

An Exploration into the Pains of Women's Federal Imprisonment in Canada

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Abstract

The literature on women's federal imprisonment in Canada is extensive and consistently highlights the Correctional Service of Canada's (CSC) failure to adequately address the unique needs and experiences of federally sentenced women. Despite the formal adoption of a women-centred approach to imprisonment following the release of the "Creating Choices" task force report in 1990, federally sentenced women continue to face many of the same hardships and deprivations that have historically characterized their imprisonment. Mobilizing Sykes' (2007/1958) conceptualization of the "pains of imprisonment", this thesis examines the deprivations associated with prison life as experienced by federally sentenced women in Canada through examining their written publications. By conducting a thematic analysis of a sample of publications retrieved from the *Journal of Prisoners on Prisons*, *Cell Count* magazine and prisoner newsletters available on the Penal Press website, this master's study found that federally sentenced women have not only continuously experienced an array of deprivations associated with Sykes' framework such as the deprivations of liberty, goods and services, romantic and desired intimate relationships, autonomy and security, but have also experienced other pains of imprisonment, including dehumanization, inadequate institutional services, and a lack of cultural and spiritual resources. In taking these harms of imprisonment into account, this study concludes that CSC has consistently failed to meet the needs of federally sentenced women, depriving them of opportunities for rehabilitation and meaningful change.

Table of Contents

Acknowledgments	ii
Abstract	iii
Table of Contents	iv
List of Tables	vi
List of Acronyms	vii
Chapter 1: Introduction	1
1.1 Focus of Study	1
1.2 Research Questions and Objectives	3
1.3 Chapter Overview	4
Chapter 2: History of the Ongoing Failure to Address the Needs of Criminalized Women in Canada.....	7
2.1 A Contextual Background on Women’s Federal Imprisonment in Canada	7
2.1.1 The Influence of the Mercer Reformatory and Maternal Logic	8
2.1.2 Imprisoned Women at Kingston Penitentiary	11
2.1.3 Kingston Prison for Women (P4W)	13
2.2 <i>Creating Choices</i> or Contradictions? Discussion on the Implementation of a ‘Women-Centered’ Approach	15
2.2.1 <i>Creating Choices</i> : The Task Force on Federally Sentenced Women	15
2.2.2 Contradictions and Critiques	20
2.2.3 The Reality of <i>Creating Choices</i> : Contradictions in Practice	23
2.2.4 Key Themes in Women’s Federal Imprisonment	25
2.3 Political and Administrative Influences on Women’s Federal Imprisonment	34
2.3.1 Intensifying Punishment Under the Harper Administration	34
2.3.2 Liberal Commitments Under the Trudeau Administration	37
2.3.3 The Current Status of Women’s Imprisonment	37
2.4 Conclusion	37
Chapter 3: Conceptual Framework	39
3.1 The Society of Captives.....	40
3.2 The Pains of Imprisonment	43

3.3	Limitations	47
3.4	Applicability	48
Chapter 4: Methodological Approach		52
4.1	Research Question and Goals	52
4.2	Epistemological Considerations	53
4.3	Data Collection	55
4.4	Analysis of the Material	62
4.5	Ethical Considerations	68
4.6	Limitations of Research	68
Chapter 5: Findings and Discussion		71
5.1	Institutional Environment and Living Conditions	72
5.1.1	Imprisoned Women, an Oppressive Environment, and a Lack of Justice	72
5.1.2	Living Conditions and Segregation	79
5.2	The Relevance of Sykes' " <i>Pains of Imprisonment</i> " in Women's Incarceration.....	83
5.2.1	Deprivation of Liberty	83
5.2.2	Deprivation of Goods and Services	97
5.2.3	Deprivation of Romantic and Desired Intimate Relationships	107
5.2.4	Deprivation of Autonomy	110
5.2.5	Deprivation of Security	114
5.3	Significant Deprivations Beyond Sykes' Framework	119
5.3.1	Deprivation of Humanity	119
5.3.2	Deprivation of Institutional Services	122
5.3.3	Deprivation of Cultural and Spiritual Resources	128
5.4	Concluding Remarks	131
Chapter 6: Conclusion and Future Directions for Research		133
References		140
Appendix A: Themes and Sub-Themes		154
Appendix B: Data Sources		156

List of Tables

Table 1: Dataset 59

Table 2: Prevalence of Themes Across the Material..... 62

List of Acronyms

CSC – Correctional Services Canada

EIFW – Edmonton Institution for Women

FVI – Fraser Valley Institution for Women

GVI – Grand Valley Institution for Women

JPP – Journal of Prisoners on Prisons

KP – Kingston Penitentiary

MCP – Mother-Child Program

P4W – Prison for Women

RTC – Regional Treatment Centre

TFFSW – Task Force on Federally Sentenced Women

W2B – Walls to Bridges

Chapter 1: Introduction

1.1 Focus of Study

There exists a large body of literature on the experiences of incarceration for federally sentenced women (those serving sentences of two years or more) in Canada, touching on the history and lived realities of imprisoned women through decades of neglect and attempted reform (Chartrand & Kilty, 2017). However, there has yet to be a study that has examined these experiences through an analysis of the written work of federally sentenced women. Contributing to this literature and drawing on Sykes' (2007/1958) "pains of imprisonment," this master's thesis explores the gendered pains of imprisonment drawing on a sample of writing published by federally sentenced women in Canada from 1984 to 2023. In 1984, a Progressive Conservative government took office and later initiated the 1990 Task Force on Federally Sentenced Women (*Creating Choices*) and the *Corrections and Conditional Release Act* (1992) that resulted in significant changes to the policies of the federal penitentiary system.

Scholarship on women's imprisonment has evolved considerably over time. Once dismissed as "too few to count" (Adelberg & Currie, 1987) and categorized as an afterthought (Cooper, 1987; Hannah-Moffat, 1991), the scope of the literature on imprisoned women has significantly grown, offering critical insights into the historical and ongoing challenges faced by federally sentenced women in Canada (e.g. Hannah-Moffat, 2001; Hayman 2006). The federal incarceration of women is marked by a history that highlights a lack of equality, inadequate programming, and the continuous neglect of criminalized women in 'correctional' planning (Hannah-Moffat, 1991). Despite the claimed implementation of a women-centered approach to imprisonment, Correctional Services Canada (CSC) has consistently failed to address the unique

needs of imprisoned women—shaped by lived experiences such as poverty, trauma, abuse, victimization, substance use, mental health, and the like—and instead perpetuates punitive practices under the guise of reform (Hannah-Moffat, 2001, 2002, 2006; Montford, 2015; Montford & Moffat, 2021; Chartrand & Kilty, 2017). It is important to note that while criminalized and imprisoned men often experience similar hardships prior to incarceration, women generally differ from them, both in the nature of the offences for which they are incarcerated and in their social, economic, cultural, and political experiences (Hannah-Moffat, 2001). As a result, a ‘correctional’ system historically designed for criminalized men fails to adequately address the needs of women (Hannah-Moffat, 2001).

The literature on women’s imprisonment is extensive, encompassing a wide range of themes and areas of inquiry within its scope. Some of the topics explored in this body of literature include, but are not limited to, analyses of the history of women’s federal imprisonment and the various flashpoints—such as *Creating Choices* and the *Arbour Inquiry*¹—along with associated reforms and their implementation (or lack thereof) over time (e.g. Hannah-Moffat, 2001; Hayman, 2006; Guenther, 2022), and an array of issues and select topics related to women’s federal imprisonment such as the problematic treatments for women suffering with mental health (e.g. Kilty, 2012); the gendered and punitive treatment and violence experienced by federally sentenced women (see Chartrand, 2015); the lack of adequate programming and vocational training (e.g. Pollack, 2009); the hardships associated to pregnancy and parenting from prison (e.g. Paynter et al., 2023); and numerous other topics related to the conditions experienced by this group. While existing research has explored many aspects of women’s experiences of federal imprisonment in Canada, a notable gap remains as there has yet to be a study that examines how federally sentenced women collectively experience the pains of

1. A detailed discussion of the Arbour Inquiry can be found below – see pp. 20-21.

imprisonment across Canada, with the exception of one study that examined the pains of imprisonment as experienced by federally sentenced Indigenous women in Alberta, Canada (see Bucerius et al., 2022). As such, this research addresses this gap through an analysis of publications written by federally sentenced women in Canada.

Continued research on imprisoned women remains critical as the number of imprisoned women is increasing, while Indigenous women represent the fastest growing prisoner population in Canada (Pollack, 2020; Department of Justice Canada, 2021) even amid stated efforts to curb Indigenous mass incarceration (e.g. *R. v. Gladue*, 1999)². In addition, CSC has repeatedly imposed punitive measures on federally sentenced women under the pretense of adopting a women-centered approach to imprisonment (Hannah-Moffat, 2001, 2002; Montford, 2015; Chartrand & Kilty, 2017). Despite decades of women-specific ‘correctional’ reforms and extensive academic inquiry into the implementation of *Creating Choices*, Canada’s women’s prisons persistently fail to meet the distinct needs of federally sentenced women (Chartrand & Kilty, 2017).

1.2 Research Questions and Objectives

Although a widely researched topic, scholarship has yet to examine the pains of imprisonment as experienced by federally incarcerated women in Canada through their own written work. As such, this study asks: How do federally sentenced women in Canada experience the pains of imprisonment as expressed through their written accounts? Essentially, this research examines Sykes’ “pains of imprisonment” as documented by federally sentenced women in Canada through their own writing. By collecting material from the past four decades, this research explores how federally sentenced women experience the pains of imprisonment given the claimed implementation of a number of reforms such as those stemming from the 1990 Task

2. In *R. v. Gladue*, an indigenous woman pled guilty to manslaughter after killing her common-law husband while intoxicated. The Supreme Court of Canada held that, under section 718.2(e) of the *Criminal Code*, sentencing judges must consider the unique systemic and personal circumstances affecting Indigenous offenders and seek alternatives to imprisonment in an attempt to reduce Indigenous overrepresentation in Canadian prisons (*R. v. Gladue*, [1999] 1 S.C.R. 688).

Force on Federally Sentenced Women (also known as “*Creating Choices*”), the 1992 introduction and subsequent changes to the *Corrections and Conditional Release Act*, and other changes documented by federally incarcerated women in publications like the *Journal of Prisoners on Prisons* (e.g. Paynter et al., 2022a). In addition, through examining how women experience the pains of imprisonment, this research seeks to assess the accuracy and usefulness of Sykes’ conceptualization as a diagnostic tool for ‘correctional’ policy, particularly in light of specific policy interventions, including the stated implementation of *Creating Choices* and policies introduced under the Harper administration that continue to shape women’s federal imprisonment in Canada more than a decade after their time in office, characterized by ‘tough-on-crime’ measures aimed at increasing sentences, reducing opportunities for community release, and making conditions of confinement more austere (Piché, 2014). The Canadian federal penitentiary system causes significant harm, which has raised questions concerning whether it ought to be reformed (e.g. Skolnik, 2022) or abolished altogether in favour of community-based alternatives (e.g. Herzing & Piché, 2024).

1.3 Chapter Overview

With the research question and objectives outlined above in mind, the remainder of this thesis is divided into five chapters. The second chapter of this thesis situates the study within the scholarly literature on women’s imprisonment in Canada with an emphasis on outlining the history of the ongoing failure to address the needs of criminalized women in Canada. In doing so, the chapter discusses the history of women’s federal imprisonment in Canada, examines the creation of and contradictions within *Creating Choices*, and engages with the scholarly literature on the topic, presenting key themes relevant to women’s imprisonment to assess its implementation and execution. Lastly, it discusses how shifting political administrations have

influenced prison policies and procedures, thereby impacting the experiences of the imprisoned population.

In the third chapter, I outline the conceptual framework employed in the analysis of the empirical material. More specifically, I introduce Gresham Sykes' (1958) "pains of imprisonment" and how it was mobilized in this research as a source for the identification, classification, and organization of themes emerging in the empirical material.

In the fourth chapter, I discuss how I gathered prison writing excerpts authored by women incarcerated in Canadian federal penitentiaries. I outline how the use of this body of work allowed me to collect material from a large population on their experiences of imprisonment. I also discuss the data analysis process and use of thematic analysis to understand the pains of imprisonment as experienced by federally sentenced women in Canada.

In chapter five, I present the findings on the pains of imprisonment experienced by federally sentenced women in Canada. This chapter begins with an overview of the institutional environment, drawing on accounts by federally incarcerated women that detail aspects such as living conditions, treatment by staff, grievance procedures, security classifications, segregation, and other key issues. The chapter then explores the "pains of imprisonment" as documented by women in their writing—first through the lens of Sykes' (2007/1958) conceptual framework (i.e. deprivation of liberty, deprivation of goods and services, deprivation of romantic and desired intimate relationships, deprivation of autonomy, and deprivation of security), and then by addressing significant deprivations that fall outside of his five categories (i.e. deprivation of humanity, deprivation of institutional services, and the deprivation of cultural and spiritual resources). Throughout, the chapter analyzes how their experiences of incarceration have been

shaped by changes to governmental policies and procedures that have impacted the federal 'correctional' system in Canada.

In the conclusion, I review the main contributions of this study to scholarship on the pains of imprisonment experienced and documented by federally sentenced women in Canada. I also discuss directions for future research.

Chapter 2: History of the Ongoing Failure to Address the Needs of Criminalized Women in Canada

This master's thesis aims to explore the pains of imprisonment as experienced by women in Canadian federal penitentiaries. In centering the voices of federally sentenced women in Canada, this research examines the unique treatment, challenges and deprivations faced by imprisoned women with an emphasis on the "pains of imprisonment" (Sykes, 2007/1958) they endure. This chapter tracks the evolution of women's federal imprisonment in Canada, arguing that despite reforms, the Canadian federal penitentiary system has failed to appropriately address the structural and gendered harms experienced by federally sentenced women. By exploring the history of women's federal imprisonment in Canada, this chapter demonstrates the longstanding neglect and maltreatment of imprisoned women. Additionally, this chapter examines *Creating Choices* and the women-centered approach to imprisonment to reveal the contradictions embedded in penal discourses and reforms affecting federally incarcerated women. By engaging with relevant scholarly literature, it highlights how these contradictions have manifested in practice. Lastly, it explores the impacts that shifting political administrations can have on 'correctional' policies and procedures, further harming federally sentenced women. Based on this literature review, I argue that, despite widespread recognition of the unique needs of federally sentenced women and the stated adoption of a women-centered approach to imprisonment, Correctional Services Canada (CSC) has consistently failed to fully implement the principles of *Creating Choices* and adequately address the needs of this population.

2.1 A Contextual Background on Women's Federal Imprisonment in Canada

Historically, the population of criminalized women were ignored by criminological researchers and correctional planners, who typically focused their attention on criminalized men

(Hannah-Moffat, 1991). The population of criminalized women were seen as “too few to count”, meaning their experiences and needs were often overlooked in the ‘correctional’ system (Adelberg & Currie, 1987). Penal practices were argued to give little consideration to how punishment affected women, while providing ‘rehabilitation’ in the form of programming that reflected stereotypical gender norms (Chartrand & Kilty, 2017).

2.1.1 The Influence of the Mercer Reformatory and Maternal Logic

Historically, women’s experiences of imprisonment were shaped by patriarchal and paternalistic policies and oppression at the hands of men (Hannah-Moffat, 1991, 2001). In the past, an institution designed to house only women did not exist, leaving criminalized women to be imprisoned alongside criminalized men (Strange, 1985). The disregard for the needs of criminalized women sparked a movement in the 1800’s and a shift towards maternal discipline, relying on maternal logic to regulate women in conflict with the law (Hannah-Moffat, 2001). The idea of maternal reform derived from growing skepticism about whether penal practices traditionally designed for men had the ability to change criminalized women (Hannah-Moffat, 2001). This model was built upon the belief that women were reformable, and a mother’s love and guidance could become a model for the regulation of criminalized women (Strange, 1985; Hannah-Moffat, 2001). Proponents of the maternal model believed that traditional penitentiaries were unsuitable for women and suggested they be imprisoned separately from men, in cottages under the order and guidance of a matron³ (Hannah-Moffat, 2001; Hayman, 2006). Whereas in other parts of the world, separate reformatories for women were the result of a larger prison reform movement (Strange, 1985), in Canada, they were the result of a state-generated project (Hannah-Moffat, 2001).

3. For a more detailed and thorough analysis of the origins of the women’s reformatory movement and the development of the maternal model of imprisonment, see Hannah-Moffat, *Punishment in Disguise: Penal Governance and Federal Imprisonment of Women in Canada* (2001).

In 1874, Ontario Prison Inspector J.W. Langmuir—inspired by the American movement—encouraged the state to shift away from punishment and adopt a moral and maternal reform strategy (Strange, 1985; Hannah-Moffat, 2001). He advocated for the creation of a separate reformatory for women leading to the construction of the Mercer Reformatory (1880-1969), the first separate prison for women in Canada (Strange, 1985; Faith, 1993; Hannah-Moffat, 2001; Hayman, 2006). Langmuir’s vision was to embed maternal control directly into the architecture of the prison, shaping it to resemble a house of reformation rather than an institution of punishment—despite three floors of cells of various sizes (Strange, 1985). At the Mercer, cell size functioned as a form of coercive control as women who complied to the order of the institution were rewarded with more comfortable accommodations (Strange, 1985). The separation of women across different floors was central to Langmuir’s design for two reasons: to encourage all women to reform, and to prevent those deemed more criminal or sinful from influencing women who were perceived as more likely to be reformed (Strange, 1985).

Langmuir believed that an all-female staff and superintendent could ‘mother’ criminalized women into respectable women (Strange, 1985). The prison was built upon the belief that a mother-daughter relationship dynamic between the superintendent and the prisoners would reform criminalized women—that a mother’s love and control was the key to obedience (Strange, 1985). To compliment this, Langmuir hoped that the Mercer would only receive women who were suitable for reformatory treatment and desired a more fulfilling life (Strange, 1985). As such, the institution was “specially constructed and administered to reform only those women deemed capable of improvement” (Strange, 1985, p. 86).

The Mercer claimed to reform women through gender-specific regimes, labour, moral and religious training, and after care (Hannah-Moffat, 2001). Programs offered basic education,

along with religious, moral and domestic training, emphasizing obedience, servility, and the importance of knowing one's place in society (Hannah-Moffat, 2001). Women were often tasked with laundering, cleaning, sewing or knitting (Strange, 1985) and industrial training was also provided, albeit, in a way that reflected gendered expectations of the time (Hannah-Moffat, 2001). The regulation of criminalized women continued after their release from the Mercer. Parole was designed to reinforce the importance of 'proper womanly conduct' and Mercer officials arranged domestic labour for women upon their release in an attempt to uphold the lessons and skills they acquired at the reformatory (Strange, 1985; Hannah-Moffat, 2001). As outlined above, the nature of the Andrew Mercer Reformatory and its practices were inherently maternalistic and deeply sexist. The regulation, guidance and discipline of women by an all-female staff and a superintendent who would 'mother' the criminalized into 'respectable women' (Strange, 1985) is inherently maternalistic. Moreover, the emphasis on creating a 'household' and instilling gendered practices revolving around traditional women's work, domesticity, and obedience further highlight the gendered practices and ideals within the institution.

The Mercer encountered several problems that contributed to its demise. Within its first twenty years of operation, it failed to achieve its mission of "uplifting criminal women through motherly reform" (Strange, 1985, p. 87). This failure was attributed to structural limitations, inefficient management and leadership, the prevalence of short sentences, and the admission of "unsuitable" prisoners (Strange, 1985, pp. 90-91). Most prominently, Strange (1985) contends that despite the presence of a motherly authority, a prison cannot successfully function as a household and the realities of imprisonment—cells, workrooms, and dungeons—cannot be transformed into a home.

When discussing the success or failure of the Mercer's attempts to reform imprisoned women, scholars argue that the problems with establishing a reform based maternal model encapsulate the contradictory nature of imprisonment (Strange, 1985; Hannah-Moffat, 2001). Prisons, penitentiaries and reformatories have adopted two contradicting goals: punishment and reform (Hannah-Moffat, 2001), a theme that regained significance several years later. The Mercer Reformatory is significant in the context of women's 'corrections' in Canada, as the maternal governance applied at the Mercer outlasted its closure and subsequently reappeared in the 1990's as penal discourse shifted again towards a women-centered approach to imprisonment (Hannah-Moffat, 2001; Hayman, 2006).

2.1.2 Imprisoned Women at Kingston Penitentiary

Despite the diverse needs of men and women; imprisoned women have historically been housed in institutions largely designed for men, experiencing worse conditions than their male counterparts (Hannah-Moffat, 1991, 2001; Hayman, 2006; Montford, 2015). Imprisoned women were often subjected to neglect, dehumanizing conditions, and paternalistic attitudes, frequently placed in facilities based on what was most convenient for the population of male prisoners (Cooper, 1987; Hannah-Moffat, 1991; Hayman, 2006). Imprisoned women were often held in quarters in male prisons with little to no access to programs and services, a condition that often led to abuse and mistreatment (Cooper, 1987; Hannah-Moffat, 1991). The imprisonment of women in Canada pre-dated confederation, beginning in 1835 upon the opening of the Kingston Penitentiary, also known as KP (Hayman, 2003, 2006). Although this institution was built to imprison men, women who were convicted of serious offences were sent to KP shortly after it opened (Hayman, 2003, 2006). Within KP, women were initially scattered across various

locations (Hayman, 2006) and were seen as inconvenient, as was reflected in the conditions, abuse and neglect they experienced (Hannah-Moffat, 2001).

In 1849, the “inadequate living conditions, the extreme punitiveness, the absence of penitentiary discipline, and inability to occupy women with profitable labour” led to the *Brown Commission*, which suggested that a separate building be created for imprisoned women (Hannah-Moffat, 2001, p. 80). This commission also revealed that women incarcerated at KP experienced physical, emotional, and sexual abuse perpetuated by both staff and fellow prisoners, while their living quarters were infested with insects (Cooper, 1987; Hannah-Moffat, 1991). The *Brown Commission’s* recommendation for a separate women’s prison was not fulfilled until 1913 when a separate accommodation for imprisoned women was made; however, it remained within the walls of KP (Hayman, 2006). The newly designated Female Department soon became overcrowded, forcing many women to sleep in the hallways (Hannah-Moffat, 2001). Several commissions and annual reports criticized the Female Unit at KP, highlighting the overcrowded, unsanitary and intolerable conditions (Hannah-Moffat, 2001). During their time in this prison, life was marked by inadequate living conditions, extreme punitiveness and a lack of meaningful work opportunities (Hannah-Moffat, 2001; Hayman, 2003).

In 1921, the *Nickle Commission* was the first to assess federally sentenced women as a distinct group, recognizing the inappropriateness of their housing alongside male prisoners under the supervision of male staff (Cooper, 1987; Hannah-Moffat, 2001; Hayman, 2003). Nickle advocated for imprisoned women to be separated from male prisoners due to moral concerns and opportunities for flirtation and indecency (Nickle 1921a as cited in Hannah-Moffat, 2001). Additionally, he highlighted the problems with the facility and the inadequate programming available for imprisoned women (Hannah-Moffat, 2001; Hayman, 2003). Nickle made a number

of recommendations, the most significant being to close the Female Unit at KP and replace it with a new prison for women (Cooper, 1987; Hannah-Moffat, 2001). This prompted the immediate construction of the Prison for Women (P4W) in Kingston (Hayman, 2003), the sole institution for federally sentenced women in Canada until the mid 1990's (Faith, 1999). During this time, there were 56 prisons for women in the United States (Faith, 1993). In contrast, P4W served as the only institution for all federally sentenced women in Canada for 61 years— regardless of their geographical origin (Faith, 1993; Guenther, 2022).

2.1.3 Kingston Prison for Women (P4W)

In 1925, construction for the P4W began, but it was not until 1934 that women were moved to the new location (Cooper, 1987; Hannah-Moffat, 1991, 2001; Hayman, 2003, 2006). While the federal government had numerous prisons for men across the country in order to ensure proximity to family, the management of offender populations, to accommodate security classifications and allow for various vocational, educational, and/or therapeutic programming, women were denied these considerations and failed to be recognized as individuals with distinct needs (Faith, 1993). The facility was modeled on men's maximum-security facilities but had planned to accommodate women with different security classifications (Hannah-Moffat, 1991). In the end, all women were subject to maximum-security custody at P4W (Faith, 1993; Hannah-Moffat, 1991). This prison was in no means an upgrade from Kingston Penitentiary. Faith (1999) states that P4W was “a large, foreboding, domed, limestone structure surrounded by eighteen-foot-high stone walls, the interior a dark maze of cells and corridors, offer[ing] little improvement in terms of comfort or civility” (p. 100). The prison was known for tragic conditions and was inadequate for living, working, eating, programming, recreation, and administration (Arbour, 1996; Hayman, 2006). In addition, women also experienced significant

problems with geographical dislocation and overclassification (Hannah-Moffat, 1991). All of these factors combined with a women's own personal struggles "results in lethargy, claustrophobia, depression, self-injurious behaviour and suicide" (Faith, 1993, p. 139). Faith (1993) shares that the conditions associated to imprisonment can become too much for women who are under significant stress to manage. Although official statistics are not available, Faith (1993) notes that from 1977 to 1991 there were at least 12 suicides within P4W, eight of which were Indigenous women.

Four years after P4W opened, commissions began to recommend the closure of the prison (Hannah-Moffat, 2001), beginning with the Archambault report (1938) which made this recommendation, in addition to suggesting that women be returned to their home provinces due to the geographical dislocation from their homes and communities (Cooper, 1987; Hannah-Moffat, 1991, 2001; Hayman, 2006). Conditions in P4W caused scholars and activists to share their concerns, which led to numerous task forces, commissions and recommendations calling for the closure of P4W (Hannah-Moffat, 1995). Over 40 years—between 1938 to 1978—eleven government-appointed investigative bodies recommended the closure of P4W and suggested that women be relocated to regional facilities in order to alleviate family dislocation (Faith, 1993, 1999). A number of these reports stated that imprisoned women had been overlooked by the federal penitentiary system as it had neglected to consider them in terms of programming and accommodation, and they experienced problems with overclassification, geographical dislocation, the absence of francophone and culturally appropriate programs, and community resources (Hannah-Moffat, 1991, 1995, 2001).

The government had been under public scrutiny for its neglect of federally sentenced women, and facing pressure from reformers, feminists, Indigenous organizations, and journalists to

change the future of women’s corrections (Hannah-Moffat, 1991, 2001). By 1988, the newly appointed Commissioner of Corrections in Canada, Ole Ingstrup (CSC, 2014), made a commitment to reviewing the needs of federally sentenced women (Hannah-Moffat, 1991, 2001; Hayman, 2006). In 1989, a joint community and government task force was appointed and by 1990, the Task Force on Federally Sentenced Women (TFFSW) had endeavoured to develop a women-centered approach to incarceration and completed the report *Creating Choices* (Montford, 2015; Hannah-Moffat, 1991, 2001; Faith, 1993; Faith, 1999; Gaucher & Lowman, 2014; Guenther, 2022). *Creating Choices* sought to break the cycle of neglect and “marked a significant shift in the philosophy underpinning the administration of women’s imprisonment in Canada. It employed a feminist methodology...and espoused a gender-specific discourse of empowerment and choice” (Montford, 2015, p. 286).

