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**Prisoner Subjectivity:  
Exploring Forms of Self-Government and Everyday Acts of Resistance**

Vicki Chartrand  
2002

Submitted to the Department of Criminology, University of Ottawa,  
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## **ABSTRACT**

The following thesis is an exploratory research of the usefulness in employing a Foucauldian investigation of subjectivity to the prison. By employing this analytical framework, I seek to reveal how the prison shapes and guides prisoner conduct through particular technologies of power and how the prisoners themselves are active in this process. I also seek to understand how, within the organizing practices of the prison, prisoners manage their sentence and organize themselves with respect to their eventual release.

Prison studies traditionally locate the prison and prisoner within broader political and social contexts or investigate the symbolic interactions within and the social organization of the prison. There has however been a general failure to locate the prisoner within broader social processes and investigate how the prisoners are active in their own self-formation. Such a gap suggests the usefulness in employing a Foucauldian analysis of subjectivity to investigate not only how prisoners manage their sentence, but how they subtly resist relations of power that are linked to forms of knowledge.

Subjectivity, understood as how individuals are fashioned and how they affect their own mode or way of being, is an on-going consequence of the forms of power and knowledge that emerge within the prison. Through particular practices and strategies, the prison seeks to shape and direct prisoner subjectivity according to certain schemes and individualizing discourses of thought. By investigating how prisoners self-govern their conduct and resist subjectifying technologies of power, we reveal the coercive and subtle ways the prison imposes a certain way of being and how the prisoners actively negotiate their sense of self within dynamic power-knowledge relations.

Through a qualitative approach of seven life-sentenced prisoner interviews, I explore prisoner practices, relations, and perceptions to gain a certain insight into how the prisoners manage themselves and their sentence. The research findings reveal that, through self-forming activities and practices, prisoners self-govern their conduct in an attempt to maintain an autonomous sense of self while attempting to improve their chances for release.

I conclude that a Foucauldian analysis of subjectivity is a useful tool to investigate the prison as it reveals how prisoners continually negotiate their concept of 'self' between the goals of the prison and with their own ways of 'doing' and 'being'. Despite its controlling nature, prisoners subtly resist individualizing forms of power that seek to submit them towards conformity. Such an approach opens a space for prisoner agency to emerge and directs our attention towards those forming activities of the prison that fail to correspond with the lived realities of the prisoner and their concept of 'self'.

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vicki chartrand

"While there is a lower class, I am in it. While there is a criminal element, I am of it. While there is a soul in prison, I am not free."

Eugene Victor Debs  
1855-1926

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## INTRODUCTION

The fundamental assumption of penal discourse is that ‘criminals’ are different from the average citizen and are therefore in need of individual treatment and modification (Gamberg and Thomson, 1984). Although prisoners are not considered entirely responsible for their psychological or social dispositions, they are required to commit themselves to the strategies necessary to overcome their deficits. Such strategies are exemplified in the Correctional Service of Canada’s (CSC) move in recent years from a ‘rehabilitative’ model towards a ‘risk’ based orientation that focuses on having prisoners manage their behaviours, thoughts, and attitudes in a manner that will minimize their potential ‘risk’ of further ‘criminal’ activity. To prepare them for their eventual release, the prison attempts to transform prisoners into ‘law-abiding’ citizens by monitoring and structuring their daily lives. These confining and forming practices of the prison are linked to various types of knowledge that seek to shape and guide prisoner thought and conduct in an attempt to align the prisoners’ interests with the goals and objectives of the prison. As subjects who exert a degree of autonomy however, prisoners are not simply objects of control within the prison regime, but actively negotiate how they manage themselves throughout their sentence, towards their eventual release.

Inspired by Michel Foucault’s work (1982; 1990), this thesis explores how, within the organizing practices of the prison, prisoners govern their conduct and how they resist the imposition of certain ways of ‘being’ offered by the prison. Foucault offers an analytical tool that locates individuals within broader discourses of thought and practices and yet as active in their own self-formation. Such an analysis provides us with a way of relocating prisoners, not simply as products of their interactions or environment, but also

as active in a continual and on-going process of subjectivity. Throughout the following thesis and through the use of prisoner interviews, I seek to understand how, within dynamic relations of power and knowledge, the prison and the prisoners themselves shape prisoner subjectivity. I further seek to understand how, with respect to their eventual release, prisoners manage their sentence and negotiate themselves as subjects of a certain type. While attention is focused on the prisoners themselves, this particular insight nonetheless contributes to a greater understanding of incarceration.

