INMATE PERSPECTIVES ON THE EFFECTIVENESS OF PRISON LABOUR PROGRAMS: A CRITICAL REVIEW OF THE LITERATURE

Major research paper submitted to

The School of Social Work

Faculty of Social Sciences

In partial fulfillment of the requirements for the Master's in Social Work (MSW) Degree

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August 2021

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ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS / REMERCIEMENTS

Thank you Mom, Dad and Cat for your endless support and encouragement throughout the past two years of graduate studies.

Merci aux professeures, professeurs et à l'administration de l'École du service social ainsi que mes collègues qui m'ont poussé à approfondir ma réflexion critique et qui m'ont appuyé dans mon parcours académique et professionnel ainsi que dans la réalisation de ce mémoire.

ABSTRACT / RÉSUMÉ

A significant number of federal Canadian inmates have substantial, unaddressed employment needs prior to even setting foot into the penitentiary. This research undertakes a qualitative evidence synthesis to bring to light the experiences of inmates partaking in prison labour as well as their perspectives concerning the rehabilitative value of this work in assisting them to integrate the labour market upon their release. Using a research strategy based on Landry et al.'s (2007) five-step process for conducting a systematic literature review, 15 scholarly articles were retained and their findings relevant to the research topic were synthesized. The results indicate that prison labour programs are useful for attaining a number of objectives, yet the perceived value of these programs for inmates' professional or personal development is often mitigated. Most notably, this paper raises awareness of the trajectory of marginal employment that often begins prior to incarceration and risks being reinforced through prison labour. The implications of these findings are discussed in light of Hatton's (2017) framework of invisible work.

Keywords: prison work; inmate perspectives; labour market integration; invisible work; qualitative evidence synthesis.

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Un nombre important de personnes détenues dans les établissements fédéraux canadiens ont des besoins importants et non comblés en matière d'emploi avant même de mettre pied dans un pénitencier. Cette recherche entreprend une synthèse des données qualitatives pour mettre en

lumière les expériences des personnes détenues qui participent au travail en prison ainsi que leurs perspectives concernant la valeur de réhabilitation de ce travail pour les aider à intégrer le marché de l'emploi lors de leur libération. À l'aide d'une stratégie de recherche basée sur un processus en cinq étapes de Landry et coll. (2007) pour effectuer une revue systématique de la littérature, 15 articles scientifiques ont été retenus et leurs résultats pertinents au sujet de recherche ont été synthétisés. Les résultats indiquent que les programmes de travail en prison sont utiles pour atteindre un certain nombre d'objectifs, mais que la valeur perçue de ces programmes pour le développement professionnel ou personnel des personnes détenues est souvent atténuée. Plus encore, ce travail sensibilise à la trajectoire de l'emploi marginal qui commence souvent avant l'incarcération et qui risque d'être renforcée par le travail en prison. Les implications de ces résultats sont discutées à la lumière du cadre du travail invisible de Hatton (2017).

Mots clés : travail carcéral; perspectives des personnes détenues; intégration au marché du travail; travail invisible; synthèse des données qualitatives.

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INTRODUCTION

There are two diametrically opposed ideologies that govern the treatment of inmates in the penal system. The first stems from the principle of retribution and is distinguished by the use of punitive measures to restore the moral equilibrium that is disrupted once a breach of the law is committed. In its purest form, this approach is solely concerned with retroactively punishing an illegal act, regardless of whether the punishment itself disincentivizes crime or brings about a behavioral change in the person having committed the offence (Ministère de la Sécurité publique, 2010). Ideologies that are rooted in the notion of retribution are oftentimes reflected in "tough on crime" legal and penal reforms, such as those that swept through most Western nations in the late 20th century, and which Canada was, for the most part, able to withhold from – at least until around the midpoint of the first decade of the 21st century (Doob & Webster, 2016).

Conversely, the second school of thought is founded on the notion of utilitarianism (Ministère de la Sécurité publique, 2010). According to this philosophy, punishment must ultimately serve a purpose in the future rather than being inflicted for the sake of itself or to restore a moral equilibrium. The purpose of the punishment usually revolves around dissuasion from crime, or the neutralisation or rehabilitation of the individual who committed the illicit act (ibid). With regard to rehabilitation, a utilitarian approach would consider utilizing various forms of interventions in attempts to fully integrate inmates into society as law-abiding citizens following their release from corrections.

In this second perspective, different tools and services may be offered to help equip inmates who live on the margins of society. Beaudette et al. (2015) state that over 70% of men in Canadian federal corrections could be diagnosed with at least one mental disorder, whereas the Office of the Correctional Investigator (2019) recently reported that more than 75% of women detained by the

Correctional Service of Canada are dealing with a lifetime or current mental disorder. Financial precarity, low educational attainment, as well as various forms of problematic consumption patterns or issues related to aggression/sexual abuse are oftentimes the focus of interventions seeking to facilitate the social reintegration of the individual (Ministère de la Sécurité publique, 2010). As this paper will explore further, employment difficulties that may or may not be associated with any one of the above-listed concerns are oftentimes also a primary obstacle experienced by the population in question (Nolan et al., 2014).

Though not a focal point of this paper, it is important to consider the interactions between employment and any of the above-noted challenges, as entering the labour market following release from corrections is in some cases only one of several concurring difficulties that must be prioritized at once. Furthermore, as Griffiths et al. (2007) point out, the notion of social reintegration entails assisting individuals to lead law-abiding lives following their stay in prison; however, the term *reintegration* must be interpreted with caution, as many of these individuals were never fully integrated in society to begin with. Hence, with regard to finding employment upon release from prison, the term labour market *integration* may oftentimes be more accurate.

Objective of the Research Paper

Simply put, the terms *prison work* or *prison labour* refer to the duties and tasks that inmates conduct as part of their job in corrections. In many ways, prison labour can be likened to employment in the labour market. At the heart of the discussion on prison work, however, lies ambiguity as to whether inmates are truly considered employees or not, for as Zatz (2008) explains, inmates are excluded from many of the social protections that employees on the labour market benefit from.

Considering the wages afforded to inmate workers can help to elucidate this point more clearly. There exist various systems of pay globally for determining the rates paid to inmate workers. While some countries have opted for a single, flat wage among all inmate workers, many countries have established a range of pay that fluctuates based on variables such as the type of prison the inmate is detained in, the nature of the work being performed, and the relative rates of pay in the country the correctional facility is located in (United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime, 2017). However, one common factor among the vast majority of penal institutions is that the rates of pay for inmates are well below the national minimum wages. In Canada's federal corrections, daily wages could reach up to 6.90$ per day, though only 8.6% of individuals earned this much in 2015-2016 (Office of the Correctional Investigator [Correctional Investigator], 2016). In contrast, provincial and territorial minimum wages across Canada on January 1st, 2021 varied between $11.45 (Saskatchewan) and $16.00 (Nunavut) *per hour* (Retail Council of Canada, 2021).

Thus, inmate wages in corrections highlight that these individuals are excluded from national and international standards of labour protection and as such, are not afforded the same sets of rights as employees in the labour market. Indeed, inmates belong to a separate and distinct category of workers, similarly to other types of workers, such as domestic workers, sex workers and students performing an internship, who, albeit for different reasons, are also excluded from the designation of who constitutes an employee in the legal sense (Hatton, 2017; Zatz, 2008).

This paper initially set out to explore the implications of this exclusion. As will be expanded on further, this paper seeks to obtain an appreciation of prison work from the perspective of those who conduct it, rather than from an outside perspective. Ultimately, this paper seeks to better understand the value of this form of work for inmates.

Social and Scientific Relevance of the Research

Nolan et al.'s (2014) findings concerning inmates in Canadian federal correctional facilities assert that a significant number of these individuals have substantial, unaddressed employment needs prior to even setting foot into the penitentiary. Furthermore, the repercussions of a criminal record are severe and often entail a form of social marginalization upon release from corrections, which can be experienced as a form of discrimination in relation to employment (among other areas of possible discrimination) and general social stigma limiting one's job opportunities (Latimer, 2017). It is therefore fitting that the Correctional Service of Canada rolls out programs seeking to provide individuals with opportunities for job training, realistic work experiences and for developing additional employment-related competencies while incarcerated. Addressing the employment needs of the inmate population can facilitate their re-entry into the labour market upon their release, which constitutes a pillar of a successful integration into society (Nolan et al., 2014). Baron et al. (2013) capture the importance of this process in stating that "employment is often seen as a cornerstone of successful reintegration into the community after incarceration" (p. 116). Thus, a closer examination of prison work programs, in Canada and beyond, can help to shed light on the practices that facilitate inmates' re-entry process, and the practices that impede it.

On the other hand, the scientific relevance of this research stems from the fact that at present, there are a limited number of studies examining prison work from a qualitative perspective. In fact, most research on prison labour is quantitative in nature, while inmates' perspectives are less thoroughly explored (Richmond, 2014). This research attempts to help bridge that gap. By providing a synthesis of prison labour studies that are focused on inmates' perspectives, the present research provides reflections on the missing links between quantitative data on prison work programs and labour market integration following release from corrections.

Overview of the Following Chapters

The remainder of this paper is broken down into six chapters. The following chapter will dive into the subject matter of prison labour, offering a selective overview of the literature conducted on this topic in Canada and abroad. Hatton's (2017) notion of invisible work will be explored in the subsequent chapter – its link with prison labour becoming increasingly evident as the reader progresses toward the end of this paper. What ensues is a description of the methods undertaken to conduct the research presented herein this study. The fruit of this research, involving the author's analysis of the results of studies contained in this qualitative evidence synthesis, is then presented. A discussion of these results in light of Hatton's (2017) notion of invisible work is offered before concluding with the paper's final remarks.

Problem Statement

This chapter presents a summary of the literature on prison labour in Canada and abroad. It begins with an overview of the population detained in the federal correctional system, followed by a discussion of the evolution of prison labour in Canada and the inception of the Correctional Service of Canada's CORCAN prison work program. A brief summary of the rights of prison labourers ensues, followed by a more thorough analysis of the trajectories leading to prison work and the outcomes that result of it.

Overview of the Population Housed in the Correctional Service of Canada

A statistical description of populations in corrections must be interpreted with prudence. As Angela Davis (2003) points out, narrowing down the experience of each incarcerated individual into a number erases their lived experience. These statistics wipe out the distinct circumstances that led each person to imprisonment, and in doing so, negates the critical thinking that should lie at the very heart of an understanding of the prison complex:

> It is precisely the abstraction of numbers that plays such a central role in criminalizing those who experience the misfortune of imprisonment. There are many different kinds of men and women in prisons, jails, and INS and military detention centers, whose lives are erased by the Bureau of Justice Statistics figures (Davis, 2003, p. 92).

