saba makes a similar point in her article, detailing that “women who statistically already earn less than their male counterparts, are doing the larger share of household duties” (2020, para 4). Additionally, she illustrates that women were disproportionately affected by the COVID-19 pandemic, as they had to sacrifice their careers to take care of their children and run a household (Saba 2020, para 5). These points exemplify the continued belief that women are more valuable in the home, which conflict theorists would argue perpetuates gender inequality.

To solve this issue through a conflict perspective, a change of public policy is necessary. For example, implementing policies like employment equity would lessen the barriers in place that are the way of women’s employment (Holmes et al. 2016, 246). This implementation would even out the current disparity in numbers between women and men in the workforce, which is important to a conflict theorist as it would give women more power and opportunity. Furthermore, paying women for the work they do in the home would weaken the ideology that their contributions aren’t valuable, and would perhaps encourage men to assist.

A feminist perspective examines how women’s lives and experiences are excluded from traditional sociology. Though there are multiple feminist theories, they all seek to understand how gender is related to social inequality, aim to change the status quo that disadvantages and devalues women (Holmes et al. 2016, 14), and argue that women’s subordination is of benefit only to men (Holmes et al. 2016, 226). Feminism also acknowledges that the roles we play as men or women are the result of learning the societal expectations of the worlds into which we are born (Holmes et al. 2016, 221). Little and Swift touches on this through their lyrics “I would be complex/I would be cool” (2019, ln 1-2), suggesting that because of Swift’s gender she is expected to present herself a certain way. Yet, if she were a man who had the same traits that she possesses, society would celebrate her. The lines “they’d say I played the field before I found someone to commit to/And that would be ok/For me to do” (2019, ln 3-5) elaborate on this, as they demonstrate how men are granted more sexual freedom than women simply as a result of their gender. Another cause from a feminist perspective is the hierarchal division of the genders (Holmes et al. 2016, 17). Zawadi exemplifies this through the line “as if our lives didn’t matter at all,” (2007, ln 31) contending that her place as a woman in society is a contributing factor to her marginalized experience.

The impacts of gender inequality under a feminist lens are expansive. Women are disproportionately affected by gender-based violence, raped, physically abused, and even murdered, as described by Zawadi (2007, ln 1-10). She also articulates how at an institutional level, men are protected by the law, with the consequences for their transgressions being “un-deterrent” (Zawadi, 2007 ln 2). Equally, Swift and Little point out that rape culture further victimizes women. The line “When everyone believes ya/What’s that like?” conveys this, communicating that when women get assaulted, they aren’t taken seriously (2019, ln 9-10). These examples are central to a feminist perspective because they illustrate how women are continuously put in helpless situations as a result of their gender.

A feminist would solve this social issue by challenging institutions, ideas, and policies that centralize and solely benefit male-centred ideologies and interests (Holmes et al. 2016, 17). This may resemble organizations such as the Woman’s movement or the MeToo movement, which protested sexual assault aggressed upon women, granted women the right to vote, and gave women a more active role in society.

Though the three sociological perspectives detailed above provide a valuable understanding of the causes, impacts, and prospective solutions concerning gender inequality, I believe a combination of a conflict and a feminist perspective best represents the complexities of the social issue at hand. Combining these two perspectives offers a comprehensive view of gender inequality, as together they create a viewpoint that considers both the micro and macro levels of analysis. This is essential because while it is important to consider individual beliefs and interactions, it is imperative that we not forget that gender-based discrimination is built into the systems we take part in. Thus, to effectuate productive social change, challenging both this personal ideology and structural prejudice is crucial.

Furthermore, conflict theory offers an explanation for the root cause of sexism, which contributes to a more exhaustive understanding. It suggests that men are more powerful because they gained control of the modes of production, while women adopted the role of homemaker. Thus, women remained uneducated and unemployed, which inevitably resulted in laws that enforced female subordination and reduced them to property, ensuring that they stay at home (Holmes et al. 2016, 220). This historical knowledge conceptualizes the previously explored feminist theory of learning social expectations, as it provides the background from which these expectations originated.

Lastly, considering intersectionality within the framework of gender inequality is integral to having a true understanding of all people’s experiences who are affected by this issue, and in turn, effectively attempting to solve it. Though feminism has received criticism for its failure to recognize these intersectional ties, the third wave takes into consideration how race/ethnicity, sexuality, and physical and mental ability complicate the issue of gender inequality and decentralizes the sole experience of white women. This idea could also be applied to a conflict perspective, as those who are part of supplementary marginalized communities on top of being a woman hold even less power. Without taking these things into consideration, perpetual harm is done to women of colour, women in the LGBTQ+ community, disabled women, and other marginalized women, as their experiences are pushed aside.

In this paper, I examined the causes, impacts, and possible solutions of gender inequality through three sociological perspectives, being: symbolic interactionist perspective, conflict perspective, and feminist perspective. A symbolic interactionist perspective argues that gender inequality is a product of interactions on a micro level between individuals and each other, as well as individuals, symbols, and definitions (Holmes et al. 2016, 224). Conversely, as previously stated, a conflict perspective theorizes gender inequality as a more institutional issue. It takes into account the power dynamic between men and women, and how this creates inequality between genders (Holmes et al. 2016, 220. I then explained how a feminist perspective explores how female subordination is only of benefit to men, and how gender plays a contributing factor to inequality (Holmes et al. 2016, 226). In my analysis of gender inequality, I used “The Man” by Joe Little and Taylor Swift (2019), a poem by Annie Kashamura Zawadi called “I Can Testify”, and two news articles by Rosa Saba (2020) and Marc Beaulieu (2017). Finally, I contended that a conflict perspective and feminist perspective are most useful, because together they attack the problem from both an individual and institutional level and allow for the most nuanced view of gender inequality. In the end, though I do believe that as a society we have made significant strides in becoming more equitable in terms of gender, we still have a long way to go.

# Female Offenders in Canada: A Review of Needs and Current Programs and Supports

## Elpida Papathanasoglou

**Abstract**

**Background:** Women’s pathways to crime commonly involve socioeconomic deprivation, physical and sexual abuse or domestic violence. In Canada, the correctional approach and practice has been developed predominantly for male offenders, who have different pathways and outcomes of crime.

**Purpose**: To summarize available evidence on the needs and outcomes of female offenders in Canada, including statistical evidence on the types of offenses, offenders’ unique circumstances and needs, including their physical and mental health, reproductive, sexual health and maternal needs, as well as reintegration requirements.

**Methods**: A narrative review based on academic literature and federal and provincial data on the criminal justice system and correctional services in Canada. My analysis is informed by the Strain Theory, Critical Criminology and Intersectionality.

**Results**: The most prevalent offenses of female offenders are property crimes, while violent and sexual crimes demonstrate very low rates. Age is an important factor in female property crime. Failure to attend to the specific needs of female offenders may severely impact female offenders’ human rights and chances of reintegration. Despite recent bills and efforts to improve the conditions of female inmates, a number of systemic flaws persist, and critical needs of women remain unmet.

**Conclusion**: There is a critical lack of programs addressing the needs of criminalized women, especially for Indigenous and BIPOC women**.** A radical reconceptualization and reconfiguration of the criminal justice system is needed in order to prevent infringements of female offenders’ rights.

**Introduction**

Trauma and victimization are common in women offenders. Their pathway to crime may commonly involve socioeconomic deprivation, physical and sexual abuse or domestic violence (Tyagi, 2006). However, in Canada, the correctional approach and practice has been developed predominantly for male offenders, who experience different pathways and outcomes of crime (Auditor General Canada, 2017). Even after the reform of correctional legislation in 1992, which mandated that corrections consider the needs of special groups, such as women and Indigenous groups, the progress has been slow (Canadian Human Rights Commission, 2003). The contrast between the limited resources and supports available for women offenders compared to the considerable government funds allocated to the prison system has been criticized for perpetuating the inequity and the vicious circle of poverty- victimization- criminalization and incarceration (Gavigan & Chunn, 2004; Shantz, 2009). These result in very high costs of incarceration, especially in relation to the relatively low risk that women offenders pause to society (Tyagi, 2006).

My main thesis is that although there have been various attempts to provide supports for female offenders and incarcerated women, basic human needs and rights of female offenders remain unmet. This may result in perpetuating an endless loop of marginalization, violence and crime, with profound short- and long-term effects not only on women themselves, but also on families, children, youth and communities, while also increasing the cost and societal burden of the Canadian Criminal Justice system.

In this paper, I will first summarize statistical evidence on the types of offenses most prevalent among females in Canada. I will then review female offenders’ unique circumstances, including their physical and mental health, reproductive, sexual health and maternal needs, security, spiritual and social needs, as well as reintegration requirements. I will then provide a brief overview of current programs and supports and will identify gaps of these programs. Lastly, I will derive recommendations for future programming. My analysis is informed by the Strain Theory, Critical Criminology and intersectionality. Strain theory views crime as a symptom of the discrepancy between culturally prescribed aspirations and the means to achieve them; while Critical Criminology engages in transformative critique of the criminal justice system (Linden, 2016, p. 282, 327). Moreover, I pay special attention to the intersectional effects of age, race and socioeconomic factors on female offenders’ experiences with the criminal justice system and their outcomes.

**Statistics of offences perpetrated by women.**

Current statistical data on female offenders are scarce, which speaks to the little attention and priority given to criminalized women. Laura Savage provides a comprehensive statistical overview of female criminality in Canada for the years 2016/2017 (Savage, 2019), revealing differences in offending rates between female youth and female adults. In Canada, women, both youth and adults, accounted for 25% of all people accused of offenses of the Criminal Code in 2017. Female offenders do not exceed, rate-wise, male offenders in any type of offense (Savage, 2019). Despite the implementation of the Youth Criminal Justice Act in 2003 and the Prostitution Criminal Law Reform: Bill C-36 (2014), contemporary offense rates share core similarities with data from 1974-1987, especially with regard to property and violent crimes (Hatch and Faith, 1989).