Chapter Two briefly summarizes Foucault's theoretical framework, how it can be applied to empirical research, and the limitations it presents. The next section explores traditional theoretical and empirical orientations to the prison, as well as the more current research that investigates prisoner perspectives on release. The section concludes that while academics generally locate the prisoner within broader social and political contexts (e.g. Ruche and Kirchheimer, 1939; Ignatieff, 1978; Ruche, 1982; Cohen, 1985; Rothman, 1990) or highlight the instrumental role prisoner interactions and prison organization play in shaping the prisoner (Clemmer, 1938; Sykes and Messinger, 1960; Cressey, 1961; Goffman, 1961; Cohen and Taylor, 1981), there remains a need to understand how the prisoners themselves are active in their own self-formation and as it relates to broader social processes. While Foucault (1977) locates the prisoner within technologies of domination that are linked to particular rationalities of government, the research would benefit from a new application of his later work, "The Subject and Power" (1982) and "The History of Sexuality" (1990) that locates subjects within dynamic relations of power and knowledge and sees them as active in a process of subjectivity. The Chapter ends by outlining the research that employs various applications of Foucault's work to the prison and concludes that such studies continue to

frame the prisoner within technologies of domination and control. This suggests a need to investigate how prisoners actively self-govern their conduct and resist relations of power.

Chapter Three first outlines the ‘governmentality’ literature. This particular work frames an understanding of diverse political rationalities and forms of government and how individuals, groups, and populations are governed through relations of knowledge and power. While my own research does not focus on broader political and government rationalities outlined in this section, the ‘governmentality’ literature introduces the basis of my analytical framework. The second section of this Chapter investigates Foucault’s later work on the subject and provides a way to understand how individuals actively manage and govern their conduct. Lastly, the conceptual tools that guide my research are developed.

Chapter Four describes the qualitative approach used to investigate the prison. In order to gain insight into the realities of prison life, I selected seven interviews with life-sentenced prisoners in a Canadian penitentiary that were conducted by myself and three other members of a prisoner advocacy group. While the use of secondary data sources is limited in providing the researcher with a direct knowledge of the subject matter, it aids to ensure that the responses of the subjects are not influenced by the goals of the researcher. Furthermore, in order not to force the data into the analytical framework, I develop three broad categories for investigation; prisoner practices, relations, and perceptions. As particular themes emerge, methodological consideration is given to how the themes are organized within their respective categories. I also present the strengths and limitations present in my research approach, as well as the ethical implications.

Finally, the concepts of power, resistance, and self-government are further elaborated upon and the questions asked of the data throughout the analysis are presented.

Through a Foucauldian analysis of subjectivity, Chapter Five explores the prisoner interviews as they relate to the above mentioned categories (i.e. prisoner practices, relations, and perspectives). Each category and their respective themes are discussed and illustrations are drawn from the interviews. Such an approach allows for the interview subjects to ‘speak for themselves’ and provides the reader with a more detailed understanding of the interview material.

In Chapter Six, I provide a brief summary of the research findings and further elaborate on their theoretical and practical significance. This is followed by a discussion on some of the possible implications the research presents and the direction for future research. In adopting a Foucauldian analysis of subjectivity to the prison, we not only see how prisoners are active in relations of power and knowledge, but also how prisoners manage their time while in prison and negotiate their concept of self with respect to their eventual release. Although I do not offer any alternatives to prison practices, the findings suggest that there is a need to further investigate how prisoners are active in their own confinement and not only how the prison shapes subjectivity, but also how prisoners shape the practices of the prison. The following research explores Foucault’s understanding of the subject and how this approach can be applied to the prison. While various authors have spoken of Foucault’s notion of the subject (e.g. Smart, 1985; Dean, 1994; Rose, 1996; Castellani, 1999), few attempts have been made to apply this analytical tool to empirical research in general, and to the prison in particular. My objective is to begin to assess the usefulness of this analytical tool and these particular lines of inquiry in the specific case of long term prisoners.

## **CHAPTER ONE**

### **LITERATURE REVIEW**

At the Collège de France in 1979, Michel Foucault delivered a course on the topic of 'governmentality': a modern productive power resulting in specific state functions and forms of knowledge (Bernauer, 1981: 351). 'Governmentality' or 'government rationality' refers to those ways of thinking about the nature of government and the styles of reasoning made possible through particular sets of practices (Gordon, 1991: 3). Since Foucault's lecture, various other scholars have taken up and developed his notion of 'governmentality' (see Allen, 1991; Burchell, 1993; Gordon, 1991; Dean 1994b; Osborne, 1994; Rose, 1993; Rose and Miller 1992; Smart 1998). Government here is understood not only as those systems of thought that arise from a political state, but is also the government of individuals through various institutions and groups and how individuals govern themselves in everyday life. In the context of the prison, my own approach draws upon this particular literature to examine not only how prisoners are governed within the prison, but also how they are active in their own self-government and with particular respect to release.