Although they cannot do justice to the distinct individuals they represent, the following statistics will provide only a superficial and limited portrait of the population incarcerated in penitentiaries. According to Statistics Canada, there was an average of 14,129 individuals serving a federal sentence per day in 2017/2018 (Malakieh, 2019). Incarceration rates of both provincially and federally-sentenced individuals were highest in the provinces of Manitoba, Saskatchewan and

Alberta, as well as in each of Canada's three territories for the 2017/2018 year (Malakieh, 2019). Furthermore, the same source affirms that 92% of the individuals sentenced to federal custody (penitentiaries) were males. Young males in particular, aged 20-39 years old, consist of 59% of the federal prison population, yet they only make-up 17% of the adult population in Canada. Along with young men, of particular concern is the rate at which Indigenous peoples are incarcerated; 29% of the population in penitentiaries identify as Indigenous, in contrast to only 4% of Canada's total adult population (Malakieh, 2019). Moreover, Indigenous women represent 40% of the female population incarcerated in federal corrections (Correctional Service of Canada, 2019). These numbers indicate a trend whereby Indigenous peoples are overrepresented in the Correctional Service of Canada at an incredibly high rate. In addition, people who identify as Black are also overrepresented, though to a lesser, albeit disconcerting, rate : while Canada's Black population accounts for 3.5% of the country's overall population, Black individuals account for 8% of the federally-incarcerated population (Correctional Investigator, 2019; Statistics Canada, 2019). Overall, these numbers point to perturbing trends regarding First Nations, members of the Black population and young males alike. Indeed, these populations are some of the main actors behind the production of goods and services derived from Canadian prison labour.

Historical Context of Prison Labour in Canada and the Inception of CORCAN

Prison labour has been incorporated into Canadian penitentiaries for at least as long as these institutions have existed, hence dating back to when the first penitentiary was built in 1835 or perhaps earlier (Correctional Service of Canada, 2013; Correctional Service of Canada, n. d.). According to Foucault (1995), the emergence of prison labour resulted from a shift away from theatrical displays of pain inflicted onto the physical body to various forms of punishment centered

on the individual's thoughts, will, and inclinations. This newfound interest in reforming individuals and their motives may be considered the starting point of the focus on rehabilitation in penitentiaries. In fact, Foucault's (1995) interpretation of the displacement of punishment from physical pain to the reformation of character represents an important historical marker whereby the role of corrections, and thereby the state, became to rehabilitate individuals. This objective is the most recent of the four primary objectives of incarceration, which are deterrence, incapacitation, retribution and rehabilitation (Thalmann, 2004).

Traditionally, prison work in Canada was used both as a form of punishment and as a means to reform character (Correctional Service of Canada, 2013). By the 20th century, individuals working in penitentiaries were involved in a variety of industries, including carpentry, auto-repair, agriculture and various other forms of menial labour (ibid.). However, with mounting pressure to reduce the competition that prison industries were engaged in with the private sector, penitentiaries began to turn inwards. The sale of products and services derived from penal labour were redirected internally, which would become a lasting trend to the point where in 2018, the Government of Canada accounted for over 90% of purchases from Correctional Canada (CORCAN) (Government of Canada, 2018). The 20th century also marks the period where prison work programs began placing greater emphasis on vocational training within corrections (ibid.).

Hence, CORCAN was officially launched in 1980 with the objectives of generating realistic work experiences for inmates and increasing the government's use of products derived from penal labour (Correctional Service of Canada, 2013). Twelve years later, CORCAN was designated a special operating agency by the federal government, allowing it to adopt a business-like approach and operate as a for-profit organization (Correctional Service of Canada, 2013; Walby & Piché, 2011). CORCAN utilizes a revolving fund, whereby the revenues it generates are

reinvested into the program (Correctional Service of Canada, 2013). Approximately 4,000 individuals participate in the program annually (ibid.).

Labourer Rights in Prisons and Penitentiaries

The right to have rights when engaging in prison labour gained traction within popular discourse during the 1970's – a period characterized in part by the emergence of social movements (e.g., students', feminists' and workers' movements) aiming to achieve greater social equality for minority and marginalized populations relative to the majority or dominant social groups (Lehalle, 2007). During this time, prisoners' rights evolved rapidly within a relatively short period. In 1980, the Supreme Court of Canada ruled that individuals confined to penal institutions would conserve their civil rights, barring those that were explicitly denied by the rule of law or that were implicitly denied due to individuals' state of physical incarceration (ibid). In 1982, the Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms integrated into the Constitution a series of rights applicable to all citizens without distinction, and a decade later, a major overhaul of legislation came into effect, which granted rights specifically to incarcerated individuals – some as important as establishing the acceptable threshold of treatment to which these individuals could legally be subjected (ibid.). In addition, the appointment of an independent ombudsman to overlook the activities of the Correctional Service of Canada as well as the treatment of the individuals it detains was a critical advancement (ibid.). The Correctional Investigator of Canada, who's reports will figure prominently throughout this research paper, is responsible for investigating complaints filled to his office from individuals incarcerated in Canadian penitentiaries (Correctional Investigator, 2013).

THE PRISON LABOUR TRAJECTORY

The majority of published articles concerning prison work are geared towards the evaluation of its rehabilitative value in some form. While a number of critical studies have also grappled with the topic of prison labour for the private sector and what Angela Davis (2003) has termed the "prison industrial complex", the initiative to offer employment programs within prisons as a means of preventing recidivism in Canada has managed to circumvent much of the same criticism. Perhaps this is because there is more to critique about the way these programs are carried out rather than the fundamental idea behind them. As this section will demonstrate, prison work can constitute a viable avenue to achieving greater social integration for individuals and increase public safety. The challenge lies in the implementation of these programs, many of which, as the literature shows, can *invisibilize* the underlying work being conducted, and in doing so, lead to the economic and social devaluation of the work performed and the marginalization of those who perform it.

The viability of offering opportunities for employment within prisons as a means of developing work-related capacities is justified by the fact that the target population has often not formally acquired these skills. According to one study conducted in Canadian penitentiaries, approximately 60% of inmates are assessed as having employment needs at intake (Nolan et al., 2014). Factors contributing to employment needs are a history of unstable work and/or unemployment and a lack of skills or competencies that are valued on the job market (Nolan et al., 2014). Similarly, a longitudinal study conducted on the pre-prison trajectory of individuals incarcerated in Dutch prisons showed that this population's employment history was characterized by socioeconomic disadvantage in comparison to the average person (Ramakers et al., 2015). In fact, this study found that many of these individuals had unstable employment patterns marked by

a heavy turnover rate, long bouts of unemployment, a number of jobs that were undeclared, and that approximately only 40% of participants were employed at the time before their imprisonment (Ramakers et al., 2015). Despite that the latter study was conducted in the Netherlands with individuals confined for no longer than one year, whereas the former involved individuals serving minimum two-year sentences, both Nolan et al. (2014) and Ramakers et al. (2015) converge on the fact that employment needs are flagrant within prison populations and hence require interventions. If these pre-incarceration trajectories are left unattended, it may be assumed that these deficits in human capital will remain problematic following release from corrections (Ramakers et al., 2015).

According to the United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime (2017), imprisonment should not solely focus on the deprivation of liberty; rather, educational and professional opportunities should be offered to increase the employability of inmates with a view to promote their successful integration into the community and, by the same token, prevent recidivism. This is precisely the objective of CORCAN, which aims to enhance inmates' employment-related skills by offering realistic work experiences within penitentiaries that are centered around one of four business lines, namely construction, textiles, manufacturing, and services (Nolan et al., 2014). Participating in CORCAN leads individuals to have a better chance of finding employment upon release into the community compared with inmates who are employed for work assignments (e.g., cooking, cleaning, and other jobs that contribute to the maintenance of penitentiaries) and those are who not employed in federal penal units (ibid.). In turn, community employment upon release is associated with significantly lower rates of recidivism (ibid.) Despite these promising results, the Correctional Investigator (2019, 2020) reports that only 6.3% of federally sentenced individuals are engaged in CORCAN industries at any given time, whereas more than half of the incarcerated population

within federal institutions are employed in various other prison work programs. Interviews conducted with staff members of the Correctional Service of Canada indicate that recruiting individuals to work for CORCAN is difficult given the physically demanding nature of the jobs, the limited skillsets developed, and the level of the pay received relative to the tasks performed when compared to other prison jobs (Correctional Investigator, 2020).

The benefits of being employed upon release from corrections have also been examined outside of the Canadian context. In Norway, Skardhamar and Telle (2012) observed a negative correlation between recidivism and obtaining employment upon release from prison, while also suggesting that the association between recidivism and non-employment may be economic given that this relationship is less strong among individuals receiving social benefits. Furthermore, after having conducted a systematic review of the literature regarding studies concerned with vocational training and employment programming following release into the community, Newton et al. (2018) suggest that programs offering a financial incentive for individuals working unsubsidized jobs may be more helpful for retaining employment, whereas low-paying and low-quality jobs may not be successful in preventing recidivism nor in increasing the chances of being employed. Building on the aforementioned findings, Skardhamar and Telle (2012) and Newton et al.'s (2018) studies suggest that breaking trajectories of job market exclusion in order to diminish recidivism may require offering financial assistance and/or providing quality job opportunities to individuals.

Despite that prison work programs generally aim to integrate individuals into the labour market upon their release, there remain substantial disparities between the work that takes place within prisons and outside of them. Shea (2005) uses the concept of "normalization" to explain how the rehabilitative value in prison programs derives from their ability to replicate the conditions outside of prisons as much as possible. Paradoxically, while some aspects of penal labour conform

to the reality of jobs on the labour market, other aspects, such as the variety of jobs offered, the quality of the equipment used in facilities, and perhaps most importantly, social protection including the unionisations of workers, do not (Shea, 2005). With respect to the Canadian context, the Correctional Investigator's 2019 annual report recommends that CORCAN modernize its manufacturing sector in order for it to be better aligned with labour market trends. According to the theory of "normalization", this investment should facilitate inmates' integration into the labour market upon their release.

Even with such an investment, however, significant gaps still remain between conditions of employment inside prison and outside of it. For Zatz (2008), one of the most important distinctions between these two forms of labour is that the former is considered "non-economic" and therefore does not contain the various forms of protection that are usually attributed to workers on the free labour market. In this regard, the International Labour Office Geneva (2001) states the following:

> "In the areas of wages, social security, safety and health and labour inspection, the circumstance in which the prison labour is performed should not be so disproportionally lower than the free market that it could be characterized as exploitative" (p. 147).

In Canada, daily wages paid to inmates in penitentiaries range from $1.00 to $6.90 (Correctional Service of Canada, 2014); these amounts have not been revised since they were established in 1981 (Correctional Investigator, 2015). Ironically, Fenwick (2005) argues that the rights of individuals in privately-run rather than state-run prisons are better protected by international standards, which provide detailed regulations for the conditions of labour in the private sector, notably in regard to convention 29 of the International Labour Convention concerning forced labour. While private

prisons are prevalent in the United States, Canadian prisons and penitentiaries are exclusively operated by the provinces, territories and the federal government.

The mechanisms through which the economic facet of work becomes blurred in prisons are outlined by Hatton (2017). The author (2017) considers prison labour to be *invisibilized* by both sociolegal and sociospatial mechanisms, which respectively refer to an exclusion from the legal definition of work and an exclusion from socially construed settings in which work is typically performed. A third branch of *invisible work* referred to in the literature concerns emotional labour, identity work and care work, all of which are devalued by what Hatton (2017) refers to as a sociocultural mechanism of invisibility. Importantly, the individuals behind the action of conducting invisible work are most often members of marginalized and/or vulnerable populations.

