Sport and Physical Recreation in Canadian Federal Prisons: An Exploratory Study of Carceral Physical Culture

by

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A thesis submitted in conformity with the requirements for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy
Department of Exercise Sciences
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Abstract

Despite their prominence in correctional environments around the world, sport and physical activity are understudied areas of prison life, including in Canada. Furthermore, even less attention has been paid to how prison sport and physical recreation intersect with the many other physical practices in prisons that, this dissertation argues, together compose a *carceral physical culture*. This thesis addresses this gap through an exploratory study of the historical development and social significance of carceral physical culture in Canadian federal prisons. The thesis includes a detailed historical examination of the development of the Canadian corrections system and its impact on physical culture, using a variety of primary and secondary sources to develop this analysis. It also draws on important theoretical perspectives from the sociology of everyday life—particularly the theoretical work of Erving Goffman, Michel de Certeau, and Henri Lefebvre—to explore the micro-level significance of physical culture in prisons. This analysis engages with the complex social meanings of sport and physical activity in an environment of extreme deprivation—what Goffman (1961a) calls a *total institution*—and the ways these practices...
are implicated in social control and resistance. Delving deeply into the broad range of physical cultural practices with which prisoners engage, and situating these within the micro- and macro-level structures that contour the social world of prisons, not only provides insight into the social significance of sport and physical activity in an unusual social context—it also allows for interpretive analysis about the operation of power in total institutions, the social production of space in and through physical culture, and the complex ways in which powerful actors exercise social control and marginalized groups resist these impositions.
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# Table of Contents

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS ................................................................................................................ IV

TABLE OF CONTENTS ............................................................................................................... V

CHAPTER 1: CANADA'S CORRECTIONAL SYSTEM AND CARCERAL PHYSICAL CULTURE .......... 1

**The Context: Corrections and Prisons in Canada** ................................................................. 1

**Sport, Physical Activity, and Physical Culture in Prisons** .................................................. 3

*Sport, Physical Activity, and Physical Culture* ...................................................................... 4

*Carceral Physical Culture* ..................................................................................................... 7

**Chapter Overview** ............................................................................................................. 12

CHAPTER 2: REVIEW OF LITERATURE AND THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK ................. 14

**Sport and Physical Activity in Prisons** .............................................................................. 14

*Rehabilitative, Therapeutic, and/or Mental Health Benefits* ............................................... 16

*Sport and/or Social Control in Prisons* .................................................................................. 19

*Constructing and Performing Prison Masculinity* ............................................................... 21

*Sport and Physical Activity in Women’s Prisons* ................................................................. 22

*Sport and Physical Activity for Juvenile Offenders and Delinquents* ............................... 23

*Physical Recreation in Prison: A Canadian Perspective* ...................................................... 25

**Understanding Prisons: Theorizing Social Control and Punishment** ............................. 27

*Punishment and Prison* ......................................................................................................... 28

**The Sociology of Everyday Life: An Interpretive Approach** ........................................... 32

*Symbolic Interactionism* ........................................................................................................ 33

*The Contributions of Erving Goffman* ................................................................................ 35

*The Total Institution* ............................................................................................................ 37

*Theoretical Approaches to Space, Tactics, and Subversion in Prisons* ............................ 40

**Conclusion** .......................................................................................................................... 45

CHAPTER 3: METHODOLOGY ................................................................................................. 46

**Methods** ............................................................................................................................. 48

*Interviews* ............................................................................................................................. 48

*Informal Discussions* ............................................................................................................ 50

*The Kingston Penitentiary Tours* ......................................................................................... 51

*Public Presentations* ............................................................................................................. 53

*Historical Analysis: Institutional and Prisoner-Produced Texts* ......................................... 54
CHAPTER 4: THE HISTORICAL DEVELOPMENT OF CANADIAN CORRECTIONS ................................................................. 77

THE INTRODUCTION AND EARLY DEVELOPMENT OF THE PENITENTIARY IN CANADA ........................................... 78

Physical Culture in the Early Penitentiary Era .................................................................................................................. 80

CANADIAN CORRECTIONS IN THE EARLY 20TH CENTURY ............................................................................................ 85

Canadian Carceral Physical Culture: From the Macdonnell Report to the Archambault Report ........................................ 87

THE RISE AND FALL OF THE MEDICAL MODEL AND THE FOCUS ON REHABILITATION ......................................... 94

The Rise of Prison Sport and Physical Activity After World War Two .................................................................................. 97

THE SHIFTING PENAL LANDSCAPE OF THE LATE 20TH AND EARLY 21ST CENTURIES .............................................. 102

Physical Culture, Human Rights, and Changing Conditions of Confinement ................................................................. 108

THE CONTEMPORARY FEDERAL PRISON CONTEXT IN CANADA .................................................................................. 116

Physical Culture in the Conservative Era ........................................................................................................................ 122

CONCLUSION .................................................................................................................................................................. 125

CHAPTER 5: EVERYDAY LIFE, SOCIAL CONTROL, AND THE PRODUCTION OF SPACE IN AND THROUGH CARCERAL PHYSICAL CULTURE .............................................................................................................. 127

PHYSICAL CULTURE AND DAILY LIFE IN A TOTAL INSTITUTION ................................................................................. 127

Physical Culture in the Daily Routine of a Prison ................................................................................................................. 127

Daily Life, Physical (Un)Health, and Symbolic Violence ...................................................................................................... 130

Daily Life and Physical Violence in Men’s Prisons ............................................................................................................... 138

SPORT, PHYSICAL ACTIVITY, AND SOCIAL CONTROL IN PRISONS ........................................................................ 141

SPORT, PHYSICAL CULTURE AND THE SOCIAL PRODUCTION OF PRISON SPACE ....................................................... 148

Representations of Space and Spatial Practice in CSC Institutions .................................................................................... 148

The Production of Sport and Physical Recreation Spaces .................................................................................................... 154

Lived Space and Physical Cultural Spaces .......................................................................................................................... 158

CONCLUSION .................................................................................................................................................................. 164
## CHAPTER 6: THE PRESENTATION OF SELF, INMATE TACTICS, AND INSTITUTIONAL CEREMONIES: OPPORTUNITIES FOR RESISTANCE AND ROLE RELEASE THROUGH CARCERAL PHYSICAL CULTURE

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Topic</th>
<th>Page</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>The Presentation of Self and Bodies as Sites of Resistance and Agency in Men’s Prisons</td>
<td>166</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Physical Cultural Paraphernalia as Resources for Identity and Resistance</td>
<td>174</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Navigating Tactics and the Limits to Resistance</td>
<td>177</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Unpacking the Significance of Physical Culture and Everyday Practice</td>
<td>181</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Institutional Ceremonies and Carceral Physical Culture</td>
<td>182</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Annual Sport Festivals</td>
<td>186</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Intermural Sport</td>
<td>191</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Intramural Sport</td>
<td>195</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Celebrity Visits</td>
<td>197</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Community-led Recreational and Therapeutic Activities</td>
<td>198</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Conclusion</td>
<td>201</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

## CHAPTER 7: CONCLUSION

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Topic</th>
<th>Page</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Contributions and Recommendations</td>
<td>204</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Future Directions</td>
<td>209</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>More Focused Research and New Methodological Approaches</td>
<td>209</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Alternative Forms of Carceral Physical Culture and Functional Equivalents</td>
<td>210</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sport and Physical Recreation in Post-release Reintegration</td>
<td>212</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>An Urgent Need for Contemporary Canadian Research</td>
<td>213</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Concluding Thoughts</td>
<td>214</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

## REFERENCES

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Source</th>
<th>Page</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Appendix A: University of Toronto Ethics Approval</td>
<td>238</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Appendix B: Information Letter Provided to Participants</td>
<td>239</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Appendix C: Oral Consent Script</td>
<td>240</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Appendix D: Interview Guide: Former Prisoners</td>
<td>242</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Appendix E: Interview Guide: Other Participants</td>
<td>243</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Chapter 1: Canada’s Correctional System and Carceral Physical Culture

There are over 10.2 million incarcerated individuals worldwide, a number that continues to rise as rising rates of global incarceration outstrip population growth (Wamsley, 2013). Popular media images, such as muscular prisoners pumping iron or violent sport matches in the yard, regularly portray sport and physical activity as enduring features of (usually male) prison life. Yet, despite the apparent significance of these physical practices in prisons across the globe, relatively little academic interest has been directed toward understanding their social significance in correctional institutions—furthermore, even less attention has been paid to how prison sport and physical recreation intersect with the many other physical practices that, this dissertation argues, together compose a carceral physical culture. Given the gap between the rising sociopolitical significance of the prison and the limited body of knowledge on its physical culture, this dissertation explores and critically examines the historical development and social meaning of carceral sport, physical recreation, and physical culture, with a specific focus on Canadian federal prisons. Delving deeply into the broad range of physical cultural practices with which prisoners engage, and situating these within the micro- and macro-level structures that contour the social world of prisons, not only provides insight into the social significance of sport and physical culture in an unusual social context—it also allows for interpretive analysis about the operation of power in total institutions, the social production of space in and through physical culture, and the complex ways in which powerful actors exercise social control and marginalized groups resist these impositions.

The Context: Corrections and Prisons in Canada

In Canada, as in other countries, prisons are a vital part of the corrections system that handles people charged with criminal offences. Various correctional facilities—including maximum, medium and minimum security prisons, remand jails, treatment centres, Aboriginal healing lodges, and youth detention centres—form a complex web of carceral institutions designed to house, punish, and rehabilitate certain criminal offenders. The operation of correctional institutions is a shared responsibility between the federal and various provincial governments. Federal institutions house adults serving sentences of
two years or more, while provincial institutions handle shorter adult sentences and youth facilities. This division of correctional responsibility was established in the Constitution Act of 1867, which gave the federal government the power to establish criminal procedures and the provinces the ability to establish administrative procedures for administering justice (Griffiths, 2010). The Correctional Service of Canada (CSC) is responsible for the operation and management of federal corrections, which include 57 penitentiaries\(^1\) as well as parole offices, community correctional centres, residential facilities, and Aboriginal healing lodges (CSC, 2013b). In total, the CSC claims responsibility for approximately 13,000 prisoners and nearly 9,000 offenders under supervised release (CSC, 2013b).\(^2\) The inmates incarcerated in CSC institutions are just a fraction of those in the adult corrections system, with only 8% of Canadians in the corrections system serving time in federal prison at a given time (Dauvergne, 2012).

As Griffiths (2011) reminds us, the criminal justice system is reflective of broader power differentials and social inequalities. As such, the composition of prison populations typically reflects broader characteristics of social marginalization, as the poor and racial or ethnic minorities are typically overrepresented (King, 2008). This phenomenon has been well-documented in the US, where black males are strikingly overrepresented in incarcerated populations—a racialized trend that Wacquant (2001b) refers to as “the penalization of poverty” (p. 401)—and the emergence of the prison as a “surrogate ghetto” for containing and segregating black, usually male, Americans (Wacquant, 2000, 2001a, 2009). In Canada, similar overrepresentations of marginalized racial groups are seen: recent data highlight the fact that visible minorities comprise 18% of total offenders in the corrections system (including, but not limited to correctional institutions); this marks a 40% increase over the last five years, a period in which the number of Aboriginal, black and Asian offenders has significantly grown (Sapers, 2013). Within federal correctional institutions, black and Aboriginal prisoners are particularly overrepresented: blacks make

\(^1\) These 57 penitentiaries consist of eight maximum security, 20 medium security, 16 minimum security, and 13 multi-level security institutions (CSC, 2013b).

\(^2\) Ricciardelli et al (2014) cite more recent figures that suggest the federal inmate population rose to over 15,000 in 2013, and that 600 of these (an all-time high) were women.
up 9.5% of the prison population, yet just 2.9% of the Canadian population (Sapers, 2013); even more disproportionately, Aboriginals account for just 4% of the adult Canadian population, yet make up 22.8% of the federal prison population (Sapers, 2014). In another aspect of marginalization and overrepresentation, prisoners experience high levels of mental illness, with a recent study of Canadian inmates in Ontario suggesting that over 40% of prisoners suffer from mental health issues (Brown, Hirdes, & Fries, 2015).

**Sport, Physical Activity, and Physical Culture in Prisons**

This project initially had sport and physical activity in prison settings as its focus. While these physical practices remained central to my data collection and analysis, it quickly became apparent from the literature and from preliminary research that to analyze sport and recreational physical activity in isolation would be to ignore the many ways in which they intersect with other socially significant physical practices. As such, in this dissertation I advance the concept of *carceral physical culture* as a broad umbrella term that cover many official and illicit physical practices that together help to constitute the social life of correctional institutions. In a prison context, this conceptualization allows for the study of phenomena as diverse as recreational sport or physical activity, rehabilitative physical practices such as yoga, physical labour, food preparation and consumption, body modification practices such as tattooing, consensual and non-consensual sex, physical violence, and drug use. Each of these corporeal practices intersects with others in prison environments, allowing a complex and diverse physical culture to flourish.

While the categorization of carceral physical culture is limited to correctional environments, I believe that it is more broadly relevant to scholarly discussions about the definitional boundaries of Physical Cultural Studies (PCS) and the ways in which sport and physical activity intersect with other physical practices such as physical labour, physical violence, sex, and body modification. In the following sections, I first discuss definitional issues of sport, physical activity, and physical culture, including a critique of the emergent PCS project; and I then briefly sketch the characteristics of carceral physical culture. Through these discussions I have three primary goals:

1. To acknowledge and provide an analytical framework for the ways in which various physical practices intersect to help construct identities of and relations between individuals and groups in prison settings.
2. To allow prison researchers to situate the diverse topics of their studies within the physical culture of prisons.

3. Building on the above discussion, to contribute to ongoing debates within the sociology of sport and PCS about the definitional and theoretical composition of physical culture, in order to demonstrate how widening our understanding of physical culture may both broaden and deepen the analysis of power relations in various social settings.

**Sport, Physical Activity, and Physical Culture**

There has been considerable scholarly debate over how to define the term sport. Perhaps the best-known definition was provided by Allen Guttmann (1978), who differentiated between *games, contests, and sport* and distinguished the latter by its organization, competition, and physicality. Thus, though chess is an organized, rule-bound competition, its non-physicality excludes it from being classified as a sport; whereas leapfrog, a physical and organized game, lacks the competitive aspect necessary to be labeled a sport (Guttmann, 1978). Coakley (2001), meanwhile, refined the understanding of sport by suggesting a dichotomy between *power and performance sport* and *pleasure and participation sport*. This distinction goes a long way toward reconciling the seeming contradiction of elite professional football being classified alongside children’s recreational soccer as “sport”—and, as such, it offers a useful analytical tool for examining the different social characteristics of various sport activities. Without unpacking too deeply the discussion on the definition of sport, it will suffice here to assert broadly that sport, whether power/performance or pleasure/participation (or in between these two categories, for that matter), should be understood as a loosely organized and rule-bound physical contest. However, defining sport in this way excludes a whole host of other bodily practices, such as dance, yoga, jogging, informal physical play, and many more activities. These, then, can be classified broadly as *(recreational) physical activities.*

While variations exist in the interpretation of the terms sport and physical activity, the term *physical culture* is a much more difficult concept to define. While recent scholarly calls for the establishment of a PCS discipline have helped bring the term into popular usage amongst scholars of sport, the concept of physical culture was deployed in popular and academic spheres for many decades before the emergence of the PCS project. A notable early usage of the term was in the interwar Soviet Union, where “brigades of physical
culturists” integrated gymnastics regimes into the industrial workday in order to promote a healthy citizenry3 (O’Mahoney, 2006, p. 9). In terms of scholarship, physical culture has been discussed and deployed for at least half a century within the sociology of sport. Andrzej Wohl (1966), in his editor’s introduction to the inaugural issue of the *International Review for the Sociology of Sport*, discussed the concept of physical culture at some length in his attempt to establish definitions of and boundaries for the fledgling sociology of sport discipline. Wohl defined physical culture as

the entire aspect of social achievements in the sphere of taking care of the body, i.e. the entire aspect of systematically used measures of promoting efficiency, of an educational, hygienic and entertainment nature, exerting their influence on the physical development of people, the development of their motor apparatus, as well as the adaptation of this apparatus to the all-round needs of the human individual, in the given conditions of development of social life (Wohl, 1957; cited in Wohl, 1966).

More recently, Hargreaves and Vertinsky (2007) defined physical culture as “those activities where the body itself – its anatomy, its physicality, and importantly its forms of movement – is the very purpose, the raison d’être, of the activity” (p. 1). Markula and Silk (2011), meanwhile, take the term to “include multiple forms of being physically (in)active. Such practices as exercise, dance, fitness, health, movement, recreation, work, elite sport, recreational sport or coaching sport can engage the physically active body” (p. 6). Key to all of these various definitions are the centrality of the physically and socially constructed body and the emphasis on a wide variety of physical movement practices beyond sport.

*Physical Cultural Studies*, meanwhile, is a contested term that is being increasingly utilized by scholars of sport, physical activity, and the body to label their research foci. The genesis of recent debates about the concept of PCS was a 1997 chapter by Alan Ingham, provocatively titled “Toward a Department of Physical Cultural Studies and an End to Tribal Warfare” (Ingham, 1997). In the chapter, Ingham argues for warring “tribes” of

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3 O’Mahoney notes that factory gymnastics were not popular with workers, who tended to prefer other forms of physical activity and sport, and often tended to be abandoned once the physical cultural brigades left. Nonetheless, this does not diminish the significance of this historical example of the intertwining of physical culture and physical labour in the interwar period.
kinesiologists to build cross- and interdisciplinary Departments of Physical Cultural Studies whose focus was on “the study of practices in physical culture, with their historical, cultural, structural, personal . . . components interwoven into it” (p. 171). Following on Ingham’s heels, Andrews (2008) advanced the usage of PCS as a means of both combating the hegemony of positivist kinesiological research departments and enlisting an umbrella term to capture the range of physical practices outside of sport. For Andrews, PCS is focused on understanding how

the various dimensions of physical activity combine to form a complex and diverse cultural sphere through which personal experiences, meanings, and subjectivities become dialectically linked to, and negotiated through, broader social, political, economic, and technological contingencies (p. 52).

In 2011, Sociology of Sport Journal dedicated an entire special issue to PCS. The editors of the issue, David Andrews and Michael Silk, identified their aim as presenting a collection of scholarship to “flesh out . . . an identifiable trend among the Sociology of Sport community and beyond” toward research centred on the interrelated topics of physical culture, power, and the body (Andrews & Silk, 2011, p. 1). The special issue featured discussions around spatial (Friedman & van Ingen, 2011) and feminist (Thorpe, Barbour, & Bruce, 2011) theories, methodological and epistemological considerations for researching corporeal practice (Giardina & Newman, 2011), and critical public praxis in and through research (Atkinson, 2011). Common themes emerging from various of these pieces include an explicit focus on the (in)active body and its shaping of and by social forces; the use of self-reflexive methodologies; an emphasis on research that contributes, in some way, to the public good; and a discontent with the corporatized university environment in which much academic knowledge is produced.

While PCS scholars preach disciplinary openness and fluidity, many of their works are also quite exclusionary in the definitional boundaries they place upon the concept. For example, various key texts (Andrews, 2008; Giardina & Newman, 2011; Silk & Andrews, 2011) include extensive lists of scholarly pieces that the authors consider to be characteristic of the PCS project. Parsing these lists, one finds that there are some notable forms of physicality that are excluded from these boundary-setting exercises. For example, physical labour, despite being an enduringly common form of physical activity for billions
of people around the world and being quite obviously enmeshed in the axes of power that PCS seeks to deconstruct, is mostly absent from discussions of physical culture. Similarly, tattooing and other body modification practices—which are inherently corporeal practices deeply connected with and influenced by historically changing social and political trends (Atkinson, 2003)—are not included in these texts as a component of physical culture. In this sense, there is a risk within the PCS project of excluding certain physical practices as legitimate research topics.

There are clearly flaws in advancing a narrow understanding of sport or physical activity, and thus ignoring many other interconnected and important bodily practices in which human beings may engage. Physical culture thus appears to be a useful scholarly concept to more broadly explore this range of activities. However, there are concerning trends in some PCS research toward an ahistorical conceptualization of physical culture and a contradictory promotion of disciplinary openness coupled with the setting of disciplinary boundaries. PCS, as it has been articulated by some of its strongest and most influential proponents, runs the risk of ignoring important sociocultural phenomena or activities that are undeniably physical. Given my reservations about these definitional issues, I subscribe to a broad definition of physical culture as an interlinked series of socially constructed and physically constituted corporeal practices practiced by a particular group in a particular social context. In the following section I discuss, based on existing literature, major components of a carceral physical culture.

**Carceral Physical Culture**

While a plethora of research examines various aspects physical practices that could constitute the "physical culture" of prisons—from sport to tattooing to drug use to rape—my research did not uncover an existing conceptual or theoretical framework through which to understand and categorize these diverse phenomena in carceral environments. This absence is certainly understandable; after all, the many physical practices that occur in prisons are incredibly diverse, as are the experiences and conditions of confinement of

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4 I am indebted to my colleague Guilherme Nothen, whose own doctoral research has raised similar critiques about the absence of physical labour in PCS, for his helpful discussions on this topic.
inmates in various types of correctional institutions around the world. In Canadian federal institutions, for example, there is a broad spectrum of conditions of confinement that affect an inmate's ability to participate in various physical practices: a prisoner in a minimum security institution may have access to activities such as tennis or basketball, and be able to roam the grounds relatively freely during the daytime; whereas, a prisoner in the segregation unit of a maximum security institution will be confined to his cell for 23 hours a day and have less than an hour each day of exercise in a small, caged-in yard.

Such extremes of imprisonment may appear so disparate as to elude broad conceptualization. However, coupling a broad understanding of physical culture with the situation of prisons within Goffman's (1961a) concept of the total institution offers an opportunity to propose herein a tentative model of carceral physical culture that captures its breadth and diversity. Although my research focused primarily on prison sport and physical activity, explorations of these topics led, at times, to an awareness of how these practices intersected with other physical cultural issues such as interpersonal and institutional violence against the bodies of prisoners, prescription drug use, and food provision and consumption. Clearly, then, sport and physical activity connect with other facets of physical culture (broadly defined) in prison contexts. The following section attempts briefly to define and map the range of physical cultural practices occurring in prison environments.

**Recreational Sport and Physical Activity:** Recreational sport and physical activity is a near-ubiquitous feature of contemporary prisons. These practices are usually sanctioned in some fashion by the prison administration, for example by the provision of sport space and equipment or the more formal organization of activities and competitions. A thorough overview of the literature on these practices is given in the next section.

**Rehabilitative or Developmental Physical Activity:** Related to, but distinct from, recreational sport and physical activity is what can be termed rehabilitative or developmental physical activity. Unlike recreational physical activity, which is perceived to

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5 Goffman’s concept of total institution and its benefits and limitations as a sociological tool are discussed in Chapter 2.
be undertaken for intrinsic values of pleasure or physical exertion, rehabilitative and developmental activities are designed and provided by prison authorities with the specific aim of changing the prisoner. Practices such as therapeutic yoga classes to teach anger management (Duncombe et al., 2005) or “boot camps” intended to instill discipline in juvenile delinquents (JHS Ontario, 1996) fall within this category. Many of the assumptions behind sport for development programming, such as that sport can encourage self development or address social problems (Kidd & Donnelly, 2007), may be seen in rehabilitative/developmental physical activity in prisons. It is important to note that there may be overlap between rehabilitative and recreational physical activity, both in terms of the assumptions of the prison administrations that provide these activities and the experiences of the inmates who participate in them.

**Physical Labour:** Physical labour has long been a feature of correctional regimes around the world. For example, Victorian British prisons put prisoners to work on a “tread wheel”—a treadmill-like device that forced its operators to continuously walk forward—as a form of hard labour to punish offenders (King, 2008). Numerous pieces of research examine the politics and social significance of physical labour in modern correctional settings, including examinations of chain gangs in the US South (Peloso, 1996/97) and outdoor firefighting camps in California (Goodman, 2012a; 2012b). In Canada, the CSC used to operate a series of prison farms on which certain inmates could live and work, however in 2009 the CSC announced that it was closing these institutions (Canadian Press, 2010). These forms of labour are extremely physical and deeply tied to inmates’ social and corporeal practices.

**Physical and Institutional Violence:** Violence, committed by and against the bodies of inmates and prison staff, is extremely common in many prison environments. Chapter 5 discusses some of these acts of violence by and against prisoners’ bodies, including physical assaults and symbolic violence enacted through inadequate food or the coercive provision of psychotropic medication. These forms of violence are undeniably physical, interconnected with broader power structures inside and outside the prison, and closely linked with other aspects of carceral physical culture.
Food: The provision, consumption, or denial (whether externally- or self-imposed) of food in prisons can be highly political (Godderis, 2006; Valentine & Longstaff, 1998), as it can in a variety of total institutions (Goffman, 1961a). Valentine and Longstaff (1998) contend that food is “a fundamental aspect of the material culture of the prison [and significant] to the disciplinary techniques within this institutional regime” (p. 133). The withholding of food or provision of inadequate food can be, as in other total institutions, a technique of mortification performed on the prisoner’s body by the administration (Goffman, 1961a). In addition to its social significance, eating is also a highly physical act and has direct consequences for the physical health and bodily condition of a prisoner. In extreme cases of brutal prison management, such as Nazi concentration camps, poor diets (coupled with extremely hard physical labour) were provided to inmates to slowly kill them. Even in less extreme situations, inadequate diet and its impact on the prisoner’s body feature prominently in prisoner narratives about daily life (e.g. Hassine, 2011; Schroeder, 1976). Finally, and not surprisingly given its corporeal immediacy, food intersects with sport and physical activity cultures in prisons.6

Tattooing and Body Modification: Prisoner tattoos are an example of how carceral physical culture is embedded within much broader structures. Tattooing as a physical practice became popular amongst prisoners in North America in the early 20th century, reaching its apex of popularity in the 1950s and 1960s, and was connected with a broader culture of criminal biker gangs and other deviant counter-cultures (Atkinson, 2003). Prison tattoos in this period were “communicative encryptions largely [serving] to denote gang affiliations within prisons . . . or one’s feeing of capture and confinement” (p. 40). Prisoners may join gangs—and physically demonstrate this affiliation through their tattoos—for self-protection, to gain power, to assert agency in a restrictive environment, to settle grudges, to improve access to material resources, or to organize against prison staff. Tattooing is thus not an isolated form of carceral physical culture, but rather a process by which prisoners signify their affiliation with a broader social entity, their gang, which itself is a product of myriad social, political and economic forces operating both within and outside

6 This topic is explored in more depth in Chapter 5.
the prison. Furthermore, prisoners’ tattoos have had a major impact on tattooing practices outside of prisons and, along with the body ink practices of other deviant groups such as motorcycle gangs and youth counter-cultures, contributed to a societal association between tattooing and social deviance (Atkinson, 2003). Prison tattooing is thus a physical practice that embeds the individual prisoner in a wide range of political and social power relations inside and outside of the prison.

**Sex and Sexuality:** Academic research and first-person prisoner accounts have highlighted the various ways in which sex plays a significant social role in correctional institutions. A major area of focus is inmate-on-inmate sexual assault in men’s prisons, which can arise from the intersection of aggressive prison masculinity, the inmate code, and overcrowded or unsafe prison environments (Kupers, 2001). However, although prison sex consists of a diversity of practices, including consensual and non-consensual acts, it remains a relatively understudied topic both in popular and academic outlets (Hensley, 2002). Sex in various prison settings may occur between partners for multiple reasons, including pleasure, commerce, a sense of freedom and self-fulfillment, transgression, procreation, protection and safety, and love (B.V. Smith, 2006). Prison sex is clearly a complicated physical practice that is intimately bound up with power relations, conditions of confinement, and interpersonal relationships. While not the focus of this thesis, it is nonetheless an important aspect of carceral physical culture.

**Drugs:** Drugs in prison can be understood as either a) substances which are typically illegal both inside and outside prison (i.e. narcotics); b) substances which are legal in general society but banned, or heavily restricted, inside prisons (e.g. tobacco and alcohol); and c) medical or prescription drugs. Many contemporary prisons have high levels of inmates who suffer from drug addiction, an underground trade in drugs, and administrations who devote a great deal of time and resources to dealing with the fear or consequences of drug abuse (Stöver & Weilandt, 2007). While inmates may take drugs for recreational purposes, research and investigative journalism in Canada has shown that legal prescription drugs are sometimes coercively administered by prison staff as a form of social control over prisoners (Kilty, 2012; Miller, 2014; Sawa, 2014). Meanwhile, eliminating illicit drug use remains a major priority for the CSC under the current
Conservative federal government, including in its design of new prison facilities (CSC Review Panel, 2007).

Clearly, the physical culture of prisons encompasses a diverse range of interconnected physical practices. While research has explored these practices individually, there has been no effort to understand more broadly the ways in which they intersect. Perhaps the concept of carceral physical culture offers a promising conceptual framework through which to develop such an understanding and to more deeply understand the social and political significance of various physical practices undertaken by prisoners in diverse correctional contexts around the world. This dissertation, with a primary focus on sport and physical activity, represents an initial step toward such a scholarly effort.

**Chapter Overview**

The dissertation consists of seven chapters, including this introduction. Chapter 2 reviews key bodies of literature and introduces the theoretical frameworks within which I am operating. In particular, the chapter introduces theories of social control, punishment, everyday life, symbolic interactionism, resistance, and space. Chapter 3 provides an overview of my methodology for this project, including a discussion of my primary methods of interviews and historical textual analysis. The bulk of the chapter, however, is devoted to a discussion and analysis of my failed attempts to conduct research inside Canadian prisons and the ethical issues raised by my project. Chapter 4 presents an historical analysis of the development of the Canadian prison system and its physical culture, drawing mostly upon policy documents, corrections reports, and prisoner-produced newspapers. Chapter 5 and 6, meanwhile, draw mostly upon my interview data to explore and analyze the experiences of Canadian prisoners with carceral sport and physical activity. Chapter 5 examines sport, physical activity and physical culture in the context of everyday prison life, exploring topics such as daily routine, physical health, and violence; sport as a form of social control; and the social production of physical cultural spaces as both sites of violence and resistance. Chapter 6 adopts a largely Goffmanian line of analysis to explore the ways in which sport and physical activity can be important resources for prisoners, and also draws upon the work of Michel de Certeau to explore the resistive potential of these physical practices. Finally, Chapter 8 concludes with a
discussion of alternative forms of carceral physical culture, the policy implications of my research, and a proposal for future research in this area.
Chapter 2: Review of Literature and Theoretical Framework

This chapter outlines the key bodies of literature and theoretical frameworks within which this research is situated. The first section provides an overview of the literature on sport and physical activity in correctional institutions, with a specific focus on: physical recreation and therapeutic or rehabilitative benefit; social control in and through physical activity; gendered aspects of carceral physical culture, particularly prison masculinity and women prisoners’ leisure activities; physical recreation and juvenile corrections; and sport and physical recreation in Canadian prisons. The second section outlines key theoretical perspectives about prison, social control and punishment, including discussion of key theorists of punishment such as David Garland, Michel Foucault, and Loïc Wacquant. The final section outlines the broad theoretical framework within which I situate my research: the sociology of everyday life. This section includes discussions of symbolic interactionism, the sociology of Erving Goffman and his concept of the total institution, and various theoretical approaches that help analyze resistance and subversion in everyday practices. This final section is particularly foundational for the dissertation, as it introduces the work of key theorists upon which I draw heavily to interpret my data: Goffman, Michel de Certeau, and Henri Lefebvre.

Sport and Physical Activity in Prisons

Despite the prominent role of physical recreation in prisons, the urgency for sociological research on incarceration in Western societies (Wacquant, 2002), and the human rights (United Nations, 1955) and health (Blaauw & van Marle, 2007) arguments for physical activity in prisons, there is relatively little research that significantly explores recreation and physical culture in a correctional context. However, it appears that social scientists globally are increasingly turning their attention toward the topic. For example, in the past four years, British psychologist Rosie Meek and her colleagues have published prolifically on sport-based rehabilitation programs in UK prisons (Meek, 2012, 2014; Meek, Champion, & Klier, 2012; Meek & Lewis, 2012, 2013, 2014; Parker & Meek, 2013), Spanish scholar David Moscoso has published results from a study in a prison in the region of Andalusia (Moscoso et al., 2012), and two separate studies of sport and leisure programs in Canadian women’s prisons have been published (Martin et al., 2014; Yuen, Arai, & Fortune,
The increasing interest in sport in correctional settings is part of a broader trend of academic and political interest in the deployment of sport as a tool for crime prevention or other forms of behavioural deterrence (e.g. Coalter, 2007; Hartmann, 2001; Hartmann & Depro, 2006).

In addition to the aforementioned publications, there are a limited number of other studies that examine physical activity and sport in prisons. In the past two decades these include ethnographies in Brazilian (Goifman, 2002) and Spanish prisons (Martos-Garcia, Devis-Devis, & Sparkes, 2009); an examination of the multifaceted role of sport and fitness in the lives of male prisoners (Sabo, 1994, 2001); a survey of the sport and leisure participation of inmates in the US state of Nevada (Frey & Delaney, 1996); and a comparison of attitudes toward weightlifting amongst non-prison and prison recreation professionals (Pawelko & Anderson, 2005). A number of graduate theses and dissertations have also explored the topic of sport in prison. These studies include an ethnographic exploration of sport in a Norwegian prison (Johnsen, 2001), a grounded study of the experiences of female inmates in the UK (Ozano, 2008), and, notably for this study, an analysis of the significance of sport in Canadian prisons (Caplan, 1996).

Meanwhile, a number of researchers have examined prison sport in specific historical correctional contexts, examining topics such as baseball in Japanese internment camps in the US (Dustin, 2002/2003), sporting activities in German prisoner-of-war camps during World War Two (Davison, 2006), and soccer leagues run by political prisoners in South Africa’s Apartheid-era Robben Island prison (Korr and Close, 2010; Suze, 2010). Studies at sites such as prisoner of war and concentration camps are significant to our understanding of sport and play in traumatic or hostile settings (Eisen, 1990; Liponski, 2012), and also provide useful comparative cases of the social importance of sport in total institutions (Goffman, 1961a). There is also a long tradition of research on sport and juvenile delinquency, including studies about the impact of sport participation on delinquent behaviour (Donnelly, 1981; Landers and Landers, 1978; Schafer, 1969; Sugden & Yiannakis, 1982) and the significance of physical activities in youth detention centres (Abrams, Anderson-Nathe, & Aguilar, 2008; Andrews & Andrews, 2003; Trulson, 1986).
While the literature is limited, it does reveal two broad social facts: 1) that prisoners engage in a diversity of physical practices in a wide variety of correctional contexts around the world; and 2) that, for both the individual inmate and the collective prisoner population, recreational physical activity plays an extremely prominent role in the organization of social life of many institutions. Put differently, the literature allows us to make the assertion that *physical culture, and particularly recreational sport and physical activity, is an important site for the shaping of social relations and power dynamics in many prison contexts*. As such, this topic should be of great interest to scholars seeking to understand how physical practices shape and are shaped by the social relations within prisons, specifically, and total institutions more broadly.

In the remainder of this section, I first examine four significant themes that emerge from the literature, particularly those related to this manuscript and to broader discussions within the sociology of sport about the social construction of sport and physical activity: the therapeutic or rehabilitative value of physical recreation; physical activity and/as social control; gender and carceral physical culture; and physical recreation and juvenile corrections. The section concludes with a more in-depth analysis of the limited literature on physical culture in Canadian prisons, particularly Caplan’s (1996) Master’s thesis on the subject.

**Rehabilitative, Therapeutic, and/or Mental Health Benefits**

Rehabilitation and therapy are two core concepts in many conceptualizations of corrections systems. Broadly, rehabilitation can be understood as “a rationale for punishment that emphasizes correcting offender behavior through treatment” (Davis, 2002, p. 221). It emerged as a correctional model in the mid-1950s and 1960s, in many countries, as a body of research began to suggest that “treatment with offenders can have a small but significant effect in terms of reducing re-offending” (Hollin, 2004, p. 8). Therapeutic approaches to corrections, meanwhile, rely on targeted interventions into prisoners’ lives that are designed to change factors, such as addiction or anger, that are linked to criminal behaviour (Moore & Hannah-Moffat, 2005). While rehabilitation and therapy are often represented as the opposite of punitive correctional approaches, they are themselves problematic concepts that can operate under the assumption that offenders are
deficient individuals who must be “cured” of their criminal tendencies (Cullen & Johnson, 2011). As Moore and Hannah-Moffat (2005) effectively illustrate in their examination of Canadian corrections, rehabilitation can be part of a “liberal veil” that can obscure the punitive nature of therapeutic programming.

Although the rehabilitative potential of prison sport is often invoked in policy and research, and is explicitly supported by some corrections staff (Pawelko & Anderson, 2005), reports of its effectiveness are mixed. Some evidence for this potential was found in research British prisons by Meek (Meek, 2012, 2014; Meek & Lewis, 2013), who argued that closely-managed and structured sport programs for young men allowed them to acquire post-release skills to assist their reintegration and reduce their likelihood of recidivism. Other research findings are more mixed. Andrews and Andrews’ (2003) participant observation study of an English youth correctional facility supported the broader thesis, found in much literature on sport and social development (Donnelly & Coakley, 2002; Kidd & Donnelly, 2007), that sport is a double-edged sword that can contribute to rehabilitation (i.e. social development) for some offenders, yet be an inconsequential or even damaging practice for others. Furthermore, some studies suggest that many prisoners may have indifferent or even hostile views toward physical recreation as part of a rehabilitation program (Caplan, 1996; McIntosh, 1986). For example, McIntosh’s (1986) study of the attitudes of racial minorities toward recreational programming in a US prison, while lacking complexity in its categorization of race, demonstrates that underlying assumptions about the rehabilitative benefits of carceral physical activity may not be shared by members of various social groups. Acknowledging the apparent rehabilitative possibilities offered by prison sport, yet being careful not to overstate these, Williams, Walker and Strean (2006) suggest that correctional physical recreation could fit well in a restorative justice framework, in which various physical activities may play a role in some offenders’ engagement in strengths-based and healing-focused rehabilitation efforts.

In addition to debates about rehabilitation and physical activity, other research suggests that physical recreation may play an important therapeutic role for inmates by helping them to cope with their incarceration and the social environment of the prison, and
thus helping to maintain their mental and physical health. Sabo (2001), for example, bluntly noted the “potential of [prison] athletics to sustain sanity in an insane place” (p. 62). Martos-Garcia et al. (2009) found that a number of prisoners in their study believed that physical recreation programs offer therapeutic benefits such as stress release, mental escape, and overcoming social exclusion; prison staff members also believed that sport offers prisoners with important mental health benefits. Meanwhile, a number of (largely psychological) studies of prison yoga programmes suggest that this practice can help prisoners with various mental health or behavioural issues by reducing substance abuse (Bowen et al., 2006, 2007; Simpson et al., 2007), improving mood (Bilderbeck et al., 2013), raising self esteem (Duncombe et al., 2005), or facilitating interpersonal relationships (Ronel, Frid, & Timor, 2013). These findings are not particularly surprising, as a large body of research has shown that various forms of exercise can provide a wide range of physical, social, and psychological health benefits (cf. Donnelly & Coakley, 2002); however, they are perhaps more notable due to the fact that prisons are unhealthy environments whose aims often conflict with those of health provision (C. Smith, 2000; Watson, Stimpson, & Hostick, 2004) and that prisoners suffer from mental illness and depression, which are created or exacerbated by their incarceration, at higher rates than the general population (Blaauw & van Marle, 2007). Physical exercise may, therefore, be a valuable mechanism for some prisoners to cope with the stressful and unhealthy conditions in which they are forced to live.

Overall, the literature on the rehabilitative and therapeutic potential of carceral physical activity offers mixed messages. Some key emergent trends and critiques help to explain these tensions. Firstly, many of the assumptions about the benefits of prison physical activity implicitly hinge on the safety valve theory, which posits that participation in or observation of vigorous or violent physical activity allows a person to vent frustration that has built up due to their life circumstances (Young, 2012). Secondly, the studies that use in-depth qualitative methods tend to produce messier but more nuanced results than those that rely on strict quantitative categorization. There is certainly a role for both types of research on the topic of carceral physical culture, but qualitative research helps to identify and analyze tensions and contradictions in ways that quantitative data may not permit. Finally, some of the literature is situated within a medical model of corrections, which
seeks to “treat” or “cure” prisoners of behavioural traits thought to lead them toward criminal behaviour (MacNamara, 1977); in such studies, physical activity is understood primarily for its curative traits rather than as a social construction whose meaning varies considerably between actors in different contexts.

Clearly physical activity is often associated with therapeutic or rehabilitative outcomes in corrections settings, and there is evidence to suggest that it may play this role for some prisoners. However, research needs to be attuned to the ways in which different activities can be experienced differently by diverse actors and to recognize that physical activities account only for a portion of social programming or recreation opportunities for prisoners. Finally, it is critical to avoid essentializing sport or physical activity and to explore the ways in which they can carry diverse social meanings and have various outcomes in different correctional settings.

**Sport and/as Social Control in Prisons**

Sport is commonly assumed to have the ability to transmit social values to its participants, such as hard work, discipline, and respect for authority; in this capacity, it is constructed as a form of social control over a particular group of people (Eitzen, 2000). While such sport programs may be (relatively) benign, they may also be deployed as a form of social control over supposedly “dangerous” populations, as Hartmann (2001) explains with regard to Midnight Basketball programs in the urban US. Prisons are inherently institutions of social control, given their task of housing and managing the daily conduct of large batches of people (Goffman, 1961a). Given this fact, it is not surprising that staff members understand physical recreation programmes in functional terms, such as pacifying dangerous offenders, reducing idleness, and contributing to the overall safety of the prison environment. As Truss and Hunter (2004) summarize:

For their supporters, prison recreation programs provide constructive ways for inmates to use their spare time while also endowing them with skills that may help prevent them from reoffending. When inmates are completely idle, like anyone else, they will become bored. They may also feel frustrated or aggressive, and become violent toward themselves or others. A number of activities like football, softball, and basketball are specifically designed to help reduce the stresses of incarceration by providing physical stimulation (p. 827).
Pawelko and Anderson (2005) shared a similar sentiment, noting that “correctional recreation is generally considered to be an important factor in reducing inmate boredom and idleness/restlessness and thus contributes to general prison security” (p. 1). This viewpoint was expressed by prison staff and/or prisoners in numerous other studies (Caplan, 1996; Gallant et al., 2015; Martos-Garcia, et al., 2009; Meek, 2014). Meanwhile, while Pawelko and Anderson (2005) found no evidence that leisure activities helped reduce aggression amongst prisoners, Frey and Delaney (1996) suggested that prison staff found physical recreation useful for institutional safety by acting as a barometer for measuring tension in the prison population.

Many of the common assumptions about physical activity and social control in prisons hinge on the acceptance of either a catharsis or frustration-aggression hypothesis of violence, in which aggression is understood to emerge from the frustrations faced by individuals in a particular context and for which sport is a safety valve outlet for aggression (cf. Young, 2012). These assumptions also conform to the long-standing belief that sport and play can be used to control dangerous or threatening populations in various social contexts, a belief evident in interventions ranging in time and location from nineteenth century American working class neighbourhoods (Hardy & Ingham, 1983) to 1990s inner city African American neighbourhoods (Hartmann, 2001). However, as Hardy and Ingham (1983) highlight, participants do not necessarily accept unconditionally the social control aims of such programs, and can exercise agency over the meaning of such interventions even as they willingly engage with them. This points toward the need for researchers to explore the multifaceted meanings of physical activity programs from a variety of perspectives and to include the perspectives of participants in such interventions.

Furthermore, this research on sport and social control (Eitzen, 2000; Hardy & Ingham, 1983; Hartmann, 2001) points to a broader absence in the literature on prison sport and social control: the connection between sport and broader ideological forces and agents of social control. Eitzen (2000) argues that in and through sport “ideological control manipulates the consciousness of individuals so that they accept the ruling ideology and refuse to be moved by competing ideologies. . . . Individuals impose controls upon themselves” (p. 371). Jean-Marie Brohm (1978) offered one of the most provocative critiques of sport, suggesting that it is used consciously by the powerful bourgeoisie as a
form of social control. Writing about the absence of sport as a focus of attention by French student protesters in 1968, Brohm argued that “it [was] truly vital for [the French bourgeoisie] to find the means to control the explosive potential that surfaced in the factories, work-places, colleges and schools. . . . Repression through sport has become a matter for the state. . . . Sport is the best way of keeping control over young people” (p. 39, italics in original). While Brohm has been rightly critiqued for oversimplifying the relationship between society and sport (Gruneau, 1983), his analysis nonetheless highlights the fact that sport can be deployed with repressive and controlling intent—a highly relevant insight when considering its role in correctional institutions. In fact, prolific prisoner-author Mumia Abu-Jamal (2001) has argued that sport is offered by the administration as a diversion to “help maintain social control, but, at the individual level, many prisoners use exercise as a coping strategy for dealing with emotional and sexual frustrations” (p. 141). Given the recent ideological shifts in Canadian corrections rhetoric, and particularly the discourses surrounding prisoners’ behaviour (CSC Review Panel, 2007; Jackson & Stewart, 2010), this is an important perspective to bear in mind.

**Constructing and Performing Prison Masculinity**

Male prison culture privileges and produces a hegemonic masculinity based upon physical domination and adherence to the “prison code” or “inmate code” that informally regulates how men act behind the walls (Sabo, Kupers & London, 2001), which resonates with the broader construction of the hegemonic masculinity within many sport and physical cultures (cf. McKay, Messner, & Sabo, 2000). Given this extensive literature on the relationship between sport and masculinity, it is not surprising that much of the literature on prison sport focuses or touches upon the ways in which physical activity contributes to masculine prisoner identities. Both Sabo (1994, 2001) and Martos-Garcia et al. (2009) explore the links between prison physical activity and the performance of masculinity. Meanwhile, Abrams et al.’s (2008) study of juvenile corrections similarly found that success in sport activities played a large role in the construction of aggressive masculine identities and the development of social hierarchy amongst the boys. Sabo (2001) states that in the prison setting “masculine identity is earned, rehearsed, refined, and relived through each day’s activity” (p. 63). He notes that physical recreation can contribute to this construction and development of masculinity, for example by providing prisoners with a means to
develop or assert a physically dominant body, to intimidate other prisoners, to climb or maintain one’s place in the prison’s social hierarchy, or to protect against rape and the social stigma of emasculation and weakness that accompanies such victimization (cf. Kupers, 2001).

For Sabo (2001), sport is intimately tied to the construction of masculinity for male prisoners, many of whom “deploy sports and fitness activities as resources to do masculinity” (p. 63). Martos-Garcia et al. (2009) similarly found that bodybuilding/weightlifting and martial arts were both used by participants to construct muscular bodies and physically dominant and assertive masculinities. The mental and physical “hardness” developed through such bodily pursuits allows men to gain status and prestige within the prison setting. The researchers suggest that the specific physical practices offered in the prison they studied promote “particular kinds of masculinity over others [and] provide a limited script for those men choosing to enter the arena of sport and physical activity within the prison” (Martos-Garcia et al., 2009, p. 93). In Canada, Ricciardelli’s (2013, 2014) research with recently-paroled men highlighted how physical strength, fighting abilities, and a muscular body—achieved through lifting weights and/or martial arts—form important parts of a tough masculine identity for many male prisoners.

**Sport and Physical Activity in Women’s Prisons**

The bulk of research on prison sport has focused on the men or male youths, meaning that the experience of women prisoners is less deeply explored. Meek and Lewis (2014) studied sport programs for English women prisoners, finding that they provided a variety of psychosocial and health benefits, including coping with the difficulties of incarceration, improving self-esteem, weight management, and building relationships with prison staff. Martos-Garcia et al.’s (2009) study provided a more sociologically nuanced exploration of gender, using thick description of a Spanish prison that housed both men and women (in separate units) to highlight a number of interesting aspects of the gendered nature of sport participation. For example, the authors note that low numbers of women participants in physical recreation both mirrors broader cultural views in Spain and is a product of administrative adherence to sexist and essentialized understandings of women’s relationship to sport. Meanwhile a series of studies by a group of Canadian scholars
(Fortune at al., 2010; Fortune & Whyte, 2011; Pedlar, Yuen, & Fortune, 2008; Yuen, Arai, & Fortune, 2012; Yuen, et al., 2009) sheds light on the experience of incarcerated Canadian women with prison leisure, including physical activity and sport. Yuen and Fortune (2008), for example, found that Aboriginal-focused leisure practices for women can be a vehicle for collective healing from and challenging of colonial legacies. Pedlar et al. (2008) argue that a structured leisure program, in which outside volunteers lead regular activities for women prisoners, offered inmates a chance to build relationships and “bring some sense of joy, humanity, and comfort” to their daily lives (p. 34). Overall, the limited literature suggests great potential for sport and physical activity, as part of a leisure program, to be a resource for women in prisons.

**Sport and Physical Activity for Juvenile Offenders and Delinquents**

Beginning in the late 1960s, a body of literature emerged that sought to explore if there was a relationship between youth athletic participation and lower levels of delinquent behaviour; or if physical recreation could be used as a deterrent to delinquency. Two major hypotheses have emerged from the many studies in this area: the deterrence hypothesis, which proposes that sport participation builds character and reduces delinquent behaviour, and the athletic delinquent hypothesis, which recognizes the ways in which deviant behaviour can occur as a result of membership in a sport subculture (Begg et al., 1996). Many of these early studies were problematic, including in their interpretations of data and methodological choices, although some later studies adopted more critical approaches to exploring sport participation and delinquency. Very little research in this area used methodologies that explored delinquent youths’ understandings of their behaviour or experiences of physical practices, a major shortcoming of the body of literature.

A significant body of literature argued that youth sport participation may contribute to reduced levels of delinquency. For example, Schafer (1969) argued that a correlation between high school athletic participation and lower rates of delinquency is likely the

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7 A notable exception to this is a relatively recent study by Andrews & Andrews (2003), which draws upon participant observation of sport programming in a UK youth detention centre.
result of sport acting as a deterrent to delinquent behaviour. Landers and Landers (1978) also found lower levels of delinquency amongst participants in high school extracurricular activities, including sport. However, they found no difference between sport and other forms of activity, which “suggests that whatever lessons are learned through participation in athletics can also be acquired from other extracurricular activities” (p. 302). Trulson (1986) explored how different forms of physical activity and they ways in which they are structured may impact their ability to lead youth away from delinquency. In particular, he found that juvenile delinquents who participated in taekwondo, which emphasized meditation and philosophical learning alongside basic physical techniques, increased their self esteem and social skills while others in a modern martial arts program showed increased tendencies toward delinquency. For Trulson, the different results lay in the fact that taekwondo provided an authority figure and role model, allowed students to burn “excess energy,” and provided appropriate psychological development activities through an emphasis on meditation and philosophical engagement. Meanwhile, other more critical approaches to the relationship between sport and delinquency (Donnelly, 1981; Sugden and Yiannakis, 1982) examined the social norms of juvenile delinquent subcultures and suggested that non-mainstream physical activities, such as outdoor educational activities, may meet in a non-antisocial context the social needs that cause youth to join delinquent subcultures. These studies highlighted the need to understand the ways in which certain activities are socially constructed and how these constructions impact the experiences of participants. Interestingly, while many studies suggest the possibility for sport participation to reduce the likelihood of delinquency, there are a variety of others that suggest that athletes are more likely to engage in delinquent or otherwise deviant or antisocial actions (cf. Coakley, 1998).