The first section of this literature review consists of the 'governmentality' literature itself and how this perspective is presented and understood by those who have developed Foucault's work and the debate surrounding this particular approach. In this section, specific attention is given to the ways in which a Foucauldian notion of government and subjectivity have been defined, analyzed, and problematized by various authors. The following section outlines traditional theoretical approaches to the prison and how such approaches contribute to our fundamental understanding of the prison and prison life.

This section is followed by studies that attempt to reveal what prisoners consider to be important for release and the means to attain it. The final section explores those studies that employ a Foucauldian analysis to the prison. This mainly consists of an investigation of the diverse technologies of power that shape the organizing practices of the prison and prisoner conduct. This review of the literature reveals a need to locate the prisoners not only as products of their environment or of their interactions, but also as active in a process of subjectivity as it is linked to broader discourses of knowledge and relations of power. A Foucauldian analysis of subjectivity, thus contributes to current theoretical and practical understandings of the prison by offering a different way to approach the prison and providing new directions for prison research.

### **Government, Power and the Subject**

In presenting the literature, it is first necessary to briefly introduce Foucault's notion of the subject and to clarify the terms and concepts that pertain to such an analysis. Although the theoretical framework is further developed in Chapter Two, an initial overview within this section provides an introduction to the 'governmentality' literature and Foucault's notion of subjectivity (see Appendix A for an overview of the concepts).

Foucault uses the term 'government' in two very distinct yet interrelated ways. One understanding of the term refers to how the state, institutions, and actors address the problematics of governing populations, groups, and individuals and the various means they use to achieve successful government (Rose, 1993: 288). Government here involves those activities or technologies<sup>1</sup> that seek to affect or direct human conduct within

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<sup>1</sup> A domain of strategies, techniques and procedures through which different forces seek to render programs operable, and by means of which a multitude of connections are established between the aspirations of authorities and the activities of individuals and groups (Rose and Miller, 1992: 183).

particular systems of thought or ‘government rationalities’. By employing certain techniques, strategies and practices, government seeks to shape human conduct towards certain ends (Gordon, 1991: 2). The second interrelated understanding of the term ‘government’ is also as the ‘conduct of conduct’. These are the practices and techniques that structure the possible field of action of others and of oneself and contribute to a process of subjectivity as individuals understand and conduct themselves as subjects of a certain type (Burchell et al. 1991). Government, as such, concerns itself with the relations one has with oneself and with others, and the practices put into place that shape and guide conduct. These two understandings of government do not operate exclusively from one another, but are rather interrelated, as particular rationalities and technologies produce the discourses that speak a ‘truth’<sup>2</sup>. The knowledge that surrounds such ‘truth’ is linked to forms of power that seek to fashion and direct conduct towards particular ends.

Power, as understood by Foucault (1982), is not something that is possessed or ‘power over’ per se, but is rather ‘action upon action’: action upon the field of possible action of another. Since power can only be exercised through action, it takes shape in many forms and operates in a multitude of ways, given the conditions under which it is employed and the forms of knowledge to which it is linked. Power for Foucault is thus understood only in terms of relations, and is a result of the organizing practices of a particular field or domain. For example, in the prison, particular forms of knowledge (e.g. psychology) are linked to diverse strategies and practices (e.g. programs). Power thus operates through knowledge and the strategies used to direct and shape prisoner

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<sup>2</sup> Truth understood here is not an absolute but is relative to the political and government mentalities of rule of the time. Particular discourses are set forth and ‘speak’ to the ways in which individuals ought to conduct themselves.

thought and conduct. Power for Foucault is always linked to knowledge, as it is through knowledge that certain forms of power take shape, and it is through power, that particular forms of knowledge emerge. Power, or power-knowledge, also creates the conditions for which prisoners are able to resist. That is, for every action there exists the possibility of a counter-action that can change or alter what power seeks to achieve. As action upon action, power can therefore not exist without the possibility of resistance, as otherwise the relation no longer exists as power, but as an absolute form of domination.