Pandeli et al. (2019) and Reich and Prins (2020) explore the consequences of performing marginal work. In fact, both studies report concerning findings regarding the impact of imprisonment on post-release labour. Pandeli et al. (2019) conclude that the repetitive, low-paying, and devalued work individuals conducted for a private organization at Bridgeville prison in the United Kingdom "reinforced inmates' negative histories of socio-disadvantage" (p. 609). In this particular situation, private companies were contracting work to penal labour in order to forgo the wages paid in the free market (Pandeli et al., 2019), without necessarily considering that the individuals performing the work may accumulate large amounts of debt during their incarceration (United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime, 2017). This finding coincides with Hatton's (2017) framework of *invisible work*, whereby sociolegal mechanisms exclude prison labour from legal definitions of work, resulting in a denial of labour protection and thereby leaving the individuals at Bridgeville prison vulnerable to exploitation by private organizations seeking to capitalize on marginal wages. Likewise, Reich and Prins (2020) provide suggestive evidence of a negative

relationship between incarceration and labour organization outside of prison. This association, they (2020) suggest, results from the uneven power relationships that employers can leverage on former inmates, who, compared to people who have not been convicted of an offense, are at a disadvantage to find alternative employment. This leaves former inmates susceptible to accepting conditions of employment that are below standards for their profession (Reich & Prins, 2020). Thus, promoting rehabilitation is a matter of providing appropriate opportunities for legitimate employment upon release and during incarceration, all the while protecting individuals from profit-seeking organizations searching to capitalize on their vulnerability.

However, even the best of interventions aiming to introduce people into the labour force after incarceration may ultimately fail if employers are unwilling to display leniency to employ individuals with a criminal record. Pryor and Thompkins (2012) highlight how federal public administrations adopt a paradoxical role with regard to rehabilitation: "It is counterproductive to expect or even train ex-offenders to become productive members of society, while simultaneously restricting access and opportunities to the job market" (cited in Sheppard & Ricciardelli, p. 47). Regardless of whether they participate in prison labour programs, former inmates must eventually navigate the job market upon their release with the stigma and potential self-stigma of a criminal conviction (Sheppard & Ricciardelli, 2020). While the Correctional Service of Canada is responsible for administering work-related rehabilitation programming to individuals serving a federal sentence, the Royal Canadian Mounted Police (RCMP), on the other hand, holds a national repository of all criminal convictions in its Canadian Police Information Center (CPIC). Employers may, and often do, ask individuals to retrieve their criminal record through the national repository prior to hiring. In fact, research by the Canadian Association for Civil Liberties (2014) confirms that police background checks have become increasingly frequent in recent years. In order for

individuals to remove information regarding their offence from the repository, they must go through the timely and expensive process of applying for a record suspension – a procedure that is in itself in dire need of a reform (Pate, 2019). The socioeconomic vulnerability of incarcerated individuals thus seems to transcend the walls of penal institutions, infringing upon their successful integration into Canadian communities following their release.

Within Canadian penitentiaries, there are specific populations who may be particularly vulnerable to being further marginalized with regard to prison work, or who may be more susceptible to seeing their employment needs overlooked. The United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime (2017) recognizes that opportunities for prison labour should be diverse and should lead individuals to maintain or improve their capacity to make a decent wage upon release. However, the Correctional Investigator (2019) reports that 83.5% of jobs for females participating in the CORCAN program are within the textiles business line. The same source (2019) highlights wherein this is problematic: offering women placements in this line of work continues "a trend that places women in gendered roles. Textiles is far from one of the leading sectors of the Canadian economy" (p. 99). Hence, with regard to its employment strategy geared towards women, CORCAN has yet to comply with practices outlined by the UN. In failing to do so, it actively contributes to placing women in stereotyped gender roles and in a marginal employment sector (Correctional Investigator, 2019; Correctional Investigator, 2020).

In addition, the lack of gender-based employment supports for women is highlighted by Strimelle and Frigon (2011). The authors' (2011) study showed that while many women desired better educational and vocational opportunities within provincial or federal penal institutions in Canada, the frontline workers who assisted them in the community integration process tended to align the oft-times precarious work experiences obtained while incarcerated with similarly

precarious opportunities available on the labour market. This contributed to the women's exclusion from finding both meaningful and financially rewarding work upon their release (Strimelle & Frigon, 2011). Furthermore, many of the vocational opportunities offered in corrections appeared to initially be designed for men then transferred to women, thus limiting the effectiveness of these interventions for the female inmate population (ibid.).

The Correctional Investigator (2019) recommended that the Correctional Service of Canada divulge a strategy for meeting the employment needs of all vulnerable populations within penitentiaries, including women, Indigenous peoples and individuals with a mental illness. As stated, Indigenous peoples are highly overrepresented in Canadian penitentiaries as they represent close to 30% of admissions into federal custody (Malakieh, 2019); however, they are underrepresented in the CORCAN workforce – making-up only 20.8% of it (Correctional Investigator, 2019).

On the other hand, former inmates coping with mental disorder may face additional barriers to enter the labour market, which are accentuated by a criminal record. According to Way et al. (2007), men diagnosed with a mental disorder are as or more successful than men without one in succeeding in work release programs, therefore suggesting that this intervention is an effective means to addressing this specific population's employment needs. However, work releases within the Correctional Service of Canada have witnessed a significant decline in the past ten years (Correctional Investigator, 2019). In contrast, the association between women with a mental illness and success with work release programs is less linear. Way et al. (2007) observed that women with a mental disorder that are in prison due to a parole violation fared less well than women without one in respecting the conditions of their work-release program. The authors (2007) suggest that this may be due to the additional role that women disproportionately assume as custodial parents

– a role that, when combined to the challenge of managing a mental disorder, may become overwhelming. Thus, addressing the unique employment needs of inmates with a mental disorder in addition to other vulnerable populations represents an important priority.

In summary, this section has outlined multiple facets of prison work, beginning with the employment needs of the carceral population and their pre-imprisonment trajectories, followed by an examination of the theory of "normalization" and how the Correctional Service of Canada can improve on replicating external conditions of labour within penitentiaries, particularly with respect to the rights of workers to receive fair compensation and protection under labour laws. I then highlighted some of the potential repercussions of these gaps and how minority, marginal or vulnerable populations in corrections are at a disadvantage to having their employment needs fulfilled.

Research Question

Quantitative analyses demonstrate that participation in prison work programs is only slightly successful in preventing recidivism (Newton, 2018). Hence, this research undertakes an exploration of qualitative literature in order to bring to light the experiences of individuals partaking in prison work as well as their perspectives as to the rehabilitative value of this work in assisting them to integrate the labour market upon their release. The following questions will be addressed through this research: What is the purpose of prison labour from the perspective of the inmates performing it? Is prison work helpful to assisting these individuals to integrate the job market, and which aspects of prison work do individuals view as helpful or detrimental to this process?

Next, Hatton's (2017) framework of invisible work is presented in detail, which provides a lens through which to interpret the findings of this research.

Theoretical Framework

The notion of invisible work was first introduced into the scientific literature in 1987 by Arlene Daniels (Daniels, 1987). The author (1987) argued that the common definition of work focuses on activities that are remunerated, thereby excluding marginal forms of labour that are oftentimes not assigned an economic value, such as housework, care work, and volunteering. Hence, these marginal forms of labour are devalued both economically and socially due to the fact that they do not fit into the limited conception of work as a remunerated activity (Daniels, 1987). Daniels (1987) argued that the common notion of work should be enlarged so as to be more inclusive of activities that have traditionally been performed by women.

Outlining Hatton's (2017) Theoretical Framework of Invisible Work

Thirty years after Daniels (1987) introduced the notion of invisible work into the literature, Hatton (2017) sought to layout a theoretical framework for this notion in addition to assigning it a robust definition. Having observed that the concept of invisible work is used in a wide range of contexts, such as when referring to work that involves "being physically out of sight […] , ignored or overlooked […], socially marginalized […], economically and/or culturally devalued […], legally unprotected and unregulated […] or some combination thereof" (Hatton, 2017, p. 337, references in quote omitted), the author (2017) organized these different uses of the term into a coherent theoretical framework. As a result, the author (2017) defines invisible work as "labour that is economically devalued through three intersecting sociological mechanisms – here identified as cultural, legal and spatial mechanisms of invisibility – which operate in different ways and to different degrees" (Hatton, 2017, p. 337).

Hatton's (2017) cultural, legal and spatial mechanisms are the key tenets of her conceptual framework. The sociocultural mechanism refers to the process whereby hegemonic cultural ideologies concerning gender, race, age, or any other social categorization, contribute to the economic devaluation of labour (Hatton, 2017.). These ideologies can be applied to labourers' bodies and/or labourers' skills. In the first case, workers are called upon either implicitly or explicitly to exercise some form of bodily labour, such as aesthetic labour, emotional work or identity work, in order to converge with hegemonic ideologies (ibid.). This may include intentionally cultivating a particular manner of speaking to conform to a corporate image, or an employee faking a smile to appease a rude customer (ibid.) On the other hand, hegemonic ideologies may also be used to devalue labourers' skills, such as when individuals are depicted as being naturally good at a particular line of work by virtue of their affiliation with a specific social group (ibid.). These narratives, captured in a term known as the *naturalization of skill phenomenon*, are exhibited when female caregivers are perceived as naturally more empathetic than males executing the same functions (ibid.). Though women may exert as much mental, physical and emotional energy in caregiving as any other gender, the misconception that women are naturally better carers erases their efforts. Thus, hegemonic discourses *invisibilize* the labour that the female caregivers perform, but not that of other caregivers. Although the sociocultural mechanism is the first of three pathways through which work becomes economically devalued, Hatton's (2017) framework does not explicitly associate this mechanism of invisibility with penal labour.

As previously mentioned, Hatton's (2017) sociolegal mechanism of invisibility specifically applies to prison work in that it frames this type of labour as non-economic and as a means to rehabilitation rather than to financial reward (Zatz, 2008; Hatton, 2017). Similarly, student

internships and informal care work may also be viewed as non-economic activities, leading to discourses that frame these forms of labour as being performed exclusively for experience or out of love for a relative (Hatton, 2017). On the other hand, illicit work, such as work on the black market and sex work, and informal labour, such as street vending, are recognized as being economic in nature, yet much like penal labour, they may also be economically devalued given that they are not legally recognized as forms of work (ibid.). Hence, all marginal forms of work falling under the sociolegal umbrella are excluded from the regulatory employment laws that apply to legally recognized jobs (ibid.). In addition, these various forms of labour are excluded from official employment data (ibid.).

Finally, sociospatial mechanisms, also discussed earlier, contribute to the economic devaluation of various forms of work by virtue of the fact that the labour is performed in spaces that are segregated from traditional, socially construed worksites (Hatton, 2017). This includes labour that is performed in the domestic sphere and other unconventional workplaces, such as the penitentiary (ibid.). Hence, it is precisely the unconventional physical setting in which the work occurs that contributes to its economic devaluation, as these workspaces are perceived as being unconducive to doing "real work" (ibid.). In many instances, as is the case with prison labour and care work, the sociospatial mechanism is closely intertwined with other pathways of invisibility. Appendix 1 offers a graphical representation of Hatton's (2017) *mechanisms of invisibility.*

Relations Between Concepts in Hatton's (2017) Framework of *Invisible Work*

Sociocultural, sociolegal, and sociospatial mechanisms all contribute to the economic devaluation of various forms of marginal work, making them invisible. Furthermore, these constructs interact in various ways. In the case of prison work, the institutional context in which it

occurs serves as a justification for its exclusion from legal definitions of labour; hence, sociospatial and sociolegal mechanisms are tightly intertwined (Hatton, 2017). Whether or not hegemonic ideologies also contribute to the invisibility of prison labour is not explicitly stated. Other forms of marginal work, such as care work, appear to be transversal to all mechanisms of invisibility (ibid.).