**Property Crimes**

For female offenders, the most prevalent offenses are property crimes, which account for 35% of offenses. Age is an important factor in female property crime, as the younger the individual the higher the likelihood of perpetrating a property crime. Property crimes are most common between the ages of 12 and 17. The most common crime is shoplifting of value $5,000 and under. Additionally, female youth are more prone to committing car theft and acts of pyromania/arson (Savage, 2019).

**Violent Crimes**

Among female offenders, both youth and adults, 28% were accused of violent crimes, with the most common crime being assault. The majority of females are accused of low-level assault, while male offenders are known to commit higher-level assault. There is an inverse relationship between the age of the female offender and the likelihood to perpetrate a violent crime. Moreover, the individuals that end up been victimized by female offenders are people that are intimate or casual acquaintances (Savage, 2019).

**Bail and Pre-Court Detention**

There are few Canadian studies on the experiences of women and the granting of judicial interim release, most commonly known as granting of bail. The sparse data that do exist reveal a damning reality for adult women. There are three conditions where a judge may deny bail to a defendant. First, the judge may believe that with the granting of bail, the accused may not appear in court. Thus, by denying bail and sending the accused to pre-court detention, the judge is guaranteeing appearance. Second, bail is denied when the judge deems that the individual will threaten the safety of the public or refuse to comply with the administration of justice (Schumann, 2013). Third, the judge may anticipate that without detention of the accused there may be a loss of confidence in justice administration (Schumann, 2013, p. 3).

The *Charter of Rights and Freedoms*, section 11(d), controls the overuse of detention on remand, and unjustified judicial interim release. According to the *Charter,* the granted bail must be within reasonable parameters, and the least onerous to the individual (Schumann, 2013). Individuals have the right “not to be denied reasonable bail with just cause” (Schumann, 2013, p. 4), and must be used as means of last resort” (Schumann, 2013, p. 4), taking into account that the individual is presumed innocent until proven guilty.

**Failure to Comply**

Women experienced an exponential increase of charges of failure to comply, more so than men, between the years 1886 and 2005. The number of such charges has almost tripled over that time period. This interferes with women’s *Charter* right to receive an equitable judicial interim release, as these charges increase their chances of bail being denied. This is because, having a history of failure practically leaves women in a position of needing to prove that there are worthy of bail (Schumann, 2013). Therefore, charges of failure to comply are problematic for women.

**Remand of Female Defendants**

For both men and women, the rates of being placed in remand are increasing. It has been argued that the current practice of bail granting is problematic (Rogin, 2014). For example, in Ontario, in 2008/2009, the remand population comprised 67% of all incarcerated female and male individuals. For the majority of those awaiting trial, their alleged crimes were non-violent. Especially for women, remand admission has increased exponentially since the 80s. Between 1996 and 2005 in Ontario, remand for women was rising, while sentencing of women to prison was decreasing, implying that violent or serious crimes perpetrated by women were decreasing. The above are inconsistent with the types of criminality women display, which is less violent and less serious than in men (Schumann, 2013).

**Sentencing**

Of the total number of completed court cases for both men and women, around 21% of cases are of female offenders. The official statistic for female-perpetrated crime is around 25%, which may imply that around 4% of cases do not complete court. Similar results can be found in Youth Court for female youth offenders. Statistical data reveal that regarding guilty verdicts for violent crimes, men tend to be found guilty more often that women (Savage, 2019). The cases of violent crimes perpetrated by women were more likely to be “stayed or withdrawn” (Savage, 2019, p.10).

**Incarceration**

*Incarceration Statistics and Women Offenders:* With the turn of the millennium the number of women in incarceration, both federal and provincial/territorial, increased dramatically. With a 60% increase overall, women constitute 11% of the population in provincial/territorial prisons, and 6% in federal prisons. Lastly, Indigenous women have experienced a more exponential increase of imprisonment of around 84%, in the federal level (Parkes, 2016).

*Assignment of security level:* Women that are incarcerated either federally or provincially/territorially face a security assignment process/algorithm, which was not developed for female offenders. The Custody Rating Scale (CRS) is used to assign the security level for each woman. Due to the implementation of the CRS, many female inmates are placed in higher security levels than they should. The reason behind this is that the CRS was developed for male offenders who are prone to commit more violent and serious crimes. Even for those women assigned to lower security institutions by the CRS, there is a chance for their classification to be overwritten by the Correctional Service staff, resulting in their placement in maximum security institutions. The above shortcoming of the security level assignment practice disproportionately affects Indigenous women. This results in challenges in gaining parole, which consequently negatively influences their reintegration to society, and raises their chances to reoffend (Auditor General Canada, 2017).

**Needs and outcomes of female offenders.**

The circumstances, needs and rights of female offenders need to be considered, in order to evaluate the appropriateness and efficacy of existing programs. These fall under the broad categories of a) health needs, b) maternal and family needs, c) security, d) spiritual needs, and e) reintegration. Failure to attend to those may severely impact female offenders’ human rights and chances of reintegration (Reyes, 2002).

**Health needs**

***Physical and reproductive health***

Overall, there is a dearth of evidence regarding the health needs of women in the criminal justice system in Canada. Besney et al. (2018) undertook a mixed methods study toexplore incarcerated women’s health issues in a remand center in Alberta. They noted low levels of access to health care prior to incarceration, due to poor socioeconomic determinants coupled with competing social and family priorities. Additionally, during incarceration, a lack of women’s-health services, lack of trust to providers, and fragmentation and discontinuity of services acted as major barriers to having healthcare needs met. High rates of mental illness, victimization from their partners, substance abuse, sexually transmitted infections (STI), and lack of access to screening were common. These results are in line with previous reports from the USA showing higher rates of mental health and substance abuse disorders, as well as chronic diseases in incarcerated women compared to men (Binswanger et al., 2010). A World Health Organization (WHO) report (Van den Bergh et al., 2009) acknowledges the socioeconomic deprivation of female offenders as a major factor in both their incarceration, as well as in their high rates of health disorders. Many of these women have experienced sexual and physical violence, substance abuse, poverty, homelessness and exploitation before their contact with the criminal justice system. Those disparities are even more pronounced among Indigenous women who represent 42% of female inmates (Statistics Canada, 2020). Incarcerated Indigenous women lose up to 9 times more years of life to incarceration compared to non-Indigenous incarcerated women (Owusu-Bempah, 2014). These data in conjunction with statistics showing that their life expectancy is 9.5-12 years lower than the national non-Indigenous average (Statistics Canada, 2019; King, 2010)paint a grim picture of an ongoing failure of the criminal justice system to protect the rights and wellbeing of Indigenous women.

Moreover, increased rates of HIV infection and cervical cancer are noted, probably associated with incarcerated women’s deprived backgrounds. A recent study reported that women with HIV are over-represented in corrections in Canada (Gromley et al., 2019). HIV positivity was strongly associated with Indigenous ancestry, poverty, unstable housing and sex work. Reproductive health is another need of incarcerated women, as 58% of female inmates are under the age of 35 (Statistics Canada, 2020).

In Canada, 4-10% of incarcerated women are pregnant (Dowling & Fulton, 2017), while access to contraception both prior and during incarceration is limited. In a study in Ontario, 77% of incarcerated women had experienced unintended pregnancies (Liauw et al., 2016).Additionally, perimenopausal problems and access to sanitary products is another unmet need identified by female inmates (John Howard Society of Canada, 2021).A recent study reveals that federal incarceration accounts for reproductive injustice by restricting access to health services, including cancer screening, and restricting women’s reproductive potential and health by barriers to access to sanitary products, and increased rates of peripartum depression, especially in Indigenous women (Paynter, 2021).

Finally, even when available, healthcare services in the criminal justice system are plagued by several shortcomings including very long wait times, shortages of personnel, equipment and expertise, difficulty accessing medications, nonempathetic staff, lack of continuity of care, and poor transitional planning (Besney et al., 2018).

***Mental health & Self-harming Behaviour***

Overall, women in custody exhibit higher rates of mental health problems than the general population, a finding possibly linked to socioeconomic determinants and past trauma (Matheson et al., 2015). Many women enter the carceral system with extensive histories of victimization. Although Canadian statistics could not be identified, in the USA up to 90% of women in prison have been victims of childhood abuse with high rates of re-victimization in adult life (Cook et al., 2005). However, trauma screening and treatment for women in custody is scarce (Matheson et al., 2015). A study by Correctional Service Canada (2017) reported that 80% of women had a current mental disorder, including alcoholism and antisocial personality disorder. Anxiety disorders and Post Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD) are the most prevalent, inflicting 33% of women in custody, whereas mental health co-morbidities were very common. Additionally, the incidence of self-harm is substantially higher among female compared to male offenders, including suicidal and non-suicidal self-injury behaviours (Corabian et al., 2013). Although exact data are lacking, one Canadian study reported that more than half of female offenders have a history of a suicide attempt (Daigle et al., 2019). Furthermore, correctional practice often resorts to punitive methods, such as isolation and segregation, rather than mental health care, to manage high-risk offenders with mental health disorders. This exacerbates the impacts on their wellbeing, chances of parole, other inmates, as well as costs (Leschied et al., 2011, p.3).