Subjectivity is an on-going consequence of power-knowledge relations. This relation creates the particular strategies and techniques that are used to govern others and which we use to govern ourselves. Within the organizing practices of particular domains, we become subjects to a variety of relations of power-knowledge that impose on us or direct us towards a certain way or type of being by which we are meant to understand and conduct ourselves accordingly. It is only through our freedom, however, that individuals can be governed as subjects as we must ‘willfully’ align ourselves with the goals and objectives what government seeks to produce in us. Rose defines subjectivity as the relations human beings have established with themselves and others (1996b: 130). Rabinow explains it as the processes of self-formation in which the person is active (1984: 11). Both definitions capture two essential understandings of a Foucauldian notion of subjectivity; as a process that does not operate apart or outside of relations of power and that individuals are always active in this process. The subject is therefore “. . . a being endowed with certain capacities or possibilities for action and subjected to power relations” (Patton, 1998: 66). The process of subjectivity operates at all levels, through time and space, where diverse government rationalities, technologies, and practices shape and guide conduct. Foucault developed this notion of subjectivity more thoroughly in his

later works in response to the criticism that individuals were continually theorized within relations of domination and control (Smart, 1998: 79). Lacombe (1996) argues that, despite Foucault's re-working of the subject, the prison is still framed as a technology of domination. Re-thinking prisoners not only as objects of control but also as active in a process of subjectivity introduces a notion of human agency and opens a space in our research for prisoner autonomy and resistance to emerge, despite the prison's controlling nature. By maintaining such an understanding of the prison, we therefore gain insight into the various ways prisoners actively negotiate themselves within dynamic relations of power-knowledge and throughout an on-going and continual process of subjectivity.

Foucault's analysis of the subject does not however provide a unifying or normalizing account which addresses problematic regimes of truth or provides solutions to particular problems within the prison or elsewhere. Rather, the approach is an interpretive framework suggesting particular lines of inquiry that question the foundations of current accepted forms of knowledge and reveals the significance of everyday practices (Dreyfus and Rabinow, 1982; Dean, 1994b; Miller and Rose, 1995a; Garland, 1997). Within the 'governmentality' literature, there has therefore been recourse from developing a unifying theory or normative account of specific phenomenon in order to maintain an approach that continually challenges and dislocates widely accepted practices and commonly held assumptions (Smart, 1991: 212). Such an approach offers a means to continually expose the diverse ways that power and knowledge operate and how, through particular strategies and practices of government, subjects are directed towards certain ends and who shape themselves as subjects of a certain type.

## **Away from the State, Away from the Individual**

Authors of the governmentality literature criticize 'state-centered' theories, particularly those stemming from a Marxist analysis, for their explicit focus on state rule and political functions (Burchell, 1991; Stenson, 1991; Rose and Miller, 1992; Rose, 1993). These theories are seen to discount those institutions, groups, and individuals who act largely independent of state functions or control, but have a fundamental role in producing power-knowledge relations and shaping the subject. "One of the most formative general principles underlying governmentality writings has been the rejection of the identification of government with the state, understood as a centralized locus of rule" (O'Malley, Weir, Shearing, 1997: 501). For example, the emergence of psychiatry within the prison, while endorsed by the state, does not simply operate to promote the strength of the state, but also to promote its own growth and well-being and maintain its particular discourse of thought as a knowledge of 'truth'. By ignoring non-state functions and practices, we overlook the active role that such institutions, groups, and individuals play in the diverse and multiple spaces of a government of others and of the self. An advantage of a decentralized notion of government is the focus on those mundane and everyday practices which reveal less overt forms of government and contribute to our understanding of the subject. The 'governmentality' literature dislocates state agencies as the primary area of investigation and shifts analysis on discursive forms of practice and power-knowledge relations as its focal point. Such an approach allows us to move away from a grand theorization of state rule and domination.

A Foucauldian analysis of subjectivity provides a mid-range interpretation between forms of government with a study of the relations humans have with others and with ourselves. Rose (1996b) and Dean (1994b) argue that cultural and social theories

have limited their analysis to social transformations and interactions and the meaning humans give to such experiences and encounters. Although such theories contribute to our understanding of the subject, the authors argue that these theories assume individuals are ‘naturally’ equipped to give meaning to such experiences and ignore the ways in which meanings and experiences are produced. Hall (1996) for example, who investigates a notion of ‘identity’, states that when deconstructed, it is a product of specific formations and practices embedded in specific historical sites. By de-centering, although never discounting, both the individual and the state from the focus of analysis, other social processes can be observed more readily. The ‘governmentality’ literature departs from other main stream theories by providing the conceptual tools that recognize those practices and strategies of government that continually fashion the subject in a particular way and towards certain ends. Applied to the prison, such an analysis recognizes the fluidity of prisoner subjectivity and turns attention not only to how prisoners are fashioned or how they fashion themselves, but also to the relationship that exists between the two.