Clearly the link, if it exists, between sport participation and delinquent behaviour is complex and multifaceted. As Coakley (1998) notes, “neither virtue nor deviance is caused by sports and sport participation. Sports are simply sites where young people often have powerful and exciting physical and social experiences” (p. 165). As a result, if researchers are to explore the relationship between sport participation and particular social behaviours, they must do so in a nuanced and contextually-grounded way. Andrews and Andrews (2003) offer an example of such a nuanced approach to understanding the role of
physical recreation for delinquent youth, as they highlight the complexity of introducing sport in a youth correctional setting and describe the different reactions individuals may have to various activities. For example, for different boys, some physical activities may be self-esteem building or educational while others will cause anger, frustration or a loss of self-esteem. The authors caution against competitive activities, and explain that for many youths the structure of sport replicated the dominant social norms from which they already felt isolated. This echoes the concerns raised by Sugden and Yiannakis (1982) and Donnelly (1981) about mainstream sports presenting delinquent youths with similar social frustrations as those that caused them to turn to delinquency in the first place. Andrews and Andrews (2003) offer a valuable reminder of the complex social environments of correctional institutions and the diversity, both socially destructive or productive, of responses that physical activities may elicit.

**Physical Recreation in Prison: A Canadian Perspective**

Because my proposed research is situated in the sociopolitical context of twenty-first century Canada, it is worth reviewing in some depth a similar study of physical activity in Canadian prisons: an MA thesis in Sociology written by Arnie Caplan of Acadia University in 1996. Caplan (1996) conducted research at four federal correctional institutions, two in Manitoba and two in Atlantic Canada, which cover the three security levels (minimum, medium and maximum) of Canadian prisons. Caplan’s methodology included observation of recreational facilities and activities and interviews with prisoners and prison staff, and analysis of corrections literature.

Caplan (1996) determined that there was a wide range of formal recreation programs offered in correctional institutions, including a variety of team sports (e.g. hockey, baseball, basketball, etc.) and individual pursuits (e.g. weightlifting). The types of activities offered and the ways in which they were structured and organized varied from institution to institution. In some cases, individuals at specific institutions were responsible for the popularity and availability of certain activities (e.g. a staff member at one prison started a bodybuilding club). Some institutions gave inmates significant control over the organization, usage, and maintenance of sport programmes and equipment, while in others the staff controlled these.
Caplan (identified four main motivations for prisoners to participate in physical recreation: to relieve stress and boredom, to take part in enjoyable activities, to improve physical fitness and to increase self-esteem through social interaction (p. 93). While he determined that physical recreation can have personal value to some prisoners, Caplan found no evidence that it contributed their rehabilitation or to a reduced likelihood of recidivism (p. 115). According to Caplan’s research, physical recreation plays an important role in some prisoners’ day-to-day life, but is viewed by inmates as a short-term practice rather than a self-improvement project with long-term benefits.

Meanwhile, Caplan (1996) identified an “official ideology” regarding physical recreation that is supported by corrections staff and literature. This approach understands physical activity as a self-improvement opportunity for prisoners to change their criminal tendencies, engage in pro-social activities, and learn desirable social skills such as sportsmanship (p. 111). However, while asserting the rhetoric of rehabilitation, prison staff also saw physical recreation as an important aspect of social control within the institution—in particular, for providing a controlled way to release aggression and thus limiting violence within the prison (p. 118). Some inmates also supported this view. Ultimately, Caplan sees physical recreation programmes as a valuable method for social control within the institution and argues that if opportunities for participation were made available to released prisoners recidivism rates may be reduced.

While a useful introduction to the topic, there are a number of weaknesses or unexplored areas in Caplan’s (1996) thesis. Firstly, Caplan only examines formally organized recreation programmes, thus ignoring the various informal forms of physical activity or inactivity that prisoners may undertake. Secondly, although attentive to historical developments in prison management, Caplan does not situate his research in its broader sociopolitical context. And finally, the researcher does not critically assess the functionalist assumptions about physical recreation and social control that were put forward by his interview subjects. My research builds upon Caplan’s exploratory research study, but adopts a more critical theoretical approach to analyze the social relations, political dimensions, and sociological significance of carceral physical culture.
Understanding Prisons: Theorizing Social Control and Punishment

Eitzen (2000) offers a basic overview of the sociological understanding of social control: “each social system . . . attempts to achieve conformity to the norms . . . of the social unit. If a social organization succeeds in controlling its members, then deviant behavior is minimized and social order is sustained” (p. 371). He further adds that social control is achieved through two mechanisms: ideology and intervention. Prisons are, by their very nature, places of social control through intervention. Most obviously, inmates are severely restricted in where and when they can move and socialize, and they are furthermore compelled to respond to and obey the authority of staff. Prisoners know that failure to comply with prison staff can lead to punishments that will reduce the quality of their conditions of confinement. Meanwhile, in terms of daily social control, surveillance of their activity means that prisoners must be conscious that their every action, and indiscretion, may be monitored. Although his seminal work Discipline and Punish has been criticized as failing to capture the empirical reality of contemporary prisons (Alford, 2000; Wacquant, 2009), Foucault’s (1978) theoretical work, and particularly his metaphor of the panopticon, reveals some of the ways in which this surveillance can impact the behaviour of prisoners.

However, the ability of prison administrations to control inmates is complicated by the placement of the prison within a larger web of correctional individuals and institutions, a point highlighted by Garland (1986):

> It is clear that no matter how hard administrators strive to develop rational policies, they are always in the end the servants of other, independent decision makers (the judiciary, the legislature, the public) whose demands are often at cross-purposes. Within this complex system, control is likely to be a major goal, but one which is always compromised by other considerations (p. 876).

This enmeshment of prisons in larger political processes speaks into their role as part of ideological social control efforts. Ideologically, in many Western countries, including Canada, the development and operation of the penitentiary in the 19th Century was explicitly linked to the moral reform and religious development of the lower classes (Ekstedt and Griffiths, 1988). Contemporarily, modern penitentiaries have been critiqued as one of many state apparatuses that help discipline those who cannot or do not participate in the capitalist wage labour system (Wacquant, 2009). Wacquant points out
that even as scholars predicted that the prison would decline in sociopolitical significance, to be replaced by subtler forms of social control, a prison boom began in the US in the 1970s that saw rates of incarceration double over a decade and quadruple over two decades; many Western European countries underwent a similar, though less dramatic, incarceration spurt in the 1990s. Curiously, this rise in punitive penal policies occurred at a time when crime rates were largely holding steady or declining, thus suggesting the influence of broader ideological motivations directed toward controlling poor and racialized minority groups.

Ultimately, an understanding of prisons as sites of social control hinges on the fact that their design and operation are intended to control both the behaviour of prisoners and to impose a particular moral or ideological order upon certain segments of society. The emergence of the multidisciplinary field of punishment and society in the past 40 years has brought together a diversity of theoretical approaches to understanding the punitive and social control characteristics of correctional institutions within and outside the prison walls (Simon & Sparks, 2013). This section reviews some of these major theoretical traditions, most notably the influence of Durkheim, Garland, Foucault, and Wacquant.

Punishment and Prison

As Garland (2013) explains in an overview of Emile Durkheim’s impact on the field of punishment studies, the French sociologist is foundational in this field for his recognition and articulation that the social purpose of laws and criminal codes is not to control criminal behaviour; rather, “punishment must be understood as a moral institution, shaped by the collective values and social relationships rather than an instrumental one shaped by the demands of crime-control” (p. 23). Such an approach means that the punishment of crime is more significant for its collective cultural meaning to non-criminals than it is for any potential deterrence it might present to potential future lawbreakers—a Durkheimian theoretical understanding that underpins much contemporary scholarship on punishment and society. Despite his influence, Durkheim has been criticized by scholars of punishment for overstating the extent of solidarity within societies (for example, underestimating divisions between different groups within a single nation) and the extent to which the penal policies of the state will reflect the dominant cultural values of the society (Garland, 2013).
Foucault’s (1978) *Discipline and Punish*, which provided an historical examination of the emergence of the penitentiary as a social institution, has been extremely influential in the study of social control well beyond the subject of prisons—including, of course, in the sociology of sport (Markula & Pringle, 2006). In this text, Foucault (1978) traces how the state’s use of public and physically violent approaches to punishment, such as torture or execution, gradually gave way to less visible and softer techniques, culminating with the emergence of the prison in 19th century Europe. For Foucault, prisons, like other disciplinary institutions, are structured to discipline the bodies and minds of prisoners and to exercise power over inmates through the threat of surveillance and the regimented structuring of their lives. As such, *Discipline and Punish* has much broader scope than just the institution of the prison, as Garland (1986) pointed out in a review essay:

> The book is not so much a history of punishment as a structural analysis of power. . . . An investigation of the emergence of the prison in the early 19th century is actually a means of exploring the much wider . . . theme of how domination is achieved and individuals are socially constructed in the modern world” (p. 848).

Among the key concepts that emerge from *Discipline and Punish* is that of the *panopticon*. Drawing on a famous prison design by British philosopher Jeremy Bentham, in which prisoners may at all times be observed and thus are forced to behave well whether or not they are *actually* under surveillance, Foucault (1978) both asserts this as an example of a technology that enables discipline within prisons and extends the metaphor to explain the spread of technologies of power and the disciplining of individuals in broader society. While it has been enormously influential, *Discipline and Punish* has been heavily criticized for its assertions about both its immediate subject of the prison and its broader theoretical claims (Alford, 2000; Garland, 1986; Wacquant, 2009), as well as its methodology and tautological arguments (Garland, 1986). Alford (2000), while not disputing the potential theoretical value of Foucault’s work, draws on extensive research in a US maximum security prison to explain that the theorist was simply erroneous in his depiction of modern prisons:

> There is no subtle way to put it. Each aspect of which Foucault refers is absent in most prisons in the United States. . . . Surveillance, the time table, control of body and posture, and non-idleness. None is significantly present. In their place is a regime marked by “hold the body” (p. 133).
The emphasis on a “hold the body” imperative in prisons is key to Alford’s (2000) dispute of Foucault’s (1978) understanding of the penal institution. He asserts that power in prisons is not exercised by surveillance, as in Foucault’s panopticon, but by the ability “not to look and not to care” (p. 127). Prisons, in Alford’s research experience, are thus places in which offenders live out a largely unstructured existence within the physical confines of an administratively structured institution. This resonates with Wacquant’s (2009) assertion that prisons have become warehouses for the most marginalized members of society who do not, or cannot, participate in the lowest tiers of the neoliberal wage economy. Prisons, according to Wacquant, are disciplinary not because of their effect on the individual but because they discipline, through the threat of physical confinement, an entire underclass of society. Though not focused on the macro-political implications of the prison, Alford (2000) similarly notes the importance of physical coercion to the corrections system. Whereas Foucault (1978) saw internalized discipline rendering physical force mostly unnecessary, Alford writes that “brute, physical coercion is not the last resort of the regime. . . . It is the first, which means that it is the veiled threat behind every act of political power” (p. 141).

Garland (1986), meanwhile, critiques both the substantive and theoretical thrust of *Discipline and Punish* for an approach to imprisonment which conceives of it exclusively as a form of control, and a very effective one at that, thereby neglecting aspects of the prison which are counterproductive in these terms, or else are geared to other ends, such as punitiveness. It offers a history which is similarly limited—relating penal institutions to strategies of control and classification but neglecting to show how these institutions have been shaped by changing forms of mentality, sensibility, and culture; giving prominence to the structures of power and knowledge but little attention to the agents that produced them” (p. 849).

Importantly, Garland (1986) stresses the existence at various points in history of forces—including social actors, cultural values, and institutions—that have provided counterpoints to the seeming inevitability of Foucault’s disciplinary society. This leads to a disjuncture between the understanding of society presented by Foucault (1978) and its actual manifestation: “what is in fact a description of the control potential possessed by modern power-knowledge technologies is presented as if it were the reality of their present-day
operation” (Garland, 1986, p. 877). Furthermore, by speaking in the abstract and rarely acknowledging the role of human agents, it presents an understanding of power that is apolitical (Garland, 1986). Given these critiques, the use of Foucauldian theories in prison research must be employed cautiously. A major flaw of Discipline and Punish, according to Alford (2000) and Garland (1986), is that it conflates penal discourses with penal practices. It is critical therefore to recognize the relationship between discourse (i.e. Canadian corrections policy) and practice (i.e. the lived reality of Canadian prisoners and staff), yet examine the tensions and contradictions between the two.

Finally, an influential approach to punishment emerged in a variety of neo-Marxist critiques that situated the emergence and ongoing operation of prisons in their broader political economy. This research both complemented and extended revisionist histories of punishment that, beginning in the 1960s, challenged traditional positivist trends criminology by “re-politiciz[ing] the history of punishment, reconstructing it from the point of view of the . . . targets of social control” (de Giorgi, 2013, p. 41). Wacquant (2009) draws from these neo-Marxist approaches in situating the contemporary American prison as a warehouse for those (mostly men) who cannot or do not participate in the neoliberal “workfare” economy. However, in addition to serving warehousing and disciplinary functions, Wacquant insists—and in doing so eschews the label of political economist—that the prison is also has symbolic importance in “reaffirming the authority of the state and the newfound will of political elites to emphasize and enforce the sacred border between commendable citizens and deviant categories” (p. xvii). Wacquant (2009) thus offers an example of theoretical bridging between Durkheimian and neo-Marxist approaches to punishment in western societies.

While Wacquant seeks to explore, through an examination of punishment in the US, the workings of the neoliberal state, other scholars have highlighted the need for caution in applying too broadly his findings:

The American shift toward a punitive governance of social marginality has not spread to all advanced capitalist democracies, and the specific configurations of the punitive turn (where it has indeed taken place) cannot be automatically derived from the emergence of a post-industrial, neoliberal economy (de Giorgi, 2013, p. 51).
This is an important caveat to Wacquant’s work, particularly given that Canada and the US, though sharing many cultural and political similarities, have distinct correctional histories and institutions (Griffiths, 2010). Nonetheless, Wacquant’s theorizing is notable for its bridging of structural and materialist perspectives in understanding the role of the prison as a sociopolitical institution in many western societies.

**The Sociology of Everyday Life: An Interpretive Approach**

The sociology of everyday life refers, broadly, to the examination of social practices and relationships that occur so regularly in certain social settings that they may appear taken-for-granted, or even trivial, yet are, in fact, extremely important to understanding the operation of power in broader social spheres (Scott, 2009). The sociology of everyday life is a broad umbrella label that includes a variety of theoretical approaches, including “symbolic interactionism, dramaturgy, labeling theory, phenomenology, ethnomethodology, and existential sociology” (Adler, Adler, & Fontana, 1987, p. 218). More broadly, the sociology of everyday life can be situated, along with Weberian sociological approaches and hermeneutics, under the umbrella of interpretive sociology (Donnelly, 2000). The sociology of everyday life is particularly useful for foregrounding the experiences of socially marginalized groups, as seen for example in the work of foundational scholars from the Birmingham Centre for Contemporary Cultural Studies and the institutional ethnography approach pioneered by Dorothy Smith (Donnelly & Atkinson, in press; Kalekin-Fishman, 2013; Ritzer & Goodman, 2004).

The sociology of everyday life has been embraced by scholars within the sociology of sport, and is the most popular form of interpretive sociology within the subdiscipline (Donnelly, 2000). As such, it is an appropriate framework within which to situate my research. By examining everyday physical practices in correctional settings, I am able to explore how aspects of physical culture are used both in the control of inmates’ behaviour and in prisoners’ navigation of the administrative and ideological impositions placed upon them. A major criticism of the sociology of everyday life is that its micro-level focus ignores macro-level structural forces that contour (or, more fatalistically, that dictate) everyday practices. As Adler et al. (1987) summarize:
research guided by this perspective has been condemned as astructural or acontextual, ... incapable of addressing political factors, ... ahistorical, ... and generally trivial in its focus and findings (p. 230).

However, a wide range of micro-level studies in the sociology of everyday life tradition have in fact addressed important macro-level concerns (Adler et al., 1987; Kalekin-Fishman, 2013; Scott, 2009), including in the sociology of sport (Donnelly, 2000; Donnelly & Atkinson, in press).

Some theorists, such as Henri Lefebvre and Michel de Certeau, focus on everyday practices from an explicitly Marxist structural perspective (Kalekin-Fishman, 2013; Scott, 2009). Meanwhile Erving Goffman, whose theoretical work on everyday interaction (along with that of Lefebvre and de Certeau) forms the foundation for much my analysis, produced research that, in its focus on the micro-order of interaction, commented in very profound ways on significant aspects of social structure (Becker, 2003). In the following sections, I first provide an overview of symbolic interactionism, which provides a key plank of my theoretical approach to this study. Following that, I discuss Goffman’s work, with a particular focus on his concept of total institutions. Thereafter, I explore theoretical approaches to resistance in total institutional setting, specifically Goffman’s (1961a) concept of the underlife, de Certeau’s (1984) explanation of strategies of domination and tactics of resistance, and Lefebvre’s (1974) critical spatial analyses.

**Symbolic Interactionism**

Symbolic interactionism emerged out of the American pragmatic tradition and found its theoretical genesis in the work of scholars from the “Chicago School” of sociologists at the University of Chicago. At Chicago, George Herbert Mead, influenced by his pragmatist colleague John Dewey, articulated a theory of *social behaviorism* that conceptualized the self as being constructed through social interaction (Mead, 1934). In addition to Mead and Dewey, other influential pragmatists who helped lay the foundation of symbolic interactionism include William James, Charles Horton Cooley and Charles

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8 There is some debate about the centrality of Mead to the development of symbolic interactionism, with some scholars suggesting that Dewey, not Mead, was the true forerunner to Blumer’s trailblazing work. See Ritzer (2004, pp. 201-202) for a discussion of this debate.
Peirce (Denzin, 1992). Meanwhile, the ethnographic urban sociology promoted by scholars such as Robert Park and Ernest Burgess (and particularly the production of various ethnographic studies by their graduate students between 1917-1942) not only created a key plank in the Chicago School’s sociological legacy (Deegan, 2001), but also provided a methodological base that has had a profoundly and lingering influence on the development of symbolic interactionism (Denzin, 1992). One of Mead’s students, Herbert Blumer, built upon his ideas and eventually developed an influential articulation of the symbolic interactionist approach:

Symbolic interactionism rests in the last analysis on three simple premises. The first premise is that human beings act toward things on the basis of the meanings that the things have for them. . . . The second premise is that the meaning of such things is derived from, or arises out of, the social interaction that one has with one’s fellows. The third premise is that these meanings are handled in, and modified through, an interpretative process used by the person in dealing with the things he encounters (Blumer, 1969, p. 2)

In their discussion of symbolic interactionism at the close of the twentieth century, Sanderson et al. (2001) add six implicit assumptions of the symbolic interactionism perspective to Blumer’s foundational definition:

1. People are unique creatures because of their ability to use symbols. . . .
2. People become distinctively human through their interaction. . . .
3. People are conscious and self-reflexive beings who actively shape their own behaviour. . . .
4. People are purposive creatures who act in and toward situations. . . .
5. Human society consists of people engaging in symbolic interaction. . . .
6. To understand people’s social acts, we need to use methods that enable us to discern the meanings they attribute to these acts (p. 5-7).

These six characteristics, taken together with Blumer’s initial definition, help to provide a deeper and more rounded picture of the symbolic interactionism perspective. However, symbolic interactionism has been subject to various critiques by scholars. Its roots and influence mean that it may reflect “an American belief in the power of individual agency in
the face of social structure” (Sandstrom, Martin, & Fine, 2001, p. 218), suggesting that it ignores or downplays the significance of social structures in shaping the self and society. Furthermore, it has been accused of simultaneously pursuing a necessarily subjective approach to interpreting social life and attempting to construct an objective scientific methodology that emulated that of natural sciences (Denzin, 1992). That being said, symbolic interactionism scholars have continuously reworked and updated the framework to address contemporary issues and political issues, indicating that symbolic interactionism is far from a stale or politically disengaged approach to studying social life (Sandstrom et al., 2001).

Symbolic interactionism, along with a range of other interpretive approaches, is also a major paradigm within the sociology of sport, (Donnelly, 2000), and its continuing influence can be seen in many new emergent forms of interpretive methods and theories within the subdiscipline (Donnelly & Atkinson, in press). Donnelly (2002) suggests that the deployment of symbolic interactionism in sport studies takes one of two overlapping focuses: processes of socialization and subcultural studies. My research seeks to bridge these two categories by examining both the socializing role of physical culture in prisons and its significance to the practices and identities of inmate subcultures. To accomplish this, I rely heavily on the work of Erving Goffman, particularly his theorizing of total institutions.

The Contributions of Erving Goffman

Among the many students who emerged from the Chicago School, perhaps the most influential is Erving Goffman. While he advanced symbolic interactionism in new directions, particularly through his development of dramaturgical analysis, Goffman’s work was “clearly consistent with it symbolic-interactionist roots” (Ritzer & Goodman, 2004, p. 74). Goffman has come under criticism on a number of fronts, including for a perceived lack of attention to macro-level sociological concerns and an ideological conservatism—however, for each of these criticisms there are a host of counterarguments in support of his theoretical approach (Birrell & Donnelly, 2004). Furthermore, as Becker (2003) indicates, a close reading of Goffman reveals that, in his apparent political detachment and straightforward use of neutral language, he actually revealed a great deal about injustices
embedded in everyday social relationships and forced his readers to confront these “morally uncomfortable” facts (p. 663).

Goffman’s most famous and influential contribution to sociology is his use of dramaturgy as a means of explaining social interaction in everyday life (Ritzer & Goodman, 2004). This approach is most clearly explicated in *The Presentation of Self in Everyday Life* (Goffman, 1959), in which Goffman equated a social actor’s interaction in various social situations with a stage actor’s performance for particular audiences. Actors perform certain *roles* in ways that they expect or hope will convince their audience of their authenticity in this role. This involves a two-way interaction between the actor and the audience, in which the former must provide a believable performance that conforms adequately to social expectations of the role and the latter must acknowledge this believability through his reactions. The actor engages in *impression management* in an attempt to ensure a successful or passable performance. All of this occurs on the actor’s *front stage*—another theatrical metaphor representing the very public nature of the actor’s performance and the various supports needed to pull it off (Goffman, 1959). Other notable and relevant concepts developed by Goffman include *role distance*, or the manners in which people engage in an activity while giving the impression of not fully embracing the role it entails (Goffman, 1961b); and *stigma*, which he defines as the gap between expected and actual identities (Goffman, 1963).

Each of these Goffmanian concepts are utilized in the analysis of my data. However, it is two essays from *Asylums* (Goffman, 1961a) that are especially significant for this study, and form the major frameworks through which I analyze my data: “On the Characteristics of Total Institutions,” in which Goffman broadly outlines the concept of the total institution; and “The Underlife of a Total Institution: A Study of Ways of Making Out in a Mental Hospital,” in which he develops the concept of the *underlife* as a way of understanding how (sub)cultural practices through which inmates somewhat resist the impositions of the institution upon their selves. By employing these frameworks to understand much of my data, I am able to explore deeply the social significance of various aspects of physical culture in a total institution and the ways in which certain physical practices may contribute to the development of an inmate underlife in prisons. This theoretical approach
also responds to calls within the sociology of sport for a deeper consideration of Goffman’s work and contributes to efforts to more fully expose its explanatory potential within this academic subdiscipline (Birrell & Donnelly, 2004).

**The Total Institution**

Goffman’s concept of the *total institution* is relevant to the sociological study of prisons. In *Asylums*, Goffman (1961a) describes a total institution as “a place of residence and work where a large number of like-situated individuals, cut off from the wider society for an appreciable period of time, together lead an enclosed, formally administered round of life” (p. xi). Examples of such institutions include mental hospitals, boarding schools, monasteries, and, of course, prisons. A key feature of total institutions is that they centralize the three key activities of an individual’s life—work, play, and sleep—in a single location, in which the inmate undertakes each of these activities with a single group of persons, in a highly regimented fashion, and under the rule of one authority. The combination of these characteristics and processes is a “rational plan” that fulfils the institutional goals of the total institution (Goffman, 1961a, pp. 5-6). Inmates’ lives are controlled both through the physical and social characteristics of the institution.

Total institutions are delineated by clear barriers, both physical and social, to separate them from the outside world (Goffman, 1961a). In terms of prisons, obvious physical barriers such as walls, barbed wire, locked cells, barred windows, and armed guards not only prevent escape and engagement with the outside world, but also contour the day-to-day physical experiences of prisoners as they are physically herded from one prison space to another. Socially, prisons operate on a strict division between staff and inmates, in which prisoners are clearly at the bottom—although, as research on inmate cultures demonstrates, there also are social hierarchies and asymmetrical relations of power *within* groups of prisoners (Ricciardelli, 2014), a fact Goffman (1961a) acknowledges in his qualifications to his sketch of total institutions (p. 112). Prisoners often face mortification of the self through dehumanizing through a variety of rituals—including having their heads shaved, being dressed in identical clothing, and being referred to only by family names or identification numbers—that are designed to strip them of their
individuality and symbolically assign them to the lowliest status within the social world of the prison (Goffman, 1961a).

The concept of total institutions, while influential, has not been universally accepted in criminological research. Farrington (1992) argues that the modern US prison is not total because situated in a network that includes both the community in which it is located and society more broadly; and that, therefore, the lines between inside and outside the prison are not dichotomous. Farrington suggests that the metaphor of the total institution is popularly accepted in the US because it is reassuring to the general public, whereas the reality of prisons is that they have transient populations and are institutionally enmeshed in broader social networks. Interestingly, Farrington was writing at a time when the US correctional system was becoming increasingly totalized through the construction of geographically and socially isolated “supermax” facilities (Wacquant, 2009). Furthermore, although Farrington (1992) argues that a prison as total institution would violate American social values, such as liberty and human rights, this claim seems dubious in light of the contemporary popular appetite for punitive approaches to imprisonment (Wacquant, 2009).

It is perhaps less helpful to set about proving how prisons are not total institutions than to recognize ways in which they do share many characteristics with Goffman’s (1961a) conceptualization. Goffman was explicit that the characteristics he sketched in Asylums were not exclusive to total institutions and were not present in every example of total institution. Rather, each total institution “exhibits to an intense degree many items from this family of attributes” (p. 5). Furthermore, it is important to recognize the critical aspects of the total institution, which are described by Goffman as follows:

The handling of human needs by the bureaucratic organization of whole blocks of people – whether or not this is a necessary or effective means of social organization in the circumstances – is the key fact of total institutions (p. 6).

However, Farrington (1992) is right to recognize that prisons are enmeshed in broader social structures, a point strongly highlighted in Wacquant’s (2009) analysis of the relationship between the expansion of prisons and the shrinking of social safety nets for the most vulnerable in society. Davies (1989) offers a useful approach to reconciling some
of the ambiguities in Goffman’s (1961a) understanding of total institutions by proposing “open” and “closed” total institutions. Open total institutions may have less severe formal administration, more opportunities to physically move in and out of the institution, and greater opportunity for social mobility; whereas in closed total institutions, such as a prisons or asylums, “convicts do not become warders and officially certified lunatics cannot be promoted to the status of psychiatrist” (Davies, 1989, p. 86). Even within a corrections context, we can see varying degrees of openness between minimum, medium and maximum security prisons—each is a total institution, but has its own unique characteristics that contour the experience of prisoners and staff members.

The concept of the total institution, while perhaps not perfectly capturing the reality of contemporary prisons, nonetheless offers a wide variety of analytical tools for the study of carceral physical culture. For example, the range of recreational activities available to prisoners is spatially contoured by the physical characteristics that help construct prisons as total institutions: walls, barbed wire, guards, etc. that physically isolate prisoners from the outside world and dictate where and when they can move. Additionally, the mortifying aspects of the total institution mean that prisoners have a very limited range of resources available to them in constructing and presenting their selves, as Goffman (1961a) stresses:

The neophyte in many of these total institutions . . . finds himself cleanly stripped of many of his accustomed affirmations, satisfactions, and defenses, and is subjected to a rather full set of mortifying experiences: restriction of free movement, communal living, diffuse authority of a whole echelon of people, and so on. Here one begins to earn about the limited extent to which a conception of oneself can be sustained when the usual setting of supports for it are suddenly removed (p. 148).

In this context, various aspects of physical culture may offer a powerful vehicle for the presentation of the self in prison environments. Another interesting line of inquiry involves Goffman’s (1961a) observation that, unlike society at large, “in total institutions spheres of life are desegregated, so that an inmate’s conduct in one scene of activity is thrown up to him by staff as a comment and check upon his conduct in another context” (p. 37). In the context of Goffman’s (1961a) activity triad of work-play-sleep, this means that a prisoner’s conduct at “play” (i.e. physical recreation or other leisure activities) can directly affect his treatment in all other aspects of his daily life. Finally, as is discussed in the
following section, inmates in total institutions develop a series of adaptations to their new environment, and these are significant for understanding how prisoners adjust to the social and physical realities of their confinement—as well as how they may use physical culture to resist, in various ways, the impositions on their self of the total institution.

**Theoretical Approaches to Space, Tactics, and Subversion in Prisons**

If Goffman’s concept of the total institution provides means of understanding the sociospatial impact of the prison on the daily lives of its inmates, is it possible to conceptualize the subversion of or resistance to such seemingly monolithic disciplinary regimes? Goffman himself gives some indications in *Asylums*, particularly the essay “The Underlife of a Public Institution,” (Goffman, 1961a), in which he details the adjustments made by inmates to distance themselves from the roles and selves assigned to them by the institution. Meanwhile, Michel de Certeau’s (1984) analysis of everyday practices, and particularly the ways in which relatively powerless individuals can subvert dominant institutional strategies through tactical engagement in everyday practices, offers a valuable insight into how seemingly benign activities can carry political significance. Additional insight into the way that various practices can subvert the spatial logic may be gleaned from the sociospatial theories of Henri Lefebvre (1974). Each of these theoretical and conceptual lenses aids in the analysis of carceral physical culture by exploring how various corporeal practices offer prisoners, in an environment in which they possess few resources, a means of resisting, however fleetingly, the dominant institutional structures.

Of course, it is important for scholars not to read resistance too liberally into cultural practices—something that, according to Giulianotti (2005), occurs in many Cultural Studies analyses of sport. However, by deploying theory carefully and contextually, engaging with the experiences of the social actors themselves (i.e. my empirical data), and remaining attuned to the diversity of meanings that can be attached to social practices—what Giulianotti (2005) refers to as *structured polyphonic research* (p. 60)—I aim to avoid such reductionism. The remainder of this section discusses the work of Goffman, de Certeau, and Lefebvre in more detail in order to contextualize my deployment of these theoretical approaches to studying resistance in and through carceral physical culture.
The Underlife of a Total Institution: Goffman’s (1961a) ethnographic research in a US mental hospital helped him to develop the concept of the underlife, which refers to the (sub)cultural practices through which “participants decline in some way to accept the official view of what they should be putting into and getting out of the organization and, behind this, of what sort of self and world they are to accept for themselves” (p. 304). While a cursory reading of *Asylums* might give the impression that inmates are completely stripped of agency in total institutions, Goffman's thorough conceptualization of the underlife allows for a more nuanced exploration of how inmates’ collective participation in certain daily practices can provide them with a small measure of freedom from the oppression of their incarceration.

Central to understanding the form taken by an underlife are two types of adjustment made by inmates: primary and secondary (Goffman, 1961a). Primary adjustments develop as the new entrant settles in to the institution and takes on the expected roles of an inmate. However, most inmates develop a series of secondary adjustments, which are particularly significant for coping with and navigating the total institutional culture:

In total institutions there will also be a system of what might be called secondary adjustments, namely, practices which do not directly challenge staff management but which allow inmates to obtain disallowed satisfactions or allowed ones by disallowed means. . . . It seems apparent that an important aspect of secondary adjustments is that they provide the inmate with some evidence that he is still, as it were, his own man and still has some protective distance, under his own control, between himself and the institution (pp. 54-55).

Secondary adjustments are thus particularly important for understanding how inmates cope with the deprivation of punishment and, collectively, develop a subculture that resists, in small but significant ways, the impositions that the institution makes upon the self of each inmate (Goffman, 1961a).

The significance of the underlife is particularly notable when considering the severe restrictions placed upon inmates in a total institution, as Goffman (1961a) notes: “When existence is cut to the bone, we can learn what people do to flesh out their lives” (p. 305). Exploring the role of physical culture in prison underlife thus helps to advance an
understanding of the ways in which it can be a resource for coping in an extreme social setting and for resisting some of the oppressive features of the total institution.

**Strategies/Tactics in the Practice of Everyday Life:** Adding to the insight of Goffman (1961a) on the underlife of a total institution is Michel de Certeau’s analysis of the ways in which relatively powerless individuals can subvert dominant institutional strategies through tactical engagement in everyday practices. In his influential work *The Practice of Everyday Life*, de Certeau (1984) explores how everyday practices such as walking or cooking can take on political significance as tactics used by disempowered individuals as a means of “making do” in their daily lives (p. 29). De Certeau’s analysis hinges on the dichotomy of *strategies*, which are the circumscribed and rational plans imposed by the powerful (e.g. the design and regulation of a prison), and *tactics*, which are means by which the weak can temporarily oppose this strategic imposition. Tactics “make use of the cracks that particular conjunctions open in the surveillance of the proprietary powers. . . . In short, a tactic is the art of the weak” (de Certeau, 1984, 37). De Certeau further explains that tactics are impromptu and opportunistic, taking advantage of momentary ruptures in the dominant order to appropriate, in some fashion, the systematically imposed practices and spaces in unanticipated ways:

Because it does not have a place, a tactic depends on time—it is always on the watch for opportunities that must be seized “on the wing.” Whatever it wins, it does not keep. It must constantly manipulate events in order to turn them into “opportunities.” . . . Many everyday practices (talking, reading, moving about, shopping, cooking, etc.) are tactical in character. And so are . . . many “ways of operating”: victories of the “weak” over the “strong” (whether the strength be that of powerful people or the violence of things or of an imposed order, etc.), clever tricks, knowing how to get away with things, “hunter’s cunning,” maneuvers” (de Certeau, 1984, p. xix).

As Giulianotti (2005) points out, de Certeau’s conceptualization of the tactic offers a useful way of understanding various acts of resistance in and through sport, particularly because “its practitioners are conscious that their actions upset the social order” (p. 54). Furthermore, in the context of a total institution (Goffman, 1961a), de Certeau (1984) offers a valuable insight into how seemingly benign activities, such as sport, can carry political significance as tactics used by disempowered individuals as a means of “making
do” in their daily lives and resisting, however fleetingly, the dominant institutional structures.

**Space and Carceral Physical Culture:** The insights into resistance offered by both Goffman (1961a) and de Certeau (1984) cannot be separated from the significance of space to their analyses. Although not identified as a spatial theorist, it is interesting to note that space plays a significant part in Goffman’s sociology. Total institutions are in part defined by their physical isolation and/or separation, which, in turn, constructs them as spatially remote from outside society: “their encompassing or total character is symbolized by the barrier to social intercourse with the outside world and to departure that is often built right into the physical plant, such as locked doors, high walls, barbed wire” (Goffman, 1961a, p. 4). This spatial arrangement is critical to the bureaucratic operation of total institutions, the social possibilities available to inmates, and the development of unique subcultural practices—insights that can be gleaned from the first person accounts of prisoner memoirists such as Abu-Jamal (1995), Hassine (2011), and Schroeder (1976). Further, certain aspects of a prison’s spatial arrangement, such as loss of privacy from shared cells and physical restrictions on movement, can themselves be key forms of mortification of the self and thus key to the management of the prisoner population (Goffman, 1961a).

In and beyond the total institution, space remains significant to Goffman’s understanding of the interaction order. For example, cues for the proper way in which to represent oneself are dictated not only by the actions of other people but also by the space in which the actions are taking place (Goffman, 1959). This has great significance for the exploration of carceral physical culture and its various social meanings in different areas of the prison. Furthermore, space is critical to the operation of the underlife of a prison, as certain spaces may offer inmates greater latitude in their actions and thus become sites for the development of an underlife (Goffman, 1961a).

Given the significance of space to understanding the social life of prisons, and the ways in which it can enable resistance to the dominance of the institutional regime, a third theorist whose work is invaluable in this discussion is Henri Lefebvre, who is arguably the most notable theorizer of space and spatial production. In *The Production of Space,*
Lefebvre (1974) sought to widen the scope of Marxist analysis to include an exploration of how space is produced through social action, seeing this process as critical to the operation of capitalism and the hegemony, in a Gramscian sense, of the ruling class. Lefebvre’s (1974) understanding of spatial production hinges on an interrelated, tripartite conceptualization of the way in which space comes into being: spatial practice, representations of space, and representational spaces. From this perspective, spaces cannot be understood fully without analyzing the interrelatedness of these three types of spatial production.

_Spatial practice_, or perceived space, refers to the ways in which spaces are materially or physically created. As Van Ingen (2003) notes, perceived space “is space that can be empirically mapped. . . . [It] is bounded space” (p. 202); yet, it is also space that is socially produced by people’s bodies and everyday practices. Thus, a gymnasium is a materially constructed and physically bounded space, but it finds its meaning as a gymnasium only due to the athletic actions of people who use it. _Representations of space_, also known as conceived space, are the conception of space in the abstract through codes, signs and other discursive constructions. This is “the space of scientists, planners, urbanists, technocratic subdividers and social engineers” (Lefebvre, 1974, p. 38), and reflects ideological assumptions about the organization of society. Finally, _representational spaces_, or lived space, are the ways in which space is “directly lived through its associated images and symbols, and hence the space of ‘inhabitants’ and ‘users’” (Lefebvre, 1974, p. 39). Lived space may be passively engaged in daily practice, but may also be a site of resistance. Paradoxically, as van Ingen (2003) highlights,

lived space is both oppressive and enabling. Lived space is the site of discriminatory practices such as racism, sexism and homophobia and is where marginalization is produced and enforced. Yet, lived space also produces critically important counterspaces that are the spaces for diverse, resistant and oppositional practices (p. 204).

Although an unconventional space, my analysis of prison sporting spaces, and their intimate connection to the operation of power and resistance, will contribute to the ongoing interest within the sociology of sport in spatial practice. The significance of space to the subdiscipline has taken root in the past 30 years, with various strands of spatial analysis coalescing in a 1993 special issue of the _International Review for the Sociology of Sport_ that has proven foundational in the subdiscipline (Tomlinson, Markovits, & Young,
Lefebvre has provided fruitful theoretical avenues for scholars exploring the complex relationship between space, identity, and physical cultural practices (Atkinson, 2009; Friedman & van Ingen, 2011; Tomlinson et al., 2003; van Ingen, 2003) and van Ingen (2003) has advocated for a greater use of his theory within sociology of sport, arguing that, while the 1993 IRSS special issue was significant for acknowledging the centrality of space to the sociological study of sport, many spatial analyses in this field have a taken-for-grantedness of spatial meanings that needs to be questioned. In particular, there is a noticeable emphasis on ‘place’ but very little discussion of the social relations within these places that, from a Lefebvrean perspective, serves to naturalize power relations and deploy limited and misleadingly unproblematic evocations of spatiality. From a Lefebvrean approach concrete geographies like sport landscapes must also be understood as expressions of social relations (p. 208).

Particularly as it focuses on the confines of a total institution, my study is intimately connected to issues of spatial production and practice as they enable or oppress various forms of physical culture. By drawing on the three theorists discussed herein—Goffman, de Certeau, and, most notably, Lefebvre—I explore the ways in which various physical cultural spaces in the prison are experienced, resisted, and practiced by prisoners.

**Conclusion**

This chapter situates the research and lays the foundation upon which the rest of the dissertation is built. The analysis in the following sections will make significant contributions to the scholarly understanding of sport and physical activity in correctional institutions, and will make novel application of the theoretical work of Goffman, de Certeau and Lefebvre to sport in total institutional environments. Before proceeding to this analysis, the next chapter discusses the methodology employed and the major ethical and logistical issues that arose during the project.
Chapter 3: Methodology

Given the limited amount of research on physical culture in prisons, my research was very much exploratory—that is, it was undertaken as a flexible and open-minded process in which I sought, through various methodological tactics, to develop possible an understanding of the social group being studied and to use this understanding to develop a grounded theory (Stebbins, 2001). My grounding in interpretive theoretical perspectives means that my starting point for developing an understanding of my research questions was the perspectives of actors themselves. Furthermore, my theoretical orientation toward symbolic interactionism entails, as Denzin (1992) highlights, a research approach that is “constantly preoccupied with the daily, ritual, and enforced performances of stigmatized identities, . . . [speaking] always to those persons who occupy powerless positions in contemporary society” (p. 20).

I was guided throughout the research process by Denzin and Lincoln’s (2011) suggestion that qualitative researchers act as *bricoleurs* who assemble their research as “a pieced-together set of representations that are fitted to the specifics of a complex situation” (p. 4). The researcher-as-*bricoleur* must draw from whatever materials are at hand and weave these together to produce a (necessarily flawed and imperfect) interpretive representation of their findings (Denzin & Lincoln, 2011). In practical terms, this process means that researchers—particularly those examining subcultures or social phenomena about which it may be difficult to glean insider accounts—must be creative and flexible in gathering data from a variety of sources. Donnelly (1985) made a similar argument regarding research on sport subcultures, noting the importance of gathering data from a diversity of sources and perspectives:

In subcultural research, all available sources of data should be employed in order to gain as complete an account as possible and the deepest level of understanding of the subculture. . . . The researcher should go beyond . . . traditional forms of data to see what members of the subculture write about themselves for other members . . . or for the general public in biographies, introductory or how-to books, and general books and magazine articles; and what is written about the subculture by journalists and freelance writers. Nor should the researcher be constrained by nonfiction since many other forms of writing and artistic work are frequently available and offer points of view that are often unique and frequently enlightening” (pp. 568-9).
Working in line with Donnelly’s understanding of subcultural research methodologies, as well as in the interpretive spirit of Denzin and Lincoln’s (2011) conceptualization of the researcher as a *bricoleur*, my project drew upon a variety of data sources in order to sketch a picture of the development and characteristics of physical culture of Canadian prisons over time. After a failed attempt to conduct participant observation in two federal penitentiaries, I refocused my methods so as to explore Canadian carceral physical culture through a *bricolage* approach to data collection. The most significant sources of data were 1) interviews with former prisoners and individuals who work, either as professionals or volunteers, with prisoners; and 2) historical and institutional texts. These traditional forms of data collection were supplemented by a host of other data gleaned through: prisoner-produced newspapers; public presentations by former prisoners, prison advocates, and corrections staff; print and online publications by former inmates and various organizations that work with prisoners; memoirs by former inmates in Canadian and US prisons; fictional works of literature and film; and a week of participant observation of public tours of a recently-decommissioned prison in Kingston, ON. Furthermore, I spent over 20 hours in informal discussions with relevant informants; while not included in my formal data collection for reasons of research ethics, these conversations were invaluable to sensitizing me to the topic and the research process. Overall, the diverse range of sources from which I create this *bricolage* greatly enhanced my understanding of the physical culture of the prison.

In this chapter, I first offer a reflexive and critical discussion of the major data sources I used for this project. Next, I describe my initial research plan, which after much back-and-forth was rejected by the CSC, and try to make sense of this decision in light of contemporary political and research trends. Given the significance to my project of the interview data I collected, as well as academic discussions about researching with marginalized populations and the politics of Research Ethics Boards (REBs) and ethics protocols, I then more deeply discuss the ethics of the interviews I conducted with former prisoners. In doing so, I situate my research in broader debates about the politics of qualitative research with marginalized populations and reflect upon two tensions within my own research: that between ethical research and research that conforms to ethics protocols; and that between participant protection and agency. I conclude by reflecting on
the possibilities for and restraints upon social justice-oriented qualitative research in light of my experience navigating ethics and the interview process.

**Methods**

Given my *bricolage* approach to research (Denzin & Lincoln, 2011), it is important to provide an overview of the various methods I used in order to stitch together my dissertation. This section this provides a summary of the major methods I employed in this project: interviews, informal discussions, participant observation on public tours of the recently-decommissioned Kingston Penitentiary, public presentations by corrections experts and prisoners, and analysis of institutional and prisoner-produced texts.

**Interviews**

While my attempts to utilize participant observation were blocked by the CSC, I was still able to conduct a qualitative exploration based around interviewing. For this project, I conducted interviews with 22 individuals with knowledge of and experience in the Canadian corrections system. Interviews were conducted in a variety of locales, including in coffee shops and diners, on the telephone or via Skype, in participants’ apartments, and in the Kingston, ON offices of a prisoner advocacy organization. Interviews lasted between 30 and 120 minutes, with the average length being just under 70 minutes. Participants can be loosely grouped into three categories: former prisoners, former corrections staff, and professional or volunteer workers in organizations that advocate for and provide services to prisoners.

**Former prisoners (n=13):** I interviewed a total of six men and seven women, the youngest of whom was 33 years old and the oldest of whom was 67. The average age of the men was 51 and of the women was 50. Four men and three women identified as white/Caucasian and two men and three women were from Aboriginal (First Nations or Métis) backgrounds; one woman did not identify her racial background. The men had served an average of 19.5 years in Canadian prisons, and the women an average of 3.25

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9 12 of the 13 former prisoners I interviewed provided me with their age.
years\textsuperscript{10}. Male participants were recruited by snowball sampling, in which I used informants’ connections to recruit new participants. All female participants were recruited with the assistance of a prisoner advocacy organization in Kingston, ON. The women participated in a focus group, rather than individual interviews; a member staff member with the organization informed me that this was a more appropriate methodology given the mutually supportive environment in which the women lived and the fact that some women may be uncomfortable being interviewed alone by a man. As such, a focus group was ideal as it allowed the women to be surrounded by a supportive group of female peers during the interview.

Current and former inmates are often identified as a vulnerable or marginalized population. However, such labels suggest a degree of homogeneity within this group and mask the fact that power differentials exist within the population. With this point in mind, it is important to note that many participants, despite the stigma that is attached to them based on their criminal pasts (Goffman, 1963), enjoy a degree of privilege compared with many other former prisoners. Most of the men I spoke with had at least some level of employment and decent accommodation, and all had stayed out of prison after their release. While living on the margins of society, and carrying the sigma attached to former prisoners, they are further removed from a life of social and economic insecurity than many released prisoners. Meanwhile, while the women I spoke with generally described precarious living situations post-release, they had access to support and services through a prisoner advocacy organization and this allowed them to ameliorate somewhat their difficulties. This discussion is not at all intended to downplay or minimize the very significant challenges faced by prisoners on their reentry to society (Travis, 2005), but rather to highlight that within this group there are degrees of marginality and to point out that there are many former inmates, many of whom likely would or could not participate in such a research project, whose voices are not included in this or other projects conducted with former prisoners.

\textsuperscript{10} One woman was unable to say how much time she had served, only that she had been in “lots of jails” and was currently serving a one year conditional sentence.
**Prisoner advocacy workers (n=8):** I use this broad term to categorize participants who work, in some capacity, for prisoners’ rights or well-being but who are not full-time employees of the corrections system. Six of these participants are involved with organizations that provide yoga classes to prisoners in youth, provincial and/or federal correctional institutions; the remaining two were a physical recreation therapist and an employee of a prisoner advocacy organization. All participants in this category were women, however I was not provided with age or other demographic information for four of them. Three of the women identified as being from Caucasian backgrounds, while a fourth identified as Latin American. Of the four women who provided me with their age, three were in their mid-30s and the fourth was 90 years old.

**Former staff (n=1):** Given CSC’s rejection of my proposal, I was unable to speak to current staff members in the federal prison system. However I did manage to contact one former CSC employee, Bob, who became a key informant for me. We spoke informally on the phone for 60 minutes in the early stages of my research and I interviewed him for two hours as part of my data collection. Bob worked in a variety of roles with CSC for over three decades, including as a recreation coordinator, a guard, and a Deputy-Warden. In addition to his valuable insights, Bob played an invaluable role in connecting me with organizations that helped me arrange further interviews with former prisoners. Bob is a white male, but did not provide his age.

**Informal Discussions**

In addition to my formal interviews, I conducted numerous informal discussions, some lasting many hours, with relevant informants. Because of the restrictions placed upon me by my REB ethics protocol and by CSC’s rejection of my research application, these are not used as data in this manuscript. However, these interactions provided me with invaluable contextual understanding of the Canadian prison system, inmate subculture, and carceral physical culture. My informal interactions included discussions with nine CSC employees (none of whom I was able to interview for this project), three former prisoners, six staff members from three different organizations that work with current and/or former prisoners, and four academics. Among these informal interactions was a site visit to Joyceville Institution in Kingston, ON, where I had hoped to conduct the bulk of my
research, during which I was given a two-hour tour of the prison and met with three staff members; various conversations during a three-hour Christmas dinner, hosted by an organization that works with former offenders, in the basement of a church in North Toronto; and a two-hour conversation with a woman former prisoner during a Greyhound bus ride from Kitchener, ON to Toronto.

Each of these interactions contributed greatly to my understanding of relevant issues and questions relating to physical culture in Canadian prisons, and improved the quality of my interview questions and conversations. Thus, while they are not directly drawn upon as data, these conversations nonetheless gave me a solid foundation upon which I conducted my formal collection of qualitative data. The willingness with which participants engaged me in discussion, and the frankness which characterized many of their interactions, also raise questions about the rigidity of ethics protocols and their potential exclusion of particular voices from the research process (see the section “Research Ethics, Rapport, and the Interview Process with “Vulnerable” Populations” below), particularly as each of them was fully aware of my status as a researcher and the nature of my project. Nonetheless, my ethics protocol being what it was, their voices are not represented in this project.

**The Kingston Penitentiary Tours**

In September, 2013 Canada’s oldest prison, the Kingston Penitentiary (known colloquially as “Kingston Pen” or “KP”) closed its doors, after 178 years of continuous operation. Two days after the prison officially closed, the Kingston United Way, in partnership with the CSC, began a three-week series of public tours of the decommissioned facility (Canadian Press, 2013); the widespread popularity of the tours, which completely sold out, led to the scheduling of a second round of tours, this time run by Habitat for Humanity Kingston over a three-week period (Habitat for Humanity, 2013). Shortly after the first round of tours was announced, one of my supervisors suggested that I go on a tour in order, given that I was unable to conduct research in operating prisons, to gain a better sense of the physical space of a Canadian prison; unfortunately by this time the tour had completely sold out. Fortunately, however, word soon emerged that the second set of tours would go ahead if enough community volunteers could be found to help with providing the
tours, greeting and organizing visitors, and cleaning the grounds. I thus arranged to visit Kingston for a week in November, 2013 and to volunteer with the tours.

In total, I spent approximately 16 hours, including the volunteer training session, working on the tours or hanging around at the tour site. I worked three four-and-a-half hour shifts, during which I took part in six 90-minute tours as a tour guide or a marshal. Tours passed through a number of key sites in the prison, including cell blocks, segregation units ("the hole"), work and religious spaces, and, notable for my research interests, recreation spaces such as the library and the yard (access to the gym was, unfortunately, restricted). Three of these five tours were led or co-led by current or former CSC guards, all of whom had worked at KP and other CSC institutions, who volunteered their time to help with the charity fundraiser. While some tour guides were particularly theatrical, and all played somewhat into the expectations of tourists for sensational and macabre stories, others were fairly measured in their explanation of the day-to-day prison experience and the prison’s history and spatial construction. The volunteer centre, in which we congregated before and after tours, was the former Keeper’s Hall—the command centre for the prison—and had a distinct air of recent abandonment: staff memos adorned bulletin boards, binders and files of documents laid in piles or in boxes behind desks, and the massive magnetic count board, on which the location of every prisoner in the institution was tracked, was mounted on a wall behind a desk. I spent a few hours before and after my shifts in the Keeper’s Hall, chatting with other volunteers and listening to their anecdotes about and experiences working in Kingston Pen.