2.2 *Creating Choices* or Contradictions? Discussion on the Implementation of a ‘Women-Centered’ Approach

2.2.1 *Creating Choices*: The Task Force on Federally Sentenced Women

Creating Choices was different from the prior reports on federally sentenced women (Hannah-Moffat, 1995). The task force committee included representation from imprisoned women and their advocates, Indigenous women, and national women’s organizations (Hannah-Moffat, 1995; Faith, 1999; Parkes & Pate, 2006). This was to ensure that the task force was built upon the views and experiences of imprisoned women, authorities, and reform-minded citizens (Faith, 1993). Though the task force reiterated many of the same issues and recommendations outlined in previous reports and task forces—overclassification, geographical dislocation, separation from families and children, inadequate programming, cultural ignorance, self-injurious behaviour, substance abuse, the need for mental-health programming, educational and vocational programs, and culturally sensitive programs and services for Indigenous and

immigrant women—the report was met with a favourable response (Hannah-Moffat, 1991). The TFFSW had formulated an approach to imprisonment that would respond to the risks and needs of federally sentenced women by rejecting the white male approach to ‘correctional’ programming and management (TFFSW, 1990; Hannah-Moffat, 1995, 2001).

The recommendations by the task force were rooted in the belief that a holistic approach to the treatment of federally sentenced women was required to address the historical problems associated with the treatment of this group (Hannah-Moffat, 1991). The Task Force therefore proposed that “the Correctional Service of Canada with the support of communities has the **responsibility** to create the **environment** that **empowers** federally sentenced women to make meaningful and **responsible choices** in order that they may live with **dignity** and **respect**” (TFFSW, 1990, p. 82, original emphasis). The women-centered approach to imprisonment included five guiding principles: empowerment, meaningful and responsible choices, respect and dignity, supportive environment, and shared responsibility (TFFSW, 1990). *Empowerment* lays in the idea that the structural inequities experienced by imprisoned women are similar to broader gender inequalities, meaning their involvement in criminal activity is linked to the inequities, hardships, and suffering experienced by women in society (TFFSW, 1990; Hannah-Moffat, 1995, 2001). Imprisoned women, like women in society, lack self-esteem and feel as though they have little power to make choices and create a rewarding future for themselves (TFFSW, 1990; Hannah-Moffat, 1995, 2001). The task force identified the disempowerment of women to be in the structural arrangements of society and in women themselves (TFFSW, 1990; Hannah-Moffat, 1995, 2001). *Meaningful choices* reflects the need to provide women with choices that relate to their needs in terms of “their past experiences, their culture, their morality, their spirituality, their abilities or skills, and their future realities or possibilities” (TFFSW, 1990, p. 108; Hannah-

Moffat, 2001 p. 148). They suggest two types of meaningful choices that include those offered by the institution in terms of programming and those made by the woman throughout her imprisonment and upon her release (TFFSW, 1990; Hannah-Moffat, 1995, 2001). *Respect and dignity* asserts that for women to gain the self-respect and respect for others needed to take responsibility for their futures, there must be mutual respect within the institution between prisoners, staff, and prisoners and staff (TFFSW, 1990; Hannah-Moffat, 1995, 2001). This concept was important to the task force given CSC's reputation for engaging in disempowering practices, encouraging child-like behaviour among women and administering rules in arbitrary ways (TFFSW, 1990; Hannah-Moffat, 1995, 2001). The pursuit of a *supportive environment* is reflective of providing an array of 'supportive' environments including political, physical, financial, emotional/psychological, and spiritual (TFFSW, 1990; Hannah-Moffat, 1995, 2001). Lastly, *shared responsibility* emphasizes the need for shared responsibility of the government, community, and the prisoner "to foster independence and self-reliance among federally sentenced women to allow them to take responsibility for their past, present and future actions. To make sound choices, women must be supported by a coordinated comprehensive effort involving all elements in society" (TFFSW, 1990, p. 111; Hannah-Moffat, 2001, p. 148). With this, *Creating Choices* made several recommendations and created the foundation for a gender-specific 'correctional' strategy for criminalized women (Montford, 2015; Gaucher & Lowman, 2014; Hannah-Moffat, 2001).

Along with the new approach to women's 'corrections' was the task force's long-term recommendation to close P4W and open a number of regional facilities, along with a healing lodge for federally sentenced women across Canada (TFFSW, 1990). The regional facilities would operate under the principles outlined in *Creating Choices*, ensure programming was

culturally sensitive and considered the needs of women, being sensitive to sexual, emotional and physical abuse and teach coping skills and techniques (TFFSW, 1990; Hannah-Moffat, 2001). They would also provide an array of services including health care, mental health services, addiction programs, embrace spirituality and religion, family visiting especially with mothers and children, education, vocational training, recreational activities, and volunteering opportunities among many others (TFFSW, 1990; Hannah-Moffat, 2001). In addition, they were to incorporate environmental factors known to promote wellness such as natural light, fresh air, colour, space, privacy, and access to land (TFFSW, 1990; Hannah-Moffat, 2001; Hayman, 2006). Moreover, the healing lodge would allow federally sentenced Indigenous women to serve their sentences in a space where programs and resources reflected Indigenous culture and addressed their specific needs with teachings, ceremonies, elders, and nature (TFFSW, 1990; Hannah-Moffat, 2001).

The task force's five guiding principles were rooted in the needs of federally sentenced women (Faith, 1999). Consequently, the success of the regional institutions relied on how well these principles were put into practice (Faith, 1999). The recommendations of the task force were presented in a report to the government in April 1990, and a few months later the Canadian federal government officially brought these recommendations into effect (Hannah-Moffat, 1991, 2001; Balfour, 2018). However, the level of commitment to meaningfully implement these reforms among federal governments since the launch of *Creating Choices* remains unclear.

A questionable development in the federal imprisonment of women occurred in 1991, when the Burnaby Correctional Centre for Women (BCCW), a provincial prison that opened in Burnaby, British Columbia which housed federally sentenced women via an exchange of services agreement (Hannah-Moffat, 1995). Despite the development of a model for women-

centered ‘corrections’ that could alleviate the hardships of imprisonment for women, BCCW was not built in alignment with *Creating Choices*’ principles and rather mirrored many of the same problematic features of P4W (Hannah-Moffat, 1995). For instance, women from multiple security classifications were being confined together and all had to abide by maximum security rules (Faith, 1993) as seen at P4W. Hayman (2006) documented an interview with a staff member at BCCW who stated that there had been no intention to approach ‘corrections’ differently at the institution and it “replicated the style of Kingston’s Prison for Women” (p. 68). The BCCW closed in 2004 when the provincial government ended its exchange of services agreement with CSC, removing the framework that allowed federally sentenced women to be housed at BCCW (Correctional Service Canada, 2020). As such, CSC was in need of a new facility for women in British Columbia and it was thereby replaced by Fraser Valley Institution for Women (Correctional Service Canada, 2020).

The five regional facilities and the healing lodge opened from 1995 to 2004. Nova Institution for Women in Truro, Nova Scotia (1995), Edmonton Institution for Women (EIFW) in Edmonton, Alberta (1995), Joliette Institution for Women in Joliette, Quebec (1997), Grand Valley Institution for Women (GVI) in Kitchner, Ontario (1997), Fraser Valley Institution for Women (FVI) in Abbotsford, British Columbia (2004), and the Okimaw Ohci Healing Lodge in Maple Creek, Saskatchewan (1995) (Hannah-Moffat, 2001; Hayman 2006). The facilities are officially described as innovative, with cottage style accommodations and a central building for programs and administration (Hannah-Moffat, 2001; Hayman, 2006). Each prison was said to include enhanced units (maximum-security units) for women who pose a ‘risk’, albeit this language was not outlined in *Creating Choices* (Faith, 1999; Hayman, 2006). Rather there was to be a designated cottage for women who were “especially high risk or high need” and who

“required high levels of staffing, support, counselling and other aspects of dynamic security” (TFFSW, 1990, p. 116; Hayman, 2006, p. 142).

Although the closure of P4W has largely been deemed to be a step in the right direction, Hannah-Moffat (1991) argued that the construction of five additional facilities for women raised concerns about the future of women’s imprisonment, as building new prisons would not resolve the problems outlined in *Creating Choices*. In addition, Faith (1993) suggested that the new regional institutions were simply replacements for P4W as opposed to genuine alternatives and as such, the problems that characterized P4W would compound at the regional facilities. Contrary to the federal government’s perceived plan to create an environment that empowers federally sentenced women, critical scholars contend that *Creating Choices* has not had a significant impact on the regime of women’s imprisonment. Rather, it continues to punish women under the guise of this framework (Hannah-Moffat, 2001, 2002; Montford, 2015).

2.2.2 Contradictions and Critiques

For decades, scholars have critiqued the *Creating Choices* model by examining the contradictions within its women-centered approach to imprisonment, highlighting how narratives of empowerment often clash with the punitive realities of the carceral environment. Prisons were created with the intention to punish, as well as to limit the freedom and autonomy of individuals who were subjected to this penalty (Hannah-Moffat, 1995, 2001). Within the prison system, there are penal policies and programs that have contradictory goals to reform, regulate and discipline deviant individuals (Garland, 2001; Pollack, 2009). It is important to recognize that punitive models frequently conflict with therapeutic approaches, blending the rhetoric of empowerment with underlying practices of power and control—a dynamic that is especially evident in the context of women’s incarceration (Pollack, 2009). As discussed above in relation to the Mercer

Reformatory, contradictory objectives to punish and reform resurfaced with the birth of *Creating Choices* (Hannah-Moffat, 2001; Hayman, 2006).

The *Creating Choices* model assumes that CSC can merge the contrasting objectives of protecting the public through security and control, along with socially integrating offenders through empowerment (Hannah-Moffat, 1995). While *Creating Choices* developed a model designed to address the unique needs of criminalized women, it ultimately reinforces punitive practices under the guise of empowerment and healing (Hannah-Moffat, 2001). The women-centered approach, despite its progressive language, fails to meaningfully break from traditional understandings of punishment (Hannah-Moffat, 1995). Although the discourse shifted to the approach of *Creating Choices*, it does not equate to the elimination of punitive measures imposed on women (Chartrand & Kilty, 2017). Critical scholars have argued that *Creating Choices* fails to account for the inherent contradictions between its discourse of empowerment and support on the one hand, and the punitive realities of the prison environment on the other (Pollack, 2009). Although the women-centered model may appear less intrusive and punitive, it ultimately fails to challenge the oppressive nature of imprisonment (Hannah-Moffat, 1995). Despite claims by the ‘correctional’ system that it has adopted a women-centered approach, these shifts have led to very few meaningful changes (Pollack, 2007, 2009).

The contradictory nature of women-centered discourses in a punitive environment can be seen through Hannah-Moffat’s (1995) examination of the language used throughout *Creating Choices* and its guiding principles. She argues that women-centered reforms rely on a definition of empowerment that is used to satisfy both correctional and feminist strategies (Hannah-Moffat, 1995). While CSC acknowledges the structural barriers women face, its efforts to alleviate the pains of imprisonment are grounded in a framework of individual responsibility (Hannah-Moffat,

1995). This focus undermines feminist analyses that highlight the social, economic, and political conditions that contribute to the criminalization of women (Hannah-Moffat, 1995). Hannah-Moffat (1995) finds that through a parallel discourse of responsibility; empowerment serves to rationalize and validate a range of disciplinary strategies. The TFFSW promotes the idea that women should make meaningful and responsible choices; however, Hannah-Moffat (1995) questions for whom the choices are intended arguing that “the discourse of empowerment is a technology of self-government that requires a woman to take responsibility for her actions to satisfy the objectives of the authorities and not her own” (p. 158). She argues that while women-centered regimes claim to prioritize treatment, punitive approaches remain evident in their practices (Hannah-Moffat, 1995).

Pollack (2009) drew similar conclusions, arguing that the women’s federal system in Canada reflects a model of punishment and rehabilitation that results in contradictory strategies of governance. Through her research, Pollack (2009) found that women’s experiences of imprisonment under the women-centered model reflected the contradictory discourses outlined above surrounding prisons as both empowering and punitive. It was revealed that imprisoned women experienced a sense of disappointment upon realizing that prisons provide little support and are not places for healing (Pollack, 2009). Pollack (2009) argues that “correctional policy has shifted its discourse from framing women’s prisons as places of punishment to framing them as places of support” (p. 119). However, women’s experiences reveal that the purpose of imprisonment is to punish and control (Pollack, 2009). Moreover, Pollack (2009) argues that the CSC’s implementation of the guiding principles has not led to the empowerment of women. Instead, it places the burden on women to address their own social inequalities while continuing to impose punishment under the guise of a women-centered framework (Pollack, 2009).

Lastly, Chartrand and Kilty (2017) make similar arguments to Hannah-Moffat (1995) and Pollack (2009), asserting that although a women-centered and holistic approach to imprisonment sounds progressive, in reality it is simply another way for the prison system to control women. They argue that the control of women occurs through therapeutic controls (e.g. the use of cognitive behavioural psychological discourses, mandatory programming, and the overuse of psychopharmaceutical medications), segregation and gendered violence (i.e. punitive and violent interventions) (Chartrand & Kilty, 2017). They argue that “these carceral logics and practices are legitimated as part of a *Creating Choices* philosophy that promotes the prison as a reasonable remedy to women’s social disadvantage” (Chartrand & Kilty, 2017, p. 111).

2.2.3 The Reality of *Creating Choices*: Contradictions in Practice

The contradictions inherent in the women-centered approach and philosophy of *Creating Choices* have manifested in the experiences of federally sentenced women. Since its alleged implementation, numerous incidents have highlighted the failed execution of *Creating Choices* within women’s federal corrections and underscored the above arguments suggesting that in a penal environment, shifting the discourse to empowerment does not result in the absence of punitive interventions. During the construction of the regional facilities, P4W remained open and overcrowded (Faith, 1999) and women—Indigenous women in particular—continued to experience adverse conditions (Parkes & Pate, 2006). Arguably one of the most notorious incidents to take place at P4W occurred in 1994 (Hannah-Moffat, 2001; Parkes & Pate, 2006; Guenther, 2022; Gaucher & Lowman, 2014) and led to the 1996 *Commission of Inquiry into Certain Events at the Prison for Women in Kingston*, led by Justice Louise Arbour (Arbour, 1996).

In 1994, a violent altercation occurred between six women incarcerated at P4W and several prison staff (Arbour, 1996). Following the incident, the six women were placed in segregation (Arbour, 1996). Days later, they—along with two other women who were also in segregation but not involved in the original altercation—were forcibly removed from their cells and subjected to strip searches conducted by an all-male Institutional Emergency Response Team (Arbour, 1996). Afterward, the eight women were left in bare cells, wearing only paper gowns, and placed in restraints and leg irons (Arbour, 1996). The following day, seven of the women were subjected to body cavity searches (Arbour, 1996). The six women involved in the initial altercation remained in segregation for several months (Arbour, 1996).

As mentioned, this incident prompted the *Arbour Inquiry*—an investigation into the events themselves and CSC’s response (Arbour, 1996). The *Arbour Inquiry* concluded that CSC had violated the human rights of the women involved, as well as its own institutional policies and regulations (LeBlanc & Kilty, 2012). Moreover, the inquiry revealed that conditions for federally sentenced women remained poor, exposing a range of systemic issues within the ‘correctional’ system (Arbour, 1996; LeBlanc & Kilty, 2012). In response, the inquiry put forward a series of recommendations aimed at improving the treatment and conditions of federally imprisoned women (Arbour, 1996).

Despite the recommendations set forth by the *Arbour Inquiry* and the stated implementation of a women-centered approach to imprisonment, scholars and activists have argued that these recommendations and the *Creating Choices* model have never been appropriately implemented (Hannah-Moffat, 2000; Hayman, 2006; Montford, 2015; Speight et al., 2020; CAEFS, 2022). The scholarly literature consistently highlights several key themes related to the treatment and experiences of federally sentenced women in Canada. As will be

outlined below, the literature reveals the inherent violence within federal prisons, as well as the limited and often ineffective avenues available to seek redress through the grievance process. In addition, it critiques the problematic framing of women's needs as 'risks,' which carries significant implications related to classification and programming. Lastly, it draws attention to the concerning nature of mental health interventions used within the federal prison system.

2.2.4 Key Themes in Women's Federal Imprisonment

Federally sentenced women typically pose lower risk to the community compared to their male counterparts (Parkes & Pate, 2006). Nevertheless, they have historically been—and continue to be—subjected to more restrictive conditions of confinement and disadvantageous treatment than men (Parkes & Pate, 2006). In the case of federally sentenced women, the prison system has been widely criticized for transforming feminist and Indigenous healing and discourses into tools used for the governance of women (Pollack, 2007, 2009). Despite the adoption of reforms and so-called empowering prisons, efforts to improve the treatment of female prisoners have had little impact on penal practices (Pollack, 2007, 2009).

Violence in the Institution

To begin, the scholarly literature outlines the problematic treatment of federally sentenced women and the violence inherent within the institution. Imprisoned women are routinely subjected to institutional violence, which is frequently dismissed as isolated incidents, justified in the name of institutional security or attributed to women who are portrayed as deserving of such treatment (Chartrand, 2015; Chartrand & Kilty, 2017). For example, during her incarceration and prolonged segregation, Ashley Smith was assaulted on many occasions (Chartrand, 2015; Chartrand & Kilty, 2017). Some of these incidents include, but are not limited

to, being struck with a flashlight, having her hair pulled, her fingers bent back, and her arm twisted for two minutes after extending it through the food slot (Chartrand, 2015; Chartrand & Kilty, 2017). In the institution, imprisoned women may also become vulnerable to sexual harassment and assault by male prison staff (Parkes & Pate, 2006). In fact, women from GVI and FVI have reported experiencing aggressive behaviour at the hands of male prison staff (Parkes & Pate, 2006). Violence is normalized within the prison setting, both as an inherent feature of the institution and as a mechanism for regulating incarcerated women (Chartrand, 2015). As such, penal reforms often reinforce this normalization by failing to address the conditions that facilitate violence within the institution (Chartrand, 2015). Unfortunately, as discussed below, there remains a significant lack of effective avenues for imprisoned women to file complaints or challenge such conditions (Parkes & Pate, 2006).

Federally sentenced women in Canada have shared their feelings of belittlement and dehumanization upon experiencing various forms of violence such as being shackled, handcuffed, pepper sprayed, strapped to beds in restraints, strip searched, isolated and locked up (Fayter & Kilty, 2024). Beyond physical violence, imprisoned women report that prison staff behave antagonistically, enforcing arbitrary rules, abusing power, and engaging in emotionally abusive behaviour (Fayter & Kilty, 2024). This violence and control can manifest through search and seizure practices. According to Balfour (2018), searches in women's prisons function as a "form of gendered carceral power aimed at the censoring of women through confiscation of unauthorized and unclassified items, such as street clothing, make-up, toiletries, pornography and sex toys" (p. 152). In addition, women also report having their food and/or personal items confiscated by guards (Fayter & Kilty, 2024). In this context, Balfour (2018) argues that gender-specific prison reform models may inadvertently reinforce gendered power dynamics by granting

prison staff increased discretion. In such cases, grievances are intended to offer women a mechanism to seek redress. However, the literature suggests that these practices are largely ineffective.

The grievance system is designed to give imprisoned individuals the ability to challenge institutional treatment and conditions (Justice Laws Website, 2023; Fayter & Kilty, 2024). For federally sentenced women, the grievance process is internal and has been shown to be inadequate in effectively fulfilling its intended purpose (Parkes & Pate, 2006). Parkes and Pate (2006) argue that the ineffectiveness of grievances can be attributed to the power imbalance between staff and prisoners. This is evident in the experiences of women when they are coerced or strongly discouraged from filing a grievance, and, when they proceed, to withdraw it (Parkes & Pate, 2006; Fayter & Kilty, 2024). The grievance system is flawed, as it enables prison staff to violate institutional policies without consequence and provides incarcerated women with little meaningful recourse (Fayter & Kilty, 2024). The injustices experienced by imprisoned women are further manifested through other aspects of the institution. Despite the adoption of a women-centered approach to imprisonment, the literature highlights the problematic tendency to label women's needs as 'risks' (Kilty, 2006; Pollack, 2013, 2020; Hannah-Moffat, 2006; Montford & Hannah-Moffat, 2021). This framing has significant implications for how women are treated and the resources available to them within the institution.

Framing Needs as 'Risks'

According to Kilty (2006), 'correctional' research has relied heavily on women's risk—the level of threat they are perceived to pose to “the security of the institution, society, themselves, staff, and other prisoners” (p. 162). As such, the perceived risk that women pose is not based on their offence or sentence, but rather their behaviour within the institution (Faith,

1999). This risk-based approach has led to a failure to adequately consider and accommodate the needs of imprisoned women (Kilty, 2006). Criminalized women are described as having unique needs related to their lived experiences such as poverty, trauma and abuse, victimization, substance abuse, mental health, and self injury (Hannah-Moffat, 2006; Montford & Hannah-Moffat, 2021). However, rather than being addressed as legitimate needs requiring support, these needs are frequently redefined as institutional risk factors (Kilty, 2006).

CSC is primarily concerned with managing risk and maintaining security in the institution (Kilty, 2006). As such, scholars argue that the penal system tends to interpret women's personal histories and needs through a lens of risk management (Montford & Hannah-Moffat, 2021; Pollack, 2020; Kilty, 2006). Despite the claimed implementation of a women-centered approach, penal practices within women's prisons continue to be influenced by the concept of risk, its assessment, and how to manage it (Hannah-Moffat, 2006; Pollack, 2020). As Hannah-Moffat (2006) contends, this framework significantly shapes the classification, treatment, and management of imprisoned individuals. The literature highlights how the labelling of women's needs as 'risks' contributes to their overclassification, influence the quality and relevance of programming, and underpin the problematic implementation of mental health interventions—ultimately failing to address their actual needs.

The overclassification of incarcerated women is a significant concern in the literature, highlighting the 'correctional' systems failure to acknowledge and respond to their personal histories and needs. Despite taking on a women-centered approach, women's prisons have been criticized for relying on generic tools to assign security classifications that fail to account for gender and race (Hannah-Moffat, 2006; Montford & Hannah-Moffat, 2021; Webster & Doob, 2004). The use of generic tools means that the unique circumstances, needs, and experiences of

incarcerated women are consistently overlooked (Hannah-Moffat, 2006; Montford & Hannah-Moffat, 2021). As Hannah-Moffat (2006) argues, considering gender in the classification of women requires attention to the context of her offending, including the socio-economic factors contributing to her criminalization.

Moreover, these tools not only fail to account for gender, but also fail to meaningfully consider race. This has had a significant impact on Indigenous women, who are largely overrepresented in federal institutions and placed in maximum-security settings that impose the most restrictive conditions of confinement at disproportionately higher rates (Montford & Hannah-Moffat, 2021; Prevost & Kilty, 2020; Webster & Doob, 2004). Prevost and Kilty (2020) further suggest that the overclassification of imprisoned women can be linked to the paternalistic nature of CSC's approach to managing criminalized women. Behaviours such as aggression or self-injury are often perceived as unfeminine and interpreted as 'risks', resulting in harsher classifications and the increased use of segregation (Prevost & Kilty, 2020).

The failure to account for women's needs and experiences continues to result in the overclassification of women and greatly impacts their experiences of incarceration. Security classifications determine a women's living conditions, access to programming, and mobility within the institution (Montford & Hannah-Moffat, 2021; Prevost & Kilty, 2020; Webster & Doob, 2004). As such, federally sentenced women are frequently overclassified and placed in restrictive settings that do not align with their risk levels or needs—ultimately limiting their access to the resources necessary for positive rehabilitation and reintegration outcomes (Montford & Hannah-Moffat, 2021; Prevost & Kilty, 2020).

Program Facilitation

The lack of consideration for women's needs is further manifested through the availability of quality of 'correctional' programming. CSC claims to deliver programming that aligns with the needs of federally sentenced women and follows the guiding principles as outlined in *Creating Choices* (Kilty, 2006). However, imprisoned women have reported that programming is not seen as empowering and often fails to address their unique needs (Pollack, 2009).

'Correctional' programming often reframes women's needs as institutional risks, prioritizing interventions based on their perceived connection to recidivism. As previously discussed, within penal settings, women's needs are often reinterpreted as risks that are only prioritized when they are associated with recidivism and can be addressed through standardized 'correctional' programming (Hannah-Moffat, 2004, 2005). Consequently, needs that fall outside of predefined programming are often ignored (Kilty, 2006). Imprisoned women have questioned the relevance and effectiveness of such programming, particularly when it fails to account for their personal histories and lived experiences (Pollack, 2009). Ultimately, women become recipients of predefined services, having their needs defined for them, rather than with them (Hannah-Moffat, 2005; Kilty, 2006).

'Correctional' programming has been further criticized for overlooking the socio-economic factors that contribute to the criminalization of women and for relying too heavily on individualistic approaches. Many women become criminalized within the contexts of "poverty, racism, addiction, lack of community supports, and violence against women" (Pollack, 2009, p. 118). Despite this, programming tends to emphasize individual responsibility and accountability, while ignoring the socio-economic factors that contribute to the criminalization of women

(Pollack, 2009). In this context, socio-economic factors are dismissed as excuses for ‘criminal’ behaviour (Pollack, 2005), and women’s experiences are framed as “the result of individual poor choices and flawed thinking patterns that subsequently contribute to their ‘pathways into crime’” (Chartrand & Kilty, 2017, p. 115).

In federal prisons, therapeutic programming such as cognitive behavioural therapy (CBT) is available to women (Kilty, 2012). However, CBT assumes that ‘crime’ stems from character deficits and defaults in individuals, thereby ignoring broader socio-economic causes (Kendall, 2002). As a result, responsibility for criminalized behaviour is placed entirely on the individual and the influence of external factors is minimized (Kendall, 2002). According to Pollack (2005), “if program facilitators acknowledge external factors, such as violence or poverty, they are thought to be feeding in to the offenders’ denial and rationalisations of their offence” (p. 75). Consequently, programming encourages women to adopt a personality conducive to lawbreaking, while discouraging them from making sense of their criminalization through their personal experiences (Pollack, 2005; Chartrand & Kilty, 2017). In this way, the treatment models facilitated by CSC ignore the lived realities of criminalized women and fail to adhere to the “holistic empowering paradigm” set out in *Creating Choices* (Pollack, 2005, p. 74).

Mental Health Interventions

The literature on women’s imprisonment in Canada highlights the concerning nature of mental health interventions within the institution, particularly those related to the medicalization of women and overuse of segregation. Federal psychology and psychiatry interventions are another aspect of incarceration that are criticized for reconstructing women’s needs as risk factors (Kilty, 2012). As such, CSC justifies the use of disciplinary and security measures to respond to these behaviours (Kilty, 2012).

Imprisoned women often experience significant distress and anger stemming from personal histories of trauma, separation from children and family, and the oppressive nature of the institutional environment (Kilty, 2012). These emotional responses are often pathologized, leading to women being labeled as “difficult to manage or mad” (Kilty, 2012). These labels subsequently justify the use of psychotropic medications within the prison (Kilty, 2012). As a result, women are often subjected to interventions that medicalize their emotions and experiences, framing their responses as issues requiring ‘treatment’ (Kilty, 2012; Leblanc et al., 2015).