### **Analytical Debate**

Debates surrounding Foucault’s notion of subjectivity and the ‘governmentality’ literature are varied. The first critique is of Foucault’s failure to provide a normative framework to guide our analysis of particular phenomenon (Habermas, 1987; Fraser, 1989). Although Foucault does provide a general framework through which to conceive a notion of power, there are no set guidelines or criteria for determining how, within certain settings and according to particular criteria, power is to be recognized or problematized. When conducting such an analysis, it is important to maintain an ability

to work in various directions without the confines of a theory that sets limits to the ways in which we understand particular phenomenon. By providing normative criteria through which to investigate a theory of power, we risk reconstituting the individual within pre-existing understandings and which themselves produce a limited awareness of our own regimes of truth (Patton, 1998: 65). While a lack of a normative theoretical substance leaves the research more susceptible to individual interpretation, it also allows for flexible and diverse research and opens a space for a variety of understandings and different insight to emerge.

The 'governmentality' literature is also criticized for its failure to critically examine forms of government and relations of power. While such an analysis identifies various technologies of government and forms of power that emerge within particular domains, it does not set any guidelines or criteria to determine which are more desirable. The literature therefore generally fails to examine the negative or positive impact particular forms of government and power produce. O'Malley, Weir, and Shearing (1997) argue that this general absence of social critique results in a tendency to minimize antagonistic forms of government, despite Foucault's own critical work on the asylum and the prison. Such a critique argues that there is a need to maintain a critical gaze when using such an approach, rather than just providing descriptive illustrations of particular phenomenon. Although there is a lack of normative critique, Foucault (1988) suggests that the problem of certain political rationalities is due neither to politics or theory, but is a failure of the type of rationality in which practice is rooted. Examination and criticism must therefore be directed towards those rationalities and government technologies from which particular practices stem, and it is up to the researcher to determine how and why such approaches are problematic.

This lack of critical analysis has also led to a failure in the literature to provide any solutions to problematic modes of government or regimes of truth and offer any alternatives to current forms of subjectivity (Habermas, 1987). While Foucault argues that we have to promote new forms of subjectivity by refusing individualizing forms of government that have been imposed on us for several centuries (1982: 785), he fails to offer any suggestions. In response to such criticism, O'Malley, Weir and Shearing propose that we need to develop new political and social conditions that facilitate contestation and promote diversity, while locating targets for intervention and developing strategies for confronting problematic regimes (1997: 505). Burchell similarly suggests reshaping the space of public debate by introducing a different way of asking questions and by inventing new rules for practice (1993: 279). In introducing alternatives or solutions, it is important to consider how our own recommendations run the risk of developing or promoting new problematic regimes of truth and coercive government technologies. Dean on the other hand, argues that it is not for academics to propose alternatives, but rather to " . . . reexamine evidences and postulates and shake up habits, ways of doing and thinking, to dissipate accepted familiarities, to reexamine rules and institutions" (1994a: 31). In so doing, we offer a variety of ways for individuals to reflexively consider their own lived experiences and ways of understanding. While the observer is bound to a priori assessments and to establishing his or her own criteria for problematizing social processes and offering solutions or alternatives, this type of research nonetheless lends itself to diversity and contestation, and for new understandings to emerge.

## **Theorizing the Prison**

The prison itself has been theorized and researched by various scholars and within diverse fields of study. Classic macro sociological studies have located the prison within political and economic relations, historical developments, and broader social structures. Ruche (1982) and Ruche and Kirchheimer (1968) for example, focus on how dominant forms of punishment are related to shifts in economic structures and labour market relations. The authors developed this understanding of the prison by tracing the link between European political economy and penal practices. Ignatieff (1978) links the penal transformations in Europe with the changing social conditions and increased social disorder caused by the Industrial Revolution. He argues that the prison emerged as an attempt to decrease social disorder by reforming the unemployed and lower classes of the population. Rothman (1990) links penal transformations to the changing social views of 'crime'. For example, 'crime' was initially understood as a natural part of society, but along with shifts in the political economy, deviancy threatened certain segments of the population and individuals and groups considered disruptive to the social order were imprisoned. Cohen (1985: 13-39), through an historical investigation of the prison, identifies four major transformations from the eighteenth century onward within penal establishments in the West: the centralization of punishment, 'criminal' classifications, prison construction, and an increased focus on the mind of the 'criminal'. While the author maintains that such changes are a result of broader social influences, he argues that these developments have only resulted in an expansion of systems of punishment and regulation. Cohen thus introduces a different approach to understanding the prison, not as a system that simply develops with social change, but rather as a mechanism of social control that results in the appropriation and absorption of any attempts made to reform

the prison. The above research highlights the diverse ways within which penal systems can be theorized by linking the prison to broader social contexts and structures. Macro-sociological approaches illustrate the complex nature of the prison and prison reforms and how the prison cannot be simply understood as a natural response to 'crime'. Such approaches are limited however to situating the prison within larger state-centered, political-economic, and structural theories that neglect other social processes and understandings of both the prison and prisoner.

