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**Loose Coupling and Defining Deviance Down: Correctional Officers' Perceptions of
Organizational Responses to Mental Health and Well-being.**

By

Victoria M. Baker

Wilfrid Laurier University, B.A. (Honours), Criminology, 2015

THESIS

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In Criminology

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Abstract

Correctional work is characterized by high rates of occupational stress, which can produce a plethora of negative outcomes for the officers employed within such institutions. The present study examines Canadian provincial correctional officers' perceptions of how occupational stress is created within the context of their employment. Through in-depth interviews with 11 correctional officers, I examine the political, organizational, and cultural factors that are perceived to negatively affect employee stress and well-being. From this analysis, I present three principal arguments. First, I uncover how correctional officers perceive ministerial policies to be loosely coupled from frontline practices. I argue that this loose coupling can create occupational stress, as correctional officers may experience frustration in navigating daily tasks in accordance with orders that they perceive to be irrelevant or impractical. Second, I argue that occupational stress that is connected to ministerial policies can be further amplified by institutional managers, as ministry guidelines are enforced within institutional operations. Further, I contend that officers perceive institutional supervisors to normalize traumatic and stressful events that occur in the line of duty. Third, I examine how the occupational culture exhibited within correctional work, which reflects notions of hegemonic masculinity, maintains the potential to trivialize occupational stress. I argue that this occupational culture places emphasis on the adoption of physical, psychological, and emotional strength, which may lead officers to perceive colleagues struggling with occupational stress or mental health concerns in a negative manner.

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Chapter One: Introduction

The Canadian correctional system is organized into federal, provincial and territorial institutions and has three primary objectives: the care and custody of inmates; the provision of programs that contribute to the rehabilitation of offenders and their successful reintegration into their respective communities; and the statutory release and supervision of incarcerated individuals¹ (Corrections and Conditional Release Act, 1992, s. 5). Within the province of Ontario, the Ministry of Community Safety and Correctional Services (MCSCS) maintains, operates, and monitors all correctional facilities. Correctional work has been described as being unique from many other occupations in both its context and purpose (Armstrong & Griffin, 2004). Correctional officers are tasked with numerous responsibilities such as keeping order within jails, supervising inmate activities, inspecting correctional facilities to ensure that safety and security standards are upheld, searching inmates for contraband items, as well as counting and escorting offenders (Griffiths & Cunningham, 2000). Collectively, these tasks seek to create a safe, secure, and humane environment, while supervising and securing a population that has often been described as unwilling to cooperate, being held against their will, and potentially violent (Armstrong & Griffin, 2004; Hogan, Lambert & Griffin, 2013; Tracy, 2004). Correctional officers work in a profession characterized as demanding, dangerous, and dirty, where occupational stress is commonplace (Armstrong & Griffin, 2004; Tracy, 2004; Vickovic, 2015). A 2012 report by former Ontario Ombudsman, André Marin, acknowledges not only the presence of occupational stress, but the lack of Canadian research on police and correctional officer stress, the persistent stigma that

¹ Throughout this thesis, I have used the terms ‘inmate’ and ‘offender’ in reference to the individuals who are imprisoned within correctional institutions. While there are ongoing discussions about these concepts in the literature, they are utilized in my writing in order to remain consistent with both the literature that has informed this project and the perspectives of my participants.

surrounds the repercussions of that stress, and the lack of supportive resources presently available.

As a result of the growing government and public awareness of occupational stress among correctional officers, there is increasing research in this area (Armstrong & Griffin, 2004; Lambert, Hogan & Allen, 2006). According to Lancefield, Lennings, and Thomas (1997), occupational stress is defined as “a disturbance of an individual’s physiological, psychological, or social functioning in response to a condition in the work environment, which poses a perceived threat to an individual’s well-being or safety” (p. 206) In defining occupational stress specifically in the context of correctional work, Cullen et al., (1985) describe this concept as “feelings of work-related hardness, tension, frustration, and distress” (as cited in Lambert & Hogan, 2010, p. 161). Thus, occupational stress occurs when one’s physiological, psychological, and/or social functioning is impaired due to negative feelings or symptoms that arise from the stress in one’s employment. Due to the increasing awareness and accounts of posttraumatic stress disorder (PTSD) and suicides among first responders, the recognition of occupational stress and mental health crises within correctional work is becoming more prevalent. In fact, an investigative journalist report from the Canadian Broadcasting Corporation notes that approximately one-quarter of Canadian correctional officers suffer from PTSD (Purdon, 2015). This report also notes that between January and April of 2014, eight correctional officers died by suicide (*ibid*). Similarly, a study conducted by Rosine (1992) demonstrates that the rate of PTSD among correctional officers nearly paralleled that of Vietnam War veterans.

In 2003, the Union of Canadian Correctional Officers (UCCO) released a quantitative report that examined the relationship between working conditions and the health, safety, and general well-being of correctional officers in Canadian prisons (see Samak, 2003). Findings from this study highlighted a number of concerning factors with respect to the working conditions that

correctional officers are exposed to during the course of their employment. Samak noted that “the stress engendered by the working conditions of federal correctional officers in correctional facilities and the spill-over and impact of this stress on the officers’ private lives is a problem that deserves more attention than it now receives” (*ibid*, p. 58). Since the release of this publication, there has been little qualitative research that explores Canadian correctional officers’ perceptions and lived experiences with respect to occupational stress and their well-being.

The present qualitative analysis seeks to address this lacuna in knowledge by providing a micro-analysis of how Canadian provincial correctional officers perceive and experience the onset of occupational stress in relation to the political, organizational, and cultural elements that characterize this particular profession. Drawing upon concepts of “loose coupling” (Meyer & Rowan, 1977), the “trickle-down effect” (Vaughan, 1997), the “normalization of deviance” (Vaughan, 1996), and “hegemonic masculinity” (Connell, 1987), my research seeks to answer the following three research questions: (1) How are ministerial practices and policies perceived to affect (both positively and negatively) the occupational health and well-being of correctional officers? (2) How are institutional practices, and interactions with supervisory staff members, perceived to impact the incitement or mitigation of occupational stress for correctional officers? And; (3) How does the occupational culture of correctional work influence officers’ perceptions, attitudes, and understandings of occupational stress?

To inform my analysis, I conducted 11 in-depth, semi-structured interviews with both actively employed and recently retired (five years or less) provincial correctional officers across Ontario. From my analysis, I demonstrate the role that bureaucratic actors are perceived to play in shaping the facilitation of occupational stress, mainly through the loose coupling between ministerial rhetoric and ground-level operations. I then illustrate the position that supervisory staff

members are believed to serve in increasing the prevalence of stress within the institution, as policies trickle-down into frontline practice, and problematic and/or stressful events are normalized. Finally, I explore how the occupational culture of corrections affects officers' perceptions and understandings of occupational health and well-being, as officers learn to prioritize physical, psychological, and emotional strength while trivializing signs of weakness.

Chapter Outline

Chapter Two: Review of Literature, provides a synopsis of the available literature on correctional work and institutionalism that is relevant to the present study, and situates my research within the context of existing empirical work on this topic area. Chapter Three: Research Methodology, outlines the data collection and analytic methods used to make sense of correctional officers' perceptions of organizational response and management of their health and well-being. My findings begin in Chapter Four: "Us vs. Them" – Loose Coupling in Policy and Practice, where I discuss the disjuncture or "loose coupling" (Meyer & Rowan, 1977) between policies created by MCSCS and correctional officers' frontline practices. Next, in Chapter Five: "Accept It and Move On" – The Trickle-Down Effect and Normalization of Stress, I examine how occupational stress that is related to the disjuncture at the ministerial level "trickles-down" (Vaughan, 1997) into the institution through enforcement by institutional managers and supervisors. I then explain how managers and supervisors are believed to normalize troublesome and/or stressful events that occur within the institution, which is perceived to further amplify occupational stress for correctional officers. Chapter Six: "Pull Yourself Together" – Hegemonic Masculinity and Occupational Culture, explores how undertones of "hegemonic masculinity" (Connell, 1987) within correctional work facilitates a culture that trivializes the occupational health and well-being of correctional officers. Finally, Chapter Seven: Discussion and Conclusion, provides a summary of the key

findings and research contributions. I conclude with an identification of the limitations of the study, and provide recommendations for future areas of research.

Chapter Two: Review of Literature

The Canadian provincial correctional system is responsible for overseeing all offenders sentenced to two years less a day, or less, as well as all individuals who are placed on remand or are being detained (Crichton & Ricciardelli, 2016; Ekstedt & Griffiths, 1998; Griffiths & Cunningham, 2000). The provincial correctional system has historically undergone a number of modifications in terms of its central practices and policies. In turn, these alterations have modified both how correctional facilities operate and how staff members within such institutions perform their duties. For example, under the Government of Canada led by Stephen Harper's Conservative Party from 2006 to 2015, both federal and provincial correctional institutions were required to expand facility capacities. These expansions were implemented in order to align with the Conservative punishment agenda, which "aimed to increase the use and length of prison sentences with fewer chances of parole" (Piché, Kleuskens & Walby, 2017, p. 26; see also Crichton & Ricciardelli, 2016). As a result of the Conservatives' 'tough on crime' approach, provincial and federal correctional centres undertook the addition of approximately 6300 beds for inmates, the construction of 23 new prisons and jails, and 17 renovations to pre-existing facilities as of 2008 (Piché, Kleuskens & Walby, 2017). The addition of new correctional facilities and increased unit capacities were justified by the Conservatives in order to "alleviate rampant crowding associated with longstanding increases in the number of persons awaiting the conclusion of bail proceedings, trials, and sentencing hearings" and to better fit Canada's changing offender profile (*ibid*, p. 27; Piché, 2014). Thus, provincial correctional facilities have become an ostensibly permanent inclusion within Canadian society (Piché, Kleuskens & Walby, 2017).

In what follows, I begin with a review of the available literature on correctional work, narrowing my focal point into occupational stress and mental health crises among correctional officers. Next, I provide a brief review of the literature on institutional theory, with specific

attention to the concepts of “loose coupling” (Meyer & Rowan, 1977), the “trickle-down” effect (Vaughan, 1997), and the “normalization of deviance” (Vaughan, 1996), which are employed to make sense of my participants’ experiences.

Organizational Structure and Culture of Corrections

Organizational structure is defined as “how an organization arranges, organizes, and operates itself” (Lambert, Hogan & Allen, 2006, p. 229). Organizational structure can include factors such as promotional opportunity for staff, integration, formalization, instrumental communication, and centralization, as well as the availability of resources, or lack thereof (Lambert, Hogan & Jiang, 2010). The organizational structure of correctional work adheres to a hierarchical and bureaucratic fashion, which is founded in accordance with a paramilitary structure (Ricciardelli, 2017; Spencer & Ricciardelli, 2016; Stohr et al., 2000). As Farkas and Manning explain, correctional work is characterized by “distinctions of status, rank, chain of command, and privilege” (1997, p. 55). Organizational decisions and directives are issued following a top-down approach, made by upper-level management and subsequently adhered to by middle-level management and frontline officers. In Canadian facilities, these directives are generally divided into standing orders (or standard operating procedures) and post orders (Griffiths & Cunningham, 2000). Standing orders reflect policies and practices that are outlined by governmental legislation, such as the *Corrections and Conditional Release Act*, and provide officers with a set of rules and procedural instructions for carrying out specific duties within the institution. Post orders outline responsibilities for officers with regards to particular positions within the institution.

While standing orders and post orders are derived from management, frontline correctional officers are tasked with monitoring the facility and making “complex, difficult decisions, usually alone with minimal supervision or review” (Farkas & Manning, 1997, p. 55). Officers are

empowered to utilize discretion in determining how orders are followed and in how they choose to exercise authority over inmates in accordance with prison rules and regulations (*ibid*). In this sense, correctional officers are perceived by inmates as “a figure of power and dispenser of authority” (Toch, 1978, p. 21). However, correctional officers’ “authority can be undermined or unsupported by management” (Crichton & Ricciardelli, 2016, p. 430), reducing the overall level of occupational autonomy that they possess.

As Spencer and Ricciardelli (2016) state, organizational culture refers to “the values, beliefs, material objects, and tacit knowledge linked with a fulltime occupational role that allows its practitioners to learn from the past what to expect in the future, and drives...modes of thinking and feeling within an institution” (p. 3). Organizational culture plays a key role in the ways that employees within an organization make sense of their individual behaviours and group actions through the formation of occupational schemas – cognitive, structured knowledge bases that assist employees in simplifying, managing, and interpreting information (Bloor & Dawson, 1994). Correctional officers are placed in a unique position when it comes to identifying with occupational culture, as they “are situated at the intersection of their own occupational [ideologies], prisoner culture, and broader societal discourse regarding [inmates and incarceration], which leaves them to negotiate between these different meaning systems in their interactions, interpretations, and occupational positioning” (Spencer & Ricciardelli, 2016, p. 3).

The culture within the correctional institution is one that is heavily built upon notions of masculinity (Ricciardelli, 2015, 2017; Zimmer, 1987). According to Connell (1987, 1995, 2002), “masculinities are always precarious as masculinity as a gender performance is responding to changes in gender attitudes and social practices as well as structural and cultural changes in society to maintain a patriarchal system...that places men on top” (as cited in Ricciardelli, 2017, p. 4). Of

particular importance within correctional work is the concept of “hegemonic masculinity” (Connell, 1987). Hegemonic masculinity is understood as the ‘idealized’ form of masculinity, which is recognized to be “unachievable, yet always symbolic and reproduced within the context of patriarchal relationships and structures” (Ricciardelli, 2017, p. 4). Hegemonic masculinity is characterized by cultural traits including authority, invulnerability, physicality, toughness, self-regulation, and fearlessness (*ibid*). Research on corrections has found that female officers within the institution must also subscribe to these values and that they often develop techniques that are “defeminized” in order to display a type of “pseudo-masculinity” (see Zimmer, 1987; Berg & Budnick, 1986; Gross, 1981).

The Correctional Officer

Correctional officers are the frontline workers – they are “the primary mechanism by which institutional policies and regulations are implemented and the inmates are controlled” (Griffiths & Cunningham, 2000, p. 179). According to Crichton and Ricciardelli (2016), “as the frontline staff in correctional institutions, [correctional officers] must negotiate changing penal policies, objectives, and responsibilities, all tied to those in their custody” (pp. 427-428). Correctional officers largely determine the success or failure of an institution, based on the degree to which they fulfill their duties, levels of support and cooperation among frontline and supervisory staff, and through the relationships that officers foster with inmates whom they supervise (Britton, 2016; Lambert et al., 2010; Vickovic, 2015). Contrary to other occupations in law enforcement (such as policing, probation or parole officers, and security guards), correctional officers remain confined in a singular work environment for the duration of their shift alongside inmates while working in a range or standing control post (Bensimon, 2005). Officers serve a “direct role in solving inmate problems, settling inmate disputes, disciplining inmates, and acting as intermediaries between

inmates and...the correctional bureaucracy” (Farkas, 1999, p. 496; Johnson, 1996). Despite the pivotal role that correctional officers hold, little is known about their experiences working within these institutions.

The role of a correctional officer has been described as being one of the most dangerous occupations in the contemporary world (Armstrong & Griffin, 2004; United States Department of Justice, 2000). They are tasked with maintaining order and safety in an environment where they are largely outnumbered, surrounded by individuals either convicted of or awaiting conviction for various criminal charges, and facing the fact that they can risk being victimized by violence or exposed to traumatic events at any given time (Gordon & Baker, 2015; Schaufeli & Peeters, 2000). According to Correctional Service Canada (2017), traumatic events that correctional officers might become involved in or witness during their employment may include hostage takings, inmate murders and suicides, inmate-on-officer assaults, inmate-on-inmate assaults, colleague deaths in the line of duty, receiving threats against oneself or his or her family, and officer suicides.

Stressors in Correctional Work

Empirical evidence demonstrates correctional work has higher rates of employee stress in comparison to many other occupations (Armstrong & Griffin, 2004; Cheek & Di Stefano Miller, 1983; Crichton & Ricciardelli, 2016; Cullen et al., 1985; Lambert et al., 2015; Lambert, Hogan & Allen, 2006; Lambert, Hogan & Griffin, 2008; Lambert, Hogan & Tucker, 2009; Lambert, Kelley & Hogan, 2013; Lambert & Paoline, 2008; Vickovic, 2015). Occupational stress can be attributed to a number of different work-related factors, such as the occupational environment, interpersonal relations with colleagues, and the specific requirements that are associated with a profession (Vickovic, 2015). Stressors within the correctional environment are typically dichotomized into two groups: occupational characteristics and organizational structure (Lambert, Cluse-Tolar &

Hogan, 2007).

Occupational Characteristics

The environment inside the correctional facility is often cited as a source of stress in itself. For example, the physical setting within the institution, interactions that occur with inmates, and the health and safety risks that officers face as a result of their employment have been identified as factors that can negatively impact the occupational health and well-being of officers (Cheek & Di Stefano Miller, 1983; Clemente, Reig-Botella & Coloma, 2015; Ghaddar, Mateo & Sanchez, 2008; Vickovic, 2015).

The internal and external structure of the correctional institution is vastly different in comparison to that of many other occupations. Correctional facilities are an example of Goffman's (1961) concept of the 'total institution', based upon their "barrier to social intercourse with the outside and to departure that is often built right into the physical plant, such as locked doors, high walls, [and] barbed wire" (p. 4). From an outside glance, prisons are distinguished by their tall cement walls, security cameras, barbed wire fences, steel bars, and large gates (Armstrong & Griffin, 2004). Upon entering a correctional institution, the environment is typically structured around a set of 'pods', which officers enter through the use of a large steel door commonly referred to as the 'grille'². Correctional facilities are often characterized by excessive noise levels, cluttered and/or dirty spaces, dense populations, and lack of freedom and privacy, all of which maintain the potential to incite physiological and psychological distress among staff members (Armstrong & Griffin, 2004; Bierie, 2012).