An advantage of using Hatton's (2017) framework of invisibility is that it allows seemingly disparate forms of labour to interact with one another. For example, the narratives that lead to prison work's economic devaluation via the sociolegal mechanism are similar in nature to those that lead to students' free labour during unpaid internships (Hatton, 2017). Likewise, the institutional context in which prison labour takes place is comparable to that of sheltered workshops where disabled individuals are purportedly provided a space for job training and work experience, yet much like prison worker labourers, are paid below the minimum wage (ibid.).

Methodology

This chapter will outline the methodological process underlying the present research. The following pages explain the reasoning that led the author to conduct a qualitative literature review on prison labour in addition to describing the various steps of the research process, including the development of the research strategy. The ethical considerations and limits of the research will also be discussed.

Overview of the Methodological Approach

Several studies have examined the impact of prison labour programs on rehabilitation from a quantitative perspective. Newton et al.'s (2018) systemic review of the impact of vocational education and training programs on recidivism employs a rigorous methodology to summarize some of the main findings and gaps in the literature. The authors (2018) conclude that more quality quantitative studies are needed to draw firm conclusions as to the effectiveness of prison labour programs and hence to justify the use of public funds enabling these initiatives. Nevertheless, observations from their study suggest that these interventions could potentially be effective for certain groups of individuals, such as those in their late twenties or older, those with a substance use disorder, and those classified as "high-risk". However, program participation does not appear to be tightly linked to subsequent employment success overall (ibid.). In the context of the Correctional Service of Canada's CORCAN program, Nolan et al. (2014) similarly conclude that participation in the program was not associated with the length of time that individuals remained employed after finding a job. Overall, these quantitative findings suggest that the effectiveness of most vocational education and employment training programs in corrections is moderate at best.

In response to these mitigated findings, the present research has adopted a qualitative methodology to explore prison work programs from the perspective of those who participate in them, which was done by utilizing secondary data obtained from studies that conducted interviews with these individuals. Richmond (2014) explains:

> Most evaluation research on correctional programming, such as prison industries, is quantitative in nature and focuses on the characteristics and outcomes of participants to determine if the program is successfully addressing specific risk factors. The perspective of those who are participating in a program is often overlooked (p. 232).

Thus, there are a number of advantages to using a qualitative methodological approach for this study. First, it allows the author to critically examine prison labour programs and the way they are conducted rather than focusing solely on the results they generate. According to Anadón (2006), qualitative research is borne from attempts to bring to light social inequalities as it allows one to adopt a critical perspective in relation to the problem being examined. Given that the effectiveness of prison labour programs appears limited, qualitative research conducted from the perspective of program participants can help bring to light why these initiatives have not been more successful. In addition, researchers today dispose of a number of data collection and data analysis techniques allowing them to explore various issues of either a social or political nature through qualitative research (Anadón, 2006). However, one of the challenges to utilizing a qualitative research design is rooted in the reflexive nature of this type of methodology, whereby authors must accurately interpret and translate non-quantifiable data into a meaningful and coherent narrative (ibid.).

As Antonius (2007) notes, determining which methodological approach to employ for a study depends on what the researcher is seeking to demonstrate. The type of data sought, as well as the perspective from which the researcher wishes to analyze it, determines the most appropriate

methodology to embrace for a given study (Antonius, 2007). In light of this reflection, the particular methodology the author has chosen to utilize for studying penal labour in corrections is the qualitative evidence synthesis. Booth (2006) defines this approach as follows:

> [It is] 'a method for integrating or comparing the findings from qualitative studies. The accumulated knowledge resulting from this process may lead to the development of a new theory, an overarching "narrative", a wider generalization or an "interpretative translation"'. It 'looks for "themes" or "constructs" that lie in or across individual qualitative studies. The goal ... is not aggregative in the sense of "adding studies together," as with a meta-analysis. On the contrary, it is interpretative in broadening understanding of a particular phenomenon' (cited in Grant & Booth, 2009, p. 99).

A strength of this approach is that it is useful for exploring service users' views, which can be used to complement existing research (Booth, 2007, as cited in Grant and Booth, 2009; Booth, 2006). Indeed, the present research seeks to mobilize prison labour program participants' views in order to draw a more complete portrait of the reality of prison work and its corresponding impact on labour market integration. However, given that the qualitative evidence synthesis approach is still very young, there is an ongoing debate as to the specific research strategy that should be employed when utilizing this methodology (Grant & Booth, 2009). The present study has opted for a research strategy that can be likened to that of a systematic review.

Research Strategy

The research strategy developed for this paper followed Landry et al.'s (2007) five-step process for conducting a systematic literature review. The first step in the process is to formulate

a research question (Landry et al., 2007), which was done following an initial review of the existing literature on prison labour programs.

The next step in Landry et al.'s (2007) procedure is to establish the inclusion and exclusion criteria for studies to be included in the review. At this stage, a number of inclusion criteria were determined in order to ensure that the most relevant studies would be retained. Perhaps the most significant criterion was the inclusion of scholarly scientific articles and the exclusion of theses, reports and the remaining grey literature. While these and grey literature have made significant contributions to the research subject at hand, this criterion was applied in order to ensure a standard of rigour in the retained articles, which, in contrast to theses and grey literature, are subject to third-party evaluations prior to publishing. This criterion is especially important given that an evaluation of the scientific validity of the retained studies is outside the scope of this research paper and is oftentimes not a primary objective of the qualitative evidence synthesis methodology, in contrast to other forms of literature reviews (Grant & Booth, 2009).

The inclusion criteria that were established also required retained studies to present original data regarding the perspective of participants engaged in prison labour programs while incarcerated. Thus, literature reviews and commentaries on existing studies were excluded in order to ensure that only primary sources of data be analyzed. Furthermore, given this paper's objective of exploring the views of prison labour participants while incarcerated, studies examining employment interventions pre- and post-release were also excluded. Hence, this criterion ensures that the focus of the retained studies remains on carceral programs implemented *during* incarceration. Following this logic, studies examining individuals' perspectives on work release programs, where a correctional institution allows an individual to conduct work in the community

during the day and return to the institution following their shift, were included in the present research project.

The final inclusion criterion that was applied required studies to be published between January 1st, 2006, and December 31st, 2020. The 15-year window of studies included in the qualitative evidence synthesis balances the competing needs of having a sufficient number of studies satisfy the inclusion criteria while also ensuring that the prison labour interventions remained temporally relevant (and thus not outdated). A 15-year timeframe struck a compromise between these diverging needs.

The third and fourths steps in the process for conducting a systematic literature review according to Landry et al. (2007) consist of identifying relevant studies (step 3) and evaluating and selecting articles (step 4). With the assistance of an academic librarian, the author constructed the following Boolean expression based on the identified research question: (prison OR imprison* OR penitentiar* OR correction* OR inmate* OR offender* OR incarcerat*) AND [(employment OR labour OR labor OR work OR job) NEAR/2 (program* OR initiative* OR training OR prison* OR correction* OR penitentiar* OR inmate* OR offender*)] AND (integrat* OR reintegrat* OR rehabilitat* OR reinsert* OR "labour market" OR "labor market" OR employ* OR recidivism OR reoffend*). In January 2021, this Boolean expression was inputted into three distinct research databases, namely *ProQuest, Academic Search Premier* and *Web of Science*, each of which yielded 885, 557 and 431 results, respectively. The selection of these databases was based on the recommendations of the academic librarian, which strategically sought to target studies from a range of disciplines in the social sciences.

Inputting the Boolean expression into the three databases listed above revealed 982 studies, once duplicates were removed. From these, an initial scan of the titles and abstracts allowed the

author to narrow down the articles to those that fit the inclusion criteria. Approximately 130 articles were retained for further revision. A more extensive revision of articles was then undertaken, dropping the number of retained articles to 14. In addition, one article that was not detected through the above-presented research strategy but was identified during the initial review of the existing literature on prison labour programs was added to the list of retained studies. Thus, a total of 15 articles were retained.

The last step of Landry et al.'s (2007) model is to interpret and synthesize the results of the 15 articles. The thematic analysis that resulted from this synthesis and analysis was completed without the use of assistive technology.

Limits of the Research Strategy

Despite having rigorously implemented the research strategy presented above, several limits of the present study persist. As previously mentioned, the exclusion of the grey literature ensured that only peer-reviewed articles would be subject to inclusion. As a result of limiting the results of this study to articles published in scientific journals, relevant findings derived from the grey literature, such as those contained in the Correctional Investigator of Canada's annual reports, were excluded from the results section of this paper. Some of these findings are, however, examined in the discussion chapter of this paper.

Furthermore, given that the vast majority of the research process was conducted by the sole author of this paper, the results of this research are subject to reporting bias. To prevent this, systematic reviews typically require that at least two authors participate in the selection and evaluation of articles to be included in the review (The Joanna Briggs Institute, 2015). In addition,

having only one author code the results of the retained studies for the thematic analysis heightens the probability of reporting bias occurring.

Another limitation of the present research concerns the diverse contexts in which the retained studies took place. The perceptions of individuals participating in prison labour initiatives while incarcerated in Canadian prisons and penitentiaries remain underexplored. Hence, in order to better grasp the realities of inmate labourers within corrections, this research included studies conducted internationally. While this confers certain advantages, such as allowing for cross-cultural comparisons to take place, it also severely limits the extent to which the results of this paper can be said to reflect the realities of Canadian inmates. Furthermore, while prison work programs aiming to improve employment outcomes vary substantially from one country to another, these interventions also vary from one province to another, and from one order of government to another (e.g., variations between provincial/state and federal intervention models). Hence, these variations further limit the application of the research findings to any given institution, including the Correctional Service of Canada. As Newton et al. (2018) point out, the results of studies where there are a diversity of prison work programs cannot be aggregated. Instead, the present research attempts to identify common themes that emerged throughout the literature on prison labour in Canada and abroad.

Ethical Considerations

While research in the social sciences has traditionally favoured the adoption of a neutral stance on behalf of the researcher, qualitative methodologies in particular have more recently began embracing the inherent subjectivity of the researcher in the knowledge production process (Anadón, 2006). Qualitative researchers today are more willing to recognize that despite their best

efforts, they are not objective and neutral in their interpretations of reality (ibid.). Thus, partaking in the construction of knowledge through qualitative methods requires simultaneously indulging in both critical and reflexive thinking, whereby researchers critically examine societal conditions as well as their own behavioural biases and thought patterns to develop self-awareness of how their subjectivity influences their research (Richard & Gervais, 2018).

In carrying out the present research, it is also important to consider how epistemological inequalities can arise, which are concerned with the varying degree of access to information across different social groups and their ability to either (re)produce forms of knowledge or ignorance (Namian, 2020). With respect to this research on prison labour, the author recognizes that his analysis is of a theoretical nature. Thus, he recognizes that the reflections put forward in this research paper are subject to debate, and that he stands to learn by engaging in discussions with experts in corrections as well as with the individuals who are most heavily impacted by prison work programs, namely the individuals partaking in them.