**Maternal and Family needs**

Of incarcerated women in Canada, approximately two thirds have young children, and the majority are their children’s primary caregiver (Dowling & Fulton, 2017; Stack, 2020). Up to 10% of female offenders are pregnant and are separated from their infants right after birth(Dowling & Fulton, 2017), as prison nurseries are scarce. The importance of mother-child relationship is not taken into account in incarceration policy, and the effects of incarceration on children are not recognized. Children of women in custody deal with grief, loss, mental health problems and they are at-risk for aggressiveness and delinquency and imprisonment themselves (Mallicoat, 2019). Moreover, due to various barriers to access, less than 10% of incarcerated women are visited by their children (Mallicoat, 2019). Stack (2020) identified a number of incarcerated women’s needs with regard to their children through a qualitative methodology. These included alleviating barriers to mother-child relationships, such as addressing the lack and cost of transportation, appropriate visiting environment, maintaining contact to foster child-parent bonds, removing barriers to phone and video contact, for example by reducing the cost of calls, and reunification with children. Although in Canada the law permits young children to stay with their mothers in provincial prisons, this program is rarely used (Stack, 2020).

**Security**

In a recent qualitative study with remanded women in Western Canada, women related long histories of frequent and systematic victimization and sexual abuse from a young age, continuing after their release and re-integration to the community (Jones et al., 2019). For some, this pattern of sexual abuse continues in custody, with women being unable to escape their abusers, especially in view of absent or ineffectual report procedures, especially as the majority of guards are men, and Correctional Service of Canada (CSC) does not record and follow up accusations of sexual assault by inmates (Kooner, 2021). Data from Canada are limited, but an earlier Human Rights Watch (1996) report on US women’s prisons raised the issue of blatant and systematic sexual abuses. Additionally, although violent female offenders are less common, disciplinary action against women in custody is far more common than in male prisons (Prisons, n.d.). Therefore, women’s prisons appear to be fundamentally violent establishments pausing several and severe risks to inmates’ security.

**Spiritual needs**

Religious and spiritual freedom is a basic human right. Moreover, spirituality is important in coping with loss and grief. Spirituality is acknowledged as a need in programming for women in custody, however, with some notable limitations. For example, Indigenous women and specific ethnic groups may face discrimination and victimization due to their spirituality. Increasing numbers of prisoners in Canada have been filing complaints to the Canadian Human Rights Commission about religious freedoms (Burke, 2017). Moreover, the federal correctional system is critiqued for failing to meet the spiritual needs of Indigenous women, and for perpetuating their stereotyping and assimilation through programs tailored to white male offenders (Vecchio, 2018; McGuire & Murdoch, 2021).

**Restorative Justice and Reintegration**

Restorative justice has been proposed as a holistic way to address the high rates of criminalization and victimization of women, Indigenous and vulnerable groups (Milward, 2008).The Correctional Program for Women offenders (Correctional Service Canada, 2021) was established in 1994 to deliver programs essential to reintegration, including trauma and substance abuse programs, education, and employment and parenting skills. However, access to these programs is based on assessment risk, which appears to be fundamentally flawed, as it uses the same scoring system for men and women. This results in women being categorized as higher safety risk and being cut off of much needed programming, despite of exhibiting much lower rates of violent crimes than males (Canadian Human Rights Commission, 2003). Those barriers to access can have detrimental effects for the outcomes of women in custody. For example, relapse into substance abuse is a common factor for being denied release, which creates a vicious circle of prolonged incarceration with increasing security categorization even for non-violent offenders (Canadian Human Rights Commission, 2003).

Moreover, there is a lack of Indigenous restorative justice programs for female offenders. This is especially alarming when considering the very high rates of incarceration of Indigenous women (McGuire & Murdoch, 2021). Indigenous women are over-represented in maximum security prisons and may therefore be not eligible for restorative justice programs that could ease their re-integration in the community.

Most women return to the communities where they lived prior to incarceration, and they face even more severe socioeconomic barriers, aggravated by the stigma of ex-offender and the struggle to find employment. When their fundamental re-integration needs remain unmet, the risk recidivism and re-victimization increases. These needs include housing, clothing, food, employment, affordable transportation, and security after release, as well as the need to be re-united with their children and families (Mallicoat et al., 2019). Additionally, without appropriate treatment and access to healthcare they will return to prior addictions (Shantz et al., 2009).

**Programs for female offenders in Canada**

The programs for female offenders offered by Correctional Service Canada can be categorized as a) correctional, b) health and mental health, c) education, employment and employability, d) social programs, and e) programs for Indigenous women (Correctional Service Canada, 2004). However, some critical gaps of those services, such as needs of transition and re-integration in the community are addressed by voluntary organizations that perform statutory social services (Quinn, 2019). Additionally, a network of non-governmental organizations (NGO) also provides voluntary supports, which are non-specific, but relevant to female offenders, such as services for those experiencing poverty, homelessness and addictions. Only female-offender-specific programs will be included in this overview.

**Programs by Correctional Services Canada**

There are six federal institutions for incarcerated women: *Fraser Valley Institution for Women; Edmonton Institution for Women; Okimaw Ohci Healing Lodge; Grand Valley Institution for Women; Joliette Institution for Women; Nova Institution for Women* (Government of Canada, 2019). These provide an array of programs; however, delivery of programs is variable over time and in consistency and quality, while some are not offered depending on the institution (Canadian Human Right Commission, 2003).

***Correction Programs:*** These programs target the offending behaviour of the female inmate. Such programs can be *Substance Abuse Programs; Sex Offender Therapy for Women; Reasoning and Rehabilitation Programs*; and *Anger and Emotion Management Program* (CSC, 2004, p. 10-12).

***Mental Health Programs:*** There is an apparent need for mental health support in female incarcerated populations. The CSC has developed a few programs to alleviate this need. Such programs are *Abuse and Trauma program; Dialectical Behaviour Therapy program*; and *Psychosocial Rehabilitation program* (CSC, 2004, p. 13-15).

***Education, Employment and Employability Programs:*** According to CSC these programs promote the female offenders to successfully reintegrate themselves into the community. Such programs are *Education program* and *Employment and Employability programs* (CSC, 2004, p. 16-17).

***Social Programs:*** The programs target an array of social skills for and easier reintegration to the community. Such programs are: *Parenting Sills program; Mother-Child program; Community Integration program; Choosing Health in Prison (CHIP); Peer Support program; Leisure Education program; Lifeline program; Spirituality and Spiritual Services; Canine program; Recreational Therapy; Horticultural program*; and *Arts and Crafts* (CSC, 2004, p. 17-20).

***Aboriginal Programs***: Due to overrepresentation of Indigenous women in the federal prison system, there is an awareness for the need of more culturally appropriate programming. The CSC has developed an array of such programs: The *Circles of Change program; The Family Life Improvement program;* and *The Spirit of a Warrior program* (CSC, 2004, p. 21-22).

**Penal Voluntary Organizations**

I identified a number of voluntary organizations offering programs to criminalized individuals, of which three are specific to women. Of those, *Elizabeth Fry Society* has national and international reach. The *Second Chance Foundation* and *Stride* of Ontario are also specific to incarcerated women, but with a local reach. Below, I provide a comprehensive, but not exhaustive, overview of programs across Canada; where specific examples are mentioned these pertain mostly to Western Canada. I was not able to identify a resource listing these programs, either by province, or across Canada, which might act as a barrier to access for criminalized and at-risk women. In the future, a comprehensive environmental scan of these programs is warranted to support women in need. Moreover, after a comprehensive key-word search in the combined academic databases and periodicals offered through the University of Alberta, and organization-specific and governmental websites, no evaluations of penal voluntary organization programming were identified. This constitutes a huge gap, as the shortcomings, limitations and coverage of these programs are currently obscure. Quinn (2019) notices that the voluntary sector is restrained by a narrative of benevolence which discourages scrutiny. Nonetheless, inasmuch as these programs cover essential needs and are competing for governmental grants, their evaluation is imperative.

***Canadian Association of Elizabeth Fry Societies (CAEFS)***

The CAEFS comprises 24 local Elizabeth Fry societies across Canada, which provide a number of supports to women and girls who are criminalized or at risk of being criminalized.  At the same time, CAEFS has advocacy programs on key issues for criminalized women and gender-diverse people. These include initiatives: on defending prisoners’ rights, including human rights and reproductive justice; legal resources; housing; bursaries, and raising awareness (CAEFS, 2020). The 24 local societies offer a variety of programs with some heterogeneity. The general services and programs are summarized in **Table 1.**

**Table 1**. **Types of Programs offered by local Elizabeth Fry Societies** (Elizabeth Fry Society of Northern Alberta, 2019, p. 6-10; Elizabeth Fry Society of Greater Vancouver, 2021).

***Transitional housing; Temporary shelter homes*** for homeless women and their children

***Parenting programs*** for new and expecting mothers.

***JustKids***: It mitigates “the long-term negative impacts of parental incarceration through an umbrella of programs, educational initiative” (Elizabeth Fry Society of Greater Vancouver, 2021)

***Family counseling*** helps families stay together or reunite after a separation.

***Adult and Youth Courtwork Program***: Advice for women appearing in Adult and Youth Provincial Courts regarding their rights and available resources.

***Court Assistants for Female Youth***: Education, mentoring, support, and referrals to community resources for youth appearing in courts.

***Prison Liaison Program***: Assistance in dealing with everyday challenges to incarcerated women, offering referrals, recreational or social development programs, and pre-release planning.

***Community Resources Program***: “Short-term support, crisis intervention, and assistance to women in obtaining food, clothing, and shelter, ID issues, hygiene items, and counselling”. Also, workshops on self-care, writing skills, exercise, and education on legal issues are provided. (Elizabeth Fry Society of Northern Alberta, 2019, p. 7).

***Indigenous Women’s Program***: It provides “spiritually minded educational, vocational, and practical assistance to women. The programs include Elder’s teachings, craft workshops, traditional campouts, and Traditional Parenting Workshops”.