Total institutions are described as containing two separate groups: inmates and staff. According to Goffman (1961), "inmates typically live in the institution and have restricted contact

² This explanation of the internal setting within the correctional institution was provided by the officers who were interviewed in this study.

with the world outside the walls, [whereas] staff often operate on an eight-hour day and are socially integrated into the outside world” (p. 7). As previously stated, correctional officers are required to work face-to-face with inmates on a daily basis. Literature on correctional work demonstrates that the interactions that correctional officers have with inmates and the relationships which they foster with one another are oftentimes associated with the level of stress that employees experience (Gordon & Baker, 2015; Misis et al., 2013). The inmate population that resides within the correctional institution is often described as unwilling to cooperate, being held against their will, unpredictable, and as potentially violent (Armstrong & Griffin, 2004; Lambert & Paoline, 2005; Vickovic, 2015).

Based on various figures from the United States Bureau of Labor Statistics, correctional work is among the professions with the highest rates of nonfatal, work-related injuries (Konda et al., 2013). A 2014 article published by the Ontario Public Service Employees Union (OPSEU) demonstrates a stark rise in the number of assaults on Canadian provincial correctional officers, increasing from 321 in 2010 to an “all-time high” of 855 in 2013. Similarly, between January to July of 2014, MCSCS reported that 448 assaults were committed against staff members (*ibid*). In addition to the increase of inmate-on-officer violence, there has allegedly been an upsurge in the amount of force that has been utilized by guards in resolving situations with inmates, including the use of physical restraint, pepper spray, and/or tear gas (MacCharles, 2012). Together, the increase in inmate-on-officer and officer-on-inmate violence has contributed to forming an increasingly tense climate within modern prisons.

Correctional officers are required to perform tasks that can place them at risk of infectious disease contraction, such as conducting strip and cavity searches, running urinalysis tests, and cleaning up inmate bodily fluids (Hartley et al., 2013). These responsibilities place officers in close

contact with saliva, fecal matter, urine, semen, and blood – all of which may potentially contain hepatitis B, hepatitis C, tuberculosis, human immunodeficiency virus (HIV), and other sexually transmitted diseases. Studies that examined correctional officers' attitudes on working with infected inmates have found that officers may fear exposure to infectious disease (Hartley et al., 2013; Keeton, 2003; McKee, Markova & Power, 1995). Officers often ascribed their fear of contracting communicable disease to fears of being assaulted, particularly in situations where blood, semen, feces, or urine may be thrown at them, or in the event that they were bitten (Hartley et al., 2013; Mahaffey & Marcus, 1995).

Organizational Structure

Research on organizational structure identified four major features of organizations that can generate stress within institutions: centralization, instrumental communication, integration, and legitimacy (Lambert, Hogan & Allen, 2006). Encapsulated in each of these forms of organizational structure are stressors that correctional officers may experience in relation to occupational responsibilities, lack of supervisory support, and poor relationships with coworkers.

Centralization refers to “the degree of control employees [maintain] in making decisions that affect both the organization [as a whole] and their [individual] jobs” (Lambert, Hogan & Allen, 2006, p. 230). Centralization is shown to have an inverse effect on correctional officers' occupational stress; as control over one's work environment decreases, stress increases (*ibid*). An example of centralization within correctional work is the requirement to follow managerial orders, limiting the amount of discretion and autonomy that correctional officers have while fulfilling their duties. Consequently, correctional officers may find themselves following orders that they do not necessarily agree with or feel comfortable exercising.

Instrumental communication is defined as “the information that employees receive about their tasks, jobs, organizational processes, organizational issues, and concerns in general”

(Lambert, Hogan & Allen, 2006, p. 231). Role conflict, ambiguity, and overload are all examples of instrumental communication that can result in the onset of stress. Role conflict occurs “when behaviours for a given job or position are inconsistent with one another” (Lambert, Hogan & Allen, 2006). Role ambiguity transpires when instructions and/or responsibilities are not clearly defined, nor understood by employees (Lambert, Hogan & Allen, 2006; Vickovic, 2015). Lastly, role overload is a term used to describe “situations in which employees feel that there are too many responsibilities or activities expected of them in light of the time available, their abilities, and other constraints” (Bolino & Turnley, 2005, p. 741; Rizzo, House & Lirtzman, 1970). For instance, instrumental communication can be jeopardized in correctional work within the contending ideologies in penal practice between punitive and rehabilitative approaches to incarceration, as role conflict, ambiguity, and overload can occur simultaneously.

Integration is considered to be “the extent that an organization allows and stresses that different work groups work together in cooperation and coordination to accomplish the major tasks and goals of the organization, or, oppositely, pits them against one another” (Lambert, Hogan & Allen, 2006). Integration can be observed in correctional work through the relationship that supervisors maintain with correctional officers. These relationships can either assist or hinder frontline workers in adequately performing their job, demonstrated through the inverse relationship between supervisory support and stress (Armstrong & Griffin, 2004; Hogan, Lambert & Griffin, 2013; Lambert, Kelley & Hogan, 2013).

Lastly, legitimacy is classified as “the perceived degree of fairness and justice found within an organization” (Lambert, Hogan & Allen, 2006, p. 231), which is primarily observed in the ways that organizational decisions are made and employees are treated. Simply put, when correctional officers feel as though they are not being treated fairly or justly at work, the likelihood of

experiencing stress increases (Lambert, Hogan & Allen, 2006).

Institutional Theory

Correctional facilities, like other institutions, are constantly striving to remain up-to-date, legitimate, and viable to the public. The logic and processes that are embedded within an institution are often dependent on the concept of “institutional work”, which refers to “the practices aimed at creating, maintaining, and disrupting institutions” (Guo, 2016, p. 101; Lawrence & Suddaby, 2006). Institutional practices are often conducted in connection to a number of different factors including organizational culture, normative expectations, regulated rules, and shared meanings (Guo, 2016). Institutions also operate in accordance to fluctuating levels of autonomy and discretion that are demarcated amongst different organizational actors. Depending on the role of the organizational actor, a set of “predetermined typifications” tend to guide what are considered to be appropriate actions in terms of how and/or what institutional decisions can be made (Berger & Luckmann, 1966; DeMichele, 2014). Organizations operate in accordance to ‘structuration’, where “rules and policies become institutionalized through a dual process in which organizational mandates shape the individuals within, while the organization itself is adjusted and reproduced by the same individual practitioners” (DeMichele, 2014, p. 552; Giddens, 1984). The application of institutional theories to occupational studies can both reveal and justify stability and change within an organization, and explore the structural nature and cultural sensibilities of an institution (DeMichele, 2014). In order to understand how employees within institutions make sense of organizational dogma and procedures, and subsequently shape their actions and behaviours, an institutional analysis is necessary. The following subsections briefly introduce three concepts associated with institutional and organizational theory that will be further expanded upon, interconnected, and applied to within the findings chapters of this thesis.

“Loose Coupling”

The policies that guide organizational practices are often connected to a number of state agencies and/or political bodies, which require institutions that fall within their jurisdiction to abide by specific procedures (DeMichele, 2014). Organizations under the influence of state and bureaucratic governance tend to shape their agency values, beliefs, and meaning systems to fit such ideologies for fear of facing negative repercussions if not sustained. However, empirical research in organizational sociology has questioned the extent to which formal administrative blueprints are truly upheld within actual work activities and organizational processes (Meyer & Rowan, 1977; Weick, 1976). Meyer and Rowan (1977), for example, argue that frontline practices are different or loosely coupled to prevailing institutional and bureaucratic beliefs regarding how an organization should function and in how responsibilities should be carried out; institutional actors often utilize discretion in meeting various components of the agency’s philosophy, mission, agenda, and practices (see also DeMichele, 2014). Although it has been recognized that ground-level operations are often loosely coupled from institutional policies, such guidelines are still enforced by managerial staff as they “trickle-down” (Vaughan, 1997) into ground-level operations.

The “Trickle-Down” Effect

Traditionally, the concept of the “trickle-down” model in organizations has been employed to understand how “the perceptions, attitudes, or behaviours of one individual (usually a manager) influence the perceptions, attitudes, or behaviours of a second individual (usually a supervisor), which then influence the perceptions, attitudes, or behaviours of a third individual (usually a subordinate)” (Wo, Ambrose & Schminke, 2015, p. 1848). However, sociologists have begun to apply this archetype in exploring the transfer or “trickle-down” of policy decisions made at the executive level to ground-level operations (Vaughan, 1997). Under the trickle-down approach, policies are crafted by bureaucratic and institutional members, which are passed down to top-level

institutional managers who then hold frontline staff members accountable in abiding by said guidelines in daily practices. The importance of examining the trickle-down effect with respect to organizational policies is often connected to understanding how problematic events within occupations can be incited by flaws at the administrative level that dictate institutional operations (Vaughan, 1997). When troublesome events occur within an organization that are provoked by or related to institutional policies and practices, bureaucratic representatives, supervisors, and employees might engage in the process of normalization (Vaughan, 1996).

“Normalization of Deviance”

In many organizations, employees follow a ‘rule of etiquette’ that prompts them to overlook mistakes and deviant activities that occur within the context of the workplace (Millman, 1976; Shaffir & Pawluch, 2003). Thus, workers essentially permit behaviours and events to occur within their occupation that may have significant consequences for the well-being and safety of employees and their organizational clientele. Due to the fact that employees might choose to disregard institutional problems, activities that may be considered ‘deviant’ become ‘normalized’ as part of typical workplace routines (Vaughan, 1997). It is important to acknowledge that in the normalization of deviance, employees do not necessarily lose sight of the risks that workplace practices present, rather they choose to define down the severity of the ramifications that such activities may engender. The normalization of deviance may also rely heavily upon the adoption of techniques of neutralization, as workers attempt to “rationalize, justify, assuage, or explain problematic actions and situations to others, as well as to themselves” (Shaffir & Pawluch, 2003, pp. 904-905).

Situating the Present Study

The available literature on correctional work and institutional theory provides a useful

framework for studying correctional officers' perceptions of occupational health and well-being. Existing empirical research on correctional officers principally focuses on the risk factors for the onset of stress, organizational structure, and the ways in which demographic variables such as gender, age, race, and educational attainment can either augment or mitigate stress. Although these studies are indeed useful and have informed the present study, the majority are conducted using quantitative methodologies, which do not consider frontline correctional officers' lived experiences and the perceived implications of occupational stress. Further, there is a gap in the knowledge base pertaining to the experiences of Canadian correctional officers – most notably, those in provincial facilities – as most of the existing research has been undertaken within the United States of America, where practices and policies differ.

This study is focused on exploring Canadian provincial correctional officers' perceptions of how occupational stress is created within the context of their employment. More specifically, this analysis will be conducted through an exploration of three occupational spheres, presenting officers' understandings of political, organizational, and cultural factors with respect to occupational stress and well-being. By examining correctional officers' perceptions, a more in-depth understanding of the dynamics that incite and maintain stress can be achieved, as well as the implications that arise as a result of occupational stress. Further, these firsthand narratives can lead to a number of theoretical and practical contributions to the available literature and inform policy as it pertains to correctional work in Canada.

Chapter Three: Research Methodology

In this chapter, I begin by describing constructivist grounded theory and how I utilized a constructivist grounded theory approach in the design of my study. Next, I describe how I collected, analyzed, and theorized the data. I conclude with a self-reflexive passage detailing my experiences in conducting the research, and the role emotionality played throughout the research process.

Constructivist Grounded Theory

I adopted a constructivist grounded theory approach to the data collection and analysis of my data. Constructivist grounded theory requires researchers to operate under “systematic, yet flexible guidelines for collecting and analyzing qualitative data to construct theories from the data themselves. Thus, researchers construct a theory that is ‘grounded’ in their data” (Charmaz, 2014, p. 1). Data is derived through our observations, interactions, and documents, which are gathered about a particular topic or setting (Charmaz, 2006, 2014). Utilizing constructivist grounded theory allowed for reflexivity, continual revisitation of data, and revision of my research questions (Charmaz, 2014). The constructivist technique to theory selection and data analysis differs from many other approaches in the sense that it rejects notions of objectivity (*ibid*). Rather than prompting researchers to overlook their personal characteristics (such as one’s privileges, preconceptions, knowledge, and academic background), constructivist grounded theory encourages researchers to acknowledge such factors and to be reflective in how these can shape both study design and analyses (*ibid*).

As a researcher, my academic background is in the field of criminology, and my research interests are structured around mental health, careers in law enforcement, and organizational policies, as well as the ways in which these phenomena interact with one another in the social

world. While completing my undergraduate degree at Wilfrid Laurier University, I took a research position with the City of Brantford, where I became involved in the creation of a mental health strategic framework and worked closely with a number of local service providers. This project greatly enhanced my knowledge of mental health and policy development. I do not have any experience working within law enforcement, but I have always been passionate about both pursuing a career in this employment sector and researching such populations. Together, these factors inspired the present study.

Study Design and Data Collection

When I first began this study, the preliminary research questions that I sought to answer were:

- 1) How do correctional officers understand and experience organizational policies, practices, and responses to occupational stress or mental health crises?
- 2) What might facilitate or prevent officers from accessing resources designed to address occupational stress or mental health crisis?
- 3) What do correctional officers feel that their organization should implement or offer to mitigate the prevalence of occupational stress and mental health crises?

These questions were created by identifying gaps in the available literature pertaining to correctional work and organizational health and wellness. In order to collect data that captured correctional officers' perceptions and understandings, I conducted 11 in-depth interviews using a semi-structured interview guide³. This interview guide was revised following the completion of the first three interviews in order to address new questions that were arising based on preliminary

³ See Appendix A for preliminary interview guide.

data and common themes of discussion⁴.

After data collection and analysis, these preliminary research questions were reformulated to align with the data that was emerging within my participants' transcripts. The new research questions were:

- 1) How are ministerial practices and policies perceived to affect (both negatively and positively) the occupational health and well-being of correctional officers?
- 2) How are institutional practices, and interactions with supervisory staff members, perceived to impact the incitement or mitigation of occupational stress for correctional officers?
- 3) How does the occupational culture of correctional work influence officers' perceptions, attitudes, and understandings of occupational stress?

The complete sample (n=11) is made up of seven presently employed and four recently retired provincial correctional officers in Ontario with a range of 14 to 34 years of work experience. Participants were both male (n=7) and female (n=4) and represented four out of the seven regional provincial correctional divisions in Ontario⁵. Interviews ranged in length from one hour to three hours, with the average interview lasting about an hour and a half. Nine interviews were conducted face-to-face, and two were conducted over the telephone. In person interviews were completed individually, in private, and in locations that were selected by participants in which they felt comfortable. All interviews were digitally voice recorded and transcribed verbatim, with the participants' consent⁶.

Participants were recruited through the use of convenience and snowball sampling. Upon

⁴ See Appendix B for revised interview guide.

⁵ See Appendix C for map of Ontario's provincial correctional regions.

⁶ See Appendix D for Letter of Information/Consent Form.

receiving ethical clearance⁷ from Wilfrid Laurier University's Research Ethics Board (REB#5177), I disseminated a recruitment letter⁸ via Facebook, identifying my status as a graduate student and my university affiliation, and describing the research questions and objectives, methodology, requirements of participants, description of the risks and benefits that the study posed, and an overview of anonymity and confidentiality principles. Friends and family members shared this post, which reached a number of correctional officers who contacted me expressing interest. After conducting my first two interviews, my participants recommended colleagues who I could contact for future interviews. In addition to recruiting participants online, I also attended a local retirement party with a part-time faculty member from Wilfrid Laurier University to distribute recruitment letters. One of the officers at the retirement party acted as a gatekeeper, introducing me to his fellow officers and inquiring about their willingness to participate. Finally, I contacted one of the seven regional chairs of OPSEU's Retired Members Division for correctional employees and requested that he disseminated my call for participation. This organizational representative passed my recruitment letter along to his fellow regional chairs, who emailed the document to correctional officers retired within the last five years, as well as to some officers who were still presently employed.

Coding

Once I completed and transcribed 11 interviews, I began to code and analyze the data. For the purpose of analysis, transcripts were examined through the use of *Nvivo 11: Qualitative Data Analysis*, a software program designed to assist in organizing and coding qualitative data. Data was coded through two phases: initial and focused coding (Charmaz, 2014).

⁷ See Appendix E for Research Ethics Board Approval.

⁸ See Appendix F for Recruitment Letter/Call for Participation

The process of initial coding “forms the link between collecting data and developing an emergent theory to understand and account for [the] data” (Charmaz, 2014, p. 343). I engaged in ‘line-by-line’ (*ibid*) or incident-to-incident coding for the first four transcripts, noting what appeared to be the most prominent and persistent codes. Here, I identified codes such as: lack of care or concern for officers, institutional changes, recalling traumatic incidents, and lacking faith in Critical Incident Stress Management (CISM) or the Employee Assistance Program (EAP). My initial codes were then operationalized and tested throughout the process of focused coding.

Focused coding requires the researcher to “concentrate on the most frequent and/or significant codes among [the] initial codes [within] large batches of data” (Charmaz, 2014, p. 343). During this phase of coding, I began to outline the parameters of what findings fit within recurring codes, which accurately captured the emergent data. For example, the code *cultural expectations of ‘suck it up’* was related to any instances of being perceived by colleagues as weak, feeling embarrassed of seeking help for mental health and/or occupational stress, notions of masculinity, the importance of persevering through an incident, and occupational bravado. I re-coded all of my interview transcripts and field notes, applying the focused codes that I initially created, while adding new codes to account for the data that did not fit into pre-existing categories.

Analyzing Through Memo Writing and Concept Mapping

While collecting and analyzing data, I began writing analytic memos about emergent themes, patterns, and trends. Memo writing enabled me to remain interactive with my data, as I was continually keeping track of connections between data, crystalizing future research questions, and tracking ideas, hunches, codes, and frames for analysis (Charmaz, 2014). Throughout the research process, I engaged in memo writing at various stages including the completion of interviews, during coding, while identifying themes for empirical chapters, and at any other time

that new ideas or thoughts surrounding my data surfaced. For example, the following was written in an analytic memo after I finished coding for interview participants 1, 2, and 9:

While the officers each acknowledged that the inmates within the institution played a role in the creation of stress, a greater deal of frustration appeared to be caused by *management*. Officers routinely expressed feeling neglected by management following exposure to critical events (e.g. not receiving follow-up support) and framed managerial bodies as *lacking empathy, care, or concern* for employees.