RESULTS

The following thematic analysis brings forward the primary themes that emerged throughout the 15 retained articles that included interviews with inmates on the topic of prison labour. The three main themes of the analysis are the following: *the objectives of prison labour*; *dissatisfactions with prison labour*; and *women and minorities*. A number of subthemes emerged as well. Furthermore, in most of the retained articles, discussions with inmates touched on more than one of the three themes. A summary of the findings is presented at the end of the chapter.

OBJECTIVES OF PRISON LABOUR

Almost all retained articles touched on the purpose of conducting prison work. The results demonstrate that prison labour responds to a variety of needs (both directly and indirectly) beyond aiming to facilitate individuals' insertion into the workforce upon their release. Despite some important differences, inmates engage in prison labour for many of the same reasons individuals find employment in the labour market.

OBJECTIVE 1: KEEPING BUSY AND PASSING TIME

One of the most frequent comments that arose when discussing prison labour with inmates is that it helps to keep busy and pass time (Lacity et al., 2014; Naessens, 2020; Pandeli et al., 2019; Strimelle & Frigon, 2011). For many, prison work serves as a form of distraction or coping mechanism in corrections. A participant in Pandeli et al.'s (2019) study explains:

> "I just want to get out of my cell, that's the only thing I'm doing it for ... otherwise you'd end up going nuts ... on your own all day or with your [cell] mate ... it's easier to get out and work. (Kane, aged 22, Workshop 2)" (p. 604).

Similarly, a respondent in Naessens's study (2020) explains how prison work can help an individual focus on a task and avoid rumination – a finding that was highlighted more than once in the retained studies:

> "R3: If you do nothing, the days last longer. You know, I have kids and a family outside, and then you just start worrying. If you're at work, you're busy and you don't spend your time thinking about problems, and time flies quickly and, you know ... If you don't have anything to do, it gets hard, you know ..." (p. 940).

Hence, inmates participating in prison labour generally preferred working than remaining inactive and confined to their cell.

Objective 2: Building a Work Ethic

Prison work also serves to help individuals build a work ethic and to ensure structure in their days (Goodman, 2012; Hunter & Boyce, 2009; Lacity et al., 2014; Silva & Saraiva, 2016; Richmond, 2014). The following passage derived from Silva and Saraiva's (2016) study with female participants incarcerated in Brazil under the purview of the Association for Protection and Assistance for Convicts (APAC) exemplifies this reality:

> "What brought me to APAC was the work, you know. Working is very important when you're serving time. I don't know, I think it's because of our rehabilitation. Because those of us who live in crime, we are not used to working. And to be honest, to me this whole work thing is quite new, to be working all day long. I'm still getting used to it. But working is important, because when I come out I want to change, I want to do things differently, I want to get a good job, I want to come along with my children and, to have that, I have to start getting used to it while I'm doing time. It's like working outside, we start early, we

have a lunch break, we have a certain time to go back to work. That's why I think it's the place to readapt indeed. (R24)" (p. 371).

As this passage demonstrates, building a work ethic and being structured in one's work is oftentimes viewed as a necessary component of the rehabilitation process. Yet, not only does the meaning of the term *rehabilitation* remains ambiguous, the link between engaging in intensive, structured prison labour and achieving rehabilitation remains uncertain (Goodman, 2012). This analysis is reflected in Goodman's (2012) study of California's prison fire camps, where the author highlights how pervasive the term *rehabilitation* is in both inmates' and prison staff's discourses and how liberally the term is applied to qualify any and all types of positive behaviours occurring in the camps. A strong work ethic that may include physically exerting, manual work is perceived as being one of the drivers of rehabilitation – a narrative that it echoed in the above passage by participant R24 (Goodman, 2012; Silva & Saraiva, 2016).

Objective 3: Generating Income

More tangibly, however, participating in prison labour provides individuals with the means to generate income and hence grants them a degree of economic independence while incarcerated (Kalica, 2015; Lacity et al., 2014; Naessens, 2020; Strimelle & Frigon, 2011). This financial independence allows individuals to avoid relying on their networks to provide them with money for expenses incurred while detained:

"R9: If you have money, you can make your life a little bit nicer. If you don't have money, you're a beggar. The most necessary things, like phone calls – which are very expensive, by the way – or stamps for your letters. If you don't have any money you're at the mercy of other prisoners and only surviving." (Naessens, 2020, p. 939).

Hence, earning an income while incarcerated allows individuals to satisfy some of their basic needs as well as achieve a higher degree of comfort in corrections; the money earned can be used to help keep contact with family members and friends, purchase new clothes or rent a television (Naessens, 2020).

It is noteworthy that not all jobs in prison abide by the same pay scale. For example, Lacity et al.'s (2014) study conducted in an American Federal Correctional Facility in Ohio interviewed individuals working for UNICOR – a government-owned, for-profit corporation responsible for prison sourcing. Wages for individuals employed by UNICOR may reach several hundred dollars a month, whereas individuals conducting institutional maintenance jobs earn approximately 30$ a month (Lacity et al., 2014). Individuals employed by UNICOR note that this discrepancy in wages elevates their social status relative to the other inmates, as the higher salaries they earn allow them to purchase services in jail, such as laundry washing and cleaning services, from inmates performing maintenance jobs (ibid.). Thus, the salary gap within American federal corrections provides a strong incentive for individuals to partake in the most lucrative forms of labour. Indeed, individuals cite the cost of living in prison, the motive of economic independence and the higher wages offered by UNICOR as the primary incentives of working for the company while incarcerated (ibid.).

Objective 4: Acquiring Formal Work Experience and Competencies

Additionally, some individuals also cited what is often thought to be the primary incentive for engaging in prison labour, namely the opportunity to gain work experience and acquire new employment qualifications, as a reason for participating in prison work (Hunter & Boyce, 2009; Lacity et al., 2014; Naessens, 2020; Pandeli et al., 2019). The following excerpt from Hunter and

Boyce's (2009) study with individuals that participated in a peer mentorship program while incarcerated in England demonstrates how prison work can offer inmates this opportunity:

> "... I was eager to get going ... I thought I needed to do this for myself, not for anyone else really, because I wanted a career, and thought, while I'm in prison there's no point me just lazing round doing nothing, and I want to get somewhere in life, so the best way to do it is just to start as fast as I could really. (Steve)" (p. 123).

Steve's statement displays how prison labour programs can provide a viable opportunity for acquiring work experience. While inmates in several institutions highlighted this, these experiences contrast with those of inmates who perceived their jobs as being mindless, repetitive, unengaging or meaningless (Pandeli et al., 2019; Strimelle & Frigon, 2011).

The lack of complementary services within corrections was highlighted several times (Elisha et al., 2017; Hunter & Boyce, 2009; Kalica, 2015; Strimelle & Frigon, 2011). Elisha et al.'s (2017) study with work release participants in Israel underlines the importance of both acquiring work experience and having access to therapeutic services within the correctional establishment:

> "The work outside the prison really helped me to fit in with other people. At first I was afraid, and during the first months, I had many conversations about this with the ward social worker. I learned how to handle myself differently with people—in language, speech, attitude . . . It also affected my relationships with other inmates here—being more polite, asking for things instead of commanding like I used to do for 20 years . . . (Mohammad)" (p. 353).

Therapeutic services within corrections appear to facilitate the transition of beginning to work in the community while remaining incarcerated. However, the importance of having support for

finding work and services in the community upon release was also highlighted, as many individuals will remain feeling ill-equipped for integrating the labour market upon their release (Elisha et al., 2017; Hunter & Boyce, 2009; Pandeli et al., 2019; Strimelle & Frigon, 2011).

Objective 5: Improving Self-Efficacy

Similarly, some individuals reported building confidence at work as an outcome of participating in prison work initiatives (Hunter & Boyce, 2009; Lacity et al., 2014; Richmond, 2014; Timler et al., 2019). Again, a participant in Hunter and Boyce's (2009) study discussed what he gained from participating in the prison's peer mentorship program: "Confidence on the phone, you know, confident speaking with people in authority, and like people in other agencies, such as probation, the council and that. (Mike)" (p. 124). In a study conducted in British-Columbia, Canada, individuals participated in the Correctional Service of Canada's prison farms program, which involves cultivation crops and partaking in the distribution of food to Indigenous communities in need (Timler et al., 2019). Through interviews with the program's participants, the authors (2019) noted that this initiative eased inmates' apprehensions of life outside of the penitentiary and allowed them to develop a sense of confidence in their rapport with others by establishing connections with various Indigenous communities. Furthermore, Timler et al.'s (2019) study also describes the sense of tranquility and pride that some individuals reported feeling while tending the crops. The following excerpt highlights the potential therapeutic value of participating in this particular program, despite the laborious work it required:

> "You're not hearing machines and that kind of stuff. You're hearing birds, you're listening to the wind through the trees, you'll see the odd wildlife. In [other jobs] you're in a building, there's bright lights, and it's noise." (p. 450).

Interestingly, donation food to communities in need, rather than selling the food for profit, made the prison labour initiative particularly meaningful. Indeed, the authors (2019) noted that some individuals stated they would not participate in the cultivation of crops if the produce were not donated. In addition, the prison farm program provided men who grew up in impoverished households with the opportunity to reflect on their own past experiences with food insecurity (ibid.). Thus, based on the interviews in Timler et al.'s (2019) study, this program appeared to have a positive impact on many of the participants.

Objective 6: Developing Relationships

Timler et al.'s (2019) study, among others (e.g., Brown & Timler, 2019; Hunter & Boyce, 2009), demonstrates how prison work can also be perceived as an opportunity to socialize and/or to build social skills while incarcerated. The prison farm study exemplifies how the men participating in the program created social bonds with the communities they delivered food to as well as between themselves:

> "It's teamwork, working with people, being able to take my experiences and skills and help other people and show them, you know, here's an easier way [...] so they can benefit from what I've learnt over the years." (Timler et al., 2019, p. 450).

These findings are echoed in Brown and Timler's (2019) study examining the Work 2 Give program in British-Columbia, which aims to provide Indigenous men incarcerated in one of Canada's federal correctional institutions an opportunity to build and donate crafted artisanal objects to First Nation communities. Furthermore, the opportunity conferred by prison work to allow inmates to socialize with their fellow comrades is also highlighted in the following passage by a participant in the St Giles' peer mentorship program:

> "The freedom that the St Giles' role gave me, you know [in a] secure closed prison and the interaction with individuals that I probably wouldn't have had anything to do with if I hadn't been doing St Giles NVQ. (Tally)" (Hunter & Boyce, 2009, p. 125).

Objective 7: Accessing Work-Related Privileges

Some individuals also noted that they were granted various privileges through their participation in prison work programs relative to unemployed inmates (Kalica, 2015; Goodman, 2012). For example, Kalica's (2015) interviews with individuals incarcerated near the outskirts of Northern Italy reveal that there is a prison floor reserved for individuals participating in prison labour. Individuals living on this floor benefit from more spacious cells that are left open during the day and a less hectic environment due to fewer conflicts erupting among employed inmates (Kalica, 2015). However, as the next section of this chapter will discuss, these perks are easily withdrawn and are thus very fragile.