***Stoplifting Program***: It offers workshops on issues associated with shoplifting (Elizabeth Fry Society of Northern Alberta, 2019, p. 7).

***Legal Clinic Program***: Involves practicing lawyers who provide free legal services to incarcerated women.

***Record Suspension Program***: It assists women to complete the process of sealing their criminal record to increase their opportunities in employment and education and provides financial assistance (Elizabeth Fry Society of Northern Alberta, 2019, p. 8).

***Employment Program***: It places women in positions according to their skills. It offers preparation for interviewing, as well as job search, and links to training programs.

***Girls Empowered and Strong***: This is a preventative program is designed for females aged 12-17.

***Housing Program***: It provides subsidized housing to Indigenous women with a history of homelessness and victimization through sexual exploitation.

***Women’s Financial Literacy Program; Women’s Empowerment Project (WEP)***: A program for women and youth living with violence.

***Independent Legal Advice for Survivors of Sexual Violence***

***Visitation Centre***: It provides video for family of incarcerated women.

***Addictions and Anger Management programs***.

***The John Howard Society of Canada (JHS)***

JHS is a non-profit agency tackling the consequences and prevention of crime. JHS has branches in 60 communities across 10 provinces and Territories in Canada (John Howard Society of Canada, 2022). Services vary across communities. Indicative programs are summarized in **Table 2**:

**Table 2: Types of programs offered by JHS** (JHS British Columbia, 2022).

***Housing***: Transitional housing; Supportive housing for individuals experiencing complex barriers, including homelessness, addiction, mental health challenges, developmental disabilities, and/or criminal justice involvement; Homelessness prevention

***Education and Employment programs****.*

***Justice Programs***: pre-release supports; Community-Based Residential Facilities; alternative justice supports to address the harm caused by crime.

***Community living services***: They “support adults with developmental disabilities, autism spectrum disorder, or Fetal Alcohol Spectrum Disorders.”

***Community services***: They “enhance community inclusion and participation by providing support, advocacy, and direct services to community members facing barriers.”

***Youth Restorative Action Project (YRAP):*** This is an Edmonton-based program providing support, advocacy, and direct services YRAP aims to create “meaningful consequences that are educational and rehabilitative rather than punitive” (YRAP, 2021).

***The Second Chance Foundation (TSCF):*** The Second Chance Foundation, based in Scarborough, Ontario, helps women transitioning from prison to half-way houses and the community through education, training, and support, to build a successful life for themselves and their children (The Second Chance Foundation, 2021).

***Canadian Families and Corrections Networks (CFCN):*** CFCN is based in Scarborough, Ontario and “focuses on families, children, and friends who have someone they care about in jail. It offers visitor resources, family liaison workers, and parenting resources (CFCN, 2017).

***Stride-Community Justice Initiatives***: This program, based in Kitchener Ontario, helps “women in prison build informal networks of support that assist them as they reintegrate back to the community” (Stride-Community Justice Initiatives, n.d.). It offers mediation and conflict resolution, sexual trauma and abuse services, integration cycles, family-centered programs, offender and victim supports, and education programs.

**Gaps and Recommendations**

Despite recent Bills and efforts to improve the conditions of female inmates, a number of systemic flaws persist, and critical needs of women remain unmet (Canadian Centre for Policy Alternatives, 2020).The use of segregation has been terminated and replaced Structural Intervention Units. Nonetheless, the two approaches are very similar, with the only difference being the hours spent in isolation (23 vs., 20h). Women that are more affected by such measures are Black, Indigenous, and people of color (BIPOC) and women with mental illness. These populations are similarly disproportionately affected by the use of force, including measures like physical handling, restraining and inflammatory agents (pepper spray) (Canadian Centre for Policy Alternatives, 2020).

Drastic changes took place in the Canadian Criminal Justice system, between 2006 and 2015. Among those changes, the strengthening and dissemination of mandatory minimums was the most dramatic in affecting accused women (Moore, 2021). Mandatory minimums take away the discretionary power of judges and impose a specific sentence for each category of crime. The result is increased incarceration of women. Furthermore, mandatory minimums mean that low-risk offenders will spend more time in incarceration without the possibility of parole. The above affect disproportionately Indigenous and Black women of low socioeconomic background, because they are considered as higher risk by the system (Parkes, 2016).

Without adequate supports, following release, many women face homelessness and may revert to a life of substance abuse, victimization and crime (Covington, 2002). Government support of transitional housing or housing provisions for criminalized women are sparse, as are shelters which can only accept women for very short periods of time (Canada Mortgage and Housing Corporation, 2021).

Based on these limitations, a number of recommendations and implications for future work can be derived:

* There is a need to develop educational programs that consider the different reasons and pathways of criminalized women at all levels of the Criminal Justice System. An elimination of the ‘gender neutral’ narrative that affects women so negatively is needed (Canadian Human Rights Commission, 2003). Moreover, employment programs that promote relevant skills for the highly competitive job market for criminalized women is imperative. Additionally, race- and culture-appropriate programs, acknowledging the unique identities, histories and the impact of intersectionality on Indigenous and BIPOC individuals are imperative, in order to improve chances or re-integration and to prevent recidivism. Consistent delivery of these programs at all pertinent institutions is important.
* The abolition of mandatory minimums for low-violence and/or non-violent crimes, which disproportionately affect Indigenous, and women of colour is critical in order avoid perpetuation of the victimization-criminalization cycle (Government of Canada, 2021).
* The development of a system that replaces the Custody Rating Scale (CRS) for the security classification of female inmates is crucial (Auditor General Canada, 2017).
* The implementation of hiring only female correctional officers in female units and institutions, as Bona Fide occupational requirement is important in order to minimize further sexual victimization of women. (CSC, 2013).
* Funded housing programs for criminalized women after release are imperative for promoting reintegration, lower recidivism and preventions of homelessness.

**Conclusion**

Throughout my paper, I demonstrated a critical lack of programs addressing the needs of criminalized women, especially for Indigenous and BIPOC women. The programs provided by the CSC have many limitations and may promote a neocolonial assimilation of vulnerable racialized women (Ricciardelli, 2014, p. 190). Programs offered by other agencies, such as NGOs, try to mitigate the various barriers; however, there is no public evaluation of their effectiveness, and no guarantee for their sustained funding. The rates and types of female offender crimes seem to have remained stable in the last four to five decades, while the rate of incarceration of women, and especially Indigenous women, has risen substantially. This implies that recent law reforms are not informed by the specific realities of criminalized women. Moreover, current practices around parole, security level assignment and transition to the community fail to take into account the vicious circle of poverty-victimization-criminalization, aggravated by the intersections of race, socioeconomic status and age. These exaggerate the social control of women’s futures, as well as those of their children’s and communities. The current system is beset with multiple levels of structural oppression that perpetuate women’s victimization and result in punishing rather than protecting the victims of social inequity and racialization (Allspach, 2010). A radical reconceptualization and reconfiguration of the criminal justice system is needed in order to prevent gross infringements of female offenders’ rights.

# Probation and Parole Officers in Canada: Occupational Stressors, Mental Health Consequences and Mitigating Strategies

## Elpida Papathanasoglou

**Background**: Probation and parole officers (PPO) experience several strains ranging from workflow stressors to traumatic events. The effects of occupational stressors on PPOs’ well-being and on public safety have been acknowledged, however, evidence continues to show high levels of mental health problems in PPOs.

**Purpose**: To summarize published evidence related to PPO officers’ well-being in Canada, including a) types of occupational stressors and prevalence of mental health consequences, b) qualitative data on PPO officers’ experiences and perspectives, and c) available resources and mitigating- preventative strategies and policies.

M**ethod**: I conducted a narrative literature review of research data and publicly available evidence from sites related to the criminal justice system. I retrieved research evidence through a comprehensive search of relevant electronic databases and grey literature.

**Results**: I identified 15 studies addressing stressors and mitigation strategies in PPOs in Canada. The main findings were that: a) PPOs experience high levels of stress and have high prevalence of mental health disorders; b) Operational job aspects are perceived as most distressful; c) there are no employee support programs specifically for PPOs, and the existing peer-led model may increase fears of stigmatization.

**Conclusion**: It is imperative that research efforts focus on developing and implementing appropriate interventions specifically on PPOs wellbeing at the federal and provincial levels. Governments need to make commitments to increase the budget for PPOs, in order to decrease risks to public safety.

**Introduction**

Probation and parole officers (PPOs) monitor, support and manage offenders’ issues in the community. Accumulating research evidence shows that PPOs experience an array of occupational stressors affecting their mental health and well-being, ranging from extreme caseloads to exposure to direct and vicarious traumatization (Carleton et al., 2020; Finney et al., 2013). In Canada, probation officers monitor offenders serving probation and sentences of two years or less, while parole officers monitor the reintegration of offenders who are on conditional release or under a long-term supervision order, assess inmates and develop rehabilitation programs. Both, probation and parole officers work in the community and in correctional facilities (Government of Canada National Occupation Classification, 2022). Probation officers are mostly employed by the provincial government, while parole officers are employed federally. Correctional Service Canada (CSC) employs approximately 1,300 parole officers, serving approximately 9,100 parolees in the community (CSC, 2019).

Despite research on the stressors faced by PPOs in other countries, and predominantly in the USA, research evidence regarding the Canadian parole system is very limited. A 2013 systematic review demonstrated a dearth of related research and failed to identify any Canadian studies (Finney et al., 2013). Moreover, I was unable to identify a literature review that addresses issues of PPOs’ wellbeing in Canada. This is an important gap, as reports highlight the challenges facing federal parole officers in Canada, and their implications for public safety [Union of Safety and Justice Employees (USJE), 2019]. As PPOs have a key role in protecting the public, pressures related to increased caseloads, and lack of supports for PPO may compromise their ability to appropriately assess and supervise offenders, resulting in increased rates of re-offense (USJE, 2019, p. 5). Understanding PPOs’ experiences and stressors, as well as the prevalence and types of their mental health challenges is important in informing national and provincial policies and the development of targeted support programs.