(Analytic memo)

As I began my focused coding, my memos became more in-depth, detailed and comparative, as I noted similarities and differences across participants' experiences and perceptions. For instance, when comparing officers' experiences within institutionally-operated stress and wellness programs (CISM and EAP), the following was noted:

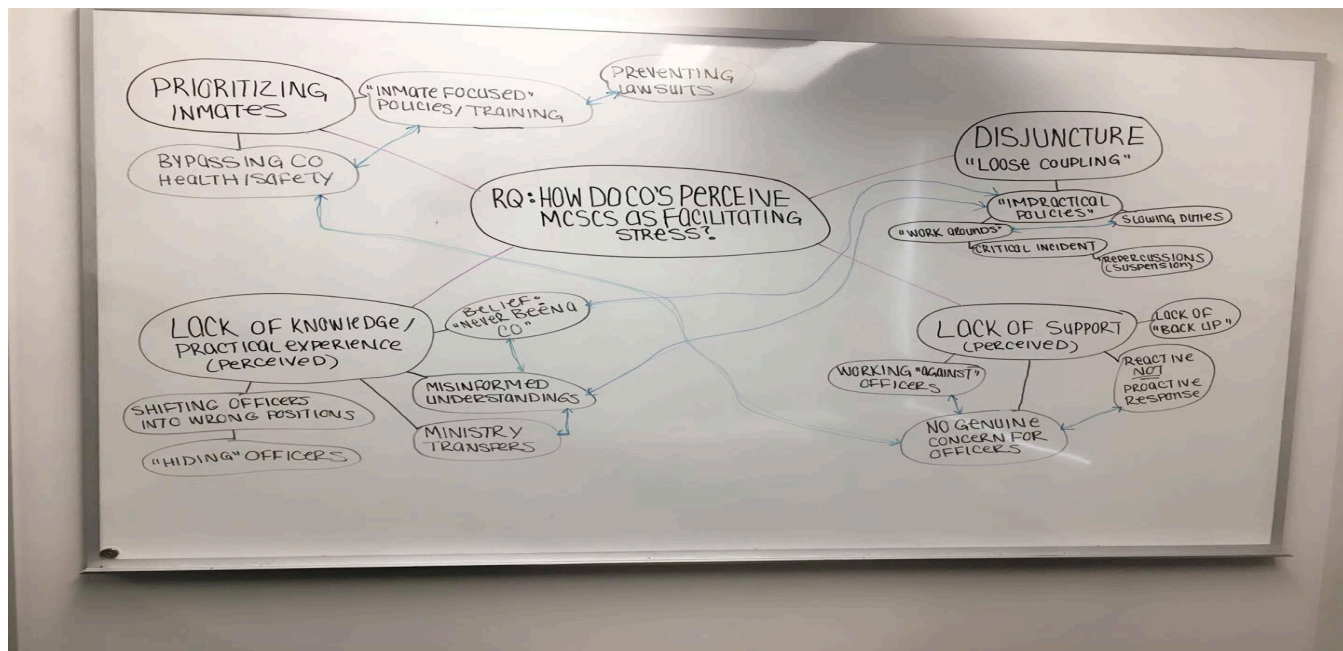
Officers varied in their perceptions of management depending on factors including their region, experiences, and years of employment. Some officers acknowledged that institutional managers were not *intentionally* creating stress (P8), but were simply *enforcing policies and requirements* as outlined by MCSCS, or, *lacked experience* working within the institution and therefore did not comprehend the consequences of their decisions. Other officers maintained the perspective that management, "in layman's terms, *simply [did not] give a shit* [about their employees]" (P2). These officers were much more critical in denoting how they viewed managers as actively constructing and reinforcing tension and strain within the institution. (Analytic memo)

Memo writing enabled me to organize my thoughts logically and to identify the relationships

among and between my various focused codes.

To further conceptualize and theorize my data, I engaged in concept mapping (Charmaz, 2014). Concept maps allowed me to determine the connections that I was seeing in my memos in a visual manner. To create a concept map, I began by writing my research question inside a circle. I then drew spokes out to themes and/or concepts that answered the research question and circled them. Finally, I drew linkages between themes to understand how various codes connected to one another to answer the research question. The concept map below (Figure 1) is an example of one of the preliminary concept maps that I created to outline Chapter Four, detailing how correctional officers perceived ministerial policies and practices as facilitating occupational stress.

Figure 1: Preliminary Concept Map – “Us vs. Them”



The purple lines lead to four major themes that essentially answered this particular research question: (1) disjuncture or “loose coupling” of policies and practices, (2) perceived lack of support from MCSCS, (3) perceived lack of correctional knowledge and experience among MCSCS personnel, and (4) the belief that MCSCS prioritizes the well-being of inmates over that of its

correctional officers. The teal and blue lines represent connections amongst subthemes within the larger concepts, as well as the relationships that existed between the four main concepts. For instance, it can be noted that when discussing the perceived lack of knowledge and experience among MCSCS personnel, participants attributed this gap to the development of MCSCS' misinformed understandings of what occurs in frontline practice. These misinformed understandings were then connected to the creation of policies that were loosely coupled from ground-level operations.

Qualitative Research, Reflexivity, and Emotionality

Reflexivity is a critical element in qualitative research processes, as a researcher's experiences, decisions, and interpretations fundamentally influence the production of knowledge that she generates (Bott, 2010; Charmaz, 2014). In being reflexive, one must self-consciously analyze the personal characteristics, interests, and standpoints that she maintains in the emergence and creation of narrative structure (Bott, 2010; Richardson, 1994; Rose, 1997). In other words, the researcher's identity can determine the degree to which she "fits" into the research that she sets out to conduct. Such personal characteristics are described theoretically as a researcher's positionality, which includes her age, gender, socioeconomic status, political stance, motivations, assumptions, and personal experiences (Rose, 1997; Widdowfield, 2000).

Entering my research, my positionality was that of a twenty-three-year-old, female, graduate student with no experience working in the field of corrections – an organization that is classified as a "closed setting"⁹ (Patenaude, 2004; Warren & Karner, 2015). This perspective made me inherently different from my participants, which would affect how open interviewees would

⁹ 'Closed settings' are locations that are not easily accessible to the general public. Access is acquired through a 'gatekeeper', an individual with the power to grant permission for initial entry.

be with me about their experiences (Rose, 1997). Throughout conducting my interviews, my position as an outsider seemed to work to my benefit rather than as a disadvantage. Participants openly discussed aspects of the job with me, knowing that I did not have any connection to individuals within their field, specifically their managers and/or representatives from MCSCS. My educational background also assisted me in garnering trust from my participants, as they felt comfortable speaking about sensitive topics such as stressful events and their mental health. For instance, when discussing the organization's CISM debriefings, one participant stated:

I would think that when a major situation happens, I would want somebody [to talk to] like yourself. Because of your experience, your training, and your education. I want somebody who basically came through the [process], [...] but having a different view and a different perspective to it shall we say. Because I can go “oh yeah, the ministry says you have to do this” [...] and a lot of times [the people they hire] can't even comprehend it (P10).

The role of researcher emotion has demonstrated that “in pursuit of certain research questions [and studies], an emotional impact on researchers is unavoidable” (Sanders, Munford, Liebenberg & Henaghan, 2014, p. 240). Emotionality in research is defined as “feelings, sensations, drives; the personal; that which is intimate; personally meaningful, possibly overwhelming; being touched at a deeper level; something that comes from somewhere within ourselves; and that which is truly human” (Gilbert, 2001, p. 9). The importance of “emotion work”, which entails “the act of evoking or shaping, as well as suppressing, feelings in oneself” and the presence of an “active stance vis-à-vis feeling” has been demonstrated by a number of researchers (Hochschild, 1979, p. 561 as cited in Hannem, 2014, p. 274). According to Hannem (2014), when conducting emotion work,

the actor does not passively experience her feelings in response to the situation, but

actively identifies the feeling that she believes to be the most appropriate...or believes herself *obligated* to feel, and engages in rationalization and emotion management to evoke the desired response (p. 274, *emphasis in original*).

As I entered my interviews, I knew that I would face the likelihood of hearing emotionally-laden stories from my participants. Given my prior work experience centered on mental health, I felt that I was emotionally equipped to handle such testimonials. In hindsight, while I was prepared to handle these situations, I found myself becoming affected emotionally following one particular interview after a participant began to cry while recalling a traumatic incident. I reflected on this experience in a journal entry upon returning home from the interview and acknowledged how this altered the way in which I conducted my research:

She began to cry and I immediately felt as though I had asked a question that was inappropriate and out of line, and as though I was intruding on aspects of someone's life that I had no right to inquire about. My demeanour for the remainder of the interview changed; I stopped probing the participant the way I would have with others regarding certain topics, afraid to bring up other memories which might cause her emotional discomfort. I was worried that if she continued to feel upset, I would lose the interviewee from my study. I attempted to make her feel more comfortable by reminding her that she did not need to provide an in-depth answer with specific information to that question and smiled gently at her to try and create a sense of ease (Research journal)

However, it was also important that I recognized the emotional impact that this had on me. Similar to Hannem's (2014) experience in interviewing, I undertook the practice of 'emotion work' by responding to my participant in a manner in which I believed to be appropriate.

Reflecting on my experiences in interviewing and my interactions with my participants

proved to be of value to the completion of data analysis. These occurrences would later reinforce to me the importance of drawing attention to the lived realities of correctional officers. Hearing officers' stories and noting the emotional impact that this line of work can have on individuals resonated strongly with me as it contrasted with negative societal perceptions and media accounts of correctional officers, who are often portrayed as brutal and careless people (Shannon & Page, 2014). I was able to truly witness the emotional effect that this line of employment can have on the officers who work in correctional institutions.

Although I feared the potential that my research might evoke recollections of distressing events and cause participants discomfort, several of the participants commended me for conducting this study. As one officer stated:

I think what you're doing is really good. I truly, truly hope that your finished product will bring some insight and bring some change to corrections. I really do [...] I think [corrections] needs to be explored and it needs to be researched. The benefits will come in the future if the research is actually listened to and done. There needs to be some quality research and investigation into all of this (P8).

Prior to conducting interviews, I highly anticipated that correctional officers would attribute the majority of work related stress to the interactions that they encountered while responding to and monitoring inmates within correctional facilities. After conducting my first three interviews, I quickly realized that my preconceptions were far from the reality of the lived experiences of correctional officers and their perceptions of occupational stress.

Chapter Four: “Us vs. Them” – Loose Coupling in Policy and Practice

In this chapter, I demonstrate how correctional officers believe that stress is created in part by upper-level organizational actors within MCSCS, resulting in perceived tensions between frontline officers and Ministry representatives. This contentious relationship has led to an “us vs. them” (P5) mentality that is evidenced most clearly in the perceived disjuncture between organizational policies that are implemented at the ministerial level, in contrast to correctional officers’ frontline practices. Correctional officers perceive the policies that govern their work as having the potential to create negative outcomes, both in terms of how daily procedures and tasks are carried out, and also for employee health and well-being. The consequences that can arise from the disconnect between policy and practice is referred to as ‘the dark side of organizations’. The dark side of organizations is described as

an event, activity, or circumstance, occurring in and/or produced by a formal organization, that deviates from both...normative standards or expectations, either in the fact of its occurrence or in its consequences, and produces a suboptimal outcome (Vaughan, 1999, p. 273).

Meyer and Rowan (1977) argue that the rhetoric that guides organizational policies and expectations seldom reflect the everyday operations within an institution (see also Weick, 1976). Organizational operations are founded upon the premise that daily actions are conducted in adherence to “formal blueprints [where] coordination is routine, rules and procedures are followed, and actual activities conform to the prescriptions of formal structure” (Meyer & Rowan, 1977, p. 342). The reality of organizational activities, however, demonstrates that organizations are often ‘loosely coupled’ to such discourses;

structural elements are only loosely linked to each other and to activities, rules are often violated, decisions are often unimplemented, or if implemented have uncertain

consequences...and evaluation and inspection systems are...rendered so vague as to provide little coordination (Meyer & Rowan, 1977, p. 343).

By working around institutional policies, employees may become enabled to successfully carry out occupational duties and minimize the added stress of guidelines that do not align with the realities and expectations of their profession. The process of sustaining differences between organizational legislation and actual workplace activities is known as the ‘negotiated order of organizations’ (Strauss, 1978), which is defined as “the consequence of give-and-take interactions within settings predefined by broader, and usually more formal rules, norms, laws, or expectations, in order to secure preferred ends (or ‘stakes’)” (Thomas, 1984, p. 214). Thus, while organizational protocols may be reflected to some extent, workers maneuver and manipulate these directives in order to better suit the actuality of the work environment at hand.

In what follows, I first examine how the perceived disjuncture between MCSCS policies and frontline practice is understood to create stress among correctional officers. Then, I discuss how the perceived lack of correctional experience and knowledge among MCSCS officials contributes to the implementation of policies and expectations that are believed to be inapplicable and impractical to occupational routines and duties at the ground-level. I conclude by explaining how the perceived disconnect between policies and everyday practices have led correctional officers to believe that the well-being of inmates is prioritized by MCSCS and the Ontario Government over their own occupational health and wellness.

Loosely Coupled Policies and Practices

In the context of corrections, MCSCS is tasked with establishing, maintaining, operating, and monitoring provincial adult correctional facilities and probation and/or parole offices (Ministry of Community Safety and Correctional Services, 2016). As such, ministry

representatives enforce legislations that are approved by elective representatives in the provincial legislature, which outline correctional officers' duties. Throughout the interviews, one of the most prominent sources of stress that participants cited was the disconnect or loose coupling between ministerial policies and institutional operations. Officers noted that often, ministry policies were scarcely followed or applied in daily activities, and they suggested that negative consequences may result from following some guidelines. The following participant provides an illustrative example of the loose coupling between policies and everyday practices:

[The ministry] comes out with standing orders, *stuff that isn't used on a day to day basis*. But if something happens, then they'll quote standing orders [and say] "you didn't do this". Well *of course we don't do that...we have a ramp system where the inmates go from levels to come down to court*. Technically, you're not supposed to have inmates from [different] levels on the ramp; but if we were to do that the courts would be a couple hours late every day, the police would get angry, *nothing would get going* (P3, *emphasis added*).

The excerpt above describes how some ministry regulations are not routinely enforced by correctional officers because they believe that the regulations will impede on their job performance and result in problematic situations for other agencies with which the institution maintains working relationships. Officers rationalize this disconnect by asserting that these policies are not realistic, and would prevent them from completing their duties. As another officer explains:

Most [correctional officers] are very diligent. They come in and they try to do things by the book, but [the policies] keep changing all the time. They have standing orders that we're supposed to follow, and if you follow them you wouldn't get your work done (P5).

The quotation above highlights perceived problems with some ministry policies, suggesting that officers believe they may not be practical in delineating how correctional officers carry out frontline duties. In addition, the officer explains that standing orders are constantly being altered, requiring employees to continually navigate between a series of outdated and newly introduced policies and practices.

As the ministry updates policies that are designed to guide correctional officers' duties, participants discussed having difficulty in making sense of how such regulations are developed. Participants argued that many times, they struggled with determining how to implement such policies in ground-level operations. As one officer states:

Oh, ministry policies. Your peers up in each section will say like “how the Christ did they come up with that idea?”, “where are they coming from with that?”, “what are they doing?”, “what do they expect us to do?” It handicaps the basic-line correctional officers from doing their jobs because they're being dictated how they perform (P10).

The questions that this participant poses illustrate the disagreement and confusion among correctional officers in terms of how organizational policies are enacted dynamically within the institution. More importantly, the officer argues that these policies can impair workers by creating various barriers to effectuating daily duties.

When discussing the creation and implementation of ministry policies, officers typically perceived ministry officials as merely “toeing the party line” (P5), wherein policies reflect ministerial ideologies about how corrections should operate in theory as opposed to the way it is done in practice. The following quotes speak to this perceived disconnect:

The things [the ministry develops] are the party line. *It's so one hundred percent*

not possible. It's just ridiculous that they can honestly stand there [and] get paid and tell us this is what we have to do. [...] *What you are telling me and what actually happens are nowhere near on the same realm*. [...] [The ministry] doesn't focus on reality in any way, they're just totally out of touch. ...*[It's] all about their [reputation]* and what they're going to say in Parliament. ...*It's so much of a disconnect and it seems so far apart* that I don't know how they can possibly get together and fix it (P5, *emphasis added*).

Many times [policies are] in conflict with what is reality within the institution on the floor level. It's very difficult to implement a lot of the directions and directives that you get. A lot of them quite frankly are asinine in most officers' views. [...] We know it, but if this is what [the ministry] wants [to do] then okay. We'll just wait until it all falls apart and then we [have to] pick up the pieces (P8).

Both quotes above acknowledge that ministry regulations often contrast with frontline practices. This disconnect presents challenges for correctional officers to execute what is required of them. For Participant 5, the disconnect is perceived to be the result of reputational management on behalf of the Minister, where policies are understood as being created to protect the reputation of the ministry, with little concern for the officers who enforce them. Further, as Participant 8 explains, it is the officers who are tasked with dealing with the aftermath of inefficient policies and reconciling the consequences that they may incite.

In order to successfully execute occupational tasks, participants discussed resorting to working in opposition to organizational protocols. Returning to the previous example by Participant 3, wherein the ministry prohibits correctional officers from moving inmates from varying levels of security classifications simultaneously, the participant discusses the ways in

which officers tend to work around such policies. He states, “we circumvent [ministry policies] a bit by putting guys on [from different security levels] if you think [that] there’s not going to be a problem” (P3). Here, the officer refers to negotiating organizational policies in order to alleviate potential issues that can result from abiding by these protocols. Another participant adds to this, stating, “basically you just look at each other – the guys who you trust – and say “okay, let’s do it [our way], but we’ll keep it to ourselves’, just get the job done” (P7). As demonstrated in this remark, rules can be violated, yet such violations are not out of contrariness or spite, but to expedite the fulfillment of obligations that might otherwise remain incomplete.

Correctional officers acknowledged that while working in contrast to ministry policies could expedite the completion of routine tasks, failing to adopt these policies could also result in disciplinary action and/or higher levels of risk and safety concerns. Participants highlighted an interesting contradiction in which ministerial workers and management officials would turn a blind eye to staff members working against standing orders, so long as the institution operated efficiently, but would hold officers liable for not following policies in the event of a critical incident. As one officer argues:

The standing orders haven’t been updated in a very, very long time and we keep protesting that [...] and if you follow them, then you wouldn’t get your work done. But [the ministry] will pull those standing orders up whenever there’s an incident, like when an inmate dies or overdoses and [state] “well you didn’t do this, this, this, or this”. None of us have [doing that] for years, but now it’s important? And I’ll be suspended or disciplined (P9).