Imprisoned women are not only more likely than men to be prescribed psychotropic medications, but they are also more likely to have multiple active prescriptions (OCI, 2016; Brown et al., 2018). In some cases, strong medications and injections are given to imprisoned women in an attempt to make them easier to control (Kilty, 2012; Chartrand & Kilty, 2017), as a way to “keep the peace,” or “control the behaviour of unruly ‘inmates’” (Boyd & Faith, 1999, pp. 198-199). The use of psychotropic drugs is deeply problematic, as it is often used as a mechanism to exert institutional control and maintain carceral power as opposed to deliver therapeutic care (Kilty, 2012). Unfortunately, federally sentenced women are often unable to refuse this form of ‘treatment,’ as it is frequently mandated in their ‘correctional’ plans, and there is limited access to non-medical or alternative forms of treatment (Kilty, 2012).

The overuse of segregation for women under mental distress constitutes another problematic practice executed by ‘correctional’ services. The use of segregation is justified as a means to maintain security within the institution (Prevost & Kilty, 2020; Chartrand, 2015; Chartrand & Kilty, 2017). As such, women who are considered to be a danger to staff, other women, themselves, or the security of the institution are placed in segregation (Chartrand, 2015;

Chartrand & Kilty, 2017). Despite the deaths of two women suffering from mental health in segregation—Ashley Smith in 2006 (see Leblanc & Kilty, 2012) and Terry Baker in 2016 (see Savarese, 2017; Speight et al., 2020)—and numerous recommendations made by the Office of the Correctional Investigator to prohibit the use of segregation for mentally ill, self-injurious or suicidal women, CSC continues to engage in this problematic practice (Montford et al., 2018; OCI, 2015).

Women’s mental health needs are often reframed as risks to be managed through punitive measures such as segregation. Those with significant mental health concerns or who engage in self-injurious behaviour are frequently classified as high-risk and subjected to interventions like segregation (Prevost & Kilty, 2020; Kilty, 2006, 2012; Leblance et al., 2015). Segregation is used both to monitor prisoners suffering from mental health and to discipline those who violate institutional rules (Chartrand & Kilty, 2017). Consequently, women experiencing mental distress or engaging in self-harm may understand segregation as a form of punishment, which may increase the very behaviours their segregation aims to control (Kilty, 2006, 2012; Leblance et al., 2015). Furthermore, the segregation of individuals suffering from mental health has been characterized as a form of torture due to its harmful impact on emotional well-being (Kilty, 2012; Prevost & Kilty, 2020). The literature shows that segregation not only exacerbates existing mental health problems (Prevost & Kilty, 2020), but can also lead to the development of previously undiagnosed mental health issues (Montford et al., 2018).

The scholarly literature on women’s imprisonment in Canada highlight’s key themes that speak to the unjust treatment experienced by this group. The literature outlines the continued violence experienced by women and lack of effective avenues to seek redress. In addition, it points to the problematic labelling of needs as ‘risks,’ which influences the classification of

federally sentenced women and availability of meaningful and effective programming. Lastly, it showcases the problematic use of psychotropic medications and segregation in women suffering from mental distress. While both *Creating Choices* and the *Arbour Inquiry* presented numerous recommendations aimed at improving the treatment and conditions of confinement for federally sentenced women, years later, CSC continues to operate in ways that reflect long-standing, problematic practices (Speight et al., 2020).

2.3 Political and Administrative Influences on Women’s Federal Imprisonment

2.3.1 Intensifying Punishment Under the Harper Administration

This section outlines the impact of shifting political administrations on the development of women’s federal imprisonment. When providing context on the conditions of confinement and how they have developed over time, a significant period worth considering is the Harper era of incarceration, largely due to its lasting impact on the prison system. In 2006, following the stated implementation of *Creating Choices* and the opening of the regional facilities across Canada, a Conservative government led by Prime Minister Stephen Harper assumed office. Harper pledged to take a ‘tough on crime’ approach, introducing a series of legislative and policy changes aimed at reducing crime on the grounds of denunciation, deterrence and incapacitation (Comack et al., 2015; Speight et al., 2020). During his time in office, he made significant changes to the *Corrections and Conditional Release Act* (CCRA) and the *Criminal Code* (see Speight et al., 2020). However, in the current context, the most significant changes were those made to the conditions of confinement in federal penitentiaries causing them to decline significantly (Speight et al., 2020).

Under his reign, prisons and jails across Canada became overcrowded and dangerous places and, as prison populations increased, the government introduced a series of budget cuts to

corrections (Comack et al., 2015). The so-called tough on crime measures and budget cuts shifted the official orientation of ‘corrections’ away from rehabilitation toward the warehousing of prisoners, primarily by limiting access to rehabilitative programming and implementing several budget cuts (Comack et al., 2015; Burgher, 2017). These cuts changed the daily lives of prisoners by making telephones less accessible, closing on-site kitchens, reducing their pay, shutting down services and programs, influencing their security classifications and more (Comack et al., 2015; Burgher, 2017). As a result of the lack of supports available during their sentence, prisoners’ ability to move forward in their lives was inhibited as they were likely to face poverty and homelessness and return to crime to survive (Comack et al., 2015).

Under the Harper administration, women again became marginalized as gender specific policy was set aside. In 2007, the report *Roadmap to Strengthening Public Safety* by the Correctional Service of Canada Review Panel was accepted (Montford, 2015). This report “provides the basis for the ‘transformation agenda’ that now guides the administration of imprisonment for all populations” (Montford, 2015, p. 284). The roadmap outlined initiatives to increase accountability among incarcerated individuals, eliminate drugs within the institution, enhance the quality of programs and interventions, update prison infrastructure, and strengthen support in community-based corrections (CSC Review Panel, 2007; Montford, 2015). Despite a brief section dedicated to imprisoned women, this framework was to guide the administration of all prisoners in Canada (Montford, 2015). This report adopts a male-centric framework and assumes that it can be applied to all prisoners due to its aim to rehabilitate through teaching self-sufficiency, productivity, and ensuring prisoners are not dependent on the state (Montford, 2015).

Montford (2015) argues that the *Roadmap* marks a significant shift away from *Creating Choices* by employing a gender-neutral discourse and assuming recommendations made for the

male population can be applied to women and minority groups. The *Roadmap* takes a punitive approach to rehabilitation, framing inequality and marginalization as the result of individual shortcomings rather than societal barriers (Montford, 2015). Its outlook on rehabilitation is contrasting, sharing that it is the result of the prisoners own free will, yet recommends that restrictions be placed on prisoners in order to motivate them (Montford, 2015).

This report marks a shift away from values of empowerment, choice and equality for imprisoned women, replacing them with a framework centered on individual responsibility, employability, and productivity (Montford, 2015). Since the *Roadmap* posits that men's and women's histories of offending are similar, gender specific services are no longer necessary as it shifts away from discourses about women, gender equality, and imprisonment (Montford, 2015). As a result of the *Roadmap's* approach to women's imprisonment, Montford (2015) questions whether imprisoned women as a group are once again being considered by CSC as "too few to count".

Federally sentenced women were significantly impacted by the Harper era of imprisonment. They suffered from a lack of justice and increased punishment, while losing access to several resources, services, programs and opportunities outlined in *Creating Choices* (see Fayer & Payne, 2017). *Creating Choices*, along with its women-centered approach to imprisonment was "all but eroded" under the Harper administration as budget cuts were implemented and conditions of confinement significantly worsened for federally sentenced women (Glaremin, 2011, p. 84).

2.3.2 Liberal Commitments Under the Trudeau Administration

In 2015, the Harper era came to an end and the Liberal Party assumed office under the leadership of Prime Minister Justin Trudeau. Trudeau pledged to implement meaningful reforms within Canada's 'correctional' system; however, scholars argue that this promise has gone largely unfulfilled (Speight et al., 2020).

2.3.3 The Current Status of Women's Imprisonment

After decades of women-centered corrections, Canadian prisons continue to fall short (Chartrand & Kilty, 2017) as *Creating Choices* recommendations go unaddressed and CSC fails to live up to the vision laid out in the document (Speight et al., 2020). Annual reports on federal imprisonment indicate that the system generally, and the conditions for federally sentenced women in particular, have continuously deteriorated over time (CAEFS, 2022). In 2022, following the 30th anniversary of *Creating Choices*, the Office of the Correctional Investigator conducted a review of women's 'corrections' in Canada (CAEFS, 2022). The report concluded that the issues *Creating Choices* aimed to rectify have not been addressed and that conditions of confinement for imprisoned women and gender-diverse individuals have, in fact, deteriorated over time (CAEFS, 2022). Given the perpetual dire situation, advocates argue that despite the supposed implementation of *Creating Choices* and a gender-specific approach to incarceration, imprisoned women continue to face the same challenges as in the past—if not more severe (CAEFS, 2022).

2.4 Conclusion

Despite decades of research on women in prison, Canada's federal penitentiary system continues to fall short in meeting the needs of federally sentenced women (Chartrand & Kilty,

2017). Women have historically been, and continue to be, marginalized within the prison system, despite the claimed adoption of a women-centered approach to imprisonment. The literature on women's federal imprisonment in Canada demonstrates a persistent cycle of neglect. It highlights the contradictions inherent in the *Creating Choices* framework, reveals how CSC continues to punish under its disguise and outlines its failed implementation. Additionally, the literature illustrates how shifting political climates have significantly influenced the direction of women's imprisonment, contributing to the continued deterioration of conditions for federally sentenced women.

There exists an abundance of scholarly research on women's experiences of incarceration, in addition to numerous writings produced by federally sentenced women themselves. However, a gap exists as there has yet to be any scholarship on the pains of imprisonment experienced by federally sentenced women through an analysis of their published work. As such, this research fills this gap by examining the pains of imprisonment as experienced by federally sentenced women in Canada through an analysis of their published writing. By analyzing their written publications in newsletters and journals available via the Penal Press website, the *Journal of Prisoners on Prisons*, and *Cell Count*, scholars can better understand the treatment and challenges women have faced while incarcerated in Canadian federal penitentiaries. I believe that their written publications provide important insight into the persistent issues embedded in the Canadian penitentiary system faced by criminalized women through the perspectives and opinions of those subject to it.

Chapter 3: Conceptual Framework

Gresham M. Sykes' (2007/1958) conceptualization of the pains of imprisonment has long been used as a tool to theorize the principal deprivations experienced by incarcerated individuals. Based on research conducted at the New Jersey State prison, this conceptualization outlines five fundamental deprivations experienced by incarcerated individuals, which I unpack in this chapter. In the context of this project, the conceptualization of the pains of imprisonment was mobilized independently from other conceptual ideas outlined by Sykes in *The Society of Captives: A Study of a Maximum Security Prison*. As such, the pains of imprisonment were employed in a restricted way for this thematic study to assist in the identification, classification, and organization of the empirical material for the purpose of understanding how federally sentenced women in Canada experience the pains of imprisonment as documented in their prison writing. In doing so, this research also assessed the accuracy and usefulness of the pains of imprisonment conceptualization as a diagnostic tool for 'correctional' policy in light of the stated implementation of *Creating Choices* and policies introduced under the Harper administration that have shaped women's federal imprisonment in Canada in recent decades. Despite the limitations of this conceptualization, it provides a strong foundation for themes that emerge from the empirical material alongside others that do not fit within the confines of these five deprivations. One limitation of this framework is that it does not account for gender-specific deprivations or the unique pains of imprisonment experienced by women. As such, this research is inspired—but not directly guided—by feminist theory insofar as it privileges and centres the insights of criminalized and imprisoned women to address the aforementioned gap in Sykes' approach. However, this research is predominately guided by Sykes, as the main contributions to

knowledge are the examination of the pains of imprisonment in the Canadian context generally, and as they relate to imprisoned women specifically.

3.1 The Society of Captives

The conceptualization of the pains of imprisonment is one of several key ideas outlined by Gresham Sykes (1958). Drawing on his study conducted at the New Jersey State Prison in the 1950's—a maximum-security institution for men in the United States—Sykes examines the prison as a social system, focusing on its structure and the instability that results from it (Williamson, 2009). He explores the challenges faced by prison staff in maintaining power, the various pains of imprisonment, the social roles adopted by prisoners, and the nature of resistance, particularly as it relates to prison riots (Williamson, 2009). Through this analysis, Sykes (2007/1958) develops several concepts related to the prison's social system and structure, including the 'defects of total power,' the 'pains of imprisonment,' and 'argot roles,' which I will briefly discuss below.

The first key concept concerns the 'defects of total power,' through which Sykes (2007/1958) highlights the limited control custodians have over prisoners. Although a maximum-security prison appears to function as a "system of total power" in which custodians possess unlimited authority, Sykes argues that this power is far from absolute (Sykes, 2007/1958, p. xvi; Shammas, 2017b). Efforts by custodians to impose rules and maintain order frequently fail, resulting in deviant behaviour and noncompliance within a social system where rulers appear to—but ultimately do not—possess almost infinite power (Sykes, 2007/1958). While custodians are theoretically more powerful than prisoners, this authority does not consistently produce obedience, as prisoners often lack any sense of duty to comply (Sykes, 2007/1958). Sykes' (2007/1958) central argument suggests that custodial power is inherently defective because "the

ruled are rebellious and the rulers are reluctant” (p. 58). He attributes these defects to several factors, including that: prisoners do not feel compelled to obey; the use of force and violence is insufficient; effective rewards and punishment systems are lacking; and custodians are unwilling to enforce rules, facing pressure to bend regulations or form informal relationships with prisoners in exchange for compliance (Sykes, 2007/1958). Ultimately, Sykes (2007/1958) contends that the ‘defects of total power’ arise from structural flaws within the prison system as opposed to individual failures.

Arguably the most central concept outlined by Sykes is the ‘pains of imprisonment,’ which was mobilized throughout this study. These pains refer to environmental deprivations that are inherent characteristics of imprisonment and help explain why prisoners experience prison life as undesirable (Sykes, 2007/1958; Shammass, 2017b). Sykes (2007/1958) identified five deprivations: the deprivation of liberty, the deprivation of goods and services, the deprivation of heterosexual relationships, the deprivation of autonomy, and the deprivation of security. Each of these will be discussed in greater detail below. Sykes (2007/1958, p. 82) further suggests that the frustrations associated with imprisonment can be mitigated through “the patterns of social interaction established among inmates”. This leads to the final concept examined here: ‘argot roles.’

Throughout his analysis, Sykes (2007/1958) identifies a number of ‘argot roles’ or social positions within the prison population, including rats, centre men, gorillas, merchants, and wolves, among many others. Prisoners may attempt to mitigate the pains of imprisonment by adopting either a collectivistic or individualistic role in response to these deprivations (Sykes, 2007/1958). They may bind themselves to others by forming connections focusing on mutual aid, loyalty, or respect, or they may enter a “war of all against all” in which they operate

independently in the pursuit of their advantage (Sykes, 2007/1958, p. 52). In a collectivistic role, prisoners may experience solidarity whereas in an individualistic role, it becomes every man for himself, and other prisoners are treated as objects of exploitation (Sykes, 2007/1958). The prisoner population does not exhibit constant solidarity or constant conflict, but rather a mixture of both (Sykes, 2007/1958). However, Sykes (2007/1958, p. 107) contends that “the greater the degree to which the society of captives moves in the direction of solidarity—the greater is the likelihood that the pains of imprisonment will be rendered less severe for the inmate population as a whole.” Lastly, he suggests that the pains of imprisonment cannot, in fact, be eliminated. However, they may be mitigated through solidarity as it provides prisoners with a social group and standing with which they can identify (Sykes, 2007/1958).

As previously stated, this research mobilized the conceptualization of the “pains of imprisonment” in a restricted way for this thematic study as a means to identify, classify, and organize the empirical material in order to understand how federally sentenced women in Canada experience these deprivations. In addition, given the context and history of women’s federal imprisonment in Canada—the stated implementation of *Creating Choices* and policies introduced under the Harper administration that have shaped conditions for federally incarcerated women—this research assessed the accuracy and usefulness of this conceptualization as a diagnostic tool for ‘correctional’ policy. While Sykes did not base his analysis on how policy may mitigate or alleviate the pains of imprisonment, he nonetheless suggests that we must be realistic about the role of prisons in society, and this should inform an “enlightened penal policy” (Sykes, 2007/1958, p. 132). As such, given the context in which this research is being conducted, assessing the accuracy of Sykes’ pains as a diagnostic tool for

‘correctional’ policy and whether these pains can be alleviated or mitigated by policy is worth examining.

3.2 The Pains of Imprisonment

The pains of imprisonment concept was coined by Gresham Sykes in 1958 (and republished in 2007) in his classic study on the New Jersey State Prison (Shammas, 2017a). As the official infliction of physical pain through corporal punishment became much less prevalent in institutions due to several reasons including legal prohibitions against such practices, Sykes examined whether the psychological pains of imprisonment could be just as damaging as the physical pains of such sanctions (Sykes, 2007/1958; Crewe, 2011). Throughout his study, Sykes (2007/1958) identified five central deprivations or frustrations that characterized prison life (Haggerty & Bucerius, 2020; Shammas, 2017a). These pains and deprivations can also be thought of as types of punishment that are deliberately inflicted on incarcerated individuals, or simply unavoidable aspects of incarceration (Sykes, 2007/1958; Haggerty & Bucerius, 2020). The “pains of imprisonment” consist of the (1) deprivation of liberty, (2) deprivation of goods and services, (3) deprivation of heterosexual relationships, (4) deprivation of autonomy, and (5) deprivation of security (Sykes, 2007/1958; Shammas, 2017a; Haggerty & Bucerius, 2020). Sykes argues that these deprivations—discussed in greater detail below—help explain why incarcerated individuals experience prison life as deeply undesirable and develop adaptive strategies to mitigate the harms of incarceration, which run counter to approaches to personal transformation that are ‘pro-social’ according to the norms of the societies of which most imprisoned people eventually return to (Sykes, 2007/1958; Shammas, 2017a).

The first deprivation is that of liberty. Sykes (2007/1958) asserted that the deprivation of liberty is the most obvious painful condition of imprisonment. Sykes contends that not only are

imprisoned individuals confined to the prison itself, but they are also subjected to a number of other measures such as being held in cells, being subjected to checkpoints, having to obtain passes to move within institutions, military-style formations, and lack of meaningful relationships on the outside due to restrictions on visitors, telephone calls, and mail (Sykes, 2007/1958; Shammass, 2017a). Sykes notes that it is the “moral condemnation” and rejection from the outside community that makes the loss of liberty so painful (Sykes, 2007/1958, p. 65). The self-image of imprisoned individuals is under constant threat as their confinement within the walls of the institution is a daily reminder of their alienation from society (Sykes, 2007/1958). This deprivation relates to my thesis research as incarcerated women are also deprived of these liberties, including a lack of fulsome relationships with those outside prison walls. Research shows that for women, and mothers in particular, the pains of imprisonment typically revolve around family relations thereby making the loss of liberty more painful as it affects their maternal role (Masson, 2019).

The four remaining deprivations are also relevant to the current thesis research. When Sykes speaks of the deprivation of goods and services, he refers to the deprivation of material possessions (Sykes 2007/1958; Shammass, 2017a). Sykes (2007/1958) observed that prison officials often believed incarcerated individuals were, in material terms, better off within the institution than they would be on the outside particularly given economic hardships. However, Sykes (2007/1958) also noted that this assumption—that the goods and services available in prisons are equal to or better than those accessible outside—has never been supported by incarcerated individuals themselves. Rather, research generally shows that in prison, basic material needs are met to maintain a basic standard of living; however, this is inadequate as they also desire amenities such as alcohol, food, clothing, furniture, privacy, tobacco, and the like

(Sykes, 2007/1958). Sykes argues that in our society we define ourselves based on the material possessions we own and consume and, when the ability to have them is taken away, imprisoned individuals can suffer from a loss of these possessions (Sykes, 2007/1958; Shamma, 2017a).

The third deprivation is that of access to heterosexual relationships. According to Sykes, who was writing several decades ago when heteronormativity often went unchallenged (Adams, 1997), this deprivation constitutes a major loss for imprisoned individuals (Sykes, 2007/1958; Shamma, 2017a). Sykes believed that the forced deprivation of sexual relations can cause tension and anxiety for imprisoned individuals and exacerbate their poor self-image (Sykes, 2007/1958; Shamma, 2017a). Sykes' (2007/1958) research and analysis on this particular deprivation focuses a great deal on the male ego and his self-image when involuntary celibacy occurs. To apply this concept to the current context where various forms of sexuality are increasingly accepted (Watson et al., 2020) this deprivation will be analyzed as the deprivation of romantic and desired intimate relationships.

The fourth deprivation is the loss of autonomy resulting from the extensive rules and regulations that govern and restrict nearly every aspect of prison life (Sykes, 2007/1958). Sykes contends that a significant distinction exists between self-regulation and being regulated by prison staff. This was often experienced by his research participants as authoritarianism, where arbitrary rules and regulations are imposed upon them without meaningful explanation or justification. Sykes (2007/1958) states that "the frustration of the prisoners ability to make choices and the frequent refusals to provide an explanation for the regulations and commands descending from the bureaucratic staff involve a profound threat to the prisoners self image because they reduce the prisoner to the weak, helpless, dependent status of childhood" (p. 75).

With this, Sykes believes that this childlike status poses a threat to the individuals' image as a member of the adult society.

The fifth and final pain of imprisonment documented by Sykes (2007/1958) is the deprivation of security. Sykes' model sees the deprivation of security as deficiencies and stressors in the penal environment that can affect an individuals' behaviour (Sykes, 2007/1958; Shamma, 2017a). Imprisoned individuals are oftentimes surrounded by other individuals who may have histories of violence or aggression (Sykes, 2007/1958). Shamma (2017a) states that prison insecurity can be caused by many factors as prisons are typically violent and unsafe, have incidents of prison rape and sexual victimization, and substance abuse and dependency may contribute to insecurity as it can cause increased violence, reduce self-control, and give way to economic transactions. Sykes (2007/1958) suggests that the pains of imprisonment are much more extensive than simply the loss of physical liberty as these additional pains he has identified are those that have a significant impact on an incarcerated individual's self-image and personal value.

Although Sykes' (2007/1958) conceptualization derived from research conducted in a maximum-security institution for men, it is relevant throughout my thesis research as my findings and analysis document how incarcerated women also experience a number of these deprivations, in addition to others that Sykes did not uncover in a men's institution. This conceptual framework is a useful guide in my analysis and from this, I identify and place additional pains and deprivations in these five categories, while suggesting new categories that consider more pains of imprisonment that constitute the female experience of incarceration.

3.3 Limitations

Many scholars have criticized and identified the limitations of the pains of imprisonment framework. For instance, Haggerty and Bucerius (2020) criticize why Sykes only identified five pains in this conceptual framework given that his research was quite extensive at the prison in New Jersey. Haggerty and Bucerius (2020) suggest that given the extensive amount of time Sykes spent in the prison, he would have witnessed or heard of several additional pains. It has been questioned whether this list of pains was intended to be thorough or broader and left open for interpretation (Haggerty & Bucerius, 2020). They argue that the ambiguity of the framework has contributed to its success, noting Davis's (1986) observation that such ambiguity can inspire researchers to expand on the concept. Some researchers have acknowledged that incarcerated men face a range of additional deprivations not addressed in Sykes' original framework, prompting numerous scholars to build and expand upon his analysis (Haggerty & Bucerius, 2020), as will be discussed further below. In addition to this, a limitation in the framework is that it is derived from research conducted in a prison for men. Though women can experience all five of Sykes deprivations, there is the possibility of many additional deprivations and losses that may be added to account for their experiences. This issue has since been addressed, as researchers have paid more attention to the gendered dynamics of imprisonment through the examination of the challenges and lives of imprisoned women (Haggerty & Bucerius, 2020).

Another critique raised by Haggerty and Bucerius (2020) is that Sykes labelled his sample as an "undifferentiated group of male prisoners" who are all experiencing the same pains of imprisonment in similar manners (Haggerty & Bucerius, 2020, p. 4). Specifically, they criticize how he fails to consider ethnic and social differences among this group and the ways in which these differences could cause some individuals to have different experiences with the

pains of imprisonment (Haggerty & Bucerius, 2020). Lastly, Shammass (2017a) notes that Sykes' conceptual framework is not very contemporary. One of the pains of imprisonment is the loss of heterosexual relationships, and now, this deprivation would be better explained as a loss of romantic relationships or as Shammass (2017a) states "lack of voluntary sexual relationships" (Shammass, 2017a, p. 3). It is beneficial to contemporize these ideas when engaging with the conceptual framework now. Finally, Haggerty and Bucerius (2020) question whether this framework still holds the potential to drive reforms in prison life, given the extensive body of literature addressing the pains and ongoing debates regarding the political and analytical utility of the concept.

3.4 Applicability

Although it has been argued that Sykes' list of the pains of imprisonment is not comprehensive, Davis (1986) asserts that the vagueness of the framework has led to its success as it has opened the door for a number of scholars to expand on the phenomenon. This conceptual framework has been used by researchers in contexts similar to the current research (e.g. Masson, 2019; Haggerty & Bucerius, 2020; Bucerius et al., 2022) and, as I demonstrate, was useful in analyzing the empirical material and conducting this thesis project. This conceptual framework directed the research to examine the different deprivations that are frequently encountered throughout prison life. In addition, it assisted in identifying, understanding, analyzing, and organizing the pains and deprivations associated with prison life by imprisoned people themselves. Moreover, by privileging and centring the writings of imprisoned women specifically, I was able to recognize how different deprivations faced by imprisoned women can fit into these categories and create additional categories that these pains can be placed in. Several scholars have successfully added to Sykes' pains of imprisonment as it has been applied to

various contexts, populations and activities (Haggerty & Bucerius, 2020). Haggerty and Bucerius (2020) identify numerous scholars who have recognized additional and some modernized pains of imprisonment, in addition to how these experiences differ across gender, age, race, and the like, some of whom I engage with below.

In the context of contemporary research, many scholars have successfully mobilized the pains of imprisonment concept to understand the deprivations associated to incarceration for criminalized women. Masson (2019) conducted research on the maternal pains of imprisonment, successfully applying all five deprivations to incarcerated women/mothers and their struggles maintaining their maternal role throughout incarceration. Masson (2019) contends that all prisoners experience these deprivations to a certain extent. However, she describes how women can experience the pains of imprisonment differently and more intensely than others (Masson, 2019). This is especially the case when considering the deprivation of liberty, as being separated from their child(ren) can severely impact their maternal role (Masson, 2019; also see Foster, 2012). Masson (2019) also identifies additional pains experienced by incarcerated mothers such as feelings of injustice, the unknown and guilt. This illustrates how the pains of imprisonment can inevitably stem from both institutional and personal barriers.

In addition, Crewe, Hulley and Wright (2017) also researched the gendered pains of imprisonment. While not precisely following Sykes' framework, they were able to identify pains such as the loss of contact with family, diminished power, autonomy, control, psychological well-being and mental health, trust, privacy and intimacy.

Soffer and Ajzenstadt (2010) successfully re-examined the pains of imprisonment with incarcerated women in Israel. They concluded that the pains of imprisonment are a multidimensional and complex phenomenon as some women experienced incarceration as a

punitive and painful condition marked by deprivation, suffering, and negative meaning, while others perceived it as a more positive and even nurturing experience, characterized by care and access to treatment (Soffer & Ajzenstadt, 2010). Those who viewed imprisonment as a negative experience described prison as restricting the liberty and autonomy of prisoners, and experienced the pains of being separated from children and losing their maternal role (Soffer & Ajzenstadt, 2010). On the other hand, those who viewed imprisonment in a positive light felt as though it provided for their physical, psychological, and social needs, representing a more desirable alternative to their lives on the outside that were characterized by many forms of suffering such as abuse, violence, poverty, rejection, loneliness, prejudice, stigma, moral judgements, and more (Soffer & Ajzenstadt, 2010). With this, they suggest that the pains of imprisonment are “a personal and complex phenomenon characterized with an array of emotions that at times are contradicting” (Soffer & Ajzenstadt, 2010, p. 502).