Clearly, my brief immersion in the Kingston Pen tours was no substitute for extended participant observation in an active prison. Nonetheless, given my inability to access active correctional facilities, it did allow me a useful (if partial) glimpse into one of the CSC’s facilities, allowing me to get a sense of the spatial construction of the institution and to interact with some current and former CSC employees. It is important to also note that, because the tours were not part of my ethics protocol, I cannot use any of the private interactions I had with other volunteers as data for this project; rather, I consider them to be informal interactions that, as outlined in the previous section, contributed to my understanding of my research topic. However, I do draw upon public components of the
tours in my data analysis. All tours were open to members of the public and all statements made by tour guides were done so publicly; as such, while I maintain the anonymity of participants’ identities, I consider the tours to be a form of public performance and, as outlined in the *TCPS II* (CIHR, NSERC, & SSHRC, 2010, Article 2.1), an ethical site of data collection. The ethical conduct of this data collection is further enforced by the fact that I was open with other volunteers about my research and the motivation for my volunteerism; and that the prison was visibly absent of inmates or staff whose privacy I could violate by observing them without consent.

Although the Kingston Penitentiary tours were different from those of active correctional facilities, it is still important to recognize that, by participating in the phenomenon of carceral tours, I was contributing to the representation of Canadian corrections in ways that obscure much of the reality about crime and punishment in Canadian society (Piché & Walby, 2012). Prison tours, which play a significant part in the broader trend of *dark tourism* focused on macabre sites such as disaster zones or concentration camps (Lennon & Foley, 2000), have been critiqued by researchers for such issues as their depoliticization of criminal behaviour and neglect or marginalization of the voices of prisoners (Piché & Walby, 2012; Wilson, 2008). I approached the tours with a critical eye and a self-reflexive sensibility, particularly given the privileged racial and class position that (like many of the tourists who paid to visit Kingston Pen) means I am statistically unlikely to ever end up serving time in a Canadian prison. While I do not more deeply discuss the subject in this manuscript, the tours and my own implication in their ideological representation of Canadian corrections is a topic I intend to revisit in my future writing and research.

**Public Presentations**

Over the course of my data collection, I attended a number of public events at which relevant informants spoke about their experiences in Canadian corrections. These events included a criminological conference at York University, at which two employees of the Elizabeth Fry Society spoke; and a “community engagement forum,” offered by Grand Valley Institution for Women in Kitchener, ON, at which the institution’s warden and four of its inmates all spoke on the topic of recreation and leisure. These public talks provided
me with supplementary data that helped confirm or add depth to my own research findings, and are cited occasionally in my analysis. Because of the public nature of these presentations they do not require REB approval for inclusion in this dissertation.

**Historical Analysis: Institutional and Prisoner-Produced Texts**

To gain an understanding of the historical development of the Canadian prison system and the ways in which physical culture was implicated in this process, I used a variety of historical sources. Seeking to bridge the divide between corrections policy and practice (Moore & Hannah-Moffat, 2005), I analyze both the development of policy over time and the experiences of prisoners at different historical moments. This is a necessarily fragmented process that, as with all historical research, hinges on my own interpretation and analysis of the “traces” of history to which I have access (C. Adams, 2012). My analysis of policy and other political documents focuses primarily on key acts and reports that shaped the direction of Canadian corrections. Criminological scholars have parsed these texts effectively, however not necessarily with the same focus on physical culture and the prisoner body that I bring to bear on this analysis. Meanwhile, in order to glean an understanding of prisoners’ experiences at different historical moments, I draw upon a number of prisoner memoirs and newsletters. While my analysis of these various texts has been an ongoing process, I had familiarized myself with them before I began interviewing participants. The insight gleaned from this document analysis was extremely helpful in sensitizing me to key issues in prison life and physical culture and thus more easily navigating the interview process. This pre-interview understanding was significant, for as Schlosser (2008) highlights in her exploration of prison research, “understanding how institutional structures of power, authority, and subjugation shape inmate identity allows researchers to become more fully prepared to interact with both the individuals who receive the authority and the people who hand it down” (pp. 1511-1512).

**Institutional texts:** The analysis of institutional documents forms an important portion of my data collection. As explained by Dorothy Smith in her influential development of institutional ethnography, the study of texts allows researchers to explore institutional structures and how these create and maintain relationships of power:
Exploring how texts mediate, regulate and authorize people’s activities expands the scope of ethnographic method beyond the limits of observation. . . It is not enough to use texts as sources of information about organizations. Rather, . . . they must be examined as they co-ordinate people’s activities (D. Smith, 2001, p. 160).

Given the significance of texts to the social operation and impact of institutions, I draw throughout this manuscript on a wide variety of reports, policy directives, and web pages that provide insight into the functioning of the Canadian corrections system over the past two centuries. This is done with a specific focus on Canadian government policy regarding prison management and, particularly, the rules and regulations governing prisoners’ experiences of physical activity, recreation, and leisure. Among the texts analyzed are major acts and reports over the history of the Canadian corrections system, many of which are considered to mark shifts in the philosophy toward imprisonment. These include the *Penitentiary Act* (Government of Canada, 1868), *Royal Commission on Penitentiaries* (Macdonnell, 1914), *Royal Commission on the Penal System of Canada* (Archambault, 1938), *Fauteux Report* (Fauteux, 1958), *Ouimet Report* (Ouimet et al., 1969), *MacGuigan Report* (MacGuigan, 1977), *Charter of Rights and Freedoms* (1982), *Creating Choices: The Report of the Task Force on Federally Sentenced Women* (CSC, 1990), *Corrections and Conditional Release Act* (Department of Justice, 1992), *Arbour Report* (Arbour, 1996), and *Roadmap to Strengthening Public Safety* (CSC Review Panel, 2007). Furthermore, I draw upon annual Commissioner’s Reports, reports by the Solicitor-General and Office of the Correctional Investigator, and CSC Commissioner’s directives that set policy for prison management. Together, these various institutional texts help to construct an understanding of the operational aims of Canadian prisons over a 150-year period.

**Prisoner-produced texts:** In addition to institutional documents, I examined a number of texts produced by inmates or former prisoners. One major source of these data was *penal press* newsletters produced by prisoners in Canadian federal institutions, which began in 1950 with the first issue of *The Telescope* at Kingston Penitentiary and subsequently spread to a point that there have been over 100 different penal press publications in Canada (Gaucher, 1989/2006). In his overview of the Canadian penal press, Gaucher (1989/2006) argues that these publications give “a fertile insight into the everyday activities of prison life and prisoners’ concerns and problems [and] a sense of the
"temper and feel" of a particular penal institution" (p. 2). As such, the penal press is a valuable source of data from inmates about their day-to-day experiences in Canadian prisons.

The Department of Sociology at Okanagan College in Vernon, BC maintains an online archive\(^{11}\) of over 1,100 prisoner newsletters that were published between 1951-2011.\(^{12}\) These primary sources offer a rich insight into the lives of prisoners at various Canadian correctional institutions in different eras. The research team at Okanagan College has provided summaries and coded many of the documents for major themes, such as “Aboriginal Prisoners” (77 documents), “Entertainment” (265 documents), and “Violence and Abuse of Power” (51 documents). At the time of writing, the research team had coded 411 (37%) of the archive. Of these 411 documents, 154 (38% of coded documents) were coded as discussing sports. I relied on this online archive and the codes provided by the Okanagan College researchers to identify newsletters containing relevant articles. In this thesis, I draw upon these newsletters to provide a sense of life within prisons and issues important to prisoners at different historical moments. Penal press newsletters are either outside directed or inside directed publications, the former of which is aimed at the general public and the latter at prisoners within an institution (Gaucher, 1989/2006). I draw mostly upon inside directed publications, given their focus on the daily struggles and goings-on of inmates.

In addition to the penal press sources, I draw on selected prisoner memoirs or life histories. There is a long tradition of prison writing by inmates that provides first person accounts of their life histories, criminal careers, and experiences in prison (Shover, 2012; Wacquant, 2002). However, Shover (2012) notes that these have not often been taken seriously by academics wishing to better understand criminal and/or prisoner subcultures and he thus advocates strongly for their use in such research. In this dissertation, I draw on a handful of first person prisoner accounts, including some online writing and notable

\(^{11}\) See [http://penalpress.com](http://penalpress.com).

\(^{12}\) As of November 26, 2013, *The Penal Press* hosted 1,124 documents from 42 correctional institutions.
memoirs by Americans Mumia Abu-Jamal (1995) and Victor Hassine (2011) and Canadian Andreas Schroeder (1976). Each of these texts has been recognized as having scholarly value and has been cited widely in academic research.\textsuperscript{13} My selective inclusion of these first person accounts is done in the same analytical vein as Shover’s (2012) research, and is intended to supplement the other qualitative data collected in this project. These data add depth and nuance to my analysis and help, in the words of Donnelly (1985) quoted earlier in this chapter, “to see what members of the subculture write about themselves for other members . . . or for the general public” (p. 568-569).

\textbf{The Best Laid Plans: Reflections on a Failed Research Plan in an Opaque Correctional Bureaucracy}

Assembling this research project has been a lengthy process with a series of obstacles along the way. While it is clearly a fantasy to assume that the data collection and analysis of a significant research project will not include its fair share of speed bumps, this fact is often glossed over in discussions of research methodology (Waddington & Smith, 2014). I think it is worthwhile, therefore, to explore the failure of my initial research plan, which involved long-term participant observation in one men’s and one women’s correctional institution. This discussion is intended to be neither a self-pitying reminiscence nor an excoriation of the CSC’s opaque ethics review process. Rather, I hope that it provides a practical caution to researchers seeking to explore life inside of a total institution (Goffman, 1961a), particularly one protected by layers of bureaucracy, and some insight into the politics of research both in prison environments and in the contemporary climate of Canadian corrections. In retrospect, I can say that I was overly

\textsuperscript{13} According to \textit{Google Scholar}, as of August 13, 2014 Abu-Jamal (1995) had been cited 141 times, Schroeder (1976) had been cited 25 times, and various editions of Hassine’s (2011) manuscript had been cited at least 114 times.
ambitious in my research aims; however, in the moment, I was committed to my proposed research plan for nearly two years before I was ultimately denied access to CSC institutions. This section describes this lengthy process, before attempting to make sense of CSC’s rejection in light of both the practical considerations of allowing researchers access to prisons and various political trends in corrections in Canada and other western countries.

**Barriers to Prison Research: Negotiating Access and Developing Alternative Plans**

Attempting to secure access to a CSC correctional institution was a long, arduous and extremely frustrating experience. Ultimately the length of the process led me to implement alternative methodological approaches and enact a backup research plan that I had developed in case my proposal to CSC was rejected. Box 1 provides a chronological timeline of my attempts to secure access, and I offer here a brief summary of this process.

My initial contact with the CSC came in March, 2012, when a research informant introduced me via email to a CSC Chaplain who oversees a yoga program at Joyceville Institution (JVI), a medium security institution in Kingston, ON. The Chaplain was interested in and supportive of my research project, but made it clear that I had to go through the proper ethics processes before I could do any research; as such, she put me in touch with an Assistant Warden (AW) at JVI, who in turn told me to contact a Project Officer (PO) at CSC’s Regional Headquarters for Ontario. The PO forwarded me paperwork for submitting a research proposal to the CSC, and we exchanged a few further informational emails. In the meantime, I arranged to meet the Chaplain and get a tour of JVI, which occurred during August, 2012. Despite multiple attempts to contact her, the AW did not reply to my requests to meet her during my visit.

Meanwhile, I was also working through institutional procedures within the University of Toronto. I defended my dissertation proposal in July, 2012, and prepared and submitted my ethics protocol to the University of Toronto’s Health Sciences REB the following month. Due to concerns about the vulnerability of prison populations, the REB had a great deal of feedback to my initial ethics protocol but, after submitting three different versions, it was ultimately approved in October. Having gained approval from the
REB, I could now submit my proposal to CSC’s Regional Headquarters for consideration. While the CSC proposal was essentially ready to submit, with only a few tweaks from my REB-approved protocol needed, I thought it prudent to discuss the project with the appropriate staff-members at JVI before submitting—there would be little point in applying to CSC if the AW and PM at JVI were not amenable to my project. At this stage, I had already had initial contact with and received verbal support from a Program Manager at Grand Valley Institution (GVI), my other proposed research site.

However, after two months of trying unsuccessfully to speak about my proposed project with these two staff members, by early January I decided I could wait no longer for their input and I submitted my proposal to CSC. After receiving feedback from the PO and members of her research team, I submitted a revised proposal at the end of that month. While writing revisions, I was also informed by the PO that the Warden at JVI, where I had invested most of my time building relationships, would not support my research; as a result, I changed my proposed research site to Fenbrook Institution, a medium security prison in Gravenhurst, ON.

Nearly three months passed after I submitted my proposal to CSC, during which I heard nothing about its progress. In April I emailed the PO to ask if there were any updates; her response led me to believe that my proposal had moved from the CSC’s Ontario Research Committee to its National Research Committee (NRC) for approval. I was also informed that the PO was retiring, and provided the contact information for her replacement. The new PO informed me that she would contact me once she had received word from the NRC about my proposal. However, a month later, at the end of May, the new PO emailed me to inform me that, somewhere in the process, my proposal had never been sent to the NRC, despite both she and I being under the impression that it had been sent forward in March. The new PO was careful not to assign blame for this mistake, so it is not clear if the original PO failed to send the proposal, or if it was lost somewhere in the bureaucratic process. As a result of this delay, the PO asked the NRC to expedite its consideration of the proposal; however, in early June, I was informed the NRC would be unable to consider my proposal until August.
**Timeline of Research Application to CSC**

March 6, 2012 – Initial phone call with Chaplain at JVI.

May 14, 2012 – Contact JVI Assistant Warden (AW) about possibility of doing research; told to contact Project Officer at CSC Regional Headquarters (Ontario).

August 2/8, 2012 – Emails AW to see if she can meet during my upcoming visit to JVI; receive no response to either email.

August 9, 2012 – Meet with Chaplain and tour JVI.

October 11, 2012 – Email JVI’s AW and Manager of Programs (MP) about my Application for Proposed Research that I will submit to CSC; receive no response.

October 23, 2012 – Follow up with AW and MP; AW suggests the three of us have a conference call in mid-November.

November, 13/16, 2012 – Email AW and MP about potential conference call; AW responds to postpone call to a later date.

December 3, 2013 – Follow up with AW and MP about potential conference call; receive no response.

December 17, 2013 – Follow up with AW and MP about potential conference call; receive no response.

January 28, 2013 – Application for Proposed Research submitted to Project Officer (PO) at CSC Regional Headquarters.

April 11/12, 2013 – Contact PO for update on my application, informed that it is being considered by National Research Committee (NRC); informed of her pending retirement and given contact information for replacement PO.

May 6/7, 2013 – Contact new PO for update on my application; told to expect a response within 10 days.

May 21/22, 2013 – Contact PO for update; informed that, while her understanding was that the former PO submitted my application to NRC in March, PO has learnt that it was actually never submitted; PO puts in request to expedite consideration of my application.

June 3/4, 2013 – Informed that NRC cannot fit my proposal on its June meeting agenda but that it will be considered at the following meeting at end of July.

July 13/21, 2013 – Receive email from CSC Senior Research Manager (SRM) requesting revisions/clarifications to my proposal; send revisions to the SRM.

August 1, 2013 – SRM informs me that Research Proposal Committee has reviewed my proposal and the response was “quite positive,” however the proposal has been forwarded to the CSC’s legal department to review the implications of participant observation as a method; further revisions are requested.

August 22, 2013 – Informed that legal department has approved use of participant observation.

August 28, 2013 – Revisions sent to and approved by RO; informed that proposal has now been sent to CSC’s Executive Committee Sub-Committee on Research.

September 12, 2013 – Informed that the committee will not support my proposal in whole or in part (only interviews and no participant observation).

September 12/13, 2013 – Inquire whether any appeal of the decision is possible; informed that no appeals are allowed.
At this stage, my contact person at the CSC shifted from the PO at the CSC Regional Office to a Senior Research Manager (SRM) at the National Headquarters. The SRM was extremely helpful in navigating the bureaucratic process and under her guidance I preemptively addressed some potential concerns of the committee and developed a backup proposal, involving only interviewing and no participant observation, which she would present if the committee raised serious concerns about my methodology. In early August the SRM wrote to tell me that the Research Proposal Committee had considered my application and its feedback was “quite positive.” The committee had a number of revisions for me, and also required the CSC Legal Department to approve the use of participant observation. I completed my revisions, meaning that the proposal moved on for consideration by the CSC’s Executive Committee Sub-Committee on Research in mid-September. In late August, I also received news that the Legal Department had cleared the use of participant observation. I had finally jumped through the various hoops and, despite the many obstacles, needed just one more committee approval to finally gain access to my proposed research sites. Then, in mid-September, I received word from the SRM that this committee had rejected my proposal:

Unfortunately, I’m writing to let you know that our Executive Committee Sub-Committee on Research was not able to support your research proposal, either in whole or in part (e.g., just the interviews). The Sub-Committee raised concerns regarding staff resources associated with accompanying you, institutional safety, liability in the event of a negative event, offenders’ privacy, and the value of the proposed research to the organization (personal communication, September 12, 2013).

Fortunately, I had prepared for the possibility of CSC rejecting my proposal and had included an alternate research project in my dissertation proposal. In June, 2013, with the support of my dissertation committee, I decided to submit an amendment to the REB to gain approval to interview former prisoners and other relevant informants. This approach, along with my other forms of data collection outlined previously, formed the foundation for my project. Nonetheless, the year-and-a-half process of attempting to work with CSC to secure research access was frustrating and disheartening. In the following sections, I reflect on this experience and attempt to make sense of it in light of its broader political and correctional contexts.
The Politics of Gaining Research Access to Prisons

Wacquant (2002), in an article provocatively titled “The Curious Eclipse of Prison Ethnography in the Age of Mass Incarceration,” laments the decline of academic fieldwork in US prisons since the 1970s—a timeframe that coincides with the rapid rise in incarceration rates in the US and a shift toward more punitive approaches to corrections and conditions of confinement. He argues that US prisons have become inaccessible for researchers in part because they are operated by rigid bureaucracies that are protective about these politically sensitive spaces:

An all-too-obvious reason for the precipitous decline of prison ethnography in the United States has been the lack of openness of correctional facilities to inquiry and the limited cooperation forthcoming from the various authorities that oversee them. By becoming simultaneously more bureaucratic and more porous to the influences of the political, juridical, and media fields, jails and penitentiaries have turned into opaque organizations that can be difficult and sometimes nearly impossible to penetrate (p. 387).

Yeager (2008) expressed a similar understanding of academic research in Canadian prisons, based on his own eight-year odyssey trying to gain approval to conduct research with dangerous offenders in Canadian institutions. Yeager faced a host of obstacles from both Carleton University’s (Ottawa, ON) REB and the CSC, and unsuccessfully fought these through a lengthy series of appeals and legal challenges.

Despite these critiques of the reticence of prison systems to allow academic fieldwork, researchers have continued to find ways to conduct ethnographic and other qualitative work in correctional settings around the world (Crewe & Jewkes, 2011; Reiter, 2014)—a fact Wacquant (2002) himself notes, with reference to European scholars. Furthermore, Wacquant (2002) in particular has drawn criticism from other scholars for overstating the near-impossibility of academic prison research (e.g. Crewe & Jewkes, 2011) and failing to acknowledge the rich body of scholarly research produced by prisoners themselves (Piché, Gaucher, & Walby, 2014). Nonetheless, as Wacquant declares, prisons often remain difficult sites for researchers to access. Reiter’s (2014) recent article on methodological strategies for carceral research notes that this body of scholarship is unfocused due both to institutional barriers and researchers’ emotional disconnection from the topic of study. Together, she argues,
these two layers of obfuscation maintain the prison as a social "black site": physically located outside of our communities, invisible to the public and the researcher alike. Because prisons remain permanently out of focus, invisible at worst and pixilated at best, they are resistant to both academic investigation and emotional investment (p. 414)

Clearly, while many persistent researchers around the world attempt with varying degrees of success to conduct fieldwork in corrections settings, gaining research access to prison can be a difficult, and sometimes impossible, challenge. While arguably overstating the near-impossibility of carceral fieldwork, Wacquant (2002) is certainly correct to highlight a major reason for this difficulty—that many prisons are closed off and correctional systems increasingly resistant to outside researchers, whether academic or not. However, to simply frame CSC’s rejection of my proposal as a hostile response to an outsider’s attempt to explore the total institution would be to oversimplify the decision. In the following section I explore how the characteristics of the CSC bureaucracy, and particularly its research branch, coupled with a changing political context within Canadian federal corrections, helps to make sense of the ultimate decision to reject my proposal. In conducting this discussion, I hope to use my own experience to shed light on the some of the hidden forces that can hinder prison research access and to contribute to the debates about this subject.

**Making Sense of CSC’s Decision**

In addition to being an extremely frustrating experience as a researcher, my attempts to gain access to CSC institutions spoke to the challenges of securing access to research in total institutions that are bureaucratically managed and largely closed to outside oversight (Goffman, 1961a). In some ways, my experience appears to fit within Wacquant’s (2002) description of prisons as opaque institutions whose “doors . . . [have been] gradually closed to social researchers” (p. 385). Furthermore, it would seem at face value to fit the narrative offered by Yeager (2008), who challenged the rejection of his proposed research to a degree well beyond what I contemplated for this project, of the CSC as a monolithic state apparatus willing to exercise censorship over research that might challenge its modes of operation. Such an explanation was, I must admit, immensely appealing on an emotional level when I experienced my initial frustration at the CSC’s decision. However, while there is certainly legitimacy to the suggestion that total
institutions are hostile to criticism or interference from outsiders (Goffman, 1961a) and that, as Wacquant (2002) highlights, prisons are particularly resistant to external interference, the rejection of my application has a much more nuanced subtext that may help to explain the decision. I explore three such possible explanations below.

Firstly, there can be a divide between policymakers, bureaucrats, and front-line staff working in corrections. Moore and Hannah-Moffat (2005), in exploring the tension between the continued use of rehabilitative practices in Ontario provincial prisons despite an escalation of punitive rhetoric and policy by the provincial government of the mid-1990s, explain how the ideologies embedded in corrections policy do not necessarily find their way into corrections practice:

Ontario politicians in the 1990s were claiming that Ontario was going to ‘get tough on crime’ and establish ‘truth in sentencing’. This rhetoric . . . [was] interpreted by a buffer zone of high-level bureaucrats . . . whose job it is to turn rhetoric into practice. In Ontario, many of these bureaucrats . . . were the same people who had participated in the changes towards rehabilitation in the 1970s. As such, many of these individuals continued to have a strong commitment to the idea of rehabilitation and worked hard to implement changes which would both satisfy the government’s rhetorical needs while maintaining, on the level of practice, a system committed to working with and changing individual prisoners (p. 89).

This revelation highlights the fact that prison policy and management are complex processes that are not necessarily congruent. Relating this to my research proposal, this helps to explain the interest and assistance I enjoyed from many people within the CSC bureaucracy. Many prison staff, such as the Chaplain at JVI, the Warden at Fenbrook, and the Program Manager at GVI, were all supportive of my research and saw it having potential value to their correctional work. And some members of the CSC’s research offices, particularly the SRM in the National Headquarters, were extremely helpful in guiding me through the application process. However, despite this support from prison and bureaucratic staff, a committee within the CSC research bureaucracy exercised the authority to reject my proposal without opportunity to appeal. There were thus a number of actors involved in the process, with varying levels of power and input into the decision of whether to approve or reject my research proposal, and it was not a simple case of having my proposed research outright dismissed by the organization. It also diverges from
Yeager’s (2008) experience, in which he interpreted the ultimate rejection of his research proposal, after a prolonged struggle with both CSC and his university’s REB, as an “example of state censorship of convict criminology in North America, aided and abetted by my own university, which effectively ‘killed’ the project through the machinations of the formal ethics review process” (p. 415).

A second possible reason for the rejection of my proposal is that the CSC has a long tradition of producing research on its own institutions and in working with researchers to inform its policy development (Bonta & Corimer, 1999). For example, from 1989 until 2007, the CSC produced an annual journal called FORUM on Corrections Research, consisting of between one and four issues per year focused on a particular theme (e.g. Women Offenders, Corrections and Parole, Correctional Education, etc.)\(^{14}\), which featured contributions from CSC employees, academics, and community members. Furthermore, dozens of CSC-produced research reports are available online,\(^ {15}\) giving a sense of the organization’s research output over the past two decades. Moore and Hannah-Moffat (2005) explain that, with a shift toward offender treatment in the early 1990s,

> the CSC’s commitment to this new approach [included] an extensive research branch that is intended to contribute to broader criminological knowledge, mainly about the psychology of the prisoners themselves, in order to further the ‘what works’ agenda of offering the most ‘effective’ and empirically proven penal programming in addition to establishing a set of best practices. CSC’s research branch has offices across the country. . . . The correctional vision imagined by the network of psychologists central to CSC is marketed throughout the world and some of their work has become canonized reading in criminal psychology (pp. 86-87).

This perspective on the CSC’s research tradition is significant for three reasons. Firstly, it reveals the hegemony of psychology as the dominant disciplinary paradigm for criminological research within or about the CSC. This view is reinforced by a perusal of the CSC’s research reports that are published online as well as by Bonta and Corimer’s (1999) review of Canadian corrections research. I had a brief experience navigating this

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methodological paradigm when I received early feedback from the CSC on my proposal, as one of the reviewers, a Chief Psychologist within the CSC, suggested I incorporate a quantitative analysis using the General Statistical Information of Recidivism (GSIR) Scale. The GSIR was designed by the National Parole Board in 1982 and serves as “a predictive tool measuring recidivism among offenders released from Canadian penitentiaries” (Nafekh & Motiuk, 2002, p. 1). Secondly, the CSC’s approach to research indicates that it is primarily amenable to research on what “works” in treating offenders—exploratory research that will paint a complicated picture of a subject, rather than advance a black-and-white understanding of an issue, may be seen as less useful in directing corrections policy and practice. In fact, the CSC is explicit that research support its organizational goals: the Commissioner’s Directive on Research (CSC, 2007) lists “contribution to the achievement of the Mission and the priorities of the Correctional Service of Canada” (Article 9a) and “anticipated benefit to corrections” (Article 9g) as two of its eight criteria for evaluating proposed research projects. Thirdly, the extensive reach and international impact of CSC’s research might make it less amenable to outside researchers; if the organization already produces well-regarded research that contributes to its goals, what need is there for outside research in its institutions, particularly if it does not align with organizational priorities?

A final potential contributing factor to the rejection of my proposed project is that recent political rhetoric concerning federal corrections is tilted toward a neoconservative doctrine of ‘no frills’ prison management and individual offender accountability. At the same time as it proposed legislation to lengthen sentences and increase the use of incarceration as a punishment, legislation that is likely lead to increased prison populations (Galloway, 2012a), the Conservative government cut the operating budget of CSC by nearly $300 million, or 10 percent, over a three year period (Government of Canada, 2012, p. 277). These policy and budget changes have put twin pressures on CSC to oversee additional prisoners while simultaneously cutting costs. This context helps to explain why the CSC Sub-Committee on Research expressed concerns about staff resources, my safety as a researcher, and liability issues—if staff are already stretched thinly, assigning a staff member to escort me in various parts of the prison would likely not be seen as a useful priority and fears about a lawsuit arising from an unsafe incident could also be heightened.
Another consequence of ‘no frills’ approaches to corrections is that prison systems must give the public impression of providing inmates with austere and disciplined living conditions free of perks or luxuries (Hogeveen, 2005; McElligott, 2008; Moore, Burton, & Hannah-Moffat, 2003). This can mean that recreation programming is cut so as to make conditions of confinement more difficult for prisoners. For example, in Ontario, which introduced a ‘tough-on-crime’ agenda under Mike Harris’ (Progressive Conservative) government of the mid-1990s, “inmates remain locked in their cells from 16 to 23.5 hours a day. . . . Recreation consists of a legislatively mandated 20 minutes of outdoor time that takes place without the benefit of basic equipment or recreation officers” (Moore et al., 2003, p. 155). In such a political climate, research on recreation may be seen by bureaucrats as unnecessary, or perhaps even counterproductive, to the systematic prison management changes being enacted, even if staff in institutions see it as valuable. In either case, it is perhaps unsurprising that a bureaucracy working under a political system that promotes a ‘no frills’ correctional model would choose to reject my efforts to research the state of physical culture inside its institutions.

While such an interpretation partially supports the notion of opaque bureaucratic apparatuses barring access to their institutions, my experience was less an example of “lack of openness of correctional facilities to inquiry” (Wacquant, 2002) than it was a structural shift in correctional ideology clashing with my proposed research project. As stated earlier, there were many key actors within the prison system who were amenable to my research; however, within a bureaucracy navigating significant shifts in policy, a specific committee raised “concerns regarding . . . the value of the proposed research to the organization” (personal communication, September 12, 2013). That the CSC’s openness to certain types of research has changed in the past two decades is apparent when comparing my research odyssey to the methods described by Caplan (1996) in his Master’s thesis study of recreation in Canadian prisons. Caplan gained access to four penitentiaries, one of which was a maximum security institution, simply by contacting their administrators and making

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16 While direct comparisons between provincial and federal corrections systems cannot necessarily be made, Ontario is nonetheless a useful Canadian case for examining the impact of a neoconservative tough-on-crime agenda (McElligott, 2008).
arrangements to conduct research. Had this process still been in place today, I would have been able to begin data collection with the support of staff at JVI in the spring of 2012. However, clearly in the past two decades the research approval process at CSC has become far more bureaucratized and potential researchers must navigate many layers of organizational procedure in order to gain access to institutions. The changes to Canadian corrections policy over the past 20 years, particularly concerning CSC priorities and public perception of prisoners’ conditions of confinement, help to explain why outside researchers may be more carefully scrutinized and their access much more limited than in the past.

**Research Ethics, Rapport, and the Interview Process with “Vulnerable” Populations**

There are many good reasons for ethics protocols, particularly when researching sensitive topics or with marginalized populations. Canada’s lengthy guide to research ethics, *Tri-Council Policy Statement: Ethical Conduct for Research Involving Humans (TCPS II; CIHR, NSERC, & SSHRC, 2010)*, hinges on a very simple, though powerful, core value: respect for the dignity of human beings. This admirable guiding principle means that all researchers should be sensitive to the inherent worth of all human beings and the respect and consideration that they are due. . . . Respect for human dignity is expressed through three core principles – Respect for Persons, Concern for Welfare, and Justice. These core principles transcend disciplinary boundaries (p. 8).

When it comes to research with vulnerable or marginalized populations, that is those people who have been afforded little respect or concern for their dignity from mainstream society, researchers must tread even more carefully in their interactions so as to avoid replicating, or worse contributing to, the marginalization of such people. In Canadian society, as they are elsewhere around the globe, prisoners are among the most marginalized of persons. This is due in part to the lingering social stigma attached to criminal acts (Goffman, 1963) and the physical separation from society that incarceration entails (Schlosser, 2008). However, it is also due to the fact that prison populations are often heavily populated by racialized minorities and/or those from impoverished backgrounds (King, 2008). Prisoners are thus, according to Wacquant (2002), “a population thrice stigmatized [because they] are law-breakers who are overwhelmingly poor and
darker skinned” (p. 387). Given this status, it is not surprising that the TCPS II specifically identifies prisoners as a vulnerable population:

One important difference that must be considered for fairness and equity is vulnerability. Vulnerability is often caused by limited capacity, or limited access to social goods, such as rights, opportunities and power. Individuals or groups in vulnerable circumstances have historically included children, the elderly, women, prisoners, those with mental health issues and those with diminished capacity for self determination. . . . People or groups whose circumstances cause them to be vulnerable or marginalized may need to be afforded special attention in order to be treated justly in research (CIHR, NSERC, SSHRC, 2010, p. 10).

TCPS II’s inclusion of prisoners on this list may arise from the fact that inmates have, historically, been subjected to violent, inhumane and dangerous participation in research studies. While medical experiments on victims in Nazi concentration camps may be the most infamous example of the abuse of prisoners in the name of science, Hornblum’s (1997) history of research on prisoners in the US demonstrates that this practice— including the exposure of inmates to various diseases and the trial of untested vaccines upon them—was also widespread on this side of the Atlantic for much of the twentieth century. In fact, by the end of World War 2, in the US “prisoners had become the guinea pigs of choice for scores of inspired researchers” (Hornblum, 1997, p. 1439). Research ethics processes only emerged as a result of notorious and particularly flagrant violations of participants’ safety and dignity in biomedical studies, such as the Tuskegee Syphilis Study in the US (Atkinson, 2014). By the mid-1970s, following a host of controversial experiments and the extreme illness or death of many inmates in the US, the public and scientific appetite for prisoner experimentation declined rapidly; and in 1976 the US government banned the use of inmates as medical subject (Hornblum, 1997). In Canadian federal institutions, medical research is not banned outright, but is only permissible under very particular circumstances in accordance with the Corrections and Conditional Release Act (CSC, 2004). Non-medical research with prisoners, meanwhile, is allowed under strict guidelines in the US; Canada does not have comparable regulations specifically for research on prison populations, but rather defers to the TCPS II to govern the ethical conduct of such research (Matheson et al., 2012). Clearly, given the historical patterns of unethical research
on inmates and contemporary prisoners’ social stigmatization, there is good reason for caution in the research process.

**Navigating Ethics in the Interview Process**

My research experience highlighted the ways in which REB protocols, while certainly in the spirit of protecting participants’ rights, do not always translate well to the process of qualitative research. This is a point highlighted by Atkinson (2014), who argues, based on his experience of ethnographic fieldwork in a variety of deviant subcultures, that “research subjects, even those on the social margins, . . . find [academic researchers’] degree of ethical i-dotting and t-crossing quite amusing and unnecessary” (Atkinson, 2014, p. 85). This quotation typifies, for the most part, my experience with the process of informed consent in my interviews with former prisoners. While I secured, through a fairly extensive defense of its appropriateness for participants who are or have been incarcerated, the right from my university’s REB to garner only oral (as opposed to written) consent from participants, I was required by my ethics protocol to follow a two-page oral consent script and provide a one-page information letter to interviewees. However, as suggested in the previous quotation from Atkinson (2014), these ethics steps were not particularly appreciated by the former prisoners I interviewed. Reactions to receiving the information letter ranged from apathy, to bemusement, to derision. One outright refused to take the letter, while others took it but told me point-blank that they would not read it, and still others threw the letter in the trash before I had left. Those who took the letter did so politely, but did little more than glance at it—giving them enough time to see the imposing institutional letterhead of the University of Toronto but none of the words explaining their rights as participants and my responsibilities as a researcher. Similarly, a handful of participants dismissively interrupted my attempt to plow through my cumbersome consent script—one man pointedly told me: “I don’t care about that shit.” These experiences raise questions about the efficacy of rigid consent processes in qualitative research. Two brief examples, presented in the form of vignettes, illustrate the challenges I faced in conforming to the ethics process committed to in my REB protocol:

**Vignette #1:** My first interview with a former prisoner, Will, was conducted over the phone, as he lives in British Columbia. I was put in touch with him by his friend, a recreation therapist I had already interviewed. After a brief
exchange of emails to arrange the interview, I sent Will an electronic copy of the information letter four days before we spoke. I figured that this would give him time to gain an understanding of the study and his rights as a participant, thus making the oral consent process much smoother and comprehensible. Finally, the moment for my first interview arrived. I waited nervously as the phone rang until I heard a friendly voice answer on the other end of the line. Will and I chatted pleasantly for a few minutes, talking about the weather in our respective provinces and his experiences during some recent visits to Ontario. The conversation led fairly organically to my research, and in response to a question from him I began to explain my project, what I was doing and why. Will was supportive of my work and offered to answer my questions and help in whatever way he could. While this seemed like a natural point in the conversation to begin discussing his experiences, I had to go through the ethics protocol first. So, instead of immediately accepting Will’s invitation to discussion, I instead asked him whether he had had a chance to read the letter I had sent him. He responded: “Yeah, I didn’t look at it. Sorry. It’s some kind of, uh, okay give me the brief synopsis if you can.” Well, that didn’t go as I had hoped. I gathered myself and tried to muster a good response to his request for a summary: “Yeah, it’s pretty boring. Basically it’s just, uh, really for the university. In order to do research with humans there’s an ethics process, so I basically just have to explain that briefly to you if that’s alright.” And with that I launched into a bumbling and hurried version of the consent script, after which I awkwardly, and only somewhat effectively, tried to shift back into the easy conversational style that we had enjoyed when my participant first answered the phone.

**Vignette #2:** I had just wrapped up a great interview with Dave at a diner in a strip mall on the outskirts of Kingston. He had been extremely insightful and, after using the two hours we spent together to vet me, had agreed to arrange a meeting with one of his clients, a former lifer in the Kingston prison network. He called Sam from the diner, and I anticipated that I would arrange a time to meet him at a coffee shop or diner later in the week. Instead, Dave turned to me and said “Sam will speak to you. He’s not too mobile, so I’ll drop you off at his apartment.” With that, we headed to the car and drove a short distance to a small, low-rise apartment complex near the strip mall. Dave escorted me into building and to Sam’s apartment, which was cramped and dingy with only a small amount of sunshine lighting the room. After making some brief small talk with Sam, Dave took his leave, leaving me to conduct the interview.

I thanked Sam for agreeing to speak with me and prepared to launch into my ethics spiel, which by now I had quite well-rehearsed. However, Sam, who knew the basic focus of my project, immediately launched into an account of his experience with sport during his decades inside the federal corrections system. Here I was, unexpectedly sitting in my participant’s apartment, and the interview had begun before I had even turned on my tape-recorder. In
other words, this interview was being conducted entirely on my participant’s terms rather than mine. As soon as I could appropriately do so, I interjected to ask if I could record the conversation; Sam agreed, and I used the break in his monologue to quickly explain confidentiality in the research process. Sam told me to switch off the recorder, which I did, then told me his full name and told me that was the only thing he would say that he didn’t want on the record. After that I switched the recorder back on and we proceeded with the interview. Following the interview, I tried to give Sam a copy of the information letter, saying “I don’t know if you want this, but...”—before I could finish my sentence he interrupted and, waving dismissively at the piece of paper, loudly said “no.” I tried again to briefly explain the information contained in the letter, but he again interrupted, this time explaining to me how to get to the nearest bus stop. That was my cue to leave his apartment and so I gathered my things, thanked him for his time, and left the building.

These two vignettes highlight some of the ways in which rigid application of ethics protocols can present a challenge to qualitative researchers. Firstly, I certainly found Atkinson’s (2014) comment about participants finding researchers’ “degree of ethical i-dotting and t-crossing quite amusing and unnecessary” (p. 85) to ring true in many of my interviews with former prisoners. In order to build rapport and interpersonal connections with many participants, I not only had to demonstrate a sound knowledge of the prison system and inmate culture, I also had to avoid, as much as possible, coming across as an out-of-touch academic. Sam, for example, not only completely shut down my attempts to explain the ethics process, he also dismissively described my academic profession, in contrast to physical forms of labour, as “ tripping over books.” As it became increasingly clear that I could not expect participants to respond positively to my efforts to conform to my ethics protocol, and that earnestly launching into a discussion of participant rights before the interview immediately set a poor tone for the conversation, I became more flexible in my approach to informed consent. I always ensured that I mentioned all the components of the consent script, however I did not necessarily do so in the order they were laid out in my protocol; rather, I approached each interview as a conversation into which I interjected, at various points and as naturally as possible, the relevant information about informed consent. While far from perfect, this approach ensured that interviews ran relatively smoothly and that the consent process only minimally disrupted the rapport between participants and I.
Secondly, I would argue that rigidly following my ethics protocol and faithfully reading the consent script in its entirety would have run counter to the priority of respecting human dignity that is enshrined in the *Tri-Council Policy*. I obviously could not force participants to read the information letter if they did not want to. Instead, I explained that the ethics procedures were for their protection and that if they had any issues with the interview the letter contained information that would allow them to redress this. I am extremely grateful that I had the forethought to stand firm with the REB about using oral consent, as in retrospect I am quite confident that a number of participants would have refused to read and sign a consent form; not surprisingly, given the way in which their lives are bureaucratically managed and the many legal processes through which they have sat, many prisoners are hesitant to affix their signature to formal documents. Atkinson (2014), concludes his critique of REB processes, in light of his ethnographic research experience, by acknowledging the autonomy of participants to ensure that research is conducted in a manner they consider to be ethical:

Research ethics manuals and protocols also fail to teach us how our friends in the field are likely the best ‘covert’ researchers around. They size you up, make personal assessments, talk about you to others, form opinions without your awareness, and always hold back important ‘truths’ from you at times… . Real ethical decision about how involved, detached, overt, covert, explicit and secretive people are in the field together … are made by [participants] as a normal course of social interaction. … They, better than I, knew how and when to ‘let me in’ as a means of managing what we like to call the inherent ‘risk’ in and through the research process. I did not have to explain this to them on a form, or through a well-worn set of institutional policies. … Our subject know far more deeply than us how to socially, emotionally and psychologically protect themselves (pp. 86-87).

Like Atkinson, I fully recognize participants’ agency in negotiating ethical concerns in the research process. Sam welcomed me into his place of residence, took time out of his day to speak to me, willingly revisited his unpleasant experiences of four decades spent in prison—enduring living conditions that he described as “a shithouse”—and showed little interest in my attempts at academic discussion of consent and ethical research. What right, then, did I have to contradict Sam’s wishes, and how disrespectful would it be for me to have assumed that he wasn’t capable of navigating the ethical terrain of our conversation? Will chose not to read the information letter and my attempts to explain it to him were met
at best indifferently; attempting to formally go through my consent script certainly had the effect of damaging the rapport we had briefly begun to build and started the interview on a somewhat uncomfortable note. Clearly, in each case, participants were more than capable of keeping the interview comfortable and managing any risk that might arise from their participation. Despite the obstacles I sometimes encountered in trying to follow my ethics protocol, I feel completely confident that my research was conducted ethically and in line with the Tri-Council Policy's emphasis on respect, justice, and concern for the welfare of participants.

**Ethics Protocols, Empathy, and Social Justice Research**

This critique is not to say that I dismiss the value of REB ethics protocols, which I see as necessary safeguards against irresponsible research and, if undertaken as they should be in the spirit of respect for human dignity, a critical opportunity for the researcher to weigh the risks and merits of his or her research. Rather, it is to highlight the need for flexibility with regard to the manner in which ethics protocols are translated into fieldwork situations; and to lend support to Atkinson's (2014) call for recognizing the agency and social expertise of participants as a part of recognizing the dignity of participants. This points to larger questions in qualitative research about ethical research with marginalized populations. As Schlosser (2008) explains, in social contexts such as prisons, a researcher's presence is that of an outsider with power” (p. 1513). In order to conduct ethical research with marginalized groups, it is thus critical that researchers employ self-reflexive methodologies that recognize power imbalances within the researcher-participant relationship and that are sensitive to the fact that the researcher is at best a sojourner, and at worst an unwelcome intruder, into the everyday social world of the participant.

While power differentials cannot be completely ameliorated, some qualitative researchers (Angrosino, 2005; Fontana & Frey, 2005) see empathy as a key foundation of ethical research with marginalized populations. Such an approach proceeds from an assumption that no science is neutral, and that therefore researchers can (and should) take an ethical stand in their research. As Fontana and Frey (2005) explain:

Empathetic approaches take an ethical stance in favor of the individual or group being studied. The interviewer becomes an advocate and partner in
the study, hoping to be able to use the results to advocate social policies and ameliorate the conditions of the interviewee (p. 696).

Angrosino (2005) notes that the researcher, even if she/he chooses to live amongst and adopt the lifestyle of a marginalized population, can never claim to be in the same position as those who are marginalized. However, the researcher may still empathize with the population and attempt to produce progressive collaborative research: “research in service to a progressive agenda flows from a degree of empathy (not simply “rapport” in the way that term was used by traditional participant observers)” (Angrosino, 2005, p. 739).

Angrosino also suggests that research with marginalized populations should be social justice orientated, in that it aims to improve the lives of people through a direct connection with people in these populations, an attempt to learn from their lived experiences, and the adoption of an advocacy role as a result of research. These calls for socially engaged research resonate with both those for public intellectualism within the sociology of sport (e.g. Bairner, 2009; Ingham & Donnelly, 1990; Jarvis, 2007) and those for a public praxis-oriented PCS aimed at combating injustice (e.g. Andrews, 2008; Atkinson, 2011). Despite the ongoing differences between sociology of sport and PCS, these methodological approaches to publicly-oriented research represent a commonality between some scholars in these sub-disciplines.

Ultimately, in my interviews with former prisoners I had to navigate the tricky terrain of ethical research and the building of empathetic interpersonal relationships. My initial struggles to strike this balance and my development of flexible alternatives to a rigid application of the consent process shed light on broader issues in qualitative research, particularly for researchers coming from a position of privilege to work with “vulnerable” populations.

Conclusion

Given the research inaccessibility of CSC prisons, this project used a *bricolage* approach (Denzin & Lincoln, 2011) to produce an interpretive and exploratory analysis of carceral physical culture in Canadian federal prisons. As such, I employed a diverse range of methods, including interviews, participant observation, and textual analysis, to collect data. The process of attempting to gain access to CSC institutions highlighted both the challenges of researching in large correctional bureaucracies and the ways in which the
political climate can limit opportunities for researchers. During the research process I struggled to balance respect for the agency of participants while adhering to the ethics protocol that governed my research, raising important questions about ethical research with "vulnerable" populations such as former prisoners.

It is important to note that my methodological approach and the barriers I faced to recruitment mean that particular perspectives are highlighted more than others in the data. Specifically, most interviews were with former prisoners and individuals working with prisoners in advocacy capacities. These data were supplemented with first person accounts provided by prisoners or former prisoners in penal press newsletters and memoirs. Meanwhile, I was forced to rely on a single interview and policy documents in order to sketch an understanding of the views of prison staff and administrators on prison physical culture. In the original research proposal, my inclusion of participant observation and interviews with prison staff was designed to give me access to a wider range of data and allow me to develop a more rounded understanding of physical culture in Canadian correctional institutions. However, CSC’s decision not to approve my research project meant that I was unable to interview any current CSC staff members. Clearly, this state of affairs means that my ability to understand the perspectives of corrections officials was extremely constrained, and this limitation must be recognized. In the future, research in this area will ideally include staff perspectives whenever possible. Ultimately, however, the methodological process for this thesis was not straightforward, and, as is common in exploratory research, it produced messy and complex results. In the following three chapters, I analyze these findings to explore the carceral physical culture of Canadian prisons.
Chapter 4: The Historical Development of Canadian Corrections

The development of Canadian corrections has occurred as the result of various historical, sociopolitical, and ideological currents, many of which emanated from either Great Britain or the United States and led to the creation of a unique Canadian corrections system. Understanding this historical development, as well as the way that political decisions made in particular historical moments still resonate in the contemporary era, is critical to understanding how contemporary Canadian prisons operate and how they relate to broader social, political, and economic structures. This chapter thus outlines the historical development of Canadian corrections and its shifting constructions of physical culture and the convict body, with a particular emphasis on the intersections between these developments and the broader historical and sociopolitical context.

To aid in this analysis, this chapter loosely follows a chronological timeline offered by Griffiths (2011, pp. 53-73), who suggests that Canadian corrections can be loosely divided into six slightly overlapping historical eras:

- Crime and punishment in early Canada (1600s-1800s);
- The creation of the Canadian Penitentiary (1830-1867);
- Developing systems of corrections (1850-early 1900s);
- The early 1900s (early 1900s-1930);
- The beginnings of modern reform (1930-1970);
- Emerging models of correctional practice (1990-present).

This chapter does not examine the pre-penitentiary era in much detail, although it is briefly touched upon in the first section. However, loosely following from Griffiths (2011), it examines five, sometimes overlapping, ‘eras’ of corrections: the introduction and early development of the penitentiary (1835-early 1900s); the early 20th century (early 1900s-1938); the rise of the medical model and rehabilitation (1938-1969); the shifting penal landscape in the late 20th and early 21st centuries (1969-2006); and the contemporary Conservative ‘tough on crime’ era (2006-present). In each section, I present an overview of major correctional developments, including landmark policy statements, and use the available data to explore the development of carceral physical culture during the period.

It is important to note that the notion that the development of a system as complex and far-reaching as Canadian corrections can be neatly categorized and tied to specific
moments in time is problematic and may obscure important and enduring ideological trends (Moore and Hannah-Moffat, 2005). Given such critiques, the categorization employed in this chapter is not intended to suggest that the development of Canadian corrections can be neatly bracketed by temporal milestones; rather, it is employed to indicate major trends and developments in Canadian corrections policy with the understanding that there is considerable overlap and blurring of sociopolitical trends between the identified eras. Moore and Hannah-Moffat (2005) offer a second critical caveat to this research, noting that “penal policy is best thought of as consisting of two components, rhetoric and practice. The rhetoric . . . does not, however, translate automatically into practice” (p. 89). As this section chapter relies in large part on the analysis of policy documents, it does not necessarily provide a clear picture of the way this rhetoric was employed in the practice of Canadian corrections. Nonetheless, it does help to understand the prevailing correctional approaches, and their impact on physical culture, at various points in Canadian history—and, as such, helps create an understanding of the opportunities and constraints faced by former inmate participants during their times in prison.

The Introduction and Early Development of the Penitentiary in Canada

In 1835, 32 years prior to the signing of the British North America Act and the creation of the Dominion of Canada, the colony of Upper Canada opened its first penitentiary in the village of Portsmouth, just outside of the major urban centre of Kingston. The opening of the Provincial Penitentiary at Portsmouth (later renamed the Kingston Penitentiary, the name by which it is referred to hereafter) was the culmination of a decade of public debate and political concern about crime control in the colony (Curtis, et al., 1985). A year after Confederation, in 1868, the new federal government passed the Penitentiary Act and established the Canadian federal penitentiary system. Over the next four decades, the penitentiary system grew quickly, with new prisons opening in Quebec (1873), Manitoba (1877), British Columbia (1878), New Brunswick (1880), Alberta (1906) and Saskatchewan (1911). In these first four decades after Confederation, “federal correctional policy was designed to establish the dominance of the federal government and to create a system of penitentiaries that would assist in the task of building the nation” (Ekstedt & Griffiths, 1988).
This relatively rapid penitentiary boom marked a significant shift from previous corrections approaches in colonial Canada. In 17th century Upper and Lower Canada, punishments included transportation, corporal punishment (e.g. whipping, chaining in the stocks), fines, and public execution (Ekstedt & Griffiths, 1988; Griffiths, 2010). As public concern about these punishments rose, the Upper Canada government passed new laws in 1800 to reduce their severity and courts resorted to capital and corporal punishment only in extreme circumstances (Ekstedt & Griffiths, 1988). Meanwhile, prior to the establishment of the penitentiary system, incarceration of offenders occurred in a limited fashion in workhouses and local jails, the latter of which held offenders awaiting trial or punishment. The first workhouse opened in 1754 in Nova Scotia, while in 1792 and 1799 respectively, Upper and Lower Canada passed acts to construct courthouse jails in each district (Ekstedt & Griffiths, 1988). However, while the opening of Kingston Penitentiary marked a new method for dealing with the deviant behaviour of the lower classes, Smandych (1991) notes that the discourses and policies that circulated around its establishment were in continuity with previous Upper Canadian ideological currents, such as the paternalism and moral concern of the Tory ruling elite, and did not reflect a radical departure from prior attitudes toward crime. Nonetheless, the creation of a penitentiary system is a major milestone in the history of Canadian corrections, and it marks the starting point for this paper’s discussion.