Dissatisfactions with Prison Labour

This section sheds light on the financial precarity, coercion and power dynamics that underlie prison labour. While several retained articles underline positive work programs initiated in corrections, a subset of these studies adopts a more critical approach towards examining prison labour and the working conditions inmates are subject to. Despite these interventions seeking to promote a vague notion of rehabilitation when taken at face value, this section highlights a contrasting, punitive component of prison work rooted in deprivation and, more broadly, retribution stemming from a "tough on crime" philosophy.

Meaningless Opportunities

Individuals in several articles highlighted their dissatisfaction with the precarious wages and lack of social protection in prison work, or made explicit references to being exploited (Guilbaud, 2012; Goodman, 2012; Hatton, 2017; Naessens, 2020; Pandeli et al., 2019; Strimelle & Frigon, 2011). As previously mentioned, individuals participating in prison labour at times emphasized the menial, unfulfilling nature of their jobs. For example, a participant in Pandeli et al.'s (2019) study with individuals working for a privatised prison in the United Kingdom claimed his job is "kids' work" and stated:

> "It doesn't really give you any knowledge and experience for going outside to get a job ... you can do factory work [in here] and ... you'll just be packing bags, tagging boxes, checking things ..." (p. 607).

This excerpt provides an example of the dissatisfaction individuals expressed regarding the skills and competencies they acquired through their participation in certain prison work programs. In several cases, their jobs did not equip them with the tools and experiences needed to successfully integrate the job market following their release other than in a marginal sector of employment (Guilbauld, 2012; Pandeli et al., 2019; Strimelle & Frigon, 2011). Sometimes, the jobs these individuals performed within prison were destined to be obsolete by the time the inmates were released (Guilbaud, 2012).

Likewise, a participant in Strimelle and Frigon's (2011) study with women that were detained in either a provincial or federal Canadian penal institution (or in some cases both) makes the following statement:

> "On the outside I worked as a cook. Here, when you work in the kitchen, you wash dishes, wash the floors. I'd rather learn something. I know how to wash dishes. There's nothing meaningful about that" (p. 117).

The above passage further depicts how some prison labour programs lack both meaning and any significant skills training that can be used to equip individuals to integrate the labour market in a skilled trade upon their release. Indeed, like the empty calories of a fruit that is stripped of all its vitamins and nutrients, these programs are reduced to their bare minimum, providing little to no value to inmates other than keeping them occupied and generating a minimal income.

Conditions of Labour

Some inmates were inclined to comment on the wages they earned in the correctional centres they worked in. At times, these wages provoked sentiments of indignation among inmates. For example, the following statement represents one individual's perspective concerning the wages paid to him in a Belgian prison:

> "R9: You'd be ashamed to pay your friend two euros to do a job for you. You'd think to yourself, 'What a bad person am I to ask such a thing'. So, in that respect, I find it (the remuneration) a disgrace" (Naessens, 2020, p. 939).

Furthermore, when asked what he learns from his job, one participant in Pandeli et al.'s (2019) study expressed the following: "'[it teaches me about] working for a small wage, that's probably it' (Matt, aged 20, Workshop 2)" (p. 606). This comment and others like it demonstrate that individuals are acutely aware that they are underpaid when engaging in prison labour. However, inmates have very little choice but to accept the wages they are offered, or refuse to work altogether and accept the consequences.

However, not all individuals are critical of the wages they receive (Naessens, 2020; Guilbaud, 2012). The following declaration exemplifies this perspective:

> "R13: Look, I find that the pay we get – €3 an hour – is high when you hear what the others earn. I myself have been working six years in prison maintenance. I earned €1.16 or €1.14

> an hour. Sorry, €3: that's twice your wages, isn't it. So who am I to say that €3 isn't good enough" (Naessens, 2020, p. 939).

This comment describes the process of social comparison that underlies individuals' perceptions of their wages. Some come to accept their wages in light of the pay their colleagues performing maintenance jobs are receiving, while others use the labour market as their point of reference. Through interviews with inmates in France, Guilbaud (2012) observed that those receiving the lowest wages felt that they were being exploited the most strongly. Thus, while the process of comparing wages within prisons can relativize pay scales, it can also contribute to creating a social hierarchy within corrections and thus generate internal competition rather than focusing on collective action to improve working conditions for all (Lacity et al., 2014).

In response to these conditions of employment among others, many individuals engaged in prison work while simultaneously performing acts of resistance, ranging from individual acts of defiance, to organized, collective protests (Guilbaud, 2012; Hatton, 2019). At the individual level, inmates may use tactics such as the slowdown, whereby they intentionally decreased their speed of production, or outright refuse to comply with a work-related order (Guilbaud, 2012; Hatton, 2019). Collectively, inmates may orchestrate protests to renegotiate their wages or working conditions, though because they are not represented by a union nor considered legal employees, their chances of success are severely undermined (Guilbaud, 2012).

On another note, while the presence or absence of social protection in cases of work-related accidents was not frequently discussed in the retained articles, participants in Guilbaud's (2012) study discussed the issue at length. Individuals expressed their disapproval of the politics governing prison labour:

> "It's as if we were working illegally really, and that's surprising because what happens if you get hurt? It's not seen as a work-related accident. You've got a right to pay, but you don't have a right to anything! René cut his finger here. He got nothing, and he lost his job! If you have an accident at work, that's it. You get a smile, a Band-Aid, and off you go! […]" (para. 39).

In addition, concerns were voiced over older adults' ability to sustain themselves financially after prison:

> "There's a guy who got out for his retirement. They told him that working inside meant nothing. It wasn't counted […] I've already seen guys who've had accidents. They got nothing. So the pay slips are useless and will be useless later on" (Guilbaud, 2012, para. 41).

Taken together, these findings depict a dissatisfaction with the conditions in which prison labour takes place. In turn, poor working conditions triggered inmates' explicit references to prison labour as a form of exploitation and modern slavery (Guilbaud, 2012; Goodman, 2012).

Use of Authority

The notion of exploitation implies that there is an oppressor and a victim of the oppression. The power imbalances that lie at the heart of relationships between correctional staff and inmates during prison labour was brought to light through numerous studies (e.g. Elisha et al., 2017; Hatton, 2019; Guilbaud, 2012; Kalica, 2015; Pandeli et al., 2019). Participants disapprovingly discussed the treatment they received from correctional staff and the sanctions they faced if they refused to obey orders. For instance, an individual from a second group of participants in Elisha et al.'s (2017) study with inmates partaking in a work-release program in Israel underlined this reality:

> "At first it was good, but after a few months, things changed for the worse. The security level of the prison was increased, the evening group activities were reduced, and the social workers often replaced and hardly functioned . . . Many prisoners caused disciplinary problems, leading to their expulsion from the ward. In response, management lost faith in rehabilitation and imposed further sanctions on us. The attitude toward the prisoners was degrading; no one cared about us . . . We felt that although we are in the process of rehabilitation, the system does not really want to rehabilitate us (Tariq)" (p. 357).

Conversely, the inmates in Elisha et al.'s (2017) study who benefitted from a fair and empathetic treatment from the correctional staff in a separate prison reported a more positive work-release experience, which translated into more compliance and greater satisfaction with the program on their behalf.

Kalica's (2015) study with individuals incarcerated in Northern Italy also drew a portrait of inmate relationships with correctional staff. Many inmates perceived their staff supervisors as hostile and reported that they tend to avoid conflict with them for fear of reprisal. Given the twofold role of the prison as both an employer and an enforcer of discipline, conflicts with correctional staff often lead to a double sanction resulting in both a lay-off from work and an additional penalty that could affect an inmate's sentence, such by as erasing the possibility of obtaining an early release. Furthermore, when external parties, such as private enterprises, participate in the supervision of prison labour, these enterprises may establish and exercise their own regulatory measures on inmates within the carceral setting. To minimize the risk of being sanctioned, many individuals prefer to maintain an invisible barrier in their relationships with their employers and correctional staff.

Hatton's (2019) interviews with individuals who participated in prison labour while incarcerated in a New York State prison examined the dynamics underlying labour coercion on behalf of correctional staff. In echoing the findings from Kalica's (2015) study, inmates expressed contempt over having to comply with some of their supervisors' orders at work:

> "We know that they got the power of the ticket, we don't want our privileges gone. We don't want to be locked in our cell 24 hours a day. We don't want to not be able to go to commissary and eat what we want to eat, or use the phone to contact our loved ones when we want to. So, we tuck our tail, you know, grown men, you got to handle it ... Because they got the say-so. We don't have no union, so we subject to tolerate a lot more" (Hatton, 2019, p. 912).

The severity of the sanctions individuals in this study faced, from solitary confinement –which was usually accompanied by physical violence – to being docked a month's pay or being administered a prolonged prison sentence, undermined inmates' motivation to express any form of resistance, even when doing so may have been justified. Similarly, Pandeli et al.'s (2019) study in a privatised facility highlights how despite claims of prison work being a voluntary activity, individuals who did not complete work assigned to them were subject to being relegated to a "basic" prisoner status and hence being permitted fewer visits from family and friends, among other restrictions (p. 604). Hatton (2019) observes that the punitive measures corrections take to ensure discipline and order in prison labour result in a form of "social coercion", which, unlike the impact of physical and economic sanctions imposed on inmates, restricts individuals' social relationships with others. Unsurprisingly, some individuals express feeling "coerced and resentful" in relation to their prison job (Pandeli et al., 2019. p. 605).

Women and Minorities

Several of the retained studies highlighted the effectiveness of prison labour programs from the perspectives of women and individuals who are part of a minority population in society. The importance of adopting a tailored approach to developing intervention programs, including prison work initiatives, that target a population's specific needs rather than using pre-existing templates of programs conceptualized for the majority population was highlighted (Strimelle & Frigon, 2011).

A few studies examined how groups of women experience prison labour programs (Richmond, 2014; Silva & Saraiva, 2016; Strimelle & Frigon, 2011). In Richmond's (2014) analysis of gender differences between men and women partaking in prison work in the state of Pennsylvania, USA, the author notes that the urge to make money while incarcerated did not seem to be as strong for women as it did for men. Instead, the priority for most women that were incarcerated was to occupy employment that had meaning and that would assist them in becoming financially self-sufficient upon release. Furthermore, the author's (2014) interviews also revealed that while men tended to prioritize employment over other forms of programming during incarceration, this did not hold true for women. Participating in initiatives such as those aiming to assist with substance abuse appeared to take precedence for women, which at times conflicted with their ability to engage in prison labour. Strimelle and Frigon's (2011) interviews with women in the Canadian context also found that this population tended to perceive work as an important need alongside others that are more or equally pressing, such as providing care for their children and maintaining relations with family.

Strimelle and Frigon's (2011) study also found that women's critiques concerning prison labour were generally centered around the low wages and the lack of both variety and of an

educational component to the jobs that were available. While some women believed their experiences on the job were valuable, the extent to which these would help them to find a job after prison were questioned:

> "The experience they give us here is very good. I got a certificate in printing. I did some sewing. I've done just about everything. With my certificate in printing, the only thing is that when you get outside it will be marked shop L, detention centre, which means you won't really be able to get a job with it. So you have a monkey on your back before you even start. You learn a trade but it doesn't mean you'll get a job on the outside" (p. 120).