Lastly, Bucerus, Berardi, and Haggerty (2022) also successfully applied Sykes’ “pains of imprisonment” to federally sentenced Indigenous women in Alberta, Canada. They too, argue that the pains of imprisonment are multidimensional and multi-faceted as they are experienced in varied ways among different groups and “involve processes or structures that can simultaneously create specific forms of pain while mitigating others” (Bucerus et al, 2022, p. 171).

Through research conducted in a single maximum-security prison for men in the United States in the 1950’s, Sykes identified five deprivations associated to prison life, leading to the conceptualization of the pains of imprisonment. Building on this framework, other scholars have examined how these deprivations are experienced by imprisoned women in different populations, including imprisoned mothers, Indigenous women, and Israeli women, as outlined above. In contrast, the current research mobilized this conceptualization to understand how federally

sentenced women across Canada experience these deprivations. This research expands the existing literature by examining a broader sample that includes a number of multi-security institutions across a wider time period, while also accounting for additional contextual factors such as Canada's history of colonialism and the resulting mass incarceration of Indigenous peoples, in addition to the history of women's federal imprisonment in Canada and the policies that have shaped it.

In light of Sykes' work and the insights generated via previous studies, this research examines the pains of imprisonment as documented by federally sentenced women in Canada in their prison writing. With this, Sykes' (2007/1958) framework, along with the research of those inspired by it, is used to answer my research question as it provides a source for identifying, classifying and organizing the main deprivations encountered by imprisoned people. As previously mentioned, this framework is based on research conducted on men. However, these deprivations can, in many cases, be applied to imprisoned women as well. By centring the insights of federally sentenced women in Canada, I was able to examine how they experience these deprivations and identify additional pains of imprisonment experienced by this group that fall outside the scope of Sykes' (2007/1958) five original deprivations. In addition, as Sykes' (2007/1958) framework was fairly broad and not too restricting, I was able to capture additional themes and experiences to add to his five existing deprivations. This framework served as a tool for engaging with the empirical material. It provided a starting point through the five predefined pains of imprisonment, allowing me to identify and categorize additional, emerging themes that fall outside of the original framework.

Chapter 4: Methodological Approach

4.1 Research Questions and Goals

This chapter outlines the methodological decisions made throughout this master's thesis and the rationale behind the chosen methods. This thesis aims to explore the deprivations and pains of imprisonment experienced by federally sentenced women across Canada. As such, this research employed a qualitative design, as it is well-suited to exploring experiences, perceptions, and behaviours, and seeks to uncover how and why things are the way they are (Tenny et al., 2022). As previously mentioned in *Chapter 3*, this project mobilizes Gresham Sykes' (2007/1958) conceptualization of the pains of imprisonment to assist in the identification, classification, and organization of the pains and deprivations associated to women's experiences of incarceration in an effort to assess the accuracy and usefulness of the pains as a diagnostic tool for 'correctional' policy. Given that this conceptualization was built on research conducted in a men's facility in the 1950's, a thematic analysis proved useful as this research attempts to identify additional pains and deprivations experienced by women that did not materialize in Sykes' research. This conceptualization provided a foundation for themes identified throughout the empirical material and the use of a thematic analysis allowed for the opportunity to create additional deprivations that do not fit within the confines of Sykes' five categories. With this, my master's thesis aims to answer the following question:

How do federally sentenced women in Canada experience the "pains of imprisonment" as expressed through their written accounts?

Using Sykes' conceptualization, I was able to effectively situate and identify additional deprivations and pains of imprisonment experienced by federally sentenced women in Canada.

This chapter begins by outlining the epistemological position to which this project is situated followed by the methodological approach used to conduct this research, the rationale behind this approach, and its related limitations. In doing so, I discuss the data collection process, the use of thematic analysis in the examination of the empirical material, and the coding process. Finally, I present and discuss the ethical considerations relevant to this research.

4.2 Epistemological Considerations

The current research is grounded in an interpretivist paradigm. Interpretivism is concerned with understanding how individuals interpret and make sense of the world around them (Willis, 2007). More specifically, it seeks to explain individuals' realities by uncovering and interpreting their lived experiences (Pretorius, 2024). Stemming from this focus, interpretivist research typically favours qualitative methods, which are well suited to exploring how people construct meaning in their everyday lives (Willis, 2007).

The interpretivist paradigm is underpinned by a subjectivist epistemology (Levers, 2013), which holds that knowledge is subjective and based on individuals' experiences and the meanings they attribute to those experiences (Ryan, 2018; Pretorius, 2024). In addition, its ontological position is rooted in relativism (Levers, 2013; Ryan, 2018), which posits that reality is socially constructed and multiple realities can exist at once (Ritchie & Lewis as cited in Ryan, 2018; Pretorius, 2024).

In the context of this research, imprisoned women hold their own unique perspectives and interpretations of incarceration, shaped by their interactions and experiences within the institution. While it is not possible to understand the experiences of others in a fully objective manner, we can attempt to interpret and make meaning of these accounts (Pretorius, 2024).

Interpretivism therefore views individuals as the experts of their own experiences and the most reliable sources of insight into their lives (Pretorius, 2024).

In line with this paradigm, the chosen data collection method for this master's thesis was document-based research (see section 4.3 below), drawing on the insights of prison writers and prison ethnographers. Gaucher (2002) asserts that imprisoned populations are in a position where they can reveal the lived realities of prison life and pains of imprisonment, while exposing changes resulting from penal policies and their subsequent consequences that often go overlooked. Prisoner ethnography involves the use of ethnographic and participant observation methods within carceral settings, recognizing that the lived experiences of imprisonment uniquely position incarcerated individuals to speak on systems of punishment and control (Piché et al., 2014). In this way, I take on the role of researcher-as-facilitator, supporting prisoner ethnography in a way that, as Piché and colleagues (2014) emphasize, "privileges the standpoint of the prisoner and promotes their written words" (p. 450).

My research question is grounded in interpretivism, focusing on exploring the experiences and perspectives of federally sentenced women in Canada. This study seeks to highlight the ways in which federally sentenced women experience the deprivations and pains of imprisonment within women's federal penitentiaries in the Canadian context, and the persistent failure to enact meaningful reform. Guided by Sykes' (2007/1958) pains of imprisonment concept, the analysis centres the insights of imprisoned women to uncover the key deprivations linked to incarceration.

4.3 Data Collection

The data for this research was collected by accessing first-person written accounts by imprisoned women in Canadian federal penitentiaries. The data was collected between June and August 2024 from three different online resources. These included the *Journal of Prisoners on Prisons*, the Penal Press website, and *Cell Count* magazine. As is discussed further below, these venues are publicly accessible on the internet and provide a space for imprisoned individuals to share their insights either in written and/or visual forms.

Hammersley (2013) contends that one of the principal purposes of conducting qualitative research is to investigate experiences and perspectives in an attempt to ‘give voice’ to individuals who are marginalized, oppressed or ignored within society (p. 51). It is believed that documenting peoples experiences is worthwhile as they are more diverse, complex, and interesting than we may acknowledge (Hammersley, 2013). In the case of this research, imprisoned women have already mobilized mechanisms to have their voices heard by publishing accounts on these online resources. As such, this research does not intend to ‘give voice’ to federally sentenced women, but rather to privilege and centre their voices through the use of qualitative research in an attempt to better understand their experiences. By collecting and reviewing the written work of federally sentenced women in Canada, this research investigates their experiences to shed light on the hardships associated to imprisonment.

Hammersley (2013) describes that the most suitable method for understanding people’s experiences is in-depth interviews and, in the event that this is not possible, researchers may rely solely upon documents. In contrast to Hammersley (2013), Piché and colleagues (2014) argue that imprisoned people themselves can provide scholarly analyses of their own condition. With this, documents-based research was deemed the most suitable method in the context of this

master's thesis. Documents based research or "document analysis" is a form of qualitative research that consists of reviewing printed and/or electronic material (Bowen, 2009, p. 27). This form of qualitative research requires that the data is analyzed and interpreted to elicit meaning and gain understanding of the material (Bowen, 2009). In light of the current project, document-based research appeared to be the qualitative method best suited to answer my research question.

There are some advantages associated to documents-based research, particularly in the context of this project. First, Morgan (2022) asserts that document-based research is useful when conducting historical research as it allows the researcher to collect information that may not be available through other means. For instance, critical criminologists in Canada are often prevented from gaining research access to conduct interviews with imprisoned people and face difficulties obtaining records through access to information requests filed with prison authorities (Mario & Kilty, 2024). Moreover, documents-based research is known for its stability (Morgan, 2022) and is produced independently of research intervention (Bowen, 2009). Morgan (2022) states that it is possible that members of marginalized groups may not trust researchers as they believe the research will not influence change, or they fear the information they offer may personally harm them or their communities. As a result, Morgan (2022) contends that they may provide inaccurate information or refuse to participate. Lastly, Hammersley (2013) believes it can be argued that documents-based research is preferred in some cases as written work may be better formulated and contain more forethought from interlocutors.

With these advantages in mind, it is important to recognize that the publications used in this research were subject to editorial processes, meaning they do not represent the entirely unfiltered thoughts of imprisoned people. For example, the *JPP* undergoes an editorial process that can shape the knowledge that is produced (Piché et al., 2014). However, this process is

collaborative as editors provide constructive feedback to authors to support the development of future drafts (Piché et al., 2014). With this, the *JPP* ensures to engage in reflexivity to avoid altering the voices of prison writers, as doing so would defeat the purpose of creating space for prison ethnographers (Piché et al., 2014). Where publications included in the Penal Press are concerned, these are often subject to institutional oversight, with prison staff and administrators acting as gatekeepers of knowledge and having final say over whether content is approved for publication (Gaucher, 2002; Piché et al., 2014). This ultimately shapes the knowledge that is distributed. Lastly, while *Cell Count* does not publicly disclose an editorial process, it is possible that a similar review process to that of the *JPP* and/or Penal Press is applied to the material published on the bulletin.

In addition to the advantages associated to documents-based research, there are numerous justifications as to why it was deemed the most suitable method for the current project. To begin, obtaining information from such a large population presents significant challenges. This project aimed to explore the experiences of federally incarcerated women across various institutions in Canada. However, obtaining ethics approval and coordinating interviews with a sufficient number of participants from multiple facilities would have been extremely difficult, if not impossible within the context of a master's study.

These challenges are compounded by other barriers to conducting research in carceral settings, where prison systems often shape and influence the production of criminological and carceral knowledge (Watson & van der Meulen, 2019). Research in carceral settings is often challenging due to institutional gatekeeping and other barriers that limit approval for prison or prisoner-related studies, ultimately reducing opportunities to carry out meaningful and quality research in this context (Watson & van der Meulen, 2019). Researchers who are perceived to be

critical of the system are routinely denied access to institutions and information on the imprisoned population for research purposes (Hannah-Moffat, 2011; Mario & Kilty, 2024). As such, there is a longstanding practice of researchers working with marginalized and criminalized groups being “unofficially banned” from accessing incarcerated individuals (Kilty, 2014, p. 125). With this, Kilty (2014, p. 135) states that “critical feminist scholars are frequently denied access; only CSC (or other like-minded) researchers or those conducting research perceived as noncritical of CSC appear to be permitted access to conduct research inside the prison setting.” These barriers further justify the decision to conduct documents-based research in this context.

The goal of this research was to be able to understand how federally sentenced women in Canada experience the deprivations associated to imprisonment. Given the volume of publicly available publications, document-based research was the most effective method to access the information required to achieve my research goals.

As previously mentioned, the data were collected from three online resources. The *Journal of Prisoners on Prisons* (JPP) is a peer reviewed, academically oriented publication produced by a university press (Piché et al., 2014, p. 450). The JPP “publishes essays of commentary and analysis of criminal justice issues by prisoners and former prisoners” (Gaucher, 2002, p. 9). The Penal Press is an open-access archive of newsletters written and produced by imprisoned individuals that allows them to share their views on penal justice policies and practices (Penal Press, n.d). While active, the newsletters produced by individual institutions provide incarcerated individuals with an opportunity to contribute art, poetry, and written work, as well as share information about their respective facilities. Lastly, *Cell Count* is a quarterly bulletin based in Ontario, Canada, that provides a space for incarcerated and formerly incarcerated individuals to share ideas and experiences (Pasan, n.d). Columns in *Cell Count*

editions often feature articles, stories, art, poetry and relevant health information tailored for those who are incarcerated (Pasan, n.d). These three outlets provide imprisoned individuals with a space and opportunity to have their experiences heard through their own voice. They were chosen as they contained accessible and rich qualitative accounts from imprisoned individuals, including federally sentenced women across Canada.

To answer my research question, I collected all of the material on the three sources that addressed conditions of confinement, deprivations or struggles written by federally sentenced women in Canada. This was possible as entries either contained the name of the institution or were from specific institutional newsletters. The material consisted primarily of written pieces and poetry. With this, I was able to dissect the material to understand the meaning within it.

The final dataset for this research included 119 entries from the three sources. *Table 1: Dataset* shows the breakdown of the number of entries and pages from each source in addition to the number of publications per year. This material was rich and included a great amount of content on the experiences of federally sentenced women and deprivations subject to analysis for this study. The material in the final dataset ranged from 1984 to 2023.

Table 1: Dataset

Year	JPP (24 entries, 152 pages)	Penal Press (87 entries, 123 pages)	Cell Count (8 entries, 8 pages)
1984		7	
1985			
1986		9	
1987		2	
1988	1	20	

1989		10	
1990		14	
1991			
1992		20	
1993		3	
1994	6		
1995			
1996			
1997	3		1
1998		1	
1999		1	
2000			
2001			
2002			
2003			
2004			
2005			
2006			
2007			1
2008			
2009			
2010			
2011	2		
2012			
2013			
2014			
2015			1

2016	2		
2017	8		
2018	1		
2019			2
2020			1
2021			1
2022			
2023	1		1

Data analysis resulted in the identification of 9 overarching themes and 38 sub-themes (see *Appendix A*), drawn from a total of 283 pages of prison writing excerpts. Each theme recurred in the material in a minimum of 8 entries to upwards of 36 entries. *Table 2: Prevalence of Themes Across the Material* shows the number of times each theme appeared throughout the empirical material analyzed. Themes and sub-themes were assigned to the material upon identifying a recurring pattern that appeared to be significant to the research question and objectives. The accounts ranged in the prevalence of themes throughout. While some accounts addressed several themes, others addressed only one. For example, poetry available through the Penal Press tended to account for only one theme whereas accounts found in *JPP* articles typically spoke of an array of experiences—particularly those related to the impacts of policies implemented by the Harper administration—and therefore addressed multiple themes. As this sample produced a large amount of material, due to space limitations and to avoid repetition, the analysis chapter includes only selected, representative excerpts that most effectively illustrate the key themes and sub-themes identified throughout this process.

Table 2: Prevalence of Themes Across the Material

Theme	Prevalence
Deprivation of Liberty	36
Deprivation of Goods and Services	29
Deprivation of Romantic and Desired Intimate Relationships	18
Deprivation of Autonomy	18
Deprivation of Security	8
Deprivation of Humanity	8
Deprivation of Institutional Services	18
Deprivation of Spiritual and Cultural Resources	12

4.4 Analysis of the Material

As previously noted, this research relied on documents as the primary data source. As such, document analysis—specifically thematic analysis—was employed to analyze the empirical material. Document analysis is a qualitative research method that involves the systematic examination and interpretation of documents in order to elicit meaning and develop a deeper understanding of the phenomenon under investigation (Armstrong, 2021; Morgan, 2022).

Although qualitative document analysis is often used as a method of triangulation—combined with other qualitative approaches such as observations and interviews to enhance the validity of a study—certain circumstances can make the use of additional methods difficult (Armstrong, 2021), as discussed above. Using documents as a standalone method offers several

advantages—as previously mentioned—and, in the context of this research, provides a non-invasive means of data collection.

Within document analysis there are several analytical strategies including discourse analysis, framework analysis, narrative analysis, content analysis, thematic analysis and grounded theory (see Armstrong, 2021). To gain a deeper understanding of how federally sentenced women in Canada experience the pains of imprisonment and to accurately interpret and present the empirical material, thematic analysis was selected as the most appropriate analytical strategy.

Thematic analysis was the chosen method as this research is following a factist approach. With the factist approach, reality is seen to be accessible through the data (Alasuutari, 1995). Thematic analysis is a method of document analysis that consists of a form of pattern recognition where emerging themes become categories for analysis and, involves a more deliberate review of the material (Armstrong, 2021). It is used to identify and interpret patterns of meaning in data, allowing researchers to develop an understanding of shared meanings and experiences (Braun & Clarke, 2023). Thematic analysis allows the researcher to explore meaning at a semantic level where meaning is explicit and/or surface level, or the latent level which discovers the deeper meaning in the data by examining underlying ideas (Braun & Clarke, 2006). Thematic analysis is a useful data analysis method for the current project as it allows researchers to identify themes within data related to experiences, views and perspectives (Clarke & Braun, 2017), which is precisely what this research intends to do.

A hybrid approach to thematic analysis complimented the current research as it allowed the analysis to be driven by, but not restricted to, Sykes' conceptualization. A hybrid approach incorporates both deductive and inductive approaches to thematic analysis (Fereday & Muir-

Cochrane, 2006). Whereas inductive thematic analysis is completely data driven, a deductive approach is ‘top-down’—meaning that the researcher brings themes and concepts to the data that in turn, are used to interpret the material (Braun & Clarke, 2023). As such, with a hybrid approach, codes can be pre-defined while others manifest through the material. A hybrid approach suited this research as it was employing Sykes’ (2007/1958) conceptualization of the pains of imprisonment, while simultaneously extracting new themes that did not fit into his original framework. As this research strived to understand how women experience the pains of imprisonment but did not want to be restricted solely to Sykes’ five deprivations, a hybrid approach in the analysis of the empirical material was the most suitable method. The coding process involves defining the data and identifying themes or concepts that are within (Ezzy, 2002). I decided to use a data analysis software to effectively code my empirical material in an organized and efficient manner. The chosen software was Nvivo, a qualitative data analysis computer software that assists researchers in organizing and structuring their collected data (Dhakal, 2022). The empirical material was analyzed using an open coding approach. Open coding is the part of the analysis that refers to the naming and categorizing of phenomena through examination of the data (Ezzy, 2002). This included reading each of the pieces within the dataset multiple times. As is describe in detail below, three readings of the material were conducted.

The purpose of the first reading was to establish relevancy to create a dataset. If entries included topics surrounding conditions in the institution, deprivations in prison, or feelings and struggles associated to imprisonment they were included in the dataset. These entries were then uploaded and saved to NVivo. I began by creating codes in NVivo. The codes contained pre-established themes in Sykes’ (2007/1958) conceptualization in addition to some recurrent themes

that I identified during the preliminary reading. This provided me with a starting point for the coding that occurred in my subsequent readings.

The second round of coding consisted of a line-by-line reading of each entry to identify specific codes that were emerging from the material. During this process, I was not only looking to identify semantic and literal codes, but latent and symbolic codes as well by diving deeper to uncover the meaning behind the material. This was particularly important throughout this research as numerous entries contained poetry or short stories carrying deeper meanings.

The third and final round of coding consisted of creating broader themes and categories based off the specific codes previously identified. Using the conceptual framework, it was at this point that I placed themes into Sykes' five key deprivations. Through this process, some themes emerged in the material that did not fit into Sykes' framework, which resulted in new themes/categories being created for them.

The coding process was completed, and saturation was established once I was confident that the material had been fully explored in relation to the research question and objectives. During the first round of coding, each account was examined thoroughly and I did not proceed to the next account until all relevant material had been identified. A second round of coding was then conducted, as outlined above, during which each account was reviewed an additional time to ensure that no valuable insights had been overlooked. Following this process, I was confident that the material had been sufficiently analyzed and that all relevant themes related to the research question and goals had been captured.

The thematic analysis employed advanced the methodology for this study and ultimately benefitted this research. The thematic analysis allowed this research to be guided by Sykes'

(2007/1958) conceptualization in the analysis of the material, while being attune to gender to examine how women in Canada experience the deprivations associated to incarceration through their prison writing. In this way, this research employed a hybrid approach in the analysis of the material to ensure it was not restricted to the conceptualization and therefore was able to account for additional sub-themes and themes that emerged through the material to add to the existing deprivations and create new deprivations. As such, this research was able to illustrate the ways in which federally sentenced women in Canada experience each of Sykes' deprivations in addition to new deprivations not yet identified in the existing literature.

The methods used and steps that were taken during data analysis were necessary for the current research. However, the process was not without difficulties. Thematic analysis was the most suitable and useful data analysis method for this research, yet obstacles continued to present themselves. The second reading/round of coding was difficult as it was overwhelming to look at the material and attempt to extract, categorize, and group themes as they emerged. I found the process to be rather intimidating at first, attempting to break down such a large quantity of material to create general codes. Another difficulty was grouping these codes into themes. It was difficult at times to decipher whether a code fit into the conceptual framework or not, and what deprivation it should be categorized as. Interpreting the material and attempting to situate it in the framework posed as a challenge at times as some of the deprivations are similar. It was also important to ensure there was no overlap in the themes. This meant that it was necessary to continuously go back over the material, which was rather time consuming. I found my biggest struggle was trusting myself. As a novice researcher I wanted to ensure that I was interpreting the material correctly generally, as well as understanding and translating their

experiences appropriately specifically. To cope with this, it was important to keep positionality and reflexivity in mind.

Positionality refers to a researcher's social and personal background—such as their identity, experiences, and beliefs—and how these shape their standpoint in relation to the research topic and group under study (Yip, 2022). It influences what researchers choose to investigate, how they approach their work, and how they interpret findings (Yip, 2022). In my case, I have never been incarcerated and I recognize that this limits my ability to fully understand the lived experiences of federally sentenced women. However, conducting research with groups to whom the researcher does not directly relate can offer both opportunities and challenges (Berger, 2015). On one hand, it can be advantageous as it positions the respondent as the expert—something that is particularly important when studying marginalized or oppressed populations (Berger, 2015). On the other, a lack of shared experience can make it particularly difficult to fully comprehend the group's experiences (Berger, 2015). For this reason, I remained especially mindful of my position throughout the research process, striving to engage with the material carefully and thoroughly to ensure I was conducting reliable research.

Closely tied to positionality is reflexivity. Reflexivity refers to the active process of reflecting on how one's own background, assumptions, and biases may shape the research (Jamieson et al., 2023). This master's thesis stemmed from my own interests and experiences. Therefore, I approached it with certain predispositions. Having first-hand volunteer experience engaging directly with individuals who have spent time in Canadian prisons and being a criminology student for several years, I was aware that the conditions have been difficult for some time now. Recognizing this, I entered the research process being very critical of correctional services. As a researcher, it is important to ensure that the research design and

methods, in addition to the conclusions drawn, are free of bias (Johnson et al., 2020). To this end, reflexivity was essential. By engaging in reflexivity, I made certain to reflect on my personal biases and remember that my position and experiences can allow me to see certain things and potentially overlook others. Ultimately, this meant that I revised the material, codes, and themes with this in mind to ensure they were being analyzed appropriately.

4.5 Ethical Considerations

The current project utilizes an unobtrusive qualitative research approach and therefore did not require ethics approval from the Social Science and Humanities Research Ethics Board at the University of Ottawa. The empirical material gathered for this research is publicly available on the internet as it has been published via online journals and newsletters. Despite the lack of an obligation to consider procedural ethics and receive REB approval, Fujii (2012) contends that ethics must always be appreciated and considered as they are an ongoing responsibility throughout the research process. In this way, I engaged in ethics while analyzing the work of imprisoned women by ensuring to interpret and present their words with accuracy and respect. This was important as this research intends to privilege and centre the voices of imprisoned individuals, while ensuring not to objectify them. As such, the present research aims to discuss the treatment and deprivations faced by federally sentenced women in Canada.

4.6 Limitations of Research

The limitations of this research stem primarily from the data collection method and the sample. As this research did not entail interviews or observations, the material was limited to what was published on the three selected sites which carries some limitations. First, there is the possibility that the material is incomplete. The material collected may contain incomplete or

insufficient detail as it was not crafted for research or to answer my specific research question (Bowen, 2009). Moreover, the material could be biased as documents or information may be intentionally blocked (Bowen, 2009). As mentioned above, Gaucher (2002) asserts that prison staff and administrators may intentionally gatekeep knowledge, and ultimately have the final say over what is published. This is relevant to the current research as several entries on the Penal Press from the Kingston P4W publication contained pages that were blacked out that spoke of specific incidents that took place at the prison. In the context of this research, this may have been very useful material.

Next, there are several years that the sample does not account for. For example, there is a significant gap between 2000 and 2015, containing only 4 entries over a period of 15 years. The large number leading up to 2000 may reflect the wake of *Creating Choices* and the CCRA. However, pieces written for the *JPP* in particular address the years that are not accounted for in the sample. Specifically, publications produced after 2015 offer critical assessments of changes made to the federal penitentiary system between 2006 and 2015 under the Harper administration. These accounts often include exhaustive lists of services and/or privileges that were reduced or revoked due to the cutbacks during this period. Nevertheless, future research is needed to address the remaining gaps in knowledge, which will be further discussed in the concluding chapter.

Lastly, as this research relied upon the published accounts of federally sentenced women in Canada, the sample is restricted to the accounts of those who submitted work to the selected outlets and thereby limits this research. To elaborate, some incarcerated women may not possess the skills or competencies to produce and publish written work and, therefore, this sample runs the risk of overlooking the perspectives, insights, and experiences of women that could contribute greatly to the analysis.

With these sample limitations in mind, it is important to note that these findings are not reflective of the experiences of the whole population of federally sentenced women in Canada. As such, this research was interested in understanding how women perceive the deprivations associated to imprisonment from their written work. I gathered all of the material from three well-known sources, however limitations—such as those discussed above—continue to exist. With this, the experiences examined may only reflect those of the individuals who submitted written work to the chosen publications. In essence, this research does not intend to state that all federally imprisoned women in Canada experience the same hardships during confinement. Instead, this research wishes to gain an understanding of these experiences from the owners of these moments as these are their experiences to share.

While limitations do exist, the quality of this research is still significant as it is exploratory in nature, aiming to understand the experiences of federally imprisoned women in Canada. Drawing on Sykes' (2007/1958) pains of imprisonment, this research examined first-hand written accounts by federally sentenced women in Canada. Through a thematic analysis, themes were extracted from the material relating to conditions and deprivations associated to women's federal imprisonment in Canada. In the next chapter, these themes will be discussed in depth, highlighting the key deprivations experienced by federally sentenced women through their written publications.

Chapter 5: Findings and Discussion

In this chapter, I argue that federally sentenced women in Canada face complex challenges and have needs that consistently fail to be accommodated in federal penitentiaries. Rather than fostering rehabilitation and empowerment, these federal penitentiaries continue to exacerbate harm by depriving women of tools and opportunities to rebuild their lives. To support this argument, I outline the “pains of imprisonment” as documented by federally sentenced women in their prison writing. Drawing on Sykes’ (2007/1958) conceptualization, I share how the deprivations associated to imprisonment shed light on the adverse realities experienced by women in Canadian federal prisons over the past four decades.