The introduction of the penitentiary in Upper Canadian society was influenced by criminal justice developments in the US and the UK. In the 1830s, US lawmakers introduced two different incarceration systems that would gain prominence. The Pennsylvania System, introduced at Eastern State Penitentiary near Philadelphia and Western State Penitentiary near Pittsburgh, operated under a separate and silent system that kept prisoners completely isolated from each other during all daily activities. Meanwhile, the Auburn System, practiced at Auburn Prison in New York State, had prisoners congregate together at work and meals, but also banned them from communication during these periods. It was the latter of these systems that became the basis for Kingston Penitentiary (Griffiths, 2010). As in the early US prisons, the stated goal of the penitentiary was the moral and religious reform of the prisoner—although there were certainly ulterior political motivations behind this decision. Although H.C. Thomson (1831), a Kingston elite who chaired the committee
that recommend building Kingston Penitentiary, argued that the penitentiary "should be a place to lead a man to repent his sins and emend his life" (cited in Ekstedt & Griffiths, 1988, p. 32), Taylor (1979) argues that the Auburn system was implemented because of practical reasons:

Solitary confinement helped prevent escape, prison labour helped finance the institution and reform the criminal, forced labour and confinement were deterents to crime (p. 400).

The early decades of the Canadian penitentiary system were characterized by poorly-managed institutions, corrupt administrators, and severe conditions of confinement (Drake, 1895; Ekstedt & Griffiths, 1988; McElligott, 2008; Neufeld, 1998). Although a series of commissions into the state of federal prisons led to some reforms, these do not appear to have had a significant impact on the conditions of confinement for many prisoners. As Ekstedt & Griffiths (1988) note,

despite [new] legislation in the early 1900s, there was little change in the philosophy of corrections or the manner in which prisons at the federal level were operated. . . . In many institutions, the punitive practices documented . . . over half a century earlier continued well into the 1900s (p. 48).

**Physical Culture in the Early Penitentiary Era**

The goals of the early penitentiary were the moral and religious reform of the criminal, and this correctional philosophy meant that potentially pleasurable forms of physical culture were aggressively repressed. The Upper Canada act to establish the Kingston Penitentiary made explicit the link between religious reformation and the development of a strong work ethic in its justification for the new institution:

Whereas, if many offenders convicted of crimes were ordered to solitary confinement, accompanied by well-regulated labour and religious instruction, it might be a means, under Providence, not only of deterring others from the commission of like crimes but also of reforming the individual and inuring them to habits of industry (Parliament of Upper Canada, 1834; cited in Macdonnell, 1914, p. 6).

The prisoner, rather than participating in pleasurable corporeal pursuits such as sport or dancing, was instead directed toward punishment and penance through physical labour. Recreation, either formal or informal, was officially banned (Griffiths, 2004) and, given the severity of prison discipline, can be assumed to be mostly absent in Canadian penitentiaries
in this period. The 1868 *Penitentiaries Act* (Government of Canada, 1868) further outlined the expectations of prisoner physical activity in this early period:

> Except during sickness or other incapacity, [the prisoner] shall be kept constantly at hard labor, the kind of which shall be determined by the Warden, every day not exceeding ten hours, exclusive of hours for meals, except Sundays [and holidays] (Article 31.4).

This passage reveals a number of interesting characteristics of the physical culture of Canada’s early prisons. Firstly, the centrality of hard labour to the prisoner’s sentence is clearly highlighted: he was expected to work for up to 60 hours each week, resting only on Sunday. The Sunday exemption highlights a second important point about the organization of physical labour and, more broadly, the ideologies underpinning the justification for and day-to-day management of early prisons: that the development of the Canadian penitentiary—as with the American and English models—was heavily influenced by Protestant values, which promoted the idea that the criminal act was a sin and that could only be absolved through penance (Macdonnell, 1914). Penance being the *raison d'être* of the prison system explains the emphasis on hard labour as the dominant aspect of physical culture in these prisons, however it is important to recognize that this was just one aspect of the prisoner’s penance: enforced silence, which was supposed to encourage silent contemplation of one’s sins, and religious study were also cornerstones of the penitentiary’s ethos (Griffiths, 2010).

Another important point arising from this passage of the *Penitentiaries Act* is that the warden is given exclusive domain over the form of labour to be practiced by prisoners. This suggests that power in the penitentiary system was distributed in a decentralized fashion, with administrators being granted significant autonomy over the day-to-day operation of their institutions and, thus, a great deal of control over the (in)activity of the criminal bodies housed therein. However, it appears that the wardens and their staff were, at least in the case of Kingston Penitentiary, woefully inadequate in enforcing the disciplinary ideologies that justified the prison’s social function: “political patronage and corruption were ubiquitous, and shoddy administration was the rule of this society” (Neufeld, 1998, p. 125). Neufeld (1998) further explains that Kingston Penitentiary was hardly a model of efficiency and organization upon its opening; rather, it was managed
quite haphazardly until at least the 1890s and had high rates of staff turnover and prisoner disobedience during this period. An 1895 report from an investigatory commission to the New Westminster (BC) Penitentiary (Drake, 1895) found similar levels of staff corruption and disorganization, suggesting that such problems may have been widespread in the federal prison system. The decentralized management of the penitentiaries appears to have severely diluted their ability to instill the moral reform and discipline that justified their construction. The inconsistent ways in which discipline was enforced and the prisons managed additionally highlight that the early Canadian corrections system was characterized by a disconnect between the crafting and implementation of policy—a point that remains salient in the contemporary Canadian corrections landscape (Moore & Hannah-Moffat, 2005).

The Penitentiaries Act also contains a number other interesting passages that highlight key features of carceral physical culture in this era. For example, it makes clear that men and women prisoners are to be housed separately (Government of Canada, 1868, Article 46). Thus, from its outset (and like many prison systems around the world), the Canadian prison system operated along a rigid gender binary that provided separate physical spaces and conditions of confinement for men and women. Given the enduring significance of gender to the (physical) culture, management and space of Canadian men’s (Comack, 2008; Rhyms, 2012) and women’s prisons (CSC, 1990; Hannah-Moffat, 1991, 2000; Hayman, 2006), it is significant to recognize its formal enshrinement in Government of Canada policy.

While the penitentiary supposedly represented a shift from punishment of the body to reformation of the soul (Foucault, 1977), corporal punishment still featured prominently in this early era of Canadian corrections. For example, in 1912, the new warden at Kingston Penitentiary began the practice of “hosing” prisoners as a form of treatment for intransigent inmates, as Neufeld (1998) explains:

17 This further highlights the methodological limitations of using policy documents for historical analysis. It is important to recognize the limited ability of these to articulate the day-to-day realities of life inside early Canadian penitentiaries.
The cell door was cut to allow a three-inch fire hose, equipped with a three-quarter inch nozzle, to be aimed into the cell. Water at 62 pounds of pressure was directed at the convict until he apologized. Convicts . . . [had] only to sing or dance in their cells at night to earn this punishment (pp. 120-121).

Hosing joined “tubbing”—a form of punishment that was invented at Kingston Penitentiary and that involved nearly drowning inmates—as particularly inhumane practices that explicitly targeted the prisoner body as a punitive measure (Neufeld, 1998). Other forms of corporal punishment included restrictions on food, shackling to a ball and chain, and whipping (McElligott, 2008; Neufeld, 1998). Thus, despite the supposed self-disciplining effect of a panopticonal Auburn-model prison, early Canadian penitentiaries showed that “older forms of physical punishment endure. . . [and] the whip underpins coercion and exploitation, as well as therapy” (McElligott, 2008, p. 130).

In order to understand these early developments in Canadian carceral physical culture it is critical to understand the broader sociopolitical context of the early prison system. As previously mentioned, the decision to construct the Kingston Penitentiary was taken by the Upper Canadian Tory elite, a ruling class that had deeply-held paternalistic approaches toward a host of social issues, including crime (McElligott, 2008; Smandych, 1991). Smandych (1991) explains that these ideological beliefs of the ruling elite were prominent for at least 35 years before the opening of the Kingston Penitentiary, suggesting that the penitentiary movement represented a continuation of beliefs about the state’s role in moral reform rather than a novel approach to social control. Thus, he suggests that the movement to develop the Canadian penitentiary was not a response to concerns about criminal activity but rather an intended contribution to ongoing paternalistic efforts to provide moral reformation and social development for the lower classes. McElligott (2008), meanwhile, notes that the ruling elite also had material interests that were being increasingly threatened by socioeconomic changes in Upper Canadian society and that the penitentiary, and the conservative social order it represented, was designed as a bulwark against a radical overthrow of the established social hierarchy.

Just as it would in the newly developed penitentiary system, the concern of colonial elites with morality and social order had significant impact on the forms and meanings of physical culture more broadly during the eighteenth and early nineteenth century.
Canadian colonial elites were predominantly British and Anglican, and frequently expressed concern with the behaviours of those outside of their tight-knit social circles. The leisure practices of the working class were increasingly viewed as a threat to social order and became legitimate concerns for both legislators and churchmen. Drinking establishments such as taverns became particular targets of concern, as they were sites for various activities, such as alcohol consumption, gambling, sex, dancing, and games, that were considered immoral and threatening to the social order (Morrow & Wamsley, 2010). It is not surprising that the penitentiary, which was designed to serve as a punishment for the behaviour of the lower classes, reflected these concerns with leisure and physical recreation. As has been seen, even at this early stage of the penitentiary physical activities—whether they were punitively forced upon prisoners or withheld from them—were an important aspect of both the ideological goals and day-to-day experience of confinement. This can be illustrated most dramatically through the contrast between the enforcement of hard labour and the banning of pleasurable forms of physical activity such as dancing (Griffiths, 2004; Neufeld, 1998).

A final trend that emerged with the physical culture of the early penitentiary was a deep fear of prisoner idleness amongst prison policymakers and administrators. This concern reflected, in an echo of Weber’s conceptualization of the Protestant work ethic, a broader Anglo-American understanding of the intrinsic moral value of hard work and view of idleness as a gateway to immorality (Hudson & Coukas, 2005; Marks, 1996). Just one year before the opening of the Kingston Penitentiary, the British government passed the 1834 Poor Law Amendment and sparked the rapid construction of Houses of Industry (i.e. poor houses and workhouses) in Upper and Lower Canada, institutions designed to put the poor and infirm to productive labour in austere conditions (Finkel, 2006). The subsequent 1837 Houses of Industry Act in Upper Canada targeted those who could or did not participate in the economy, including the poor, delinquents, and notably “all persons, able of body to work and without any means of maintaining themselves, who refuse or neglect to do so” (cited in Finkel, 2006, p. 49). This fear of idleness, coupled with the faith of Canadian elites in the penitentiary’ reformatory abilities, helps explain the emphasis in early prisons on hard labour, even as other forms of movement were disallowed. As one warden of Kingston Penitentiary expressed:
We send out men worse than when they came, unless they are taught intelligent labour. . . . I can hardly find words to express what I think of keeping prisoners in idleness” (cited in Neufeld, 1998, p. 110).

These historical trends, taken together, highlight a major tension in the early days of Canada’s penitentiary system. On the one hand, the body of the prisoner and its movement was both a potential threat to order and morality—for example through dancing or playing (Griffiths, 2010)—and a target for physical punishment. On the other hand, the body was the vessel through which hard work, in the form of enforced prison labour, could supposedly earn penance and ultimately salvation for the delinquent soul. However, as Neufeld’s (1998) detailed historical examination reveals, the operation of the early penitentiary was far from achieving its disciplinary goals. The actions of social actors, including wardens, guards, and inmates, helped in various ways to undermine the ideological expectations of the prison. Inmates, despite the threat of physical punishment for their transgressions, found various ways of subverting administrative and ideological aims through their physical practices—including dancing and singing, sex, inattentiveness to work, and alcohol consumption (Griffiths, 2004; Neufeld, 1998). The tension surrounding administrative and ideological assumptions about prisoner movement, and inmates’ various means of subverting and resisting these, continued to feature, in different guises, throughout the development of the Canadian corrections system.

**Canadian Corrections in the Early 20th Century**

The period from the turn of the 20th century until just before World War Two was one of great change in the Canadian corrections system, as it was for the nation as a whole. In 1906, a new Penitentiary Act made changes that would, supposedly, provide less punitive conditions for inmates (Griffiths, 2010). While these policies did not translate quickly into significant changes to the lives of prisoners (Ekstedt & Griffiths, 1988), they did indicate that penal reform was becoming a public issue in the country in the early decades of the twentieth century. The prisoner’s aid movement, which began in the 1880s, began making limited inroads with prison reform to improve prisoners’ conditions of confinement. By the 1930s, there had been a shift away from physical labour as punishment and an acceptance of exercise and recreation as important parts of the prison experience. Furthermore, it is worth noting that, by the end of the 1920s, many of the cultural and institutional
foundations of contemporary Canada were laid. As historian Mariana Valverde (2008) argues,

It can . . . be claimed with some plausibility that [the 1880s to the 1920s] were in fact transitional decades: in the 1870s Canada was a very sparsely populated, barely post-colonial state where farming and staples production predominated; by the 1920s the Native populations had been firmly marginalized, the weight of the economy had shifted toward industry and finance, and urban living had become the rule rather than the exception. By the 1920s the Canadian state had developed, at least in embryonic form, most of the institutions it has today, and in English Canada a certain cultural consensus, based to a large extent on American and British influence but incorporating a new nationalism, had emerged and was being consolidated (p. 15).

As discussed in the previous section, the penitentiary was constructed by its creators as an important part of Canadian nation-building, yet the reality of its day-to-day management fell far from the ideal it represented. Nonetheless, a variety of social currents culminated in a series of reforms to the penitentiary system that helped shape its future directions. For example, the prison reform movement in Britain began in the 1840s, and was influential in the rise of prisoners’ aid groups in Canada in the 1860s (Whittingham, 2000). However, Edmison (1976) notes that Canadian prison reform was limited in the late 19th century:

Prison reform as we now understand the term was not a continuing major issue. Attempts were made here and there to provide prison after-care, but lack of funds crippled such work, and ambitious projects and associations petered out. A few groups interested in penal reform passed resolutions, but these were seldom acted upon (p. 365).

The limited success of prison reform efforts seems borne out by the fact that physical punishments, such as hosing, the ball and chain, and forced submersion in ice water remained in vogue for the first few decades of the 20th century (Ekstedt & Griffiths, 1988). Yet prison reformers did appear to play an influential role in the formation of policies designed to provide more humane conditions for prisoners. For example, the efforts of the Salvation Army and prisoners’ aid societies were formally acknowledged in a 1916 report on parole services (Whittingham, 2000). More broadly, the early decades of the 20th century were a period of middle-class social reform movements in English Canada (Valverde, 2008).
Meanwhile, a series of commissions into the administration and conditions of penitentiaries helped to realize some prison reforms and nominally shifted the aims of Canadian corrections. For example, the silent system was modified to allow prisoners to converse during non-work periods of the day, inmate education initiatives were introduced, and, in 1935, prisoners gained the right to be paid for their labour in confinement (Ekstedt & Griffiths, 1988). These changes were significant developments in terms of the day-to-day experience of prisoners. Furthermore, they suggest a number of important trends with regards to dominant views of prison recreation and carceral physical culture. Firstly, the allowance of talking indicates that leisure time and socializing were recognized as tolerable, if not desirable, activities for prisoners. Secondly, inmates’ education and payment for labour implies a shift away from attempting to achieve moral reform of the criminal through punitive physical measures. Rather, it was to be achieved through education and physical labour that would compensate inmates and attempt to assist their reintegration into society upon their release. Taken together, these changes also demonstrated a shift toward a more typical contemporary daily schedule for inmates, integrating work, education, and recreation into their day-to-day routines.

Two notable documents signaled the shifting penal philosophy at this time, each of which had implications for the physical culture of Canadian penitentiaries: the 1914 Report of the Royal Commission on Penitentiaries (Macdonnell, 1914), known as the Macdonnell Report; and the 1938 Report of the Royal Commission to Investigate the Penal System of Canada (Archambault, 1938), known as the Archambault Report. The next section analyzes these reports in greater detail, with a particular focus on their implications for carceral physical culture.

**Canadian Carceral Physical Culture: From the Macdonnell Report to the Archambault Report**

In 1914, the Royal Commission on Penitentiaries (Macdonnell, 1914) released its report on the state of Canadian penitentiaries. Major recommendations included the establishment of a commission to oversee the wardens of federal penitentiaries, a focus on prisoner education, an increase in the allowance of perks for good behaviour (e.g. tobacco, newspapers), the abolition of extreme forms of corporal punishment, and improved access
to medical attention for inmates. The report was heavily critical of the prison administration and the punitive nature of its management of offenders, stating that:

If the punishment of the offender is the only object society should have in view, the Penitentiaries of Canada fully meet the requirements. They are old-time prisons dominated by the idea that, not only should the offender be punished by being deprived of his liberty, ... but that the avenging hand of the law he has violated should continue to bear heavily upon him in his place of incarceration (p. 26).

The commission’s report raised a number of issues related to physical culture. Notably, it criticized the practice of hard labour as a punishment, thus challenging the ideology of hard work as penance that underpinned the early administration of Canadian prisons. The report was particularly critical of the stone pile, a site at which inmates crushed rocks into gravel:

The only excuse for the stone pile, for the product of which there is no pressing need, is that there is no other way of keeping the men at work. The idea that the prisoners must work at hard labour all the time when they are outside their cells, even if the product of their labour is of no value, is carried to the extreme (Macdonnell, 1914, p. 6).

However, the report did not dismiss physical labour as a useful part of the prison regime—in fact, it called for inmates to be employed in prison farms and workshops and to be put to work constructing government buildings. However, the commission, building on its critique of labour as punishment, advocated that physical work be made productive for the prisoner, and in doing so echoed earlier moral concerns about idleness and criminal reformation:

The prisoner who is engaged in interesting, improving work, is not hard to manage. ... Idle and dissolute he may have been when he enjoyed his liberty, and now for the first time in his life, probably, he is made to appreciate the blessedness of labour (Macdonnell, 1914, pp. 31-32).

The report also promoted education and physical activity as ways for prisoners to rebuild a sense of identity and improve themselves:

If an hour or two every day were given up to school for some and exercise in the yard for others, less stones would be broken, 'tis true. But some men, whose spirits are being crushed, and whose manhood is debased, might be saved to future good citizenship if a civilizing help in the way of a school or a
breath of the open air each day could be introduced to brighten their lives (Macdonnell, 1914, pp. 6-7).

While the Macdonnell Commission criticized the operation of the Canadian penitentiary, it did not suggest a major shift in its ideological aims—many of the report’s recommendations were designed to “encourage [prisoners] to habits of industry, and a better appreciation of the duties of citizenship” (Macdonnell, 1914, p. 43). Its discourses of civilizing prisoners and Christian charity also represented continuity with the paternalistic attitudes of the ruling Upper Canadian, who had played such a large part in the establishment of the first penitentiary in the 1830s (Smandych, 1991). The language of the report is also very gendered in its overwhelming focus on the wellbeing of male inmates.18

The focus on masculinity amongst prisoners, and the role of exercise in aiding the fixing of this “debased” identity, reflected broader societal attitudes about masculinity and sport. Canadian sport in the late-1800s and early 1900s was developed as “masculine, a training ground for those qualities of physical artistry and strength, courage and stamina, ingenuity and loyalty that gave men their claim to the greatest share of the social surplus” (Kidd, 1996, p. 26). In Canada, as in the US and Great Britain, organized sport and vigorous physical exercise for boys and men were seen as a counter to a perceived crisis of masculinity precipitated by increased urbanization and industrialization, women’s gains from first-wave feminism, and the gendering of child-rearing as a female responsibility (Burstyn, 1999; Kidd, 1996). It is not surprising, therefore, to see this focus on exercise as a bastion of masculinity presenting itself in correctional policy—particularly given the slow movement toward focusing on prisoners’ reform rather than punishment.

Despite Macdonnell’s (1914) calls for increased exercise, it does not appear that prisons were quick to incorporate physical recreation into their daily regimes. For example, Topping (1930) observed that, in the 1920s, Kingston Penitentiary had “no athletic contests of any kind and no games of any sort” (cited in Caplan, 1996, p. 17). This state of affairs differed markedly from the US, where organized sport became widespread in

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18 Women prisoners are discussed in the MacDonnell Commission’s report, notably in the suggestion that they be placed under the care of provincial, rather than federal, supervision. See Hayman (2006, p. 15) for a brief discussion.
prisons between 1915-1930 with the goal to “absorb the time of unemployed inmates in peaceful activities” (McKelvay, 1977, p. 294). However, in Canadian prisons, as Caplan (1996) notes, “the introduction of recreational or competitive sports . . . has [historically] lagged considerably behind the American experience” (p. 17). That being said, the 1933 Penitentiary Regulations (Guthrie, 1934) did make allowance for physical activity of a limited and disciplined nature, namely 30 or 40 minutes of “exercise . . . of a varied nature; not less than one-half [of which] shall consist of exercises of rhythmic or systematic nature such as followed in the Public and High Schools of Canada” (p. 10). This change may suggest that Macdonnell’s (1914) calls were eventually been heeded, or perhaps it simply reflects the growing prominence of exercise regimes and military-style drills, including the popular Strathcona Trust exercises, in Canadian schools, clubs, and other social institutions over the previous four decades (Kidd, 2005; Morrow & Wamsley, 2010).

While progressive in their inclusion of physical activity in the daily prison routine, these new policies clearly did not consider that physical activity should be a source of pleasure for inmates. The regulations outlawed organized sport, stating that “no exercise shall be permitted which calls for competition between groups of convicts or permits or calls for personal contact of convicts” (Guthrie, 1934, p. 10). Furthermore, daily exercise was only provided to prisoners who worked indoors—with the exception of Sundays and holidays, those put to work outdoors did not enjoy exercise privileges. This suggests an instrumental understanding of physical activity, and that physical labour was assumed to inculcate the same discipline as group gymnastics or military drills. The limited understanding of the possible role of sport and physical recreation in prison life would be critiqued strongly in the 1938 Archambault Report.

The Royal Commission to Investigate the Penal System of Canada, which produced the Archambault Report, was created in 1936 in response to a number of violent disturbances and riots in federal penitentiaries (Archambault, 1938; Caplan, 1996; Ekstedt & Griffiths, 1988). The commission not only spoke with staff and inmates across the country, but also visited prisons in Britain and the US (Archambault, 1938). The Archambault Report is considered a landmark in the history of Canadian corrections for its critique of punitive correctional practices and its strong emphasis on reforming prisons to
better rehabilitate and humanely treat offenders (Griffiths, 2010). The report explicitly advanced a rehabilitative model of prisons on both moral and pragmatic grounds:

The great majority of prisoners will be called upon at some time to live again the ordinary life of a free man. Therefore, entirely apart from humanitarian grounds, and from a purely economic point of view, and for the eventual benefit of society, the task of the prison should be, not merely the temporary protection of society through the incarceration of captured offenders, but the transformation of reformable criminals into law-abiding citizens. . . . The reformable criminal . . . will not be reformed if, during his term in prison, his spirit has been broken, his habit of industry . . . suppressed, and his morals corrupted by prison associations (Archambault, 1938, p. 9-10; emphasis in original).

Archambault (1938) went on to elaborate, in the negative, on the elements needed for a successful reformation of prisoners:

Without proper classification and segregation, without education, without effective means of understanding the offender, the motivation of his offence, and his basic capacity for effective citizenship, without physical and mental exercise, moderate recreation, and above all, without humane approach, any treatment is bound to fail (p. 10; emphasis in original).

In these passages, the report makes a strong argument for prison to serve a rehabilitative function, and it includes physical activity amongst the characteristics that define such an institution. The commission argued that increased recreation time—which was defined as consisting of both physical (e.g. sport) and mental (e.g. reading) activities—be tied to good conduct, with well-behaved inmates earning greater privileges. This was intended to promote inmate discipline and make prisoners “realize that good conduct, industry, and diligent attention to prison rules and routine win the most comfortable passage through the passage of detention” (Archambault, 1938, p. 107). Early in the report, in his general sketch of the characteristics of the penitentiary system, Archambault (1938) noted that, although inmates received 30 or 40 minutes of daily open-air exercise, there was a lack of recreation and sport available to inmates in Canadian penitentiaries:

There is not sufficient physical exercise, especially on Sundays and holidays, and, as a rule, competitive games are prohibited. In some institutions, and for a few inmates only, volleyball and quoits are authorized. . . . No hobbies are permitted in the cells and, except for a few privileged inmates, there is no inside recreation (pp. 23-24).
This statement suggests that a nascent culture of Canadian prison sport was beginning by the 1930s, given that a limited number of inmates practiced volleyball and quoits. The restricted access to such forms of recreation suggests that participation in games was a great privilege to which, presumably, only the best-behaved or least dangerous prisoners were permitted access. Archambault (1938) also makes a very brief mention of softball games being played at Kingston Penitentiary (p. 111), but does not elaborate on the form or frequency of these matches. However, despite these examples of limited inmate sport participation, physical recreation was clearly not widespread in Canada’s prisons in the late-1930s, a fact highlighted by Archambault (1938) when he compared the dearth of Canadian prison exercise with that afforded to inmates in the UK and the US. The report presented specific criticisms of the limited exercise regime for Canadian inmates, noting that the time allotted for exercise was insufficient, that it was frequently cancelled due to inclement weather and that, furthermore, “the type of exercise given is not a form of recreation, but in many cases more of a hardship and punishment” (Archambault, 1938, p. 110). The report further critiqued the fact that prisoners were not allowed to relax and socialize with their fellows, and advocated strongly for the extension of free recreation on weekends and holidays and the introduction of sports such as softball, quoits, and handball (Archambault, 1938, p. 110). The justification for the promotion of physical recreation was its potential significance in prisoner rehabilitation:

A properly planned program of recreation is a most essential part of prison life. It should be regarded, not as entertainment, but as part of the treatment necessary to strengthen soul, mind, and body. It should absorb time that would otherwise be spent in idleness or brooding, and should be an important factor in reformation. These objects can only be attained by keeping a prisoner physically fit by adequate outdoor exercise, and by keeping his mind occupied by labour and recreation (Archambault, 1938, p. 109).

As with the Macdonnell Report (Macdonnell, 1914) and other previous policy discourses, Archambault (1938) expressed a strong concern for prisoner idleness. For example, in addition to the above statement, the report further noted that “idleness in Canadian prisons cannot be tolerated. It is destructive to the physical and moral fabric of the prisoners, and it renders ineffective any provision for their reformation” (p. 128). This ongoing fear of idleness amongst prisoners represents continuity with prior discourses of
the Canadian social elite, which had been deployed in the 1830s to rein in the behaviour of
the lower classes through poor houses, workhouses, and, ultimately, the penitentiary
(Finkel, 2006; Neufeld, 1998). Also in continuity was the paternalistic concern for
prisoners’ well-being, and the belief that the penitentiary could, and should, be a civilizing
force for inmates (Smandych, 1991). These complementary ideological currents underlay
the promotion of physical recreation in the Archambault Report—sport and exercise were
constructed as instrumental, though potentially pleasurable, forms of physical culture
designed to occupy constructively the time of inmates. The report further argues that social
control and reformatory benefits would flow from prisoner participation—for example, it
mentions prison sport matches in the UK, which purportedly led to “less trouble arising
from fighting or other disputes amongst the players than would be the case in similar
games played outside the prisons,” and makes the argument that “such games undoubtedly
teach the prisoners a number of highly desirable features, including self-control”
(Archambault, 1938, p. 111).

While the continuing concern over inmate idleness and the paternalistic approach to
prisoner well-being suggests little change to the Canadian penitentiary system, the
Archambault Report is significant for the prominent role it afforded sport and physical
activity in achieving these ideological aims and the more light-handed approach it took
toward prisoners’ pleasure. Whereas the prior dominant discourses about prison physical
culture focused on the importance of hard labour as a form of penance and route to
salvation, physical activity in the Archambault Report was presented as both a means of
bringing about social change amongst prisoners and as a more humane approach to
inmates’ conditions of confinement. In this sense, it is a culmination of prior efforts,
including the prisoners’ aid movement and the Macdonnell Report, to improve the material
and social conditions endured by inmates; yet at the same time, a continuation of the
conservative and moralistic ideological assumptions that underpinned the Canadian
penitentiary since its inception over a century earlier.

It is also worth noting that the Archambault Report was written at the end of an
interwar period in which sport had assumed great prominence as a vehicle of self-
improvement for middle class men, buttressed by the belief amongst its proponents that it
“honored the mind, cultivated leadership, taught sound morals and social idealism, and undermined racial and religious prejudice” (Kidd, 1996, p. 46). This understanding of sport as a form of rational recreation also underpinned the provision by middle class reformers of sport and play opportunities in poor urban areas in the US (Hardy & Ingham, 1983), and in Canada it was part of a broader nationalist reform project in the post-World War One era (Kidd, 1996). In particular, sport was seen by its Canadian advocates as holding potential to “counter the ‘negative recreation’ of idleness and delinquency among boys and unemployed veterans” (Kidd, 1996, p. 46). The rise of rational recreation in the interwar period provides valuable context to the treatment of sport and physical activity in the Archambault Report, which echoes many of the functionalist claims about sport’s transformative potential that were found in the discourses of Canadian sport advocates. Sport and the prison system were two different, yet very important, social and political institutions in Canada as it struggled to construct a distinct national identity following World War One, and the Archambault Report highlights elements of the way in which social elites and middle class reformers imagined that both might operate to contribute to this nationalist project. With World War Two just a year away, the report laid the foundation for a considerable shift in Canadian correctional philosophy toward rehabilitation, a focus that would gain momentum following the war.

**The Rise and Fall of the Medical Model and the Focus on Rehabilitation**

The 1938 Report of the Royal Commission on the Penal System of Canada (Archambault, 1938) was notable for Canadian corrections and represented a philosophical shift toward rehabilitation, rather than punitive reform, as the dominant raison d’être of the prison system. Among the recommended changes emerging in the 1930s was to make Canadian prisons more humane through measures such as allowing family visits, providing prisoners with recreation opportunities, and offering improved medical attention (Griffiths, 2004). The Archambault Report also heralded the emergence of the treatment or medical model of corrections, which attempted to ‘treat’ or ‘cure’ offenders of the physical, social, or mental deficiencies that were thought to cause their criminal tendencies (Ekstedt & Griffiths, 1988; Griffiths, 2010). This rational and scientific approach to corrections is encapsulated by the statement made by a McGill University professor at the 1935 Canadian Penal Congress:
Modern penology is a science, one of the new social sciences. It is not philanthropy. Being a science, it must work by the scientific method... Being a science, it should be as completely divorced from politics as it is humanly possible to make it in a democracy (Scott, 1935; cited in Ekstedt & Griffiths, 1988, p. 52).

This shift in correctional philosophy had a significant impact on the management of prisons and the conditions of confinement for inmates. The report of the 1956 committee of inquiry into the corrections system (Fauteux, 1956), known after its author as the Fauteux Report, made strong recommendations about a treatment model based upon a classification of offenders. Some of these recommendations, such as the introduction of minimum-security prisons and a parole system, were designed to ease inmates’ conditions of confinement and reward ‘good’ behaviour; others, such as increased focus on treating inmates and hiring professional experts, spoke to the rising prominence of a medicalized treatment of criminal behaviour (Griffiths, 2010). The Fauteux Report was explicit and emphatic about the fact that the correctional system should be focused on criminal rehabilitation, stating that “throughout this Report great importance is attached to the concept of reformation and rehabilitation” (Fauteux, 1956, p. 46.). To this end, in the 1960s the Canadian government implemented some seemingly progressive initiatives, such as increasing visitor privileges to increase inmates’ ability to maintain outside relationships and expanding educational and vocational training opportunities (Griffiths, 2010).

However, while the increased focus on rehabilitation through programming, treatment, and scientific expertise may appear to have been more benign than the previous punitive and moralistic approach to managing inmates, the medical model was severely problematic. Griffiths (2010) summarizes some of the major problems arising from the treatment approach:

Prison physicians were added to treatment teams in an attempt to address the offender’s criminal behaviours. This involvement extended to conducting medical experiments on offenders. Throughout the 1960s and 1970s, prison inmates were used as subjects in a variety of experiments conducted by drug companies, federal government agencies, and universities. Psychiatrists played an increasing role in institutional treatment programs; their techniques included electroconvulsive shocks and drug therapy, which for many years could be administered without an inmate’s consent.... In one set of studies, doctors gave female inmates at the Kingston Prison for Women... LSD as part of a psychology experiment (p. 71-72).
Griffiths’ (2010) overview indicates that prisoners’ bodies, under the medical model, were subjected to unethical and damaging experimentation in the name of treating crime. Whereas physical labour was once viewed by corrections administrators as a punitive way for the prisoner to atone for his crimes (Government of Canada, 1868; Griffiths, 2004), under the medical model physical punishment was inflicted upon criminals under the guise of medical or psychological treatment. This leads to a broader and important point about rehabilitation, argued by Moore and Hannah-Moffat (2005), which is that although it is frequently contrasted with punishment, the two are not mutually exclusive—that is, the practice of rehabilitation can in fact be punitive for its participants. In order to implement the rehabilitative penal philosophy demanded by the medical model of corrections, the postwar decades were accompanied by the increasing recruitment of and reliance upon a variety of scientific experts to identify and treat the various “illnesses” that prisoners were assumed to have (Ekstedt & Griffiths, 1978; Moore & Hannah-Moffat, 2005). As Moore and Hannah-Moffat (2005) explain,

Punishment through the 1950s and 1960s in Canada (more so in the 1960s) was increasingly informed by social and psychological expertise. Social workers and psychologists held directive positions in Canadian institutions as well as working on the front line in prisons. Much of the political and governmental rhetoric about punishment at the time was focused on the betterment of the individual as part of a broader project of the betterment of society (p. 86).

Previously shunned by policymakers and prison administrators, recreation, including sport and exercise, was a prominent part of this new treatment model of corrections. The Fauteux Report (1956) discussed recreation alongside education, religious instruction, vocational training, and work as forms of treatment that would increase public safety by transforming offenders into law-abiding citizens who avoided recidivism. Given the prominence afforded to recreation as a part of offender treatment and the critiques proffered in Archambault’s (1938) report, the postwar period saw a major rise in the provision of sport and physical recreation opportunities in Canadian federal prisons. Annual reports of the Commissioner of Penitentiaries and penal press sources both describe the emergence of active and widespread sport cultures amongst inmates.
The Rise of Prison Sport and Physical Activity After World War Two

Whereas Archambault (1938) highlighted prisoners’ limited opportunity for physical activity, as well as the severe restrictions placed upon their ability for physical expression through the imposition of set exercise routines, the postwar period saw a boom in the availability of physical cultural activities in which inmates could take part. A 1948 Commissioner’s Report on the penitentiary system (Gibson, 1948) suggests that access to recreation had improved for at least some inmates from the 30 to 40 minutes of structured exercise described by Archambault (1938). For example, in the report the Warden of Collins Bay Penitentiary (ON) noted that

amelioration of confinement was provided by the diversion period during which the convict population is unlocked for a two-hour period on three evenings each week and permitted to play games... Authorized games and physical training are also taken part in during the daily exercise periods held on the outside exercise grounds under supervision of the Physical Training Instructor (p. 81).

Subsequent Commissioner’s Reports note the expansion of recreation and sport opportunities for inmates. The 1950 report (Gibson, 1950) describes various initiatives at penitentiaries across the country to build or expand prison yards and to introduce organized sports such as basketball, softball, volleyball, hand tennis, quoits, and shuffleboard (pp. 17-18). The 1953 report (Gibson, 1953) noted that inmate intramural leagues had been created in hockey, football, and softball, while other activities such as weightlifting, gymnastics, handball, wrestling, and table tennis were also popular amongst prisoners. This report also contained a Wardens’ report from Kingston Penitentiary, which highlighted the formation of a prisoner baseball team that competed in the local Kingston league and the visits of outside sport teams.\(^{19}\) Other Wardens’ reports offered insights into the growing significance of sport in Canadian penitentiaries, for example by highlighting the construction of new bleachers at the softball diamond of Dorchester Penitentiary (NB), commenting on the expansion of recreation opportunities and their contribution to inmate discipline at Manitoba Penitentiary, and discussing the organization of boxing instruction and tournaments for inmates at British Columbia Penitentiary thanks to donations of

\(^{19}\) See Chapter 6 for a discussion of the significance of these sport activities.
equipment and time by, surprisingly, the local police force (Gibson, 1953). Taken together, these various reports suggest not only the flourishing of sport and physical activity opportunities in penitentiaries across the country, but also the enthusiastic support of prison administrations in promoting them.

The hegemony of experts and targeted scientific knowledge that characterized the medical model of corrections (Griffiths, 2010; Moore & Hannah-Moffat, 2005) was apparent in the provision of sport and recreation. The 1950 Commissioner’s Report (Gibson, 1950) notes that old exercise practices, which were derided by Archambault, had been done away with in favour of modern regimes—but, that experts in physical education were needed to deliver these new activities:

The formal programme of “physical jerks” has been largely discontinued and supplanted by games of one sort or another in accordance with the best modern physical education practice.... Efforts are now being made to obtain suitably qualified personnel and to provide present personnel with further facilities for a more adequate physical recreation programme (Gibson, 1950, p. 18).

In the early postwar years this scientific rationalism was tinged with the same moralism that had characterized earlier assumptions about carceral physical culture. For example, the 1950 Commissioner’s Report (Gibson, 1950) combined religious and rational discourses to justify the vast expansion of physical recreation opportunities for inmates:

It is important to realize that the provision of [physical recreation] facilities is not merely a "pampering or molly-coddling of the prisoners" as is so commonly suggested by uninformed critics but that it is a provision to satisfy basic psychological needs of a human being and is a fundamental and integral part of any programme which aims to achieve the reformation or rehabilitation of the individual. ‘Man does not live by bread alone.’ This statement, by the greatest Teacher of all time, of man’s basic need of spiritual and emotional satisfactions has been more than amply corroborated by the findings of modern educators. It is considered, therefore, that further development of an adequate programme of recreational activities is a fundamental part of a treatment aimed at "re-creation" of men (p. 17).

Such religious language soon disappeared from these reports as the hegemony of the medical model was established, replaced entirely by functionalist rationalizations for the provision of inmate recreation. However, there remained a fear of prisoner idleness amongst prison administrators and policymakers. For treatment to be effective, the
prisoner needed to be actively engaged in the various treatment programs, including recreational activities, which were available to him. As the Fauteux Report commented:

Idleness is one of the major curses of prison life. Work in itself is an effective form of therapy. At the same time, every inmate has need of opportunities for individual self-expression. In this connection, hobbies and recreation of all kinds become a matter of concern. . . . If [society] is to be protected to the greatest possible extent, an increasing number of offenders must receive such treatment in the institutions as will promote their reformation and rehabilitation (Fauteux, 1956, p. 46).

By the 1960s, the penitentiary system had achieved its goal of having recreation specialists on staff at institutions across the country. The 1963 Commissioner’s Report notes that penitentiaries now had full-time recreation officers and recreation supervisors on staff (MacLeod, 1963). In 1968 these professionals gathered for the first time at a conference to share best practices and develop standardized procedures and programmes for the provision of prison recreation (MacLeod, 1968). As recreation programs were developed, standardized, and institutionalized within the prison system, they increasingly were portrayed in corrections reports as serving various functions that went above and beyond treatment. For example, the same 1963 Commissioner’s Report (MacLeod, 1963) explained that sport activities were excellent vehicles for character building amongst inmates:

The new programme of correctional training assigns to recreation the vital role of an active socializing agent. Sports and games are organized in teams, and teamwork emphasizes co-operation within the team rather than competition against opposing groups. Competition is still unavoidable when-leagues are organized, but it is used more as a motivating factor than as an end in itself. Sports and games provide the best opportunity for the training in character, as inmates participate in activities of their free choice and can freely practice self-control and self-restraint, which are the primary steps in character training and in developing desirable co-operative social attitudes. Consequently boxing and wrestling have been removed from the list of approved activities, as these "sports" are essentially competitive and give pre-dominance to sheer force over skill (MacLeod, 1963, p. 18).

Such essentialist arguments about the social value of sport programmes had, of course, been made by proponents of sport for nearly a century. Coakley (2002), for example, notes that American history contains many examples in which sport was thought to impart character building lessons to marginalized members of society who were deemed threatening to the social order, without addressing the social factors that contributed to
their marginalization. Sport, in this understanding, supposedly acts as a cure for social problems while simultaneously being an agent of social control over ‘dangerous’ populations (Hartmann, 2001). Despite the problematic nature of this view of sport (Coakley, 2002; Donnelly & Coakley, 2004; Hartmann, 2001), the functionalism that underpins it resonated strongly with broader North American understandings in the 1960s and 1970s of sport’s supposed inherent value. For example, in the late 1960s, a scholarly interest began to develop in questions about potential relationships between sport participation and reduced likelihood of participating in delinquent activity, as well as whether physical activity might be effective as a deterrent to participating in delinquency (Begg et al., 1996). Around the same time, the early coalescence of a Sociology of Sport subdiscipline reflected, in much of its research, Sociology’s “orthodox consensus” about functionalist theories, modernization, and positivism (Ingham & Donnelly, 1997, p. 364)

In addition to its role as a form of therapeutic treatment and its supposed potential for imparting pro-social values, physical recreation was also represented in Commissioners’ Reports as a contributor to social control in the institution. The 1968 report (MacLeod, 1968) applauded the widespread adoption of recreational programming in Canadian federal prisons, and noted that such activities act both as an emotional release for frustrated prisoners and an opportunity for staff surveillance of inmates’ activities:

The Canadian Penitentiary Service has had recreational programs in existence for almost twenty years. We have become increasingly aware of its importance not only in alleviating the drab routine of prison life and serving as a safety valve for the release of excess energies, but also for its potential when directed towards helping inmates face up to and solve some of their personal problems. There is also the fact that over and above the therapeutic role of recreation, accurate and detailed observations by recreational staff can make them most important members of the inmate training team (MacLeod, 1968, p. 16).

The report’s support for the use of sport as a ‘safety-valve’ for the release psychosocial tension among inmates adheres to the catharsis theory of sport violence, and was widespread amongst sport advocates from at least the 1920s until it fell out favour in the 1970s due to mounting contradictory evidence (Young, 2012). Meanwhile, the use of
recreation periods as opportunities for staff observation of inmates speaks to the ways that sport spaces are sites of surveillance within prison environments.  

The deployment of recreation alongside various other treatment programmes also meant that inmates’ engagement with it factored into their treatment within the prison system, adding another layer to its intended social control function in the minds of corrections policymakers. This is made clear in the *Fauteux Report*, which argued for the creation of a national parole board. Among the report’s arguments for the parole system were its supposed ability to regulate behaviour among inmates, acting as a carrot to induce them to “derive maximum benefit from the facilities provided by the prison as preparation for parole, i.e. the educational, vocational, religious and recreational [opportunities] furnished by the institution” (Fauteux, 1956, p. 51). This carrot was accompanied by the threat of a stick: “The possibility of parole revocation operates as a deterrent to anti-social conduct” (Fauteux, 1956, p. 51). This is consistent with Goffman’s (1961a) observation that, in a total institution, “an inmate’s conduct in one scene of activity [may be] thrown up to him by staff as a comment and check upon his conduct in another context” (p. 37), and is discussed in Chapter 5 with specific regard to conduct in sport.

Thus, with the boom in carceral sport and physical recreation in the postwar period, these components of physical culture assumed a double-edged purpose within Canadian correctional discourse: on the one hand, structured physical recreation was constructed as an important part of a rational scientific plan designed to cure the inmate of his social ills so that he might eventually be reintegrated into society; and on the other, it was deployed to control the behaviour of inmates within the institution and help ensure the smooth operation of the penitentiary. However, the medical model of corrections would quickly fade from prominence in the late-1960s, which, along with a variety of other sociopolitical trends, would have a significant impact on the physical culture of prisons in the latter decades of the 20th century.

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20 Chapter 5 discusses this topic more deeply.
The Shifting Penal Landscape of the Late 20th and Early 21st Centuries

In the late 1960s and 1970s, corrections policy again shifted as the flaws of the medical model became clear. In 1969 another federal commission produced the Ouimet Report (Ouimet et al., 1969), the main suggestion of which was a shift away from a focus on offender rehabilitation in prisons toward a model in which many inmates would be better served receiving treatment in community settings—in other words, imprisonment was to be an exceptional, rather than standard, response to crime (Doob, 2014; Ekstedt & Griffiths, 1988; Lowman & Maclean, 1991). A violent and highly publicized inmate riot at Kingston Penitentiary in 1971, which was followed by numerous prisoner disturbances in the following years (Lowman & Maclean, 1991), caused increased introspection by Canadian corrections administrators (Swackhammer et al., 1972). Further governmental policy reviews in the 1970s (MacGuigan, 1977; Task Force, 1977) reinforced the federal government’s commitment to shifting from the medical treatment model of rehabilitation toward an approach that emphasized prisoners’ agency to move away from a criminal lifestyle. As the MacGuigan Report (1977) explained:

We do not recommend imprisonment for the purpose of rehabilitation. . . . [This approach] implies that penal institutions are capable of adjusting an individual as if he were an imperfectly-operating mechanism, and through acting externally on him, can make him over into a better person. . . . We prefer to approach the problem with a new term—“personal reformation”—which emphasizes the personal responsibility of the prisoners (p. 37; emphasis in original).

While the 1977 MacGuigan Report heavily critiqued the Canadian prison system, its recommendations focused on altering the ways in which an institution was administered rather than challenging its social function—as such, the report actually argued for greater classification of inmates and the expansion of prison facilities to accommodate a greater diversity of types of prisoner (Lowman & Maclean, 1991). Meanwhile, Ekstedt and Griffiths (1988) critiqued the disconnect between the shift in penal philosophy and the management of prisons, noting that

while a major justification for abandoning the rehabilitation model was the inability of such an approach to be implemented within correctional institutions, no consideration was given to modifying the environments of correctional institutions to create a more fertile ground for such initiatives. Rather, the reform initiatives were abandoned (p. 56-57).
The human rights of prisoners became a prominent topic in the 1970s and 1980s. Corporal punishment was banned in 1972 and, 14 years after the last death penalty was enacted, capital punishment was abolished in 1976 (CSC, 2015; Ekstedt & Griffiths, 1988). Although it was a progressive move, the elimination of the death penalty had the unintended consequence of increasing the number of offenders receiving life sentences (minimum 25 years before being eligible for parole) for first-degree murder, as judges responded to this legislation by toughening their sentences and handing out more murder and fewer manslaughter charges (Lowman & Maclean, 1991). This meant that the federal prison system was expected to hold more prisoners for much longer periods of time, which had major long-term impacts on both prison management and inmate culture. Despite the magnitude of this shift in sentencing, according to Lowman and Maclean (1991), “virtually no thought went into the way in which prisoners convicted under this legislation were to be dealt with by the prison system” (p. 141). As such, the authors argue, the shift in sentencing patterns has led to more “lifers” spending much of their adult life behind bars, which in turn has caused increased mental health problems, more inmate violence and, in response, an increasing securitization and repression of inmates by the prison administrations. Ironically, a major advance in criminal human rights led indirectly to a reduction in the day-to-day rights of prisoners.

Further political decisions from the 1970s to 1990s affected the conditions of confinement for and rights of federal inmates. In 1975, Canada finally signed on to the United Nations Standard Minimum Rules for the Treatment of Prisoners (UN, 1955), which had been created 20 years previously (CSC, 2015). Meanwhile, the introduction of the Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms in 1982 had a major impact on the penal landscape by opening the door for inmates to gain the right to vote, thanks to its assertion that “every citizen of Canada has the right to vote in an election of members of the House of Commons or of a legislative assembly and to be qualified for membership therein” (Section 3, para. 1). A series of Charter-based court cases at the provincial and federal levels eventually led to inmates in provincial institutions gaining the vote in 1993 and, finally, all prisoners being enfranchised in 2003, despite strident opposition from the federal government (JHS Canada, n.d.). Meanwhile, the new Corrections and Conditional Release Act (CCRA), which governs corrections policy in Canada, was passed in 1992 and immediately
replaced previous corrections legislation. Although the CCRA made it clear that public safety was the top priority of the CSC—"the protection of society is the paramount consideration in the corrections process" (Department of Justice, 1992, Article 3.1)—the act emphasized the rights of prisoners that were established by the Charter of Rights and Freedoms (CSC, 2015). In particular, it guaranteed that inmates “retain the rights and privileges of all members of society except those rights and privileges that are necessarily removed or restricted as a consequence of the sentence” (Department of Justice, 1992, Article 4e) and that the “least restrictive measures” possible (Article 4d) would be employed in their incarceration.

Related to the emergence of human rights concerns, women’s corrections also became a major focus of the corrections system during this period. In the 1970s an emergent feminist criminology began to explore the gendered experiences of women with the law, although it was not until the 1980s that research on the experiences of women prisoners began to appear (Hannah-Moffat & Shaw, 2000). Until 1995, Canada had just one federal women’s prison, the Prison for Women in Kingston, which was constructed in 1934. This arrangement was problematic due to the distance of many prisoners from their home communities and the fact that the institution had “no minimum-security facilities, no facilities for mothers with babies nor even specific psychiatric facilities for women serving long sentences” (Hannah-Moffat & Shaw, 2000, pp. 17-18). While there had been periodic calls for the prison’s closure, including in the Archambault (1938) and MacGuigan (1977) Reports, it was not until 1980 that these calls began to be implemented.

In 1980 a feminist group launched a complaint with the Human Rights Commission of Canada, arguing that women offenders were discriminated against and provided worse conditions of confinement than men—a challenge that was supported by the Commission, which called on the federal government to make substantial changes to women’s imprisonment (Hannah-Moffat, 1991; Hannah-Moffat & Shaw, 2000; Hayman, 2006). Further pressure from women’s groups (Hayman, 2006) ultimately pushed the federal government to implement a task force to examine women’s corrections in 1989, leading to a landmark report Creating Choices: The Report of the Task Force on Federally-Sentenced Women (TFFSW, 1990). The report called for the closure of Prison for Women and the
building of five new institutions spread across the country, including a women’s Aboriginal healing lodge in Western Canada; a spatial restructuring of women’s correctional institutions using small, cottage-like living units that allowed greater freedom of lifestyle and movement; holistic, women-centred programming provided in partnership with community organizations; and the development of community programmes to assist offenders upon their release (Hannah-Moffat & Shaw, 2000; TFFSW, 1990). According to Hayman (2006), the struggle over women’s correctional reform was so prominent because the Prison for Women “represented many of the larger inequities against which women were campaigning; on every score the prison failed the equality-with-men test. It was a microcosm of the wider discrimination women faced in Canadian society” (p. 25).