As this passage displays, some of the study's participants were satisfied with the work they conducted while incarcerated – in contrast to some of the other women that were interviewed.

Despite this, participants noted that prison work often consists of activities stereotypically assigned to women, such as cleaning, housekeeping, cooking and working in textiles, which typically lead to jobs in marginal employment sectors (Silva & Saraiva, 2016; Strimelle & Frigon, 2011). Thus, in addition to the barriers specific to women seeking employment following their release, such as the stigmatizing labels assigned to women convicted of a criminal offence, the multiple roles they juggle such as raising children, earning an income, and coping with any pre-existing issues (such as substance abuse, an abusive partner or a fragile mental health), the employment training women receive in corrections often relegate them to marginal sectors of the economy (Strimelle & Frigon, 2011). In light of these difficulties, one participant in Strimelle and Frigon's (2011) study stated that the prospect of reverting to illicit work such as the sex trade can be a tempting way to make ends meet quickly (ibid.).

Brown and Timler's (2019) study provides an example of prison work programming that is generally aligned with a population's needs and objectives. The Work 2 Give program gave

Indigenous men that were incarcerated in a federal correctional centre in Canada the means to create and donate craft items to local First Nations communities. This experience created a cycle of giving and receiving while generating social connections between the Indigenous men and the communities they donated to. Much like Timler et al.'s (2019) study where men donated food to deprived communities, the men participating in Brown and Timler's (2019) interviews noted how the program provided them with an opportunity to support fellow Indigenous communities through their gifts and to reflect on their own experiences growing up:

> "[The sock monkeys] are sort of like a security blanket ... [M]e as a child, five years old I was put in foster care for a few months. And I would have loved to have had a sock monkey to hang onto, or a scarf, a toque, anything, right? ... I wouldn't have felt so alone" (p. 29).

Indeed, many participants highlighted positive outcomes of doing such deeds. In addition to the social bonds the men created between themselves and the recipient communities, the program offered them an opportunity for self-reflection, which opened a gateway to healing. The emphasis placed on giving, rather than mere productivity, was the crux of the program that allowed the traditional Indigenous craft gifts to hold special meaning.

Prison work also, at times, allowed individuals to perceive themselves in new, more positive ways (Brown & Timler, 2019; Timler et al., 2019). For instance, Brown and Timler (2019) observed that some of the Indigenous men participating in the making and donating of crafts came to perceive themselves as "people who give to others" due to their acts of donation, similarly to the individuals who partook in the Correctional Service of Canada's prison garden program (Brown & Timler, 2019, p. 30; Timler et al., 2019). While the Correctional Service of Canada has demonstrated an openness to support Indigenous inmates and communities, much of the

enthusiasm for such programs are tempered by the appallingly high rate at which Indigenous peoples in Canada are incarcerated.

In a different vein, interviews with individuals engaged in a work-release program in the United States brought to light that all participants subscribed to some degree of performance to present an alternative identity of themselves (Barak & Stebbins, 2017). Some of the program's participants viewed this enactment as instrumental to achieving a desired state or objective: "To get a job, you have to pretend to be this so-called person that you're not in order to land this job that you're looking for […]" (p. 296). Conversely, some of the program's participants viewed their performances as fundamentally transformative, in that they genuinely believed they would eventually become the identity they displayed.

In the context of their work environments, "performing being content" was the most common type of performance described by participants (Barak & Stebbins, 2017, p. 297). As one individual stated: "You got to wear the mask at work, we can't be upset. We can't say certain things", referring to the idea that performance is an adaptation strategy participants use in the workplace to get by (p. 298). In addition, participants also described adapting their speech to fit in with prescribed sociocultural norms, thus depicting how individuals that are part of minority social groups are expected to adopt the dialect of the majority when seeking out jobs:

> "We could talk a totally different language ... you got the real language, the proper English, and then you got the sub-culture – the language that we use amongst each other. If I was trying to explain something to you I might use proper English, 'cause that's probably the only language you probably know ... They want us to just stop using it [our language] so much ... 'cause we have to go on job interviews they want us to learn proper English" (p. 298).

In this way, a hegemonic way of speaking is reinforced as the default and normative language of conversation in relation to work. Whether directly or indirectly, the correctional institution in which this study took place attempted to fortify this ideology among the program's participants.

Summary of Findings

The first section of this chapter explored the objectives of prison work. The findings of this study revealed that prison labour can be useful for achieving a number of objectives, namely, to allow inmates to keep busy and pass time; build a work ethic; generate income; acquire formal work experience and competencies; improve their self-efficacy; build relationships; and access work-related privileges. Conversely, dissatisfaction with prison labour was centered around the lack of meaningful opportunities for work in prison and the lack of preparation for work beyond prison, poor working conditions – which primarily refers to the low wages and inadequate social protection – and the excessive use of authority.

The final section of this chapter explored women's incentives for participating in prison labour as well as their as their critiques of prison work. Moreover, an appreciation of two Canadian programs designed for Indigenous inmates was provided. A separate study investigated workplace performance and the suppression of Ebonics that oftentimes apply specifically to minority populations in corrections.

The following analysis will discuss these results in light of the literature presented in the Problem Statement chapter as well as Hatton's (2017) framework of invisible work.

DISCUSSION

This study set out to answer the following research questions: 1) What is the purpose of prison labour from the perspective of the inmates conducting it? 2) Is prison labour helpful in assisting these individuals to integrate the job market upon their release, and which aspects of prison work do individuals view as helpful or detrimental to this process? Findings from the qualitative evidence synthesis offer numerous elements of response to these questions.

THICK AND THIN NEEDS

As the previous chapter highlighted, prison work programs have a variety of objectives. On one hand, they can contribute to fulfilling some of inmates' immediate needs, such as generating income in prison and avoiding idleness (e.g. Kalica, 2015; Lacity et al., 2014; Naessens, 2020; Pandeli et al., 2019; Strimelle & Frigon, 2011). Thus, prison work can help to alleviate these superficial or "thin", yet no less important, needs, which are of a primary importance in corrections (Dean, 2010; Naessens, 2020). On the other end, prison work can also allow inmates to build new competencies for the job market, develop connections with others and shift identities by engaging in self-reflection (e.g. Brown & Timler, 2019; Hunter & Boyce, 2009; Lacity et al., 2014; Naessens, 2020; Pandeli et al., 2019; Timler et al., 2019). Hence, prison labour has the potential to allow individuals to satisfy another order of needs, called "thick" needs, whereby they come to perceive their work experience positively rather than as a mere survival strategy (Dean, 2010; Naessens, 2020).

The prison work programs examined in the present research sought to address several of inmates' needs, with some programs addressing more than others. Pandeli et al.'s (2019) study provides a clear example of this: Inmates in Workshops 1-4 conducted dull, mind-numbing jobs,

while individuals in Workshop 5 performed engaging jobs that held promise for launching a new career after incarceration. Despite both groups of inmates having at least some of their employment needs fulfilled, inmates in Workshop 5 unsurprisingly viewed their prison labour experience as being much more enriching and constructive (Pandeli et al., 2019).

Much of what made prison work unappealing to inmates in Workshops 1-4 was reflected in other prison labour programs as well. In other studies (e.g. Goodman, 2012; Guilbaud, 2012), individuals expressed feeling taken advantage of or exploited due to the nature of the work they performed, the low wages they were paid and the lack of social protection they received in relation to work. These findings call into question whether the International Labour Office Geneva's (2001) recommendation that "[…] the circumstance in which the prison labour is performed should not be so disproportionally lower than the free market that it could be characterized as exploitative" is respected by correctional institutions (p. 147). While the question would benefit from further investigation, studies contained in this qualitative evidence synthesis indicate that this standard is not always upheld.

Furthermore, despite that prison labour helped individuals in Workshops 1-4 keep busy and generate a minimal income, some of these individuals expressed dissatisfaction at the fact that their employment programming was aligned with marginal sectors of the economy – a finding that was corroborated by other studies (Pandeli et al., 2019). Indeed, Silva and Saraiva (2016) and Strimelle and Frigon's (2011) interviews with female inmates provide evidence of prison labour programming that steers women towards financially precarious, gender-biased jobs, such as cleaning, housekeeping, and cooking. These findings echo the Correctional Investigator of Canada's (2019) observation that in some instances, prison labour programs actively contribute to placing women in stereotyped gender roles that oftentimes are not leading sectors of the economy.

Coercion and Resistance in Prison Labour

Poor working conditions in prison labour were also displayed in the harsh treatment of inmates on behalf of correctional staff and the hegemonic ideologies around workplace performance that were reinforced (Barak & Stebbins, 2017; Elisha et al., 2017; Hatton, 2019). Retained studies revealed that for better or for worse, the attitude and treatment correctional staff exhibited towards inmates seems to have a substantial bearing on these individuals' experiences of prison labour (Elisha et al., 2017; Timler et al., 2019). Furthermore, being employed by correctional institutions created a power dynamic that was twice as constraining for inmates, as missteps in either work or in the correctional environment at large almost inevitably impacts their working conditions (Kalica, 2015). As a result, inmates have little choice but to fully comply with the demands of correctional staff at all times by fear of reprisal.

Several authors have critically examined the mechanisms through which the correctional setting attempts to instill docility into inmate populations. As Hatton's (2019) interviews bring to light, one such mechanism is coercion. Furthermore, after examining the life writings of Canadian inmates on the topic of prison labour, Rymhs (2009) observes a firm resistance expressed by these individuals to becoming part of a labour-intensive workforce within the correctional apparatus.

Guilbauld's (2012) interviews highlight how resistance to prison labour can take various forms, yet inmates sparsely resist by taking organized, collective action. According to the author's (2012) interviewees, the lack of a union to represent inmates both facilitates the infliction of injustices on them and undermines the chances of success for taking joint action. Oftentimes, the lack of an adequate recourse to signal injustices forces inmates to "tuck their tail" and endure coercion from correctional staff as well as poor working conditions overall (Guilbaud, 2012; Hatton, 2019, p. 912; Pandeli et al., 2019). While the appointment of a Correctional Investigator

in Canada is one means to combat these injustices at the federal level, the number of complaints filed by inmates to the Correctional Investigator indicate that violations of rights seemingly continue to take place in penitentiaries (Correctional Investigator, 2020).

House (2020) describes the national strike in Canadian penitentiaries that took place in the fall of 2013 resulting from the federal government's hike in inmates' room and board fees and the abolition of bonuses for individuals working for CORCAN, thus reducing inmates' wages by a total of 30%. An aggravating factor leading to the strike was that wages paid to inmates have been frozen since 1981 and that by the end of the 1980's, inmates' purchasing power had already substantially declined due to inflation (House, 2020). It is estimated that inmates in at least 18 of Canada's 43 penitentiaries participated in the strike, making it the country's largest in federal corrections since 1975. Despite this display of collective action, and following various attempts at an appeal, inmates' fate was ultimately sealed in the court of law in late 2019. A suboptimal social and political strategy to effectively mobilize their forces, combined with a lack of political willpower to reverse the changes, were among the primary factors leading to inmates' defeat (House, 2020).