In this paper, I will summarize evidence related to PPOs’ well-being in Canada, including a) prevalence and types of occupational stressors and mental health consequences, b) qualitative data on PPOs’ experiences and perspectives on work stressors, and c) available resources and mitigating strategies and policies. My thesis is that despite increased rates of PPO occupational stressors and psychiatric morbidity, in Canada, supports for PPOs are scarce, and fail to address the root causes of their occupational strains. Available resources focus on the management of traumatic events, which is conflicting with evidence showing other types of stressors as most important for PPOs. I will show that available programs are, therefore, of limited effectiveness in mitigating the adverse effects of PPOs’ stressors. Finally, I will discuss research gaps and the need for policy and program development.

**Theoretical Framework: Alienation, Occupational stress and ill-health.**

There are several theoretical frameworks addressing occupational stress (Althaus et al., 2013). For this review, a sociological framework is appropriate as it accounts for the interpersonal, group and organizational aspects of the job. Peterson (2018, p.63-73) proposed links between alienation, occupational stress and ill-health by synthesizing prior work on Marx’s theory of alienation and of management control. According to Peterson (2018, p. 63), alienation is the result of management’s control, and it can lead to workers being unable to fulfill important needs. Management can affect the job in three ways: a) by restricting job latitude and workers’ opportunity to exercise control over the work, b) by bureaucratic processes for decision-making, and c) by a climate of negative attitudes, poor feedback and “general lack of appreciation”, thus rendering workers powerless (p. 69). In this review, I will assess the importance of these elements in the literature on PPOs occupational health.

**Methods**

I conducted a narrative literature review of research data and publicly available evidence from governmental sites and sites related to the criminal justice system in Canada. I critically evaluated and compared the evidence, in order to assess gaps in current research and policy. I retrieved research evidence through a comprehensive search of databases available through the University of Alberta Library, including Criminal Justice Abstracts, Sociological Abstracts, SocIndex, Social Science Citation Index, Medline, CINAHL, PsycINFO. The search strategy included combinations of the following terms: “probation” or “parole” or “community supervision” AND “stress” or “burnout” or “anxiety” or “emotional exhaustion” or “psychology\*” or “psychiatry” “trauma” or “distress” or “PTSD” or “mental health” AND “Canada. I searched the literature since January 1990. Out of the 363 articles initially identified, only 15 included data pertinent to PPO in Canada, with the first pertinent publication in 2019. Additional sources were identified by searching sites related to the criminal justice system and officers’ associations.

**Results**

**Occupational stressors and association with mental health**

I identified five studies providing quantitative data on occupational stressors and the prevalence of mental health disorders in PPOs in Canada. Three studies were conducted in Ontario and included PPOs as part of larger samples of correctional workers. The only study specific to PPOs, is a 2019 report by the Union of Safety and Justice Employees (USJE). Overall, the studies highlight the importance of operational and organizational stressors in the psychological wellbeing of the PPOs, and the presence of potentially more vulnerable subgroups based on age, gender and education.

The 2019 USJE report presented results of an on-line survey of 541 federal parole officers. The main findings included high levels of anxiety, job stress, burnout and physical symptoms linked to increased workload, chronic understaffing, and increased offender caseloads. Workplace strains were associated with increased absenteeism and leaves of absence. The majority of respondents identified additional duties due to policy changes (87.4%), increased paperwork (83.73%), staff reductions (66.17%), lack of resources (~60%), preparing Indigenous offenders for release (58%), vacant parole officers’ positions (57.85%), increased expectation to conform with various levels of “best practices” (54.15%) and insufficient clerical support (45.47%) as the major reasons for job strain. More than 93% of respondents indicated that their workload was too heavy, 70% said that they were not able to complete their assigned workload, and 90.7% responded that they needed to work outside normal working hours. Almost 87% of the respondents believed that their workload affected their psychological or physical health (p.21). Moreover, they reported “workplace incivility”, and the need to work extra hours despite knowing that overtime would not be approved. The comments conveyed a negative work climate, with no perceived respect for PPOs contributions, and demoralization. The authors concluded that chronic workforce shortages have created insurmountable challenges to protecting public safety, due to increased risk of re-offense (p. 5).

In line with these findings, Carleton et al. (2020) reported on an online survey of Correctional Service workers in Ontario, including 144 community probation officers. Probation officers had elevated risk for major depressive disorder, generalized anxiety disorder and PTSD. Overall, 63.2% of probation officers screened positive for one or more mental health disorders, compared to 59% of Institutional Correctional Officers. Probation officers were from 1.2 to almost 4 times more likely to screen positive for a mental disorder than Correctional Wellness staff (which were considered to reflect general public levels), with an odds ratio (OR) 2.22, [95% Confidence Interval (CI):1.24-3.95)]. This indicated a risk higher than that of Institutional Correctional Officers (OR:1.85, 95%CI:1.13-3.05). Workers in their 40s were 1.53 (95%CI:1.02-2.28) times more likely to screen positive for mental disorders. These findings are important in planning targeted interventions. PPO demographics in Canada are not available, but in the USA, more than 54% of PPOs are female, and with a mean age of 43 years (zippia.com, 2022).

In a subsequent study, Konyk et al. (2021), assessed occupational stressors in Correctional workers in Ontario, including 149 PPO. Occupational stressors were conceptualized as organizational, operational and other stressors. Organizational stressors involved factors such as collaboration with co-workers, staff shortages, resources, and administrative duties. Operational stressors included job fatigue, paperwork, occupational-related risks, socialization and public outlook. Other occupational stressors included concerns over job performance, working in close contact with offenders and inter-departmental collaboration. PPO exhibited the highest stress scores related to working closely with offenders and concerns over job performance and paperwork, compared to other categories of workers. The traumatic events experienced on the job were similar to those of Institutional correctional officers, and the overtime demands were the second highest. Contrary to prior hypotheses (Carleton et al., 2019, Fusco et al., 2021), total operational stress scores were more strongly associated with the likelihood of PTSD, major depression, generalized anxiety, panic disorder and alcohol use disorder, than exposure to traumatic events on the job. This finding is important, since it highlights the psychological toll of stressors typically reported by PPOs, such as paperwork, fatigue and social aspects of the job. Moreover, it challenges the concept that mental health disorders are only associated with the experience of distinct traumatic events.

In a subsequent study, Ricciardelli et al. (2022b) theorized that the experience of uncertainty might mediate psychiatric morbidity in correctional officers, including PPOs. The authors confirmed the findings of Konyk et al (2021) but observed no associations between participants’ scores on the Intolerance of Uncertainty scale (IUS-12) and mental health disorders. The investigators concluded that occupational stressors are more salient predictors of mental health in corrections, which has many important implications for intervention programs.

In a recent study, the same group explored aspects of suicidality in correctional workers in Ontario, among which 163 were probation officers (Carleton et al., 2022). Overall, there was no evidence of higher life-time suicidal behavior, in probation and institutional correctional officers. Notably though, female correctional workers were up to almost 5 times (OR: 2.62, 95%CI: 1.4-4.91) more likely to have attempted suicide, compared to male workers, and workers above 50 years of age were up to almost 10 times more likely to have attempted suicide (OR: 3.24, 95%CI: 1.08-9.75). Conversely, college or university graduates were less likely to have suicidal ideation, compared to those with lower education. These findings imply that although probation officers as a group might not be more susceptible to suicidality, there may be specific groups based on gender, age and education that are more vulnerable (Carleton et al., 2022), which need to be considered in prevention programs.

A notable limitation of this body of evidence is that the majority of the studies have been conducted by seemingly the same group of investigators. As the three peer-reviewed studies were conducted in Ontario, and since probation officers are employed by the provincial government, it is unclear if these results can be generalized to other Canadian regions. Moreover, there is lack of an established theoretical framework to inform the investigation. Finally, the data on mental health originated from on-line surveys, which may have resulted in an unpredictable self-selection bias and under- or over-representation of specific mental health conditions or types of stressors. Nonetheless, the data provide clear evidence for: a) the increased mental health morbidity in PPOs, and b) the association between operational stressors and workload and mental health problems. The latter is corroborated by findings in PPOs in the USA, as the level of depressive symptoms was directly related to the caseload and was not mitigated by PPOs mental health training (Gayman et al., 2018).

The data reviewed above provide evidence of the importance of all three factors of the Alienation, Occupational stress and ill-health model (Peterson, 2018) for PPOs’ occupational health. These aspects include a) limited opportunity to control their work environment as they respond to unjustified changes in policies, increased workload and the need to process cases fast, b) the need to deal with a stressful bureaucratic system, and c) negative attitudes within an under-funded and understaffed system with non-existing supports, whereby, they do not experience job fulfillment and appreciation.

**Qualitative exploration of PPOs’ occupational stressors**

I identified seven qualitative studies that focus either explicitly (n=2) or implicitly (n=5) on the experiences of PPOs in Canada, 5 of which of which collected data through on-line survey questions. In the 5 studies that included PPOs among other personnel, the authors reported PPOs’ experience separately from the rest of participants in Corrections Service, hence, recognizing the uniqueness of PPOs’ work. In two studies, the authors explored the effects of the COVID-19 pandemic on PPOs. Similar to the quantitative studies, qualitative exploration identified operational and organizational stressors contributing to declining mental health and toxic work environments.