While the federal government accepted the recommendations of Creating Choices, and provided funding to implement them, budget concerns and opposition from segments of the public, amongst other factors, led to some of the recommendations being discarded; nonetheless, by 1997 the five new regional institutions opened and in 2000 the Prison for Women was finally closed (Hannah-Moffat & Shaw, 2000). However, events at the Prison for Women in 1994 had major ramifications for the new operation of women’s corrections. In April of that year, a violent incident between staff and six inmates led to the women being put into segregation conditions. Two days later, three more inmates “caused further disruption by slashing, taking a hostage, and attempting suicide” (Griffiths, 2010, p. 146), precipitating a protest by CSC staff who wanted the inmates transferred to an institution with higher security levels. Meanwhile, the warden of the prison ordered an emergency response team, comprised entirely of men, to remove the inmates from their segregation cells and strip-search them; this procedure, which was videotaped, involved severe and humiliating methods. When footage of this incident made the national news a year later, public pressure mounted against the CSC and the federal government launched an inquiry into the entire incident (Griffiths, 2010; Hayman, 2006). The result of the inquiry was the Arbour Report (Arbour, 1996), which criticized the CSC’s handling of the incident and, more broadly, management of the institution. In particular, it criticized the excessive use of force and reliance on segregation of inmates. The report led to changes in the management of women prisoners and increased the pressure to close the Prison for Women (Arbour, 1996; Griffiths, 2010; Hayman, 2006).
While these various interconnected trends—namely the rejection of the medical model, the embracement of human rights discourses, and the shift toward women-centred corrections—suggest that the latter decades of the 20th century were a progressive period for Canadian corrections, there were problematic ideological undercurrents beneath these changes. The language used in the MacGuigan Report (1977), particularly the introduction of the term “personal reformation” (p. 37), foreshadowed the emergence of major trend in Canadian corrections, which would be increasingly evident in subsequent policy changes: an increasing emphasis on neoliberal approaches to crime and prison management, in which offenders were expected to be accountable for their behaviour and take ownership of their rehabilitation. Hannah-Moffat (2000) labels this a responsibilization approach to corrections, which decontextualizes the sociocultural causes of crime and places the offender in charge of the success or failure of her rehabilitation. She further explains that the concept of empowerment, a feminist and women-centred understanding of which underpinned the recommendations of the Creating Choices report (TFFSW, 1990), was adopted by the CSC to manage women offenders by absolving itself of the responsibility for offenders (un)successful rehabilitation. Similarly, although human rights agreements and legislation offer valuable protection to many individuals, the notion of universal human rights has been critiqued for emphasizing the centrality of individual rather than collective rights (Kidd & Donnelly, 2000). While human rights frameworks impacted both the revamped CCRA and various changes to women’s imprisonment, the former’s subordination of prisoners’ rights to institutional safety (Department of Justice, 1992) coupled with inmates’ responsibilization (Hannah-Moffat, 2000) meant that human rights discourses in Canadian corrections risked obscuring collective issues and reinforcing individualized understandings of criminal behaviour.

It is appropriate that individualized, neoliberal discourses began to circulate within Canadian corrections in the 1970s. Broadly speaking, the later years of this decade were the beginning of a major political and economic shift toward neoliberal forms of governance in countries such as the US, UK, and China. The aims of this emergent political philosophy were, in the words of David Harvey (2005), “liberating individual entrepreneurial freedoms and skills within an institutional framework characterized by strong private property rights, free markets, and free trade” (p. 2). The state, though
playing a reduced role in public service provision, would bear responsibility for providing economic protections to private property rights, including through rule of law (Harvey, 2005). Wacquant (2009), meanwhile, argues that the economic changes entailed by neoliberalism, such as the gutting of welfare programmes and the push for recipients to participate in insecure wage labour (a phenomenon dubbed workfare), necessitated the growth of the prison as a disciplinary feature of the state. Prisons are thus an indispensable part of the neoliberal agenda, designed to act as warehouses for members of the marginalized underclass who do not, or cannot, participate in the workfare economy. Thus, for Wacquant (2009), “welfare revamped as workfare and prison stripped of its rehabilitative pretension . . . work jointly to invisibilize problem populations . . . and eventually push them into the peripheral sectors of the booming secondary labor market” (p. 288).

Wacquant’s (2009) research focuses largely on the US experience, and to a lesser extent that of some Western European countries. However, as Griffiths (1988) suggested nearly 30 years ago, Canadian corrections must be considered separately from the US context, for, “while often influenced by events and shifts in attitudes and philosophies . . . in the United States, correctional policy and practice north of 49 continue to reflect the distinct legislative, sociopolitical, and cultural setting in which they operate” (pp. 57-58). Even under the Conservative leadership of Brian Mulroney from 1984 to 1993, during which period Canada continued on the path of neoliberal reform (Carroll & Shaw, 2001), Canada’s “criminal justice policies and practices . . . were inconsistent with authoritarian US law and order models in place at the time” (DeKeseredy, 2009, p. 305). Nonetheless, through a process of policy transfer, Canada began in the mid-1990s to adopt some aspects of the US’ ‘tough on crime’ agenda, including tougher criminal legislation and greater use of punitive incarceration (DeKeseredy, 2009); meanwhile, at this time a US-style penal populism (Pratt, 2007), which saw increased public support for harsher responses to crime, began to emerge, a process that accelerated after 9/11 (Ricciardelli, Crichton, & Adams, 2014). The legislative impact of penal populism was most notable in the provincial corrections system in Ontario under the Conservative leadership of Mike Harris, which lasted from 1995 to 2003 (DeKeseredy, 2009; McElligott, 2007, 2008); at the federal level, in another example of policy transfer, the Conservative government of Stephen Harper
introduced a ‘tough on crime’ agenda that was greatly influenced by the Harris-era Ontario approach to corrections (McElligott, 2009) as well as ideological trends in US corrections (Ricciardelli et al., 2014). Thus, although not directly analogous to the Canadian experience, the relationship of the US’ carceral boom to its neoliberal policies is helpful for contextualizing some aspects of recent shifts in Canadian corrections. However, it is important to recognize that its post-2006 crystallization under the Conservative government was possible because of the various sociopolitical trends, including the increasing acceptance of penal populism amongst Canadian voters, which began before this government was elected.

**Physical Culture, Human Rights, and Changing Conditions of Confinement**

Whereas physical recreation and sport assumed great importance in Canadian corrections policy following the 1938 publication of the *Archambault Report*, it appeared less frequently in government documents in the latter decades of the century. Nonetheless, the enthusiasm for physical recreation shown by administrators and inmates in the postwar decades appears to have ensured that active physical cultures would continue to thrive in Canadian prisons for a number of decades. Numerous prisoner newspapers in the 1970s and 1980s describe diverse sport and recreation practices within Canadian institutions, including the ever popular baseball and softball leagues, floor hockey, and even boxing, despite it being banned by correctional officials in the 1960s (MacLeod, 1963, p. 18). However, there is some evidence to suggest that the popularity and social significance of physical recreation was, for a variety of reasons that will be discussed in this section, declining during this period.

With the decline of the medical model, prison recreation was no longer seen by policymakers and administrators as a targeted component of therapeutic rehabilitation. Instead, it was framed in government reports either as a means of promoting prosocial

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21 The Conservative government has pursued its ‘tough on crime’ agenda at a time when many US jurisdictions are scaling back their punitive policies. In 2011, a group of conservative American lawmakers, including the former head of the US Drug Enforcement Agency, advocated against Bill C-10 due to the massive costs and high recidivism rates experienced by the US prison system as a result of the American prison boom from the 1970s to 2000s (Galloway, 2012b).
relationships, with the aim, consistent with the emphasis on community corrections (Ouimet et al., 1969), of helping inmates to prepare for their ultimate release and reintegration back into society; or, given the increasing climate of human rights sensitivity, as an issue of prisoners’ rights and conditions of confinement. An example of the former framing of physical culture can be seen in the 1971 annual report of the Solicitor General:

[Recreation] activities serve to assist the inmate’s re-entry into normal social living. Included are all types of individual and group, athletic, social and cultural activities…. Recreational activities are one of the best means of promoting community involvement and citizen participation. Coach and official clinics have been held at our institutions and some of those attending were outside participants. Some of our inmates and staff have shared in recreational leadership training experiences with communities sponsoring these endeavors. Inmates compete through intramural leagues and also with local teams in basketball, hockey, fastball and other team sports. … Inmates have reciprocated with volunteer work for charitable organizations and assisting in such activities as refereeing minor sports events…. Approximately 10,000 citizens participated in institutional programs last year. The involvement spans those who took part in recreational, chapel and entertainment activities (Goyer, 1971, pp. 50-51).

The rise of human rights language in Canadian corrections in this period is also relevant to carceral sport. Since the 1970s, there is a tradition of human rights charters and manifestos including sport and physical activity amongst their foci, and a number of ways in which the relationship between sport and human rights manifests itself in contemporary societies, including participation in sport being acknowledged as a human right (Kidd and Donnelly, 2000; Donnelly, 2008, 2013). As Donnelly (2008) points out, the UN’s (1948) Universal Declaration of Human Rights implicitly addresses sport in its affirmation of every person’s right “to rest and leisure” (Article 24) and to “freely to participate in the cultural life of the community” (Article 27.1). Some 28 years after the Declaration, sport participation was formally recognized in the European Sport for All Charter, which explicitly stated that “every individual shall have the right to participate in sport” (European Council, 1975, Article 1). When, in 1975, Canada signed on to the United Nations’ (1955) Standard Minimum Rules for the Treatment of Prisoners, it agreed to the following articles on recreation and physical activity:

Every prisoner who is not employed in outdoor work shall have at least one hour of suitable exercise in the open air daily if the weather permits…. 
Young prisoners, and others of suitable age and physique, shall receive physical and recreational training during the period of exercise. To this end, space, installations and equipment should be provided (p. 3).

Recreational and cultural activities shall be provided in all institutions for the benefit of the mental and physical health of prisoners. (p. 12).

Canada’s acceptance of the UN code did not appear to significantly impact the day-to-day physical culture of Canadian prisons—in fact, federal correctional policies already adhered to these rules and provided more daily recreation time than the UN requirement. That being said, the human rights-inspired changes to women’s prisons did include a discussion of access to exercise space and activities, as explained in the *Creating Choices* report:

Each [new] facility will emphasize the importance of exercise and will provide staff who will actively encourage and facilitate participation by all women. Recreational facilities will include both open air and indoor exercise areas where team, group and individual activities can take place. For any facility where recreational space cannot be built on site due to expense, community recreational facilities must be made available through the use of temporary absences (TFFSW, 1990, Chapter XI).

Of course, the new women’s prisons did not play out exactly as intended by the authors of *Creating Choices*, including in the restricted inmate movement imposed at the institutions by the construction of additional fences (Hannah-Moffat & Shaw, 2000). As Hannah-Moffat (1991) notes, with regard to women’s corrections, we must be cautious when assuming that human rights agreements lead automatically to improvements in practice: “federally sentenced women have discovered that although the state may concede a right, that does not mean that it will make the structural alteration that will allow for the exercise of that right” (p. 191). Furthermore, as Donnelly (2013) highlights, the Canadian government has not followed through on its commitments to many basic human rights, let alone to sport participation. As such, the adoption of various human rights agreements and discourses in Canadian corrections appears to have had limited impact on prisoners’ access to sport and physical recreation activities.

A number of factors contributed to sport and physical recreation becoming less popular than they had been previously. Bob, a participant who worked in corrections for nearly 40 years, blamed the introduction of television for eroding interest in sport and
physical activity. When Bob started working for the CSC in the 1970s at Millhaven Institution “there were no televisions anywhere in the institution,” only in-cell radios with preset stations that inmates could listen to with headphones. However, soon thereafter, the administration introduced televisions in common areas and then, according to Bob, “they took it one step further and said to inmates ‘if you want to buy a TV you can have one in your cell.” . . . And a lot of inmates took advantage of that. . . . Each one of those steps diminished the number of inmates who went to the recreation area.” Bob summed up the impact of these policies on the physical culture of the prison:

The milestone event in recreation occurred when inmates were allowed to purchase their own TVs and have TVs in their cell. There are a couple reasons for that. One, in maximum and medium [security] the environment is fairly hostile and fairly unpredictable, and so things can happen, even if you’re not directly involved you can become involved by association. . . . And so a lot of guys opted to watch TV [in their cells, instead of going to the yard]. . . . [After changes to inmate finance rules], it was a snowball rolling down the hill, giving more inmates access to TV. And it’s had a huge, huge, huge impact [on recreation]. The second half of recreation in an evening in a prison would see, oh, less than 50 people [in the yard]. Because that’s prime time. . . . for all your big [television] shows.

Harry, a former prisoner, similarly saw the widespread adoption of televisions as detrimental to the collective nature of physical activity in Canadian prisons:

[Television was] a way of breaking down the community. Because guys were doing more things collectively, out in the Yard, and that doesn’t happen like it used to. So when they allowed prisoners to buy their TVs, that really, really changed the dynamics of the institution. It really started breaking down the prison community. . . . We used to get one movie in the gym, so that was a big event and everyone would go down, now when they say you can buy your TV. . . . suddenly guys weren’t so interested in the baseball league, guys were [saying] “no, I’m going to stay in my cell and watch TV.” So I think that [television] really, really, really was a major, major factor in ending a lot of [organized sports].

I was unable to pinpoint the precise year that televisions were allowed in cells, although Bob placed it some time in the early 1980s. However, some federal institutions had provided television viewing since at least 1951, when inmates at Kingston Penitentiary were, according to the Warden’s annual report, able to watch the World Series thanks to the loan of a television set from a local department store (Gibson, 1952). The first record of a permanent television installation was at the Federal Training Centre (QC), where a
donation from the Montreal Knights of Columbus meant that inmates could watch one of two televisions during their evening recreation period. According to the Warden’s report, “these sets were installed in two classrooms, adjoining the recreation hall, and programmes are enjoyed nightly by an average of 100 inmates, between 18.30 and 20.30 hrs” (Gibson, 1955). While the availability of televisions appears to have been unevenly rolled out in different federal prisons, it is clear that the new entertainment option quickly proved popular to inmates who had access to it—and, apparently, that it had an effect on the number of inmates taking to the yard or participating in organized sport during the evening recreation period.

Despite the impact of television on prison sport, the penal press of the period still reported on a wide variety of organized and informal physical activity at institutions across the country. That being said, the sport sections of these inmate-produced papers occasionally alluded to declining enthusiasm for physical recreation and sport. For example, inmate editorials in Springhill Penitentiary’s (NS) the Communicator and Millhaven Institution’s (ON) Highwitness News, written eight years apart, highlighted declining participation in the previously popular intramural baseball and softball leagues:

The “A” softball team has fallen completely apart . . . In the past month or so, we have found it difficult to even field a team, let alone win some games . . . . The majority of inmates as usual are content with sitting around, lapping in the sun and indulging in the finer things of life (Roy, 1977, p. 29).

The baseball season hasn’t been up to par around here. Especially in the [competitive] major ball. There is [sic] only two teams in the fast pitch league . . . . I predict that the major league won’t last long. There has already been notions of players quitting on both teams . . . . Folks, there really isn’t much enthusiasm in baseball this year . . . . It’s the worst year that I’ve seen here for baseball (Logan, 1985, p. 21).

Like these two editorials, a 1995 column in Collins Bay’s (ON) Inside the Bay blamed inmate apathy for declining recreation participation. The article (Boomer, 1995) estimated that only 10-15% of inmates participated in organized sport, meaning that the rest relied on dilapidated cardio equipment for aerobic exercise—machines that, according to the author, were not maintained by the prisoners responsible for their upkeep. While some inmate sport enthusiasts lamented the declining interest of their peers, a Queen’s University professor (Hennessy, 1999), who tried to establish regular basketball games
between university students and Kingston Penitentiary inmates in the mid-1990s, blamed lack of administrative support for the failure of the initiative:

In the fall of 1995, the recreation officer reluctantly agreed with me to allow two college and university sports teams into the institution for a series of “exhibition” games against prisoner teams. Only one game of basketball was played in the late fall, at which there were no more than ten inmate spectators, those who happened to be on the weight-lifting gallery at the time. The reason given was that the inmates were not interested in watching a sports event after supper. In truth, the event was not publicized and only one ethnic group, four hours before the event, was invited to field players. . . . The games with the visiting students ended in March and were never resumed even though the students were willing to return (p. 158).

Other fragments of evidence also suggest that corrections policies and officials played some role in limiting physical recreation opportunities for Canadian inmates. Bob told me that recreation professionals in the CSC were, up until the late-1970s or early 1980s, employed as physical educators rather than recreation officers—a distinction that meant these employees earned higher pay and possessed a deeper academic and pedagogical knowledge of physical activity. However, Bob explained that due to budget decisions, by the early 1980s these physical educators had their positions downgraded to a role that entailed less teaching and more managing of recreation programs, and as such earned wages “less than half of what the teachers’ [had been earning].” The end result of this was an exodus of qualified physical educators from the prison system and the infusion of more hands-off administrators in their place. The annual Commissioner’s Reports in the early 1980s rarely mentioned recreation or physical activity, in stark contrast to the enthusiastic reports of the 1940s to 1960s. On the rare occasion that physical recreation was mentioned in these reports, however, it was in reference to inmate grievances about recreation provision, including inattentive and ineffective staff. For example, inmates at the Regional Psychiatric Centre (ON) complained about “the practice of having the recreation staff work [daytime shifts] only which eliminated use of the gymnasium in the evenings and weekends” (Stewart, 1984, p. 15). Two years later, the Commissioner explained that, in segregation cells at some prisons, “because of staff shortages they are unable to provide such basics as daily showers and the minimum one hour exercise per day for inmates in these special cells” (Stewart, 1986, p.19). However, despite these indications that the access to and popularity of physical recreation in prisons, many prisoners—including many
of this study’s participants who were incarcerated in this period—still practiced physical activity and sport.

One other major development that deserves attention in this discussion is the rise in segregation of inmates in isolated cells, conditions that severely restricted their already limited freedom of movement within the institution. There were two types of administrative segregation: preventative, in which prisoners considered to be potential threats to institutional order were placed in isolation cells; and protective custody, in which inmates who might be at risk in the general population (e.g. those convicted of sex crimes, “snitches,” etc.) were housed. The use of these forms of administrative segregation by prison administrators rose significantly during the 1970s (Lowman & Maclean, 1991). Meanwhile, in the late-1970s a new “super maximum-security” classification was employed and Special Handling Units (SHUs) were introduced within select maximum-security institutions to house these inmates. Lowman and Maclean (1991) identify this as a consequence of the emphasis on prisoner classification and the process of bifurcation; that is, with the opening of more lenient institutions for prisoners considered to be low-risk—a result of the dominant correctional emphasis on community reintegration—there was a subsequent increase in restrictive and punitive measures for those inmates at the opposite end of the classification continuum. Thus, beneath the rhetoric of more lenient penalty and human rights was an undercurrent of more punitive confinement and reduced rights for some offenders.

These segregation units were rife with human rights violations and inmate complaints, many of which centered on various aspects of physical culture and health, such as the quality of food, access to exercise yards, and inhumane and unhealthy living conditions (Hansen, 1974, 1978; Maclean & Lowman, 1991; Stewart, 1979, 1983). Prisoners in these units were locked up for 23-and-a-half hours each day, released for just 30 minutes of exercise (Maclean & Lowman, 1991). However, even those 30 minutes were subject to restriction. Annual reports from the Correctional Investigator report on inmates being locked up for 24 hours a day for extended periods (Hansen, 1978) and being refused their exercise period due to “staff shortages and overcrowding” (Hansen, 1977, p. 36) or even “any unusual interruption in the institution’s activities [such as] a staff training
session” (Stewart, 1979, p. 20). Even when inmates in segregation and SHUs were given their daily allotment of yard time, they might face humiliating and painful actions in order to exercise this right. For example, Lowman and Maclean (1991) reported that, in preventative segregation units, before being allowed out of the cell for exercise, the prisoner must strip before four guards, hand out all clothing for inspection, turn, and bend over for an anal inspection. The same measures are taken when the prisoner is returned to the cell (p. 148).

Administrative segregation came under significant criticism throughout the 1980s and 1990s, ultimately leading to a government task force on the practice. As Moore and Hannah-Moffat (2005) summarize,

prisoners were being held in solitary confinement for indeterminate periods of time for questionable reasons. The punitiveness of the practice of segregation was amplified by the fact that those held in segregation were routinely denied the basic rights afforded to prisoners housed in the general population. . . . In segregation, prisoners did not have the same access to health care, spiritual guidance, and recreational time and activities (p. 95).

The punitive nature of segregation units contrasted with discourses about coddled prisoners and “Club Fed” facilities that circulated amongst conservative media and politicians in the 1990s (McElligott, 2008; Moore & Hannah-Moffat, 2005). Nonetheless, the “Club Fed” label was pervasive—and often was deployed in reference to physical recreation to bolster the impression that Canadian prisons were luxurious residences. For example, an anonymous article in the Whitehorse Star criticized the conditions at Williams Head Institution (BC):

The facility has a golf course. Mind you, it’s only six holes, stresses assistant warden Randie Scott, and is more like a pitch-and-putt then [sic] a course. But, as reporters were shuttled around the grounds, inmates could be seen wandering around in shorts and T-shirts, practicing their swing (“Inmates enjoy superb view,” 1998, para. 4).

Similar descriptions of a “Club Fed” prison were given in a Toronto Star article about the Joliette Institution for Women, one of the new women’s prisons opened in the 1990s, and its notorious inmate Karla Homolka. Homolka, the reporter writes,

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22 “Club Fed” is a play on words of the luxury resort chain “Club Med.”
walks the manicured grounds . . . moving freely behind a 2.5-metre double fence with razor wire. . . . Like college roommates, the inmates share the chores and meal preparation in their own kitchens. . . . Although the women have a curfew, during most evenings there are planned various events, such as volleyball or card tournaments (Shepherd, 1999, paras. 3, 12, 18).

While physical recreation was, and is, discursively frequently deployed to critique prisoners’ conditions of confinement, the reality of confinement and physical culture was very different for many prisoners. However, the widespread public perception of generous recreation provision to inmate contributed, along with therapeutic programming and rehabilitation activities, to what Moore and Hannah-Moffat (2005) term a liberal veil that masked the punitive nature of federal correctional institutions. The scholars suggest that the neoliberal individualization of criminal activity has allowed the correctional administration to coerce prisoners’ behaviour under the guise of free choice.

The Contemporary Federal Prison Context in Canada

In January, 2006 the Conservative Party of Canada won a minority government in the federal election, ending 13 years of rule by the Liberal Party of Canada. Conservative Party leader Stephen Harper, who had assumed leadership of the party after a 2004 merger of Canada’s two centre-right parties, became the country’s 22nd Prime Minister. The Conservatives led a minority government until the 2011 federal election, in which they won a parliamentary majority that will last until at least the 2015 federal election. Under Harper, the Conservative Party has placed a heavy emphasis on criminal justice policies, making a ‘tough-on-crime’ mandate a key pillar of its domestic agenda (Jackson & Stewart, 2010; Mallea, 2010). Prior to the 2006 election, the Conservative Party’s platform outlined its plans to impose mandatory minimum sentences for specific offences, limit opportunities to receive parole, increase police presence on city streets, create an Ombudsman’s office for victims of crime, increase sentences for youth crime, and target drug offences (“Stand up for Canada,” 2006). It is not an exaggeration to say that the Conservative government has dramatically shifted the direction of Canadian corrections. While the Liberal government of the early 2000s certainly placed an increasing emphasis on public safety, the Conservative government has taken this to an extreme level: since 2006, the government introduced 81 separate crime bills, of which 30 have passed (M. Adams, 2014).
The Harper government has been successful in enacting most of the measures it proposed in its election platform. Many of these changes are embedded in an omnibus crime bill called the *Safe Streets and Communities Act*, known as Bill C-10, which became law in 2012. Among the changes brought by Bill C-10 are mandatory minimum sentences for certain drug and sex crimes, stricter conditions for conditional sentences (such as being sentenced to house arrest rather than to prison), elimination of pardons for certain offenses, and the sentencing of some minors as adults (“9 elements of the crime bill,” 2011). One of the consequences of these penal policies is that various programs designed to assist in the rehabilitation of prisoners will be cut, for both economic and ideological reasons.

Economically, the 2012 Government of Canada budget called upon CSC to cut $295.4 million, or roughly 10 percent, from its operating budget by 2015 (Government of Canada, 2012, p. 277). As a *Globe and Mail* column highlighted, these cuts came at a time when the federal government was launching plants to expand 30 prisons by adding 2,700 cells, thus putting twin pressures on CSC to oversee additional prisoners while simultaneously cutting costs (Galloway, 2012a). As a result, programs provided to prisoners above and beyond basic food and shelter (including recreation programs) are likely to come under financial pressure. The government, for example, recently cut a program that had employed former prisoners to act as counselors to released prisoners and assist with their reintegration into life outside prison (Curry, 2012).

The Harper government’s ‘tough on crime’ rhetoric and policies have come at a time of a continuing decline in crime rates (Statistics Canada, 2011, 2015), leading many scholars to suggest that this is an ideological project rather than an effort to confront social problems (Colaguori, 2012; Doob, 2014; Parkes, 2014). According to Statistics Canada (2015), the crime rate continues to decline: in 2013, police-reported crime rates were at their lowest point since 1969, having been trending downward since the early 1990s, and the number of homicides was the lowest since 1966. Furthermore, many of the changes

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23 On April 19, 2011 the Canadian government announced that it was closing three federal prisons in a cost-cutting measure, including Kingston Penitentiary. However, with the additional cells being constructed at existing facilities, there will still be a net increase in carceral capacity.
made by the Conservative government are primarily symbolic ones that have minimal impact on the normal functioning of the justice system (Doob, 2014). For example, in 2011 the government passed Bill S-6, which eliminated the so-called “faint hope clause” that allowed offenders serving life sentences for murder or high treason to appeal for early parole after serving 15 years. While this act made a symbolic stand against the release of prisoners convicted of serious offences, in practice it will result in only a small number of offenders being denied release—since 1987, an average of just six prisoners per year have been released under this clause (JHS Canada and Ontario, 2010; Mallea, 2010).

Bill C-10 was actively opposed by organizations such as the Canadian Civil Liberties Association, the Canadian Bar Association, the John Howard Society and the Elizabeth Fry Society. The Canadian Bar Association (2011), which represents more than 37,000 lawyers across Canada, argued that Bill C-10 ignores existing research on effective approaches to crime reduction, will result in prisoners spending more time in prison and less in alternative rehabilitation programs, will target the most vulnerable segments of Canadian society, and will place unreasonable stresses on an already overtaxed justice system. The Conservative government also faced opposition to the bill from the provincial governments of Quebec, Ontario and Newfoundland, which expressed concerns about rising police and court costs and possible overcrowding of correctional institutions that would occur as a result of the new laws (“Provincial pleas for federal crime bill funding dismissed,” 2012). Even the Union of Canadian Correctional Officers, which represents guards in federal institutions, has condemned the Conservative government, claiming that overcrowded prisons and housing two prisoners in one cell (known as double-bunking) will endanger its employees (Stone, 2014).

Scholars have also been critical of the Conservative government’s criminal policies. Michael Jackson, a Law professor at University of British Columbia, and Graham Stewart, the former Executive Director of the JHS of Canada, labeled the ‘tough on crime’ approach a “fear-driven policy” that is capitalizing on a rise in public perceptions of insecurity in spite of an overall drop in Canadian crime rates (Jackson & Stewart, 2010). McElligott (2009) drew direct links between the Conservative approach to crime and punishment and the “Tory high modernism” that characterized the punitive overhaul of Ontario’s provincial
penal policies under the Progressive Conservative government from 1995-2003 (McElligott, 2008). McElligott (2009) also expressed concern about the reduction of prisoners’ rights, the intrusion of corporations into the operation of prisons, and the ideological drive to increase incarceration rates irrespective of crime rates. Meanwhile, in a keynote address at a socio-legal conference, York University professor Claudio Colaguori (2012) argued that Bill C-10 is an ideological project that will disproportionately victimize the most marginalized classes of Canadian society. Colaguori’s predictions are at least partially corroborated by research showing that harsher penalties for drug offences, one of the key planks of the Conservatives crime agenda enshrined in Bill C-10, exacerbate a historical legal bias against Black Canadians (Khenti, 2014). Despite these many objections, the bill passed and its impacts on the Canadian justice system are beginning to be felt.

Ideologically, the Conservative government’s approach to crime and punishment has marked a significant shift away from a (purportedly) rehabilitative model of prisons to a more overtly punitive one (Colaguori, 2012; Griffiths, 2004; Ricciardelli et al. 2014). It has also extended the neoliberal responsibilization of criminal behaviour (Hannah-Moffat, 2000), meaning that offending is framed as a moral failure that is the result of poor individual choices (McElligott, 2008). This ideological stance has a major impact on the ways in which the contemporary federal government has approached the treatment and expectations of prisoners. Furthermore, Conservative discourse on crime has frequently constructed and reinforced a binary between ‘ordinary’ or ‘law abiding’ Canadians and criminals.24

A foundational articulation of the Conservatives’ understanding of corrections can be found in a 2007 document called *A Roadmap to Strengthening Public Safety* (CSC Review Panel, 2007), which was the result of a panel appointed to review the corrections system. Notably, the panel was headed by a key figure in the Progressive Conservative government’s punitive overhaul of Ontario prisons in the late-1990s and early-2000s.

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24 For example, the Prime Minster’s 2013 Throne Speech stated that “the justice system exists to protect law-abiding citizens and our communities. For too long . . . the system coddled criminals” (Harper, 2013). Numerous other examples abound from statements by Conservative politicians.
The Roadmap laid out the Conservative government's vision for law and order in Canada, with a focus on five key areas: increasing the accountability of offenders; removing illicit drugs from prisons; emphasizing job and skills training, rather than social programming (e.g. anger management, substance abuse, etc.), to prepare prisoners to enter the job market; centralization of prisons, ultimately reducing the total number of institutions; and making parole contingent on demonstrable participation by offenders in rehabilitation efforts (i.e. CSC programming) (CSC Review Panel, 2007).

Taken together, these recommendations hinge ideologically upon key tenets of neoliberalism—such as individual accountability, fiscal efficiency, and the hegemony of the market—which represent not just a vision of how prisons should operate, but of how society should be organized. This is articulated in the Roadmap, which states: “mirroring Canadian society—earning your own way—should be a core concept of life inside penitentiaries” (CSC Review Panel, 2007, p. ix). This was a marked shift from the discursive focus on human rights that predominated in the 1980s and 1990s. Rather than being given to prisoners, under the correctional regime envisaged in the Roadmap rights are to be earned through good behaviour (Jackson & Stewart, 2010; McElligott, 2009). The ideological underpinnings of the Roadmap and subsequent policy actions are consistent with Wacquant's (2009) description of the political ascendancy of neoliberal approaches to crime and incarceration in Western countries, thus suggesting that similar social and political processes are taking place in Canada. Jackson and Stewart (2010) suggest that fear of crime and support for punitive measures have become hegemonic in Canadian society, with widespread support amongst citizenry. Furthermore, they suggest that the public appetite for ‘tough on crime’ measures has diminished the ability of the Liberal and New Democratic Parties to oppose Conservative policies in this area, lest they be seen as soft on crime (Jackson & Stewart, 2010). Such an argument aligns with the suggestion that a rising penal populism is helping to shape Canadian corrections (Ricciardelli et al., 2014).

Some of the moves made by the federal government target prisoners’ conditions of confinement in small, yet cumulatively significant, ways. Despite fears from prisoner advocates that the changes would hinder prisoners’ ability to rehabilitate, in 2012 Minister
of Public Safety (who oversees the CSC) Vic Toews announced that inmates would have to put a higher proportion of their $10 to $69 fortnightly pay cheques toward their confinement and pay to use the telephone, saving the CSC an expected $10 million each year (Mills, 2012). The following year, inmates at some institutions refused to work in protest at their stagnant wages, which had not been raised since 1981 even as inmates were shouldered with the burden of paying for daily items such as toiletries and stationery products (Broshnahan, 2013). Meanwhile, in 2012, Toews announced that federal inmates would no longer be allowed to use their earnings to order takeout food, such as pizza or fried chicken, to their institutions. The practice, which was used by inmate committee’s to fundraise donations for community initiatives like United Way campaigns and the Special Olympics, was eliminated because, according to Toews’ office, “Canadians were concerned that dangerous and violent prisoners had across the board access to pizza parties and BBQ socials” (cited in Broshnahan, 2012). CSC also made cuts to part-time chaplains, who typically served the non-Christian population, thus removing this form of religious support for many inmates in an increasingly diverse offender population (Sapers, 2013).

Such restrictive measures certainly give the appearance of supporting a ‘no frills’ approach to prison management, although the actual fiscal impact is marginal. For example, if realized, the $10 million in savings from further garnishing prisoners’ pay and charging them for phone calls (Mills, 2012) would represent a miniscule reduction in the CSC’s nearly $3 billion operating budget. Meanwhile, the more substantial slashing of CSC’s budget, coupled with the ideological emphasis on individual offender accountability, creates a problematic tension. The Roadmap explains rehabilitation as a two-way process in which “it is CSC’s responsibility to provide the opportunities and tools necessary to the offender … however, to change their behaviour, offenders must seize those opportunities, pick up the tools of rehabilitation and use them” (CSC Review Panel, 2007, p. 15). However, in a political climate in which program budgets are being slashed and prisons are being forced to house more inmates with less money, it is not clear how CSC can provide ample rehabilitative opportunities to its prison population.

Finally, it is important to note that Canada’s prison population continues to change demographically and become more racially diverse. The 2013 Correctional Investigator’s
report (Sapers, 2013) includes a focus on cultural diversity in the offender population. In particular, it highlights that between 2003 and 2013, a period in which the inmate population grew by 2,100, the number of Aboriginal inmates rose 46% and visible minorities increased by 75% (including a 90% increase in the number of black inmates), while the number of Caucasian prisoners dropped slightly by 3%. The report further notes:

A more complex and diverse offender population profile mirrors larger demographic trends and patterns in Canadian society. . . . Disproportionate rates of incarceration of some minority groups, including Black and Aboriginal Canadians, reflect gaps in our social fabric and raise concerns about social inclusion, participation and equality of opportunity (Sapers, 2013, pp. 3-4).

Taken together, these various strands of correctional change reveal a contemporary prison system that is in the midst of a transformation toward larger numbers of inmates incarcerated for longer periods of time, greater ethnocultural diversity within the inmate population, more crowded institutions, and fewer staff and programming resources. Prime Minster Harper has made it a clear part of his political agenda to shape Canada into a more right wing and conservative society (Mallea, 2010), and his government’s approach to crime and punishment appears to be a central pillar in this effort. Within the changing correctional system, changes in the physical culture of prisons are part of the broader shifts taking place within these institutions.

**Physical Culture in the Conservative Era**

Because the policy changes implemented by the Conservative government have occurred so recently, and because the CSC is a large bureaucracy whose culture cannot easily be changed in a short period of time, it is possible to only vaguely sketch out the ways in which the recent punitive penal discourses are impacting physical cultural practice in federal institutions. Furthermore, as Ricciardelli et al. (2014) point out, the effects of the Conservative’s correctional changes will alter the demographics and subculture of Canadian inmates, as the new policies “will continue to change the ‘profile’ of imprisoned Canadians as people will be incarcerated for longer periods of time and more frequently” (p. 111). Given how recent the changes are, the transitional state of the prison system at the time of writing, and the limited data available on corrections under the Conservative government, it is difficult to make strong interpretive claims about the present state of
physical culture in CSC prisons. Nonetheless, a number of participants in this study have first or secondhand knowledge of penal practices and shifts in recreational policies under the Conservative government, and there are media and policy sources that touch upon the topic. Using these, in this section I tentatively sketch the contemporary state of aspects of physical culture in federal correctional institutions.

Physical recreation is only briefly mentioned in the Roadmap; however, its inclusion speaks in important ways to the ways in which this aspect of physical culture is understood within the Conservative government’s vision for corrections. As such, it is worth quoting this passage at length:

In order to prepare an offender to return to society as a productive, law-abiding citizen, and in order to ensure that a good work ethic is learned while in incarcerated, a complete work day is required as the standard daily regiment [sic] while incarcerated. . . . The Panel notes a recurring observation from its visits to CSC penitentiaries—the lack of a well-structured day was creating an environment that was causing significant competition for scarce time and resources for programming, penitentiary employment, mental health treatment and leisure time. The Panel also noted that recreational time was not directly linked to the offender’s correctional plan or needs. It was not clear to the Panel that an offender activity in general weight training had anything to do with their correctional plan or personal rehabilitative needs. . . . An important and complementary issue that must be considered is the offender’s use of productive time and the reduction in offender idleness. . . . The Panel has recommended the creation of a structured day, recognizing the benefits of maximizing the integration and use of offenders’ non-discretionary (employment and programs) and discretionary (leisure activities) time. . . . It is critical to lengthen the active day in a penitentiary to 12 hours, but also make those 12 hours meaningful (CSC Review Panel, 2007, pp. 63-65).

This passage reveals a number of key ideological assumptions about the function of physical culture in Conservative correctional discourse. Firstly, it reintroduces and repackages the fears of prisoner idleness that were so prominent in 19th and early 20th century corrections documents for a 21st century neoliberal climate. Whereas this earlier concern for prisoner inactivity was framed in terms of the inmate’s personal and religious reformation, the contemporary framing in the Roadmap is focused almost entirely on the inmate’s (in)ability to integrate into the labour market—prisoners are to learn “a good work ethic” through “a well-structured day” that includes both work and programming
approved under their correctional plans (CSC Review Panel, 2007, p. 63). This has a direct impact on recreation, including physical activities such as weightlifting, which the CSC Review Panel specifically highlighted as failing to contribute to inmates’ “correctional plan or personal rehabilitative needs” (p. 63). Put differently, the document attempts to align important components of carceral physical culture with the Conservative government's societal vision in which prisoners are denied pleasurable activities that are considered ‘frivolous’ and enabled only to pursue a limited range of activities in support of their individualized correctional plan.

Also of note is that discourses surrounding human rights have disappeared. In fact, prisoners' rights in Canada are a prime example of the politically contingent nature of human rights; under the Conservative government incarcerated individuals are having various rights and privileges stripped away (CSC Review Panel, 2007; Jackson & Stewart, 2010; McElligott, 2009), yet no policies are being implemented to ameliorate the collective socioeconomic conditions that lead Canadians from certain classes to commit crimes (Colaguori, 2012; cf. Wacquant, 2001, 2009 for a detailed discussion of this phenomenon in the US case). Under this approach to inmate management, physical recreation is not given as a right, but rather an individualized privilege to be earned through good behaviour and a prescription as part of a broader correctional plan. Jackson and Stewart (2010), with a nod to the potential importance of physical recreation for prisoners, bluntly explain the contingent nature of inmate rights under the present carceral regime: “You behave well, you get to play football and have visitors. You don’t, you don’t” (p. 3). This trend is reflective of a broader approach to sport and physical activity under the Conservative government, which in 2007 announced tax credits for families to offset the cost of enrolling their children in sport. The tax credit, which contributes to a political trend in Canada of reducing public support for recreation in favour of market-based solutions (Donnelly, 2013), has primarily benefited wealthy Canadian families (Spence et al., 2010). Thus, it would appear that a shift toward physical recreation as a privilege, rather than a right, is a feature of broader Conservative policy—and that this privilege is extended only to those ‘ordinary’ Canadians that the Conservative government supposedly represents.
Finally, the issue of inmate segregation, that is, an even more repressive form of restricted movement than incarceration in the general population, continues to be a major issue in contemporary corrections. The death of 19 year-old inmate Ashley Smith in 2007 brought increased public attention to bear on the practice of segregation. Smith, who was known to be suicidal, was held in a segregation cell at Grand Valley Institution and strangled herself while being video-monitored by staff, who did not intervene. The incident led to the firing of top administrators at the prison and a lawsuit, settled out of court, brought by Smith’s family against the CSC (CBC, 2010). Of course, the heavy use of segregation was a major problem in corrections well before Smith’s death, beginning in earnest in the 1970s (Lowman & Maclean, 1991). Recent Reports of the Correctional Investigator (Sapers, 2013, 2014) draw attention to the practice, noting that its use continues to rise, that it is often used to handle inmates with serious mental illnesses in lieu of appropriate treatment, and that visible minority inmates are overrepresented in its population.

There are a number of other important trends concerning carceral physical culture that are addressed in subsequent chapters, that are being affected by these changes to corrections policy and practice. They include the lack of physical cultural practices that reflect the diverse ethnocultural prison population (Sapers, 2013), the impact of overcrowding on physical violence and the inmate code (Ricciardelli, 2014), the ways in which newly constructed prisons’ spatial productions might shape their physical cultures (Tremonti, 2014), and how behaviour in physical recreation impacts the likelihood of gaining parole. These, and other topics focus on key themes emerging from my qualitative data collection.

Conclusion

This chapter has traced the development of Canada’s prison system from its founding in 1835 until the present day, as well as the ways in which its carceral physical culture has been shaped in response to changes in corrections policy and broader Canadian society. The physical culture of the early penitentiary reflected the austere and punitive conditions of confinement for inmates, and this changed only incrementally until the interwar period. The 1938 Archambault Report was a landmark document for the Canadian
corrections system, setting it on a decades-long course of pursuing the rehabilitation of offenders. It also made explicit arguments for the value of sport and physical recreation as part of prisoners’ rehabilitation program, and following World War Two a vibrant sport culture grew in many Canadian prisons encouraged, for various ideological reasons, by federal policymakers and prison administrators. This prominence of sport and physical recreation began to decline in the 1970s due to various factors, including the introduction of non-physical forms of recreation such as television, changing prison demographics, a decrease in budget support for recreation, and a rise in the use of segregation. The election of the Conservative government in 2006 marked another shift in penal philosophy, with its policies and rhetoric touting an increasingly punitive approach to prisons. There is fragmentary evidence that this is significantly reshaping prisoners’ conditions of confinement, including in a reduction of recreational opportunities that may be perceived as “perks,” but the full impact of the Conservative government’s policies on carceral physical culture will not be known for many years. Throughout this historical account, I have stressed the fact that policy does not necessarily unfold as intended in the practice of corrections. In the following chapters I explore more deeply this disconnection in examining the ways in which inmates and prison administrators have constructed carceral physical culture in the daily life of CSC prisons in ways that are often at odds with the intent of corrections policies.
Chapter 5: Everyday Life, Social Control, and the Production of Space in and Through Carceral Physical Culture

This chapter examines how physical culture shapes and is shaped by the everyday life of the prison environment. It begins by examining how various aspects of physical culture are central to the everyday life of prisons. Next, it examines the ways in which sport and physical activity are employed by correctional policymakers and prison administrators for purposes of ideological and interventionist social control. Finally, drawing heavily on the work of Lefebvre (1974), the final section considers how carceral physical culture spaces are socially produced through conceived, perceived, and lived spaces.

Physical Culture and Daily Life in a Total Institution

This section discusses the significance of carceral physical culture in the daily life of CSC prisons. In particular, it situates certain physical cultural practices in the daily routine of prison life, discusses the (un)health of prison environments, and examines acts of symbolic and physical violence against and between inmates.

Physical Culture in the Daily Routine of a Prison

Among the characteristics of total institutions is their regimentation in terms of scheduling and group movement (Goffman, 1961a). Sport and physical activity, along with many other aspects of physical culture, make up a portion of this daily round of living for many prisoners. A consistent pattern emerged in my data that suggested a fairly standard daily routine for inmates housed in general populations. There is, of course, some variation of this routine depending on the type and level of institution. Furthermore, prisoners may opt out of meals, work or classes, or recreation time, choosing instead to remain in their cells; these decisions, not surprisingly, carry consequences: going hungry, not contributing toward the likelihood of receiving parole, or missing opportunities for socialization and exercise. That being said, an approximate and generalized daily routine, based upon the data I collected, is presented here:

03:00 – Nightly count
07:00 – Wake up
07:30 – Breakfast
08:30 – Work or classes
12:00 – Lunch and count
13:30 – Work or classes
18:00 – Free time
18:30 – Dinner
20:00 – Yard or personal recreation time
22:00 – Lock-up and count

In terms of the various forms of physical culture discussed in this manuscript, these are most obviously seen in the meal times (food), work periods and some classes (physical labour or craftwork), and recreation periods (sport and physical activity). With regard to physical culture, the security level of an institution can impact the access inmates enjoy to certain activities, the levels of violence experienced, and the subcultural meaning of sport in particular institutions. Harry explained that, in his experience, prisoners in minimum security levels were more less likely to organize sport activities due to the more transitional nature of their confinement: “Guys are more focused on getting out of prison . . . [and] are coming and going so much, [so] there wasn’t so much organized sports it was kind of individualized.” This is in contrast to higher levels of security, where inmates may serve longer sentences and thus build a more stable collective routine around sport and exercise. In high security prisons, inmates may also engage in physical fitness routines in order to build muscular bodies that will allow them to survive or thrive in the violent inmate subculture (Ricciardelli, 2014).

It is very apparent that this routine becomes extremely monotonous for inmates, who must adhere to this schedule day after day. The most dramatic example of the frustration caused by this routine occurred during the 1971 riot at Kingston Penitentiary. The prison used a loud bell that was rung at different times in the day to indicate the change from one activity to another. When inmates seized control of the institution, one of their first acts was to destroy the bell—an anecdote relayed to me many times during the course of my data collection. Two quotations, the first from Sam, a former inmate, and the
second from Rick, a CSC guard on the Kingston Pen tours, give a sense of the monotony that accompanies a long stint in prison:

**Sam:** You go down and get your breakfast, you go back to your cell, you eat your breakfast. They ring a bell. You go to work, making mailbags, repairing mailbags, painting the wall… You come back for lunch. You go to your cell, they ring the bell for count, then they ring the bell for lunch. Then lunch is over and you go down, you go back to work, and you do it again. Then you go back to your cell. And you do that five days a week. It never varies… [The bell] woke you up, counted you, sent you to work, counted you, sent you to work, brought you back, went to the gym, went to the yard, went to bed. Nine times a day. Everybody hated that bell.

**Rick:** If you want to know what it’s like to be in prison take a look at that [pointing to a cell]. Live in your bathroom, share the rest of your house with 35 other people, get one choice of meal… and in the evening go out in your backyard. And do that for years. It’s just boring.

These descriptions of prison routine are consistent with Goffman’s (1961a) description of the total institution as “a place of residence and work where a large number of like-situated individuals… together lead an enclosed, formally administered round of life” (p. xi). Furthermore, the characteristic collapsing and regimentation of the normally separate spheres of work, rest and play is evident (Goffman, 1961a). Given the monotony that accompanies such a routinized daily round of life, sport and physical recreation can be significant departures from the daily grind. As such, these activities may play an important role for inmates in ‘doing’ or ‘killing’ time (Goifman, 2002; Martos-Garcia et al., 2009), or at least in passing the time more pleasantly (Sabo, 2001). Many participants alluded to this aspect of carceral physical recreation, particularly its value in establishing a routine and helping ‘do’ their time, as encapsulated in this statement from Steve:

Physical activity is one way to pass the time… The thing about doing time is in order to psychologically survive it you’ve got to have a routine. If you can add an hour of anything that you can do to your 24 hours it helps you to, for lack of a better word—but it’s quite apt—keep from going insane… Having little tiny things to look forward to and okay, got to do the next, and the next.

Prisoners face a variety of stresses as the result of their immersion in this environment. In fact, stress and anxiety were overriding characteristics of prison life in

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25 This feature of prison life is also well-documented in prison memoir and literature.
both my data and the academic and prisoner-produced literature (e.g. Caputo-Lavine, 2012; Hassine, 2011; Ricciardelli, 2014; Schroeder, 1976; C. Smith, 2000). Sam collectively described the prisons he lived in as “a shithole.” Deborah likened her prison experience to being in a zoo where “they treat you like an animal.” Dave noted that, in prison, “you’re always tense.” Other inmates used similar, if less colourful, language to describe the conditions of their confinement and its impact on their mental state. In such a stressful environment, as well one in which inmates are stripped of the various components with which they constructed their selves outside the prison (Goffman, 1961a), many ex-prisoners found that physical activity took on significance as a means of coping with incarceration and establishing a sense of self identity:

**Dave:** [Physical activities] give you something to do, they give you something to look forward to. Because it’s part of your routine. Because you have very little else to do. People like routine.... [In prison] everything’s controlled, everything’s run and you’re told what to do all the time, so in any way if you can take charge of your life at all, make decisions for yourself, it’s one way you can do that.

The role of carceral physical activity as a coping mechanism is one that is widely reported in the academic literature (e.g. Martos-Garcia et al., 2009; Meek, 2014; Sabo, 2001). Similarly, most of the former prisoner interview participants described sport and physical recreation as a rare opportunity to pleasurably pass time or to cope with the daily stresses of life in an oppressive and routine-based environment. At a basic level of analysis, this social function of physical activity can be understood as part of a series of *make dos* that inmates use as secondary adjustments in total institutions (Goffman, 1961a). Such adjustments may simply be focused on accomplishing daily tasks; however, they may take on deeper significance as “a form of resistance that signaled that their social self and sense of identity had not been totally lost to the regime” (Innes, 2003, p. 86)—a theme that is explored later in this chapter.

**Daily Life, Physical (Un)Health, and Symbolic Violence**

Another major theme relating to everyday life that emerged from my research was that prisoners are keenly aware that prisons are, in a variety of ways, unhealthy places. This is perhaps not surprising given that, despite various United Nations conventions establishing the rights of prisoners to health care and healthy conditions of confinement
(Coyle, 2007), the very nature of prisons—namely physical confinement and social control of inmates’ lives—ensures that they will negatively impact the physical and mental well-being and health of most inmates (C. Smith, 2000). A 2004 review of the literature on prison health identified three major areas of health problems in correctional institutions: mental illness, communicable diseases, and substance abuse (Watson et al., 2004). Meanwhile, Canadian prisoners have a number of identified health problems, often at much higher rates than the general population, including high rates of emotional distress, substance addiction, HIV, and hepatitis (Robert, 2008). Given the focus of my research, participants specifically highlighted health concerns about interrelated aspects of physical culture such as physical recreation, food, physical violence, and prescription drugs. With the exception of physical violence—which I discuss in a separate section—these themes were consistent between men and women participants.

The link between food and physical health came through strongly in my data collection. For many of the women I interviewed, this link was experienced in the form of significant weight gain due to the radical shifts in their diets once they were incarcerated. For example, Chantelle explained that she came into prison at an emaciated 100 pounds, due to drug abuse, but gained an additional 180 pounds in prison: “three years later I came out [at] 280 pounds, my hips were falling apart. . . . Here I am, 36 [years old] coming out, and I feel like I’m about 60 years old.” Another participant stated that “I’ve never gone over 130 pounds in my life. I have three children, I could eat pizza and drink beer and sit on the couch. . . . But [prison] was the first time I’ve gained weight in my life. I went to 200 pounds.”

As a result of the changes made in the 1990s to women’s corrections, which emerged from recommendations made in the Creating Choices (TFFSW, 1990) report, women face unique challenges when it comes to food preparation and consumption. As participants explained, the cottage-style living units at the new regional correctional institutions meant that the inmates shared responsibility for meal planning and preparation with their housemates. This was, according to an NGO worker I interviewed, part of a prison setup that was intended to “keep [life] more normalized” through the spatial construction and day-to-day lifestyle of the inmates. However, according to women
participants, the ‘empowering’ nature of the new CSC women’s prisons creates many problems with regards to food, such as struggles to ensure equitable sharing of food among housemates, mental health issues such as hoarding for some prisoners, and limited budgets. Meanwhile, Marie highlighted the fact that within the prison culture, and in an environment with scant privileges and sources of pleasure, food takes on an unhealthy status that contradicts with messages about healthy exercise:

There’s two messages being given [about health]. There’s so much focus on food, and food as a reward. Like, your Christmas box is mainly food. . . . And people save up all year for that. Up to $200 [of inmates’ income] can be spent on that. . . . Then there’s an outside food order [for inmate fundraisers] from a place people choose, like McDonald’s or Subway or pizza or [Kentucky Fried Chicken]. . . . And I just felt like, they have these food opportunities, and at the same time they have different exercise things available. So you’re getting these two messages, and it’s like, I don’t know, a lot of women gain weight.