This chapter begins with an overview of the situation of imprisoned women, the institutional environment and living conditions as described by federally imprisoned women to provide context on topics that will be described in the deprivations analyzed. I then explore the primary deprivations associated to prison life, beginning with Sykes’ (2007/1958) five key deprivations: the deprivation of liberty, goods and services, romantic and desired intimate relationships (“heterosexual relationships” in his original analysis), autonomy, and security. I analyze how these deprivations manifest in the context of women’s imprisonment and identify additional themes that intersect with or expand upon Sykes’ (2007/1958) framework. Following this, I examine further deprivations uncovered throughout the analysis that fall outside of Sykes’ (2007/1958) original framework. These include the deprivation of humanity, institutional services, and cultural and spiritual resources. Together, these findings display the continued struggles experienced by federally sentenced women in Canada.

5.1 Institutional Environment and Living Conditions

Before examining the specific deprivations listed above, it is important to first discuss the findings on the institutional environment and living conditions in women's federal prisons. In doing so, this section begins by outlining the characteristics of imprisoned women, followed by an overview of the prison environment and conditions that have been outlined throughout their accounts. Key issues are explored related to treatment, grievance procedures, security classifications, living conditions, and the use of segregation. While these carceral practices are not unique to the experiences of federally sentenced women, the objective is to establish a foundation and provide context and background for topics discussed in the specific deprivations that will be analyzed in the sections that follow.

5.1.1 Imprisoned Women, an Oppressive Environment, and a Lack of Justice

Imprisoned women often have complex histories marked by risk factors typically linked to criminal behaviour. Throughout the empirical material, multiple entries speak to the challenges and struggles encountered by women prior to their imprisonment and how they have contributed to their involvement in criminal behaviour. Jo-Ann Mayhew (1988a, p. 18) outlines some of the characteristics typically associated to imprisoned women stating that:

The women inside these walls are very real, human, mainly conservative, and often depressingly dependent...In the main, over eighty per cent are addicted to drugs and/or alcohol. Their crimes were committed while under the influence or while obtaining these substances. An equally high percentage are victims of incest, rape, and/or battering. The likelihood of these traumas contributing in part to addiction is very high.

Academic research on the risk factors contributing to criminalized behaviour in women substantiates this finding, indicating that risk factors—such as experiences of physical and sexual victimization, relationship challenges, mental health issues, substance use, low self-efficacy,

poverty, and parental difficulties—are commonly present among women involved in the criminal justice system (Van Voorhis et al., 2010). Throughout the empirical material, victimization and substance use emerged as the most prevalent risk factors associated with criminalized activity among imprisoned women. A key finding is that women’s involvement with the penal system is often a direct response to their personal histories—whether shaped by their victimization, traumas or addiction. As Jo-Ann Mayhew highlighted, many women struggling with substance use committed their offences either while under the influence or in an attempt to obtain substances. These risk factors are directly linked to their offences, suggesting that their criminalized behaviour can frequently be the result of personal experiences. Many incarcerated women have experienced trauma, and this is often compounded by the fact that incarceration itself is recognized as a traumatic experience (Kelman et al., 2022). For women with histories of trauma, the prison environment can be particularly painful as the institutional conditions and behaviour of staff may pose as potential triggers (Kelman et al., 2022). This is reflected throughout the empirical material I examined, where many women have discussed the negative environment and treatment received by prison staff.

Throughout the empirical material women have described the institutional environment to be oppressive and isolating, often characterized by a sense of hopelessness. Rachel Fayter and Sherry Payne (2017, p. 10) state that “life in a federal penitentiary is extremely challenging and tedious. We are removed from our friends, families and communities, and placed into a restrictive, oppressive environment.” An anonymous prisoner also states that “as a Lifer doing a long sentence it is not so much the sentence that is troubling, but rather the negative, lonely and hopeless environment with day-to-day inconsistent treatment from the staff” (Anonymous Prisoner 3, 2017, p. 45). As seen in these quotes, the institutional environment is not warm and

rehabilitative. Rather, it is cold, lonely and oppressive. Prison staff contribute to the oppressive prison environment and are what Melissa Stewart and Julie MacKay (1994, p. 37) call “rulers of oppression.” This demonstrates how the unsettling nature of the prison environment is exacerbated by the poor treatment imprisoned women receive from staff. Several entries throughout the material describe staff as being neglectful, disrespectful, and administering unjust and arbitrary punishments and charges.

Prison staff play a significant role in shaping the institutional environment. They have been reported to be neglectful, not caring about the well-being of the women inside. An unknown writer (2015, p. 11) on *Cell Count* shared the neglectful treatment she witnessed by prison staff in the case of a woman who had physical and mental health concerns writing that:

The next morning, I was woken up early by Kinew next door, banging on the wall between our cells. ‘Hey! I need something to eat. I feel weak, and I’ve been pushing my button for an hour now, and the guards aren’t coming. Can you push yours for me?’ I could just make out her words. Kinew was a diabetic, and known to push her emergency button more often than most, but she did have legitimate health concerns, not to mention her mental health.

In this entry, the anonymous writer discusses a woman, Kinew, who used her call button more often than most due to legitimate physical and mental health concerns. After her release, the writer learned that due to an incident at Grand Valley Institution for Women (GVI), Kinew had been transferred to the Regional Psychiatric Centre in Saskatchewan—a Correctional Service Canada (CSC) institution—where she once again used her call button in distress and staff neglected to respond. This was until women surrounding her cell began to push their buttons when Kinew had been suspiciously quiet. Tragically, by the time staff responded it was too late (Unknown, Cell Count, 2015). While the topic of neglectful mental health treatment will

be explored in greater detail below, it is important to mention here, as it helps contextualize the neglectful treatment individuals with such needs often receive in prison.

Neglect by staff is not the only form of misconduct identified in the material. Women have also spoken to how disrespectful staff are not only to them, but their spaces and belongings. Rachel Fayter and Sherry Payne (2017, p. 11) speak about the extremely disrespectful actions by prison staff stating that:

Guards are extremely loud when completing their rounds through the living units, which is especially disruptive at night when prisoners are sleeping, where they also shine lights in our eyes. They also repeatedly wake up prisoners while we are napping during the day. It is rare that a guard treats us with respect or dignity. They demean us, lie, make accusations and assumptions, tease us, restrict our choices, belittle us, swear and call us names. For example, guards have made fun of what clothing women wear, our make-up, our weight and how much junk food we purchase at canteen. The guards conduct searches of each unit at least once a month and can search once a week or more if the institution deems it necessary. Guards read and seize our personal journals, notes, address books, and schoolwork during searches. They throw our belongings around our living spaces and destroy personal property without any repercussions. It is possible to file a claim for broken possessions. However, the warden approves or denies claims within the institution. Thus, they are often denied. After a search, it can take hours to clean our living unit.

As illustrated in this quote, prison staff often fail to treat incarcerated women with respect or dignity, ironically one of the guiding principles in *Creating Choices*. This is shown in several ways, including the disregard for their personal time, the use of bullying and abusive language, and the destruction of their personal belongings. Women in prison are rarely in a position to defend themselves against such treatment, as there are limited avenues available for them to voice concerns. As a result, they are often left no choice but to endure these conditions.

A further aspect of incarceration where women are unable to defend themselves is the imposition of disciplinary charges and punishments by prison staff. Gayle Horii (1994, p. 13)

wrote that “those who are in power determine what is an offence and to what extent punishment/treatment will be imposed.” This is evident throughout the empirical material, where prison staff issue unnecessary and arbitrary charges. Josephine Pelletier (2017, p. 36), for example, recounts receiving a charge after a guard misheard her:

I am afraid to tell anyone how I feel in this place because they are not here to help me, they are here to do their job. Five days ago, I told the staff and my Parole Officer that I wanted to kill myself. I received an institutional charge for disrespecting him because he heard me say something else. The system is simply not setup to help people.

This represents a situation where prison staff determine what is an offence and what the punishment shall be as Gayle Horii indicated above. Imprisoned women have highlighted a shift in the frequency and severity of disciplinary charges—particularly under the Harper administration—where the charging process has become more arbitrary. An anonymous prisoner commented on this issue sharing that:

The charging process has become harsher. In the past, informal resolutions were tried first. However, now prisoners are usually being charged without first a verbal warning, then a written one and finally the charge. The process should revert to the informal resolution process with a charge being at the end of the line, not at the beginning as it is in most instances (Anonymous Prisoner 4, 2017, p. 52).

As I will outline throughout this chapter, under the Harper administration the pains of imprisonment experienced by women were exacerbated. As previously mentioned, imprisoned women often lack the resources to challenge unjust charges or defend themselves within the system. This claim is substantiated by the faulty grievance process. To reiterate, the grievance system is designed to provide imprisoned people with the opportunity to raise concerns and challenge institutional treatment, conditions, human rights violations and abuses of power (Justice Laws Website, 2023; Fayter & Kilty, 2024). This process should offer an opportunity to seek justice; however, as documented throughout the material, grievances are frequently ignored

or dismissed, rendering them ineffective. This system leaves imprisoned women feeling helpless and powerless, contradicting the very purpose of grievances. Melissa Stewart and P. Durnford (1997, p. 86) discuss the issues surrounding the grievance system sharing that:

The grievance procedure is very bureaucratic, unwieldy and frustrating for prisoners as well. Lengthy delays and pat responses are common... This aggravates the feelings of anger and despair felt by the prisoners. Whether she has a valid concern or not, she feels powerless and that no one will listen to her... They cannot assert themselves, and if they try to 'right' perceived injustices through the grievance procedure, they are brushed off.

This quote highlights that, despite the presence of grievances and the appearance of avenues for justice, women are often left feeling silenced and powerless. This presents the broader issue of the abuse of power within CSC. Rachel Fayter and Sherry Payne (2017, p. 11) speak to this, stating that “the entire process is internal, as CSC staff make all decisions on whether the grievance is approved... This process allows CSC to abuse their power. Many women feel powerless and fearful of fighting for their rights.” This demonstrates how flawed the system is, with its internal structure that protects staff and enables the continued abuse of authority within CSC. The ongoing lack of justice for imprisoned women is further reflected in security classifications—a longstanding issue consistently documented throughout the material.

Historically, women raised concerns regarding the multi-level security system at the Kingston Prison for Women (P4W). The lack of distinction between rules and regulations across security classifications prompted an era of “maximum security for all” and “mass punishment” at P4W (Mayhew, 1989 p. 4). This affected imprisoned women in a manner of ways. Jo-Ann Mayhew (1988a, pp. 8, 10) wrote that:

With only one prison in operation it is impossible to offer and limit the degree of custody necessary to contain the risk. Although prisoners within the Kingston Prison for Women

are labelled in various categories...the rules and regulations governing daily lives are determined by the highest maximum security requirements...The factors resulting from the security imposed on a 'multi-security' level prison severely handicap programs and training.

As a result of housing all federally sentenced women in a single institution, every woman at P4W was treated as a maximum-security prisoner regardless of their individual status. This raised concerns relating to the access of opportunities, programs, and resources. For example, women must be assigned a specific security classification in order to participate in certain programs. This continues to be an issue as anonymous prisoners from Fraser Valley Institution for Women (FVI) shared that:

I was held in a remand centre for nearly two years before I got sentenced. I then sat in max here at FVI for two years on the Lifer two-year rule before coming out to medium population. Up to that point, there was only dialectical behavioural therapy and school available in the max, which were both certificate programs. (Anonymous Prisoners, 2017 p.37).

This demonstrates the limited access to resources and programs that support rehabilitation for maximum-security prisoners, ultimately restricting them from making any meaningful progress. In addition to limited resources, women have expressed concerns about the bias and injustice related to security classifications. Prison staff may rely on the words of other women, who may falsify information about other individuals. This can lead to unjust changes in security classifications, resulting in the inability to access resources, privileges or opportunities.

We denounce the transfer of prisoners based on unproven allegations... Other prisoners provide information, often false, for personal gain and favour from staff. This information can impact our security rating and parole hearings, restrict our access to visits with family and friends, limit community access, and eliminate our employment positions. If our security levels are increased we can be transferred from the minimum unit to the medium compound or from medium to the secure unit. Once a prisoner is transferred, it can take months or even years to return to a lower level setting. This requires women to start all

over again, resulting in a loss of community and having to rebuild relationships. Women feel powerless, hopeless and anxious in such circumstances. (Fayter & Payne, 2017 p.12)

This highlights the consequences that a change in security classification can have on an imprisoned woman. It reflects the injustice faced by imprisoned women, as these changes are often based on unproven allegations—sometimes made for personal gain.

This information has provided context on the institutional environment and treatment experienced by federally imprisoned women in Canada. The following section explores the physical living conditions within these institutions, before examining the “pains of imprisonment” as described in the written accounts of incarcerated women.

5.1.2 Living Conditions and Segregation

Throughout the empirical material, discussions of physical living conditions primarily center on P4W. The conditions within institutions, from the opening of new regional facilities across Canada to the present, are seldom explored in detail. As outline in *Chapter 2*, numerous reports deemed P4W’s conditions unsuitable for women. Incarcerated women described the prison as having a dungeon-like atmosphere and appearance, with a male-centric design that failed to address the specific needs of women. In fact, P4W has been compared to a mental health facility or an “abattoir” (Horii, 1994, pp. 12, 16). Numerous women wrote on the physical living conditions at P4W.

Jo-Ann Mayhew (1988a, p. 15) stated that:

It is common to have new arrivals seriously wonder if they have been institutionalized in a mental hospital by mistake and equally common to hear statements such as ‘I feel like I am on a different planet’ or ‘I feel like Alice after she fell down the rabbit's arse hole.’

Similarly, Melissa Stewart (1997, p. 93) shared:

My first impression of the P4W was its dungeon-like appearance...The walls inside the P4W were grey and ugly, with paint peeling off the bars. Everything was steel and concrete...Women prisoners in the P4W do not receive natural light and fresh air. They are housed in dismal surroundings, with a lack of privacy.

T.A Glaremin (2011, p. 85) spoke to the male-centric design writing:

I tried to hang myself at the Prison for Women in Kingston because conditions were so hard for me to understand. It is not easy for any abused woman to understand the principles of a man based prison, built by men for men but used to hold women that does not include female prisoners in its decision-making. Correctional decision-making regarding women is carried out within a patriarchal government.

These quotes illustrate the living conditions at P4W, touching on the physical environment and the institutions male-centric design. Contemporary issues surrounding living conditions, as explored later in this chapter, tend to focus more on structural and systemic issues as opposed to cosmetic ones. The regional facilities were designed based on the *Creating Choices* model and are said to be innovative with residential style houses and a central core building (Hannah-Moffat, 2001). Therefore, it is unlikely that the physical infrastructure of these prisons is as intolerable and dungeon like as P4W. It appears as though more recently, it is not the physical infrastructure of the prison that makes incarceration difficult for women, but rather the unjust treatment and lack of support systems, basic goods, resources, and opportunities for rehabilitation.

An exception to this claim is rooted in the persistent issues surrounding the conditions in segregation, which have long been, and continue to be, deeply troubling. From P4W to the regional facilities, incarcerated women have consistently described segregation as inhumane. In 1988, Fran Sugar wrote that “we have adjusted to the deafening noises and screams coming from segregation when our Sister has just been stripped of her clothes and maced in the face” (Sugar, 1988, p. 27). Women in segregation are often denied dignity and respect despite their struggles.

Unfortunately, these conditions have not improved over time. In 2017, Rachel Fayter and Sherry Payne (2017, p. 12) expressed their concerns, noting:

The conditions in the segregation unit are deplorable. Being placed in segregation results in a deteriorating attitude, feelings of isolation, alienation, loss of identity, increased mental health issues, and feeling oppressed and disconnected from the community.

Segregation is an area of incarceration that has remained stagnant in its poor conditions and treatment towards imprisoned people who may be struggling. As will be explored later in this chapter on the inaccessibility of mental health care, women who self-harm or struggle with mental health are frequently placed in segregation as a form of “intervention” and continue to be held in segregation for extended periods of time. Rachel Fayter and Sherry Payne (2017, p. 12) note that “CSC regularly places prisoners in segregation for over 15 days, including those who are living with or experiencing mental health issues...Anytime a woman self-harms, no matter the severity, she is placed in segregation.” This is a practice that has been shown to worsen mental health (Haney, 2018; Montford et al., 2018). In addition, research consistently supports the link between segregation and increased suicide risk, with studies noting that physical isolation is a significant risk factor for suicide in prison (Reeves & Tamburello, 2014; Kelsall, 2014; Favril et al., 2022). When combined with pre-existing tendencies toward self-harm and/or mental health struggles, the outcome can be tragic. At P4W, there were several suicides over the years of its operation, both in segregation and the general population. Gayle Horii (1994, p. 11) wrote on the tragic situation of suicides at P4W recounting 11 suicides over just four years. The total number over P4W’s 66 years in operation is unknown. She wrote:

On the night of Nov. 24, 1988, four women attempted hanging in segregation... One week later, Marlene Moore, was dead... Over the next three years, six more women took their own lives despite the ‘commendable care and resources offered’ them. Pat Bear and Sandy Sayer in 1989, Marie Ledoux, Careen Daigneault and Johny Neudorf in 1990,

and Lorna Jones in 1991. In 1992 another woman was resuscitated after hanging herself in P4W.

This highlights how the harsh conditions and practices in segregation can worsen the mental health of incarcerated women; and, in some cases, lead to tragic outcomes. Unfortunately, this practice persisted at the regional facilities. Throughout the empirical material, there have been two documented suicides—Ashley Smith and Terry Baker—both of whom died in segregation at GVI. As Rachel Fayter and Sherry Payne (2017, p. 12) wrote:

Despite the deaths of two young women in segregation at Grand Valley Institution in less than a decade (Ashley Smith in 2007 and Terri Baker in 2016), management continues to place women with histories of mental health issues and self-harming behaviours in segregation.

This reveals that CSC failed to learn from the mistakes made at P4W by continuing to place women in prolonged segregation despite the obvious harm. In addition, the ongoing use of this practice despite two additional deaths in segregation at the regional facilities points to the continued disregard for the well-being of imprisoned women.

This section has provided context on the lives, treatment, and living conditions experienced by imprisoned women. As the remainder of this chapter will demonstrate, the Canadian federal penitentiary system, in its existing form, fails to foster healing and rehabilitation for incarcerated women. The following will now explore the “pains of imprisonment” as documented by federally sentenced women in Canada, analyzed through and expanding upon Sykes’ (2007/1958) framework.

5.2 The Relevance of Sykes' "*Pains of Imprisonment*" in Women's Incarceration

The following section applies Sykes' (2007/1958) "pains of imprisonment" to the experiences of federally sentenced women in Canada. I examine each of the five deprivations identified by Sykes, beginning with the deprivation of liberty, followed by the deprivation of goods and services, romantic and desired intimate relationships, autonomy and security, as reflected in the prison writing of federally sentenced women. In doing so, I explore how these pains emerge in women's experiences and how they have evolved over time.

5.2.1 Deprivation of Liberty

The first and most evident pain of imprisonment, as outlined by Sykes (2007/1958), is the deprivation of liberty. He argues that this deprivation stands out as it involves not only physical confinement but the imposition of additional measures that restrict personal freedom and meaningful relationships (2007/1958). Sykes highlights that the emotional toll of being rejected and alienated by society deeply impacts the self-image of incarcerated individuals (2007/1958). Other research has suggested that the deprivation of liberty is particularly painful for imprisoned women. This is because the pain is most often rooted in the absence of meaningful relationships with the separation from family, especially children, proving to be particularly distressing (Masson, 2019). The current research supports this notion, where the deprivation of liberty manifests throughout discussions surrounding the painful separation from family, friends and children and the institutional barriers that exacerbate this divide.

Throughout the empirical material, imprisoned women express the challenge of being separated from their family and friends. This struggle is not only rooted in the inability to see their loved ones, but in the lingering feelings that accompany this separation. For example,

women have written about feeling abandoned and as if people in their lives are moving on without them. Cathy (1993, p. 14) wrote in *Tightwire*, expressing her feelings of abandonment and frustrations with unkept promises from people in her life. She wrote:

...Those who we once thought were near to us become a lingering memory... Life goes on without you...you soon get used to receiving letters that open with, 'I'm sorry for not writing sooner but...'... and then let's not forget the old, 'we are planning on visiting you soon.' Soon is a useful bull word. Three long months pass and they are still within the accepted boundaries of the word 'soon'... They all close their letters with 'Love you' and 'P.S. let me know if you need anything' this is supposed to reaffirm their concern and charity... Can they give you back the part of yourself that included them, that you seemed to have lost?... Your lives are so busy, demanding, hectic, that there's never time to sit down for 10 minutes to write a brief letter, you'll be by to see us soon, and if we need anything we should let you know. And of course everyone sends their love... its easier to send love than deliver it.

This quote illustrates the feelings of abandonment and isolation experienced by women who feel forgotten by those once closest to them, intensifying the separation. Cathy expresses the emotional toll of no longer feeling needed by the people she cares about, while still yearning for their love and support.

Imprisoned women have also described experiencing feelings of guilt during their imprisonment, often rooted in the emotional harm their actions may have caused their loved ones. An unknown author in *Tightwire* wrote a poem that encompasses these feelings sharing that:

...So many years have passed us by. / I'm sorry for the pain. / But I love you mum. / I can't wait to hug you again. / I didn't mean to let you down. / I didn't mean to lie. / I know I must have broke your heart. / I must of made you cry. / ... / I regret so many things I've done in my time. (Unknown, 1992a, p. 13).

This poem demonstrates the profound sense of guilt and regret that imprisoned women experience as a result of not only their actions, but the ways in which their behaviour has

impacted their loved ones. This theme extends more specifically to the separation from children, where feelings of this nature are intensified.

The separation of a mother and their child(ren) is a concerning issue in the context of women's incarceration. The empirical material suggests that child separation is a painful experience that affects the emotional well-being of incarcerated women and the bond between mother and child. As previously noted, the deprivation of liberty is recognized as one of the most painful aspects of incarceration for women as it impacts their maternal role (Masson, 2019). The current research highlights that the separation from children is "usually a deeply wounding experience for both mother and child" (Stewart & MacKay, 1994, p. 37). This separation can often cause lasting strain in these relationships and be accompanied by negative feelings for imprisoned women. Rachel Fayter and Sherry Payne (2017, p. 16) wrote on this experience sharing that: "Being disconnected from one's children can negatively influence a mother's relationship with her child indefinitely. Women separated from their children feel isolated and alone, which leads to feelings of anxiety, frustration, anger, and low self-esteem." The emotional pain described that often accompanies the separation from children can be intensified by the added worry and concern for their child(ren) on the outside. T.A Glaremin (1993, p. 35) spoke to this experience sharing that:

If only I wasn't a mother, I could handle all this time, / but my heart lies elsewhere
beyond the prison walls. / If only I was alone, I would not have anyone else to worry
about. / Someone I carried inside of me for nine long months. / I would not feel the pain
of desperation, / Knowing I am responsible for another human being, / who needs me,
needs me there at home. / And home is a place I gave, another part of my heart. / A
feeling that time or space could not tear apart. / If only I was doing this time alone, /
things would be less complicated, but I'm not, / and Lord it hurts so much.

The experience of caring deeply for a child—a vulnerable human who relies on them—while being physically absent from their lives is emotionally painful for women. Research

supports this, indicating that incarcerated mothers often experience profound feelings of grief and worry for their child(ren) on the outside (Celinska & Siegel, 2010). As shared above, serving a sentence becomes much more distressing when a mother is responsible for someone she cannot care for and is unable to fulfill her maternal role. A following challenge for imprisoned mothers exists in the potential for their child(ren) to be placed in government care if there are no family members available to care for their child. This situation adds to the hardships of the initial separation and intensifies feelings of worry and concern for their child(ren)'s well-being. Jacquie (1986, p. 6) describes this struggle sharing that:

To lose a child / is to lose your life / If you lose a your child by death / The pain is great /
But to lose your child / To the Government and know / Your child to live / Is the worst
ever pain yet / As the Government pays for the / Child's upkeep / But does not know nor
control / The money hungry so called / Foster parents or their Boss / Children's Aid
Society / They use and abuse / The system / And what is even worse / They use and abuse
your / Children with no care.

This quote demonstrates the pain that is accompanied by losing a child to the Government. There is a profound sense of worry for their child(ren) and the level of care they are receiving in the system. Imprisoned mothers also experience grief tied to the loss of potential for developing or maintaining a meaningful relationship with their child(ren). Lisa Tennant (1988, p. 44) reflected upon this grief, sharing:

...I sit with my family in the visiting room, / Holding tight to what is rightfully mine. /
The flesh and blood I bore inside / Holds out her arms to her grandma / To go to her; to
take her away, / She cries from fear of not knowing me / The terror fills my heart, / A
flood of tears fall down my face / As she reaches out for another / ... / The hurt you
experience is so deep / ... / The prison so cold and heartless, / Where do you turn for
comfort? / You cry alone in despair. / The hurt lies heavy in your heart / 'Till the next
visit...to find your / Baby...clenching close to the mother / You once clenched so close
for comfort.

As Ms. Tennant shows, the grief associated to being separated from a child can be exacerbated by feelings of being forgotten or replaced in the child's life. She expresses the deep pain of losing the bond with her child especially as they find comfort in another, challenging her identity and role as a mother.

As illustrated above, imprisoned mothers face significant emotional hardships because of their separation. The Mother-Child Program (MCP) was established in a stated attempt to reduce the harms associated with the separation of incarcerated mothers and their young children (Paynter et al., 2022b). The empirical material suggests that this program has not fulfilled its intended purpose, as institutional barriers have prevented several mothers from fully participating.

Prior to the Harper era of incarceration, the MCP provided incarcerated women with an opportunity to foster strong bonds with their young children as “the program enabled women to live with their young children, ages five and under in a cottage designated as the mother-child unit located on the general compound” (Fayter & Payne, 2017, p. 15). When the Harper administration was in power from 2006-2015, it implemented changes and cut-backs in ‘corrections’, and “the mother-child program was one of the many programs that was substantially overhauled” (Fayter & Payne, 2017, p. 15). Despite the reinstatement of the program in 2016, it no longer upheld the same values and principles that it once did. Rachel Fayter and Sherry Payne (2017, p. 15) speak to the current state of the MCP sharing that:

The current mother-child program is only a shadow of what it once was... There are many bureaucratic constraints and extraneous processes so it can take eight to twelve months or even longer for a woman's child to be able to move in. Aside from the required paperwork, a woman also has to earn her minimum-security rating and finish all necessary programming prior to moving to the MSU. This results in her not seeing her

child outside of visits for twelve months or more...The guards often make allegations that prevent women from participating in the mother-child program.

As this quote illustrates, there is a level of bureaucracy associated to the MCP and numerous barriers in place to participate. Since its reinstatement, incarcerated women have shared their ongoing concerns about the persistent obstacles and barriers they must navigate to be granted access to the program. Significant issues worth acknowledging are the rigid eligibility criteria and the manipulation of the system by institutional staff. The empirical material has revealed that efforts have been made to penalize women, preventing them from participating in the MCP by making the process unreasonably difficult. Rachel Fayter and Sherry Payne (2017, p. 16) share the story of a woman named Kendall, who was denied access to the program due to unjust actions in the institution. They wrote:

Kendall has been a model prisoner since arriving at Grand Valley in 2016. She has completed all required programming, attends school, is employed within the institution and works closely with her case management teams. Her goal is to earn her minimum-security rating so she can move to the MSU and live with her son. Kendall is serving a three-year sentence... The Children's Aid Society (CAS) is supportive of Kendall having her son live with her at GVI, but the institution keeps making allegations that she is engaged in illicit activities, without having any evidence to substantiate their claims. The prison has intercepted her phone calls for two months, conducted random urinalyses (all of which came back negative), and requested a strip search (which she consented to) in order to determine whether she has received any new tattoos while incarcerated. Each of these situations have resulted in delaying Kendall's security-level review, causing a lengthier wait for her to spend time bonding with her son at this critical point in his life.