Ricciardelli et al. (2020), conducted a thematic analysis of an open-ended question of a survey that was administered to correctional employees in Ontario. The sample size (n=67), included 12 PPOs, rendering this the first Canadian study to explore PPO issues. The main emerging theme was that mental health issues affected all levels of the correctional work force. However, these issues have remained unrecognized and undervalued either by management or the greater organizational culture. The notion of the “meat grinder”, described by one participant, was echoed in the testimonies of the majority of the participants (Ricciardelli et al., 2020, p.4). This conveyed that working in corrections is taxing, both physically and mentally. This is exacerbated by lack of recognition by administration, as participants felt that their needs were “swept under the rug” (p.4). Further, the participants identified how this bleak situation might be remedied. The main suggestion was that there is a need of recognition of mental health concerns affecting correctional workers, at all levels of the organization, with particular focus on management. Additionally, wages were perceived as inadequate for the “emotional, physical and verbal abuse” the workers are faced with on a daily basis. The stigma of mental was reflected into the benefits packages, which they did not adequately covered mental health (p.6), conveying that mental health was not considered as valid as physical health.

Johnston et al. (2022), investigated how correctional workers navigated suicidal ideation, using an open-ended survey including 12 PPOs. They found that mental health concerns and in turn suicidal ideation were either caused by non-work-related events, or work-related events. Nonetheless, mental health and suicidality could be exasperated by work-related stressors, leading to “occupational stress injuries” (Johnston et al., 2022, p. 1514). Similar to Ricciardelli et al. (2020), there was little focus on the PPO population in this study. Moreover, the results were ambivalent about the relationship between suicidality and working on corrections.

Norman and Ricciardelli (2022a) conducted a survey with open-ended questions on PPOs in Ontario, (n=144). This is the first study that focuses solely on the experiences of PPOs. The leading causes for the deteriorating mental health and general wellbeing of PPOs were described as ‘operational stressors’ and ‘organizational stressors. Operational stressors were linked to the primary and/or secondary trauma that PPOs are exposed to in a routine basis. The experience of secondary trauma was more relevant for PPOs. Secondary trauma or vicarious trauma is the experience of trauma by witnessing others’ encounters with present or past traumas. Although, PPOs regularly interact with individuals, who carry unique traumatic experiences, the PPOs surveyed appeared to put more stock on the organizational stressors with regard to their high levels of stress and mental wellbeing. Particularly, PPOs reported that overwhelming administrative mandates and paperwork, along with interpersonal conflicts and an overall lack of human resources made the workplace “toxic” (Norman and Ricciardelli, 2022a, p.96). Considering paperwork, the PPOs felt that they devote a disproportionate amount of time in administrative tasks, rather than supporting parolees and probationers. Paperwork amounts to overwhelming work, which cannot be mitigated as PPO offices are “severely understaffed” (p.96). On top of this, the perceived “lack of support from the employer” and management is severely detrimental to the mental wellbeing of PPOs (p.97).

Prompted by the themes above, Ricciardelli et al. (2022a) conducted 150 qualitative interviews with PPOs across Canada, focusing on daily organizational stressors. The main themes were the overall shortcomings of the organizational culture, a turbulent relationship with management, and a general sense of lack of support and respect. Participants referred to their workplace as being “political” with a rigid hierarchal establishment, which hindered any meaningful change, and promoted silence on matters of mental health and misconduct (p.8). Further, the CSC, as a whole, was viewed as reactive, meaning that remedies on issues of PPOs’ mental health came “when it’s too late” (p.10). Participants also identified negative management attitudes as a leading stressor. Respondents described an apathetic and unsupportive culture that only assigns more work to an already overworked PPO workforce. Finally, participants, felt that management and the CSC administration lacked an understanding of the nature of PPO work, which led to PPOs not receiving the support needed.

A 2022 USJE report reiterated the common stressors for PPOs described above. The overwhelming workload in the form of administrative duties and numerous clients under supervision were considered as primary stressors. However, those stressors were considered to be exasperated by other more salient factors, identified as an unsupportive management culture, unpredictable deadlines due to the everchanging mandates in the workplace, chronic short staffing worsened by medical leaves and an overgeneralization of PPOs work description which resulted in more work.

Overall, the qualitative exploration of PPOs experiences complements the quantitative findings. Absence of control over their work environment, not being included in decision-making and a general lack of appreciation of the complexity of their work, are central in exacerbating job-related stress in PPOs.

**Effects of the COVID-19 pandemic on PPOs**

Exploration of PPOs’ experiences during the COVID-19 pandemic confirmed the importance of PPOs being included in administrative decisions, and the intense interpersonal aspects of their work. Norman et al. (2021) studied the effects of the COVID-19 pandemic by interviewing 54 parole officers from across Canada. Community Parole, from community office spaces, was all of a sudden conducted from home. This created challenges in managing parolees, and in finding ways to avoid exposure of their families to sensitive matters. Furthermore, there was a push for decarcerating people for better health management of the institutional population. Participants perceived this as a push from CSC administration with no consideration of the feasibility of this decision for the already overworked parole officers. Additionally, supervision over the phone was perceived as inadequate, eventually resulting in offenders that breached their conditions and reoffended. This added to the increase of stress levels for parole officers.

Norman and Ricciardelli (2022b) conducted focus groups with 96 institutional parole officers from across Canada. A central theme was the absence of in-person interactions with offenders. As they were not able to build rapport with offenders for accurate assessment of needs and risks, participants perceived that their effectiveness in case management faltered, decreasing the likelihood of offenders been granted parole. Similar to community POs, institutional POs identified several stressors with the policy of decarceration, including the exponential increase of parole applications.

**Programs supporting PPOs’ wellbeing.**

I was unable to identify programs specifically targeting PPOs’ wellbeing in Canada. The online sites of provincial and federal associations of PPOs, such as FPPOA (Federal Parole & Probation Officers’ Association), POAO (Probation Officers Association of Ontario) do not mention resources for the psychological wellbeing of their members. A printed pocket guide available to PPOs in the Prairie region focuses solely on PTSD and is an adaptation of material developed for the US military (QuickSeries Publishing, 2008-2014). The information seems outdated, as it does not include current definitions according to the Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders (DSM-5, American Psychiatric Association, 2013), and the content may perpetuate stigma and unrealistic expectations.

In contrast to sites for PPOs, the Union of Canadian Correctional Officers (UCCO) includes resources for mental health challenges in the form of internet links. However, the resources are either for the general public, or for public safety personnel, and are not customized to the specific needs of correctional officers. It is possible that programs for public safety personnel may apply to PPOs. Nonetheless, even such programs are sparse, and have very recently been implemented, so evaluation is mostly lacking. Siqueira Cassiano et al. (2022) note that in North America and Western Europe programs intended for correctional staff started in the mid-2000s. Even to-date, specialized programs are lacking, as most are adaptations of programs for police officers. Adapting programs from police to PPOs has been criticized due to the different nature of police and correctional officers’ work.

In 2016, the Union of Canadian Correctional Officers (UCCO, 2016) outlined the significance and consequences of operational job stress and PTSD among its members and called for supportive and preventative programs. To-date such programs are only offered in federal prisons, and they are reactive, rather than preventative in nature (Siqueira Cassiano et al., 2022). Types of programs include Employee Assistance Programs (EAP), critical incident stress management (CISM), cognitive-based programs and physical exercise. These programs are potentially accessible to parole officers working in correctional institutions, but not to the majority of PPOs working in provincial and community corrections. EAPs and CISMs are the most commonly offered programs; however, their use is limited due to the lack of support from management, lack of specialists, and low awareness of mental health issues, as well as mental health stigma (Siqueira Cassiano et al., 2022). In contrast to EAPs and CISMs, cognitive programs target prevention of mental health problems, but their acceptability is low among correctional officers. In a qualitative study, the majority of correctional officers found EAP and CISM helpful, but emphasized the need for improvements in the availability, managerial support and mode of programs’ delivery (Siqueira Cassiano et al., 2022).

In the correctional system in Canada, EAP and CISM are peer-support programs, without participation of correctional psychologists (Siqueira Cassiano et al., 2022). There are 3 models of peer-support programs: peer-enabled, peer-led, and peer-partnership, which all include a degree of social and emotional assistance to peers (Price et al., 2022). Although such programs are commonly available for public safety officers, their feasibility for PPOs and correctional officers is ambiguous, based on evidence showing failure to improve the mental health of correctional officers (Jessiman-Perrault et al., 2021). This may be attributed to the fact that trust among officers is important in mitigating risks, as officers depend on their peers when dealing with potentially dangerous situations. Seeking peer support for mental health issues may jeopardize an officer’s status, create stigma, and a potential domino of effects that can undermine an officer’s safety. Moreover, as leave for mental health reasons is not backfilled, this increases the job demands and creates a vicious circle of stress (Jessiman-Perreault et al., 2021). Although it is unclear if these data apply to PPOs, it is important to note that the specific job conditions and nature of inter-personal relationships need to be considered for program planning for PPOs. For example, although not explicitly addressed in Canadian studies, evidence from the USA shows that probation officers hold stigmatizing views towards mental health illness (Givens et al., 2020); which could deter PPOs from seeking peer support. At least in the prairies, EAP can include a short-term consultation with specialists, but the employee has to go through a peer-referral process (Correctional Service Canada, n.d.). The practice that trained volunteer employees assess, advise and refer their colleagues to appropriate professionals may create barriers due to fear of stigmatization. Therefore, prevention and treatment strategies for PPOs need to be tailored to their specific occupational context and needs, in order to avoid further trauma due to peer stigmatization.