The women identified poor health as a barrier to exercising, leading to a weight gain cycle of poor nutrition and lack of physical activity. Furthermore, despite the supposedly empowering nature of the new women’s prisons (TFFSW, 1990), the structure of the institutions appeared to contribute to a reduced opportunity for the women to participate in enjoyable or healthy forms of physical culture, which in turn contributed to a self-identified loss of self-esteem among participants. Meanwhile, the women complained that they lacked access to the knowledge and resources about healthy eating and living that they needed to improve their physical and mental health. This experience is in line with Hannah-Moffat’s (2000) argument about the consequences of the responsibilization of women offenders, as female participants felt that they were placed in a position where they were expected to take charge of their own health, yet lacked the tools to do so.

While women former prisoners complained that food provision led to weight gain and a decreased ability to participate in physical activity, physically active male prisoners appear to face a different issue: namely, that a lack of food hurt their ability to build the muscular physique that can be so important to many male inmates (Ricciardelli, 2014). This phenomenon is highlighted in the literature on prison food, such as Valentine and

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26 Since Marie’s release, the ordering of outside food for inmate fundraisers has been banned in CSC institutions by the Conservative government (Broshnahan, 2012).
Longstaff’s (1998) observation that male bodybuilding inmates, concerned about inadequate prison food, “supplement the prison diet with foods from the canteen in order to control, discipline and shape their own bodies. . . . Foods rich in protein or carbohydrates are therefore particularly sought after” (p. 138-139). Among the participants in this study, Dave’s experience—he lost 55 pounds in jail and prison—speaks most clearly to this link between diet, nutrition and bodybuilding:

[The weight loss] was nerves [and] no food. Because I was a bigger guy when I came in, some of the guys, they were intimidated. . . . And I’d lost so much muscle mass I could not properly curl a 15 pound weight. . . . [Eventually] I got my nerve to go to the yard, to get down to the gym, just to get my body back again. Because it’s, like, talk about unhealthy weight loss. [It’s] a starvation diet. The food was bad. . . . It was white bread and [watery] soup. . . . That horrible weight loss, it’s incredibly unhealthy.

As Valentine and Longstaff (1998) note, as an adaptation to this situation some male prisoners—particularly those involved in weightlifting—will find creative ways to obtain the nutrients required to build muscle. In Andreas Schroeder’s (1976) memoir, he discusses a bodybuilder cellmate who consistently finagled extra servings of vegetables from the kitchen staff in order to help his muscle growth, and would stash them in his cell: “now the back of his mattress where he’s slit it open and removed the stuffing is full of lettuce and cabbage leaves, carrots and the occasional stalk of rhubarb” (p. 37). Similarly, after becoming involved in a yoga practice led by a CSC psychologist, Harry used this participation to acquire access to healthier foods: “[the psychologist] let us organize a food drive [for the yoga program]. We were getting fresh fruit, ’cause we were interested in eating better.” Meanwhile, American former prisoner Daniel Genis, who since his release has written a number of popular articles describing the prison weightlifting subculture, explains the significance of food and nutrition to male bodybuilding prisoners:

Nutrition is a problem, of course, as any bodybuilder knows that feeding the muscle is half the battle. Getting enough protein is a struggle for every incarcerated weightlifter, so now there’s a whole racket in which people steal cases of whitefish out of prison warehouses and sell them to inmates. . . . Getting the protein required was an exercise in theft and smuggling. . . . Creatine is an entire industry . . . [and] is smuggled in. . . . A jar retails for $50 in the yard, which becomes an expensive proposition if you load it. But the stuff works (Genis, 2014, para. 11, 13).
Food, at least in the context of my data collection, appears to therefore have a different relationship to physical activity for women and men prisoners—although this is, of course, a limited study in this regard. Another health-related issue facing prisoners is the predominance of pharmaceutical drugs in the physical culture of correctional institutions. My interviews with women offenders highlighted widespread use of prescription medication, including psychotropic drugs, in CSC women’s institutions. This is consistent with research on prescription drugs in CSC women’s institutions. A 2002 CSC report (Langner et al., 2002) revealed that as many as 90% of women offenders took medication and 42% took psychotropic drugs, rates much higher than the general population. Later research has also critiqued the overreliance on medication to control female inmates in Canadian correctional institutions (Kilty, 2012). The women offenders I interviewed identified widespread drug use as a barrier to health, in some cases linking it to inactivity and unhealthy weight gain. Chantelle, for example, explicitly linked her prescribed drug use with her large weight gain while incarcerated:

When I got to [CSC institution] they put me on a regimen of . . . antipsychotic medications to help me sleep. I have no [psychotic] issues but it was helping me sleep. . . . Three years later I came out 280 lbs., my hips were falling apart.

Male participants did not report medication or drug dependence as a major feature of daily life in their prison experiences, but this may be due to the time period in which most of them were incarcerated, which predates the increasing reliance on medication to control prison populations. Nonetheless, there was some limited evidence of it being a problem in men’s institutions. Megan, who has worked for 14 years as a recreation therapist in Canadian corrections, identified heavy use of prescribed psychotropic medication as a barrier to physical activity for male prisoners, as it severely curtails their motivation. Harry, who is now employed working as an advocate for currently incarcerated male prisoners, stated that, while in his time prisoners would occasionally acquire some marijuana or hooch,

one of the things that shocks me now is the number of people on methadone in the institutions. . . . It’s almost become a crutch in there. . . . I think if they allowed more sport in the institution and allowed more contact with the outside community, it would make a difference [in limiting reliance on medication].
The widespread availability and usage of medication in Canadian prisons raises some problematic questions about the motivation for their provision to inmates. In 2014, a CBC and Canadian Press investigation revealed that “a powerful mood-altering medication with potentially life-threatening side effects was for years being prescribed in Canadian [women’s] prisons for unapproved purposes, raising concerns the drug was being used to "subdue" or "sedate" inmates” (Sawa, 2014). This is in contrast to CSC regulations, which state that “medications shall be prescribed only when clinically indicated and shall never be used for disciplinary or control purposes” (CSC, 2003). As a result of these revelations, Correctional Investigator Howard Sapers launched an investigation into the matter—but, by August, 2014, the CSC had failed to provide him with requested documentation, causing Sapers to publicly criticize the organization (Miller, 2014). Meanwhile, Kilty’s (2012) research with formerly incarcerated women led her to conclude that medication is used by administrators as a form of control over inmates that raises problematic issues concerning consent to treatment and human rights. The possibility of prison regime’s using drugs to control their inmates was also raised by Hassine (2011) based on his experience in the US prison system, as he critiqued the “‘medicate-and-forget-them’ system of modern prison management . . . [as a] solution to warehousing masses of inmates into smaller spaces, while using fewer and fewer support services” (p. 86).

Bourdieu’s (2001) concept of symbolic violence helps to explore theoretically the significance of these unhealthy physical cultural practices and their relation to the social control of prisoners. Bourdieu suggests that symbolic violence is “a gentle violence, imperceptible and invisible even to its victims, exerted for the most part through . . . purely symbolic channels” (p. 1-2). Meanwhile, Colaguori (2010), in an article expanding upon Bourdieu’s conceptualization, suggests that symbolic violence spotlights “the social practices of conformity imposed upon subjects in the course of living out daily rituals that create and sustain institutionalized forms of social stratification and regulation. . . . [It is] both coercive and voluntary” (p. 395). Although he does not deploy the concept of symbolic violence, Goffman’s (1961a) description of total institutions highlights a range of acts enacted upon the inmates that could fall within this definition—for example, the mortification of self that a new inmate undergoes upon entering a total institution is
achieved through a combination of acts of physical and symbolic violence, such as material deprivation or humiliating rituals, against the self.

Through the lens of symbolic violence, we can understand food-related deprivation and humiliation as an apparatus of violence against the bodies and minds of prisoners. The prominence of food in the narratives of prisoners is not surprising, as it carries extremely powerful symbolic value in prisons (Godderis, 2006); more broadly, the provision of inadequate or poor quality food serves as a means of humiliation or discipline in total institutions (Goffman, 1961a). Thus, while the consistent complaints about the quality of food might seem like relatively trivial griping about unpleasant conditions of confinement, they point to broader questions about social control and symbolic violence in and through this area of carceral physical culture. Meanwhile, the heavy use of medication on inmates also can be interpreted as a form of symbolic violence that, though ‘softer’ than more physically punitive forms of confinement, nonetheless acts as a means of controlling the inmate population and ensuring compliance with prison administration. This is a particularly coercive form of symbolic violence because, although prisoners have the right to refuse medication, exercising this right may cause their noncompliance to be written up on their files, a notation that could harm their chance of parole or their reputation in future court cases (Kilty, 2012).

Finally, it is important to note that are many ways in which symbolic violence committed against prisoners is a gendered practice. I will discuss later physical violence in prison physical culture, but will briefly note here that my uncovering of this phenomenon was entirely confined to the experience of male prisoners. Other recent research on men’s federal prisons confirms that physical violence is a routine part of daily life, particularly in higher security institutions (Ricciardelli, 2014). However, although men did describe symbolic violence in and through physical culture, this theme came through much more strongly in women’s accounts. Furthermore, the findings on Canadian prisoner over-medication (Kilty, 2012; Langner et al., 2002; Sawa, 2014) focus on female prisoners and thus suggest that this is a problem that most heavily afflicts women.

The academic literature suggests that there are structural reasons for these gendered differences. For example, Hannah-Moffat (1991) identified that “women
prisoners [in Canadian federal institutions] have been, and continue to be, the victims of outright discrimination when it comes to providing them with meaningful services, programs, and accommodations” (p. 188). The relative deprivation of female prisoners, in comparison to men, was also noted by employees from the Elizabeth Fry Society, with whom I interacted in my informal data collection. It seems, therefore, that men’s prisons are characterized by much higher levels of physical violence, while women’s prisons feature heavier use of medication as a form of symbolic violence. Hannah-Moffat and Shaw (2000) make a similar argument, noting that “in general, there is less overt violence in women’s prisons…. [But] there is a long history of controlling women in prison with medication . . . , and a greater use of disciplinary proceedings for minor infractions which would not be pursued in a male facility” (p. 18). Thus, although appearing to be very different from the highly visible physical violence of men’s prisons, the physical culture of women’s federal correctional institutions is intimately connected through symbolic violence to issues of social control, power, and domination.

Clearly, carceral physical culture cannot be separated from the health issues that exist in the prison environments in which inmates live. Many prisoners appear to understand that their living conditions impact them in unhealthy ways, particularly due to factors such as the quality of food and abundance of medication. Both of these factors impact physical activity in different ways. Heavy medication appears in some cases to increase lethargy, contribute to weight gain, and discourage participation in physical activity or sport. Meanwhile, women’s descriptions of food indicated that it contributed to unhealthy weight gain and physical inactivity, whereas physically active men—mainly weightlifters and bodybuilders—have the opposite problem, leading to an underground economy in protein-rich food and nutritional supplements. The deprivation, humiliation, or sedation associated with these aspects of carceral physical culture can be fruitfully analyzed through the lens of symbolic violence (Bourdieu, 2001), which appears to be more heavily enacted upon women prisoners. The significance of these various characteristics of prison life, particularly the prison economy and institutional social control, is be discussed further later in this chapter.
Daily Life and Physical Violence in Men’s Prisons

While daily life in prison is largely characterized by routine and monotony, it also features frequent enactments of violence by and upon its inmates—or, as Dave succinctly and eloquently characterized it, “prison is boredom punctuated by violence.” While men’s prisons certainly have numerous examples of symbolic violence against their inmates, Dave was referring in this statement to physical violence by inmates and guards. Inmate-on-inmate, inmate-on-staff, and staff-on-inmate violence were all highlighted in my data as regular occurrences in federal prisons. There has been considerable debate among scholars about the causes of prison violence, with more sophisticated recent theories suggesting a combination of external social factors, an internal inmate code, and the type and degree of administrative controls exercised over prisoners all impacting the likelihood of an institution developing a violent inmate culture (Ricciardelli, 2014). This section focuses on physical violence in and through sport and physical activity, exploring how the culture of these activities was constructed as a violent one for participants.

The academic literature and my own research suggest that physical violence is woven into the daily fabric of life in Canadian men’s correctional institutions in a variety of ways—a component of daily life that has significant consequences for the physical culture of these institutions. Ricciardelli’s (2014) recent research demonstrates how the inmate code in Canadian prisons affects violence, as prisoners may use violence to maintain their status in the social hierarchy or to police violations of the code’s behavioural norms. That being said, Ricciardelli employs a sophisticated analysis to demonstrate that, by providing a normative framework to social interaction, the inmate code in Canadian men’s prisons is used as a risk mitigation strategy by inmates and may actually serve the purpose of reducing violence. Similarly, Caputo-Levine (2013), drawing on Bourdieusian theory to analyze his ethnographic data from a study of ex-prisoners, argues that violence is a form of capital that helps inmates navigate daily life and the prison culture. As a result, “prisoners often structure their daily routines around avoiding or controlling violence” (p. 171). An example of the way in which violence is regulated, to some extent, by the inmate code is seen in this statement from Rick, a CSC guard who volunteered on the Kingston Penitentiary tours:
I've been here 9 years, [there’s only been] only one person killed. . . .

[Inmates] do not want to do that, they do not want to kill people. It gets a lot of heat put on them, there’s a lot of questions asked, somebody is going to get more time for it. That being said, they do want to establish a hierarchy. There are people who will get stabbed but then not tell anybody. If you think somebody’s been stabbed, you have to have them remove their shirt and you will see puncture holes that they’ve covered with tape or toilet paper or whatever it is, because they don’t want to have to be involved in the investigation. There’s guys beaten up, [and saying] ‘oh, I fell in the shower, I tripped in the yard,’ stuff like that. That’s just how it was. If we tried to identify who did it, [inmates would say] ‘well I can’t tell you.’

Griffiths (2010) suggests that inmate violence may be expressive or instrumental in character. Expressive violence is unplanned, and can be considered a spontaneous reaction to the pressures of an inmate’s conditions of confinement. Instrumental violence, on the other hand, is a tactical action that is deliberately employed to earn or maintain status or to materially benefit. While the inmate code in Canadian men’s prisons places a high value on a tough persona and a willingness to engage in physical violence, thus ensuring that instrumental violence is a key part of surviving incarceration for many prisoners, my informants described both types of violence as being very common in Canadian institutions. Thus, while the inmate code appears to govern many aspects of sport-related violence (Young, 2012) in prison environments, my data suggest that sport and physical activity are aspects of carceral physical culture that are deeply connected to both instrumental and expressive acts of violence.

Discussions of instrumental violence in and through sport revolved primarily around weightlifting pits or the exercise yard, rather than team sport. I discuss both the spatial and symbolic significance of this violence in later sections, so here it suffices to note that weight pits and yards provided both the materials (e.g. weight bars) and the spatial characteristics (i.e. large, relatively chaotic, and crowded spaces with minimal staff supervision) for the enactment of instrumental violence. Bob, the former CSC staff member, bluntly explained that free weights were banned in CSC institutions because “the bars were used to cave people’s heads in.” Former inmates similarly described extreme incidents of physical violence in weight pits:

Dave: There was another case where a guy got smashed up badly, so much so that the expression “barred” or “piped” means he got a weight smack.
Mike: When I was at [name of institution], they started pulling [the free weights]. . . . Sure there was a couple fights with the bars, but nobody was at the point of being hospitalized or almost dying from a weight bar.

Violent incidents in these spaces appear to be premeditated, and thus more of the instrumental variety of violence for the purpose of settling scores, staking out gang territory, or establishing one’s place in the masculine hierarchy. The fear of such violence, as well as the obvious physical consequences, contributes to the unhealthy nature of men’s prisons and profoundly shapes their physical culture. Meanwhile, consistent with the fact that toughness is prized within the inmate code (Ricciardelli, 2014), some participants similarly explained a link between aggressive physical activities, such as boxing or weightlifting, and the navigation of a violent social environment. James’ statement exemplified this instrumental approach to physical activity:

[Boxing] is a good form of exercise and overall well being. Because you’re thrown into a society with some really bad guys, right? And you have to learn. It’s like being thrown into the wolf den, who’s the bigger wolf, you know what I mean? Especially [name of penitentiary], ‘cause [penitentiary] is a gladiator school and you got to learn. . . . If you don’t learn something then you’re going to get stepped on, right? Weights have their purpose. But you can be as big as you want, but if you’re not fast, you ain’t too good, buddy, you know what I mean?

While instrumental violence clearly is a feature of certain activities, former inmates explained the expressive variety of violence arising in sport matches as a natural consequence of physical competition. Participants variously described regular games of tackle football and underground boxing matches, aggressive floor hockey matches that earned the name “war hockey” due to their high levels of physical violence, and occasional fights breaking out during particularly heated baseball games. This expressive violence appears to have been tolerated by the administration, as part of a tacit agreement with inmates. James expressed this sentiment, stating:

As long as [the game is] clean and nobody gets killed, then it’s okay. If [staff] got to do paperwork, then it’s not okay. . . . They’re pretty laid back, but if they’ve gotta do paperwork then they gotta remind you, “it’s our house, not yours.” See what I mean? So, they’ll play nice. One hand washes the other . . . Like the old saying is, you don’t shit in your backyard, right?

Other male inmates concurred with James’ view; they generally agreed that it was widely understood among prisoners that a certain level of expressive violence would be
tolerated by staff, but that there would be a loss of privileges if this threshold was surpassed. Expressive sport violence, therefore, can be understood in the prison context as a form of *tolerable deviance* (Stebbins, 1996), a concept that has been applied to sport activities to explain rule-breaking behaviour that is only minimally sanctioned by officials and other stakeholders (Young & Atkinson, 2013). Self-regulation of expressive sport violence thus was an important feature of these activities for participants, as encapsulated by Harry:

> You tried not to [let violence spill over]. Someone would always step up and say “leave that bullshit off the ice” or “leave that bullshit off the diamond.” We don’t need that shit here. Take it inside or take it somewhere else. Because you don’t want to lose that, you want to be able to play that game, y’know?

Thus, for some inmates and for staff, there appears to have been a tolerance of a certain level of violence within prison sport games, with a recognition that there are consequences for the violation of this tacit agreement. Violence of both the instrumental and expressive forms appears to be a regular feature of prison life, including in sport and physical activity.

**Sport, Physical Activity, and Social Control in Prisons**

As discussed in the literature review, we can broadly understand social control being exercised through ideological means or through intervention (Eitzen, 2000). Sport has been implicated in a variety of forms of social control, including “character building” that attempts to instill particular values and ensure adherence to specific social norms. As Coakley (2002) highlighted, such assumptions often frame sport-based interventions in “problem” populations, such as inner city youth, without considering the structural conditions that place these populations outside the dominant culture. A similar targeting of supposedly dangerous or threatening populations has been seen in various historical contexts, including notably in the provision of recreation activities to immigrant or racial minority urban populations in the US (e.g. Hardy & Ingham, 1983; Hartmann, 2001). In all cases, these sport interventions hinge on a labeling of certain populations as deviant and a conscious use of sport and physical activity to inculcate participants with particular dominant cultural values—a common feature in sport-as-social-control efforts (Eitzen, 2000). As Coakley (2011) explains, such interventions assume that “only when these [character building] lessons are internalized by enough people will the positive qualities,
decisions, and choices of individuals benefit the communities in which they live” (p. 309). Meanwhile, Brohm’s (1978) polemical attacks against the deployment of sport in French educational institutions offer a critique of physical activity that provides “stereotyped and one-dimensional bodily techniques . . . to train young people for alienated work, to stifle their sexual needs and inculcate submission to authority” (p. 40-41). This section discusses both ideological and interventionist approaches to social control with regard to the provision of carceral physical recreation, before considering how prisoners may resist both types of social control in the next section.

In order to explore the ideological underpinnings of sport and recreation provision in Canadian prisons, it is helpful to examine the relevant policies and tease out their underlying assumptions. I have already traced the ideological development of Canadian corrections and carceral physical culture, and this analysis gives some insight into changing views on physical culture as part of a broader ideological social control project—namely, the introduction and development of the penitentiary as a social institution that seeks, in different ways at different times, to change the behaviour of its inmates. Most recently, under the Conservative government, carceral physical culture has been increasingly constructed as a means of transforming prisoners into participants in the labour market—an ideological gambit that resonates at least partially with Brohm’s (1978) critiques of sport as a vehicle for social control in support of an exploitative economic system. Concomitantly, in pursuit of this aim, physical recreation has been framed in Conservative policy as both a carrot and a stick: rather than being granted recreational opportunities as a basic human right, inmates may now earn them through conforming to the administration’s standards of conduct; and inmates who do not behave in an acceptable manner may be punished with the stripping of privileges and, in more extreme cases, the severe restriction of movement and social engagement through placement in segregation units.

The attempts to implement this form of social control through carceral physical culture can be seen not only in the Conservative government’s discourses, but also in the policies being produced by CSC bureaucrats that govern the day-to-day management of federal correctional institutions. For example, the Commissioner’s directive on leisure (CSC,
2008) demonstrates an assumption about the social control effect of physical recreation. The directive makes it clear that these activities are to be provided, not for the pleasure or health of prisoners, but “to encourage inmates to use their leisure time constructively, thereby helping them become law-abiding citizens” (CSC, 2008, Article 1). Put differently, leisure activities such as sport are, from a policy perspective, deployed in a functional manner to induce prisoners to act in particular ways. Meanwhile, a Commissioner’s directive on discipline demonstrates that the withholding of sport and physical recreation privileges can be used as a coercive disciplinary tool: “reasonable limitations on recreational privileges used as a sanction [as part of the disciplinary process] may include, but are not restricted to: . . . exercise time per day respecting inmate rights and health requirements . . . [and] opportunities to associate with others” (CSC, 2013d, Annex D).

Jackson and Stewart (2010), in their critique of recent policy and discursive shifts in Canadian corrections, similarly suggest, that when these changes are implemented “prisoners would have to ‘earn’ their rights and privileges. . . . You behave well, you get to play football and have visitors. You don’t, you don’t” (p. 3). These policy representations of physical recreation highlight how it can be used as either a carrot or a stick in prison administrators’ efforts to exercise social control over inmates.

Shifting focus from organizational (i.e. CSC) policy to institutional administration of individual prisons, it was clear from my data, as well as the literature (Caplan, 1996; Frey and Delaney, 1996; Martos-Garcia et al., 2009; Meek, 2014; Pawelko and Anderson, 2005), that sport and physical activities are often seen by prison administrations as a way to control the behaviour of inmates and the social environment of the prison. The provision of physical recreation appears to be driven by strategic reasons concerning both day-to-day prison management and the broader project of changing prisoners’ behaviour. Reflecting the CSC Commissioner’s policy directives, sport and physical recreation are used both as a carrot and a stick, sometimes being viewed as an attractive activity for prisoners that can also promote good behaviour, and other times being withheld as a form of punishment. James explained one way in which the provision of sport activities can act as an inducement by prison staff and administrators to limit prisoner unrest:

The staff and the powers that be, they’ll do what they have to do to have a smooth running joint. Right? Like one hand wash the other. [Staff will say]
“okay you guys, don’t do this, don’t do that, and stop this, and do that, because we don’t like doing paperwork.” And [inmates say] “okay, we’ll be good, but give us the [sports].” Nobody wants upset inmates.

James’ statement would appear to apply to many areas of recreation in prisons, as former prisoners explained how inmate committees would negotiate with staff for activities ranging from team sports to concerts to charity fundraisers. That prison administrators acquiesced in these negotiations suggests that they saw value in the activities and believed they would help the prison to run smoothly. Bob, the former CSC staff member, agreed with this perspective, suggesting that sport activities may be viewed by authorities as a tool for occupying the attention of prisoners and deterring them from causing unrest in the prison:

Physical activity was seen as really a management tool in the institution to try to provide inmates with things to do in their leisure time, as opposed to anything that was directed towards [rehabilitation]... I’m pessimistic that in an institutional setting it will be seen as anything but a babysitter.

This statement suggests that prison administrations may adhere partially to an ‘opiate of the masses’ approach to sport, in which it is deployed to act “as both a temporary escape from the problems of world [or, in this case, institutional] politics and as a safety valve for releasing tensions that might otherwise be directed toward disrupting... existing power relationships” (Eitzen, 2000, p. 373). There may be some validity for this interpretation, particularly given the CSC’s growing concern in the 1970s about inmate violence and rioting. During and following this period, sport activities may have been encouraged to deter inmate violence in response to poor conditions of confinement. However, while there may be some basis for it, the usefulness of an ‘opiate of the masses’ interpretation of the social function of physical recreation is limited. Carceral sport, for example, does not hold out the illusory promise of social mobility to participants (Eitzen, 2000)—inmates are well aware that prowess in sport will do little to change their status or material well-being in relation to the administration (though it may in relation to their fellow inmates).

More likely, then, is that prison administrators commonly subscribe to a safety valve theory of violence, a psychosocial approach that posits that humans require outlets, such as physical activity participation, for naturally accumulated frustrations (Young, 2012). From this perspective, sport serves as a way for prisoners to ‘blow off steam’ and release pent-up
aggression that may have developed as a result of their conditions of confinement; research suggests that many prison administrators and staff subscribe to such an understanding of intense physical activity (Frey & Delaney, 1996). The view of sport as a tool of social control resonates with both the broader literature on prison management and with the experiences of participants in this study.

In addition to being deployed to control prisoner behaviour, exercise and sport are also opportunities for surveillance of the prisoner population. The foregrounded nature of social control in and through recreation is seen both in the policy and practice of Canadian corrections. CSC policy makes it clear that sport activities should be closely monitored by prison staff (CSC, 2008). Meanwhile, it was clear from my research that the yard, the ubiquitous outdoor exercise space in the middle of most prisons, is a heavily surveilled space, with armed guards often gazing down upon the proceedings from their towers. The weight pits and gym spaces are similarly overseen by staff who could, at least in theory, intervene at a moment's notice into the activities of the prisoners. Although Foucault's panopticon, a metaphor for a system of control that subjugates a population through the inducement of self-surveillance rather than the imposition of physical force (Foucault, 1978), is a popular descriptor for prison social control, these surveilled recreation spaces are not panoptical—prisoners are very aware that they are being watched and that, therefore, any subversive action must be undertaken in subtle ways. Three quotations, the first from a former prisoner and the second two from CSC guards who volunteered on the Kingston Penitentiary tours, indicate the different ways in which inmates’ actions in these surveilled physical cultural spaces were controlled through physical force:

**James:** [If there is an incident in the Yard] that sucks too. And we get locked in our drums [cells] for weeks on end. And there’s no good that can come of it. You’ll get transferred all over Canada or to . . . another prison.

**Roger:** If a fight breaks out in the Yard, buddy in there [points to the guards’ watchtower] has got a gun. And a warning shot is not mandatory. If somebody’s gonna kill ya, ya gotta take care of business.

**Rick:** [Sometimes] inmates would refuse to come in from the yard . . . . When negotiations failed, we would gas the yard. It takes a lot of gas to fill this yard.

These statements suggest a contradiction between the ideological social control aims of CSC policies and the interventionist use of physical force. James’ quotation indicates
the pervasive threat faced by inmates of institutional lockdown, being placed in segregation, or even being transferred to another institution. Meanwhile Roger and Rick openly described the use of physical violence by CSC guards to control inmate populations in physical cultural spaces such as the yard. Prisoners are aware of the fact that their actions are being surveilled by armed guards with access to firearms and tear gas. Unlike in Foucault’s (1977) panopticon, discipline here appears to be enforced through physical coercion and a “hold the body” (Alford, 2000)—or perhaps what we might call a “transfer the body”—treatment of prisoners.

According to two participants, a further consequence of the surveillance of sport and physical activity spaces has recently emerged. Due to the Conservative government’s tightening of parole eligibility, prisoners face a tougher time securing their release—and their actions during physical recreation, such as tempers boiling over during a basketball game, may now be noted on their record and used as evidence against their suitability for parole. One recent example of this occurred in 2010, when a CSC inmate was charged with assault against another prisoner “over what he viewed as routine ball hockey violence” (Yanagisawa, 2010, para. 1). To Dave and Harry, such incidents are examples of a shift away from inmate self-policing of prison sport toward increased institutional social control. While my ability to explore this phenomenon was limited, it is nonetheless an area that deserves deeper scrutiny. Even in isolated instances, the documentation of inmate behaviour in physical cultural spaces and the possibility of it affecting future privileges or sanctions represents a key aspect of social control in total institutions: that “an inmate’s conduct in one scene of activity is thrown up to him by staff as a comment and check upon his conduct in another context” (Goffman, 1961a, p. 37). I also found some evidence of this phenomenon in my interviews with yoga practitioners. Although many inmates appear to enjoy and benefit from the volunteer-led yoga and mindfulness classes, these programmes are made available only to inmates who adhere to the administration’s understanding of ‘good’ behaviour—thus, based on staff observation of a prisoner’s conduct in the institution, he or she is given access to or barred from participation in these potentially beneficial classes. This provides an interesting example of how the surveillance of prisoners can contribute to the carrot and stick style of social control in and through aspects of physical culture.
Interestingly, many of the former prisoners I spoke were very aware that their involvement in physical activity and sport contributed to the administration’s attempts to control the inmate population. That is, they were not cultural dupes. As Sam stated:

The administration, they like [inmates to participate in sport] because that means you’re not taking it out on each other in any other part of the institution. . . . If there’s no participation and there’s no sports, then you’re going to have the anxiety build up. Somebody’s going to do something to you or to [another inmate], now his friends are going to retaliate, now you got a gang war going. And [the staff] don’t want that.

While on the surface this view might fit neatly within the expectations of prison administration regarding the utility of physical activity, it would be a mistake to suggest that this is simply an example of false consciousness amongst a repressed group. Rather, former inmates displayed a recognition that they could benefit from the administration’s fears of prisoner unrest and assumptions about the social control function of physical activity. Former prisoners often described a give-and-take struggle with administration over access to different types of physical activity, with an equilibrium often being settled that might allow for increased forms of recreation or even the bending of prison rules. In other words, prisoners are not entirely powerless and, just like prison staff, they play games to try to gain an advantage. One vivid example provided by Dave was an ice hockey match between inmate teams that ran over time. When the guards came to clear the yard and return inmates to their cells, the dozens of players and hundreds of spectators simply refused to come inside. Rather than risk trouble, the staff negotiated with inmates to allow the game to conclude. Less spectacularly, some women described inmates collectively working to increase access to certain forms of sport or exercise space and equipment, in spite of limited resources provided by the administration. These instances of inmate solidarity demonstrate that physical culture is a site through which negotiations of power take place between inmates and staff, and they complicate a straightforward reading of administrative social control efforts. The next section considers in greater depth how, in and through their engagement with physical culture, prisoners resist, however fleetingly, the institutional and ideological control of the prison administration.
Sport, Physical Culture and the Social Production of Prison Space

There is an apparent paradox to physical recreation in a prison environment: that the playing of sports or engagement with pleasurable forms of physical activity represents a free movement in a space whose primary raison d'être is the confinement of human bodies. I explore this tension firstly through the work of Lefebvre (1974) and his spatial triad, tracing in particular Canadian prisons’ changing spatial practice and representations of space since the construction of the Kingston Penitentiary in the 1830s. Having considered both how these spaces were perceived and conceived, I turn to they ways in which they were lived as representational spaces—and specifically, how aspects of inmates’ physical culture have been inseparable from the social production of prison spaces. For this analysis I borrow theoretically from Goffman’s (1961a), particularly his concept of the underlife of total institutions, and from de Certeau’s (1984) conceptualization of resistance in and through space. My interest in the spatial construction of carceral physical culture was sparked as it became increasingly clear during my research that the space of prisons had major impacts on the ways in which prisoners experience physical culture.

Representations of Space and Spatial Practice in CSC Institutions

Prisons, since their inception, have had their spatial and representations of space shaped by hegemonic ideological assumptions about crime, power, and social order—thus, as representational spaces, the ways in which they are experienced by prisoners in daily life are contoured by sociopolitical understandings anchored in particular historical moments. The power of ideology to shape representations of (prison) space is most famously reflected in Jeremy Bentham’s commitment to moral architecture in his Panopticon model of prison design (Foucault, 1977; Taylor, 1979), which was intended not just to control the behaviour of inmates in prisons, but also in workhouses, asylums, and other total institutions (Taylor, 1979). In Canada, as Griffiths (2010) points out, “a review of the history of prison architecture . . . reveals a number of distinct design phases that can be related to shifts in correctional philosophy” (p. 136). This dissertation has already discussed the various social currents—including Protestant morality, a class-based understanding of social order, and an elite paternalism toward the working class—that coalesced in the construction of the Kingston Penitentiary, and this first prison (as well as a number of other early Canadian penitentiaries) was notably intended by its supporters to
stand as a symbolic bulwark against such social disorder (McElligott, 2008; Taylor, 1979). This ambition was reflected in the penitentiary’s architectural design: at its conception, it was designed to be Upper Canada’s biggest public building and to be both impressive and intimidating in its aesthetics (Taylor, 1979). This meant that, in its moral architecture, the prison “would guide the growth of the miscreants it contained, while also setting a course for the young colony in which it was so prominently placed” (McElligott, 2008, p. 126).

*Exterior of Kingston Penitentiary’s original entrance gate (photographed on November 11, 2013 by author)*
The ideological representations of space (Lefebvre, 1974) of Kingston Penitentiary, and other early Canadian penitentiaries of similar design (Griffiths, 2010), were reflected in the spatial practice of its grand architectural design, isolated personal spaces, and austere conditions. The representational spaces (Lefebvre, 1974) in which inmates lived were thus characterized by miserable conditions of confinement, an enforced system of silence, and hard labour. These conditions were enabled by the prison's physical design, which divided inmates' time between daytimes in easily surveilled communal eating and work areas and nights spent in single-occupant “small, barred, windowless cells built in tiers like stacked cages overlooking a tall common space” (Griffiths, 2010, p. 137). The lived spaces of carceral physical culture in this era were thus shaped by both the representational space and spatial practice of the penitentiary.

According to Griffiths (2010), there was little shift in prison design, beyond some retrofitted improvements such as plumbing and ventilation, until new institutions were constructed in the 1950s. Prisons constructed in this decade offered some relatively small design changes, such as offering greater privacy in cells by replacing barred cells with solid
doors with viewing windows. In the 1960s and 1970s, a wave of newly-constructed institutions offered some fairly radical designs. These included: “a campus-style layout” with separated living units; increased rehabilitation and programming space; and a security design that encouraged dynamic security (i.e. proactive efforts based on staff-inmate interaction) rather than static security (i.e. containment through physical barriers and surveillance) arrangements (Griffiths, 2010, pp. 136-138). Such representations of space, and the spatial practice they helped to engender (Lefebvre, 1974), reflected the broader ideological consensus in Canadian corrections about rehabilitation being the primary aim of prisons, which rose to prominence beginning with the Archambault Report (1938) and was in ascendancy in the 1960s and 1970s. A visual comparison of the layouts of Kingston Penitentiary and Springhill Institution (NS), which opened in 1967, shows the contrasting prison styles. In particular, Kingston Penitentiary is more enclosed and more centralized, whereas Springhill Institution features more scattered and less symmetrical buildings, greater amounts of green space, and a perimeter fence that is much less conspicuous and imposing than the thick walls of Kingston Penitentiary.
An aerial view of the spatial layout of Kingston Penitentiary (top; Canadian Press, 2012), which opened in 1835, and Springhill Institution (bottom; Treasury Board of Canada Secretariat n.d.), which opened in 1967.

The 1950s and 1960s were, of course, a period in which physical recreation became prominent in Canadian institutions. The design of the new institutions, such as Springhill, aimed to “normalize the institutional environment . . . [and] reduce inmates’ isolation and loss of personal dignity” (Griffiths, 2010, p. 137). Parallel to these architectural efforts was the widespread introduction of physical recreation, including prominent intramural competitions and regular activities involving community members. The 1971 report of the Solicitor General exemplifies this ideological commitment, noting that “[carceral]
recreation is one of the best means of promoting community involvement and citizen participation” (Goyer, 1971, p. 51). Springhill Institution, which is exemplary of the 1960s prison architecture (Griffiths, 2010), was clearly built with physical recreation in mind, given the prominent space allotted to two baseball diamonds and a track. If, as Lefebvre (1974) suggests, representations of space are the “history of ideologies” (p. 116), the contrasting spaces of Kingston Penitentiary and Springhill Institution reveal much about the historical development of correctional ideology from the mid-19th to the mid-20th century—including attitudes toward sport and physical recreation in these eras.

The use of mixed design and less imposing security barriers, encouraging spatial practices of freer inmate movement and greater socialization between inmates and staff, continued in various forms in many prisons throughout the 1980s and 1990s. By the 2000s, “the new ‘moral architecture’ in federal corrections [promoted] positive group interaction among small groups of inmates, [encouraged] inmates to become more responsible, and [prepared] inmates for life outside the institution” (Griffiths, 2010, p. 139). However, as discussed in the previous chapter, the 1970s also marked the beginning of the increased construction and use of segregation cells and supermax prisons (Lowman & Maclean, 1991), whose representations of space and spatial practice were contradictory to those represented by the Springhill Institution design. Thus, at the same time as the architectural design of new prisons was intended to promote rehabilitation, freedom of movement, and social interaction for some inmates, in other spaces and for other prisoners it promoted punishment, extremely restricted movement, and greatly reduced opportunity for social interaction. Thus, the representations of space and spatial practice of CSC prisons from the 1970s through the early 2000s reflected the ideological shift toward bifurcation, in which some prisoners were given improved resources to help prepare them for reintegration while others were faced with more punitive conditions of confinement (Lowman & Maclean, 1991).

Since the Conservative Party has been in power, it has asserted new representations of space and that will produce different spatial practices in new and retrofitted CSC institutions. The Roadmap (CSC Review Panel, 2007) argued that the existing prison infrastructure was inadequate and that the government must
examine new approaches to facilities design and construction that provide increased opportunities to deliver more effective and efficient correctional services in safe, secure environments (p. 153).

The report criticized older facilities for, among other factors, having spaces where assaults could occur out of sight of guards, inadequate separation between subpopulations (e.g., gangs, those with mental illness), and designs that assume that prisoners are able to manage themselves responsibly. The report further advocates for the construction of large centralized regional institutions that contain minimum, medium, and maximum facilities that can share resources and spaces (CSC Review Panel, 2007). The report produces a representation of space that conforms to the Conservative government's broader ideological treatment of corrections, with a focus on prisoner accountability, earning privileges rather than granting rights, fiscal efficiency as an overriding priority, and the stigmatization and punishment of prisoners (Jackson & Stewart, 2009). Furthermore, the Conservative interest in constructing new institutions, coupled with its legislative changes to imprison more Canadians for longer, mean that the size of these proposed new complexes reflects assumptions about who and how Canadians should be incarcerated for criminal offences. In terms of spatial practice, this approach to prison construction or upgrading would mean larger, more controlled, and more surveilled prisons that will shape inmates’ patterns of movement and conditions of confinement.

**The Production of Sport and Physical Recreation Spaces**

There are numerous ways in which carceral physical culture is implicated in the social production of prison spaces, and I gained some small insights during my data collection into this process under the Conservative government. A popular and memorable stop on the Kingston Penitentiary was the yard, and the following field note gives a description of the space as I recalled it after the tours:

Surrounded on two sides by the penitentiary’s thick walls, and boxed in on the other two sides by imposing buildings, the yard forms the southernmost tip of the institution. As such, it juts aggressively into Lake Ontario and, as I experienced in the frigid November rain, therefore bears the brunt of the lake’s often vicious wind and precipitation. It cannot have been a pleasant space for recreation during the winter months. Even without miserable weather, the yard and its surroundings were been extremely grim. The only bit of colour to break monotony created by the concrete walls, gravel floor, and metal fences that dominated the space was the orange rim and
backboard paint of the four basketball nets that towered high above their asphalt courts.

New yard at Kingston Penitentiary (photographed on November 11, 2013 by author)

Despite the relative freedom of movement that would have been allowed in this space, and the many memories shared with me about epic baseball and hockey games that took place on these grounds, my attention was immediately captured by the very obvious imposition of security features. In the southeastern corner of the yard, a guard tower loomed ominously over the proceedings, a constant reminder that this was a surveilled space and that the armed guards in the tower could intervene at any time they wished. More subtly, a number of cameras and microphones were affixed to the walls as yet more physical evidence of the constant surveillance to which prisoners were subjected. The yard itself was divided into two separate spaces, each of which was enclosed by 10-foot high chain-link fences topped with ample amounts of razor wire. The tall walls dominated the background, and were also liberally topped by razor wire. Thus, the yard was doubly enclosed: cages within walls.
The physical recreation offerings in the yard were sparse. The caged-in yard most visible during the tour had a single heavy bag, dangling idly from its support; a chin-up bar and rack that normally, according to Roger, “would have all kinds of weights on it for exercise,” a single picnic table, bolted to the ground; and a basketball court with two hoops. In the far caged-in yard I could see a basketball court, but no other recreational equipment or infrastructure. I was surprised by the double-caged yards, as this significantly reduced the amount of usable space of the yard. I could not imagine the how the baseball games described to me by former inmates and recounted in the penal press could possibly have occurred in such a space. Fortunately, guards who had worked at Kingston Penitentiary gave some insight into this question and, in doing so, into the representational space of the yard.

According to these former guards, early in 2013, just months before the closure was announced, a renovation was completed to improve security in the yard. This was when the yard was split into the two smaller sections. One of the reasons for doing so was so that staff could more easily intervene if a security incident occurred in the middle of the yard. Around the perimeter of the two caged-in yards, including in between them, was a space
large enough to drive a vehicle, which coupled with secured gates at strategic points in the fence meant that staff could quickly enter the yard. Furthermore, as explained by Roger, the yard’s new design was “for security reasons. Instead of having 300 cons willy-nilly, you put 150 here and 150 there. If something broke out, there’s a little bit of control.” Thus, the representations of space for the new yard clearly valued security and social control as dominant conceptions for how the recreation space should be organized; and the spatial practice, particularly the very visible surveillance and the new security fences that reshaped the yard’s design, reflected these priorities.

Meanwhile, a recent interview with security expert Colin Lobo, conducted on CBC Radio show *The Current* (Tremonti, 2014), offered some insight into how modern prison designs may contour the carceral physical culture experienced by future inmates. With regard to the yard, a space routinely used by inmates in subversive and violent ways, Lobo explained that

traditional correctional facilities had this outdoor yard that was actually away from the building, had a fence around it or a concrete wall. The newer facilities now, that outdoor courtyard is actually within the building itself. So it makes it impossible for . . . people to escape (Tremonti, 2014).

Lobo described modern prison design in terms representational space, with a focus on minimizing escapes and inmate unrest:

Before the design of any facility, we do a detailed threat/risk analysis. We look at all the vulnerabilities, we look at past instances . . . and then we come up with solutions working with the architects to make sure that the layout is conducive so that these security vulnerabilities are minimized (Tremonti, 2014).

He also noted that modern prisons are designed to limit even further a most fundamental aspect of physical culture, namely human movement:

Traditionally in correctional facilities inmates would travel long distances throughout the facility to get from one point to another, whether it was to go to different programs, to go to the yard, for eating. In newer facilities their movement is restricted. They’re all self-contained within an area. . . . Restricting their movement makes monitoring a lot more efficient. . . . We try to provide as much freedom [as possible] for the inmates, but also protect the inmates as well as the officers (Tremonti, 2014).
Thus, within a prison environment already spatially contoured to severely curb human movement and to punish and rehabilitate offenders, there is a trend in modern prison design toward more restricted movement, greater surveillance, and a reduction in outdoor physical recreation spaces. The representations of space discussed by Lobo (Tremonti, 2014) and trumpeted by the authors of the *Roadmap* (CSC Review Panel, 2007) conceive of physical cultural space as dangerous and in need of heightened security and surveillance. This points to an important assumption embedded within modern representations of prison space: namely, that the movement and congregation of inmates is inherently dangerous and must be minimized. As it is a time of heightened social and physical interaction between inmates, recreation period has come increasingly under suspicion. Thus, the new yard at Kingston was designed to limit prisoner mingling and interaction even if this spatial practice reduced the range of possible sport and physical activities in which inmates could participate. And, as Lobo’s overview of modern prisons highlights (Tremonti, 2014), modern designs seek to reduce the amount of distance traversed by inmates in their day-to-day lives. To understand these embedded assumptions about prisoner behaviour and prison space, I now turn to an examination of the third aspect of Lefebvre’s (1974) spatial triad: spatial practice, or lived space.

**Lived Space and Physical Cultural Spaces**

As previously discussed, the Canadian government has viewed physical recreation both as a part of a rehabilitative programme for criminal offenders and as an inducement, whether as a carrot or a stick, for behavioural change. The representations of space reflected in the design of prisons and the representational space of their physical construction have reflected this dichotomous approach to physical recreation and activity—at some times, prisons have been constructed to encourage relatively free movement and opportunities for recreation, and at others their construction has been designed to limit these activities in the name of security and risk mitigation. While sport and recreation are thus employed, in a variety of ways, as a means of social control in prisons, this top-down imposition is neither effectively implemented by staff nor passively accepted by inmates. In fact, the ways in which inmates used sport and recreation spaces—that is, the prison’s representational or lived space (Lefebvre, 1974)—sometimes made surprising physical use of the prison’s spatial practice and often subverted correctional
aims. In particular, inmates repurposed recreation spaces and equipment in ways that tactically undermined the strategies of the administration (de Certeau, 1974) and actively contributed to what Goffman (1961a) refers to as the underlife of the total institution. Thus, in the lived space of prisons inmates resisted, in small ways, the oppression of their sociospatial environments. However, as van Ingen (2003) reminds us, “lived space is both oppressive and enabling” (p. 204) and that certain physical practices “while resistant are destructive and obviously problematic” (p. 211). This contradictory nature of representational spaces was seen in my data, which demonstrated physical cultural spaces as both empowering and physically violent.

One common theme that emerged from my data is that prisoners frequently repurposed recreation spaces and equipment to purposes that were different, if not diametrically opposed, to their intended purpose. Bob, a former CSC staff member, explained to me how, with the ascendency in the 1980s of a “risk management” approach to prison operation, staff spent less time interacting with prisoners and avoided situations and spaces where there was the possibility of inmate unrest. As a result, he explained that in men’s prisons staff withdrew from interaction with inmates in the recreation areas. So inmates were left to their own devices. So the recreation areas became, for lack of a better word, owned by inmates. Not only legitimate social and sports activities, but they became the grounds for inmate commerce and transactions and untoward activity and so on. If you look historically, many serious incidents involving injury or death occurred in the recreation area. Because they’re large areas, minimally supervised by staff (emphasis added).

Bob’s recollection points to the way that perceived space, conceived space, and lived space interacted to produce the space of the yard as one in which certain inmates dominated and exercised power over other inmates. In addition, the staff’s withdrawal from active engagement to passive surveillance of the yard suggests that these inmates also exercised, in a limited fashion, power over the staff and carved out a lived space in which their own economy could flourish. In this way, the yard acted as a space for the development of what Goffman (1961a) calls the underlife of a total institution. Inmates’ development of an underlife takes advantage of the spatial construction of the institution to facilitate physical practices that act as secondary adjustments:
The study of total institutions also suggests that formal organizations have standard places of vulnerability, such as supply rooms, sick bays, kitchens, or scenes of highly technical labour. These are the damp corners where secondary adjustments breed and start to infest the establishment” (Goffman, 1961a, p. 305).

Along with physical violence, recreation spaces such as the yard were also described to me as places in which other secondary adjustments, such as smoking cigarettes or taking illegal drugs, occurred. Dave provided a vivid description of how an inmate underlife developed in a medium security institution and used the conceived space of the prison to create a lived space for inmate commerce and socializing:

They didn’t have night yard at [institution] . . . simply because they didn’t have lights. But they used to leave “the Strip,” . . . this really broad hallway, a huge broad hallway, running the whole way right from the front to the back, and all the ranges go off it. They used to leave that open and people would mill about, it was like a stand on Zanzibar. They’d actually set up tables and sell things, and some of the guards would sit at the very end and watch this . . . . And that’s not where things happened. It was so weird coming from Millhaven, where you weren’t around a lot of people, and it was unnerving to go in there where there’s all these people, hundreds of people around. It was very strange. You had to get used to it. Then eventually, after quite a while, they did get some yard lights out so they had evening yard and they closed [the Strip] down. Of course, now they would never let guys just mill about like that.

Dave’s description highlights the creative ways in which inmates can, through their construction of representational space (Lefebvre, 1974), create unique spaces that serve their own recreational purposes and that are minimally surveilled and controlled by staff. Such spaces are critical to the establishment of a prison underlife and may offer many inmates important opportunities to develop secondary adjustments that ease their pains of imprisonment (Goffman, 1961a).

My data collection also highlighted some ways in which the spatial practice and representations of space interacted to produce some unique forms of physical culture. The penal press sources occasionally mentioned physical activities that appeared to have developed in response to the specific spatial layout of a particular prison. For example, a 1966 article in Joyceville Prison’s Advance (Stern, 1966) mentioned a sports day that included atypical sporting contests such as base-running on the prison’s baseball diamond and an 880 yard relay race around part of the prison grounds. I was also told of inmates
taking advantage of a large wall to fashion an outdoor racquetball court in the yard, whose boundaries were arbitrarily created based on the available paved space by the wall. Meanwhile, in his insightful memoir, Andreas Schroeder (1976) described how spatial production, presentation of self, and embodied physical practice combined to produce a unique walking style called the “Prisoner Waltz” or “Slammer Shuffle”:

It’s that peculiar prison walk which is unique to inmates who have done medium- or maximum-security time and is like no other walk I’ve ever seen. It’s different primarily because its purpose differs from that of a walk along an open street; the shuffle isn’t intended to get anyone anywhere; it’s the walk of a man going no place. At the same time it’s designed to cover a large distance, tirelessly, like the pacing of a caged animal—because that’s essentially what it is. . . . Head down and weaving slightly, eyes focused inward and arms crossed behind his back, the shuffler paces from wall to wall or gate to gate like a mechanical toy. . . . The shuffler walks instinctively on the forward part of the foot, rocking from instep to toes, thus constantly alert in body if not in mind. I’ve seen prisoners walk for hours in this way (pp. 34-35).

Schroeder (1976) further articulated the significance of this physical practice, noting that it was a way of creating opportunities for socializing that might be difficult otherwise to create:

Where a man on the Street might invite a friend to join him in a cup of coffee or a beer, an inmate suggests: “Wanna walk a bit?” Often two, three or even four inmates get up to walk together. . . . In a neat even row, their paces measured and matched, deep in conversation, the walkers stride until they arrive at the opposite wall or barrier, where, still in perfect unison . . . they whirl neatly about . . . and they’re off again, still in perfect unison and heading for the opposite wall, where they’ll turn and come back. This, too, I have seen continue for hours and nobody missing a step (p. 35).

These lengthy passages from Schroeder’s (1976) memoir highlight how physical movement can be constrained by the perceived space of a prison, which itself is reflective of the conceived space that underlay its design, and how prisoners create lived space through their physical engagement in and through these spaces. For de Certeau (1984), walking in the city is an everyday spatial practice through which the individual appropriates the urban topography and acts out the space in a physical and corporeal manner. Similarly, for the inmates described by Schroeder (1976), the act of walking was a physical and embodied appropriation of a prison space not designed for the physical and
social purposes to which they turned it. The walking is one example of inmate tactics, in that the activity is one of a number of “ways of ‘making do’ . . . [that] do not obey the law of the place, for they are not identified or defined by it” (p. 30). Much like the use of *la perruque* (de Certeau, 1984) as a tactical appropriation of everyday (physical cultural) objects, the tactic of walking is significant as a temporary rupture in the correctional strategies of prison administrators and the spatial practice and representational space (Lefebvre, 1974) of the institution. However, while these spaces may offer inmates a chance to temporarily evade institutional control, they may also be sites of increased threats of violence and danger.