Studies done within a micro-sociological tradition, mainly focusing on prison culture, attempt to reveal the everyday realities and struggles of prisoners and staff. Clemmer (1938) for instance, defines the experience of incarceration as a process of 'prisonization' in which prisoners, predisposed with 'criminal' propensities and value systems, are further socialized into an existing 'criminogenic' culture upon entering the prison. Integration into the prison culture therefore breeds further 'criminality' and anti-social behaviour. In contrast to Clemmer's 'importation' model of the prison, Sykes (1958) and Sykes and Messinger (1960) offer a deprivation explanation in which prison culture (e.g. prisoner code) is a result of the collective adaptation to the pains of imprisonment. These 'pains' include the adaptation to the deprivation of liberty and limited access to goods and services, heterosexual relationships, and personal autonomy and security. Prisoners develop an informal inmate value system or 'convict code', to alleviate the 'pains of imprisonment' and develop inmate 'solidarity'. This code allows prisoners to feel less isolated from or vulnerable to one another and less oppressed by staff (Sykes, 1958: 107-108). Cressey (1961) similarly describes how social organization and participation in institutional processes are key to understanding the culture of the prison. The institution's goals of rehabilitation and custody establish a purpose for the

prison while the organizational hierarchies and systems of the institution attempt to ensure that the resources necessary to manage inmates and to operate the prison are available. Such organization therefore determines the activities, relationships, and behaviours found amongst prisoners and staff. Goffman (1961: 17-42) exemplifies this argument by defining the prison not only as a complex social system, but also as a total institution. Here, all aspects of life occur in the same place, under one authority, among large groups of people who are treated similarly within a regimented order and where the activities are designed to achieve the aims of the institution. The characteristics of a total institution create a division between prisoners and staff, determine how participants are treated or dealt with, and how each group operates and perceives one another. For example, inmates undergo a process of 'mortification' where they are stripped of their personal identity and thus suffer role disposition and displacement. Once within the institution, inmates are encouraged to understand their reactions to particular situations as reflective of their 'criminality'. However, essential processes within the institution provide the inmate with an individual sense of self; these include institutional lingo, messing-up, and engaging in forbidden activity, 'fraternalization' process and collective teasing (Goffman, 1961: 51-74). Cohen and Taylor (1981) extend our understanding of the prison with their research on long-term imprisonment. Prisoners not only undergo or respond to prison life, but reflect on their situation and strategically survive the prison experience through outside relations, managing their time, and sustaining their identity. Cohen and Taylor thus introduce a notion of prisoner agency as prisoners actively 'survive' their prison sentences.

While micro-sociological approaches provide different insight into the complexity of the prison and prisoner activities, there have been few efforts to locate the prisoner

within dynamic relations of power that not only shape prisoner conduct, but which the prisoners themselves actively shape. An analysis of power-knowledge relations links our understanding of the prison to a broader social context and how social processes relate to the subject. While locating the prisoner within larger discourses of thought and relations of power, such an investigation does not negate the importance of individual agency and resistance. Although both macro and micro approaches are useful to contextualize the prison within the dimensions of political, social, and interactionist understandings, there is a need to bridge the gap between the two. For my own research, I examine how prisoners are active within the prison as it relates to broader social processes and how this relates to the prisoners on-going concern for release.

### **Prisoner Conduct and Perspectives on Release**

Through empirical studies, attempts have been made to determine what prisoners believe will affect their potential for release. Using surveys and statistical analysis, studies (e.g. Boudris and Braden, 1980; Sapsford, 1978) reveal that prisoners most often consider that obtaining an appeal, participating in prison programs, and demonstrating pro-social attitudes and behaviours are important factors for release. Proctor and Pease (2000), who test the deterrence hypothesis, reveal that there are lower reported rates of misconduct for those prisoners denied parole hearings, compared with those who are granted parole hearings. The authors conclude that there is a need for the administration to consider the impact parole has on controlling institutional behaviour. Studies that conduct large scale sampling of the factors involved with prisoners and release, fail to investigate the nuances that occur in the everyday lives of the prisoner that would offer

insight into particular patterns and findings. These studies also neglect the complexity of the prison system itself and how and why particular prisoner strategies are employed.