Following the report of the standing committee for addressing the operational stress of public safety officers, including PPOs (Canada Parliament, 2016), the government of Canada has released an action plan to support Public Safety Personnel (Public Safety Canada, 2019). The action plan focuses on prevention, early intervention, stigma reduction and treatment of mental health disorders of public safety personnel and includes research funding. To date, the action plan has not yet produced any benefits for PPOs. This initiative has a strong focus on post-traumatic stress injuries, which may invalidate the experience of many PPOs who undergo a range of everyday stressors despite absence of discrete traumatic events. The focus of the action plan on traumatic events is counter to evidence reviewed herein, showing caseloads, inadequate managerial support and a negative work climate as the major factors in psychological morbidity in PPOs.

**Review of current recommendations**

In the 2019 USJE report on the challenges facing federal parole officers, specific recommendations called for managing the POs caseloads, increasing the number of POs in the community and in institutions, and granting overtime pay. Since then, work conditions do not seem to have improved. Subsequently, the 2022 USJE report documented many of the same persistent problems and included a set of more specific recommendations to address parole officers’ occupational challenges, their job satisfaction and mental health (p. 60-64). Recommendations addressing parole officers’ job satisfaction include a) hiring additional parole officers in determinate positions at each correctional institution, parole office and community correctional center, in order to reduce caseloads, b) hiring administrative support staff for clerical support, c) clearly delineating the responsibilities of the case management team, as parole officers reported having to do everything on the job.

Recommendations to enhance job satisfaction call for: a) Resources to encourage commitment to human contact, including regular consulting and training; b) a salaries review to match parole officers’ level of education and responsibility; c) meaningful recognition of work from management; d) enhancing opportunities for collegial support; e) regular communication with management; f) interpersonal and trauma-informed training for managers; and g) regular opportunities for training, including vicarious trauma, cultural awareness, offender populations and new policies. Finally a set of recommendations address parole officers’ mental health, including a) access to mental health treatment, b) backfilling their responsibilities when on leave, c) training and support to help them cope with clients’ distressing behaviors and traumatic events, d) pairing officers when visiting high risk clients, e) inclusion of parole officers in critical incident stress management, f) creation of well-being spaces onsite, and g) mental health training and efforts to reduce mental health stigma. These recommendations are a positive step, as they are comprehensive, and evidence based. They address all aspects of the Alienation, Occupational stress and ill-health model (Peterson, 2018), namely, control over the work environment, decreased workload and enhancing open and positive communication with management. However, the recommendations are very recent, and specific strategies for their implementation, or evidence of commitment by the correctional services or policy makers are lacking.

**Conclusion and Implications for Research and Policy**

The available research evidence on stressors facing PPOs in Canada shows a significant gap in our understanding of the causes, consequences and mitigating factors of stressors in PPO work. Most published work is linked to a multiyear longitudinal study on mental health in federal correctional workers in Canada and is therefore bound to similar assumptions and limitations. The majority of data are about federal officers from Ontario, and only scant data exist on federal or provincial PPOs in other provinces. Another notable gap is the scarcity of data specifically for PPOs, as in most studies, PPOs were included as part of larger samples of correctional or public safety officers. Additionally, there is no clear indication of theoretical framing of those studies that can guide future work.

Nonetheless, the available data clearly show that: a) the majority of PPOs experience high levels of stress and have high prevalence of mental health disorders; b) operational aspects, such as paperwork and caseloads, as well as absence of managerial support, are perceived as most distressful and are associated with PPOs mental health risk; c) PPOs seem to experience traumatic incidents at similar rates as other correctional officers, but operational factors appear to be the main factors causing psychological distress; d) there are no employee support programs specifically for PPOs, and the available programs may even increase fears over mental health stigmatization.

In view of these results, it is imperative that research efforts focus on collecting data specifically on PPOs’ wellbeing at the federal and provincial levels. It is important to develop, test and implement strategies to prevent and manage psychological distress in PPOs. To this end, identifying easily assessable indicators for the evaluation of programs for mental health will be crucial. USJE (2022) has reported a comprehensive set of evidence-based recommendations that need to be considered when designing such programs. Based on research evidence, it is important to tailor programs according to officers’ age, gender and educational level. Additionally, adopting an appropriate theoretical framework, such as the Alienation, Occupational stress and Ill-health model, can enhance the comprehensiveness of approaches, by highlighting the role of the management. However, as the main driver of psychological morbidity seems to be the increased workload and the need to expedite cases, the federal and provincial governments need to increase the budget for PPOs, which, at present, is grossly disproportionate to the numbers served through this system. While 40% of offenders in federal custody are under community parole, only 6% of the federal corrections budget is allocated to parole (USJE, 2019, p. 5). Improving PPOs work environment is not only a matter of labor rights, but a matter of public safety. The condition where overworked PPOs are pressured to expedite processing of offenders, within a general context of underfunding and sparse support programs, increases the risk of re-offence and undermines public safety, while increasing the costs of the correctional system.

# The Rise of Saffron Fascism: Intensification of Interlocking Oppressions in Modi’s India

## Kritika Taparia

**Abstract**

Fascism redux, or the development of far-right, ultranationalist rhetoric after World War II, is increasingly becoming a problematic and pervasive phenomenon across the globe. A unique form of fascism redux in India, known by some scholars as “saffron fascism”, was popularized during the rise of Hindu nationalist party Bharatiya JanataParty (BJP) and its leader, Narendra Modi. Importantly, the rise and maintenance of saffron fascism involves the amplification of interlocking oppressions in Indian society. This paper argues that precolonial-, colonial-, and neoliberal-era vulnerabilities and rationalizations continue to allow fascist ideas and policy to perpetuate gender-based violence, class and caste oppression, and Islamophobia against subaltern communities in India.

**Introduction**

Fascism redux, known by some as “neo-fascism”, is the emergence or persistence of far right, ultra-national ideas that glorify a “racial” hierarchy, exacerbate inequality and interlocking oppressions, and permit and rationalize the use of violence against a socially constructed, subaltern “Other” in a post-World War II era (Cammaerts, 2020). Originally, neo-fascism was defined as emerging after 1945, either inspired by fascist regimes in Europe, or as remnants of fascist parties unwilling to renounce their beliefs (Bull, 2012). However, the rise of fascism in countries outside of the Western sphere during and beyond the post-War period is well-documented and warrants consideration. In India, neo-fascism materialized alongside the election of Hindu nationalist Bharatiya JanataParty (BJP), under the leadership of “strongman” prime minister, Narendra Modi, in 2014. The ideological foundation of the BJP is based upon far-right activist Vinayak Sarvarkar’s notion of Hindutva, or “Hinduness''; according to Sarvarkar, Hindu identity was based upon one’s territory, “race”, and culture. Due to a Hindu majority in India, Sarvarkar decreed that not only is India a Hindu nation, but Hindus who meet the aforementioned criteria possess exclusive rights in India that minorities may not assert (Berberoglu, 2020). Hindutva was popularized in the 1990s by the BJP and has gradually become an oppressive and hegemonic ideology that is now termed “saffron fascism”.

Importantly, the maintenance and exacerbation of interlocking oppressions, or the mechanisms through which historical and systemic conditions create and intermediate the experiences of oppression (Mookerjea, 2022a), is characteristic of fascist regimes. However, the manifestation of interlocking oppressions is deeply dependent on a nation-state's unique historical and sociopolitical context. India’s case of “saffron fascism” has roots in the oppressive, precolonial, caste system, British exploitative colonialism, and in contemporary times, the crises inherent in neoliberal globalization. In awareness of the complexity that underlies the current state of Indian society, the materialization of interlocking oppressions will be examined twofold. First, the entanglement of precolonial inequalities, colonial strategies, and Eurocentric racialized stereotypes of India enabled a sense of vulnerability which rests at foundation of Hindutva; these colonial-era vulnerabilities continue to allow the BJP to deny and amplify oppressions against Muslims and lower-caste individuals. Second, Modi’s use of passive revolutions and nationalist rhetoric to rationalize neoliberal “development” exacerbates violence against rural-based, poor, gendered, and lower-caste individuals and relegates Indian women to the precarious informal sector, while naturalizing a system for wealthy Indian elites to pass as white. Notably, several hydra political movements, often spearheaded by women, have resisted these interlocking oppressions and their efforts must also be examined.

**Precolonial and Colonial Roots of Interlocking Oppressions in Modi’s India**

The subalternization of various groups in India based on interlocking oppressions has historical roots in both precolonial India and from the era of the British East India Company and British Raj, beginning in the 18th century. India’s caste system is allegedly based in sacred Hindu texts which assign each caste to a particular role in society. Discrimination of those in lower castes was established by ancient Hindu law known as the Law of Manu, while top-caste Brahmins exercised politico legal power (Riser-Kositsky, 2009). The Law of Manu was not literally applied in medieval India. However, the British East India Company (EIC) formalized caste law in 1772, solidifying a “Brahminical grip on British India” and exacerbating caste oppression while simultaneously using the existence of the caste system as an Orientalist rationalization of colonialism (Riser-Kositsky, 2009, p. 33). The caste system, according to EIC officials, was based on superstition, characteristic of the uncivilized and “defective Indian character” (Riser-Kositsky, 2009, p. 34). Reflecting the colonial science of establishing “racial” differences between those in the rational, superior West and the ignorant and underdeveloped “Orient”, EIC elites justified their colonization of India for the purpose of accumulating capital via the ideology of progress (Mookerjea, 2022b).