As discussed previously, many male inmates described prison as a physically violent environment. Recreation spaces, in particular the yard and weight pits, were frequently invoked as sites in which violence could regularly occur and vigilance was warranted. Dave, upon entering a maximum security prison at the start of his federal sentence, quickly acquired this understanding of the yard. Although he wished to begin an exercise regime after months of ill health in a provincial institution, he explained that he had to “get the nerve to go to the Yard, because, y’know, the Yard seemed kinda scary to walk in.” Other male former inmates described sport activities and spaces as similarly violent. I was told of cribbage boards being wielded as weapons, prisoners getting “barred” or “piped” (attacked with weightlifting bars) in the weight pit, and ice hockey matches featuring levels of violent play. Even more dramatically, the infamous Kingston Penitentiary of 1971 began in the recreation hall, as a number of inmates took advantage of the relative openness and chaotic conditions of the space to overpower guards and begin their efforts to take control of the prison (Desroches, 1974). The lived space (Lefebvre, 1974) of prison physical recreation sites thus appears to be frequently characterized by high levels of instrumental and expressive violence.

Even in women’s prisons, which female participants did not describe in such physically violent terms, there appears to be aggressive competition for very limited physical activity equipment and the development of social hierarchies that determined who could access particular spaces and equipment. As Marie bluntly put it, equipment “gets monopolized by certain individuals,” suggesting that unequal power dynamics between
female inmates determine access to scarce physical cultural resources. Furthermore, because the new women’s prisons are set up on a “neighbourhood housing” model of small living units spread around the grounds (Griffiths, 2010), access to gym space was contoured based upon the location of inmates’ rooms from the recreation space. Cheryl explained that there were only 13 cardio machines at the institution where she was incarcerated, and that the spatial layout of the prison helped determine who accessed these:

> We do have in the gym the exercise machines. Now they’re only available to inmates after 5:30 PM count, which is in the evening, so it’s not that much time…. And there’s so many women who want to use [the machines]…. I live in the back [of the institution] in the minimum [security] housing, and the women at the back they can never get to the gym…. So the only people that have access to the gym are the ones that live in the front or if you can run fast enough to get your name on the [sign-up] list…. So the others don’t get any machines so they can’t exercise.

Thus, for Cheryl, the perceived and conceived spaces of the women’s prison helped create a lived space in which access to fitness machines was restricted. Furthermore, women prisoners described a generally competitive and individualized environment, in which, according to Marie, “nobody’s in to working together. It’s a battle.” While men’s prisons were described by participants in more physically violent terms, they were also characterized as places of competition over recreation spaces and equipment that privileged a few inmates and marginalized others. For example, Bob, described how recreation spaces—such as the yard, gym and weight pits—increasingly became dominated by gangs and were thus hostile environments for others to enter. Thus, both men’s and women’s prisons appear to be characterized by certain levels of competition and violence between inmates relating to sport spaces and activities—characteristics that are in opposition to both the social control and rehabilitation agendas of the administration.

These data suggest that the CSC’s competing ideologies of rehabilitation and punishment, as well as its social control agenda in prison design and management, are not neatly translated in the production of inmates’ lived space. For example, inmate “ownership” of the yard allowed it to be refashioned as a violent and exclusionary space, suggesting that the safety valve theory of social control (Young, 2012), which can implicitly underpin the rationale for the provision of physical activity to prisoners, is in some cases
severely misguided. Furthermore, these data suggest that surveillance, though somewhat present in recreation spaces, is not an effective form of social control; and that a combination of institutional management decisions and prisoners’ collective behaviour helps to construct the lived space of recreation areas as violent and competitive. Meanwhile, the ideological assumptions underpinning the new women’s prisons’ perceived rehabilitative space, conceived through their spatial “neighbourhood housing” layouts, are not reflected in the lived space in which inmates with greater status and geographic proximity monopolize access to the limited exercise equipment and spaces. These representational recreation spaces also point to the way in which prisoners make, in a way reminiscent of de Certeau’s (1984) description of tactics, use of institutional space and resources in unanticipated ways. Furthermore, the underlife (Goffman, 1961a) that develops in these spaces demonstrates the double-edged nature of lived space, which, as noted earlier, can be constructed through physical practices that “while resistant are destructive and obviously problematic” (van Ingen, 2003, p. 211).

Conclusion

Physical culture plays a prominent role in the social construction of carceral environments, and its impact on the daily lives of prisoners is mixed. Physical practices such as sport and weightlifting may contribute to violent inmate cultures within prisons, refuting the implicit policy notion that such activities help prisoners release tension in a benign manner. However, other aspects of carceral physical culture, such as drug regimens and inadequate diets, can enact to symbolic violence against inmates and contribute to the social control efforts of prison administrators. The framing of physical recreation by the CSC suggests that it is used as a form of social control as a carrot and stick, that is, as a reward to induce compliance with administrative goals or as punishment for failing to do so. The heavy surveillance of physical recreation spaces, and the willingness of prison staff to use violence to enforce discipline, indicates that prison administrations are willing to take an active approach to asserting their control over physical cultural spaces. However, prisoners are aware of these intentions and are able, in limited ways, to maneuver so as to secure continued access to recreation or minor bending of prison rules.
Meanwhile, a spatial analysis of physical cultural spaces in prison indicates that the design of prisons reflects ideological assumptions about corrections, including carceral physical culture, at the historical moment of their conception. Furthermore, their conceived space is constructed so as to direct the movement of prisoners in particular ways, with modern prisons built to restrict opportunity for inmate congregation and social interaction, including in physical recreation spaces. However, the experience of former prisoners resist the lived space of prisons is constructed in unexpected ways that undermine the correctional aims of the administration. Physical cultural lived space can be a site for the expression of agency and inmate solidarity, yet oftentimes it is a violent and competitive space in which inmates’ establish and reinforce social hierarchies. In both cases, inmates’ use of physical cultural spaces subverts the social control efforts of prison administrators. The new wave of prison design presently being implemented in federal prisons will reshape the social production of physical cultural spaces in CSC institutions. However, if Goffman’s (1961a) analysis of total institutions is accurate, inmates will find a way to take advantage of these new prison spaces to develop an underlife that subverts, in small ways, their intended functions. The next chapter examines in more detail how carceral physical culture can contribute to a prison’s underlife and the limited opportunities for resistance it affords to inmates.
Chapter 6: The Presentation of Self, Inmate Tactics, and Institutional Ceremonies: Opportunities for Resistance and Role Release through Carceral Physical Culture

This chapter is divided into two sections. The first section draws upon theoretical work of Goffman (1959, 1961a) and de Certeau (1984) to explore how inmates present their selves in and through carceral physical culture, and how this self presentation can have a tactical character that allows limited opportunity for resistance within a total institutional context. I specifically discuss inmates’ sculpting of intimidating muscular bodies and reappropriation of physical cultural paraphernalia to illustrate this tactical subversion. The second section draws upon Goffman’s (1961a) description of institutional ceremonies to explore the significance of five types of physical cultural event that emerged strongly in the data: annual sport festivals, intermural sport competition against community teams, intramural sport leagues, celebrity visits, and community-led activities with a therapeutic or rehabilitative focus. These events are exceptional in the daily life of the prison, yet carry important social meaning. For prison administrations, they are an opportunity to present a public image of a smoothly operating and humane institution, while for inmates they are an opportunity for limited material gain and, more significantly, for temporarily overcoming the stigma and dehumanization they face due to their status as inmates—what Goffman (1961a) refers to as role release. The chapter concludes by discussing institutional ceremonies in light of the Conservative government’s recent correctional changes.

The Presentation of Self and Inmate Tactics

Having discussed the ways in which aspects of physical culture are part of the often unhealthy and violent every day life of Canadian prisons, as well as the ways in which they are implicated in the administration’s ideological and interventionist social control efforts, this chapter now considers how prisoners make use of physical culture in their daily lives—and in what ways these uses may resist the severe restrictions placed upon them in prison environments. In particular, I discuss physical recreation as a tactic of making do (de Certeau, 1984) in the prison environment and as a contributor to the underlife of this total institution (Goffman, 1961a). It is critical to exercise caution when reading resistance into
everyday physical practices (Giulianotti, 2005) and, as such, I attempt to recognize the limitations of such tactical engagement with physical culture. Prisoners have limited agency, and it would be problematic to overstate the extent to which their engagement with physical culture allows them to navigate their day-to-day existence in a total institution.

The chapter first considers how inmates’ presentations of self (Goffman, 1959) are politicized in and through carceral physical culture, and how prisoners’ bodies can be sites of resistance and agency. Next I consider how the repurposing of physical cultural paraphernalia is an example of a tactic through which inmates subvert the prison administration’s regulation of their daily lives. Then I discuss the limits to physical cultural resistance in prisons, before concluding with a discussion of the significance of physical culture and the practice of everyday life (de Certeau, 1984).

**The Presentation of Self and Bodies as Sites of Resistance and Agency in Men’s Prisons**

In *The Presentation of Self in Everyday Life*, Goffman (1959) explains in great detail the ways in which people create a ‘front stage’ performance that uses available resources to present a passable impression to their audiences. These front stage performances require both an appropriate *setting* and *personal front*—a doctor, for example, is expected to appear in a medical setting and possess attire and tools expected of his or her role. In total institutions, however, inmates are subjected upon entry to various strategies to achieve *mortification of the self*—that is, practices that strip the inmate of key aspects of his or her outside identity and forge a new one in the bureaucratically-managed world of the institution (Goffman, 1961a). Mortification processes may include referring to inmates using degrading language, calling inmates by numbers rather than names, providing inadequate or uncomfortable food and lodging, or creating uniform physical appearances through standardized dress, hairstyles and comportment. All of these practices occur, to varying degrees, in prisons and all have the effect of significantly limiting the range of ways in which an inmate can express a unique sense of self. Put differently, prisoners are denied many of the resources with which they would normally publicly present themselves and thus are severely restricted in their abilities to stage a successful performance and control the impressions they present to others (Goffman, 1959).
As Ritzer and Goodman (2004) highlight, although Goffman’s work on the presentation of the self is frequently understood as relating solely to micro-level social interaction, it is in fact very much concerned with and aware of social structures. Fronts, for example, “tend to become institutionalized. . . . Very often, when actors take on established roles, they find particular fronts already established for such performances” (p. 225). This is significant in prison environments, where various structural factors, such as the violent nature of many institutions and the social regulation imposed by the *inmate code* (Ricciardelli, 2014), mean that impression management can be extremely significant to inmates—including with regard to their social acceptance and physical safety. Inmates must thus present a front that both conforms to the narrow range of tolerable performances and maximizes their ability to complete their sentence as safely and pleasurably as possible. In a total institution with extremely limited resources for constructing a passable front stage performance, aspects of carceral physical culture—including physical practices such as sport and bodybuilding—can take on significance as vehicles for the presentation of the self.

An excellent example of the importance of self presentation in a total institution is found in Andreas Schroeder’s memoir of his time in British Columbia federal penitentiaries. Schroeder (1976) explains how the standard issue prison uniform, a common feature of mortifications of the self in total institutions (Goffman, 1961a), could be adjusted in small ways by prisoners to assert a distinct front—but, that the opportunity to do so was a privilege open to only certain inmates in the hierarchy:

You wanted on the one hand to maintain your individuality, on the other to keep your profile low enough to avoid attracting unnecessary attention, from both guards and inmates alike. . . . As a newcomer, in particular, you . . . wore your prison clothes as they had been issued. . . . Tearing the arms off a shirt or jacket to create a vest, however, was definitely seen as swaggering and invariably drew challenges when first worn. . . . The clothes a person wore in prison were a far more accurate reflection of his accomplishments than a person's clothing Outside, and this made it much easier to “read” a person at a single glance; virtually everything you owned or said or wore was directly symbolic of who you were or wanted to be (pp. 30-31).
Moving from inmates’ clothing modifications to their body modifications, we can begin to explore the ways in which physical culture contributes to a similar self presentation in prisons and the significance that such practices take on in these environments.

Given the violence enacted against and upon the bodies of prisoners through their confinement, it is interesting that some inmates consciously use their own bodies to make very visible displays to other prisoners or staff. In doing so, an inmate uses his body to build an “‘identity kit’ for the management of [a] personal front” (Goffman, 1961a, p. 20) and, in some cases, as a tactical form of resistance to administrative impositions (de Certeau, 1984). Weightlifting, as an activity purportedly provided by the correction system to help prisoners rehabilitate and to keep the institution safe, provides an excellent case study of this phenomenon—particularly as prisoners’ subversive use of the activity has resulted in reactive administrative changes to try to curb these practices. This research found that prisoners lift weights for a diversity of reasons, including improving physical health, taking control over one’s body, becoming more intimidating to guards and other prisoners, deterring violence against oneself, self-improvement and goal setting, managing boredom, socializing with friends, managing stress, and making oneself useful as “muscle” in a gang. Very few of these motivations mesh with the goals of the corrections system or the administration of individual prisons and suggest, in Goffman’s (1961a) terms, that in the practice of weightlifting prisoners collectively “decline in some way to accept the official view of what they should be putting into and getting out of the organization (p. 304)”

Muscular inmates have been perceived as a potentially violent threat by corrections staff for some time, leading to changes in the type of and access to weights in prisons. Prisoners have used the administration’s perception of exercise as a safety valve to develop, through the practice of weightlifting, physiques that gave the impression of threatening the very social order the activity is supposed to protect. As Dave explained:

[Prisoners’ motivation is] trying to get big. Perception, too, [that] you’re safer, tougher. I was really, really big back then, for most of the time. Bodybuilding big.

While the supposed administrative fear of muscular prisoners might appear to be an exaggeration, there is historical evidence to suggest that weightlifting inmates have been
perceived as a legitimate threat in corrections systems. For example in 1994, after two violent attacks against guards in prison weight rooms in the US, the Congress considered the Pryce-Strupak Amendment, a piece of legislation to ban weightlifting and self-defense training in federal institutions. One of the members of Congress who proposed the amendment, capitalizing on a moral panic around prisoner violence (Tepperman, 2014), argued for the ban by stoking fears of inherently violent prisoners who were enabled by the provision of weights:

Not only is this equipment used inside prisons as weapons—but it also supplies a means for many prisoners, already prone to violence, to increase their strength and bulk. We have unwittingly been mass producing a super breed of criminals... If you want to stop building a better thug, support the Pryce-Stupak amendment (Pryce, 1994).

Though Canada has not had the same moral panic, similar concerns about muscular prisoners exist. Bob, the former CSC staff member I interviewed, explained that guards started avoiding the weight areas because of fears of meeting a violent and strong inmate “with a 20-pound steel bar in his hand.” He further explained that for safety reasons free weights were slowly phased out of federal prisons, to be replaced with universal weight systems, beginning with maximum security and continuing down through the system; a number of male inmates who were interviewed were incarcerated during this period, and described the shift from large and crowded free weight pits to smaller and confined indoor gyms. That prisoners use their bodies as a performance directed toward prison staff was similarly suggested in the comment by Roger, a retired CSC guard: “Most guys would come in here [to Kingston Penitentiary], they’d look [skinny]. When they’d leave they’d have tattoos everywhere and they’d look like Arnold Schwarzenegger.” Clearly the self presentations of muscular (and tattooed) inmates were noticed by prison staff, some of whom perceived them as threats. This is notable from a symbolic interactionist perspective, in which symbols and meanings, and the process of their interpretation, are significant to shaping social life (Blumer, 1969, p. 5).

Canadian and US prison administrations’ banned free weights as a response by to large male inmates—a reactive *strategy* designed to impose a rational order on spaces that have been unsettled by prisoner tactics (de Certeau, 1984). In this sense, weightlifting may be understood as a practice of everyday life that enables many prisoners to assert some
level of agency and symbolically resist the impositions of the prison administration that exercises such control over the conditions of their daily existence. Atkinson's (2002) research on female tattoo enthusiasts shows, drawing briefly on de Certeau, that some individuals in marginalized social positions will “in de Certeau’s terms . . . use ‘what they have’ [i.e. their bodies] in order to wage resistance” (p. 233) In a similar manner, a muscular physique can be a tactic of resistance for prisoners.

Furthermore, the fact that some prisoners seek, through weightlifting, to construct a particular front suggests that physical activity and sport can be an important part of constructing an identity in prison. This practice can be significant not only for asserting agency in a disempowering environment, but also for navigating the hierarchy between inmates. This is borne out in Ricciardelli’s (2014) research on masculinity in Canadian prisons, which highlights how many men undertake intense weightlifting regimens, not for their physical health, but because “presenting as or looking tough is just as important for masculine presentation as actually being tough” for surviving and establishing dominance over other inmates. (p. 49). The participants in this study similarly expressed the sentiment that becoming large through weightlifting was, in large part, a form of impression management (Goffman, 1959) geared toward appearing strong and tough regardless of actual physical ability. Dave captures some of these complexities surrounding self presentation, violence, and masculinity:

You feel less vulnerable if you feel stronger. Now I didn’t have much trouble. . . . But the fact is that guys used to say “look at the size of the guns on you.” But I don’t even know how to throw a punch properly. If you ever see me throw a baseball I throw like a girl! . . . The real bodybuilders couldn’t [fight], they didn’t have the range of motion. . . . I think a lot of people do use that [perception of being tough], it makes you feel a little more confident.

The use of the body as both a tactic and a front is particularly significant given the context of a total institution, in which inmates have a very narrow range of resources from which to (re)construct an identity (Goffman, 1961a). It is also a historically and culturally contingent phenomenon, a fact I was only briefly able to delve into through my data collection but to which much more study is owed. Bob provided me with the first clue about the ways in which prisoner corporeal self presentation can shift according to broader sociopolitical forces. According to Bob, inmates increasingly turned toward weightlifting as
a form of physical activity due to a slow decline in team sport beginning in the 1950s and 1960s, which itself was precipitated by two factors: the permitting of radio and television sets in cells, which began to occupy the recreation time of greater numbers of inmates; and a shift in prison management style to *risk management*, under which the congregation of large numbers of inmates around sport contests became increasingly a matter of concern for prison administrators.

Meanwhile, competition amongst biker gangs, whose “primary mode of operation was intimidation,” created a high demand for muscular inmates to assist with the intimidation and extortion of other inmates. As such, according to Bob, “the ’70s and ’80s were an age of muscle. . . . [Gangs] needed to have some beef, some muscle behind [them]. So you had corps of inmates who were vigorously pumping themselves up to counteract the opposition.” However, this metaphorical and literal arms race began to fade in the mid-1980s due to the rapid influx of racial minority inmates and rise of ethnic- and race-affiliated gangs in what had formerly been largely a white prison population—a reflection of changing immigration patterns and ongoing socioeconomic marginalization of ethnic minorities in broader Canadian society in this period27 (Hiebert, 2000; Reitz, 2001). This new gang cultures mimicked a street scene in which weapons, not fists, were the principle form of settling scores—meaning that muscularity was no longer the prized gang attribute it had been when biker gangs predominated. Furthermore, the new gangs created divisions amongst ethnic groups and solidarity within them, meaning that violence became more far-reaching in its impacts. Instead of “beefs” arising largely between individuals, they became gang affairs according to Bob: “If you and I have a disagreement, and I’m a Muslim, suddenly you have a disagreement with all the Muslims in the joint.”

It was difficult given my limited data collection to corroborate Bob’s version of events. However, I certainly gleaned fragments of data that help to support his

27 Beginning in the 1960s, Canadian immigration policy changed to reduce racial favouritism of white European, American and Commonwealth immigrants and to increase the numbers from Asia, Africa, and Latin America. In the 1980s, the number of immigrants admitted each year doubled to 200,000. Together, these changes “led to a dramatic increase in the number of non-European immigrants entering Canada” (Hiebert, 2000, p. 27).
interpretation. Dave, for example, described a prison scene in the 1980s in which biker gangs such as Hell’s Angels and Satan’s Choice were prominent in the inmate culture of the prison, but noted that these gangs did not pressure non-members into joining. Furthermore, he described a culture in which muscular inmates were respected and feared, yet also noted a shift toward a focus on weapon-based violence and athleticism in which being large and strong was no longer a physical advantage:

[Inmates] say don’t be afraid of the big guy, it’s the little guy [you should be afraid of]. Because the big guy will give you a shot in the head, but the little guy [will] come up from behind you…. [If I’m a little guy] I’m not gonna fight you, I’m gonna stab you so full of holes they’ll think you’re a colander.

Furthermore, due to his close work with prisoners since his release, Dave was very attuned to the major changes to the gang scene and the ways in which they have impacted prison life:

Street gangs are a real problem [today]. They clique up…. They force a lot the guys [to join]. When a young Black fella comes to the prisons he’s gonna have a hard time staying out of [Black gangs]. Just like out West, it’s all Aboriginals and they really pressure the guys into joining. They’ll have three or four different [Aboriginal] gangs, I mean it’s really hard [to stay out of it].

The organization of prison life around race or ethnicity was also observed in the penal press, particularly in the remaining team sports taking place in prisons. Similarly, although it was very brief, my visit to Joyceville Institution highlighted the ongoing competition between racial and ethnic inmate groups in and through physical culture. In addition to being told that the different recreation rooms for cultural groups were being merged due to ongoing violence between the groups (these spaces were closed at the time due to a recent gang-related stabbing in one of them), I noted a sign promoting an upcoming floor hockey game between race-based teams. While aspects of carceral physical culture may have become more racially segregated, there are some indications that it has also become more diverse, with activities such as soccer, table tennis, and Aboriginal physical practices being introduced or more widely popularized. The diversification of Canada’s male prisons in the past 30 years (Sapers, 2013) thus appears to have had a profound effect on the social organization of prison life and carceral physical culture in men’s institutions.
Interestingly, it appears that various structural factors are once more making muscular physiques an important part of prison masculinity for Canadian inmates. Ricciardelli’s (2014) recent research suggests that the inmate code has changed in response to rising rates of violence and risk, and has become increasingly individualized rather than collective. As a result, presentations of self that will minimize risk by contributing to a threatening and tough masculine image—that is, strong and muscular physiques—are highly prized. Importantly, this self presentation is directed toward other inmates, rather than staff. One participant, Steve, who completed his sentence entirely in the 2000s, indicated one way in which changing administrative controls have impacted the perception of muscular prison bodies. Whereas the fear of muscular prisoners was previously seen by staff as a potential security threat, the arming of guards with new technologies of inmate control meant that they had less fear of physical attacks:

Corrections [would get] nervous, and this might be a thing of the past, about inmates getting too strong, [about] people getting too big and strong from weightlifting, because then it might become a security threat. I don’t think that’s really true. [Prison staff] don’t even think of that stuff anymore. They have Tasers and stuff now. . . . So I don’t think they’re concerned about [strong inmates] so much.

Steve’s comment points toward a key point in Ricciardelli’s research (2014), namely that administrative controls and inmate culture interact to produce unique forms of physical culture within particular correctional environments. This bears further research in Canadian federal corrections as the impact of the Conservative government’s policies continues to shape prison administration in new ways.

**Physical Cultural Paraphernalia as Resources for Identity and Resistance**

Tactical resistance and identity construction can also be found in the paraphernalia associated with the prison’s weightlifting subculture. Research on sport subcultures indicates that equipment may play a major role in the construction and representation of subcultural identity (Donnelly and Young, 1988; Ohl and Taks, 2008). Meanwhile, prisoner writing (Genis, 2014; Hassine, 2011; Schroeder, 1976) indicates that, in a variety of correctional settings, everyday items such as clothing can take on huge significance in terms of identity. Goffman (1961a) also highlights this point, both in terms of how in a total institution the deprivation of individualized material goods is a key part of the loss of an
individual’s “control over the guise in which he appears before others” (p. 20), and therefore the added social significance that is assigned to the “small, illicit, talisman-like possessions that inmates use as symbolic devices for separating themselves from the position they are supposed to be in” (p. 307). It is in this context that we may understand how the ownership, or at least the access to, sport-related material goods can take on major social significance in a prison context.

Participants mentioned various items of such value, including yoga mats, homemade boxing gloves, and running shoes, which both enabled participation in a meaningful physical practice and helped the person to establish a sense of identity within the institution. In an informal discussion with a CSC Procurement Officer, I was told that some inmates, who found running to be a very meaningful activity, saved and spent nearly all their discretionary funds for the year on high quality running shoes that the officer would source specially from local sporting good stores. Meanwhile, yoga instructors described how access to mats differed by institution and shaped inmates’ ability to engage in the physical practice. In some prisons, mats were not allowed in cells, making inmate access to formal classes an incredibly competitive process; on the other hand, in some institutions inmates could borrow or purchase mats and thus participate in their own routine in the confines of their cells. A former American prisoner, who has written about his involvement in a prison weightlifting subculture, explains vividly the significance of items of physical culture in his description of inmate-created weight belts:

[The belt] was a jailhouse bodybuilder’s very identity. Leatherworking was allowed in Green Haven CF, so for $50, a man would make a weightlifting belt that expressed your personality. . . . The best one I ever used was a jury-rigged canvas belt sewn out of a punching bag’s exterior, with the word “Everlast” still visible. But every serious weightlifter I knew had his own personalized belt. . . . It’s part of the culture, especially since prisoners are so limited in what they can wear. In an environment where your self-expression is constantly denied, you seize any opportunity to assert who you are, even if it’s only a bit of colorful leather wrapped around the waist. . . . It was just part of the uniform of a jailhouse bodybuilder (Genis, 2014, paras. 8, 10).

As Genis’ statement highlights, sporting equipment represents a small, but significant, resource for constructing one’s identity in prison. It also hints at the ways in which such material goods can be used for what de Certeau (1984) calls la perruque, or the
appropriation by the weak of the tools of the powerful for their own purposes. This concept is applicable in prisons, where the theft and repurposing of prison goods is common and a thriving underground economy operates (Goffman, 1961a). In Genis’ narrative, the repurposing of prison-issued punching bags and the use of the institution’s leatherworking shop to produce weightlifting belts demonstrates such small material appropriations that benefit the less-powerful inmates. Similarly, a media investigation into weightlifting in US prisons found that, in lieu of proper equipment, “resourceful prisoners check out books from the library for the sole purposes of lifting them. Those who work in the mess hall can hoist large pots full of water” (Palmer, 2011, para 4).

I uncovered a number of similar examples of prisoners engaging tactically with the limited materials and structures available to them to resist the restrictions placed upon their physical practices. For example, in the hastily abandoned cell blocks of Kingston Penitentiary, which bore many traces of their recently departed occupants, I observed numerous cells in which inmates had fashioned makeshift free weights out of thick cloth (bedding or nightshirts) wrapped around heavy objects. Meanwhile, former inmates mentioned practices such as rearranging their cells to accommodate yoga practice, using bunk beds for makeshift workouts, and volunteering for manual labour jobs in order to sneak access to gym equipment. These examples demonstrate that, even in the face of severe restrictions on their physical movement and practices, many prisoners find tactics through which they “vigilantly make use of the cracks that particular conjunctions open in the surveillance of the proprietary powers” (de Certeau, 1984, 37) and achieve, in a limited fashion, their own ends. The culture of a prison’s underlife (Goffman, 1961a) appears to be rife with small, but significant, acts of resistance and identity reclamation in and through sport and physical activity.
Navigating Tactics and the Limits to Resistance

It is important to note that prisoners’ tactics are constantly under (often unspoken) negotiation with the prison administration and any shift in the status quo may lead to them being swiftly, and sometimes permanently, shut down. This is particularly true where actions are violent or are otherwise perceived as a threat to the institution’s safety, reflecting Bob’s previous observation about the hegemony within the CSC of a risk management style of prison administration. The banning of free weights in US prisons after a small number of violent incidents is instructive in this regard—particularly as this meant that the actions of a very small number of prisoners affected the experiences of all inmates in the system. A similar example I found, albeit a spectacular and exceptional one, concerned the closing of the inmate-maintained and –operated ice rink at a maximum security institution in Ontario. A variety of sources made it clear that some Canadian men’s institutions had outdoor rinks, which were used for recreational skating and lively intramural hockey matches. However, at this prison, an outbreak of violence led to their
permanent closure in 1988. Harry first described this incident to me, explaining: “Shortly after I left [name of institution], guys had a smashup and burnt the rink boards. So that ended the rink.” I was then able to find a discussion of this in a penal press source, and the ice rink disturbance appears to have occurred during a broader period of inmate unrest and heavy-handed staff crackdowns at this institution:

Disagreement spread far and wide and tension mounted. . . . A prisoner [was] shot dead in the yard. The Inmate Committee along with the servery workers [left] their jobs in protest and the population of the prison follow[ed] suit. . . . [After the] burning of the hockey boards and bleachers . . . Christmas came and went without the christmas [sic] bags and ballhockey [sic] played instead of the usual ice hockey. . . . Snow and cold weather [arrived] and still no ice rink for the pleasure skaters (Turnbull, 1988, p. 4).

As previously discussed, social control is exercised in and through carceral physical culture as both a carrot and a stick. In this case, the administration clearly used the latter approach, punishing the ongoing inmate unrest by refusing to reopen the ice rink and thus depriving them of an important form of recreation for players and spectators. It is impossible, without deeper data collection, to discern whether the destruction of the rink was an expressive or instrumental form of collective violence (Griffiths, 2010)—that is, whether it was a spontaneous and aimless outbreak of violence or whether it was a tactic in the collective resistance against the administration that inmates were waging. However, the manner in which the act was punished is a reminder that actions that are, or are perceived to be, subversive tactics against the strategies of domination (de Certeau, 1984) employed by prison administrations can be swiftly punished and have long-lasting effects on inmates’ conditions of confinement.

Beyond such spectacular examples of violence, however, there appears to be room in the usual routine of prison life for limited give-and-take between inmates and staff concerning daily practices. This point was touched upon in the previous chapter about social control in and through physical culture: as a number of participants pointed out, if the administration places severe restrictions on physical recreation, there is a risk of angering inmates to the point that they cause unrest that could inconvenience, or even threaten the safety of, staff. As James colourfully explained, this unspoken negotiation was understood by both sides:
[Staff] are pretty laid back, but if they’ve gotta do paperwork then they gotta remind you, “it’s our house,” not yours… One hand washes the other… [Inmates would cooperate because] like the old saying is, “you don’t shit in your backyard,” right?”

One relatively benign example of la perruque (de Certeau, 1984) that was tolerated by staff was highlighted by Carol, a CSC guard on the Kingston Penitentiary tours. On one of the ranges, most cells had their doors covered almost entirely in green or white cloth, with only a small space through which one could look inside. Carol explained that some prisoners ripped up blankets and sheets in order to decorate their cells in this manner to limit the brightness of the morning sun, to gain some measure of privacy, and to prevent rodents from entering their cells. While this constituted a violation of CSC rules that inmates’ cell doors must allow an unobstructed view of the cell, as well as a destruction of Canadian government property, the prison staff tolerated the practice if inmates left a large enough space that guards could have a clear view of the entire interior of the cell. Carol explained that “guards learn to pick their battles with prisoners” and that this was not an issue worth angering prisoners over.

28 Carol’s explanation about keeping rodents out of cells drew expected gasps and laughter from the tour audience. While the cloth on most cell doors was pulled tight to the very bottom of the bars, which could potentially prevent mice and rats from entering, I suspect this particular detail may have been sensationalized in order to entertain the tourists.
This relatively minor power struggle between inmates and guards may be inconsequential in light of the dominant structures of confinement imposed upon prisoners. Nonetheless, such struggles represent, in de Certeau’s (1984) terms, everyday practices that are “tactical in character. . . . [A] victor[y] of the ‘weak’ over the ‘strong’ . . . [and over] an imposed order” (p. xix). It can also be understood as an inmate tactic for coping with the material deprivation of a total institution, that is for ameliorating somewhat conditions of confinement that are physically uncomfortable, lacking in privacy, and easily surveilled by staff. Finally, the incident also importantly highlights that staff are not a monolithic group and that, although tasked with enforcing the authority of the prison administration, are themselves caught up in structures and ways of operating that place constraints upon their ability to effectively impose rules and regulations on prisoners. As
such, they may develop their own set of strategies and tactics to cope with their conditions of employment and with the tactical subversions employed by prisoners.

**Unpacking the Significance of Physical Culture and Everyday Practice**

Goffman (1961a, p. 305) asserts that, in the underlife of a total institution, “when existence is cut to the bone, we can learn what people do to flesh out their lives.” This section has explored some of the ways in which prisoners have used sport and sport and physical activity to achieve such a fleshing out of their existences. In doing so its focal point is not the psychological adjustments to confinement of individual prisoners, but rather the collective sport-related mechanisms through which prisoners can and do adjust to their confinement in a total institution—particularly those activities that resist, in some way, the social control of the prison administration and provide a pillar of identity formation. Situating these practices in the underlife of the prison (Goffman, 1961a) allows for an exploration of the role played by sport and physical activity in the creation and sustenance of this inmate social world.

While sport occasionally offered an opportunity for prominent displays of resistance, these incidents appear relatively rare compared with the less spectacular day-to-day ways in which prisoners opportunistically resist the social control of the administration. It is in these practices—such as the sculpting of intimidating muscular physiques, the act of *la perruque* (de Certeau, 1984) in the refashioning of institutional materials, or the appropriation of recreation spaces for the social purposes of inmates—that we can see the significance of physical culture as a *practice of everyday life* (de Certeau, 1984) that contributes to inmates’ reconstruction and presentation of their selves (Goffman, 1959, 1961a). Particularly in a space whose *raison d’être* is physical confinement, sport and physical recreation may also offer a “moment of liberty” (Goffman, 1961a, p. 305) in which the prisoner is able to present, at least temporarily, a sense of self beyond his or her limited role and stigmatized identity as a prisoner. This analysis thus speaks not only to the sociological importance of sport in prison contexts, but also in other total institutions such as boarding schools, refugee camps, juvenile detention centres, or military establishments. Clearly, there is much fertile ground in these spaces for sociologists of sport to explore if and how, when faced with loss of identity and imposing disciplinary
Regimes, individuals draw upon sport as a resource to construct or sustain a new identity and resist, to a small degree, the institutional restrictions imposed upon them.

**Institutional Ceremonies and Carceral Physical Culture**

While total institutions are generally closed off to the outside world, they do not usually exist in isolation from the communities in which they are situated (Goffman, 1961a). Prison staff, of course, retire to their homes at the end of their shifts. Prisoners can, under certain restrictive conditions and in various forms, receive visitors. Sometimes prisoners are allowed day passes into the community. They may also be placed on special work duty that takes them beyond the wall of the prison, allowing them to temporarily assume roles that may not be available to them in a bricks-and-mortar institution (Goodman, 2012a, 2012b). Additionally, and significantly for the purposes of this paper, outside groups are sometimes allowed into the prison for particular special events. These instances may take the form of regular volunteer visits for particular programs, such as reading groups, recreation activities (including some sport and physical activities), and religious services. Alternatively, and more infrequently, an outside group may participate in a more spectacular performance, such as a musical or stage performance or a sports match. In most cases the audiences for these events are internal (i.e. inmates and staff), but on rare occasions they may involve audience participation from members of the community.

Goffman (1961a) refers to these occasional events in which the outside community participates as *institutional displays*. These events are significant to front stage presentation and maintenance, in a dramaturgical sense, of an idealized and unified institutional identity by inmates and staff. This identity reaffirms the differentiated roles of inmates and staff at the same time as it downplays many of the problematic practices that occur in the back stage as a result of these asymmetrical power relations. Despite this, inmates routinely participate actively and enthusiastically in these displays. Even where participation may be coerced, the inmate usually gains in some way from the relaxation of usual work duties, the provision of luxury items or better-than-normal food, a rupture in the usual daily routine, and/or an opportunity to take roles that are usually unavailable to him or her (Goffman, 1961a).
The temporary cooperation of inmates and administration to host institutional ceremonies offers an interesting sporting example of the role of team performances in the staging of self presentation (Goffman (1959). This team performance accomplishes different goals for the administration and the prisoners. For the former to be seen as benevolent overseers of orderly prisons, the inmates must cooperate in the collective front stage performance of the institutional ceremony by avoiding violence, working to ensure the smooth operation of the event, and presenting fronts as sportsmanlike athletes or willing and engaged participants in community-led activities. In return, inmates enjoy exceptional material and physical/spatial privileges for the duration of the event and, perhaps more importantly, role releases from their stigmatized status as criminals. This team performance by groups of actors usually pitted against each other allows the institution to present, through its institutional ceremony, an impression to the public of a unified and well-run institution (Goffman, 1961a).

Institutional displays are part of a larger category of event in total institutions, referred to as institutional ceremonies (Goffman, 1961a). These ceremonies offer occasional opportunities for staff and inmates to humanize the “other” through limited, and prescribed, contact. Goffman explains that these ceremonies are important for inmate-staff relations because they express unity, solidarity, and joint commitment to the institution rather than differences between the two levels. . . . Given the usual roles, these activities represent “role releases” (p. 94).

Institutional ceremonies seem to be found in even extreme total institutions across history and cultures—even “cropping up in . . . what would seem to be the poorest possible soil” (Goffman, 1961a, p. 95)—in a variety of forms, including staff-inmate Christmas parties, inmate-produced newspapers known as house organs, theatrical (and often satirical) inmate theatre performances, and, notably for this study, sport and physical activities. Sport matches as institutional ceremonies appear to hold particular sway in the popular imagination, given their prominent appearance in fictional representations of total institutions such as The Loneliness of the Long Distance Runner, The Longest Yard, Escape to Victory, and others. Institutional ceremonies are exceptional events in total institutions, perhaps explaining their popular appeal, yet are extremely important to the operation of
these institutions and reflect a great deal about the power relations within these sites. Furthermore, their changing form in the contemporary era speaks to broader societal shifts in views of punishment and crime.

Goffman (1961a) only briefly discusses sport or physical culture in *Asylums*, but these occasional mentions do reveal his understanding of these physical practices in the social world of total institutions. In “The Underlife of a Total Institution,” Goffman (1961a) interprets inmate participation on a baseball team as a means of *working the system* by taking advantage of institutional arrangements to secure personal benefit:

Patients on the [mental hospital] all-star baseball team, when playing against teams from the environing community, were able to enjoy the special camaraderie that develops between opposing teams in a game and that separates both teams off from the spectators (p. 219).

Meanwhile, in “Characteristics of Total Institutions,” Goffman assigns particular significance to the representative feature of competitive sport in interpreting competitive matches between inmate and community teams. It is worth quoting at length here:

The inside team tends to be a group of all-stars chosen by intramural contest among all inmates. By competing well with outsiders, the all-stars take roles that palpably fall outside the stereotype of what an inmate is—since team sport requires such qualities as intelligence, skill, perseverance, cooperativeness, and even honor—and these roles are taken right in the teeth of outsiders and staff observers. In addition, the outsider team, and any supporters it manages to bring into the grounds, are forced to see that there are natural places on the inside where natural things go on (p. 107).

In this insightful passage, Goffman (1961a) reveals a number of interesting characteristics of intermural prison sport. Firstly, he asserts that inmate competitors in these contests are able to temporarily take on the role of athlete, and a variety of positive traits associated with this status that contrast favourably with their normal low-status role. Next, he notes the extra pleasure to be gained by the very public nature of this role-taking, which elevates the status of the prisoner in front of the staff and the outside visitors.

Goffman (1961a) continues, in his explanation of intermural sport matches in total institutions, to note that inmates’ participation in these competitions also entails complicity with the aims of the institutional display:
In exchange for being allowed to demonstrate these things about themselves, inmates through their intermural team convey some things about the institution. In pursuing what is defined as an uncoercible endeavor, the inmate team demonstrates to outsiders and observing inmates that the staff . . . are not tyrannical, and that a team of inmates is ready to take on the role of representing the whole institution and allowed to do so (p. 107).

This passage cuts to the heart of institutional ceremonies, highlighting that whatever benefits accrue to the inmate also serve a function to the administration’s management and presentation of the total institution. What is particularly interesting about institutional displays and ceremonies is that many inmates are willing participants even though they are aware that these events put a happy face on what is, for most of them, an unhappy institutional arrangement. Furthermore, unlike collective displays of inmate resistance, these displays require significant cooperation between inmates and staff. However, within this cooperative action, there are multiple motivations being pursued and achieved in the course of a single event.

Institutional ceremonies are fascinating moments to study in terms of ascertaining their significance in the operation of the prison, and the significance of sport-based institutional ceremonies became apparent during data collection. In the following sections I discuss four types of institutional ceremonies that frequently arose during the research: annual festivals put on by the institution for the public; competitive intermural matches played inside institutions between inmate and community teams and intramural sport leagues contested between inmate squads; recreational games played during visits by celebrity athletes; and recreational and/or therapeutic activities led for inmates by volunteers from the community. In most cases, except for the latter, I discuss men’s prisons much more heavily and sometimes exclusively. The reasons for the greater prominence of sport-related institutional ceremonies in men’s prisons are likely manifold, and I can only speculate that it arises in part due to a combination of the historic marginalization in Canada of women prisoners (including in terms of resources and programme opportunities) in comparison to men (Hannah-Moffat, 1991) and administrative assumptions about sport as a masculine activity.
Annual Sport Festivals

Historically, many Canadian correctional institutions appear to have hosted annual sport festivals featuring widespread inmate participation, cooperation in organizing between staff and inmates, and public spectators. Penal press sources discuss a variety of these spectacles. A 1966 article in Joyceville Prison’s Advance (“Field Day 66,” 1966), provides an overview of the prison’s annual Field Day, which featured typical athletics contests (e.g. 100 yard dash, mile race, tug-o-war), races that seemingly reflected both the inmates’ personnel and sense of humour (e.g. “Old Man’s Race” and “Fat Man’s Race”), and some unique events that were a product of the spatial geography of the prison (e.g. 880 yard relay race). Participants enjoyed Kool-Aid and hot dogs, suggesting that, as in Goffman’s (1961a) description, this institutional ceremony was an opportunity to enjoy perks not usually available to inmates. In 1979, Collins Bay Institution’s CON.T.A.C.T reported on a Sports Appreciation Day to which inmates’ families were invited and trophies were awarded to participants. Addressing inmates, the author particularly highlighted the significance of “the presence of your families, and those who care most for you” (French, 1979, p. 12). In an unusual twist, an inmate-organized event called the Con Walk saw prisoners participate in an institutional ceremony outside the prison: over a number of days, some inmates from a Kingston-area institution would participate in a charity walk from Ottawa to Kingston, dressed in exaggerated prison costumes and closely monitored by accompanying prison staff. The spectacle drew a large amount of public attention, which helped the inmates to raise funds for muscular dystrophy research (Sauve, 2012).

The significance of and tensions arising from such sport-based institutional ceremonies can be seen in research on arguably the most (in)famous such event in North America: the rodeo at the Angola maximum security prison in Angola, Louisiana. This US institution is home to 5,000 male inmates and—ironically, given its population is 75% black—it sits on the site of a former slave plantation (J. Adams, 2001; Schrift, 2004; Wilson & O’Sullivan, 2005). The annual festival, which has taken place each year since 1965, sees inmates compete for the entertainment of the general public in rodeo events and also features an “Inmate Arts and Crafts . . . Fair, as well as inmate bands, concession stands, and various games and activities” (Schrift, 2004, p. 334). The rodeo is a spectacle of complex
symbolism that can be read in different ways depending on the audience. For participating inmates, even though they are keenly aware of the rodeo’s exploitative characteristics\(^{29}\) (Schrift, 2004), it can be an opportunity to make themselves publicly visible and challenge their dehumanized public image (Wilson & O’Sullivan, 2005) or to improve their material well-being through cash and other prizes (Schrift, 2004). Yet, at another level, the spectacle of the rodeo helps, through various symbolic measures such as dressing inmates in striped clothing reminiscent of Southern chain gangs, to publicly shame inmates and reaffirm to the public the lowly status of prisoners (Schrift, 2004). It is also, from the perspective of the administration, “officially intended as a form of recreational subjugation” as part of the institution’s efforts at social control (J. Adams, 2001, p. 99). Adams (2001) comments on the powerful symbolism of the event, noting that

By presenting the spectacle of prisoners being publicly punished in the form of a gladiatorial contest, without betraying the nature of the spectacle to the performers themselves, the rodeo displays for both free citizens and the prison community the morality of this particular prison, as well as the apparent rightness of the existing social order; convicted men appear to willingly condone their own censure (p. 100).

Clearly, as the Angola rodeo starkly highlights, there are multiple and complicated meanings attached to institutional displays, particularly those that, as in the case of sport-based events, place inmates visibly in the public spotlight. In the following, I explore the complexity of one such prominent institutional display: the Exceptional People’s Olympiad.

The Exceptional People’s Olympiad was an athletic festival for young athletes with intellectual disabilities that was hosted within the walls of Collins Bay Institution in Kingston, ON. The event involved significant inmate participation, both as spectators, grounds crew, and even athlete mentors. In the latter capacity, inmates acted as “godbrothers” to athletes, in which role they would, according to an official report on one Olympiad, volunteer to be “a chaperone, friend, coach and athletic instructor and

\(^{29}\) Exploitation can be read into the Angola rodeo in a variety of ways. In addition to placing inmates in dangerous situations to enhance the spectacle, the event relies on poorly-paid inmate labour, a willingly uncritical audience, and the exploitation of animals to project a public image that reaffirms hegemonic understandings of criminality and the social function of the prison.
confidante for the athlete [they are] paired with” (EPOC, 1983, p. 4). The success of the event apparently sparked copycats, as similar events were at various held Spring Hill Institution (NS), Leclerc Institution (QC), and Mission Institution (BC), suggesting that other prison administrations saw value in the event (CSC, 2014). Four of the men I interviewed had served time in Collins Bay Institution and all spoke about the Exceptional People’s Olympiad as a major sport-related event in the life of the prison. Two overviews of the event are provided by the Collins Bay inmate newspaper, Ice Carrier II, and by Dave, who was incarcerated at Collins Bay from 1984 to 1992:

For those of you who don’t know what the Olympiad is I’ll give you a brief outline. Every July for the past 12 years the prisoners here in the joint have organized a two day track and field competition for mentally disabled athletes. These athletes, boys, girls, men and women, come from towns and cities around Ontario and North and central New York State. Just about everyone in the joint has a hand in seeing that the yearly event goes smoothly. . . . The Olympiad Committee has an office in the gym and there is usually someone down there so drop by if you like (“Inside and Around,” 1988, p. 8).

Dave: It was a big thing. Over 300 guys were directly involved at Collins Bay, out of a population of less than 500. . . . [Inmates would organize] everything, even the fundraising. . . . The Olympiad was very, very recognized in the community. Members of Parliament would come, the mayor would come. I remember shaking hands with Ronald McDonald in the Yard at Collins Bay – it was surreal. They had guys from the army base parachute in. It was a big Kingston event, it was seen as a big community event. That’s when the corrections [systems] were really working.

An annual penal press newsletter, entitled Olympiad News, provides confirmation of and further insight into these inmate descriptions of the Olympiad. Publications from 1983 and 1988 (EPOC, 1983, 1988) list a wide range of sponsors, including local businesses and organizations such as trade unions and Rotary clubs, community and inmate organizing committees, and a host of special guests including politicians and community figures. According to the 1983 newsletter, the Olympiad featured, in addition to the wide variety of athletic contests, live music performances, clowns, and group meals—all provided by inmates.
The Olympiad appears to have represented a genuine effort by at least some inmates to “give back” to the community in a meaningful way. The 1983 Olympiad News includes the following message to the community from the inmate organizing committee:

Thank you, from all of us here at C.B.I. [Collins Bay Institution] for your support and assistance. With your help, we were able to assist those less fortunate than ourselves (EPOC, 1983, p. 26).

The 1988 Olympiad News (EPOC, 1988) lists nine objectives of the event, which can be grouped into three categories: to provide support and opportunities to people with intellectual disabilities; to allow prisoners to show their potential and develop social skills; and to reach out to the local community. The first of these categories of objectives fits in with the previously mentioned altruistic motivations for the event and the seemingly genuine delight that prisoners took in hosting the event for disabled athletes. Indicative of the second theme is the following objective: “to provide the opportunity for prisoners to be socially useful, appreciated, and to show the immense potential so often wasted behind prison walls” (EPOC, 1988, p. 4). And emblematic of the third theme is the aim “to reduce animosities and misunderstandings that may exist between the prison community and the community at large” (EPOC, 1988, p. 4).

Goffman (1961a) explains that institutional displays offer inmates a role release that allows them, temporarily, to publicly assume roles with admirable qualities. Thus, in addition to presenting themselves (seemingly quite genuinely, in at least some cases) as caring and altruistic human beings, inmates’ participation in the institutional display of the Olympiad suggests that they used the event to take on, in a highly public manner, humanized roles as responsible and caring citizens, selfless workers, and willing community members—and to assume these roles, in Goffman’s words, “right in the teeth of outsiders and staff observers” (p. 107).

Goffman (1961a) is clear that, although inmates benefit from institutional displays through role release and the provision of treats such as better-than-usual food or material goods such as tobacco, they must also collude with the administration in achieving institutional aims. The widespread inmate involvement in running the Collins Bay Olympiad, much like that behind the spectacle of the Angola Prison rodeo (J. Adams, 2001; Schrift, 2004; Wilson & O’Sullivan, 2005), helps the administration to present an idealized
front stage performance, thus “giving [members of the public] an ‘appropriate’ image of the establishment . . . calculated to allay their vague dread about involuntary establishments” (p. 102). Just like the all-star asylum baseball teams observed by Goffman, the many inmates working at the Olympiad helped to show “outsiders and observing inmates that the staff . . . are not tyrannical, and that a team of inmates is ready to take on the role of representing the whole institution and allowed to do so” (p. 107). A vivid example of this compliance with institutional demands was given by Sam, who served time in Collins Bay in the 1980s and 1990s. Sam explained that the Olympiad was such an important event to inmates that they suspended any hostilities for the preparation and hosting of the festival:

There was a [informal] rule for the two or three days that they were there, we were not allowed to fight in the Yard. You can fight after the Olympiad was over, you could stab each other to death, we didn’t care, but you couldn’t perform nothing in the Yard. And everybody went along with it. There were guys that weren’t friends but they just said “okay, I’ll see you after the Olympiad.” And when the Olympiad was over they’d go out in the Yard and get into a fist fight, or somebody’d get stabbed. But it would not happen at the Olympiad. And the administration knew that . . . people were making enemies of each other, but they said do [the Olympiad], it’s good for [the athletes and public] and it’s good for us.

Sam’s comments highlight the fact that inmates, to continue to benefit from institutional ceremonies, must collude with the administration to successfully achieve its front stage performance (Goffman, 1959, 1961a). Furthermore, it highlights another key aspect of institutional ceremonies: that, just like the temporary nature of their role release, inmates’ material benefits are fleeting and their life post-ceremony is not appreciably improved from before. Goffman (1961a) notes that institutional ceremonies “mark a putting aside and even a reversal of the usual social drama, and so [reminds] us that what was put aside has a dramaturgical, not a material character” (p. 110). Sam’s statement offers a graphic description of inmate violence—a common theme in my interviews, as well as a wide variety of prison literature—and notes that it is only temporarily set aside during the Olympiad. Following the institutional ceremony, inmate violence picks up again and the social control aims achieved by the administration, which it knows to be temporary, are lost. The inmate code that regulates prisoners’ violent behaviour during the ceremony thus protects the ceremonial gains of both the administration and the inmates.
**Intermural Sport**

Another type of sport-related institutional ceremony, and one that is public but less spectacular than annual festivals, is intermural sport matches between inmate and community teams. I was first made aware of this practice during the early stages of my research, when various informal discussions raised the topic of Queen’s University Varsity teams sending teams into Kingston prisons to compete in basketball. The topic came up again frequently in my interviews with formerly incarcerated men (it was not mentioned by any women), who related stories of highly competitive matches between penitentiary all-star baseball and basketball teams and local community clubs. Dave describes baseball leagues at a maximum security institution in the early 1980s:

> Softball was very big in the summer. . . . Outside teams used to come in sometimes. Also, like, the California Cuties [a baseball player team of cross-dressing men] and stuff like that, exhibition baseball. . . . It was pretty excellent, I used to watch it a lot.