Those approaches that do consider the more dynamic processes involved in how prisoners organize themselves to expedite release, generally present prisoner conduct as ‘manipulative’ or ‘game-playing’ (e.g. Akerstrom, 1987; Muhammad, 1996). Watson’s research on women prisoners’ responses to assessments for release (Maison Tanguay, Montreal, Quebec), uses Goffman’s notion of ‘presentation of self’ and ‘dramaturgy’ to analyze how prisoners demonstrate ‘institutionally approved’ behaviours to staff for release assessments. The research reveals that the prisoners defined their behaviour as ‘conning’ as a means to retain their sense of self. “It is their retreat from and protection against the power of the institution to define them and their chosen method of remaining their ‘own [person]’” (1982: 254). This type of ‘role-playing’ provides the women with a means to resist overt forms of disciplinary control and to remain ‘true’ to themselves. Assuming however that prisoner conduct is only ‘conning’ or ‘manipulative’ downplays how those acts of resistance affect relations of power and how such acts are meaningful to the prisoners themselves.

### **Foucault, Modern Forms of Power and Practices of Punishment**

A Foucauldian analysis of subjectivity contributes to current prison research by introducing not only relations of power and knowledge as a way to contextualize the prison, but also directs attention to how the prisoners themselves actively manage their sentences and negotiate their concept of self. By looking at how power-knowledge relations shape and direct prisoner conduct and how the prisoners themselves are active in such a process, the prison is understood as more than a forcing house of change, and

prisoner identity is not simply set or congealed within coercive regimes of order, control, and domination. Examining everyday mundane practices of rule and forms of conduct within the prison expose those less overt technologies of power that emerge and reveal the prisoner's role, however small it may be, in negotiating themselves within relations of power. Such an approach might contribute to our ability to link everyday realities to a broader social context of power relations and subjectivity.

Foucault's (1977) own approach to the prison demonstrates how objectifying and disciplinary mechanisms of control are linked to forms of knowledge and techniques of punishment that serve to classify and normalize segments of the population. Foucault argues that shifting forms of punishment are not progressive reforms, but are rather an ability to punish better and " . . . with more universality and necessity; to insert the power to punish more deeply in to the social body" (Foucault, 1977: 82). Foucault's (1990) analysis of subjectivity contributes to his earlier work by locating the prisoner not only within technologies of control and discipline, but also as active in a process of subjectivity as they are linked to broader discourses of thought. Subjectivity, understood as " . . . the way in which the individual establishes his relation to rule and recognizes himself as obliged to put it into practice" (Foucault, 1990: 27), investigates forms of government and the practices and strategies that emerge within the prison that seek to shape how prisoners understand and conduct themselves. Without discounting Foucault's earlier groundbreaking work, by including his notion of subjectivity, we begin to conceive how prisoners are active in their own self-formation and resist the imposition of certain modes or ways of 'being' and 'doing'. Such an analysis contributes to Foucault's work on the prison by introducing the subject and a notion of agency through an empirical investigation of the prison.

## **Prison Research and the Governmentality Literature**

A Foucauldian analysis of the prison provides a number of ways in which the prison and prisoners can be located. Carrabine (2000) for example, exposes the prison's strategies of control by linking forms of power that emerge within, with the changing dominant discourses of exclusion in an English prison from 1965 to 1990. Kendall (2000) demonstrates how psychology and psychiatry emerged within the prison and constructed female prisoners as 'mentally disordered'. By conceiving such forms of knowledge as scientific 'truths', rather than social and political processes, this conceptualization of the female prisoner expanded and consumed prison practice, while very little consideration is given to other concerns faced by this population. While the above research links the prison within larger political and government arrangements and forms of knowledge that change over time and space, it also directs our attention towards everyday practices within the prison and the ways that power can take shape.

Along with studies of power, prisoner resistance has also been a focus of concern for prison studies. In general, there has been a great deal of research that has investigated the prison in terms of those more overt forms of resistance, particularly with respect to prison violence and riots (e.g. Pallas and Barber, 1972; Sharp, Hancock and Portrey, 1982; McCorkle, Miethe and Drass, 1995). This research recognizes structural, managerial, and/or administrative organization as the main impetus for prisoner revolts and outbreaks. Huspek and Comerford (1996) approach prison violence by employing Foucauldian concepts that are central to his anti-science project and argue that dominant penological sciences that seek to understand and prevent violence in the prison are restrictive in their understanding and self-defeating in their approach. That is, those strategies (e.g. bureaucracy, policies, legislation) used to reduce prison violence only

further debilitate and restrict prisoners, resulting in increased hostility towards staff and administration and promote further forms of violent resistance in response to these power dynamics of the prison. Although investigating prison riot, violence and outward acts of resistances contribute to our understanding of the problems that lie within the penal complex, they neglect more subtle acts of resistance that provide different insight into the prison regime and locate the prisoner in an everyday context.