A number of important insights are raised in the preceding statement. First, the participant identifies how work practices are often loosely coupled to the broader ministerial policies. Second,

the participant perceives this loose coupling to be the result of largely outdated and irrelevant policies that do not fit with frontline practice. Third, and most importantly, the participant suggests that institutional guidelines are not rigidly enforced unless they are violated during a critical incident that could have negative consequences for the institution itself because, presumably, following policies could have prevented or reduced the risk of the incident happening. This leaves correctional officers in a tenuous position, wherein they realize that they may be able to accomplish more if working outside of the standing orders, yet, they fear the repercussions they may face if management or the ministry choose to hold them responsible. This tenuous position leads participants to feel as though they are being utilized as scapegoats for institutional dilemmas. As one participant explains, “[the ministry and managers] should be held liable [for certain events], but it’s always the correctional officers’ fault, no matter what happens. That’s the way they turn it and the Government backs them” (P3).

Participants explained that sometimes, working outside of ministry policies can be viewed as a necessity to protect employees’ well-being. As the following officer explains:

To not get hurt, you don’t want to follow the rules, which opens yourself up to discipline. But if you follow the rules, you’re going to get punched in the head or kicked or gassed by an inmate. So, disciplined versus assaulted, disciplined versus assaulted, which one do you pick? The reality of the rule we’re given and the reality of what actually happens within the jail are so blatantly obvious (P1).

The participant above draws attention to how officers feel as though ministry policies require them to choose between prioritizing employment security over their own personal health and safety. This participant makes yet another reference to the loose coupling between institutional regulations and frontline practice by alluding to the competing realities that exist between regulations and

everyday duties. As yet another officer explains:

The officers and the guards are being watched as much as the inmates [now]. It's at the point where *you're afraid to grab an inmate* because over the last few years they've been firing the correctional officers for what they call 'excessive force', but *all [the officers] are doing is defending themselves* (P7, *emphasis added*).

Above, the officer draws attention to the way the workplace has changed. The participant perceives these changes to have led to increased workplace surveillance, wherein officers are 'being watched as much as the inmates'. Further, this quote identifies how officers must mentally police their own interactions with inmates to avoid being punished. While officers tend to view their behaviours as defensive, the ministry may frame instances of officer-on-inmate aggression and/or contact as going beyond the scope of what reasonable constitutes self-defence, which can result in the officer being penalized.

Understandings of MCSCS Personnel

Many correctional officers believed the disconnect between policy and practice was the result of a lack of correctional knowledge and experience among ministerial representatives. As the following participant explains:

I see the direction that corrections [is] going [in as] formulated by some Dilbert¹⁰ sitting in a cubicle in head office who has never done anything in corrections except work in an office. They really don't know what's going on. [...] You have people that are floating in from different Ministries and they have no experience in corrections, and as I've mentioned before, corrections are not normal. Take a look at the Ministers that you have in corrections – we could have two or three Ministers

¹⁰ Dilbert is a comic strip created by Scott Adams, which is known for its satirical office humor.

a year that are supposed to be running our ministry (P8).

The statement made by the officer above indicates that officers believe that those persons who are tasked with running the ministry do not understand the environment for which they are creating policies and practices. More specifically, ministry workers are equated to being mere office workers, as opposed to being competent or experienced within corrections.

Similarly, another participant states:

It kills me [that] the Minister of Corrections has *never* [set foot] in a jail in his life, and he's my boss? [The ministry] puts people in supervisory positions who have never worked with an inmate. When I first started the workforce after high school, you respected your supervisors and your bosses because they started where you did and worked their way up the ladder, but in the Ministry of Corrections it's not like that. They just put the wrong people in the wrong positions (P7).

As demonstrated in the quote above, correctional officers perceive the ministry to hire personnel who lack experiential and practical knowledge of what occurs within the confines of the correctional institution. The quotation also presents some lack of understanding about the relationship between elected government officials and the bureaucratic end of the civil service in corrections. The Minister of Corrections is not put in his/her position by the ministry, but is an elected member of the legislature who is then appointed Minister by the provincial Premier. Thus, the Minister him or herself is largely advised by deputy ministers who are civil servants and generally have a professional background within corrections or public safety. At the time of this thesis, the active Minister of MCSCS is Marie-France Lalonde. Prior to her appointment, Lalonde was the Parliamentary Assistant to the Minister of Economic Development, Employment and Infrastructure, and to the Minister Responsible for Francophone Affairs (Ministry of Community

Safety and Correctional Services, 2017). The Deputy Minister of MCSCS is Matthew Torigian. Prior to his appointment, Torigian was a police officer with the Waterloo Regional Police Service located in Ontario, and was the Waterloo Region's fifth Chief of Police (Ministry of Community Safety and Correctional Services, 2016). The Associate Deputy Minister of MCSCS is Marg Welch, who worked within correctional services for over thirty years, as well as in probation and parole services (Ministry of Community Safety and Correctional Services, 2016).

Policies were viewed by participants as founded upon the basis of ministerial representatives "reading reports and the news" (P8), as opposed to entering the institution and observing or generating an understanding of what the occupation truly entails. Another participant describes ministerial policies as "kind of like lip service...the Government makes a policy only if it suits their needs" (P4). Here, the officer feels as though the ministry creates policies based on what suits their own needs, as opposed to those of the officers. As another officer argues:

[The Ministers] think when they sign [legislations]...that it's going to roll, it's going to work good, and they [foresee] us doing this and that. But they don't have any [experience]. They don't work in the jail. They don't know when they're signing stuff that it isn't going to work (P3).

The statement above reinforces the perspective that the ministry designs policies based on how they, at the executive level, envision correctional work, in contrast to officers' lived experiences.

One officer describes a perception that the role of the Minister of Corrections is among the lowest priorities for the Government of Ontario:

The biggest problem in corrections is that the correctional portfolio for the Minister is basically the lowest portfolio there is. [The ministry] gives it to somebody who is inexperienced, just an up and coming guy, and the turnover [rate] is [huge]. It's

like every other year you have a new Minister (P3).

Participant 3 discusses how he believes the individuals that are appointed to the role of the Minister of Corrections are unfamiliar with the complexities of the correctional system. The officer also raises a concern regarding the perceived amount of turnover among Ministers appointed by the Ontario Government; yet the deputy and associate deputy Ministers generally remain quite static¹¹ and have the primary responsibility for bringing issues to the attention of the Minister and developing policy. This presents an interesting disconnect among correctional officers in differentiating between the role of the Minister as a political figure and the officials who comprise the bureaucratic arm of the Ministry of Corrections.

Correctional officers argued that, in some cases, ministerial representatives do, in-fact, have experience working within the field of corrections. However, participants perceived that the individuals who worked within bureaucratic ministerial positions were appointed after being inefficient frontline officers:

Most of them are incompetent – they're in the wrong job, and they're incompetent.

For the most part, they were correctional officers that were not good correctional officers and did not enjoy working around the inmates. How do you get away from working around inmates? Climb higher. Climb higher. Climb higher (P1).

Like I said about the wrong people in the wrong positions [...] I find with the ministry [in order] to get [poor correctional officers] out of the work force, they hide them. Where do you hide them? You promote them. And now I'm supposed to go to them for supervision and advice and all that? (P7).

¹¹ Lalonde was appointed in January, 2017; Torigian was appointed in February, 2016; and Welch was appointed in February, 2016.

The quotations above present ministerial employees with former correctional background and experiences as being shifted to working within the ministry in order to maintain employment when they are perceived as incapable of working around inmates. The officers above present an interesting reification of the ministry as an entity in itself, with a lack of understanding of important questions such as how decisions are made to promote or move correctional officers into ministerial or managerial positions.

Perceiving MCSCS as Unsupportive

A number of participants within this study came to perceive the ministry as being unsupportive of frontline workers, and were believed to demonstrate little regard for officers' health and/or well-being. As the following officer explains:

What [the ministry] has done particularly well is create a lot of mental stress and emotional instability. Have they addressed the problem and made it better over time? I don't believe they have. They create a lot of anxiety within the institutions, and it's just a myriad of problems (P8).

The preceding participant's quote presents the ministry as exacerbating stress instead of actively preventing or treating it. As another officer states:

The majority of stress you deal with comes from your employer, and that's simply because they're there for the inmates; they're not there for their employees. They don't back you, they don't help you. They would sooner create a confrontation rather than help you. It's a negative environment, but the least you can do is have an employer who is there to help you and work with you. I swear they're there to work against you (P2).

Above, the officer perceives the ministry as causing stress because of the perceived lack of support

provided to employees, and the perception that inmates are a higher priority than the officers ('they're there for the inmates'). Another officer speaks to this, as he explains that "the Government really has no respect for the job. It's pretty evident when you work here that they really don't like [correctional officers]. It's just noticeable in the way they deal with us" (P3).

Many participants perceived the lack of support to be connected to the ministry's concern with organizational risk management. Correctional officers argued that most forms of support for officers that are offered by the ministry are reactive in nature, rather than proactive. As one officer explained, "they could be a leader and take [responsibility] to actually do something and show concern and appreciation for their employees, but they don't do anything until they're forced to and their feet are put in the fire" (P2). Relatedly, another officer argues:

[Management and the ministry] don't do anything very well. They really don't. There's no proactive anything. It's always, always reactive. It's always wait until something bad happens and then [the ministry will] try and figure out how to smooth it over. It's never a 'how do we figure out how to not have this happen again?'. It's always just a constant scramble of 'what can we do now to not get in trouble?' (P5).

The participant above suggests that many of the ministry's immediate responses to critical events or officers' well-being are created for political purposes, rather than to genuinely help correctional officers. As another officer explains,

[Officer support resources] are there just so that [the ministry] can say 'we offer this'. But when you actually look at what is offered, it's minimal. It's just so that they can politically say, 'we have a [support] program for staff members' (P1).

Participant 1 describes ministry resources and programs as being limited in the degree of assistance

that they provide to officers who are struggling to manage occupational stressors. Another participant describes ministry responses merely as “CYA, or a ‘cover your ass’ [approach]” (P11).

When discussing ministry responses to officers who had been injured in the line of duty, participants reflected on how they felt as though the ministry failed to demonstrate any concern for employees. For instance, when recalling an assault that happened in a correctional facility, one officer explained that:

After I got assaulted back in November, I was never asked [if I wanted] to talk about it or anything. Instead, I got called in [to a meeting] to [be told] “okay, you did it wrong”. It wasn’t [about] “how are you doing?” or “is your jaw okay?”, “do you feel okay?”, nothing like that. But over the years I learned to expect that. I always said the ministry and the Ontario Government was the worst employer I ever worked for (P7).

Above, the participant perceives a lack of empathy on behalf of the ministry towards their employees. Instead of offering any type of support to the employee, the officer felt as though the ministry was more concerned with explaining to him where he failed to act in accordance with occupational protocols.

Viewing MCSCS as Prioritizing Inmates

While officers perceived a general lack of support by the ministry, they also perceived the ministry to prioritize inmates’ health, well-being, and safety above their own. As one officer explains, this perspective begins to develop as early as the initial training processes:

[The ministry’s] concern with you is how you’re going to take care, control, and custody of your inmates. There’s little to no concern about you as the employee. That’s not what the training is about; it’s about use of force, use of restraints,

community escorts – it's all focused on the inmates. But training as to you as an employee and how things could affect you and your well-being and your health? Nothing. There's no concern about that. The employer is simply not concerned with that (P2).

In the statement above, the participant describes his training as pertaining solely to learning how to manage offenders within the facility, while neglecting to provide any training on how to properly maintain his own self-care.

Many participants believed that the ministry bypasses the importance of staff health and well-being due to the number of allegations of inmate maltreatment and/or abuse:

I don't know that [the ministry has] personally done anything very well for us. We used to feel that we were valued and we don't feel that now. Now there's attacks on us, which are usually physical, and it seems like [the ministry is] more concerned with the inmates and who they're suing and that their needs have been met than ours now (P9).

They're so worried about paying off lawsuits from all of the inmates that have been wronged over the years, so as per usual, staff are just thrown to the bottom of the pail and there's no care or concern about officers. None whatsoever (P5).

The quotations above present many critical viewpoints. First, these statements speak to a decline in the amount of value and respect that frontline correctional officers feel from the ministry. Second, the participants highlight the number of inmate-based lawsuits that the ministry is presently dealing with, which they perceive as being connected to the lack of concern for officers. Third, and of most importance, the officers note that they feel as though the ministry has a longstanding trend of not demonstrating concern for officers.

Discussion and Conclusion

As illustrated within this chapter, stress and tension within the correctional institution is perceived to be exacerbated and unaddressed by MCSCS. Most prominently, participants believed that stress is largely related to the disconnect that occurs between ministerial policies and the lived experiences of frontline officers. Officers are placed in a precarious position in which they must negotiate varied understandings and perspectives on the realities of prison duties and frontline practices.

These thematic findings demonstrate the ‘loose coupling’ (Meyer & Rowan, 1977) of organizational philosophy from ground-level procedures. In order to circumvent this disjuncture, participants learn to work outside of ministerial rhetoric in order to successfully complete tasks and mitigate the prevalence of stress. By performing these work-arounds, officers are able to exercise discretion in how daily routines are carried out, based on their individual experiences and perceptions of what is and is not reasonable.

Officers demonstrate a lack of understanding in the appointment of individuals to work within the ministry, as they generally view these persons as lacking experience or knowledge regarding corrections. This is important to draw attention to, as participants’ discussions of the ministry point to a conception of the ministry as a singular, anonymous entity, as opposed to a large number of people, with diverse backgrounds and experiences, who undertake various responsibilities and roles. This perspective transcends into the way that frontline officers view the ministry and the ways in which policies are created and enforced, as well as who is appointed to specific positions.

The perceived lack of care and concern that the ministry exercises with respect to frontline correctional officers has led officers to feel as though the ministry invests more time and effort in attending to the well-being and needs of those serving sentences in correctional institutions, rather

than in assisting those who staff such facilities. Consequently, officers appear to be highly skeptical of any effort made by the ministry in providing employee support, as it is not perceived to be genuine, but as a political front or reactive solution that is implemented primarily to uphold the ministry's public reputation.

Chapter Five: “Accept It and Move On” – The Trickle-Down Effect and Normalization of Stress

As mentioned earlier, institutional managers are required to adhere to policies and guidelines that are created by MCSCS in order to operate correctional facilities. Occupational stress that is believed to be generated from a disjuncture at the ministerial level therefore ‘trickles-down’ (Vaughan, 1997) into frontline practice, as policies that are perceived by officers to be impractical are enforced by managerial bodies. In the correctional institution, supervisors’ decisions, conduct, and attitudes are believed by officers to be influenced by a series of organizational policies and rhetoric, wherein political concerns about the ideal methods of running a correctional facility appear to take priority over staff well-being. In turn, these policies create an organizational dogma wherein institutions are designed to be “mean, aggressive, goal oriented, [and] efficient...but rarely empathetic, supportive, kind and caring” (Maier & Messerschmidt, 1998, para. 4).

In what follows, I begin by demonstrating how practices and policies created at the ministerial level trickle-down into frontline correctional work, and how supervisors are perceived to place correctional officers in tenuous and dangerous positions. I then discuss how managers are perceived as being dismissive in responding to employee mental health and well-being, and as having minimal regard for the officers they oversee.

The Trickle-Down Effect

In simple terms, the trickle-down effect examines the linkage between policy decisions at the administrative level of organizations and workplace missteps or mistakes (Vaughan, 1997). This occurrence is marked by “executive goals and resource allocations [trickling down], impeding the efforts of people doing [occupational] work” (Vaughan, 1999, p. 294). Although the trickle-down effect can be relevant to all organizations to some degree, the consequences that might ensue

from this tendency can be heightened in risky work, where fatality and/or social harms are potential outcomes. Correctional work is an example of risky work, given the range of potentially dangerous tasks that officers are expected to complete on a regular basis, as well as the possibility for exposure to critical events in the line of duty.

By exploring the trickle-down effect in organizations, a number of key issues become apparent (Vaughan, 1997). First, it explains how employees perceive policies and policy decisions to contribute to problematic workplace occurrences. Second, it demonstrates how the decisions of top-level executives trickle-down into the frontlines of an organization, influencing the culture of the workplace itself. Third, it examines the relationship between bureaucratic accountability and occupational assumptions or expectations that permeate the institution. Fourth, it reveals how the established culture affects all employees involved in risky work within the workplace, ranging from upper-level management to frontline staff members.

Participants in this study indicated the prevalence of the trickle-down effect within correctional work and institutional practices. As the following officer explains:

The most stressful part for me that caused frustration was dealing with some of the direction that's coming down from your managers, which you know, they've been directed to give to you coming from regional or head offices all the way down through the institutions. You see some of this stuff and you look at it and you know inherently this isn't going to work well, if at all. That becomes very stressful after years and years of watching that happen (P8).

Above, the participant highlights that although orders that are dispersed by institutional managers can create tension and stress among frontline employees, these directives are not created by supervisors, but by ministerial officials. Officers acknowledged that managers may be enforcing

ineffective policies for fear of repercussions from policy-makers:

Some [managers] are very incompetent. Some of them are very out of touch. Some of them are so worried about the company lines that they have no concept of what really needs to get done and how it needs to get done. Some of them are really worried about how to please the higher-ups so they follow the party line but it doesn't work (P5).

Participant 5 suggests two reasons why management might implement directives that both frontline officers and supervisors perceive as failing to align with the reality of correctional work. First, she argues that supervisors are perceived as being focused on obeying guidelines provided by MCSCS, and as worrying about upholding institutional rhetoric in order to successfully perform required managerial duties. Second, she notes that managers may be following ministry directives due to their perceived lack of knowledge in supervisory positions or lack of experience within the correctional environment. Officers also stated that management may overlook broader ramifications to abiding by ministry policies:

We had a guy who would rape his cellmates and physically beat them. [...] There's guys that need to be in segregation, but the Government doesn't understand that. When the Government says something to the superintendent he just obeys it; he doesn't want to question it, even though he should question it...He'll just say okay, we'll let him rape somebody else (P3).