Other research has supported these ideas, suggesting that strict eligibility and judgement from staff present as barriers for women attempting to participate in the MCP (Breuer et al., 2021; Paynter et al., 2022b). Unfortunately, Kendall's case was not the only one identified in the empirical material. Despite support from social workers, incarcerated women continue to face significant barriers in obtaining the required security classification to have their child(ren) live with them. Even those who follow institutional rules and are viewed as 'model-prisoners'

continue to face this discriminatory treatment. This approach is both cruel and counterproductive, as many incarcerated women in the empirical material have pointed out that maintaining relationships with their children serves as a powerful deterrent to criminal behaviour. Stephanie Deschene, who had a similar experience to Kendall, emphasizes the program's potential role in breaking cycles of abuse and supporting deterrence among imprisoned mothers. She shares that:

Every day spent not having that report finished is another day I am away from my son, and another day that I lose to bond with him... Keeping my child with me is not only the best thing for me and my son's relationship, but it is best for my family and my community as having him here with me means it is less likely that my son will end up in the system like so many other children of Indigenous prisoners. Not only would there be less chance that I re-offend post release, but there would be less chance that my cycle of drug abuse and crime will repeat itself in the next generation... All women should be given equal opportunity to be with and maintain healthy bonds between themselves and their children (Deschene, 2017, p. 42).

The program has the potential to promote rehabilitation and reduce the likelihood of reoffending upon release for imprisoned mothers. Other scholarly research has made similar findings that being separated from, and missing children is the primary motivation for imprisoned women to change their lives and desist from crime, while also emphasizing the importance of visiting and co-living options (Bucerius & Sandberg, 2022). As Ms. Deschene mentioned, when implemented in its original form, the program—along with strong maternal bonds—could play a crucial role in rehabilitation and breaking cycles of abuse. Institutional barriers not only prevent imprisoned mothers from participating in the MCP. They also create significant challenges in maintaining contact and relationships with their children on the outside. However, research contends that maintaining contact with children through traditional forms of communication can be difficult due to barriers in prison systems and institutional conditions (Celinska & Siegel, 2010).

The deprivation of liberty and loss of relationships is compounded by the inability to maintain meaningful contact with those outside the institution. Sykes (2007/1958) highlights that institutional barriers that place restrictions on visitors, telephone calls, and mail can significantly hinder an imprisoned individual's ability to preserve connections with those on the outside. These barriers were prevalent throughout the empirical material, in addition to the added barrier of the locations of women's federal facilities.

The empirical material has revealed that imprisoned women have long encountered significant challenges with accessing phone and mail services, which are crucial for maintaining connections with those on the outside. Gayle Horii (1994, p. 16) described the access the telephones at P4W sharing that:

...in 1986, we were permitted one ten-minute phone call per month...In contrast, men incarcerated in B.C. (usually their home province) were permitted up to 100 minutes of phone time per month. This amounts to 10 times the contact allowed women at P4W, many of whom were thousands of miles from their families. After petitioning, phones were installed in 1988.

Despite the unjust disparities in resource access between incarcerated men and women, the installation of telephones has not resolved the challenges associated with communicating with people outside. Barriers to accessing telephones remain a persistent issue. Throughout the empirical material the most significant barrier to maintaining telephone contact with those outside the prison is the financial burden it imposes. An anonymous prisoner shared that:

We have not had a raise in wages for decades. Yet, I know myself like many others live off what we make in here, contributing to my struggles for phone money to stay in contact with what family I have left, while trying to save money for when I get out. The prison has become a place for us to just be housed, cut-off from society to complete our core programs until our time comes when we get out. (Anonymous Prisoner 3, 2017 p. 48)

This quote outlines the struggles imprisoned women must navigate while attempting to maintain telephone contact with their families. Despite the low wages they receive, they continuously make efforts to save money for phone calls to their families, all while attempting to cover their basic necessities and save for their futures. Those who must make long distance calls experience a greater financial burden. This is because “for long-distance calls, the rate is \$0.11 per minute. For local calls, the rate is \$0.56 per hour.” (Fayter & Payne, 2017 p. 22). Unfortunately, the need to pay higher fees for long distance calls is not a unique experience. As Petey (2016, p. 77) shares: “With five regional federal prisons for women in Canada, the overwhelming majority of phone calls are long distance.” There are few alternatives available to help alleviate these challenges. With mail services presenting similar barriers, imprisoned women are left with limited means to maintain contact with their families.

Access to mail services is especially important for imprisoned women, yet it is accompanied by additional challenges. Rachel Fayter and Sherry Payne (2017, p. 21) speak to this situation sharing that:

As one of our only means of accessing the outside world, regular postage mail is extremely important to us and can brighten a prisoner’s day. According to CSC policy, we are entitled to our mail every business day. CSC is supposed to deliver prisoners’ mail in the same manner that Canada Post does. However, we receive our mail infrequently as it is treated like a privilege. Some days we do not receive our mail at all and it can take weeks to receive local correspondence.

As this quote demonstrates, mail services are often inconsistent, infrequent, and treated as a privilege, making it difficult for imprisoned women to consistently stay in contact with their family through this means. Additionally, the financial burden mirrors that of telephone contact as “women used their earning to purchase stamps and envelopes to contact family” (Petey, 2016, p. 77). Imprisoned women are required to save what little they have from their low wages to

purchase the supplies needed to send correspondence to their families. The last remaining form of communication for imprisoned women is family visits.

The empirical material suggests that being able to physically see their loved ones is especially meaningful for incarcerated women, providing them with emotional support and helping them cope with the challenges of incarceration. Kim Friebus (1992, p. 10) shared this sentiment stating that: “I feel that when you are incarcerated that the more family contact you have the better, it helps the time go by faster and a little [easier].” Unfortunately, family visits are also accompanied by numerous barriers, both physical and institutional.

The physical barrier that prevents regular family visits is the location of the institution(s). Until the new regional facilities were constructed and P4W closed in 2000, it was the only federal facility in Canada housing women from across the country. This meant that women were often separated from their families, children and communities, with some being placed a great distance from home. This distance caused severe suffering and distress, as incarcerated women were isolated and alienated from what they knew and loved. An unknown writer at P4W wrote about this separation sharing that:

At the moment the inmates for Canada’s single federal prison for women yearn only for their families. For years, female prisoners from the west have been denied the frequent access to children, parents, and relatives that male prisoners in federal penitentiaries take for granted. The trip to Kingston was usually too expensive for Prairie families. Isolation, especially from children can only compound a female inmates alienation. It serves the community’s sense of vindictiveness but diminishes the prisoner in every way.
(Unknown, 1992b, p. 3)

Women suffered because of the distance from their homes and families, and the lack of support in addressing this separation. The emotional toll was so severe that there have been

reports of attempted suicide stemming from this separation noted throughout the empirical material. Gayle Horii (1994, p. 11) stated that “in 1992 another woman was resuscitated after hanging herself in P4W. All she wanted was to be incarcerated 2,500 miles to the west, in her home province of Alberta.”

One of the recommendations made by the Task Force on Federally Sentenced Women (TFFSW) was to open five new regional facilities across the country; with one of the intended goals being to reduce family separation experienced by imprisoned women (TFFSW, 1990). In theory, this would alleviate the pain of being so far from home; however, in practice, the impact was mixed. Some women welcomed the new facilities, as they were previously incarcerated a great distance from their families. Kim Friebus (1992, p. 10) expressed her approval of the new prairie facility sharing that:

I am here to tell you that I am very glad they are closing P.4.W. For me it is something that I am looking forward to, because that is my home and my children and husband are there. For the most part of my sentence I have been put in a facility that is 1900 miles from my family and that is very hard to deal with.

The support for the new federal facilities was not shared by all federally sentenced women anticipating the move. Some women’s families resided in the Kingston or Ottawa area, and being moved to Kitchener meant being placed further away from their families. Melissa Stewart and Julie MacKay (1994, p. 37) spoke to this concern sharing:

Some women do not want to leave Kingston at all because they have family close by...Since my family resides in Ottawa, sending me to Kitchener which is twice as far away to visit as Kingston is for them, contradicts the reason given for moving me.

With the establishment of the five regional facilities and one Healing Lodge across Canada, discussions about the distance from family became less prevalent. While the empirical material did not speak to the emotional or psychological challenges linked to this separation after

1997, they do mention the emotional toll associated to the institutional barriers that prevent family visits. Since there is still not one institution per province or territory, it is unlikely that this issue has been resolved. Rather, it seems that federally imprisoned women have come to accept the physical distance as an inevitable part of their incarceration. For example, Rachel Fayter and Sherry Payne (2017, p. 21) share that family visits that are cancelled last minute are “[inconvenient] to our families who have taken time off work or drive long distances and stay at a local hotel to visit.” This excerpt shows that while they acknowledge the physical distance from their loved ones, the greater struggle lies in the institutional barriers that prevent them from having meaningful contact.

Imprisoned women have shared the institutional barriers related to family visits, including visits being revoked as punishment and the inappropriate environment and atmosphere—especially for visits involving children. On numerous occasions, the empirical material suggests that family visits can be revoked as a form of punishment against imprisoned women. This is a longstanding practice that has consistently been carried out for decades, taking place at P4W and continuing at the regional facilities. Jo-Ann Mayhew (1988a, p. 12) wrote on this harsh practice sharing that:

Within the unpredictable fluid disciplinary code of this institution, women can be penalized for trivial offenses by the loss of family visiting rights. The fact that visiting is done over very considerable distance with much pre-arranging of time and resources makes this practice unduly harsh.

More recently, the revocation of visiting rights can occur due to additional factors as well. One example relates to allegations made by staff or other women. Rachel Fayter and Sherry Payne (2017, p. 20) speak about this situation sharing that:

Visits can also be suspended or closed due to allegations from ‘reliable sources’ or prisoner informants with no substantial evidence. Additionally, without notice, guards suddenly cancel visits or deny family members from seeing prisoners, even when they have travelled for hours from out of town.

This demonstrates the abuse of power and authority inherent in the system, where imprisoned women are being refused the right to visit their families based on unjustified claims and arbitrary decisions. As mentioned above, a following concern related to family visits relates to the institutional environment.

Women have shared their concerns about the institutional environment, highlighting that it fails to provide an appropriate atmosphere for family visits or for mothers to bond with their children. This has been a longstanding issue, carrying over from P4W to the regional facilities. In 1997, Melissa Stewart and P. Durnford (1997, p. 83) spoke to the “uncomfortable conditions” family visits take place in, and how “few prisons are set up to accommodate children.” This problem persisted in 2017, where Rachel Fayter and Sherry Payne (2017, p. 15) shared that: “The visiting room is not a conducive location for a mother to bond with her child... women have been denied the opportunity to hold their baby, breastfeed and change diapers.” As mentioned, the uncomfortable atmosphere of the institution makes it difficult to create bonds, especially with children. Adding to this struggle, strict institutional policies and procedures further contribute to the uncomfortable environment, creating an intimidating atmosphere for families and visitors. Rachel Fayter and Sherry Payne (2017, p. 20) wrote:

Guards and search dogs are intimidating to our visitors. The guards in the visiting area tell our visitors where they can sit. Additionally, guards intervene if visitors stretch or visitors and prisoners sit too close, hold hands, hug, or touch for more than three seconds.

This shows how prisons fail to foster an environment that allows imprisoned women to create bonds with children or have comfortable and meaningful interactions with their families.

In contrast, social activities run by the institution provide women with the opportunity to visit their families in a pleasant and pro-social environment. Rachel Fayter and Sherry Payne (2017, p. 20) share their thoughts on these activities saying that:

Family Day or socials are an opportunity for women to visit with family and friends for up to six hours in an informal atmosphere with music, food, games, and entertainment. Socials occur much less frequently than in the past. For several years now, there have only been two socials per year at GVI.

These events were once frequent; however, under the Harper administration, activities and privileges of this nature were significantly reduced. The ability to have meaningful communication with the outside is very important for imprisoned women whether by telephone, mail, or visits. Rachel Fayter and Sherry Payne (2017, p. 22) express the importance of communication with the outside sharing that:

Maintaining strong family ties and connections to our community through visits, correspondence, and phone calls are vital to the rehabilitation and reintegration process that CSC claims it supports. However, the damage caused by this flawed system is counterproductive...The negative impacts of having these issues with our visits, correspondence and phone system are numerous. Contact and relationship building with family and friends are vital to community reintegration. Without these outside connections, we feel isolated, lonely, disconnected, hopeless, powerless, frustrated, anxious, angry and unsupported.

As illustrated, relationships with family, friends and the community are crucial for the rehabilitation and reintegration of imprisoned women. However, the effects of institutional policies, procedures, and restrictions, create significant barriers that make these services very hard to reach or completely inaccessible to imprisoned women. This has a negative impact on these women and can leave them feeling lost and disconnected from the people they care about and the outside world.

In applying Sykes' (2007/1958) deprivation of liberty to the analysis of the pains of women's federal imprisonment, the former is clearly evident in the loss of relationships and restrictions on outlets to preserve connections with those on the outside. However, in this context, these pains are more profound. For imprisoned women, the loss of relationships often includes separation from their children and the loss of their maternal role. Moreover, the already limited outlets to maintain contact with those on the outside were exacerbated when women were imprisoned thousands of miles away from their families. This demonstrates that imprisoned women can experience the deprivation of liberty in deeper and more profound ways than outlined in Sykes' (2007/1958) original analysis.

Moreover, the evolution of the pains associated to the deprivation of liberty have remained relatively unchanged over time. Across the empirical material, women described facing similar challenges, with few reporting meaningful efforts aimed at alleviating these struggles. While some challenges became slightly less prevalent following *Creating Choices* and the opening of the regional institutions, the most significant shifts were under the Harper administration, where conditions of confinement deteriorated under the guise of getting 'tough on crime'.

5.2.2 Deprivation of Goods and Services

Sykes' (2007/1958) deprivation of goods and services primarily focuses on material possession and the ways in which we define ourselves through what we own and consume. Imprisoned individuals can suffer a loss of possessions that are normally accessible to them on the outside such as clothing, food, alcohol, tobacco, privacy, and the like (Sykes, 2007/1958). As this research adopted a contemporary approach to this framework, I have expanded my analysis

to include additional services that imprisoned women have identified as inconsistent or unavailable throughout their incarceration, causing a significant loss and feelings of dehumanization. Throughout the empirical material, women have reported on the loss of basic goods including computers; privacy; food, and personal and menstrual hygiene products. Women also reported on the deprivation of services including education, libraries, as well as medical, dental, and mental health care services. It is important to note that under the Harper administration, many goods and services that were previously accessible became restricted, marking a shift in the conditions under this deprivation. While the deprivation of goods and services had been a significant issue prior to this period, the situation became worse during this time.

Throughout the empirical material, imprisoned women highlight the hardships caused by the inaccessibility of certain goods. The first is the limited access to computers. An anonymous prisoner shared that “prisoners were allowed their own computer in their rooms. This is no longer permitted. It is important to do legal work at every hour that a prisoner can and with the necessary privacy to keep the privilege intact” (Anonymous Prisoner 4, 2017, p. 51). The limited access to computers, an item found in most households, represents a significant loss for imprisoned women and creates barriers for those pursuing an education or legal work, both of which require computers and the internet. The restricted access to computers became prevalent under the Harper administration. As previously noted, prior to policy changes under Harper’s government, women were permitted to keep computers in their cells, allowing them to engage in academic and legal work privately.

The loss of privacy is another challenge faced by imprisoned women, who feel as though their privacy is violated not only by prison staff but other women. Nadine Sparks (1992, p. 33) wrote “the girls gathered round to take a look at me. / One of the first things I noticed was I lost my privacy”, speaking to the lack of privacy from other women. Renne Acoby (2011, p. 91) also spoke to the lack of privacy for women on management protocol⁴ sharing that “some institutions take the ‘observation’ aspect of the Protocol literally by posting female guards to observe women taking a shower and during recreation.” This constant surveillance highlights the lack of privacy afforded to imprisoned women, a right typically granted to the rest of society.

A following loss imprisoned women experience is in relation to the food available within the institution, primarily in the context of the inaccessibility of adequate and nutritious meals.

Rachel Fayter and Sherry Payne (2017, p. 19) speak to this situation sharing that:

In the medium- and minimum-security areas of the prison, we cook our own food and receive \$35.21 each per week to purchase our groceries. This amount has decreased within the past two years from \$35.35 and the overall budget of approximately \$35/week has not increased in the past 20 years since GVI opened, despite inflation and rising food prices. Produce, dairy and meat are expensive, while processed, unhealthy items are cheaper and more affordable to eat. CSC National Headquarters has recently regulated our menu in order to make it consistent with other institutions across Canada. Healthy menu items were removed and replaced with canned goods and processed, unhealthy food.

Imprisoned women are required to purchase their groceries with inadequate funds to support proper nutrition and health. Despite the failure to increase their grocery allowance to be in accordance with inflation rates, under the Harper administration these funds were reduced after remaining unchanged for decades. In addition, healthy food items were removed from their menus and replaced with foods that do not support proper health and nutrition. This reflects a

4. The management protocol was introduced in 2003 as a set of rules created for imprisoned women in Canada who were characterized as particularly high risk for escape or violence. They were held in secure units experiencing conditions such as being confined in cells for twenty-three out of twenty-four hours a day and their movement was controlled through security escorts, body belts, and shackles (Balfour, 2017). 99

loss for imprisoned women, demonstrating the broader struggle of having little to no control over the food they can access.

Compounding the deprivation of goods, women have reported that institutions fail to accommodate the basic hygienic needs of imprisoned women, forcing them to use their little earnings to purchase these necessities. Petey (2016, p. 77) shared that “women used their earnings to purchase ... food to supplement the inadequate amount provided, and sanitary pads and tampons to supplement the limited and insufficient quantities we received.” In addition, Rachel Fayter and Sherry Payne (2017, p. 14) share that “...wages have not been reviewed in over three decades, despite the increased cost of living. Women use this money for hygiene, snacks, and contact with family.” This reflects the limited access imprisoned women have to essential products that support their personal and menstrual hygiene. As a result, they are forced to spend their limited wages on overpriced items that should be available to them. Women on management protocol experience more barriers to access personal hygiene items. Renee Acoby (2011, p. 91) shared that “the management protocol states that all items/privileges will be considered based on risk assessments. CSC officials have used this guideline in the Protocol to control items such as toilet paper, [and] basic hygiene items (soap, toothpaste, etc...)...” Women who are viewed as a risk to the safety or security of the institution can be denied access to basic hygiene needs. This is a cruel practice as items of this nature should be regarded as a right made consistently accessible rather than a privilege for good behaviour.

In addition to being deprived of essential goods, imprisoned women also face the loss of numerous services. As previously mentioned, imprisoned women suffer the loss of education, library services, medical, dental, and mental healthcare services. Imprisoned women have spoken

to the difficulties in obtaining any non-mandatory education during their confinement. In theory, obtaining an education while imprisoned is possible; however, the barriers women face makes pursuing a post-secondary education extremely difficult. Within the federal institutions the “completion of a high school education is forced, while post-secondary education is difficult to access” (Fayter, 2016, p. 59). Imprisoned women have shared their goals of pursuing an education to set themselves up for a good future beyond their imprisonment. Petey (2016, p. 72) shared: “given that my foreseeable future would be spent behind bars after receiving a ten-year youth sentence, I set my sights on obtaining an education so that I could have a future upon my release.” However, there are several barriers preventing women from accessing a post-secondary education. As Rachel Fayter (2016, p. 67) shares, “the barriers to education that exist in prison are physical, institutional, relation, and psychological.” Specific obstacles to obtaining an education include inadequate resources, restrictive institutional practices, financial constraints, and the oppressive institutional environment. These challenges collectively prevent imprisoned women from accessing the education they seek and hinder their ability to achieve their academic goals. Petey (2016, p. 78) speaks to the barriers and struggles relating to completing an education sharing that:

My final assessment of my experience in GVI was that, *theoretically*, I could complete certain courses, but a full degree would be unlikely. There is simply not enough access to research tools, and nothing in the way of motivation or financial resources. It is simply too hard to keep going for the length of time it would require to complete a degree. I would have run out of money fairly quickly had I not encountered the obstacles that delayed my education while in prison: time delays due to snail mail and having to work a different job in the prison during business hours; telephone communication difficulties; the lack of a tutor to assist me with scheduling and understanding the material; and demotivation due to my confinement and the slow progress I was making in school. Any successes that I had were after blatant opposition from, and fully despite, the prison system.

Programs that support women in pursuing an education and aim to alleviate some of the barriers they experience do exist. Walls to Bridges (W2B) is one of these programs, aiming to help imprisoned women complete university credits. This program provides women with the opportunity to participate in classes alongside campus enrolled students to pursue an education and work toward their academic goals while incarcerated (Pollack, 2020). Rachel Fayer (2023, p. 72) shared her positive experience with W2B, sharing that despite the barriers to education in prison:

In W2B spaces, prisoners were valued, respected, heard, and seen as equals. Our lived experiences and histories of trauma were sources of knowledge that could not be found in any textbook. We were lifted up in a place where we are constantly put down. People with power and privilege, such as university professors, came to the prison to learn from us! I had found a place where my strengths could be nurtured, my voice would be heard, and my perspective was valued. In the W2B community, I found a place to heal, I found somewhere I belonged, and most importantly, I found myself.

Despite the success of W2B and the positive impact it has had for some imprisoned women, institutions continue to fail women who are attempting to pursue an education. Education is a critical step for many women working toward rehabilitation and self-improvement, yet the numerous barriers created by these institutions make it very difficult for them to succeed despite their continued motivation.

Imprisoned women have also shared their struggles while attempting to defend themselves and their innocence as barriers to accessing adequate library services and legal texts stand in their way. In 1994, Gayle Horii (1994, p. 17) shared that “in women's prisons only very limited access to law books is available, while in men's prisons there are often complete law libraries.” This struggle became less prevalent until the Harper administration made cutbacks to the system. Women reported that prior to the Harper administrations cutbacks, full-time librarian

services were available and would help women obtain legal texts (Anonymous Prisoner 4, 2017). Now, there are significant barriers in their pursuits of justice. Nellie Parr (2018, pp. 86, 88) wrote on the accessibility of legal texts and library services sharing that:

Arguably the most important part of the affidavit states that ‘no one at FVI can undertake legal work of any depth with the legal material currently available at FVI. With the cuts in legal aid funding, many at FVI find themselves having to deal with complex appeals, ministerial applications, and civil suits to get back from a lawyer or estate issues. It just cannot be done with the materials available now’ ... Today, we remain in the dire position of not being able to do good legal work. Some prisoners cannot work to prove their innocence, while others cannot defend themselves and fight to obtain their freedom. Where is the justice in this? The Crown has access to unlimited resources and we are unarmed in almost every sense. The least CSC should provide to ensure there is due process is a full-time librarian and proper legal resources in libraries that are ‘compliant with policy and comparable to services, materials and technologies available in community libraries’ as was recommended by the Office of the Correctional Investigator in 2016 (ibid, p. 59). Without this, there can be no actual justice for criminalized and incarcerated women behind these walls.

The inaccessibility of adequate library and legal aid services is a significant problem encountered by imprisoned women. Inadequate funding for legal aid services forces imprisoned women to represent themselves in their pursuit of justice, often against attorney’s who have access to numerous resources. Despite recommendations and directives that state women should have complete access to the same resources as the public, they continue to struggle due to the insufficient means provided to them within institutions.

A following service imprisoned women have consistently highlighted is the inadequate health, dental, and mental health care services available to them. These services are often inconsistent or entirely unavailable. While attempting to seek medical, dental, or mental health care, their requests are frequently ignored, treated with little urgency, or met with inadequate solutions. They face extremely long wait-times, have no access to preventative care, and their

pre-existing health issues are often left unaddressed. Rachel Fayter and Sherry Payne (2017, pp. 26-27) discuss these issues in relation to health and dental care sharing that:

There is a lack of accessibility to proper medical services inside the prison. Many people wait years for a diagnosis, and then even longer for any necessary surgery. It can take weeks or months to see a doctor or dentist, even for antibiotics or a common cold or flu. The dentist at GVI specializes in extracting teeth and prefers pulling a tooth to providing a filling. There are no teeth cleaning or preventative care appointments available. CSC blocks most standards of care and prohibits many necessary medications from being prescribed...Instead, doctors prescribe various psychotropic and mood stabilizing medications instead of pain relievers. Holistic care is difficult, if not impossible to access. There is no access to a chiropractor or massage therapist, even if women are willing to pay for it themselves. It is challenging to get items such as wrist or knee braces. Not having proper access to health care is dehumanizing and causes us to feel worthless and inferior, as if nobody cares. Preventable health conditions occur and current health problems worsen. This can lead to chronic pain, physical exhaustion, and depression or anxiety. Lack of access to proper dental care can lead to bleeding or inflamed gums, cavities, and teeth being pulled out. Preventative health services should be made more accessible. Female prisoners should have the same access to preventative health care, such as breast cancer screening and annual pap tests, as women in the community. CSC should honour prescriptions written for us by doctors outside the facility. Teeth cleanings and regular dental check-ups should be available for people.

The state of medical and dental care for imprisoned women is deeply troubling. There is a significant shortage of opportunities and resources, resulting in care that is either inconsistent or entirely unavailable. Multiple imprisoned women have expressed their frustrations with the inadequate quality and lack of care they receive, and the complete disregard for preventative care which further contributes to their sense of dehumanization.

The last service imprisoned women experience a loss from relates to mental health care. There is a significant lack of awareness and available treatment for imprisoned women experiencing mental distress. This is a critical issue given that, as outlined earlier in this chapter, many have experienced traumatic histories and/or suffer from substance use. Despite this,

imprisoned women have limited access to psychological care and support. As a result, the “treatment” provided to women navigating mental health in prison often amounts to inhumane practices.

Access to a psychologist, psychiatrist, counselling, and therapy has long been a significant issue for imprisoned women. The current research highlights a significant number of women expressing concerns about the lack of mental health services and interventions. In the past at P4W, women suffering from mental distress were sent to the Regional Treatment Centre (RTC), a mental health facility located within Kingston Penitentiary (KP); however, the so-called treatment did not offer any true healing. Jo-Anne Mayhew (1997, p. 76) wrote that “at the RTC the only treatment was January’s freezing weather whining through the ancient windows of Kingston Penitentiary.” The lack of treatment and awareness continued with the opening of the new regional facilities where “since the opening of the new prisons the Department of Psychology has been gradually eroded” (Stewart & Durnford, 1997 p. 83). In more recent years, the mental health treatment of imprisoned women has remained inconsistent. Reflecting on the state of mental health services at GVI, Rachel Fayter and Sherry Payne (2017, p. 27) wrote:

Many women are over-medicated with psychiatric drugs. Psychology only allows twelve sessions even if someone is in severe distress (e.g. has selfharmed or recently been released from serving more than fifteen days in segregation or maximum-security). The focus of CSC Psychology is on women with serious diagnosed mental health issues (e.g. schizophrenia, bipolar, borderline personality disorder). Counselling sessions are supposed to be confidential, unless we are a risk to ourselves or others, or are jeopardizing the security of the institution. However, since psychologists are employed CSC staff, women do not feel comfortable sharing their feelings and struggles based on the fear that what they say will end up in their paperwork. Their case management team could be notified of anything they say, which would affect security ratings, temporary absences and parole.