"Cycles of Invisibility"

Hatton's (2017) framework of invisible work is useful for shedding light on the findings reported in the previous chapter of this study, mainly because it describes the mechanisms through which prison labour becomes a financially precarious activity. As a reminder, this framework defines invisible work as "labour that is economically devalued through three intersecting sociological mechanisms – here identified as cultural, legal and spatial mechanisms of invisibility – which operate in different ways and to different degrees" (Hatton, 2017, p. 337). Comments from

inmates concerning the wages they were paid while engaged in prison labour and the lack of benefits and social protection they were awarded signal that prison labour is indeed an economically devalued activity. As such, Hatton's (2017) framework of invisible work provides a lens through which to interpret inmates' experiences of prison labour.

According to this framework, the primary cause of this economic devaluation is the sociolegal mechanism of invisibility, which conceals the economic precarity of prison labour with a discourse of rehabilitation. In other words, the narrative that prison labour is offered to inmates as a form of rehabilitation can be used to justify inmates' precarious work experiences (Zatz, 2008; Hatton, 2017). As stated, most interviews with inmates whose experiences of prison labour resembled those of inmates in Workshops 1-4 in Pandeli et al.'s study (2019) reveal that their experiences were primarily a coping mechanism for life in corrections rather than a true form of rehabilitation (Elisha et al., 2017; Goodman, 2012; Guilbaud, 2012; Kalica, 2015; Naessens, 2020; Strimelle & Frigon, 2011). Indeed, these experiences clash with the discourse that upholds prison labour as an avenue for rehabilitation, and in doing so, perpetrates the economic precarity associated with this labour.

Furthermore, the carceral population is oftentimes a marginalized one, particularly in terms of inmates' relationship with employment (Nolan et al., 2014; Ramakers, 2015); results from this study indicate that prison labour programs are susceptible to deepening this marginalization by reinforcing a "cycle of invisibility" (Pandeli et al., 2019, p. 596). Prison work programs often forego addressing inmates' pressing employment needs in favour of work experiences that address only immediate "thin" needs, such as helping to avoid rumination (Naessens, 2020). For example, Guilbaud's (2012) interviews highlight how some jobs in prison come to be obsolete over time, thereby doing little to equip inmates to integrate the job market after months or years of detention.

In Canada, the Correctional Investigator (2019) has denounced the lack of modernized equipment in CORCAN's manufacturing sector, stating that it must better reflect the current needs of the labour market. Thus, interventions that either directly or indirectly contribute to placing individuals in peripheral sectors of the economy perpetuate a cycle that oftentimes begins before incarceration and is reinforced during detention through the financial precarity that characterizes prison labour. Without interventions that offer promise for escaping the very sidelines of the labour market, the onus of rehabilitation is ultimately displaced almost entirely on the individual, despite claims to the contrary. As a result, it may be assumed that the trajectory of precarious work will continue, thus maintaining a cycle of employment that is almost always marginal (Pandeli et al., 2019; Ramakers et al., 2015).

Breaking the Cycle

To prevent reinforcing a cycle of invisibility, penal institutions must at the very least do as much to assist individuals to integrate the labour market upon their release as the repercussions of being incarcerated do to withhold them from occupying employment. According to Shea (2005), the process of normalizing life in prison by enabling structure and routine around work while permitting individuals to socialize in a work-related context should result in an easier adaptation to life outside of prison. However, as Kalica (2015) highlights, work is fundamentally different inside and outside of correctional facilities. Himself a former inmate, Kalica (2015) observes that the prison environment infiltrates the activities of work as well as every other aspect of life in corrections. Thus, he argues that it is essential for prison labour to dissociate itself from this environment as much as possible. In this perspective, work release programs and employment

opportunities within corrections that closely resemble the realities of the current labour market may present better chances for integrating it following incarceration.

The results of this study reveal that when properly executed, prison work programs can contribute to fulfilling individuals' professional needs in addition to contributing to their personal growth. Despite the small sample size, participants in Workshop 5 of Pandeli et al.'s (2019) study attest to this: these individuals unanimously expressed the opinion that their prison work experience was a form of rehabilitation and believed that it would help bridge them into the labour market. Similarly positive experiences were reflected in other studies; for example, participants in Timler et al.'s (2019) study reported a therapeutic value to their work in a Canadian penitentiary and perceived their job as being particularly meaningful due to the philanthropic mission that was incorporated into it. Similar results were reported in Brown and Timler's (2019) study that examined a prison labour initiative geared towards members of Canada's Indigenous population. Indeed, the Work 2 Give initiative presents Indigenous peoples with a program that is culturally relevant by offering them the opportunity to partake in building traditional arts and crafts and subsequently donating them to nearby Indigenous communities (Brown & Timler, 2019).

Programming for other populations in corrections, such as women, older adults and individuals with a mental disorder, should be inspired by this approach to design programs based on the needs and ambitions of the population in question. One may reasonably assume that the more an intervention is engineered around the specific needs of a given population, the better the chances that the intervention will succeed in responding to those needs. In this same line of thought, the Correctional Investigator (2019) has recommended that the Correctional Service of Canada "report out on how they specifically plan on addressing the unique employability needs of vulnerable populations" (p. 103).

Interestingly, while individuals participating in a prison labour program with which they were satisfied were undoubtedly aware of the lesser wages they received relative to the labour market, this topic of discussion was less prevalent in studies that cited these individuals, thus giving the impression that the issue was less contentious among these participants. For example, many individuals in Hunter and Boyce's (2009) study reported that the peer advisor program was fulfilling and constructive, despite being acutely aware that they were providing a cost-effective option for the correctional facility they were housed in. One possible interpretation of this finding is that prison labour programs that are perceived as being enriching by inmates may partially displace their focus from the frugal wages offered in corrections.

However, while properly executed prison work programs may ease the challenge of integrating society following release, it is well-known that a criminal record can be a significant barrier for obtaining employment, especially when the offense committed is severe (Uggen et al., 2014). Kilgour (2013) argues that occupying employment is a key component of rehabilitation, as this gives individuals the means to provide for themselves and acts as an important doorway to personal development; indeed, much of the social identity is defined by one's relation to work. Meanwhile, Latimer (2017) highlights how a record can generate stigma, result in the denial of one's human rights (e.g. right to housing), and lead to different forms of discrimination in the areas of employment, education, travel, and several others – all of which may complicate the feat of finding a job. Furthermore, after conducting interviews with individuals burdened by a criminal record, Côté (2019) observes that the stigma associated with a record can exert a negative impact on self-esteem, social relations, mental health, and other facets of well-being. The author (2019) explains that the act of stigmatizing individuals is intended to set them apart and purposely

differentiate them from the norm of society, hence resulting in their marginalization. Thus, the repercussions of a criminal record risk undermining the impact of employment programming.

CONCLUSION

In summary, this study sought to better understand the motives for inmates' participation in prison labour and whether they perceive engaging in prison work as a valuable step towards integration the labour market upon their release into the community. The 15 scholarly articles that were retained for the qualitative evidence synthesis allowed the author to identify points of convergence and divergence among them, through which were drawn several observations using Hatton's (2017) framework of invisible work as an anchoring point.

TAKEAWAYS

The results of this study highlight that prison labour can accomplish a variety of objectives, and thus, is useful to inmates for a variety of purposes. While some prison labour initiatives seek to fulfill inmates' "thin" yet crucial needs primarily relating to generating income and passing time, it is clear that programs responding to both inmates' "thick" and "thin" needs were thoroughly more appreciated by participants in the retained studies. Programs that are centered on inmates' employment needs and priorities within corrections not only hold promise for better employment prospects upon release into the community, but also have the potential to fuel a sense of both personal and professional growth. A bottom-up approach when conceiving prison work interventions, whether they are destined for women, Indigenous peoples, older adults or individuals with mental health challenges, is an important step for properly discerning and addressing the needs of the population in question. Conversely, prison labour programming that is primarily focused on responding to inmates' superficial needs merely allow these individuals to survive in prison, suggesting that these interventions are less effective in addressing the employment concerns many inmates present upon admission into corrections.

Hatton's (2017) conceptual framework of invisible work brings to light how the association between the somewhat vague notion of rehabilitation and prison work contributes to the economic devaluation of this form of labour. Inmates who participated in prison work initiatives that offered them a form of professional or personal growth generally presented a more positive outlook on their jobs in corrections and on their experience conducting prison work. Others who were engaged in jobs that were socially or economically devalued, required little expertise if any, lacked personal meaning, or held little promise for helping to integrating the job market following their release from custody were more critical of the value of prison labour and oftentimes of the economic precarity associated with it. Additionally, the attitude displayed by correctional officers towards inmates impacted the latter's experiences of participating in prison labour. The use of coercion appears to generate a particularly tense dynamic between inmates and members of the correctional staff, who exercise their power during prison work hours and beyond.

Aligning the prison labour experience with sectors of the economy that are in-demand is critical for breaking the cycle of marginalization that often characterizes inmates' experiences with either formal or informal labour prior to their incarceration. However, even the best prison work programs may ultimately fail in assisting inmates to integrate the labour market after release if barriers to employment, one of the most notable being a criminal record, constrain their ability to find a job through which they could reasonably be expected to become contributing members of the Canadian economy.

Future Research and Final Thoughts

Future research could further explore inmates' employment trajectories prior to and following their incarceration in order to reach a better understanding of their needs at the time of entry into corrections and to discern which interventions are most effective for securing stable employment following their detention. Furthermore, Newton et al.'s (2018) review of the impact of vocational education and training programs on recidivism concluded that more rigorous quantitative data is needed in order to draw firm conclusions as to the effectiveness of these interventions. Yet, despite the appeal that quantitative data has for assisting decision makers to make informed choices, the value of qualitative data should not be overlooked. Indeed, taking inmate perspectives into consideration when designing interventions that are ultimately destined for this population can provide prized insight into the factors that enable or inhibit these interventions' success. Furthermore, there is also a lack of qualitative data and academic research that is published on prison work programs in Canada.

It would also be helpful to explore measures that may be implemented to assist individuals in overcoming the barriers to employment that are associated with a criminal record. As highlighted at several points throughout this paper, a criminal record is a factor that significant limits employment opportunities. Other notable factors that can reduce employment opportunities for former inmates include inadequate preparation for the job market, the task of juggling competing priorities (such as balancing employment with caring for one's dependents), the difficulty of readapting to life in the community, or the challenge of managing mental health or substance abuse disorders (Baron et al., 2013; Elisha et al., 2017; Nogueira Menezes Mourão, 2018; Strimelle & Frigon, 2011). Again, the task of integrating the job market following release from corrections must not be thought of in isolation to other challenges inmates may face at that

point in time, which underlines the importance of inserting prison work initiatives into a comprehensive plan for community integration.

Despite the Correctional Service of Canada being under heavy fire from critics for a number of years particularly due to the overrepresentation of Indigenous peoples and other minority populations in Canadian penitentiaries, the federal agency has the urgent challenge of continuing to revise its prison labour interventions to better reflect the needs and priorities of inmates and to facilitate their integration into their respective communities. It is in this way – by adopting a utilitarian approach to community integration and refraining from committing the errors of the early 21st century that saw sweeping penal reforms made on an ideological basis – that we may contribute to building safer communities.

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APPENDIX 1: HATTON'S (2017) MECHANISMS OF INVISIBILITY (P. 339)