A number of important insights are raised in the quotation above. First, the officer reinforces a thematic finding from the prior chapter, in that, often, the ministry is believed to not understand the processes of running a correctional institution, thus creating disjuncture between policy and practice. Second, he states that officers perceive management to refrain from questioning orders

received from the ministry – even in circumstances where problematic events may arise, either for the officers themselves or the inmates in their custody. Third, the trickle-down effect is prevalent again, in the sense that policies and directives that are viewed as inapplicable or consequential enter frontline practice, creating constraints and stress for correctional officers.

After identifying the ways in which supervisors enforce ministerial policies that are believed to be impractical, participants mentioned that they perceived institutional managers as having little to no experience and/or knowledge in correctional work, or simply being the wrong fit for a managerial position. For instance, as one officer explains:

Management is very out of touch because most of these guys that are senior managers haven't actually been a correctional officer for maybe 20 years or more. Some of them never have. The old superintendent we had was an office manager, but his brother was a regional director so he marked him up to superintendent. *He had never even been a correctional officer. Their knowledge of what goes on in there is either very outdated or not [existent] at all (P3, emphasis added).*

In the statement above, the participant believes that in certain cases, supervisors are hired with virtually no prior work experience in corrections and may be hired merely due to personal connections. The officer discusses how these individuals typically lack familiarity with what correctional work entails, or attempt to run institutions based on ideologies that are largely obsolete with respect to ground-level practice.

Officers also discussed how managers could be transferred in from different institutions, where the occupational environment, inmate profile, and work practices were vastly different:

They had managers [in our institution] that hadn't been on the job for 5 years and had come out of dick backwards Ontario that had inmate counts of about 30 and

they're putting them into a maximum-security institution with a capacity of 1,600 inmates. That's just crazy (P10).

Here, the participant notes that although supervisors may have correctional experience, their backgrounds may be in institutions that do not necessarily equip them with the skills to handle facilities with larger offender counts and/or higher security designations and vice versa.

The Normalization of Stress

The normalization of deviance is used to explain how organizations create and perpetuate an occupational culture whereby behaviours that are understood to be unacceptable by employees, such as the violation of health and safety protocols or the perpetuation of risky practices that maintain the potential to harm staff members, are permitted despite the negative outcomes they may generate. This concept posits that “the unexpected becomes expected, which becomes the accepted” (Pinto, 2014, p. 377; see also Pinto, 2006). Normalization of deviance does not occur instantaneously following a single event or situation within an organization. Rather, it occurs gradually, in relation to the summation of decisions made or avoided, strategic misrepresentations, predetermined outcomes, culture, and failure to conform to expected standards (Clegg et al., 2002; Clegg et al., 2006; Pinto, 2014). In order for deviance to become normalized, Banja (2010) iterates that there are four components that are generally required: “1) multiple people (2) committing multiple, often seemingly innocuous mistakes that (3) breach an organization's fail-safe mechanisms, defenses, or safety nets, resulting in (4) serious harm or frank disaster” (p. 139).

Many participants perceived management to actively dismiss stressful and/or traumatic events that officers face while performing occupational duties that present the potential to negatively affect officers' overall well-being and mental health. The following participant provides an illustrative example, where one of her supervisors dismisses his responsibility in responding to

a critical situation, placing her and her colleague in potential jeopardy:

I had an inmate one day going absolutely crazy, blood dripping down his face [because] he was banging his head off a wall. I called the manager [and he said] “okay – call a nurse”. This guy is threatening to smash anybody who comes in his cell, so I’m not calling a nurse until [management] is here because it’s not safe for her and there’s only 2 of us in here and he’s a big guy. [I called a] medical alert. Force [supervisors’] hands. [He asked] “why’d you call a medical alert?”. Well I needed to get a manager down here [and he said] “well that wasn’t necessary” (P9).

In the excerpt above, the officer notes that management refrained from tending to a critical situation with a violent inmate until a medical alert was called, which required a supervisor to physically be present in a unit. Another officer discusses a similar situation, where she was assaulted by an inmate while pregnant:

When I was pregnant with my youngest, I was kicked in the stomach 5 times. I was leaving the jail to go to my doctor’s the next day [...] I’m going out and the superintendent was sitting in the deputy super’s office and he was talking to me as I was walking by and he stopped me and I [said] “I’m on my way to my doctors right now”. He said “okay well I’d like it if you’d let me know [what happens with the baby]”. I said “okay thank you, I appreciate you talking to me”. His deputy super sat there with a pen and was *sighing and rolling his eyes*. He flipped his pen and was huffing because the superintendent was talking to me while they were trying to have a meeting. To him it was like *just go, get out of my office* (P1, *emphasis added*).

The quotation above identifies an interesting contrast between two institutional managers with

respect to the manner in which they responded to the participant. Although the superintendent made an effort to demonstrate concern by asking the officer to keep him informed with the outcome of her doctor's appointment and pregnancy, she felt as though the deputy super was more concerned with delaying his meeting than her well-being or safety.

Throughout the interviews, participants stated that instead of recognizing the consequences that might ensue from stressful situations, they felt that supervisors typically considered these experiences to be a normative part of the profession. As the following officer says:

For years [management] never accepted that [correctional officers] had any posttraumatic stress at all. They just thought 'oh, it's part of the job – just go home and don't worry about it'. When I witnessed an inmate burn himself to death they didn't even offer me counselling (P4).

Again, the belief that exposure to distressing events as an ordinary part of correctional work is reiterated. The participant above also argues that in the past, officers perceived management as being skeptical with respect to recognizing the prevalence of occupational stress and/or mental illness in correctional officers at all, potentially leading them to fail to provide appropriate assistance to officers.

Another prominent theme that emerged from the interviews was the perspective that managers tended to assign correctional officers dangerous occupational tasks. Participants acknowledged that, sometimes, refusal to perform these duties may result in occupational consequences. These consequences may affect the officer in question individually, such as suspension or termination, or affect the institution as a whole, including a lockdown, work-to-rule, or institution-wide refusal to work. As one participant explains:

[Officers] are under a lot of duress and chronic overcrowding and [are] short

staffed. You're not allowed to have the keys to lock [the institution] down if you're short staffed because you don't have enough response staff if there's a problem. [...] Managers give you an order, you either open it or you could be suspended. You're under a constant fear of being fired, suspended, or disciplined for something that you at times have no control over or had no fault of your own in. You're doing your job to the best of your ability, but you could still be out the door (P9).

In the former passage, the officer acknowledges the possible individual ramifications of attempting to fulfill occupational requirements, even in situations that are beyond an officers' locus of control.

Participants also recounted situations where consequences affected employees as a whole. For instance, one officer discusses an event where managers prohibited conducting a weapon search:

We had an incident years ago where somebody from the street called in to a manager and told him there was a zip gun in the institution. He ordered the building [into] lockdown and we were going to do a major search with our [protective] vests. The wellness manager heard about it and said "no, we aren't [searching with vests on]" and he cancelled it. The union got their back up [because it wasn't safe] and we were out for 19 hours. The superintendent decided to bring us all in and conduct interviews before punishing us [for not working]. Everybody got the exact same suspension; if you were working 2 days, you got a 64-hour suspension, and if you were working 1 day you got a 24-hour suspension (P3).

Above, the participant notes how one institutional manager wanted officers to engage in unsafe work practices by searching the facility without the use of protective vests, resulting in a walk-out that was promoted by the union. The officer draws attention to the penalties that officers faced,

including pay-cuts and hour suspensions.

Perceiving Management as Uncaring

Upon discussing the wide array of stressful incidents that may occur within the confines of the correctional institution, correctional officers felt that many times, supervisors did not provide support or assistance. Officers perceived their supervisors to be negating their managerial responsibility to staff in crisis in merely suggesting that employees contact their family physician or the organizational EAP, expressing no concern with officers to resolve stress or mental health crisis. As one participant argues:

If I were to tell my manager that I'm having some mental health issues he would say "go to your doctor". Period. He would basically want you to get out of his office, he doesn't want to know any of this – it's like there's no concern (P5).

This officer alludes to the perspective that management and correctional officers are largely distanced from one another and that there is little assistance to be had in approaching management about stress or mental health concerns. As another participant explained:

They would rather quickly just say "use the EAP" and just wash their hands of it because if anything were to ever happen the next day or the next week, they don't want to be part of it or associated with you (P2).

The officer in the previous quote reinforces the belief that management tends to distance themselves from staff members within the institution, creating the perception that supervisors care little for their employees. This participant argues that management essentially tries to rid themselves of the responsibility attached to staff members battling occupational stress or mental health crises.

In addition to identifying management as demonstrating little regard towards employees'

wellness, participants discussed feeling as though managers created the viewpoint that staff members were disposable. For instance, as one participant states:

Don't ever think that you're 'super guard' or that you can't be replaced – because for management you're just a number, you're easily replaced. And when you're off sick, nobody calls you except your true friends; nobody remembers that you still work there (P9).

This quote conveys how officers perceive managers as dehumanizing employees by equating them to 'a number'. Officers feel as though management declines to make an effort in following up with officers who are on sick leave. Similarly, another officer argues:

If an inmate were to start freaking out and looking like he's twitching a little bit then [management] would care; if an officer flips a switch and he's done? That's okay, just call Bell Cairn¹² and find another one. We're like a screwdriver from Canadian Tire – you break one, you can go back and get another one. Do whatever you've gotta do. Total disregard for the officers (P11).

The notion of disposability is prevalent again within the above excerpt as the participant compares officers to expendable hardware tools. Here, the officer notes that he sees management as placing greater priority on the inmates within the institution as opposed to the individuals who work inside the facility. This viewpoint parallels a similar finding in the previous chapter, where the ministry was believed to emphasize inmate health and well-being, further demonstrating the trickle-down effect noted in the beginning of this chapter.

Institutional managers were also regarded by correctional officers as providing little to no

¹² Bell Cairn is the college where correctional officers complete their Correctional Officer Training and Assessment (COTA) program before being eligible to work in a correctional facility.

support in standing behind officers' decisions and interactions with offenders or in how daily tasks are performed. As one participant states:

[Management doesn't] back up your decisions a lot of the time. For example, when you want to lock [the inmates] up early because they're [behaving badly] and he says "no, you can't do that – you can't punish them". But meanwhile, when he wants to do it he just says "lock 'em up". He basically abuses his power for whatever he likes, but when you're the guy running the area for 12 hours of your shift and you've been with them all day and explain why you want to lock them up he just says "no" (P4).

A number of important insights are raised in the preceding quote. First, the participant explains that managers are believed to work against officers, as supervisors do not support staff members decisions, suppressing officers' occupational autonomy and control. Second, the officer highlights how power differentials between correctional officers and supervisory staff can affect decision-making processes, despite the fact that officers are the ones who are working the frontline and interacting with inmates on a regular basis. This perspective was reiterated by the following participant:

You get a lot of abuse through your management. You have incidents with inmates, and then you go to management for back up or for support and they're not there for you. They don't back you. You just have to bite the bullet. [...] That wears on you, you feel like the lone man on the island at times (P2).

The perceived unsupportive relationship can place officers in a position where they feel isolated in dealing with the pressures of institutional operations.

Positive versus Negative Interactions with Management

It is critical to note that although this chapter contains a considerable amount of negativity directed towards institutional managers and supervisors, participants consciously noted that there were, in fact, various instances where management and supervisors did support and provide assistance to officers. Yet, positive experiences with management were often overshadowed by the perceived failures and negligence of other supervisory personnel. As one officer explains:

The managers that I've dealt with have been good. There was one who [...] could read me like a book. He was an older guy and I remember him calling me in the office one day and giving me a speech, kind of like a father-son speech. [...] Others would just look at you and go "huh...take two days off", knowing that your next two days you were off anyways (P11).

Here, the participant presents a contrast between the presence of managers who make a personal connection with their employees and are thought to be genuinely caring, versus those who are understood to essentially pretend to show concern, or lack regard altogether, towards the officers they oversee.

The position that managerial bodies fill is best summarized by one officer who claims: Is management supportive of staff? I think in the basic idea they are, but when running the institution gets in the way, management is not so supportive. You can look at it in two ways – they're caught in a catch 22 and then the staff below them pay the price. [...] You really appreciate the good ones, you really do. [...] When I first started in corrections I had every intention of getting into management and after about 8 or 10 years I decided that management was the last place I wanted to be in, because I didn't want to be caught in the middle. That's where not just your frontline managers are, but even your senior levels within the institution right up to

the superintendent. [...] They're not allowed to step outside a very narrow scope, and simply because they don't want to create problems at the regional or head office level (P8).

This statement depicts supervisors as the 'middle man' in corrections as they find themselves caught in a predicament between appeasing the ministry and guiding frontline correctional officers. While correctional officers see some managers as actively attempting to support workers, many are believed to adhere strictly to ministry policies. The participant argues that, ultimately, supervisors have limited ability to supersede ministerial authority, limiting the extent to which they may be able to assist their employees. Managers are confined by existing policies with no room for deviation, and nonconformity to ministerial expectations may result in repercussions at the supervisory level.

Discussion and Conclusion

As demonstrated in this chapter, correctional officers believe that stress and tension within the institutions may be exacerbated by individuals in managerial and supervisory positions. Participants argued that stress could be attributed in part due to the trickling down (Vaughan, 1997) of ministerial policies, enforced by institutional management in frontline practice. Supervisors were perceived as failing their responsibility to call ineffective policies into question, as officers believed that managers have inadequate knowledge of corrections and are largely concerned with appeasing ministry representatives.

Supervisors are perceived as maintaining a dismissive attitude with respect to the stressors that frontline officers are privy to on a daily basis, essentially normalizing (Vaughan, 1996) problematic occurrences. This normalization is demonstrated through three primary facets. First, participants believed that managers would sometimes discount the potential for traumatic or

critical events to adversely affect correctional officers' mental health and well-being. Second, supervisors created the perception among officers that troublesome occurrences were a normative expectation of correctional work, and that officers should be able to 'accept and move on' (P1) past said events. Third, participants argued that by defining down critical events, managers potentially created a number of consequences for officers both individually and at the institution-wide level.

Correctional officers in this study expressed a great deal of concern regarding the perceived disregard that supervisors display for frontline employees. Moreover, they felt that many times, management did not provide adequate support to officers, both in situations provoking occupational stress and in the execution of daily tasks. Finally, participants argued that although some supervisors within the correctional institution have made genuine attempts to work alongside officers and provide support and assistance, MCSCS policies may be restricting the degree to which this is possible. Further, the prevalence of managers who are believed to be insufficient and play a key role in generating stress can overshadow these positive experiences.

Chapter Six: “Pull Yourself Together” – Hegemonic Masculinity and Occupational Culture

Upon examining the political and organizational factors that are perceived to create and maintain stress for correctional officers, it is essential to explore the culture that is manifested within the correctional facility itself. Occupational culture is most prominently reflected in an institution’s beliefs, norms, language, values and traditions, which ultimately shape many of the interactions that occur within an organization (Stohr et al., 2012). Interrelated to occupational culture are cultural norms, understood as schemas that employees generally adhere to, which are normalized and accustomed to the work environment at hand (Chenault, 2010). Literature pertaining to correctional work identifies a number of characteristics with respect to occupational culture, such as solidarity, loyalty, emotional suppression and ‘hardness’ (Chenault, 2010; Crawley, 2006; Kauffman, 1988; Martin, 2003; Travis, 1994). In fact, a 2012 report on policing and correctional services, former Ontario Ombudsman, André Marin, acknowledged the need for an organizational culture that values the emotional well-being of its employees instead of continuing a culture “where physical and mental strength is rewarded and a culture of ‘suck it up’ has traditionally prevailed” (p. 14).

When discussing the occupational culture of corrections, Ricciardelli (2017) argues that a number of different masculinities are prevalent within the context of this occupation. In examining these masculinities, the concept of ‘hegemonic masculinity’ (Connell, 1987) appears to be one of the most fitting amongst correctional officers. Hegemonic masculinity – a kind of ‘recipe for manliness’ (Kimmel & Holler, 2011, p. 16; see also Langan, Sanders and Agocs, 2017) – is evidenced through the adoption and prominence of stereotypically masculine physical and psychological traits including empowerment, determination, dedication, hard-work and strength (Ricciardelli, 2017). Hegemonic masculinity considers the glorification of so-called ‘masculine traits’, such as drive, ambition, self-reliance, aggressiveness, and physical strength

(Messerschmidt, 2012), which in turn becomes understood not only as a set of gendered expectations or identity, but as a “pattern of practice” (Messerschmidt, 1993 as cited in Comack, 2015, p. 105). In coordinating activities, actors become cognizant that their behaviours are observable to others, and learn to “construct activities in relation to how they might be interpreted by others in the particular social context in which they occur” (Messerschmidt, 1993 as cited in Comack, 2015, p. 105).

Scholars in gender and organizational studies argue that gendered scripts are imperative to examine within an organization, as gender is a continual, interactional process that influences workers’ identities, occupational culture, and organizational structure (Acker, 1990; Britton, 2003; Dellinger, 2004; Williams, 1995). When looking specifically at the prevalence of hegemonic masculinity in organizations, this concept describes a “work culture that exhibits specific masculine traits and values” (Schulze, 2011, p. 3). In the context of correctional work, officers are socialized to develop a ‘working personality’ that places emphasis on “being suspicious, macho, and pragmatic to deal with the demands of working in prison” (Liebling, 2007, p. 106 as cited in Ricciardelli, 2017, p. 6). The degree to which correctional officers engender this ‘working personality’ is dependent on a number of different factors, including prison culture, institutional security level, and occupational autonomy; yet, it is understood that virtually all correctional officers will possess these qualities to some extent (Liebling, 2007; Ricciardelli, 2017). The hypermasculine nature of correctional work is not only reinforced by fellow officers, but also by the environment and context of correctional work itself, as inmates “prize ‘dominating’ features, such as aggression, strength, and physical prowess” (Ricciardelli, 2017, p. 6).

In what follows, I begin by demonstrating how hegemonic masculinity is embedded within the occupational culture of corrections, primarily through the importance that officers place on

physical, psychological, and emotional strength, as well as the trivialization of weakness, which occurs when these strengths are perceived to be violated in occupational practices. I then discuss the potential consequences that might ensue for officers who violate the hegemonic mold that symbolizes correctional work. Following this, I examine the negative perspectives that are cast unto officers who are placed on accommodation. I conclude by explaining how officers differentiate between what is deemed to be an acceptable example of stress or mental health leave, and what is believed to be a form of abuse with respect to sick time protocols.