These findings align with other research showing the overuse of psychotropic medications and the lack of access to non-medical interventions (Kilty, 2012). These practices are a direct contradiction to the TFFSW's promise to provide quality mental health services that meet community standards (TFFWS, 1990). In addition, a more alarming issue relates to the longstanding overuse of segregation for women experiencing mental distress, particularly those with suicidal tendencies or who engage in self-harming behaviours. As previously mentioned, time spent in segregation only contributes to the further deterioration of mental stability. Despite this, it remains an ongoing issue, with women voicing their concerns over the years from P4W to the regional facilities. Melissa Stewart and P. Durnford (1997, p. 86) shared that "if a prisoner at P4W slashes or attempts suicide, she is placed in segregation, her clothes are removed, and she is given a paper gown." This practice continued in the regional facilities where Rachel Fayter and Sherry Payne (2017, pp. 27-28) wrote:

If a woman expresses that she may hurt herself she is quickly placed in segregation, stripped of her clothing, placed in a canvas 'baby-doll dress' and strapped to a table until the institution believes she is able to keep herself safe. GVI does not have the capacity to care for women with severe mental health issues. The lack of appropriate mental health care leads to verbal and physical altercations in living units, women feeling misunderstood, exacerbated mental health issues, distrust, self-harm, and even death.

The lack of support and available counselling in addition to the overuse of psychotropic medications and segregation for women in distress represents CSC's failure to acknowledge and adequately support the mental health needs of imprisoned women.

Similarly to Sykes' (2007/1958) findings, imprisoned women suffer from a loss of goods and services. The deprivation of goods and services is very significant in the context of women's imprisonment. Imprisoned women suffer a loss from various goods and services that are available in the community and that are essential in supporting their rehabilitation and

reintegration. As presented throughout, imprisoned women have long been deprived of various goods and services; however, several of them became completely inaccessible, or were significantly reduced because of the Harper administration's cutbacks.

5.2.3 Deprivation of Romantic and Desired Intimate Relationships

In his original analysis, Sykes' (2007/1958) deprivation of heterosexual relationships focuses on the male ego and exacerbation of the self-image when involuntary celibacy occurs. As mentioned in *Chapter 3*, this project is taking a contemporary approach to the pains of imprisonment. Therefore, this deprivation will be analyzed as the deprivation of romantic and desired intimate relationships to be applied to various forms of sexuality. Two main themes were identified in relation to this deprivation: desire/lust and loneliness. The analysis of the empirical material has revealed that imprisoned women express this deprivation through a longing and lust for romance and intimacy, as well as feeling a profound sense of loneliness due to the absence of companionship. These experiences were captured primarily through latent codes, as many women conveyed these feelings through poetry.

For imprisoned women, the desire for physical and emotional intimacy is a common experience. The deprivation of fulfilling sexual and romantic relationships is evident in the desire and lust for romance and companionship expressed by women in their poetry. For example, Darlene Hogan (1992, p. 14) wrote the poem "Sweet Love" sharing:

Holding onto something that's not there / giving everything I've got, its not fair / Looking for an answer, hoping it will come / Oh Baby tell me can I have some? / Of that sweet love. / Looking for a rainbow / or a shooting star / Babe if you only knew / I know, your too far / You say you miss me / but your never there / I want you to know / My love I will share / with someone who cares. / Sweet love is what I need / That sweetness you are indeed / Someone I've lacked for all these years / Oh Baby please stop my tears.

Throughout this poem, Ms. Hogan expresses her desire for love and companionship in a partner. It appears as though she is speaking to a partner who has been distant in the relationship; and expresses her willingness to search for love elsewhere to fulfill her desires. Other women have expressed their commitment to their partners writing poems directed to them expressing their continuous love.

I know it hasn't been easy / for you lately / and I can't even / begin to tell you / how much you've been on my mind. / It isn't easy for me... / feeling so far / away from you / when I want / to be close enough / to hold you / and tell you / with all my heart / that everything going / to be alright / And that I love you ('Sweetness', 1990, p. 8).

This poem expresses feelings of missing a partner and the pain and guilt associated to their forced separation. This poem also shows their yearning for the love, intimacy and presence of their partner during these hard times. The desire and lust for intimacy expressed by imprisoned women is further manifested through poetry. Women have shared experiences related to dreams and fantasies they have had in this context. Patrice (1989, p. 44) wrote:

Visions of a woman bathed in a rainbow aura / I imagine the feel of her kiss on my face / Babies breath / Butterfly wings / Caress me. / This woman my vision / drives me to the brink of insanity / with an empowering hunger / to bond with her / to be as one. / Her hair is aflame with fire colors / Autumn leaves / Her eyes all knowing / Kaleidoscopic, Seductive / Long limbs moving with sensuous grace / She beckons me / Welcoming my embrace. / AHH the very smell of her. / My sorceress, my vision / I reach for her my need / for her too much to bear / And / I awaken / Soaked in night sweats / My lover a sweatsoaked empty bed!!! / I cry, alone in the dark.

This poem is reflective of the deep desire for lust and intimacy, as well as the sense of disappointment and defeat that follows when they wake up from these fantasies and confront the reality of their circumstances. As shared above, imprisoned women long for both physical and emotional intimacy and connection and often feel hopeless and sad when confronted with the

reality of these unmet needs. The absence of romantic and sexual relationships has also been associated to feelings of loneliness among imprisoned women.

Feelings of loneliness among imprisoned women can stem from being separated from a partner or the loss of meaningful relationships within the institution. Colleen Millward (1988, p. 49) shared a poem expressing this pain writing:

Could have been the first gaze / into your eyes / the pain within our souls. / lonely cold,
so alone / Anger hatred and lies / twisted in Knots. / Missing, wanting, needing / your
warmth / the turmoil goes on of being / WITHOUT YOU.

Ms. Millward speaks to the loneliness and pain associated to being away from someone she desires. This may be framed in the context of a partner outside or someone within the institution; however, it underscores the loneliness that is associated to the absence of romantic and intimate relationships.

The feelings of loneliness experienced by imprisoned women are not always tied to the absence of romantic and intimate relationships. They often yearn for companionship and human connection—someone to share their feelings with, helping to ease the isolation and loneliness accompanied by imprisonment. ‘Chunky’ (1968, p. 13) wrote the poem “Lonely Screams” to express her feelings of loneliness and desire for companionship sharing:

...I need someone who’s sweet and tenderly soft. / Someone I can talk to, somewhere I
can go, / Instead of walking around feeling so low. / How do I say it? What do I do? /
When all I need is someone to hang on to. / Someone who’ll be there when I need them
most, / We could be each other’s private leaning post / ... / What can I say? How do I
explain? / The loneliness I feel and all the pain? / Why can’t I find someone to ease all
this pain; / To take away this loneliness I feel again an again? / Someone who’ll stand by
me, proud and tall: / Me their companion and friend, that’s all.

This demonstrates that feelings of loneliness are not only associated to a loss of romantic and intimate relationships. Imprisoned women can also experience feelings of loneliness when they are lacking friendships and companionships where they could have people to confide and find support in during their incarceration.

The deprivation of romantic and desired intimate relationships differs greatly from Sykes' (2007/1958) analysis of the pains of imprisonment. Where he found that the loss of heterosexual relationships was troubling for men, injuring their ego and self-image, this research reveals that imprisoned women struggle with the loss of romantic and sexual relationships—but for different reasons. Rather than feeling like their self-image or sense of pride is threatened, imprisoned women appear to feel hopeless, sad, and lonely when deprived of these relationships. It is difficult to determine whether this deprivation has changed over time, as the empirical material did not include any recent contributions on this subject. I hypothesize that the absence of recent content on this topic is attributable to the nature of the material typically published in the selected sources. *Tightwire* featured submissions of art, poetry and personal writing, providing women with greater creative freedom and a platform to express emotions related to their romantic and sexual lives. In contrast, the *Journal of Prisoners on Prisons (JPP)* and *Cell Count* typically focus on more specific ideas, experiences, and issues related to imprisonment, which may explain the absence of such content in these publications.

5.2.4 Deprivation of Autonomy

Sykes (2007/1958) defines the deprivation of autonomy as being subjected to several rules and regulations that govern everyday behaviour. He highlights how the experience of being controlled by others, subjected to authoritarian actions by staff, and reduced to a childlike state

can be a difficult experience for imprisoned individuals (Sykes, 2007/1958). Research contends that prisons are designed to oppress individuals and restrict autonomy (Hannah-Moffat, 2000), a significant theme highlighted throughout the material. Similarly to Sykes' (2007/1958) findings, imprisoned women experience the deprivation of autonomy in their lack of agency and choice, the harsh enforcement of rules and regulations and being reduced to a child-like status. Unlike Sykes' findings, women also experience the deprivation of bodily autonomy, a theme that emerged in the context of strip searches.

The first way women express the deprivation of autonomy is through the loss of personal agency. While the general population maintains the freedom to exercise control over their daily lives, the everyday routines and activities of imprisoned women are enforced by the institution. Rachel Fayter (2016, p. 58) states that "correctional officials tell us when to eat, sleep, go outside and take our medicine. They control who we can call, visit with and write to." This demonstrates the lack of self-regulation afforded to imprisoned women as they are stripped of the ability to make any decisions regarding their daily lives. Academic research has supported these findings, showing that many aspects of incarceration hinder a woman's sense of autonomy as they are unable to make decisions about daily aspects of their lives including food, work, hygiene, and more (Crewe et al., 2017). This theme was also prevalent in the lack of choice and voice afforded to imprisoned women. Fran Sugar (1988, p. 27) wrote: "we adjust to having freedoms stolen away from us, to having fewer and fewer choices, less and less voice in the decisions that affect our lives." This feeling was particularly evident when CSC was preparing to transfer women from P4W to the regional facilities. Melissa Stewart (1997, p. 101) shared that "prisoners have no choice about where they will go... the turmoil and pain this process poses for prisoners is exacerbated by a lack of information about the relocation process." This further reflects the

feeling of being unable to practice agency in matters that effect their lives, especially where they will live. This is a troubling concept to cope with.

The second aspect of incarceration that undermines the autonomy of imprisoned women is the harsh rules and regulations enforced within the institution. Melissa Stewart and P. Durnford (1997, pp. 83-84) share that “many women perceive that the rules are arbitrary and applied randomly...The rules are thought to be petty, inconsistent, and unfair.” This reflects the lack of consistency and fairness in the disciplinary system, where imprisoned women are punished without valid explanation. This points to the acts of authoritarianism by staff who may abuse their power at the expense of imprisoned women and their sense of autonomy. Under the Harper administration, women have even documented being penalized for sharing clothing or food with other women. An anonymous prisoner wrote “it seems that prisoners in the past were allowed to share their clothes and food. Prisoners face charges if they do that now. They should be allowed to give each other clothing, food or any allowed item without fearing charges” (Anonymous Prisoner 4, 2017, p. 53). This demonstrates how rules and their enforcement have become increasingly punitive since the Harper administration came into power, where women are being punished for helping one another. This can ultimately contribute to the loss of autonomy they experience.

Sykes (2007/1958) notes that the deprivation of autonomy threatens an individual’s self-image, as they are left feeling helpless, weak, and reduced to the status of a dependent child. This is the third way that imprisoned women have expressed the deprivation of autonomy. Rachel Fayter (2023, p. 69) shared that “for people in prisons designated for women, we share the experience of being infantilized, treated as vulnerable or needy children incapable of decision-

making without a powerful, patriarchal system assigned to ‘fix’ us.” Throughout the empirical material, women repeatedly speak to the patriarchal and paternalistic treatment and control they experience. They report being treated like children, feeling dependent, infantilized and juvenilized due to the lack of autonomy afforded to them.

The deprivation of bodily autonomy is an additional pain experienced by imprisoned women that Sykes (2007/1958) does not consider in his analysis. Throughout the empirical material this is highlighted through the discussion of strip searches. Christina Boyland (1990, p. 28) wrote on this practice sharing that:

The insidious procedure utterly destroys one’s inner self respect and dignity as a human being. In many instances conjures up horrifying memories which are best dealt with through counselling. There is NO EXCUSE why we are subjected to this POTENTIALLY, DAMAGING procedure when in effect – it serves absolutely NO benefit to those ex[e]cuting this most DEGRADING and UN-ACCEPTABLE ACT....

The forced execution of this degrading practice reflects the lack of choice women have in what happens to their own bodies. Strip searches have been described in the empirical material as a as a form of emotional and psychological rape (Boyland, 1990; Horii, 1994); evidently, violating their bodily autonomy. As previously mentioned, many imprisoned women have histories of victimization, and institutional practices of this nature can be deeply traumatizing.

As outlined, Sykes’ (2007/1958) findings on the deprivation of autonomy align with the documented experiences of imprisoned women, with the additional troubles associated to the deprivation of bodily autonomy. The overarching theme that emerges with this deprivation is the denied agency over their lives and bodies, along with the patriarchal and paternalistic control exuded by the state. Conditions contributing to the deprivation of autonomy have continued over time despite rules and punishments becoming harsher. Imprisoned women have continuously

expressed their struggles with the deprivation of autonomy, consistently speaking to the lack of self-regulation and choice, harsh enforcement of rules and regulations, being reduced to a child-like status, and losing their bodily autonomy across the empirical material.

5.2.5 Deprivation of Security

In Sykes' (2007/1958) original analysis, he contends that the deprivation of security refers to deficiencies and stressors in the institutional environment. The current research has shown that for imprisoned women, prison insecurity can stem from being housed in male institutions with men that may have violent histories, as well as witnessing violence within the walls of the institution inflicted both by other incarcerated women or prison staff.

Historically, women have reported on a period in which federally sentenced women were confined in men's institutions, primarily Kingston Penitentiary. Those who have written on their time in a male dominated institution or have faced the possibility of being sent to one, have expressed feeling a sense of fear for their safety and security upon being held in an institution for men. Women have reported being sent to the RTC. Jo-Ann Mayhew (1997, p. 76) wrote on her experience sharing:

At that time KP was notorious for housing Canada's worst sex offenders. I am not sure what disturbed me more; the drilling noise making cells smaller and smaller or the thought of being a female hostage in a prison of 400 men.

This quote demonstrates feelings of insecurity and vulnerability experienced by a woman confined in a male prison, surrounded by individuals who may have histories of violence and/or sexual offences. A following occasion in which federally sentenced women have expressed the insecurity related to being housed in a men's prison was in 1997. According to the inmate

committee at P4W, CSC planned to transfer all maximum-security women to KP. The maximum-security women wrote a letter sharing their concerns related to the transfer, expressing how they feared for their safety. Part of the letter wrote:

...at a previous riot (1995) within the walls of Kingston Penitentiary, a female Security Clerk (employee of C.S.C.) was brutally and repeatedly raped by a male inmate there. Our case is simple – *if C.S.C. cannot protect or guarantee the safety of their own, then how/why would they bother to grantee ours?* We are to be moved into the exact same building (with one segregated floor for our use) housing over 100 men whom we have been informed are in need of one form or another of special needs treatment...This is even more terrifying and dangerous for us...Shortly after the 1994 riot, several women were transferred over to the Regional Treatment Centre in Kingston Penitentiary, and were forced to be subjected to the *vulgar* and *degrading* verbal and physical assaults/actions that the men were displaying. (P4W Max Security Women, 1997, p. 5).

This letter shows the fear and insecurity experienced by the max-security women upon being told about their transfer to KP. Their fear was substantiated by several incidents in which women had been physically or verbally abused by men in the institution and they did not trust that CSC would be able to protect or guarantee their safety. As Shammass (2017a) stated, prison insecurity can stem from being in an environment that feels violent or unsafe. Imprisoned women experienced the deprivation of security as they perceived the environment at KP and the RTC to be unsafe due to the presence of individuals who may have violent histories or tendencies.

This deprivation has potentially shifted over the evolution of the federal prison system. At the moment, it is unclear whether imprisoned women experience the deprivation of security in this form as it has not been reported since the closure of P4W. It is possible that women continue to spend time in men's facilities for administrative segregation purposes (Acoby, 2011). However, it is unknown whether they feel a sense of prison insecurity if/when they do.

The deprivation of security is further experienced by conflict or violence within the population. This will be referred to as intra-population conflict. As previously mentioned in *Chapter 3*, prison insecurity can stem from being surrounded by others who have potentially violent or aggressive histories; or, being in a violent or unsafe environment that can have incidents of sexual victimization or give way to economic transactions (Sykes, 2007/1958; Shammass, 2017a). The empirical material has suggested that conflict within the population can arise due to the ‘inmate culture’ and hierarchies among women, which can result in cases of violence, sexual violence, and death at the hands of other imprisoned women. However, it is important to mention that there were no specific cases of violence between women reported in the material, but circumstances where violence of this nature could occur and comments speaking to the presence of violence within institutions in general.

Intra-population conflict is evident within ‘inmate culture’, as there are unwritten rules incarcerated individuals adhere to. The P4W inmate committee (1986, p. 2) explains this concept and the subsequent consequences sharing:

...there is a ‘code’ in Canada and all over the world that prisoners adhere to. Women who have killed and abused children, men who are rapists and child molesters, and informers are not accepted into the population. This means that if they are put into the general population they often get killed or stabbed.

This demonstrates one form of violence that can occur within the population. This form of violence could create an insecure or unsafe environment for those involved in a situation of this nature. A following occurrence that can result in intra-population conflict is hierarchies within the institution. Melissa Stewart and P. Durnford (1997, pp. 84-85) explain this concept sharing:

...there is an informal hierarchy in the prison where prisoners with little power can be particularly vulnerable. Also, there is an underground economy that operates within the walls, and prisoners may find themselves in debt without the means to repay (this is particularly true of drug debts). Prisoners may be raped, beaten, or threatened with death by other prisoners. They are sometimes murdered.

This shows the violence inherent in the hierarchies within the institution. These writers share that women in these situations often feel powerless when they are forced to deal with these conditions as the consequences of “ratting” to guards can be detrimental (Stewart & Durnford, 1997, p. 85). Violence within the population was not a very significant theme outside of these contexts. Among the three circumstances in which the deprivation of security was relevant, intra-population conflict can be challenged by other findings. While violence undeniably exists within the institution, the empirical material suggest that women forge bonds as a coping mechanism. These interactions provide support and help women navigate the challenges they face. For example, Jo-Ann Mayhew (1997, p. 77) formed a bond with another woman at the RTC and shared that:

As I look back and consider not only the nightmare quality of our surroundings but also a span of twenty years between our ages, the amount of playful laughter we shared was truly amazing... Somehow our spirits were joyfully joined in small ways and we eased each other's time at the RTC.

This finding aligns with other research indicating that federally sentenced women often develop mutual support systems and a sense of solidarity, which helped them navigate and cope with the challenges and stressors associated to imprisonment (Fayter & Kilty, 2024). While the formation of bonds was a prevalent theme throughout the material, the deprivation of security still holds relevance in certain cases as avenues for conflict and violence continue to exist. The last situation where the deprivation of security is present is when referring to getting into conflict with prison staff.

Women's feelings of insecurity also stem from the behaviour and actions of prison staff. Throughout the empirical material, women speak to the violence inflicted on them by prison staff. This can ultimately make the carceral environment feel violent and unsafe. The material suggests that prison staff are physically abusive towards imprisoned women with instances of beatings, women being maced, stripped of their clothing, and having their hair pulled. Gayle Horii (1994, p. 15) shares: "so too do legal convictions legitimize the beatings, the macings, the 'cell extractions' by hooded and armed men." In addition, Fran Sugar (1989, p. 23) wrote: "last week she watched a love one / stripped mac-ed in the eyes / dragged down the halls / by her hair. / bleeding. / screaming." These quotes demonstrate the violence at the hands of prison staff, ultimately creating an insecure and unsafe environment for imprisoned women. Gayle Horii (1994, p. 10) speaks to the irony of violence within the institution stating that:

I feel it ironic, that while incarcerated for a violent crime, I witnessed and was surrounded by death and violence inflicted both by staff and by prisoners, none of which I was able to stop and in fact, which I was forced to endure.

This irony, as she explains, highlights the deeper issue of the systemic hypocrisy within the prison system. While women are imprisoned for their offenses, prison staff can abuse women as they please, often without consequence.

The deprivation of security is relevant to imprisoned women, where being held in men's institutions, experiencing conflict with the population, and violence by prison staff can create an environment that feels unsafe. Within the deprivation of security, Sykes (2007/1958) contends that prison insecurity can affect an individual's behaviour. In accordance with this, Rachel Fayter (2023, p. 71) shared that:

I had to cope with the daily emotional, physical, psychological, and spiritual violence and abuse from police, guards, lawyers, media, and other prisoners. I had to become someone other than myself to survive that oppressive, coercive, harmful environment.

From this excerpt, it can be concluded that women may alter their behaviour to cope and survive in such an insecure and violent environment. As most of the material on the deprivation of security was from the late 1980's and 1990's, this quote also points to the continued violence experienced by imprisoned women at the hands of prison staff and other prisoners, pointing to the continued relevancy of the deprivation of security.

5.3 Significant Deprivations Beyond Sykes' Framework

Having examined Sykes' (2007/1958) five original "pains of imprisonment" in the context of women's imprisonment, this section turns to additional deprivations that emerged from the empirical material but fall outside of his framework. Through my analysis, I have identified three further deprivations: the deprivation of humanity, the deprivation of institutional services, and the deprivation of cultural and spiritual resources.

5.3.1 Deprivation of Humanity

The first additional deprivation relates to the loss of humanity. In this context, the deprivation of humanity refers to dehumanization and the erosion of identity throughout imprisonment. Goffman's (2017/1961) concept of the "mortification of the self" within total institutions offers a useful analysis for this finding. He suggests that individuals confined in total institutions often undergo a process through which their former identity and self are stripped away (Goffman, 2017/1961). He states:

The recruit comes into the establishment with a conception of himself made possible by certain stable social arrangements in his home world. Upon entrance, he is immediately stripped of the support provided by these arrangements. In the accurate language of some of our oldest total institutions, he begins a series of abasements, degradations, humiliations, and profanations of self. His self is systematically, if often unintentionally, mortified (Goffman, 2017/1961, p. 14).

The current research supports these ideas, highlighting that imprisoned women experience a profound disconnection from their former selves because of dehumanizing practices and the use of institutional language and labels.

To begin, a recurring theme throughout the empirical material relates to the dehumanizing experience of being reduced to a number and confined in cages like animals. Karleen Faith (1993, p. 151) states that imprisoned individuals are reduced to “one unit in the vast ‘correctional’ enterprise.” Rachel Fayer (2016, p. 58) speaks to this writing that imprisoned women are “herded like cattle, numbered and counted like economic products, and locked up like wild animals... We are seen as ‘inmates’ (rather than citizens), known primarily by our Fingerprint Section (FPS) number...” Institutional practices that reduce individuals to numbers and confine them as animals as opposed to people do more than impose physical punishment. They inflict deeper harm by removing the humanity and identity from imprisoned women. Moreover, imprisoned women have spoken to how the use of institutional language and labels deny their sense of humanity and strip their identity. Gayle Horri (1994, pp. 13-14) expresses this sharing:

Like the men, the punishment begins by stripping the identity from the person. We become females, not women. All become ‘inmates’ or ‘offenders’ - the ‘others’ - the process that enables all discrimination which in turn rationalizes annihilation... But how can you ‘normalize’ people by locking up ‘inmates’ in cages? The subtle use of institutional language softens the cruel reality: self-abuse for slashing; institution for penitentiary; inmate for prisoner; go home, for go to your cage; treatment for punishment.

This demonstrates the harmful impact of institutional language and labeling. Terms such as “inmate” or “cage” strip imprisoned people of their identity and humanity, reinforcing punishment through dehumanization. For imprisoned women, this also entails the loss of meaningful labels that shape their sense of self. For example, Gayle Horii (1994, p. 17) wrote “we are still called ‘girls’ and rarely mothers.” Imprisoned women are stripped of crucial labels that make up their identity—such as being a mother or a student—and are ascribed new negative labels. These labels may damage their former identity. Rachel Fayter (2023, pp. 67, 72) shares this experience writing:

Incarceration was the ultimate limit-situation, which led to a further fragmentation of my identity. The prison system forced me to put up emotional walls, lose many social connections, disconnect from the natural world, while also losing my housing, car, belongings, employment, and student identity. My personal values, goals, hopes, and dreams quickly shifted or were replaced...I adopted the labels that were ascribed to me by the system: troublemaker, criminal, menace, manipulative, dishonest, dangerous, and offender. It became a self-fulfilling prophecy. If that is who they thought I was, I thought that I may as well start behaving that way. What was the point of trying, when none of my strengths or accomplishments were appreciated or recognized by the carceral system?

As Rachel Fayter explains, when imprisoned individuals are stripped of key aspects of their identity and disconnected from the structure of their life in the community, they may experience a form of identity crisis. They are assigned new labels by the system, which they may begin to internalize, ultimately leading them to reconstruct their identity and self. Their former identity may begin to erode as their priorities shift to be in line with the demands of imprisonment.

The deprivation of humanity is especially relevant throughout the empirical material. Imprisoned women are not only punished through confinement but through the erosion of their identity, which intensifies the pain associated to imprisonment. As the author quote above noted,

when women internalize the negative labels assigned to them, it can create a harmful mindset that may hinder their motivation to make a positive transformation. To encourage constructive change, positive aspects of their identity should be reinforced rather than dismissed and replaced by negative labels.

5.3.2 Deprivation of Institutional Services

Throughout the empirical material, another significant deprivation emerged: the deprivation of institutional services. By institutional services, I refer to the absence of opportunities for self-improvement, rehabilitation, and reintegration—this includes inadequate programming, limited opportunities to gain work skills, and limited avenues to earn income. Effective programming has been found to reduce recidivism and encourage rehabilitation (Arbour et al., 2021). However, the empirical material shows that programming and vocational skills are neither adequately implemented nor operating at their full potential, thereby inhibiting their ability to make a meaningful impact.

The challenges related to programming, as documented by imprisoned women, can be divided into two distinct time periods. From the 1980's to the late 1990's, concerns primarily centered on the inaccessibility of available programs and the lack of a female-centered approach. It remains unclear whether these issues were fully addressed with the opening of the five regional facilities and the introduction of *Creating Choices*, as women did not report concerns related to programming again until 2016. At that point, different problems emerged, focused on the overemphasis on accountability and personal deficiencies.

At P4W women spoke to the lack of adequate programming available to them. Gayle Horii (1994, p. 12) reflected on this problem stating, “P4W dollars unavailable for women so that even the most basic of ‘programs’ are denied to them.” This reflects the limited availability of programming for imprisoned women due to a lack of funding. While some treatment programs were available for substance use and anger management, they were primarily designed with imprisoned men in mind (Stewart & Durnford, 1997). Melissa Stewart and P. Durnford (1997, p. 85) contributed to this sharing:

The problem of treatment programs being designed for (and by) men, but being applied to women, is pervasive. Female federal prisoners have very different life experiences than do men, as well as different histories of offending. These programs may not be suitable for this very reason. Yet, the small numbers of federally incarcerated women do not make it economically feasible to research and design specific treatment programs.