The interplay of precolonial Indian inequality and the colonial co-optation and exacerbation of these oppressions can similarly be seen in the beginnings of Hindu/Muslim communalism. Several scholars note that communal conflict began in the midst of migration and the ongoing quest for land or sociopolitical authority. However, conflict was on the basis of the intersections of caste, class and region-based identities, alongside religion (Upadhyay & Robinson, 2012). Thus, while regional conflicts provided “fertile grounds” (Upadhyay & Robinson, 2012, 36) for colonizers to exploit, intensification of communal conflict, on the sole basis of religion and on a massive scale, has been attributed to the British strategy of divide and rule. This further intensified after the widespread subaltern revolt of 1857, as the British held Muslims responsible for the rebellion and, in turn, systematically barred them from entering administration or receiving an English education (Upadhyay & Robinson, 2012; Puniyani, 2012); this crystallized the Muslim/Hindu divide and created an upper-caste Hindu buffer class that could pass for white (Mookerjea, 2022c), while still serving imperial interests.

Colonial strategies of divide and rule, alongside orientalist, Eurocentric assumptions, undoubtedly exacerbated the foundations of interlocking oppressions present in precolonial India. However, nuances must be noted to understand the colonial roots in Indian fascism redux. Orientalist knowledge that labeled Indian culture as “primitive”, or 19th-century colonial stereotypes of Hindus as a “puny” or “dying” race created a “sentiment of vulnerability” (Jaffrelot, 2021, p. 12) and provoked Indian scholars to try to legitimize Indian institutions while countering the dominance of Eurocentric depictions of India. This scholarship, much of it written through a Brahminical, communal, and casteist lens, is at the foundation for Hindutva fascism (Upadhyay & Robinson, 2012). Thus, interlocking oppressions have entangled precolonial and colonial roots, and examples of these perpetuations of interlocking oppressions in BJP’s rise to, and maintenance of, power are prevalent.

In their reliance on the aforementioned Brahminical ideological foundations of Hindutva, the BJP leans towards socially conservative policy that restricts caste mobility. Upper castes are overrepresented in Parliament, whereas caste-oppressed groups, particularly Dalits or “untouchables”, belonging to the lowest stratum in the caste system, dropped 20% in their representation in 2014 (Jaffrelot, 2021). Affirmative action or “reservation” policies aimed at emancipating Dalit students and civil servants from centuries of caste oppression were gradually diluted by the Modi government, who rationalized their actions by aiming to foster a “sense of enterprise” and promote merit-based entry into industry (Jaffrelot, 2021, p. 137). The ideology of meritocracy further makes invisible and denies the needs of caste-oppressed groups whose unique experiences are mediated by a long history of accumulated violence (Mookerjea, 2022a). In a similar vein, the subalternization of Indian Muslims solidified first under the British Raj, which systematically relegated Muslims to poor, uneducated sectors of society. After the Partition of India and Pakistan in 1947, the majority of remaining Muslims in India were illiterate and impoverished laborers and peasants with limited connections and mobility who were “left vulnerable to right-wing Hindu thoughts” (Puniyani, 2012). Communal violence against the poor has continued since the Partition but was exacerbated during the rise of the saffron fascism in the 1990s, which culminated in several violent riots, including the 2002 massacre of at least 2000 Muslims in Gujarat. The BJP government continually turns a blind eye to violence against Muslims, while some fascist leaders are promoted for their complicity in inciting violence (Banaji, 2018). State-sponsored communal violence, combined with practices that prevent the selling property to Muslims and restricts the observance of Islam in areas with a Muslim majority, leads to the ghettoization of poor Muslims (Jaffrelot, 2021). These strategies of apartheid are compounded by laws such as the Citizenship Amendment Act (CAA), alongside the National Population Register (NPR) which singles out Muslims as “illegal migrants” (Kadiwal, 2021). “Ruling elites” (Mookerjea, 2022d, p.6) in India dictate who is “alien” and who is not, at the expense of millions of Muslims who are at risk for statelessness. The BJP continues to accumulate violence that is rooted in India’s historical circumstances against poor, lower-caste, and Muslim subalterns while denying or rationalizing their actions.

**Modi’s Passive Revolution in Neo liberalized India: The “Development Man” Myth**

India adopted the IMF-mandated structural adjustment program (SAP) in 1990, in response to the debt crisis that had been brewing since the 1970s. Generally, structural adjustment policies required Global South governments and industry to focus on establishing an export-based economy, reduce labor and environmental protections, and shrink the welfare state (Mookerjea, 2022e). The Indian National Congress (INC) party, while claiming a rich anticolonial history, began to decline in favor in the 1990s due to inefficient, corrupt governance in a worsening economic climate. In these conditions, Modi’s image as a “strongman”, and “champion of the poor” (Jaffrelot, 2021, p. 113) have allowed him to gain electoral support of the poor, despite oppressions against the poor only worsening over his tenure since 2014. Modi’s claims of solving the problems of the poor translated into several initiatives that could best be described by Gramsci’s term “passive revolution”, or the process of containing social crises via superficial reform that continue to maintain interlocking oppressions (Mookerjea, 2022a). Modi’s “Clean India Mission” of 2014, aimed at promoting the construction of toilets, was masked in anti-poverty rhetoric that would give dignity to the poor, and especially to poor women who were forced to defecate in public. The true intent of this initiative was to garner more money for tourism and improve public image, but Modi instead portrayed it to be a question of dignity and helping those in need. In 2019, the Modi government declared India to be “defecation-free” (Jaffrelot, 2021, p. 118), despite the glaring facts that the toilets were poorly constructed, and most poor households were not equipped with a steady water supply, which would require the manual emptying and treatment of fecal matter. These dangerous and unsanitary tasks are systematically forced upon poor Dalits, whose bodies accumulate toxins, infection and stigma as forms of violence. Another infamous example of Modi’s passive revolution strategy includes the demonetization campaign, in which 86% of the cash in circulation (in the form of 500- and 1000-rupee banknotes) was withdrawn. Although it was marketed as a way to curb corruption and redistribute wealth to the poor, this campaign took a devastating toll on the poor, informal sector of India (80% of the Indian economy) who had no bank accounts and had cash-based wages (Jaffrelot, 2021). Modi rationalized their suffering by using nationalist rhetoric about withstanding discomfort for the good of the nation.

Modi has continued to roll back welfare policies in the midst of economic neo liberalization of India, such as minimum wage guarantees for the rural poor and rural development programs, while continuing to cut corporate taxes (Jaffrelot, 2021). In doing so, the BJP helps to create a new class of millionaires and billionaires who can pass for white in this neoliberal racial capitalist system and further exploit subaltern groups in India.

Neoliberalism and the BJP’s exacerbation of the interlocking oppressions experienced by poor Indian women warrants special attention. With the onset of neoliberalism in the 1990s and its practice of exporting polluting industries to Global South countries, Indian women were increasingly seen as a flexible and cheap labor force (Patel, 1994). Separated from their means of subsistence production and made to be dependent on unlivable wages due to the cheapening of their labour-power, poor Indian women were relegated to the precarious informal sector of the economy in a process that eco-feminists Maria Mies and Veronica Bennholdt-Thomsen refer to as “housewifisation” (Mookerjea, 2022f). Women work long hours in dangerous labor conditions and strenuous jobs, without receiving adequate healthcare or essential commodities required for the intergenerational reproduction of their household (Patel, 1994). Based on the eco-feminist “Iceberg Model of Capitalist Patriarchal Economies”, neoliberalism externalizes the costs of production onto racialized, classed, and gendered bodies in the realm of social reproduction (Mookerjea, 2022g). Moreover, Patriarchal Hindutva rhetoric works synergistically with neoliberalism to entrench oppressions against women. Son-preferred sex selective abortion (SSA) increased in prevalence in the 1990s, enabled by accessible ultrasound technology. SSA has been shaped by many factors, but at its foundation is the invisibility of female labor. Sons represent “security”, as well as an “essential financial income-earning asset” for the household (Purewal, 2018, p. 30); meanwhile, daughters’ domestic labor in the realm of social reproduction is rendered invisible due to what Silvia Federici terms as the separation of production from social reproduction (Federici, 2004). SSA must be situated within neoliberalism, which further rationalizes this practice of gendered violence by presenting reproduction as a means of increasing productivity in the growing climate of economic inequality and absence of welfare policies. Patriarchal and paternalistic campaigns against sex selective abortion initiated by the BJP such as “Save the Daughter, Educate the Daughter” are passive revolution strategies that only entrench class oppression and misogyny further (Purewal, 2018). Instead of women having basic human rights, they are depicted as requiring charity in the form of “saving” or “protection”. This “victim discourse” prevents women’s labor from being recognized or valued in the realm of production, and continues to promote patriarchal, ultra-masculine violence against women in a neoliberal landscape.

**Anti-oppression Hydra political Resistance to Saffron Fascism**

In the midst of intensifying connections between class oppression, casteism, Islamophobia and misogyny, many subaltern groups have shown solidarity to act against interlocking oppressions. Dalit feminists and anti-caste Dalit associations, such as the Dalit Atyachar Ladat Samiti, have also long argued for Dalit “womanist praxis that dismantles all structures of caste and patriarchy” (N. Upadhyay, 2020, p. 467). Student protests erupted across the country after the CAA was passed, several of which were led by young Muslim women. Muslim women leading protests across the country has widespread significance in presenting counternarratives to the racial and patriarchal stereotype of the oppressed Muslim woman in need of saving. The sites of resistance and protest depicted mass cooperation, care, and non-violence. Women extended aid and support to one another, allowing for discussions of different subaltern experiences and the spreading of “feminist pedagogy” to create and foster hydra political agency to resist herculean power (Kadiwal, 2021, p.12).

**Conclusion**

Saffron fascism both depends on historical interlocking oppressions and exacerbates them via rationalizations of violence, passive revolution, and neoliberal globalization. In eradicating these interlocking oppressions and the accumulated violence they wield; we must continue to develop an understanding of subaltern experiences and the ways in which these individuals exhibit solidarity and hydra political agency to resist interlocking oppressions.

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## The Rise of Saffron Fascism: Intensification of Interlocking Oppressions in Modi’s India

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