Hegemonic Masculinity in Corrections

When discussing occupational stress and mental illness, interviewees were quick to reinforce the importance of being perceived by fellow officers as someone who was emotionally resilient and able to handle all aspects of correctional work. It became clear throughout the interviews that within the correctional institution, officers feel that strength is emphasized and weakness is trivialized. As one participant explains:

I think [stress] is definitely a factor for everyone and I think it's something that is not accepted by a lot of people. I think it's frowned upon [and] *it's viewed as a sign of weakness if you're not strong, capable, and managing yourself.* [...] We have to rely on each other for physical protection. So, if someone feels that I'm a flake and I'm useless it's not going to make them very confident going into a unit of 60 inmates thinking that their partner is on the verge of some mental breakdown (P5, *emphasis added*).

As the officer above explains, struggling with stress is something that is not perceived to be culturally acceptable within correctional work. She notes that officers are expected to be tough, proficient, and have the ability to manage themselves and protect their colleagues. The participant

also connects the idea of being strong to reflect risk management, as she notes that officers must be alert, reliable, and physically prepared when entering an inmate unit in the event that a critical event should occur.

The importance of emotional and physical strength is reaffirmed by the following participant, who states:

Sometimes you just need to suck it up – in our business *you can't be soft*. You have to be strong, you have to have a back bone, you have to ... be able to say no, you have to suck it up, buttercup. [...] You'll suffer through [mental illness] because you don't want anybody knowing your business or that you're struggling with anxiety or fear or whatever the case may be. [...] Because that's the bottom line – the last thing you want is people to think that you're afraid of the inmates or that you wouldn't jump in if somebody was in a fight or being assaulted (P9).

Here, the participant reinforces the emphasis that officers are perceived to place on the maintenance of a 'hardened' working personality within the correctional institution. She explains that officers must 'suffer through' in order to prevent others from knowing that they may be suffering from stress or mental health concerns. The quote above connects to the former statement made by Participant 5 with respect to risk management, as Participant 9 notes that colleagues must feel confident that fellow officers are able to support them in potentially dangerous situations.

Participants noted that there was a perceived prominence on bravado within the institution, which officers generally regulated their behaviours in accordance to. As one officer claims:

You're very careful about who you talk to [because] if it ever gets out [that you're suffering from stress] some people are going to see you as weak. [...] There [are] a lot of people out there that work within corrections that just see it as a negative

thing. Like buck up, what's your problem? We all deal with that kind of shit so what's your deal? [...] You get a little bit of that 'I'm tough I can handle it' attitude, a cowboy attitude or whatever you want to call it. Like I can handle anything that comes my way, so what's your problem? You're weak (P8).

In the excerpt above, the participant discusses the importance of cognitively policing who he would speak to in the event that he was suffering from stress, given the tendency to become perceived as weak by other officers. More importantly, he notes the development and prevalence of a 'cowboy' attitude in correctional work, which reflects traditional Western masculine ideologies of being macho wherein a male is able to 'talk the talk' and 'walk the walk', essentially appearing to be strong and fearless.

Similarly, another officer presented a comparable statement:

You can't be seen as weak there, there's no room for that. I have some female coworkers and they'll cry at the drop of a hat and you think 'pull yourself together'. Because inmates should never see that kind of weakness, you need to be strong. You need to just take a deep breath and get it together because I'm relying on you to be my partner. If you can't do this today, ask to go home until you're stronger. That sounds cold I think, but as a female in particular you have to prove yourself constantly. It doesn't matter what kind of an officer you've been for 20-25 years, you're always trying to prove yourself and that you're worthy and you're equal with your peers. Men tend to respond to things much differently than women do, so you can't be an emotional mess (P9).

A number of fundamental points are raised in the quote above. First, the officer argues that the expectations of a correctional officer are different for female staff members, who must continually

demonstrate that they are capable of exercising the same degree of strength as their male counterparts. Second, she notes that some of her female colleagues essentially violate maintaining a masculine attitude, by showing emotion while on duty. Third, she notes that she perceives there to be differences in the ways that men and women respond to incidents and occurrences that occur within this profession. She alludes to the belief that while working within the institution, you must reflect masculine scripts by demonstrating resiliency or not attend work at all.

Breaking the Hegemonic Mold

After identifying the cultural orientation that guides correctional work, participants mentioned that, in some cases, there could be consequences to breaking the hegemonic frame that exists within the institution. One officer provides an illustrative example of such consequences:

[Stress] puts a label on you where it's like 'I don't want him as my back up because he's weak' [or] 'he might not be able to handle the stress – is he going to run to the washroom when something happens?'. [That] is the label they get, they're viewed as weak. And staff starts passing [the label] around where it's like 'oh, he's got mental problems, he's never going to back you up' (P4).

This quotation demonstrates how participants believe that knowledge of an officer who is suffering from mental illness or stress can result in the assignment of a negative label, which might lead to officers not wanting to work with that particular officer. Officers who are perceived as 'weak' are subsequently understood as being incapable of performing daily tasks within the institution. As another participant explains:

You don't want to be seen as a weak person. You can be shunned. You're [viewed as] 'watch for him'. [...] Be careful because [stress] is contagious. [...] You don't want to have that black could hanging over you or a flag where it's like 'look it's

that guy'. [...] It's a stigma, you know? (P11).

Above, the officer draws upon the metaphor of a 'black cloud' to explain how negative reactions and interactions can follow someone labeled as 'weak' or suffering from mental illness. Also of interest is the participant's perception that stress or mental illness can be viewed as 'contagious' – something that other officers may fear catching if having to work with someone known to suffer from occupational stress or mental health concerns.

Another concern identified by participants were the perception that correctional officers may be harassed by their colleagues if they engaged in behaviours that challenged hegemonic masculinity or disclosed physical or mental health challenges. For example, when discussing an officer who was viewed by his colleagues as 'different' one participant stated:

[There is] a lot of gossip. Some [officers] get to the point where they don't want to work with you and they just make fun of you. We had one officer [who] died of a heart attack [and] when he was at our place he was tormented and teased badly [by the other officers]. I'm like okay, we're grown ass adults and professionals, right? [...] He was hyper, he was different. [...] And when he actually asked for help, [the ministry] just moved him out [of our institution]. [...] And then he had his heart attack and people were like "oh did you hear?!" and I'm like you know what? Don't say anything because I can pick out every single one of you that probably caused some of the stress that caused him to have a heart attack (P6).

In the passage above, the officer discusses how officers would actively gossip about and bully another officer. Of particular interest in this statement is the role that correctional officers themselves may play in generating stress within the institution and among their colleagues. As Participant 6 states, the officers appeared to be concerned about the death of their colleague, but

were not believed be cognizant of the possibility that by harassing this particular officer, they may have contributed to the development of his poor health.

Another officer discusses a similar situation, where a fellow colleague took a mental health leave after being treated poorly by his coworkers:

There's been staff that have gone off [on] mental health stress for different things, but there's always a social stigma. Not necessarily because of their [mental health], but because of the incident that happened. [One officer] faced a lot of bullying – people writing his name on the wall that he's a rat, putting notes in his locker, stuff like that [because he had two officers written-up for poor behaviour]. That played a mental game on him and he went off (P1).

The participant above identifies concerns regarding the occupational culture of correction work – wherein officers who are known to suffer from mental health challenges can be harassed, and singled out by fellow coworkers. The participant makes an interesting point that perceptions of weakness or harassment are not only linked to stress or mental health, but can also be connected to incidents in the workplace. The participant describes corrections as “high-school with money” (P1).

Negative Perceptions of Accommodation

As regulated by the Government of Ontario, MCSCS provides all correctional officers with access to an employee accommodation and illness plan, constructed in correspondence to the Canada Labour Code, the Canadian Human Rights Act, the Financial Administration Act, the Employment Equity Act, and the Government Employees Compensation Act (Correctional Service Canada, 2015). Institutional supervisors are responsible for determining accommodations that will enable employees to remain at work as opposed to taking a leave of absence when

appropriate (*ibid*). Officers who are suffering from occupational stress and/or mental illness may be accommodated under such protocols.

Although correctional officers are entitled to utilizing workplace accommodations, participants within this study noted that being placed on accommodation for stress and mental illness may be viewed unfavourably by their colleagues:

We have several officers that have mental issues and have work accommodations where they get premium posts for a lesser amount of work and [they] have been doing that for decades. [...] I realize that is what is medically needed for them, but it's very frustrating to staff. I have to go and deal with inmates every day, I have to go and get into fights potentially every day; and then you have some people that sit in an ivory tower and collect the same amount of money doing a fraction of the job. So that is not respected at all, at all, at all. [...] It's not that they're looked down upon because they have a mental illness, it's because of the lack of fairness (P5).

Above, the participant discusses the frustration that frontline officers experience with respect to those officers who are on accommodation¹³. She attributes this frustration to the fact that officers who are placed on accommodation receive equal income while fulfilling 'premium' occupational duties that do not place them in the same amount of danger as those working the frontline. Further, the officer also notes that some officers remain on accommodation for extensive periods of time. In addition to being perceived as receiving the same income for less work, officers on accommodation were also viewed as being able to surpass sick time protocols:

¹³ When discussing accommodation, officers who participated in this study defined accommodation as a position fulfilled by an officer whose duties do not involve direct contact with inmates due to reasons such as workplace injuries or personal health concerns. This definition is operationalized for this chapter, as MCSCS presently does not define what accommodated positions for officers may entail.

[Officers on accommodation] make the same money, and then the way the system is set up then [they] put in for your overtime. [They] have the highest sick time because [they] have a schedule one diagnosis, which the ministry can't ask [them about] and *[they] jump through the sick time rings and it's like a golden card, right?* [They] can have as much sick time as [they] want, whereas *the rest of us book off sick because [we're] just exhausted, or [we've] just had too much, or mentally it's just draining and we go through the sick time process and get in trouble for it.* But because [they] have some doctor who says they have a [mental illness they're] protected. [They] can have unlimited sick days and unlimited time off and then come in and work overtime (P1, *emphasis added*).

The statement above demonstrates a perceived lack of fairness between officers on accommodation and officers working the frontline. According to the participant, officers on accommodation are enabled to have a considerable amount of sick days, whereas officers who are not on accommodation may be punished for being absent from work too many days. She also notes how staff on accommodation are still able to work overtime, which is not believed to be fair given their absences from work.

Another officer noted the perpetual tendency for accommodated officers to work overtime, furthering frontline correctional officers' frustration:

A lot of people who are on accommodation will work overtime and people resent that. [...] It's called punking somebody off. Somebody will punk [an officer] out of their regular post because they're accommodated to that post, but they're coming in on their days off. [...] The general consensus is you shouldn't be allowed to work overtime if you're on accommodation (P9).

The excerpt above further illustrates how correctional officers may perceive coworkers utilizing accommodation negatively ('punk') when they take opportunities for overtime without working the same hours or duties that frontline officers are required to. The officer further explains:

There's a lot of people that are on accommodations [and] it's a huge negative. People are accommodated for lots of different reasons, but then you have some people who are accommodated strictly for anxiety so they have no inmate contact. It's really resented because they're making the same money that we are and we're dealing with these guys every day and the same shit and you're going to hide in the module? [...] *It's not respected and nobody wants to ever go on an accommodation – you go on an accommodation reluctantly.* It's supposed to be a short-term measure to get you over the hump until you're physically well, but it doesn't take into consideration mental wellness, right? And that's not something people snap out of or get over (P9, *emphasis added*).

Here, the participant states that accommodated officers may be viewed negatively and/or resented by frontline officers, based on the reiteration that accommodation is believed to involve a lesser amount of work and exposure to dangerous situations for the same pay. She raises an interesting point in that she argues that officers will go on accommodation reluctantly, given that they know it is not respected by fellow colleagues.

Participants also noted a fear or sense of 'embarrassment' (P7) for going on accommodation because,

You don't want your fellow officers to find out because then some [officers] would start [saying] "oh you're just trying to get off" [or] "you don't want to work". And certain guards [...] get this reputation where they do it over and over and over again.

There are some guys who have been off work longer than they've worked, and they get paid for it (P7).

The officer above notes that employees may be reluctant to utilize accommodation, given the undesirable reputation that they can become susceptible to, particularly in the event that accommodation or leave of absence becomes a routine occurrence.

Differentiating between Acceptable/Unacceptable Accommodation

Correctional officers noted that, although accommodation was generally perceived in a negative manner, there were certain situations wherein it was considered to be acceptable. Generally speaking, these situations often involved exposure to physical assaults within the correctional facility. For instance, as one officer claims:

If someone has gone through an incident, yes [it's acceptable]. That's why they're off, and that's that. [There was an] officer that was beaten and was unconscious on the floor. He went off and he came back and went right back onto the job. He was assaulted, someone tried to stab him in the neck with a pencil. [...] They went off for the time, they got the help they needed, and they're back [at work]. Congrats, that's great! (P1).

The statement above demonstrates how officers might be more inclined to accept accommodation or leave of absence if an officer is involved in an incident that is deemed worthy – in this case, the officer was involved in a physical assault. This differentiation further echoes the notion of hegemonic masculinity in the sense that a leave of absence must be justified only through an experience that maintains the potential jeopardize one's life and/or overall wellness. The participant also notes that the officer involved in the incident made an effort to come back to work following the event.

In addition to deeming accommodation ‘acceptable’ under the premise of the event, participants placed emphasis on whether or not officers were perceived to abuse a leave of absence to work to their advantage:

It depends on who it is [on accommodation] and are you trying to come back to work or are you just playing the game? [...] I don’t know about [mental health], but if you got hurt [physically] and came back to work to start doing your regular job [and said] “I can only work four hours a day” – [that’s] okay, for a while. But don’t keep playing the game. You take [officers] back in when you can see that they’re not trying to play the system, *they’re trying to be a guard...which is what they signed up for* (P7, *emphasis added*).

Above, the officer discusses how he believes accommodated employees tend to do one of two things: (1) utilize accommodation or a leave of absence as a method of avoiding the work environment, or (2) make the progression to return to work following an incident. He notes that accommodation may be perceived as legitimate when officers demonstrate that they are making a sincere attempt in fulfilling occupational duties that characterize this type of work, or ‘doing the job they signed up for’.

Accommodation and leave of absence was perceived with negativity when officers viewed coworkers as using either their mental or physical health as an ‘excuse’ to avoid attending work in general, reduce their contact with inmates, or achieve more desirable posts. As one officer explains,

I believe that some correctional officers abuse [stress or mental health]. To get off work they go off on mental stress, and if they’ve got the right doctor and get the right note then they’re sitting at home getting paid. They’re making as much money as me, but I’m at work. Some people I disrespect because they use that as this

excuse (P7).

The quotation above denotes how some officers are believed to be ‘taking advantage of a situation and for better terms, milking it’ (P2).

Officers on accommodation were also thought of poorly when they were perceived to be utilizing accommodation in order to take on posts that required less work than others:

It’s incredible the amount of people that are on some kind of accommodation there, like it’s amazing. A lot of people just decide early in their career ‘I’m going to work straight nights’, [where] they don’t have to deal with the inmates. They [interact] with the inmates for one hour when they get there at seven o’clock [and then] they get locked up at eight o’clock. They don’t have to listen to them or deal with them again (P3).

This passage illustrates how some correctional officers are perceived to take advantage of accommodations in order to reduce the amount of work they are required to complete during a shift and/or lessen the amount of time that they spend with offenders.

Discussion and Conclusion

Within the occupational culture of correctional work, stress and mental illness are perceived negatively – thereby maintaining the potential to trivialize those who are labeled as struggling and/or dealing with occupational stress and mental health concerns. Correctional officers in this study emphasized the importance of appearing to be strong, capable, and able to manage oneself while in the line of duty in order to gain the respect of colleagues. The presence of traditional ‘masculine traits’, namely the suppression of emotion, were perceived as an indication of individuals’ abilities to be an efficient and effective correctional officer. Officers believed that there were a number of potential ramifications for officers who did not exercise

behaviours that were characteristic of masculinity, particularly through instances of workplace harassment.

Participants discussed accommodation within the institution, noting that they perceived a lack of fairness in the way that staff on accommodation were treated versus frontline officers. Specifically, participants felt as though accommodated officers were entitled to benefits including equal wage, premium posts, and overtime shifts, which frontline officers achieve while working posts that may present more danger and/or require longer work hours. This belief reflects elements of hegemonic masculinity through the underpinning thought that in order to be recognized and treated as a correctional officer, one must be capable of completing and handling the work that is required.

Finally, participants argued that accommodation can be acceptable in certain cases where an incident has occurred that is considered justifiable by fellow correctional officers – specifically, incidents that involve a feat of bravery or the jeopardizing of one’s life or well-being – further elucidating the ‘manly’ expectations that this profession entails. Similarly, it was noted that when officers utilize accommodation for occurrences considered to be miniscule in their severity, or in order to reduce one’s workload or achieve premium posts, the officer could be viewed negatively by his or her fellow coworkers.

Chapter Seven: Discussion and Conclusion

As illustrated within this thesis, correctional work maintains the potential to elicit occupational stress among the individuals who work within this profession. It is a profession that is perceived by frontline workers to be governed by policies and organizational practices that may not always be relevant, applicable, or consistent with the realities of correctional work. The occupational culture within this profession can facilitate the perception that correctional officers must learn to conceal occupational stress, given the apparent trivialization of weakness, as a result of the prioritization of physical, psychological, and emotional strength. In what follows, I provide a summary of the research contributions of this study, review its limitations, and identify areas of future research.

Summary of Findings and Research Contributions

The present study contributes to the literature on correctional work. Within the literature regarding correctional work, correctional officers are largely regarded as the “invisible ghosts of penalty” (Liebling, 2000, p. 337). It has been recognized that the experiences of correctional officers remain “understudied and unrecognized in prison research, despite more people working in the occupation in response to increasing or high rates of incarceration in many countries” (Ricciardelli, 2017, p. 4). While a number of studies have quantitatively examined occupational stress among correctional officers, there has been relatively little research that has provided qualitative accounts pertaining to officers’ lived realities. This research project has made a conscious effort to unmask the voices of correctional officers and bring these experiences to the forefront of the academic purview. This research project presented officers’ perceptions on the political, organizational, and cultural arenas of their profession and the provocation of occupational stress.