This is particularly concerning given that, as mentioned earlier in this chapter, imprisoned women often have complex histories marked by risk factors associated to criminal behaviour. With this, programming should have been available to support their rehabilitation; however, CSC failed to adequately address their needs. More recently, since the opening of the five regional facilities across Canada, the empirical material suggests that women’s primary concerns regarding institutional programming are its focus on personal deficiencies and accountability as opposed to focusing on their broader rehabilitative needs. Rachel Fayter (2016, pp. 60-61) discusses her concerns with programming sharing:

Much of the CSC course content focuses on pointing out our individual deficiencies, which are positioned as the reasons why we committed a crime and teaches us how to become ‘pro-social’ people... With the intent of encouraging “accountability”, social, economic, familial and environmental factors are disregarded in correctional conceptualizations of risk. Thus, the underlying structural oppressions – which form the basis of our needs – are ignored. We are told that there is never an excuse for committing a crime... CSC program facilitators inform us that we always have a choice, even if that

choice means starving, being homeless or dying. We are told these choices are always preferable to committing a crime.

Prison programs that emphasize individual deficiencies and personal accountability often fail to meet the rehabilitative needs of imprisoned women. By placing the responsibility solely on the prisoner, these programs overlook the broader structural oppressions and risk factors that contribute to women's imprisonment. The emphasis on accountability becomes particularly challenging when women experience different forms of punishment for failing to admit their guilt. As an anonymous prisoner wrote, imprisoned women are "...told that they must 'confess' to a crime or they cannot complete a program" (Anonymous Prisoner 4, 2017, p. 50).

Furthermore, women may face additional punishments, such as the revocation of private family visits or reduced pay, and may encounter obstacles when trying to appeal their convictions. One anonymous writer shared her perspective on this practice, sharing that:

Private Family Visits should not depend on participation in programming when the program content demands that if you do not admit to the crime for which you have been convicted you cannot complete the program... If you are attempting to appeal your conviction, this takes away the ability to complete a program. It puts a prisoner in an impossible catch-22 situation...The wages are far below minimum community standards. What is even more unfair is that because I would not admit my guilt, my wages were dropped to E pay from C pay because I could not participate in programs since I am appealing and cannot be forced to admit guilt (Anonymous Prisoner 2, 2017, p. 43).

The emphasis on accountability can be counterproductive for imprisoned women, particularly those pursuing an appeal. They are placed in a difficult position as admitting their guilt can undermine their legal efforts while refusing to do so can introduce other consequences. The longstanding issues with available programming for imprisoned women highlight the lack of meaningful support provided to them on their journey to rehabilitation. This reflects the broader systemic failure by CSC to deliver programming that fosters positive change.

Another area in which CSC falls short in supporting imprisoned women is in the availability of employment opportunities. Throughout the empirical material, the lack of access to adequate employment and vocational training has been a long-standing issue, dating back to P4W and continuing at the regional facilities. Historically, women faced difficulties obtaining work while imprisoned, and when opportunities were available, the positions often mirrored traditional gender norms. Melissa Stewart and P. Durnford (1997, pp. 85-86) contributed on this problem sharing that:

Vocational training and work programs are primarily geared towards prison maintenance, and are traditional 'women's work' in nature, such as laundry, beauty parlour and clerical work. These are limited in nature, and do little to allow the prisoner to escape the cycle of poverty once released.

The limited nature and availability of job opportunities have deprived imprisoned women of the chance to develop diverse skills to support their success after release. The empirical material suggests that these limitations persist, with imprisoned women continuing to face a lack of access to employment opportunities and vocational training. Rachel Fayter and Sherry Payne (2017, pp. 13-14) discuss these challenges sharing that:

The most salient employment issues within prison today include a lack of job opportunities and wage cuts. Employment is an integral aspect of prisoners' correctional plans and central to our future success in the community after our time inside comes to an end...The lack of job opportunities in prison means we have little opportunity for skill development and limited financial resources to keep in contact with our family or prepare for our eventual release.

The absence of employment opportunities has been a long-standing issue, consistently failing to provide women with the skills needed for success after release and reintegration into society. The limited employment opportunities available also restrict their ability to earn an income and support themselves during their imprisonment or save for their futures upon release.

The problems associated to income and pay levels within the institution reflects another significant concern highlighted throughout the material, pointing to a broader lack of support and resources for imprisoned women.

As highlighted earlier in this chapter, imprisoned women are responsible for covering various costs within the institution. Unfortunately, the extremely low wages they receive make it difficult to afford these expenses. Some issues related to prison wages contribute to this problem, including the failure to adjust pay levels and the various deductions taken from their minimal earnings. Throughout the empirical material, women have spoken to CSC's failure to adjust wages over the decades. Petey (2016, p. 77) wrote on this issue sharing that:

Prison jobs are modern slave labour and 'wages' have not been updated since the 1980's, so they are negligently and criminally out of date. At my highest, I earned \$6.90 per weekday of work, minus several deduction fees.

Institutional wages are extremely outdated, having remained unchanged since 1981, these wages fall far below community standards and have not been adjusted to reflect inflation (OCI, 2023). As a result, imprisoned individuals have experienced a significant decline in purchasing power (OCI, 2023). This presents another longstanding issue for imprisoned women, as they have been expected to pay community-level prices with their low wages. Jo-Ann Mayhew (1988b, p. 4) noted in *Tightwire*, "the canteen prices do not match our pay levels." More recently, an anonymous writer echoed this concern sharing that:

Prisoners must pay community prices, but are not paid community minimum wage. The solution is simply to raise the pay to a minimum level so that prisoners can take care of themselves and some of their family members. (Anonymous Prisoner 4, 2017, pp. 50-51)

Despite rising inflation, wages for imprisoned women have remained stagnant for decades. They are expected to pay community-level prices for essential goods and services, yet their frozen wages offer little to no financial flexibility. The situation is further compounded by mandatory deductions taken from their already minimal earnings. This issue became especially concerning under the Harper administration, which introduced a series a budget cuts to the prison system. Rachel Fayter and Sherry Payne (2017, p. 14) wrote on the administration of wage deductions sharing:

Then, in November 2013, the federal government implemented a policy to take an additional 30% off our wages for ‘food and Accommodation’ (22%), as well as the administration of the ‘inmate telephone system’ (8%) essentially causing us to pay this fee twice. At full-time pay we only take home \$29 every two weeks.

Although their already minuscule pay was “set up to take those costs into consideration” (Anonymous Prisoner 4, 2017, p. 52), the introduction of additional deductions under the Harper administration further reduced their earnings, forcing them to pay for some services twice. The Office of the Correctional Investigators (OCI) 2022/2023 Annual Report examined wage related issues and found that while the average daily wage is \$5.80, mandatory deductions reduce this to an hourly rate of just \$0.46 (OCI, 2023). The deductions include costs for food and accommodation, telephone services, the prisoner welfare fund, mandatory savings, and court-ordered obligations (OCI, 2023). This longstanding issue is echoed throughout the empirical material, highlighting how imprisoned women are consistently denied opportunities to save for their futures. Instead, they must use these wages to cover basic necessities and remain in contact with their loved ones. It places imprisoned women in an unjust position, where they must choose what to prioritize with their income.

The deprivation of institutional services has long been an issue affecting imprisoned women. Programming, employment training and income-generating opportunities are essential for successful rehabilitation and reintegration into society. Unfortunately, these needs have been continuously overlooked, leaving imprisoned women without the necessary tools to ensure their success after release.

5.3.3 Deprivation of Cultural and Spiritual Resources

The final deprivation identified in the empirical material concerns the limited access Indigenous women in Canadian federal penitentiaries have to cultural and spiritual resources. In addition to the deprivations discussed throughout this chapter, women face additional oppression due to their Indigenous identities by being deprived of the cultural and spiritual resources they desire. Gayle Horii (1994, p. 15) shared that “the peoples of the First Nations, are an ‘ethnic’ group over-represented in Canadian prison populations, a group whose ‘ethnic needs’ are among the first to suffer from the axe of budgetary cutbacks.” Prior to Gayle Horii’s contribution in 1994, Jo-Ann Mayhew (1987, p. 21a) wrote on the access to spiritual and cultural resources for Indigenous women stating that: “At the Prison for Women, the Native sisterhood meets weekly. Women are allowed to keep eagle feathers, prayer bundles, and sweet grass...A sweat lodge was built...Elders and spiritual advisors are welcome to visit and advise on a regular basis.” It appears that since this was written, the availability of spiritual and cultural resources has declined, as evidenced by Gayle Horri’s statement above and will be further explained below. Since Jo-Ann Mayhew’s statement, the empirical material highlights that indigenous women experience difficulties due to the absence of Indigenous culture and limited access to elders,

traditional ceremonies and activities, and culturally relevant programming and rehabilitation that coincide with their needs.

Throughout the empirical material, women have voiced concerns about Elders in the institution, feeling as though their spiritual needs are unmet due to the limited support and services they provide. A group of anonymous prisoners described this situation sharing that:

The ladies that remain in max now feel they are not having their spiritual needs met by the Elder that is in the position to assist them...The Inmate Committee still receives complaints on the lack of services available from the Elder (e.g. not being available when a crisis approaches, no clear communication, stating there would be a sweat or pipe ceremony and not following through, not giving the max ladies a schedule to follow, no access to drumming or singing, making appointments and not showing up, no follow-ups, lack of respect and communication, causing the ladies to become spiritually isolated). (Anonymous Prisoners, 2017, p. 37)

This highlights the lack of support and assistance Indigenous women receive from Elders. In this specific case, the Elder was failing to communicate with imprisoned women and completely isolating them spiritually by neglecting to provide them with an array of services, ceremonies and activities. Across the material, imprisoned women have been deprived of spiritual ceremonies and activities such as sweat lodges, smudge kits and prayer scarves, pipe ceremonies and PowWow's for a significant amount of time. For example, Victoria Kenny (2019/2020, p. 3) wrote that "it's easier to get on the needle program and shoot up drugs than it is trying to get a smudge kit or prayer scarf in this jail [GVIW] and that's pretty sad...", reflecting on the lack of spiritual tools they receive. Moreover, a group of anonymous prisoners wrote "I had two pipe ceremonies in the two years I was in max" (Anonymous Prisoners, 2017, p. 37), demonstrating the infrequency of spiritual ceremonies.

Indigenous women also encounter these problems in relation to programming and rehabilitation as these services are traditionally set by cultural norms. Fran Sugar (1988, p. 27) shared her discontent with the system sharing that:

It is an absurd, phucking joke to think that the criminal just-us system with their residential care, treatment, programming, counselling and mental health programs are specifically designed programs to meet the needs of Native women when we have never had an equal footing in the case management strategic planning sessions that take place. The bureaucracy and paper pushing outweighs the importance of listening to what the Native woman says she needs.

As reflected in this passage, the system has been unjust to Indigenous women by implementing programs and rehabilitation services that do not reflect their specific needs or experiences. To address this problem, a healing lodge for Indigenous women was established as a part of the *Creating Choices* reforms. The goal was to create a safe space where Indigenous women could heal through traditional and spiritual practices, with access to elders and holistic programming (TFFSW, 1990). The empirical material included only one entry addressing the conditions at the Okimaw OHCI Healing Lodge. Written in 1998, Kakapuishii (1998, p. 5) praised the Healing Lodges' exceptional conditions sharing that:

It's unlike a federal institution, its like a coming home feeling. A place that greets you with respect to what you are, to what you have become, to what you are about to become. Most of all they listen to what you feel and they help you with Elders. Elders are on call twenty four hours...We have no walls, no sign of steel bars, no sign of uniforms...On average I entered the sweat lodge of three time per week. We start our day at (8:30 am.) at the spiritual lodge, we send our concerns to the creator and our thanks. What I am most grateful for is that I am here to nurture and heal as much as possible from my experience at P4W. We speak to elders on a daily basis... If the judge wants to lock up a native person, they should provide such a place as the Healing Lodge. Don't send my Brother or Sister to a place of deprivation, send them to a place where they will heal.

At the Healing Lodge, Indigenous women are placed in a supportive and culturally rooted environment, where they have access to the spiritual and cultural resources necessary for their

healing. However, as previously noted, imprisoned Indigenous women continue to be deprived of this support, lacking access to spiritual ceremonies and tools, culturally relevant programs and the support they desire from elders. This is due to their placement in regional institutions rather than Healing Lodges. According to the OCI's 2022/2023 annual report, Indigenous women make up 41% of all minimum-security women yet Healing Lodges for women are at 52% capacity (OCI, 2023). The OCI emphasized that Healing Lodges play a vital role in the reintegration of Indigenous women, making their limited use very concerning (OCI, 2023).

The deprivation of cultural and spiritual resources is very significant in the context of federally imprisoned women. The current research has shown that Indigenous culture and healing practices are very important to imprisoned women, and outside research suggests that they are crucial for the rehabilitation of Indigenous individuals (Hyatt, 2013). CSC acknowledges that the access to spiritual and cultural activities and programs contribute to the successful reintegration of Indigenous prisoners (CSC, 2024). Despite this, many Indigenous women remain housed in regional institutions, where they are denied access to the resources that facilitate their healing. If these resources are available and proven to be effective, their underuse is deeply troubling. This situation exemplifies how CSC continues to neglect the needs of imprisoned women, contributing to cycles of harm and denying opportunities for positive change.

5.4 Concluding Remarks

In this chapter, I examined how federally sentenced women in Canada experience the pains of imprisonment as documented in their prison writing. Drawing on Sykes' (2007/1958) conceptualization of "the pains of imprisonment", I assessed its relevance in the experiences of federally imprisoned women, expanding upon his five deprivations where applicable. I also

identified additional deprivations that emerged through my analysis that Sykes (2007/1958) did not identify. In doing so, this research highlights policy implications—particularly as they relate to *Creating Choices* and policies enacted by the Harper administration—showing Sykes’ concept of “pains of imprisonment” as being a useful diagnostic tool for policy and demonstrating the impact—or lack thereof—on women’s federal imprisonment in Canada.

In addition, this chapter shows that imprisoned women continue to face many of the same challenges and harms associated with imprisonment identified by Sykes (2007/1958), but in deeper and more complex ways. Additionally, they continue to experience further deprivations that were not accounted for in Sykes’ (2007/1958) original analysis. Despite efforts towards reform, the fundamental challenges persisted across the material, and in the case where progress was made, it was subsequently reversed under the Harper administration. Evidently, the accounts examined and the pains of imprisonment identified within them indicate ongoing problems at the structural and policy levels suggesting that reforms like *Creating Choices* were poorly implemented and failed to produce lasting change. Overall, this points to the continued failure by CSC to provide federally sentenced women with the support and resources needed for their successful rehabilitation and reintegration in society.

Chapter 6: Conclusion and Future Directions for Research

This study explored the deprivations associated to imprisonment as experienced by federally sentenced women in Canada over the past four decades. I argue that despite alleged efforts to reform and implement a women-centered approach to imprisonment, federally sentenced women continue to experience an array of pains and deprivations associated with incarceration. Drawing on Sykes (2007/1958) and his conceptualization of the pains of imprisonment, I demonstrate that federally sentenced women experience the five deprivations associated with imprisonment in more complex ways, in addition to further deprivations that fall outside of the framework first articulated by Sykes almost 70 years ago.

This research provides insight on the lived realities of federally sentenced women, shedding light on the continuous struggles and absence of justice in the Canadian penitentiary system. The findings reveal that federally sentenced women are confined in an oppressive environment, experiencing inhumane and unjust treatment, with limited avenues to foster positive change. They experience the deprivation of liberty and the emotional toll of separation from family, friends, and especially their own children. This is compounded by institutional barriers that make maintaining these relationships quite difficult. They often endure the loss of both material possessions and essential services, including education, legal support, library access, and adequate medical and mental health care. Moreover, they experience profound feelings of loneliness resulting from a loss of romantic and close personal relationships. Federally sentenced women also experience the deprivation of autonomy, losing personal agency and choice, and are often infantilized—being treated by the state as if they are a dependent child. In addition, they experience prison insecurity, stemming from the violence they experience by the system, staff and other prisoners. Outside of Sykes' (2007/1958) framework, the

dehumanizing language and practices embedded in the oppressive penitentiary environment diminish federally sentenced women's sense of self, identity and humanity. They suffer from the lack of meaningful opportunities to support their rehabilitation and reintegration, including access to programming, vocational training, and liveable income generating activities. Lastly, the findings that emerged from my analysis of the empirical material for the study highlight the significant loss experienced by Indigenous women, resulting from the deprivation of spiritual and cultural resources they deem to be essential to their healing.

The additional deprivations identified in this research—namely, the deprivation of humanity, the deprivation of institutional services, and the deprivation of spiritual and cultural resources—differ from those outlined by Sykes, yet remain significant, particularly given the contexts in which they were uncovered. To begin, the deprivation of humanity is not explicitly identified by Sykes. While it could be argued that this form of deprivation falls under the deprivation of liberty, I contend that physical confinement does not equate to the loss of one's sense of being. This deprivation is especially troubling because it was experienced within a women-centered model that purported to promote empowerment. How can a woman be empowered when she is reduced to a number, confined like an animal, denied her sense of self, and stripped of her identity?

Next, the deprivation of institutional services emerged as another theme not identified by Sykes. Although Sykes refers broadly to the deprivation of goods and services, the sub-themes associated with institutional services are specific to the prison environment, whereas goods and services typically refer to resources attainable outside of prison. This deprivation is also particularly problematic within a women-centered model, as *Creating Choices* claimed the

regional institution would provide a wide array of services and additional programming—an expectation that did not materialize in practice.

Lastly, the deprivation of spiritual and cultural services could also be conceptualized as a form of deprivation of goods and services, as access to these resources exists outside of the prison. However, given Canada's history of colonialism and the fact that Indigenous women represent that fastest growing prison population in Canada (Pollack, 2020; Department of Justice Canada, 2021), it is both necessary and appropriate to examine this deprivation separately from basic goods and services.

Despite these additional findings, Sykes' pains of imprisonment remain highly relevant to the experiences of federally sentenced women in Canada and provide an effective framework for identifying the deprivations associated with imprisonment. Although Sykes did not consider gender in his original formulation, this research centred the experiences of women which therefore resulted in the addition of new themes, and in some cases, modifications to his existing deprivations to more accurately reflect the lived experiences of federally sentenced women in Canada. For example, the deprivation of romantic and desired intimate relationships was reconceptualized, as the material did not reveal frustrations related to involuntary celibacy. Instead, women expressed a profound yearning and desire for companionship and intimacy, alongside deep feelings of loneliness.

Similarly, the deprivation of liberty was found to be particularly painful for imprisoned mothers due to the separation from children. As many incarcerated women are sole caregivers (Hannah-Moffat, 2001), this separation often results in emotional distress. The location of prisons also emerged as a theme, particularly during the period when P4W was the sole federal

institution for women in Canada. Geographical dislocation from family and community posed challenges that Sykes did not identify for incarcerated men.

While additional themes were introduced and existing deprivations were modified to account for gendered experiences, Sykes' conceptualization remained highly useful in uncovering and analyzing how federally sentenced women in Canada experience the pains of imprisonment. This conceptualization also made visible the failures of *Creating Choices* and the impact of the Harper administrations penal policies on the severity of the pains of imprisonment experienced by federally sentenced women in Canada. As such, the accounts examined and the pains of imprisonment identified within them indicate ongoing problems at a structural and policy level, showing the ongoing failure of CSC to accommodate the needs of federally sentenced women in Canada.

As previously mentioned, Sykes did not base his analysis on how policy may mitigate or alleviate the pains of imprisonment, but rather suggests that we ought to be realistic about the role of prisons in society thus informing an “enlightened penal policy” (Sykes, 2007/1958, p. 132). In the context of this research, *Creating Choices* had the potential to function as such a policy—one that could mitigate the suffering and hardships experienced by criminalized women and support more positive futures upon release. However, as many studies have documented, this potential failed to materialize in practice (e.g. Hannah-Moffat, 2000; Hayman, 2006; Montford, 2015; Speight et al., 2020; CAEFS, 2022). This research demonstrates policy failure through the failed implementation of *Creating Choices*. I argue that, had *Creating Choices* been adequately implemented, several findings as they relate to the pains of imprisonment would not have emerged so prominently in the written accounts of federally sentenced women—such as those relating to the deprivation of goods and services and access to adequate health and mental health

care. That said, policy cannot mitigate all hardships associated with imprisonment, which raises the question of whether CSC has the capacity to meaningfully address the conditions that produce the pains of imprisonment.

In discussing this question, I contend that the answer is two-fold. The written accounts examined demonstrate that some pains of imprisonment can, in fact, be mitigated through policy, while others cannot. There are inherent aspects of imprisonment that are unavoidably painful; imprisonment is, by nature, a punitive experience and will never be enjoyable. Nevertheless, policy can play an important role in alleviating certain hardships and in supporting conditions that foster personal development and improve prospects for success upon release.

Ultimately, this research has contributed to the literature by articulating how federally sentenced women in Canada experience the pains of imprisonment through an analysis of their written accounts. Through examining a wider sample of women in Canada from 1984 to 2023, this research offers critical insight into how federally sentenced women in Canada experience and interpret the pains of imprisonment and identifies three additional pains of imprisonment experienced by this group. In doing so, this research was able to successfully assess the accuracy and usefulness of Sykes' pains of imprisonment conceptualization as a diagnostic tool for 'correctional' policy in light of specific policy interventions that have shaped women's federal imprisonment in Canada.

While this research offers valuable insights into the deprivations experienced by federally sentenced women, it is limited by the gaps in the timeline making it difficult to assess shifts and continuities in the pains of imprisonment endured by women throughout the history of the federal penitentiary system. Given this limitation, future directions for research should consider drawing on additional sources and publications to gain more material on this subject. Expanding

the sample size to include more publications from the aforementioned gap in the timeline could better capture the development of conditions over the period I examined and provide a clearer understanding of these deprivations. This research has found that many of these deprivations have largely remained unchanged. However, there is a significant gap in the available material during the period between the opening of the new regional facilities and when discussions begin about the impacts of budget cuts under the Harper government. Although some comments referenced the removal of certain services, they offered limited detail about what was available prior to these cutbacks. This highlights the need for gathering narratives from currently and formerly incarcerated women, through written accounts, oral histories, or interviews, to explore these gaps in knowledge and assess the impact of the implementation of *Creating Choices* prior to budget cutbacks under the Harper administration on the pains of imprisonment.

In relation to the sample, the majority of publications since the establishment of the regional facilities originate from Grand Valley Institution for Women (GVI) and Fraser Valley Institution for Women (FVI), with only one contribution from Joliette Institution, one from the Okimaw OHCI Healing Lodge, one discussing a positive experience at Edmonton Institution for Women, and no publications from the Nova Institution for Women. Given this imbalance, future research would benefit from collecting a more representative sample that includes prison writing from all federal facilities for women. This would allow for a more comprehensive understanding of whether conditions vary across institutions. The disproportionately high number of contributions from FVI and GVI raises important questions regarding whether these institutions are more frequently represented due to poor conditions or if they benefit from greater access to programs that promote prison writing like Walls to Bridges (W2B), which began at Wilfrid Laurier University and is located in the Kitchener-Waterloo region where GVI is situated. In

addition, GVI is also overrepresented in this study as *Cell Count* tends to publish Ontario-based accounts. As such, gaining insights from all federal institutions would offer further empirical material to explore the Canadian penitentiary system and its treatment of federally sentenced women.

Despite the limitations noted above, this research remains significant, highlighting the longstanding systemic issues embedded within the federal penitentiary system that continue to deprive women of opportunities for personal transformation and perpetuate cycles of harm. As knowledge continues to be produced and the realities of prison life exposed, perhaps one day the pains and harms documented in this study will come to an end.

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Appendix A: Themes and Sub-Themes

Theme 1: Institutional Environment and Conditions of Confinement

Sub themes
Environment
Conditions of Confinement
Treatment
Grievance Procedure and Charges
Overclassification (i.e. conflict with security classifications)
Male-centric Design
Segregation
Self-harm
Deaths in Custody
Other

Theme 2: Deprivation of Liberty

Sub themes
Child Separation
Lack of Meaningful Relationships
Restrictions on Telephones, Mail Services, and Visitations
Location/Distance from Home Community
Other

Theme 3: Deprivation of Goods and Services

Sub themes
Computers
Privacy
Humanitarian Needs
Education
Library Services
Inadequate and/or Unattainable Dental Care
Inadequate and/or Unattainable Health Care
Inadequate and/or Unattainable Mental Health Care
Other

Theme 4: Deprivation of Romantic and Desired Intimate Relationships

Sub themes
Desire and Lust

Loneliness
Other

Theme 5: Deprivation of Autonomy

Sub themes
Lack of Agency
Harsh Policies and Restricted Privileges
Reduced to Childlike Status
Bodily Autonomy
Other

Theme 6: Deprivation of Security

Sub themes
Intra-population Conflict
Confinement in Male-Dominated Institutions
Conflict with Prison Staff
Other

Theme 7: Deprivation of Humanity

Sub themes
Denied Sense of Self
Identity Formation
Other

Theme 8: Deprivation of Institutional services

Sub themes
Inadequate Access to Programming
Inadequate Access to Employment or Vocational Training
Inadequate Financial Support
Other

Theme 9: Deprivation of Cultural and Spiritual Resources

Sub themes
Inadequate Access to Elders
Inadequate access to Cultural and/or Spiritual Ceremonies and Activities
Inadequate access to Cultural and/or Spiritual Programming/Rehabilitation
Other

Appendix B: Data Sources

* Presented in chronological order.

Publication 1: *Journal of Prisoners on Prisons*

- Mayhew, J. (1988a). Corrections is a male enterprise. *Journal of Prisoners on Prisons*, 1(1), 11–22.
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- Horii, G. (1994). Disarm the infamous thing. *Journal of Prisoners on Prisons*, 5(2), 10-23.
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- Horri, G. (1994). Notes: suicides at P4W. *Journal of Prisoners on Prisons*, 5(2), 54-57.
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- Stewart, M., & Durnford, P. (1997). Suicide: the challenges faced by female federal prisoners. *Journal of Prisoners on Prisons*, 8(1&2), 79-90.
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- Glaremin, T.A. (2011). A new direction for federally sentenced women, foiled once again. *Journal of Prisoners on Prisons*, 20(1), 84-88.
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- Deschene, S. (2017). Fraser Valley Institution for Women. *Journal of Prisoners on Prisons*, 26(1&2), 40-42.
- Pelletier, J. (2017). Grand Valley Institution for Women. *Journal of Prisoners on Prisons*, 26(1&2), 35-36.
- Fayter, R., & Payne, S. (2017). The impact of the conservative punishment agenda on federally sentenced women and priorities for social change. *Journal of Prisoners on Prisons*, 26(1&2), 10-30.
- Parr, N. (2018). Inadequate resources for and access to penitentiary libraries diminish access to justice and transformation. *Journal of Prisoners on Prisons*, 27(1), 86-88.
- Fayter, R. (2023). The transformative potential of walls to bridges: My journey into becoming a whole self. *Journal of Prisoners on Prisons*, 32(1), 64-80.

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- Reed, P. (1984). The hardest part is letting go... *Tightwire*, 20(10), 34.
- Auger, B. (1984). For Dawn, the woman of my dreams. *Tightwire*, 20(10), 38.
- Tightwire*. (1984). Pay proposal. *Tightwire*, 20(11), 1-2.
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- Mayhew, J. (1988, Spring). Editorial. *Tightwire*, 21(5), 1-2.
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- Millward, C. (1988, Spring). Without you. *Tightwire*, 21(5), 49.
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- Riddell, A. (1990, Summer/Fall). Prisoner voting. *Tightwire*, 24(2), 57.
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- Boyland, C. (1990, Spring). Editorial. *Tightwire*, 24(4), 2-3.
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Parks, N. (1992, Summer). Life behind bars. *Tightwire*, p. 33-35.

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