Meanwhile, Sam described the vibrant sport scene during his time another maximum security institution in the mid-1960s. The prison had a well-known intermural team, nicknamed by inmates, in an ironic but self-aware decision, the Saints. According to Sam:

> We had teams coming in from all over Canada and some parts of the United States to play against the Saints, who were a great team. . . . The last team we played in basketball was the Osgoode Owls. They came in to play us basketball. They beat us, but I mean, we played them. They came in. They’re a semipro team but they come and played us. . . . [Inmate spectators] would come out, there’d be two or three hundred watching the baseball games, there’d be 100 watching the hockey games. We asked some teams to come in and play floor hockey with us, but they said “no part of it,” because they weren’t playing “war hockey” [inmate nickname for often violent hockey matches]. . . . No matter what institution I was in, we had a baseball and we had teams come in to play them.

A search of prisoner-produced newsletters reveals that such regular athletic competition between men’s prison and community teams was common from the 1950s through to at least the early 2000s, and that this was a feature of federal institutions regardless of their security level or geographic location. The earliest mention I found of intermural competition was a 1951 edition of Kingston Penitentiary’s *Telescope*, which reported on four Saints games: one, a Kingston Amateur Softball Association league game against the Kingston Vimy Signals, and three other exhibition matches against teams from
Kingston or Belleville (Nolan, 1951). This report confirms statements from three study participants about the prowess of the Saints and their regular competition in the local amateur fast pitch league. Similarly, 22 years later an article in the *Tarpaper*, the house organ (Goffman, 1961a) for the medium security Matsqui Institution (BC), reported the exciting news that its all-star softball squad had gained admission to the local league. This development represented a joint effort between the inmate committee and the staff member in charge of recreation. The paper reported that:

The Matsqui team will be entered in the Mission District Softball League and will play half of their games under lights at the Mission Agricultural Grounds. In previous talks with league officials, [the Supervisor of Recreation] had set one condition: the Matsqui team will play their home games at the institution, so that prisoners can be part of the action. The institutional field is now being renovated for the home games. A grandstand will be built inside the fence . . . to accommodate prisoners’ visits . . . When the inmates were asked by [the] Director of Socialization . . . if they were prepared to accept the responsibility for their conduct outside the institution, [the inmate group leader] said, “We intend to hold up our end.” (“Sports Makes the News,” 1973, p. 5).

Nearly two decades later, and on the other side of the country, a 1990 edition of *The Keep Chronicle*, produced by inmates at the minimum security Westmoreland Institution (NB), stated that the Moncton University women’s volleyball team had been invited to lead clinics for the inmate team (Goore, 1990). Later that year, the same newspaper reported that inmates had played softball against a local women’s team and were preparing for a game against the staff of a local radio station (“Recreation Report,” 1990). The most recent penal press source I obtained was from 2001, and reported on a tournament held at William Head Penitentiary (BC) in which outside teams competed against the prison team (Featherstone, 2001). These reports are just a few examples of dozens of similar articles in Canadian penal press sources. The various accounts of intermural sport competition featuring inmate teams clearly speaks to the widespread prominence of sport in men’s, and later women’s, correctional institutions in Canada from the early 1950s until at least the year 2000.

As in the annual sport festivals, inmates appear to have established a code of conduct to which they would temporarily abide during intermural matches. This was partly out of collective self-interest, as inappropriate or dangerous behaviour would jeopardize
the events. Again, this agreement served both inmates’ own purposes and those of the administration, the latter of whom would obviously appear in a poor light if a visitor was injured or insulted. Harry summarized how this interplay operated during such athletic contests:

I think if they allowed more sports inside the institution and allowed more interaction with the community, it makes a difference. When we would have teams from the outside come in, we would ensure that nobody would be yelling at them, so there’s that whole development of tolerance [and] respect. Somebody would say something out of line, usually a spectator, somebody’d go over to him and say “Shut your mouth. Don’t be fucking this up for the rest of us.” That’s all gone. And it’s sad.

While Harry may be romanticizing the long term impact of inmate conduct during these intermural matches—given that in the absence of institutional displays the prison appears to have reverted to its normal state of violence—he nonetheless sheds light on the ways in which institutional ceremonies permit a temporary rupture in the usual institutional culture, and how inmates themselves work to maintain an institutional order for the duration of the event.

A number of important themes emerge from the data on intermural sport. Firstly, the widespread nature of intermural sport highlights that there was, since at least the 1950s, significant social interaction between male inmates and outsiders in and through sport. The divide between life inside prisons and life in outside society is poignant for prisoners, who commonly use dichotomous language to describe their incarceration “in here” and their past lives and relationships “out there” (Comack, 2008). The participants in this study frequently used the terms “on the inside” or “in the joint” and “on the street” or “in the community” to distinguish between life inside and outside institution. Goffman (1961a) uses a similar inside/outside dichotomy, and also contrasts an inmates’ “presenting culture” from his “home world” with the identity resources available to him in a total institution (p. 12-13). Of course, as the prominence of intermural games and other institutional ceremonies demonstrates, total institutions are not impermeable. Intermural sport matches, then, appear to be one way in which the administration permits contact with outsiders and helps to bridge the inside/outside dichotomy. That these games did
indeed contribute to improved inmate morale is implied by the large crowds that attended matches and their enthusiastic reporting in prison newspapers.

A second significant point that arises is that the contact with the outside world provided by these intermural contests seems to be important for helping inmates to feel humanized. Given the social stigma attached to prisoners in society (Goffman, 1963), the relatively normalized interaction with outsiders experienced through sport seems to be significant for some prisoners. The following report on a 1973 baseball tournament, which took place at Joyceville Institution between the host Jets and community teams from Toronto and Belleville, suggests that inmates felt a great deal of gratitude for the social interaction they enjoyed with outsiders through sport:

The outside teams... had given graciously of their leisure time to entertain us... Getting a team together on a weekend to travel 300 miles is quite a job; Thanks to all concerned for sharing your time with us... [After the games] the Joyceville Jets and officials shared an enjoyable dinner with the outside teams, in addition [sic] to having time to socialize and discuss the past ball season.... Several players from both [outside] teams stated that... it had been a meaningful experience for them in terms of dispelling their apprehension about coming into a penitentiary to play ball.... It is evident that this type of encounter with people from the outside, via the healthy medium of sports, is meaningful to all involved ("Ball Congress," 1973, p. 20).

Similarly, Harry explained that, for participating athletes,

It was a huge deal [when teams came in].... Guys wanted to do their best, wanted to be seen as more than cons, be seen as really sports-minded. People from the community would... see, "hey, these guys are just normal guys too, they like doing the same things we do." All of a sudden they didn’t see you as a headline in the paper, the saw you as [an athlete].

Harry’s statement affirms the humanizing potential of intermural sport, and can be understood as a form of role release (Goffman, 1961a) through which inmates could take on the role of athlete and have that at least partially supplant their role as criminal. This is a similar finding to that of Goodman (2012b), who found that participating in the dangerous and publicity visible work of fighting wildfires allowed California inmates to temporarily be viewed as heroic individuals rather than stigmatized inmates. However, Goodman’s work provides a cautionary component to this role release, as the inmates in his research benefitted only temporarily from this symbolic increase in status; ultimately, for his
participants, “the elevation in status gained by inmate firefighters is partial and fleeting” (p. 366) and afterward they return to the lowly status of inmate. Similarly, the increased status of star prison athletes is limited to the context of the event and does not alter the conditions of confinement for prisoners in a substantial way.

**Intramural Sport**

In addition to intermural sport, the data made it abundantly clear that intramural sport leagues thrived in men’s federal institutions since at least the middle of the twentieth century. For example, by the 1950s, the Collins Bay (ON) *Diamond* and Kingston Penitentiary *Telescope* reported on the active sport cultures in those institutions. In its July, 1956 issue, the *Telescope* devoted three pages to reporting on the intramural baseball league, including match reports, statistics, standings, and even updates on player trades between teams. Another page discussed an upcoming boxing competition, which had nine scheduled bouts between inmates spread between five weight classes. A final section, entitled “Getting Around,” reported on many other recreational activities, including horseshoes, table tennis, handball, and cards and games tournaments. An issue of the *Diamond* from the same year (McQuade & Goy, 1956) described a similarly diverse sporting scene, including plans for matches or tournaments, organized by the Inmate Committee, in handball, racquetball, table tennis, volleyball, weightlifting, “Major league” and “Minor league” baseball. Some 32 years later, a new Collins Bay publication, *Ice Carrier II*, reported on ball hockey, basketball, and snooker competitions, as well as a nascent soccer league that comprised just two teams divided along ethno-national (Italian and Jamaican) lines (“Inside and Around,” 1988). Similar evidence of lively sport cultures in institutions across the country can be found in penal press sources from the 1950s through until the early 2000s. In fact, nearly every newspaper I viewed included sections that provided information on recruitment, matches, and statistics for a wide variety of inmate sport leagues. Furthermore, all but one of the male former prisoners I interviewed were active participants in intramural sport.

In women’s prisons there is less evidence of robust intramural sport competition. Kathleen, a prisoner advocacy worker, described a declining emphasis on women’s intramural sport in recent years:
In the old Prison for Women days and the old KP [Kingston Penitentiary] days there used to be all kinds of baseball teams and volleyball teams, and there’d be these intramural sports. It’s something that’s no longer seen as a priority [by the administration].

Kathleen’s comment appears to be borne out in the limited penal press literature from women’s institutions. A 1972 edition of Prison for Women’s *The Voice Inside* includes a half-page sport section that provides brief information about softball, football, hockey, and volleyball competitions (Grandmaison, 1972), while a 1973 paper and successor to *The Voice Inside*, entitled *Tightwire*, also includes a discussion of women’s baseball teams forming in the prison and offers a brief profile of the athletes (“Untitled,” 1973). However, by the late-1970s discussions of sport events appeared to be entirely absent from the *Tightwire*: I consulted a sampling of editions from 1978, 1980, 1984, 1988 and 1993, and found no discussion of intramural sport competition (although, as mentioned in the previous section, there were sporadic mentions of intermural contests). Meanwhile, an issue of Grand Valley Institution’s *The Grapevine* from 1997, the prison’s first year of operation, features a brief mention of scheduled weekly volleyball, floor hockey, and badminton sessions (“Weekly Sports Activities,” 1997). However, by 1999 the newspaper listed only a weekly volleyball session on its sport calendar (“April,” 1999; “Social Development Activities,” 1999), suggesting that sport opportunities were declining in this new federal women’s prison.

The very limited attention given to sport in penal press sources from women’s prisons since the 1970s is in contrast to publications from men’s prisons during this period, which consistently devoted coverage to a diversity of intramural sport activities. This absence may be a product of the editorial focus of the newspapers. The editions of *Tightwire* I analyzed had major emphases on inmate art and sociopolitical issues such as feminist activism, racism, and the criminal justice system. Or perhaps, as Kathleen implied, intramural sports in women’s institutions were on the decline by the end of the 1970s.

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30 The Prison for Women, which operated from 1934 to 2000, was the only federal women’s institution in Canada until its closing (CSC, 2013c). It was located on the grounds of Kingston Penitentiary and, since 1960, had its own administration (Hayman, 2006).

31 Grand Valley Institution opened in 1997, and is one of six women’s penitentiaries that replaced the Prison for Women.
Either way, by the time the female participants in this study entered the new federal prisons in the 2000s, there appeared to have been little opportunity for them to participate in intramural contests.

**Celebrity Visits**

A third type of sport-related institutional ceremony was celebrity visits, which appear to have been fairly common in men’s prisons at least until the end of the 1970s. There is a well-established North American tradition of visits to prisons by sport or entertainment celebrities, with musician Johnny Cash’s performances at California’s Folsom Prison (1968) and San Quentin State Prison (1969) serving as perhaps the most famous examples of this phenomenon. A sport example in the US is a 1954 exhibition hockey game between members of the National Hockey League (NHL) team the Detroit Red Wings, including star players such as Gordie Howe and Ted Lindsay, and inmates at Michigan’s Marquette Prison, played on an outdoor rink in the institution’s yard (Roose, 2012). In Canada, according to a *Toronto Star* article, a baseball team composed of NHL players from the Toronto Maple Leafs competed against Kingston Penitentiary inmates in the early 1950s (Brennan, 2010). Although there is little recent information about this trend in North American media, and it thus appears to be declining, there are occasional examples of celebrity athletes visiting prisons, such as a summer visit by National Basketball Association player Byron Mullens to an Ohio prison in 2011 (Clemmons, 2011).

Some of the men I interviewed spoke about celebrity athlete visits. Sam, for example, told me about a major junior hockey club, the Cornwall Royals, that played a hockey match against a team of inmates in the early 1980s, as well as celebrity softball teams featuring star athletes such as Bobby Hull and Jackie Robinson. Harry discussed the visit of some local junior hockey teams, including future NHL star Doug Gilmour, stating that it was “a huge deal” to inmates when these visits occurred. Penal press newspapers would also report on these occasional contests. For example, *CON.T.A.C.T.*, a Collins Bay newsletter, reported that a sport banquet was attended by a part-owner, coach and player from junior hockey’s Kingston Canadians (French, 1979).

These events seemed to be meaningful for prisoners, who described enjoying the excitement of the unusual event, their respect for the visitors for taking the time to visit,
and, as with intermural matches, the humanizing effect of assuming the role of athlete rather than convict. However, they appear to have had relatively little impact on day-to-day life of the prison beyond their entertainment value and the temporary role release offered by the institutional ceremony. In this sense, they are not unlike celebrity involvement in sport-for-development initiatives (Darnell, 2012), as they may provide a spectacular event yet fail to create significant social change.

**Community-led Recreational and Therapeutic Activities**

A final, and very significant, form of physical culture-related institutional ceremony is recreational and therapeutic activities led by volunteers from the community. Unlike the previous three types of activity discussed above, these events were far less spectacular. Furthermore, these activities were typically more explicit about developing a specific set of skills or providing therapy than recreational activities that were largely framed as being for pleasure or, perhaps, associated with ill-defined goals related to assumptions about sport as a positive social force. As with religious or educational programmes, federal institutions have relied heavily on community volunteers to run sport programming even in the presence of professional and dedicated CSC staff. According to the CSC (2013a),

> approximately 8,700 Canadians volunteer their time, energy and passion to helping offenders become law-abiding citizens. Their work inside our institutions and in the community provides a bridge to help offenders safely transition from incarceration to rehabilitation.

While there is no empirical support of which I am aware about the effectiveness of volunteers’ work in being the prison-to-community “bridge” described by the CSC, the data from this study certainly highlighted the ongoing importance of volunteers in sport and physical activity programming for Canadian prisoners.

While the prison intermural baseball games discussed previously relied on outside visitors, these were players and spectators rather than volunteers—preparing the grounds, organization of inmate teams, and umpiring games were tasks carried out by the inmates themselves. However, an interesting programme that emerged during my interviews with Mike and Dave was an umpire school that apparently allowed inmates to train and become certified as umpires, both improving the quality of officiating in the institutional games and offering some prisoners an opportunity to obtain work releases to umpire games in the
community. I also learned about participants of local boxing clubs volunteering to run tournaments for inmates and running clubs leading long distance running classes in men’s prisons. Meanwhile, some of the women I interviewed mentioned participating in Stride nights at Grand Valley Institution (ON), a community justice initiative in which community members lead weekly recreation evenings that could include activities such as arts and crafts in addition to physical activity (Yuen et al., 2012). While the women spoke positively about these Stride nights, they also suggested that most of the physical activity taking place in the prison was informal (e.g. walking or running) or inmate-organized (e.g. an inmate took the initiative to organize and lead fitness classes). Nonetheless, research on Stride nights and similar leisure initiatives does suggest that they can pay a part in building prosocial relationships between community members and prisoners (Fortune et al., 2010; Fortune & Whyte, 2011; Pedlar et al., 2008; Yuen et al., 2012), even if this is accompanied by some problematic assumptions about incarcerated women (Pedlar et al., 2008).

Finally, yoga is a physical activity that was an important focus of this research. Whereas sport activities appear to be offered mainly for recreation rather than any specific development purposes, yoga is explicitly framed by its proponents as a therapeutic and rehabilitative activity. Yoga in Canadian federal institutions was introduced in the early 2000s by Margaret, a participant in this study who, as a Catholic nun stationed in the Philippines, taught yoga and mindfulness to imprisoned rebels during the dictatorship of Ferdinand Marcos. Later, she worked with the Prison Phoenix Trust in the UK, which offers yoga classes to prisoners in the UK and Ireland. Building on this experience Margaret launched a yoga organization and, despite a lack of interest from CSC officials in Ottawa, began slowly to introduce yoga into federal institutions.

Since that time a number of other organizations have emerged to offer yoga in federal, provincial, and youth correctional institutions. I interviewed staff and volunteers from three of these organizations, all of whom work with prison chaplaincy or social work departments to gain access for volunteer yoga instructors to run programs for inmates. In addition to the inherent physicality of yoga, the classes focus on anger management, mindfulness, and building positive relationships. Yoga is a recent phenomenon in Canadian prisons, with its increasing acceptance by inmates and staff paralleled by its rising
prominence as a popular form of physical activity for wealthy consumers in western countries (Lewis, 2008). Steve, who lives and served his sentence in BC, jokingly explained the growing awareness of yoga from an activity for “weirdo hippies” to one widely accepted in the physical culture of prisons: “[In] Vancouver, holy shit, it’s yoga places on every corner. [But in] 2001, if you told most people you did yoga, it would be ‘oh geez one of these people.’ But not anymore.” Similarly, Dave, who still works with incarcerated men, said that “yoga is bigger now than it ever has been way back.”

Like Stride nights or other volunteer-led recreational activities, yoga classes allow for controlled and prosocial relationship building between community members and prisoners. I was told informally by a CSC employee, who oversees a yoga programme, that the volunteer instructors are extremely popular and respected by inmates. Similarly, the women instructors I interviewed generally described having very polite interactions with inmates and receiving a great deal of gratitude for their volunteerism. That being said, while I found some evidence that prison yoga contributes to rehabilitative goals such as anger management, and offers an intriguing counterculture to the violence that can pervade so much of a prison’s physical culture, I also argue that yoga functions as a form of administrative social control in a variety of ways (Norman, 2015).

Furthermore, under the Conservative government’s tough-on-crime regime, it is not clear if yoga will continue to grow. Although it is offered at no cost to prisons by volunteer instructors, yoga is an easy target for advocates of a punitive “no-frills” approach to prison management. For example, in 2011 Ontario Conservative Party leader Tim Hudak, whose party’s rhetoric on corrections echoed that of its federal counterpart, criticized the provision of yoga to provincial inmates: “I have a problem with prisoners getting Zen yoga classes while moms who have had their kids murdered can’t get access to the compensation fund” (Hudak, quoted in Talaga, 2011). Such framing of yoga as a perk for undeserving and violent criminals contributes to the stigmatization of prisoners and ignores the potential correctional benefit of volunteer-led activities such as yoga. It also raises questions, with regard to sport and physical, of the principle of less eligibility—that is, the idea that “if imprisonment is to act as a deterrent the treatment given to a prisoner should not be superior to that provided to a member of the lowest significant social class in
the free society” (Sieh, 1989, p. 159). As prison yoga grows in popularity, will there be further pushback from tough-on-crime advocates against inmates receiving classes whose cost many non-incarcerated citizens cannot afford?

**Conclusion**

Although exceptional events in the daily routine of the prison, institutional ceremonies intriguingly expose a number of interesting aspects of social life in a prison. That inmates and prison administrators could cooperate to organize a spectacle such as the Exceptional People’s Olympiad seems improbable at first glance, but when considering the benefits that both parties secure from their participation beyond any intrinsic pleasure—role release and small, yet significant, material benefits for inmates; a positive public relations front for the administration—it can be understood as a bargain from which both profit. Furthermore, given the isolation and stigmatization that can accompany incarceration in a total institution, the temporary blurring of the inside/outside dichotomy is a significant factor in inmates’ embrace of community members participating in or leading sport-related activities within the prison walls. Finally, some of the participants raised the interesting idea of sport-related events building solidarity between inmates. This was particularly highlighted in instances where inmates were empowered to participate in a variety of roles and thus take ownership over the event. This was perhaps best exemplified by the Exceptional People’s Olympiad, but was also noted with regard to intramural sport leagues in men’s prisons in which inmates could participate as athletes, umpires, grounds crew, or spectators. According to Dave, such involvement was a positive force for relationships within the inmate population:

> A lot of guys at [penitentiary] were there for a long, long time, so when you’re there there’s more of an impetus to organize things.... The institutions ran better, they were more cohesive, and things worked and guys would keep things up, there was a sense of ownership.

Although my data on the present state of federal prisons in Canada is sketchy, I gained some hints that institutional ceremonies and visits by community members may be declining since the Conservative government took power. Harry and Dave, who both work with incarcerated men, mentioned that outside sport teams no longer visit the prisons and that the Exceptional People’s Olympiad was no longer running. The most recent record I
was able to find of the Olympiad was in 2012 (CSC, 2012), suggesting that their information about it is correct. As discussed above, it is possible that yoga programming could become a target under conservative governments who may leverage the principle of less eligibility to argue for its removal. If true, the demise of sport-related institutional ceremonies means a significant reshaping of social relations within Canadian federal prisons, and between those institutions and the community. It means less cooperation between inmates and staff, fewer opportunities for humanizing role release for stigmatized prisoners, a reassertion of the physical and social boundaries that demarcate the inside and outside of the prison, and less volunteer-led programming that could improve prisoners’ well-being. Harry, speaking about the charity fundraiser Con Walk, summarized some of these sentiments about the significance of institutional ceremonies to prisoners:

> It would give guys a real sense that they’ve done something good for the community. Now, they don’t allow that anymore. The government’s cut everything out… The ironic thing is that everyone in the communities knew who we were because I’d get a hold of the local newspapers [to publicize the fundraiser]… You’re breaking down barriers, you’re breaking down myths. Isn’t this what prison is supposed to be about – learning how to be good citizens? If you can be a good citizen in prison then you can be a good citizen in the community.

Clearly sport-related institutional ceremonies are important, if exceptional, events in prison life. With the effects of the Conservative government’s correctional policies still being felt, and the ongoing focus on a security agenda in prison management, it will be interesting to observe how these events change and the effects that this has on the social life of federal prisons.
Chapter 7: Conclusion

This dissertation explored, in an interpretive fashion, the social significance of prison sport and physical activity within their broader sociopolitical context. In my introduction (Chapter 1) I advocated for the adoption of the term carceral physical culture as a way of acknowledging and analyzing diverse, but interconnected, physical practices in correctional institutions. In doing so, I both questioned the narrow ways in which physical culture is defined within the PCS literature and suggested that a diversity of prison research topics might fruitfully be situated within this new term. I next (Chapter 2) reviewed the literature on sport and physical activity in prisons, identifying its key thematic interests and its limitations, and discussed the key theoretical frameworks through which I analyze my data. The significance of this research in these areas is discussed in the following section. In the methodology (Chapter 3), I reflected on my failed efforts to conduct participant observation in CSC institutions, the *bricolage* methodology (Denzin & Lincoln, 2011) I employed to stitch together my project, and the ethical considerations that emerged as a result of my research with former prisoners. These discussions touch on a number of important methodological concerns within the sociology of sport and PCS, particularly when it comes to research with subcultures and marginalized groups.

In my findings (Chapters 4 to 6), I first explored the historical development of Canadian carceral physical culture within its broader sociopolitical context and the ways in which former inmates explained the significance of sport and physical activity in prison culture. In Chapter 4, I use major policy documents to trace official constructions of carceral physical culture and, where possible, prisoner-produced newspapers and participants’ experiences to explore how inmates experienced and interpreted these constructions. Such a detailed examination of the historical development of prison sport, physical activity and physical culture has not previously been undertaken by scholars. In Chapter 5, I explored key themes and tensions that emerged from the data concerning physical culture in the everyday life of prisons. In particular, I examined how aspects of carceral physical culture were experienced in everyday life such as daily routine, inmate health, and acts of violence between or enacted upon prisoners; how sport and physical
activity formed part of a social control agenda by policymakers and prison officials; and how carceral physical cultural spaces were socially produced by institutional design and the actions of staff and inmates. Finally, in Chapter 6, I adopted a symbolic interactionist perspective to examine how inmates use sport and physical activity in their presentations of self in a total institution, (Goffman, 1959, 1961a) and further draw upon the work of de Certeau (1984) to analyze the ways in which prisoners’ tactics, in and through physical culture, represent temporary acts of resistance against their imprisonment. Additionally, I examined the significance of sport-related institutional ceremonies—such as intermural baseball games or volunteer-led yoga classes—and their social function in the management and day-to-day experience of prison life.

This dissertation has explored a complex and inaccessible topic. As befits exploratory and interpretive research, the project was necessarily messy and inevitably produced a far-from-conclusive analysis of the topic. In writing this conclusion I found myself with more questions than answers, and with a long list of topics I wished to explore in greater depth. That being said, the research makes some important contributions to the multidisciplinary scholarly literature on sport and physical activity in prisons and to the sociology of sport and PCS subdisciplines, and offers data to support some policy recommendations regarding prison recreation. Furthermore, it lays the foundation for future in-depth research on carceral physical culture in Canada and elsewhere. In the following sections, I outline the project’s disciplinary and theoretical contributions, its policy implications, and they ways in which I hope to build upon this study in future research.

**Contributions and Recommendations**

This dissertation makes substantive and theoretical contributions to the fields of sociology of sport and PCS. Substantively, this research contributes a critical analysis to the small, but growing, body of literature on sport and physical activity in prisons. As countries around the globe grapple with the impact of changing correctional philosophies and populations, ongoing research on prison cultures, including the meaning of sport and physical activity, is needed to understand these shifts in their local and global contexts. In the Canadian context, without discounting the important work being done on leisure in
Canadian women’s prisons (Fortune at al., 2010; Fortune & Whyte, 2011; Pedlar et al., 2008; Yuen et al. 2012; Yuen et al., 2009), this research provides an important update to the Master’s thesis research carried out by Caplan (1996) on sport and physical activity in the federal corrections system, and creates a foundation upon which future research may be conducted.

Theoretically, this project makes a number of important contributions to broader discussions in the sociology of sport and the emergent PCS. By situating the research within the sociology of everyday life, the dissertation frames physical culture as a crucial aspect of everyday human experience and opens it up for theoretical interrogation from this perspective. My research contributes to debates about structure and agency in and through sport by examining an extreme social environment in which, despite severe structural restrictions placed upon them, prisoners exercise limited agency in and through sport and physical activity. Furthermore, by using a symbolic interactionist framework to explore the significance of carceral physical culture, the study moves beyond a deterministic Foucauldian view of discipline and social control. 32 The dissertation also contributes to the increasing interest in the sociology of sport and PCS about the social production of space in and through physical movement (Friedman & van Ingen, 2011; van Ingen, 2003), and explores the ways in which physical cultural spaces may be both restrictive and empowering.

Significantly, the project’s use of the concept of the total institution (Goffman, 1961a) opens up important lines of theoretical inquiry in sport and physical activity research. While total institutions are unusual and extreme social settings, scholars have read totalizing characteristics into competitive sport organizations and cultures (Anderson, 2008; Atkinson & Young, 2008) and historically there are a number of examples of sport interventions in total institutional sites such as Aboriginal residential schools (Forsyth, 32 While Foucault’s (1977) conceptions of dispersed power and the production of docile bodies may appear appropriate lenses through which to understand the significance of carceral physical culture, they may discount both the asymmetry of power between prisoners and prison administrators and the (albeit limited) agency of prisoners to assign their own social meanings to prescribed physical activities.
2013) and concentration camps (Eisen, 1990; Liponski, 2012). Thus, in addition to its relevance to other correctional settings such as juvenile detention centres, this research may open up relevant lines of inquiry in other total institutional sites, such as refugee camps in which sport-for-development programmes are offered (Kidd, 2008). Such social settings, while obviously carrying their own unique sociopolitical histories and social arrangements, share some physical and social characteristics with prisons. Goffman’s (1961a) theory of the total institution thus offers a broad framework within which to situate their diverse physical cultures while allowing researchers the flexibility to understand the unique histories and social structures of each site.

Finally, this research was undertaken with an explicit goal of formulating recommendations that may, eventually, help to craft more effective and humane corrections policy that improves in small ways the conditions of confinement of Canadian prisoners. This goal was certainly set back by my inability to research physical culture in CSC institutions at the present moment, as well as the political climate regarding corrections under the Canadian Conservative government. Nonetheless, I believe that my research highlights the social importance of sport and physical recreation to some Canadian inmates, how a lack of administrative support and underfunding for these activities can contribute to an unhealthy physical culture, and the ways in which sport and physical activity can be important conduits for breaking down social barriers between inmates and with the community. Furthermore, given Canada’s commitment to various human rights agreements that protect the right to leisure or sport (Kidd & Donnelly, 2000; Donnelly, 2008), as well as its acceptance of the UN’s (1955) Standard Minimum Rules for the Treatment of Prisoners, there is a strong case to be made to more explicitly enshrine the right of federal prisoners to physical recreation. While general population prisoners enjoy at least the minimum levels of recreation as guaranteed in the UN rules, there is alarming evidence that inmates in segregation and special handling units may regularly be denied such access.

Despite the arguments in favour of cementing access to physical recreation as a key component in the conditions of confinement in CSC institutions, there is a real possibility that various acts of inmate resistance in and through carceral physical culture, such as
those discussed at length in this dissertation, will provide ammunition for policymakers to further restrict the range of activities offered to prisoners. This is particularly the case where subversion takes a violent form that puts staff or other inmates in danger. Rebutting such an argument first requires a recognition that the way in which Canadian corrections has developed is not inevitable, a fact Griffiths (2011) highlights:

Systems of corrections exist within, not apart from, the broader societal context. Put another way, society’s political, economic, and religious beliefs strongly influence who is identified as criminal and/or deviant, what sanctions are imposed on those convicted of criminal or deviant acts, and what the objectives of those sanctions are (p. 44).

Griffiths’ observation is an important reminder of the ways in which prisons are socially constructed and that alternative understandings of the institution are possible. Goffman (1961a) describes secondary adjustments as developing in response to the deprivation faced by inmates upon admission to a total institution, suggesting that subversive acts by prisoners are a response to the social environment into which they are thrust. Thus, while the development of secondary adjustments may be an inevitable aspect of inmates’ navigation of total institutions, it needs not be violent, unhealthy, or destructive if the institutional environment does not encourage adjustments of this nature. In a Canadian context, Ricciardelli (2014) highlights how much of the violence in CSC prisons arises from strategies of risk management employed by prisoners to limit the likelihood of greater danger. However, despite the fact that “removing such risk from the prison environment . . . would allow prisoners to focus on personal growth and rehabilitation rather than self-protection,” the Conservative government shows little inclination to pursue such a focus (p. 208). As such, it would appear that a reorientation of correctional priorities is needed to alter prisons’ social environments and minimize the levels of violence that are frequently experienced by inmates.

Clearly reshaping physical culture alone will not significantly improve the conditions of confinement for Canadian prisoners; nonetheless, as a significant part of the culture of the prison, it may contribute to a safer, more rehabilitative, and more humane carceral environment—particularly if it changes are made in conjunction with a broader reorientation of correctional environments. Given these discussions, I propose the following broad recommendations:
• That a diverse range of physical recreation activities be provided to inmates, responding both to prisoners’ needs and desires and institutions’ ability to facilitate them. Inmate needs and desires could be determined through nationwide inclusive qualitative research.

• That professional physical educators be hired to develop and implement physical recreation programming.

• That culturally sensitive and relevant forms of physical culture be implemented in CSC institutions, in response to the increasing ethnic and racial diversity of the prisoner population (cf. Sapers, 2013, 2014).

• That the specific needs and desires of women offenders be considered when designing physical recreation programs in federal women’s prisons.

• That prisoners held in segregation and special handling units be given at least the minimum amounts of daily exercise time as required under Standard Minimum Rules for the Treatment of Prisoners (UN, 1955).

• That alternative forms of physical culture, particularly those that are structured to address the specific social issues faced by prisoners, be actively explored. Such activities are discussed in the next section, “Future Directions.”

• Finally, that a major reconsideration be undertaken in Canada of the causes of crime, the demographic profile of prisoners, and the social role of prisons. There are large bodies of research that demonstrate a relationship between social marginalization and likelihood of spending time in prisons and that question the effectiveness of prisons as an effective response to crime. However, such evidence appears to have minimal impact on the production of corrections policy. A broad and thorough reconsideration may provide a foundation for the implementation of radical changes to the Canadian corrections system.

Overall, while this exploratory project may make both significant scholarly and initial policy contributions, it also raises numerous topics that will require future research. In the next section I discuss four such areas for future research.
Future Directions

This exploratory project has analyzed some key aspects of carceral physical culture in Canadian federal prisons. However, it presents only an initial overview of the topic, and there are many ways in which future research could build upon the present research. This section discusses four of these areas: more focused research using diverse methodological approaches; an exploration of alternative forms of physical culture (e.g. yoga and animal therapy) and potential functional equivalents (e.g. arts-based therapy); sport and physical recreation in the reintegration of former prisoners; and research on the changing carceral physical culture of contemporary Canadian federal prisons.

More Focused Research and New Methodological Approaches

Two major limitations of this project were its broad exploratory focus, which inhibited my ability to delve deeply into particular topics of interest; and its methodological restrictions, which included the impossibility of participant observation and, due to recruitment challenges, a relatively small number of participants. From another perspective, the first limitation was actually a strength given the dearth of research on prison sport and physical activity; that is, exploratory research was an appropriate, and arguably necessary, methodological tactic for such a study. This dissertation has possibly opened up some lines of inquiry that more focused future research can flesh out. Meanwhile, the latter issue was a matter of feasibility. Once my proposal to conduct participant observation was rejected by the CSC, I was limited in my ability to recruit participants because the decision meant that I was unable to interview current CSC employees and had to rely in large part on overworked and underfunded non-profit organizations to assist me in setting up initial interviews. Fortuitously, the CSC’s rejection led me to adopt a deeper analysis of historical documents such as policy documents and penal press newspapers, allowing me to open new lines of inquiry in my research. Nonetheless, the fact remains that I was limited in my ability both to gain a deep understanding of contemporary Canadian correctional settings and to engage with the perspectives of a large number of current or former prisoners. Future research in this area would benefit from a continued use of mixed methods, including interviews, ethnography or ethnographic techniques such as participant observation, and archival research. In many ways, this dissertation has only scratched the surface of carceral physical culture in Canada
and deeper research from with diverse methodologies will help to explore more fully its sociological and historical significance.

**Alternative Forms of Carceral Physical Culture and Functional Equivalents**

While this dissertation explored many aspects of carceral physical culture, it did not consider deeply a number of examples of physical practices that may provide an alternative to the violence and unhealthy practices that characterize so much of carceral physical culture. Yoga is one notable example of a physical activity that is structured in such a way as to deemphasize aggression and violence while promoting holistic mental and physical health, and it is a meaningful practice for at least some inmates—though it must be acknowledged that it also contributes to the ideological and interventionist social control agendas of policymakers and prison administrators (Norman, 2015). Another intriguing form of carceral physical culture is animal therapy. In Canada, the Okimaw Ohci Healing Lodge, an institution for Aboriginal women offenders, provided (at least as of 2006) a horse programme run by the Nekaneet First Nation. According to the CSC (Amellal, 2006), “the program teaches residents traditional lessons about the horse from a Nekaneet perspective, and allows them to master the basics of equine care and horseback riding. Horses are often used for healing in Aboriginal culture” (section 3, para. 7). This programme is part of a broader approach of prison-based animal programmes, which includes animal visitation, wildlife rehabilitation, livestock care, and other activities (Furst, 2006).

Such alternative forms of physical culture deserve further scrutiny, as do the experiences of inmates who participate in them. More broadly, a host of recreational activities beyond sport and physical activity are offered to inmates in diverse correctional settings around the world, including among their number therapeutic arts-based programmes such as music (O’Grady, Rolvjord, & McFerran, 2015), drama (Buell, 2011), and visual art classes (Johnson, 2008). This raises the question of whether such activities might be functional equivalents—that is, whether these forms of recreational therapy might contribute the same needs to prisoners’ social worlds as similarly-structured physical activities (cf. Scott & Marshall, 2009, “Civil Religion”). While structural functionalism is unfashionable within the sociology of sport, it may have some value in the
exploration of the social role of sport and physical activity in particular (sub)cultures (Loy & Booth, 2000). In fact, functional equivalence is implicit in some of the research on sport and physical activity for juvenile delinquents. For example, Landers and Landers’ (1978) argue that “whatever lessons are learned through participation in athletics can also be acquired from other extracurricular activities” (pp. 302-302), and both Donnelly (1981) and Sugden and Yiannakis (1982) suggest that structured outdoor physical activities can offer juvenile delinquents similar social experiences to their delinquent subculture in safe and non-destructive settings. While it is a concept to be deployed cautiously, given the myriad critiques of functionalist theory, functional equivalency may offer useful entry point to examining the ways in which certain forms of physical culture may contribute to the therapeutic rehabilitation being undertaken through arts-based prison programmes.

Ultimately, Canada’s carceral physical culture is hindered by a poverty of imagination. There is little evidence in the recent development of federal corrections policy to indicate a radical reconsideration of what prison, let alone its physical culture, can or should be. In fact, the evidence suggests a rapidly rising hegemony of retribution and revenge in the form of security concerns and risk management as the primary motivations for the regulation of physical culture in CSC institutions. One alternative understanding of how correctional institutions could be structured, and the ways in which aspects of carceral physical culture could be integral to this, was offered in a Guardian report on Bastoy prison island, a Norwegian maximum security institution (James, 2013). The article described an environment in which inmates live and cook together in small houses, are paid a daily wage for various jobs such as bike repair or laundry, grow their own crops and raise livestock, can purchase bicycles from their earnings, enjoy a wide range of recreational and educational offerings, and are allowed weekly conjugal visits. One inmate described the prison as “like living in a village, a community. Everybody has to work. But we have free time so we can do some fishing, or in summer we can swim off the beach. We know we are prisoners but here we feel like people” (quoted in James, 2013, para. 5). Given Norway’s low rates of reoffending, examples such as this show that alternative forms of confinement are possible, and that various physical cultural practices can play an important role in their social construction.
Sport and Physical Recreation in Post-release Reintegration

While many prisoners take pleasure in and benefit socially from various forms of sport and physical activity in prison, what happens when they are released and living in the community? Some of the study participants explained that, despite their best intentions, they experienced difficulty in maintaining their exercise routines once they left prison. Various participants cited barriers to activity such as poor mental health, an inability to enjoy a healthy diet, the cost of gym or yoga studio memberships, and a fear of stigma in the community due to their criminal histories. The participants who work with prison yoga organizations keenly recognized these barriers, and were attempting to find ways to facilitate released prisoners in continuing their yoga practices in the community; however, they acknowledged that the high cost of classes and the largely white and middle-class yoga culture were deterrents to such ongoing participation by former prisoners.

Caputo-Levine’s (2013) research highlights the significant physical difficulty that former prisoners, who have developed carceral habituses that do not translate well outside of prison, may have upon aspects of reintegration, such as finding employment and navigating crowded public spaces. Among the many important insights in this research are the very significant ways that prisoners’ bodies and ways of carrying themselves are shaped by the violence, mistrust, and aggression that characterizes many correctional environments; put differently, there is a very significant and long-term physical cultural impact of being incarcerated.33 Given this, it would behoove the corrections system and non-governmental agencies to consider if and how physical activity programming might be provided for former prisoners to help them channel, unlearn, or reshape aspects of their carceral habituses.

It appears that physical recreation is rarely considered in the reintegration of former federal prisoners—in my research I did not find any CSC-produced discussion of the potential role of physical recreation in the reintegration process. Meanwhile, although the

33 For example, Caputo-Levine (2013) notes aspects of the carceral habitus such as an extreme sensitivity about protecting personal space, a resort to aggression to resolve disputes, a default to a blank facial expression known as “yard face,” and a posture that conveys a willingness to physically defend oneself if necessary (pp. 175-179).
United Nations’ (UNODC, 2012) recent handbook on the reintegration of offenders highlights the critical importance of post-custody programming and social support, it makes minimal mention of sport and physical activity.\(^{34}\) That being said, Meeks’ (2014) recent book on prison sport includes a chapter on the various ways that sport and physical activity might play a role in aiding offender reintegration and reducing the likelihood of recidivism. Among these possibilities are sport participation helping to construct a non-criminal identity, aligning with resettlement priorities such as healthcare and education, reducing stigma, and helping to build social capital (pp. 76-87).

While sport and physical activity may have a role to play in community reintegration for some former prisoners, the literature on sport for development reminds us that caution must be exercised when assuming positive outcomes from physical activity interventions—a point argued in this dissertation with regard to the ways in which prisoners make use of physical recreation for subversive purposes. The history of ‘sport for good’ demonstrates that functionalist approaches to sport intervention can assert particular social values that may not be appropriate for or welcomed by participants (Donnelly et al., 2011). Any use of physical activity or sport programmes for recently released prisoners will need to be intentional about its aims and realistic about its outcomes. Further research in this area, including in Canada, will help to determine if and how sport and physical recreation might aid prisoners in their reintegration into the community after they have served their sentences.

**An Urgent Need for Contemporary Canadian Research**

Finally, as is highlighted throughout this dissertation, there is an urgent need for research to understand the rapidly changing conditions of confinement in Canadian prisons since the Conservative government’s ascension to power in 2006, and its successful passage of Bill C-10 in 2012. Numerous participants articulated the fact that, based on their knowledge of federal prisons, the social and physical environments of CSC institutions has

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\(^{34}\) Sport and physical activity are mentioned twice in the United Nations Office of Drugs and Crime (2012) handbook, both with regard to juvenile offenders: as crucial components of juvenile institutions (p. 106) and post-release centres (p. 114).
significantly changed as the result of legislative changes brought in by the Conservatives.

Former prisoner Steve dramatically explained the impact of these changes:

A lot has changed in those 6 years [since being released]. When the Conservative government really got a foothold it changed a whole bunch of stuff. We could really be talking about a complete generation difference here. . . . I’ve heard all about it and am like “holy crap,” it almost sounds like a whole different country, with some of the changes they’ve made.

Similarly, Kathleen, who works with recently released women prisoners, noted that the government’s concern with presenting a tough-on-crime image means that “anything that looks like it’s a perk, . . . and trust me [physical activity and health resources] could, healthy food could, the Harper government is so concerned with the optics . . . that they’re at risk [of being cut].” Throughout this dissertation I have noted the strands of insight I gleaned about physical culture in contemporary federal institutions, but these form a fragmented and incomplete picture. Despite the numerous barriers they will inevitably face, it is crucial for social scientists to attempt to study the contemporary prison context in whatever manner possible—and, in terms of building upon the findings of this project, to pay close attention to changes in the carceral physical culture of CSC institutions over the past five to 10 years.

**Concluding Thoughts**

Sport and physical activity, as parts of a broader carceral physical culture, have clearly held important social meanings at various times throughout the history of the Canadian federal corrections system. This dissertation has provided some insight into the sociological significance of these physical practices in the unusual total institutional environment of prisons, particularly in terms of questions of social control, resistance, presentation of self, and production of space. While this project broadens and deepens the scholarly knowledge on sport and physical activity in Canadian prisons, it also represents an initial sketch of a complex topic. There is much fertile ground for future research on the subject, and many pressing sociopolitical reasons to undertake such research. Thus, in concluding this dissertation, I suspect that I am in actuality only just beginning a long journey of future scholarly inquiry.
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Appendices

Appendix A: University of Toronto Ethics Approval

UNIVERSITY OF
TORONTO

PROTOCOL REFERENCE # 28120

October 22, 2012

Dr. Peter Donnelly
FACULTY OF PHYSICAL EDUCATION AND
HEALTH

Mr. Mark Norman
FACULTY OF PHYSICAL EDUCATION AND
HEALTH

Dear Dr. Donnelly and Mr. Mark Norman,

Re: Your research protocol entitled, “Exploring forms and meanings of physical activity and sport in Canadian federal prisons”

ETHICS APPROVAL

Original Approval Date: October 22, 2012
Expiry Date: October 21, 2013
Continuing Review Level: 2

We are writing to advise you that the Health Sciences Research Ethics Board (REB) has granted approval to the above-named research protocol, for a period of one year. Ongoing research under this protocol must be renewed prior to the expiry date.

Any changes to the approved protocol or consent materials must be reviewed and approved through the amendment process prior to its implementation. Any adverse or unanticipated events in the research should be reported to the Office of Research Ethics as soon as possible.

Please ensure that you submit an Annual Renewal Form or a Study Completion Report 15 to 30 days prior to the expiry date of your current ethics approval. Note that annual renewals for studies cannot be accepted more than 30 days prior to the date of expiry.

If your research is funded by a third party, please contact the assigned Research Funding Officer in Research Services to ensure that your funds are released.

Best wishes for the successful completion of your research.

Yours sincerely,

Judith Friedland, Ph.D.
REB Chair

Daniel Gyewu
REB Manager

OFFICE OF RESEARCH ETHICS
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Appendix B: Information Letter Provided to Participants

Dear Participant,

Thank you for your participation in this project. I am a PhD student at the University of Toronto. As part of this project, I will be conducting interviews with former prisoners about their experience with physical activity inside correctional institutions.

My research is concerned with the types of physical activity that occur in a prison setting; the experience of inmates with those activities; the views of prison staff and activity providers toward these activities; and the contributions of physical activity to the social life of the institution. From this research, I will publish a dissertation that will be publicly available through the University of Toronto. I may publish this research in other forms or present it at academic conferences. However, the original material (notes from interviews and observations) will not be shared with any other person.

You will be compensated with a $15 gift card as a thank you for your participation. The research involves minimal risks to participants.

Please be aware that your participation in this project is entirely voluntary. You may withdraw from interviews at any time and have your participation in this project cancelled. You may inform me of your desire to withdraw within six months of the interview date.

Furthermore, your participation will remain confidential throughout the research process: you will be identified by a fictional name in my writing and personal details linking your statements to your identity will be omitted. I will destroy this information upon completing this research project; however, completely anonymous data (in which all personally identifiable information will be removed) may be kept beyond this date.

If you wish, my doctoral supervisor, Dr. Peter Donnelly, can be contacted by email (peter.donnelly@utoronto.ca). If you have any questions about your rights as a participant, you may contact the University of Toronto Ethics Review Office by telephone (1-416-946-3273) or by email (ethics.review@utoronto.ca).

Thank you again for your participation in this research project.

Sincerely,

Mark Norman
Doctoral Candidate
Faculty of Kinesiology and Physical Education, University of Toronto
Email: mark.norman@utoronto.ca
Appendix C: Oral Consent Script

I am researching physical activities and sports in correctional institutions, including yoga programs, and am interested in learning about the forms of activity, the experiences and views of various participants towards them, what role they play in the social life of the institution, and how they are structured.

Can I confirm that you are willing to be interviewed as a participant in this research project?

The results of this research will be published in a dissertation that will be publicly available through the University of Toronto. I may publish this research in other forms or present it at academic conferences. I will also be preparing a report for the Correctional Service of Canada, based upon my research. If you would like a copy of my research summary, I would be happy to provide you one upon its completion.

Any information that I collect will be coded, which means that I will use a pseudonym in place of your real name and that all other information that may identify you will be altered. I will keep this information until I have completed my research project, at which time it will be destroyed. I will also keep anonymous information which may be used in academic research beyond this point but that will not in any way be identified with your name or other personally identifiable information.

[For former prisoners]: You will be given a $15 gift card as compensation for your participation.

[For other participants]: You will not be compensated for your participation or any benefits beyond any value you derive from your participation.

I anticipate that this research involves minimal risks to you as a participant. You can choose to end our interview at any time that you like. If you do not want to answer any question that I ask or wish not to discuss certain topics, you do not have to do so. I appreciate your participation and want to be sure that you feel comfortable throughout. If at any time you would like to stop the interview, or if you wish to withdraw any comments you made, I will
not use them as part of my research. If, later on, you wish to withdraw from participating you can do so within six months after this interview.

With your permission, I would like to tape record this conversation. If you would prefer not to have this interview recorded I will not do so and will simply take notes instead. May I record our interview? I will not share notes or tape-recordings from our interview with any other person, with the possible exception of my academic supervisor. Audio recordings will be destroyed at the completion of the project. I will not use your real name in any written form with regard to this research. Upon completing my research, all notes will be modified to remove any identifying comments. When writing my dissertation, I will attempt to avoid writing facts that may identify you. However, I would like to remind you that people are often identifiable by the stories they tell and to ask you to keep this in mind when speaking with me.

If you wish, you can contact my supervisor if you have any concerns about this research. If you have any questions or concerns about your rights as a participant, you may contact the University of Toronto Ethics Review Office by telephone or by email. Contact information for both is provided in the Information Letter that I am offering you.

Do you have any questions for me about anything that we have just discussed?
Appendix D: Interview Guide: Former Prisoners

Demographic Info
- Gender
- Age
- Ethnicity/race

Personal history in the corrections system
- Time spent in correctional institutions (federal/provincial)
- Security level of institution(s)

Daily Routine in prison
- What was a typical day like? (work, classes, eating, recreation, etc.)
- How much time did you get for recreation or physical activity?
- What was your participation in leisure activities?
- Other types of physical activity (e.g. hard work)?

Physical activity and sport in prison
- Did you do any sports or PA before going to prison?
- What activities did you participate in while in prison?
- Types of physical activity at institutions
  - What is available?
  - How is it organized?
  - How easy is it to participate?
- What are your views toward physical activity in a prison setting?
- Did sport or physical activity impact your relationships with other prisoners or with staff?
- Did physical activity impact your own experiences in prison? Did it make it better? Worse?
- Have you been able to continue with similar physical activities after release?
- Overall, what do you see as the value of physical activity for prisoners?
- If you could recommend changes to the delivery of recreation programming, what would you suggest?

Final Questions
- Do you have any questions for me or any comments that you still wish to make?
- Are there any aspects of this research that you think would be important to consider as I go forward with this research?
Appendix E: Interview Guide: Other Participants

Overview of your Role Organization

- What is your role with [organization]?
- How long have you been in that role?
- How did [organization] start?
- What is the goal of the organization?
- How many staff and volunteers work for [organization]?
- Where do you work? (i.e. in what correctional institutions?)
- How did you reach out and make connections with correctional institutions?

Organization of Recreation Programs

- How often do programs run in correctional institutions?
- Who do you work with at the various institutions?
- Can you describe typical activity session in a correctional institution?
- How much interaction do instructors have with staff and/or prisoners?
- What are challenges?

Impact of Recreation Programs

- Do you have a sense of the impact of the programs?
- How do staff and prisoners view the programs, in your experience?
- How do you collect evidence?
- In your experience and knowledge, do certain types of recreational activity (e.g. yoga) offer something unique in a correctional setting versus other types of physical activity?

Final Questions

- Do you have any questions for me or any comments that you still wish to make?
- Are there any aspects of this research that you think would be important to consider as I go forward with this research?
- If I need to clarify any of your comments, may I email you?
- Is there anyone else you can recommend that I speak to for this project?