Specifically, the study demonstrates how correctional officers' perceptions of MCSCS, and the policies that are designed to guide correctional work, are perceived to contribute to the facilitation of occupational stress. Officers argued that, oftentimes, organizational policies were 'loosely coupled' (Meyer & Rowan, 1977) from frontline practices. In order to mitigate this disjuncture, officers perform work-arounds, whereby they exercise discretion in the ways that occupational routines are carried out based upon their firsthand knowledge and experiences in correctional work. Correctional officers view the ministry as demonstrating little care and concern towards its staff members, prompting the viewpoint that the health and wellness of inmates is prioritized over that of correctional officers.

Further, the study demonstrates how institutional managers are perceived to contribute to occupational stress, as they enable disconnected ministry policies to 'trickle-down' (Vaughan, 1997) into ground-level operations. Correctional officers argued that many times, managerial staff 'normalize' (Vaughan, 1996) troublesome events that occur within the institution, given the perspective that exposure to traumatic occurrences were a standard characteristic of this profession. Correctional officers recognized that there were some cases where supervisory staff could be a great asset to officers, but noted that many times, positive experiences were negatively overshadowed. Participants were cognizant of the fact that managers often lacked autonomy in operating outside of ministry legislation, given that supervisors may face repercussions for their career in the event that organizational philosophies were violated.

Finally, this study demonstrates how the occupational culture of correctional work is shaped by 'hegemonic masculinity' (Connell, 1987) – wherein, correctional officers place great emphasis on the importance of physical, psychological, and emotional strength, while trivializing emotional and physical weakness. Accommodation was considered to be acceptable under certain

circumstances, which usually pertained to involvement in physical altercations that maintained the potential to cause significant injury or become life threatening. Officers on accommodation were welcomed back by their colleagues when they were capable of showing that they were making a genuine effort to resume their full range of duties, demonstrating their capability of ‘doing the job they signed up for’ (P7).

Limitations

Despite the fact that this study contributes both practically and theoretically to the literature base on correctional officers, I acknowledge that a number of limitations remain. The sample size for interview participants (n=11) is relatively small. With this being said, the perspectives and experiences elicited by the correctional officers in this study cannot be said to be representative of the majority of provincial correctional officers in Ontario, or within the broader spectrum of Canada. In looking specifically at the Ontario interviewees, it should be noted that I was not able to achieve a sample that included representatives from all of the regional divisions, as only four out of seven were included for the purpose of this research.

The officers within this study were both actively employed and retired, and were not differentiated from one another. On one hand, including officers from both of these categories may be beneficial, as retirees may have different experiences across various eras of correctional work – thus enhancing the scope of knowledge included within this thesis. However, these differences may also be critical to note as, at times, retirees would refer to the differences between ‘the way it used to be’ in comparison to ‘how it is now’. As the retirees are not currently involved in corrections firsthand, their understanding of ‘how it is not’ may not be truly representative of the current state of affairs. Retirees within this study were limited to being retired for no longer than five years in order to be eligible to participate and to mitigate the presence of stark differences in

understandings and experiences in correctional work.

Participants within this study were recruited through the use of convenience and snowball sampling, meaning that the sample is not necessarily random or representative (Cohen & Arieli, 2011). In certain circumstances, participants were potentially aware of the identities of other officers within this study. In addition, participants had prior knowledge regarding the nature of some of the questions that were included within the interview guide, given their discussions with their colleagues, who had inquired about their willingness to participate. However, convenience and snowball sampling is also rife with advantages, most notably in its potential to locate and access hidden or hard to reach populations. According to Cohen and Arieli (2011), “the knowledge that the researcher was referred by a trusted person increases the potential for trust and cooperation in providing data” (p. 428). Without the use of snowball sampling, it is reasonable to assume that my database would have been considerably smaller in size.

This research was also constrained in terms of the strict timeframe that was allotted for the completion of my Master’s thesis. Eleven interviews transpired over the course of one month, there were a number of additional participants who had expressed their interest in participating, but unfortunately, were not able to be included due to scheduling conflicts. These officers have expressed their willingness to remain as potential research participants in any future research initiatives.

Directions for Future Research

Throughout this project, I was able to pinpoint a number of suggestions for future research endeavours, aligning with both the findings and limitations that arose. First, I believe that there are valuable insights that can be gained through a comparative analysis among correctional officers across Canada. A second suggestion is to look more thoroughly at each of the themes within this

study, independently. By expanding on these areas of investigation, the literature on correctional work can be further strengthened by providing a better understanding of the political climate that governs this type of work, the organizational environment that officers must operate within, and the culture that officers are privy to. A third suggestion is to conduct a gendered analysis to understand how correctional officers achieve and 'do gender' (West & Zimmerman, 1987) within the masculine ethos of correctional work. A final direction for potential research is to look at the differences that exist between correctional work in provincial and territorial facilities, versus that of federal institutions. While engaging in conversation with interviewees, many participants made comments alluding to the perceived differences between these two organizational bodies. In exploring the institution comparatively, answers can be provided to questions such as what differences transpire between legislative policies and practices in federal and provincial institutions? Or, relatedly, do provincial and federal officers experience and/or attribute occupational stress to different sources and events?

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Appendix A: Preliminary Interview Guide

This study is guided by three major research questions:

How do correctional officers understand and experience organizational policies, practices, and responses to occupational stress or mental health crises?

What might facilitate, or prevent, officers from accessing resources designed to address occupational stress or mental health crises?

What do correctional officers feel that their organization should implement, or offer, to mitigate the prevalence of occupational stress and mental health crises?

Part I: Introductory Questions

Disclaimer: Before we begin, do you have any questions, comments, and/or concerns about participating in this interview, or about this study? Okay. I'll remind you that the audio recorder can be turned off at any time, just let me know when. The first part of the interview will ask some introductory questions to get a sense of the work you do.

- I. Could you begin by telling me about your career as a correctional officer?
 - How long have you been an officer?
 - Why did you choose to become a correctional officer?
- II. Could you describe what a typical day in your occupation consists of?
 - What are your duties?
 - Who do you work with?
 - How long is a standard shift?

Part II: Understandings of Organizational Health and Wellness

Transition: Thank you. The next part of the interview will consist of questions that will focus on your understandings of occupational stress and mental health as a correctional officer.

- I. Are you familiar with the term 'occupational stress'?
- II. How would you define 'occupational stress' in correctional work?
- III. Based on your understanding of occupational stress, would you consider correctional work to be classified as a stressful occupation?
 - "Yes" – what kinds of thoughts, behaviours, or actions come to mind?
 - "No" – have you ever felt as though this occupation was stressful before?
- IV. Can you tell me how you would define 'mental health crisis'?
- V. Based on your understanding of 'mental health crisis', would you consider correctional work to be an occupation where mental health crises occur?
 - "Yes" – what kinds of thoughts, behaviours, or actions come to mind?
 - "No" – have you ever felt as though this might be associated with your occupation before?
- VI. Would you say that there is a connection between occupational stress and mental health?
 - "Yes" – can you tell me what this connection is?

Part III: Knowledge on Organizational Health and Wellness Programs and Policies

Transition: Now we'll move on to discussing some of the ways that your organization addresses occupational stress and mental health.

Education and Training

- I. Have you received any education or training to recognize symptoms of occupational stress or mental health crisis?

Note: critical incident stress management (CISM) training will count for this question!

- “Yes” – can you tell me about what training you've received? How would you describe this training in terms of its applicability to correctional work?
 - “No” – what kind of education do you think is important to provide officers with during training?
- II. In which way would education or training on correctional officers' health and wellness assist them in managing stress and mental health issues?

Peer Support Programs

- I. Do you have any type of peer support programs offered through your organization?
 - “Yes” – can you tell me about what these are and how these programs work?
 - “No” – would you see this being a useful strategy? Why or why not?
- II. In your opinion, are these programs helpful?
 - “Yes” – how so?
 - “No” – why not?
- III. Have you personally used a peer support program?
 - “Yes” – how did you find this experience? Would you use it again?
 - “No” – would you consider using one? Why or why not?

Services Outside the Workplace

- I. Besides what is offered through your workplace, what other measures or services do you use to address your stress or mental health?
- II. What made you turn to these services?
- III. What are the benefits of seeking help outside of the service?
- IV. What are the consequences of seeking help outside of the service?

Part IV: Facilitators and Barriers to Utilizing Occupational Stress and Mental Health Crisis Resources

Transition: The next part of the interview will explore your views on what some of the facilitators and barriers are to using occupational stress and mental health crises resources.

Stigma

Officer Attitudes

- I. Is stress and mental health something you would openly discuss with your colleagues?
 - “Yes” – can you tell me about why you find it a good idea to confide in them?
 - “No” – can you tell me why you're not comfortable with this?
- II. How do your fellow officers treat and/or respond to individuals who are seeking support for mental health and organizational wellness?
- III. In your opinion, how are officers who are suffering from, or dealing with mental health, viewed or perceived by fellow officers?

- IV. How do these views and/or perceptions influence decisions to utilize mental health and organizational wellness services?

Supervisor Attitudes

- I. How does management respond to, or treat, individuals who are seeking support for mental health and organizational wellness?
- II. In your opinion, how are officers who are suffering from, or dealing with mental health, viewed or perceived by management?
- III. How do these views and/or perceptions influence decisions to utilize mental health and organizational wellness services?
- IV. What are your experiences in terms of how your managers respond to officer stress and mental health?

Consequences and Benefits to Utilizing Services

- I. What are the consequences of seeking assistance for mental health and organizational wellness matters?
 - Can you explain how these consequences can impact your work?
- II. What are the benefits of seeking assistance for mental health and organizational wellness matters?
 - Can you explain how these benefits can impact your work?

Part V: Mitigating the Prevalence of Occupational Stress and Mental Health Crises

Transition: This is the last formal section of the interview, which will focus on some suggestions that you, as a correctional officer, might have for your organization in terms of improving responses to stress and mental health.

- I. What do you feel should be implemented to improve officers' experiences with resolving stress and mental health?
- II. What can individual officers bring to their correctional team to mitigate stress or critical incidents?
- III. What areas of occupational stress or mental health do you believe need the most improvement?
- IV. How can negative attitudes towards occupational stress or mental health be reduced among management and officers?

Part VI: Concluding Remarks

Transition: I'll end our interview by asking you some concluding questions and providing you with an opportunity to mention anything which I may not have covered that you feel is important.

- I. What kind of benefits do you think might be associated with having organizational responses to correctional officers' stress and mental health examined?
- II. Looking back on your career, what would you say that your organization has done particularly well when it comes to stress and mental health? What would you say that they have done poorly?

III. Is there anything else that you would like to add, or that we did not get the chance to discuss during our interview?

Thank you very much for your time today! I would like to give you a token of my appreciation for agreeing to participate in my study (\$5.00 voucher to Tim Hortons).

In the event that I need to touch base with you regarding any follow-up information or questions would it be okay to contact you via e-mail, telephone, or mailing address?

In your consent form, you indicated that you would like the opportunity to review your transcript for accuracy and comfort. What is your preferred method for transcript delivery? (e-mail, mailing address).

Also in your consent form, you indicated that you would like a final copy of the report. What is your preferred method for report delivery? (e-mail, mailing address).

Appendix B: Revised Interview Guide

This study is guided by three major research questions:

How do correctional officers understand and experience organizational policies, practices, and responses to occupational stress or mental health crises?

What might facilitate, or prevent, officers from accessing resources designed to address occupational stress or mental health crises?

What do correctional officers feel that their organization should implement, or offer, to mitigate the prevalence of occupational stress and mental health crises?

Part I: Introductory Questions

Disclaimer: Before we begin, do you have any questions, comments, and/or concerns about participating in this interview, or about this study? Okay. I'll remind you that the audio recorder can be turned off at any time, just let me know when. The first part of the interview will ask some introductory questions to get a sense of the work you do.

- III. Could you begin by telling me about your career as a correctional officer?
 - How long have you been an officer?
 - Why did you choose to become a correctional officer?
- IV. Could you describe what a typical day in your occupation consists of?
 - What are your duties?
 - How long is a standard shift?

Part II: Understandings of Organizational Health and Wellness

Transition: Thank you. The next part of the interview will consist of questions that will focus on your understandings of occupational stress and mental health as a correctional officer.

- V. Are you familiar with the term 'occupational stress'?
- VI. How would you define 'occupational stress' in correctional work?
- VII. Based on your understanding of occupational stress, would you consider correctional work to be classified as a stressful occupation?
 - "Yes" – what kinds of thoughts, behaviours, or actions come to mind?
 - "No" – have you ever felt as though this occupation was stressful before?
- VIII. What would you say causes the greatest amount of stress within your occupation?
- IX. Can you tell me how you would define 'mental health crisis'?
- X. Based on your understanding of 'mental health crisis', would you consider correctional work to be an occupation where mental health crises occur?
 - "Yes" – what kinds of thoughts, behaviours, or actions come to mind?
 - "No" – have you ever felt as though this might be associated with your occupation before?
- XI. What types of events would you say would be most likely to lead into the onset of mental health crises?

Part III: Knowledge on Organizational Health and Wellness Programs and Policies

Transition: Now we'll move on to discussing some of the ways that your organization addresses occupational stress and mental health.

Education and Training

- III. Have you received any education or training to recognize symptoms of occupational stress or mental health crisis?
 - “Yes” – can you tell me about what training you've received? How would you describe this training in terms of its applicability to correctional work?
 - “No” – what kind of education do you think is important to provide officers with during training?
- IV. In which way would education or training on correctional officers' health and wellness assist them in managing stress and mental health issues?

Critical Incident Stress Management

- I. Are you familiar with your organization operates CISM?
- II. Who attends CISM debriefings?
- III. Have you ever been part of a CISM debriefing?
 - “Yes” – can you tell me about your experience?
 - “No” – have you spoken to any of your colleagues who have?
- IV. In your opinion, is CISM helpful?
 - “Yes” – how so?
 - “No” – why not?

Employee Assistance Programs

- I. Does your organization offer any employee assistance programs?
- II. Do any of these employee assistance programs apply to concerns with either occupational stress or mental health crises?
- III. Have you personally used an employee assistance program?
 - “Yes” – how did you find this experience? Would you use it again?
 - “No” – would you consider using one? Why or why not?

Peer Support Programs

- IV. Do you have any type of peer support programs offered through your organization?
 - “Yes” – can you tell me about what these are and how these programs work?
 - “No” – would you see this being a useful strategy? Why or why not?
- V. In your opinion, are these programs helpful?
 - “Yes” – how so?
 - “No” – why not?
- VI. Have you personally used a peer support program?
 - “Yes” – how did you find this experience? Would you use it again?
 - “No” – would you consider using one? Why or why not?

Services Outside the Workplace

- V. Besides what is offered through your workplace, what other measures or services do you use to address your stress or mental health?
- VI. What made you turn to these services?
- VII. What are the benefits of seeking help outside of the service?
- VIII. What are the consequences of seeking help outside of the service?

Service Selection

- I. In the event that you were to seek out support or assistance for occupational stress or mental health crises, would you prefer to utilize services that are provided by your institution or outside agencies?
 - Can you tell me why this would be your preference?

Part IV: Facilitators and Barriers to Utilizing Occupational Stress and Mental Health Crisis Resources

Transition: The next part of the interview will explore your views on what some of the facilitators and barriers are to using occupational stress and mental health crises resources.

Stigma

Officer Attitudes

- V. Is stress and mental health something you would openly discuss with your colleagues?
 - “Yes” – can you tell me about why you find it a good idea to confide in them?
 - “No” – can you tell me why you’re not comfortable with this?
- VI. How do your fellow officers treat and/or respond to individuals who are seeking support for mental health and organizational wellness?
- VII. In your opinion, how are officers who are suffering from, or dealing with mental health, viewed or perceived by fellow officers?
- VIII. How do these views and/or perceptions encourage officers to utilize mental health and organizational wellness services?
- IX. How do these views and/or perceptions prevent officers from utilizing mental health and organizational wellness services?
- X. What impact do you think colleague attitudes, actions, or perspectives have on the way that you perform in your job? Either negatively or positively

Supervisor Attitudes

- V. How does management respond to, or treat, individuals who are seeking support for mental health and organizational wellness?
- VI. In your opinion, how are officers who are suffering from, or dealing with mental health, viewed or perceived by management?
- VII. How do these views and/or perceptions influence decisions to utilize mental health and organizational wellness services?
- VIII. How do these views and/or perceptions encourage officers to utilize mental health and organizational wellness services?
- IX. How do these views and/or perceptions prevent officers from utilizing mental health and organizational wellness services?
- X. What are your experiences in terms of how your managers respond to officer stress and mental health?
- XI. What impact do you think supervisory attitudes, actions, or perspectives have on the way that you perform in your job? Either negatively or positively

Consequences and Benefits to Utilizing Services

- III. Are there any social consequences of seeking assistance for mental health and organizational wellness matters?
 - Can you explain how these consequences can impact your work?
- IV. Are there any professional consequences of seeking assistance for mental health and organizational wellness matters?

- V. Are there any social benefits of seeking assistance for occupational stress or mental health crises?
- VI. Are there any professional benefits of seeking assistance for occupational stress or mental health crises?

Part V: Mitigating the Prevalence of Occupational Stress and Mental Health Crises

Transition: This is the last formal section of the interview, which will focus on some suggestions that you, as a correctional officer, might have for your organization in terms of improving responses to stress and mental health.

- V. What do you feel should be implemented to improve officers' experiences with resolving stress and mental health?
- VI. What can individual officers bring to their correctional team to mitigate stress or critical incidents?
- VII. What areas of occupational stress or mental health do you believe need the most improvement?
- VIII. What steps can be taken to create a more supportive work environment when dealing with stress and mental health?

Part VI: Concluding Remarks

Transition: I'll end our interview by asking you some concluding questions and providing you with an opportunity to mention anything which I may not have covered that you feel is important.

- IV. What kind of benefits do you think might be associated with having organizational responses to correctional officers' stress and mental health examined?
- V. Looking back on your career, what would you say that your organization has done particularly well when it comes to stress and mental health? What would you say that they have done poorly?
- VI. Is there anything else that you would like to add, or that we did not get the chance to discuss during our interview?

Thank you very much for your time today! I would like to give you a token of my appreciation for agreeing to participate in my study (\$5.00 voucher to Tim Hortons).

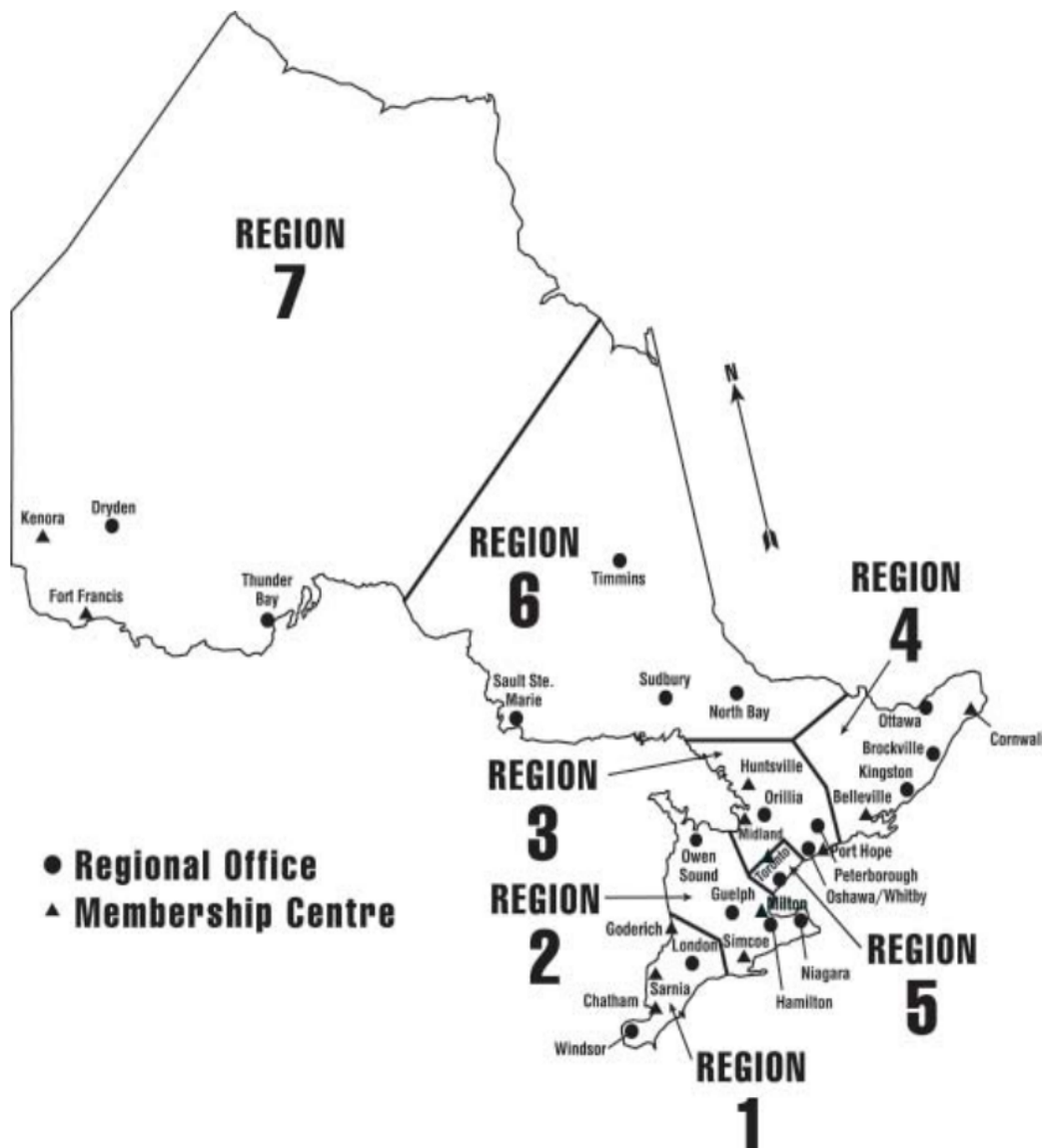
In the event that I need to touch base with you regarding any follow-up information or questions would it be okay to contact you via e-mail, telephone, or mailing address?

In your consent form, you indicated that you would like the opportunity to review your transcript for accuracy and comfort. What is your preferred method for transcript delivery? (e-mail, mailing address).

Also in your consent form, you indicated that you would like a final copy of the report. What is your preferred method for report delivery? (e-mail, mailing address).

Appendix C: OPSEU Regional Boundaries for Ontario Provincial Institutions

Regional boundaries



Note: Membership Centres are stand-alone offices/meeting spaces for member use. All Regional Offices have meeting and office facilities for member use as well.

Region 1

- West: Canada-U.S. Border
- North: From Lake Huron shoreline at Clark Point, southeast along Hwy. 86 to Dorking
- East: Dorking south on a line to Clear Creek at Lake Erie
- South: Lake Erie shoreline, west to Canada-U.S. border

Region 2

- West: North and east boundaries of Region 1
- North: Lake Huron shoreline east to but not including Collingwood
- East: Collingwood on a line to Hwy. 7 at and including Bramalea, west along Hwy. 7 to Hwy. 10, and including Brampton, south along Hwy. 10 to but not including Port Credit
- South: Port Credit along Lake Ontario shoreline to Canada-U.S. border, west along Lake Erie shoreline to Region 1 boundary

Region 3

- West: East boundary of Region 5
- North: Georgian Bay shoreline including Collingwood, to and including Parry Sound, east to the junction of Hwys. 60 and 127
- East: Junction of Hwys 60 and 127, southeast to and including Bancroft, south to Presqu'île Point on Lake Ontario
- South: Shoreline west to east and north boundaries of Region 5

Region 4

- West: East boundary of Region 3
- North: Junction of Hwys. 60 and 127 east to Ontario-Quebec border at and including Pembroke
- East: Ontario-Quebec border
- South: Ontario-U.S. border west to Region 3 east boundary

Region 5

- West: Port Credit north along Hwy. 10 to Hwy. 7 but not including Brampton
- North: East along Hwy. 7 to Hwy. 12 but not including Brooklin
- East: South along Hwy. 12 to Lake Ontario but not including Whitby
- South: Shoreline west to Port Credit

Region 6

- West: Canada-U.S. border at Sault Ste. Marie, north along Lake Superior shoreline to but not including Marathon
- North: A line from Marathon northeast through and including Manitowadge to James Bay, shoreline southeast to Ontario-Quebec border
- East: Ontario-Quebec border south to north boundary of Region 4
- South: West along north boundaries of Regions 4 and 3 to Canada-U.S. border at Sault Ste. Marie and including Manitoulin Island

Region 7

- West: Canada-U.S. border north along Ontario-Manitoba border to Hudson Bay
- North: Hudson and James Bay shorelines east and south to north boundary of Region 6
- East: Southwest along north boundary of Region 6 to Lake Superior and including Marathon
- South: West along Lake Superior shoreline and Canada-U.S. border to Ontario-Manitoba border



Adopted from: Ontario Public Service Employees Union (2009). *Your home in OPSEU: A user's guide to the Ontario Public Service Employees Union* (pp. 12-13). Retrieved from: <https://opseu.org/sites/default/files/migration/yourhomeinopseuwithcoversoct1509.pdf>

Appendix D: Letter of Information/Consent Form



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Protecting Those Who Protect Us: An Analysis of Occupational Stress and Mental Health

Among Canadian Correctional Officers (REB# 5177)

Letter of Information/Consent for Interviews

Principal Investigator

Victoria Baker

MA Candidate in Criminology, Wilfrid Laurier University

73 George Street, Brantford, ON, N3T 2Y3

bake9520@mylaurier.ca

Information and Research Objectives

This research project is a requirement in completing a Master's of Arts degree in Criminology. The objective of this qualitative research project is to understand how correctional officers understand, experience, and manage occupational stress and mental health crisis within the context of their employment. From these interviews, I will be examining: (1) how correctional officers understand the concepts of occupational stress and mental health crisis; (2) how correctional officers experience institutional responses occupational stress and mental health crisis; (3) how correctional officers manage and/or reconcile occupational stress and mental health crisis; (4) factors that might facilitate, or prevent, officers from accessing occupational stress and mental health crisis resources; and, (5) what correctional officers feel that their organization should implement to mitigate the prevalence of occupational stress and mental health crisis in this type of occupational context.

Procedures Involved in the Research

As a research participant, I would like you to participate in an in-depth interview, either face-to-face, through GoToMeeting.com, or via telephone call, at a place and time convenient to you. The interview will last approximately one hour, although this time limit may either be extended or shortened at your discretion. This interview will invite you to provide responses to open-ended questions with respect to your lived experiences as a correctional officer, and your understanding on occupational stress and mental health crisis among correctional officers. With your consent, the interview will be digital voice recorded for transcription and analysis purposes by the principal investigator. I may contact you a second time with follow-up questions or with questions of clarification. If at any time during the interview you feel uncomfortable answering a particular question or participating within this study, you have the right to not answer that question, or to

withdraw from the study in its entirety. You may, at your choosing, review the transcript of your interview and add or delete any information.

Potential Harms, Risks, or Discomforts

There are no physical risks to participation in this study. Although the topics covered during our interview are within your areas of professional expertise, you may face psychological risks by discussing various situations that you have had to deal with. These risks could be the result of difficult events that you recall during our discussion. Furthermore, while I will keep your identity and information confidential, because of the close-knit community of correctional services there is a minimal risk that informed observers might surmise your identity or involvement from my publications. This could have negative peer or professional consequences. As a participant, you have the right to vet your interview transcript prior to analyses.

Potential Benefits

This study presents a number of potential benefits to participants, fellow correctional officers, and to the Ministry of Community Safety and Correctional Services, as well as the Ontario Public Service Employees Union (OPSEU). This study provides correctional officers with a platform to voice their lived experiences and discuss the triumphs and challenges that they face on a daily basis within their profession, as well as to provide their perspectives on how they understand occupational stress and mental health crisis in their occupational context. Providing correctional officers with a chance to share their stories may be beneficial in the sense that it allows correctional officers to recognize that the issues they struggle with are also shared by others. As a participant of the study, you will be provided with a copy of the final research report. The findings will *not* reveal specific information (i.e. names of correctional institutions, names of participants, etc.), rather, they will be grouped thematically (i.e. correctional officers' understandings of occupational stress, correctional officers' strategies in coping with occupational stress, etc.). No identifiable data pertaining to participants will be included in any reports; however, if such information is required, it will be reported in broad terms (i.e. 'participant 3 has worked in corrections for more than 10 years') to ensure confidentiality and anonymity.

Confidentiality

If consented to, interviews will be digital voice recorded and transcribed for later analysis by the principal investigator. The digital voice files will be destroyed immediately following their transcription. If you agree to participate in this interview, you are *not* required to answer all of the questions if you do not feel comfortable in doing so, and you can withdraw from the interview at any time. If you decide to withdraw from the study at the end of the interview, or at a later date, you can choose to have your responses destroyed if you wish and your data omitted from the final research report. Your interview will be assigned a number rather than your name, and all of your answers will be held in strict confidence. Anonymity will be maintained for research participants through the use of numbers or pseudonyms, as well as in all presentations. This consent form will be kept separate from your data set, and will be kept in a locked filing cabinet which only the principal investigator and her thesis supervisors will have access to. Your digital recorded responses will also be assigned a number or pseudonym, and will not be identifiable in the final research report.

Participation

Participation in this research study is entirely voluntary. You are free to withdraw at any time, and without prejudice. If you decide you want to withdraw before the interview is held, your interview will be cancelled. If you withdraw during the interview, the interview will be stopped and the recording (or field notes) will be destroyed. If you withdraw after the interview, but before the final research report is written, you may contact the principal investigator to do so. All of your data will then be destroyed, unless you specify otherwise. At any point throughout, or after, the interview, you may request to have your data removed from the study. In this case, your data will not be included in the final research report. You will receive a copy of this consent form for your records, and one will be kept on file for the principal investigator until the end of the study when it will be destroyed.

Compensation

For participating in this study, you will receive a \$5.00 gift card to Tim Hortons as a token of appreciation.

Feedback and Publications

The findings from this research will be disseminated through a number of different avenues, including: a written Master's thesis, conference presentations, and journal articles. Confidentiality will still be maintained, as all identifying information will be removed. The use of interview numbers will be utilized rather than participants' names. Participants are able to obtain a copy of their personal transcript from the interview, as well as a copy of the final Master's thesis, if they would like. The transcripts will be issued immediately after they are completed, and the final Master's thesis will be issued at the end of October 2017.

Contact

If you have any further questions, or require more information about the study itself, please contact the principal investigator, Victoria Baker, via email at bake9520@mylaurier.ca

If you have concerns or questions about your rights as a participant, or about the way that this study is conducted, you may contact:

Dr. R. Basso, Chair, University Research Ethics Board at Wilfrid Laurier University at (519) 884-1970 or rbasso@wlu.ca



Consent

I, _____ have read and understand the above information about the study on correctional officers' occupational stress and mental health. I have received my copy of this consent form, and I agree to participate with this study, in accordance with the terms set out above.

I, _____ agree to have the interview digitally recorded.

Yes ___ No ___

I understand that following our interview, I can contact the principal investigator, Victoria Baker, directly to request the opportunity to review my interview transcript and add or delete information to ensure accuracy and comfort level.

Yes ___ No ___

I understand that unidentified quotes may be used from my interview transcript in the final report.

Yes ___ No ___

Participants Signature: _____ Date _____

Researchers Signature: _____ Date _____

Appendix E: Wilfrid Laurier University Research Ethics Board Approval



January 24, 2017

Dear Victoria Baker

REB # 5177

Project, "Protecting Those Who Protect Us: An Analysis of Occupational Stress and Mental Health Crisis Among Canadian Correctional Officers"

REB Clearance Issued: January 24, 2017

REB Expiry / End Date: August 31, 2017

The Research Ethics Board of Wilfrid Laurier University has reviewed the above proposal and determined that the proposal is ethically sound. If the research plan and methods should change in a way that may bring into question the project's adherence to acceptable ethical norms, please submit a "Request for Ethics Clearance of a Revision or Modification" form for approval before the changes are put into place. This form can also be used to extend protocols past their expiry date, except in cases where the project is more than two years old. Those projects require a new REB application.

Please note that you are responsible for obtaining any further approvals that might be required to complete your project.

Laurier REB approval will automatically expire when one's employment ends at Laurier.

If any participants in your research project have a negative experience (either physical, psychological or emotional) you are required to submit an "Adverse Events Form" within 24 hours of the event.

You must complete the online "Annual/Final Progress Report on Human Research Projects" form annually and upon completion of the project. ROMEO will automatically keep track of these annual reports for you. When you have a report due within 30 days (and/or an overdue report) it will be listed under the 'My Reminders' quick link on your ROMEO home screen; the number in brackets next to 'My Reminders' will tell you how many reports need to be submitted. Protocols with overdue annual reports will be marked as expired. Further the REB has been requested to notify Research Finance when an REB protocol, tied to a funding account has been

marked as expired. In such cases Research Finance will immediately freeze the release of your funding.

All the best for the successful completion of your project.

Yours sincerely,

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Robert Basso". The ink is dark and the signature is written in a fluid, connected style.

Robert Basso, PhD
Chair, University Research Ethics Board
Wilfrid Laurier University

Appendix F: Call for Participation/Letter of Intent



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Protecting Those Who Protect Us: An Analysis of Occupational Stress and Mental Health

Among Canadian Correctional Officers (REB# 5177)

Call for Participation

Principal Investigator

Victoria Baker

MA Candidate in Criminology, Wilfrid Laurier University

73 George Street, Brantford, ON, N3T 2Y3

bake9520@mylaurier.ca

Information and Research Objectives

This research project is a requirement in completing a Master's of Arts degree in Criminology. The objective of this qualitative research project is to understand how correctional officers understand, experience, and manage occupational stress and mental health crisis within the context of their employment. From these interviews, I will be examining: (1) how correctional officers understand the concepts of occupational stress and mental health crisis; (2) how correctional officers experience occupational stress and mental health crisis; (3) how correctional officers manage and/or reconcile occupational stress and mental health crisis; (4) factors that might facilitate, or prevent, officers from accessing occupational stress and mental health crisis resources; and, (5) what correctional officers feel that their organization should implement to mitigate the prevalence of occupational stress and mental health crisis in this type of occupational context.

Findings

Data from this study will be used for the completion of a Masters thesis. The findings will *not* reveal specific information (i.e. names of correctional institutions, names of participants, etc.), rather, findings will be grouped thematically according to the aforementioned research questions (i.e. correctional officers' understandings of occupational stress, correctional officers' perceptions of organizational resources and policies on occupational stress and mental health crises, etc.).

Participation and Confidentiality

Interview data will be digitally voice recorded and transcribed for later analysis by the principal investigator. The digital voice record will be destroyed after transcription. Participation in this study is entirely voluntary. If you agree to participate in this interview, you are *not* required to answer all of the questions if you do not feel comfortable doing so, and you can withdraw from

the interview at *any time* without any prejudice. If you decide to withdraw from the study at the end of the interview, or at a later date, you can choose to have your responses destroyed if you wish and your data omitted from the final research report. Your interview will be assigned a number or pseudonym rather than your name, and all of your answers will be held in strict confidence. This consent form will be kept separate from your data set, and destroyed at the end of the study. Your digital recorded responses will also be assigned a number or pseudonym and will not be identifiable in the final research report.

Procedures Involved in the Research

As a research participant, I would like you to participate in an in-depth interview, either face-to-face, over GoToMeeting.com, or telephone call, at a place and time convenient to you. The interview will last approximately one hour, although this time limit may either be extended or shortened at your discretion. This interview will invite you to provide responses to open-ended questions with respect to your lived experiences as a correctional officer, and your understanding on occupational stress and mental health of correctional officers. With your consent, the interview will be digital voice recorded for transcription and analysis purposes by the principal investigator. I may contact you a second time with follow-up questions or with questions of clarification. If at any time during the interview you feel uncomfortable answering a particular question or participating, you have the right to withdraw from either that question, or the study in its entirety. You may, at your choosing, review the transcript of your interview and add or delete any information.

Interested in Participating?

If you, or someone from your organization, are interested in participating in this study, please contact the principal investigator, Victoria Baker, via email at bake9520@mylaurier.ca by *March 17th, 2017*.