Fox (1999) examines everyday acts of prisoner resistance to reveal the subtly coercive nature of a “Cognitive Self-Change” program in a Vermont prison. The author argues that psychological paradigms imposed on prisoners are dependent upon the prisoners adopting the language and rhetoric of the program in order to obtain a positive assessment towards their ‘progress’. Through the program rhetoric, prisoners are constructed as possessing particular ‘criminal’ personalities and ‘cognitive distortions’. A prisoners’ refusal to adopt such an understanding of themselves becomes reflective of their ‘criminality’. This form of power therefore absorbs prisoner resistance into the program rational and negates and de-legitimizes the reasoning and motivation for such acts of resistance. This research demonstrates how knowledge is linked to power and the repressive potential such forms of knowledge serve to sustain a dominant discourse of ‘criminality’. Hannah-Moffat (2000) further supports such an understanding in her study on the Correctional Service of Canada’s attempt to ‘empower’ federally sentenced women by giving them the ‘freedom’ to choose to participate in prison programs. Female prisoners who choose not to participate however, are considered to be at “higher risk” and consequently become a greater security concern. This eliminates the possibility for these women to be given the responsibility to make ‘meaningful choices’ and ultimately legitimates the programs necessity. Prisoners’ resistance to the penal system is

absorbed into the disciplinary technologies of the prison. Although Fox (1999) and Hannah-Moffat (2000) present the potentially dangerous ways that power and knowledge operate within the prison, they fail to reveal how resistance is nonetheless important for the prisoners themselves and how such forms of resistance alter and shape relations of power. Whether we look at large scale acts of resistance or those more common everyday forms, there is a general need to consider how certain forms of conduct and resistance are taken up within the prison and how such acts are reflective of an on-going process of subjectivity.

Bosworth (1999) develops a notion of subjectivity in her research on women's imprisonment. The study reveals how women prisoners continually contest power relations in an attempt to present themselves as independent agents and to maintain their sense of identity. "[The] women manage their experiences of imprisonment by drawing on their sense of self which they ground in their (feminine) identities as mothers, girlfriends, and lovers" (Bosworth, 1999: 155). Such an analysis reveals the ways in which the women resist power within the prison as subjects to their feminine identities. Newton (1994) alternatively, by looking at the concept of prisoner solidarity and the prisoner code, demonstrates how theories of masculinity are useful to understand how the men conduct themselves in the prison. The study reveals that the prison environment is similar to power relations found in shop floor cultures that create hegemonic masculinity among the workers. Such an interpretation demonstrates how prison culture, although unique in their own setting, share similar qualities with those found outside of the prison and introduces the idea that prisoners should not be solely treated as special categories of the population.

Framing the prisoners in terms of their identity is useful to expose how subjects conceive themselves apart from the prison and maintain an individual sense of self. Gender or minority constructs however only present particular categories of prisoner subjectivity and are thus limited to such understandings of the prisoner (e.g. as men, women, Aboriginals etc.). Where one's identity usually remains constant, subjectivity is not only reflective of one's identity, but also of how individuals understand and conduct themselves in all aspects of life, whether it be through routine, work, family, and so on.

The prison research discussed above exemplifies the diverse ways the prison and prisoner have been framed within the 'governmentality' literature and through an analysis of subjectivity, and despite the lack of normative criteria to guide this type of analysis. There is however a need to further investigate forms of prisoner subjectivity and resistance as it relates to the power relations found within the prison. By investigating subjectivity and how prisoners organize themselves around notions of release, I seek to understand how the prisoners manage their sentence in their everyday lives and to investigate prisoner attempts to maintain a certain degree of autonomy and sense of self. The literature suggests that a Foucauldian analysis is a useful tool to reveal forms of power and knowledge that emerge within the prison and that there is a need to further develop an understanding of prisoner conduct as reflective of a dynamic and on-going process of subjectivity. Without discounting the importance of the diverse research discussed throughout this literature review, my own research attempts to contribute to an understanding of the prison by locating the prisoners within dynamic relations of power and examining how they understand and conduct themselves as subjects of a certain type.

## **CHAPTER TWO**

### **ANALYTICAL FRAMEWORK**

How we theorize the prison will influence how we conceptualize particular practices and problems that arise in such an environment and the alternatives we offer. “Theoretical work . . . seeks to change the way we think about an issue and ultimately to change the practical ways we deal with it” (Garland, 1990: 277). Through an investigation of the organizing practices of the prison and how prisoners understand and conduct themselves within their social context, I seek to reveal some of the various ways that power operates within the prison. In this Chapter, I discuss Foucault’s work on ‘governmentality’ along with his notion of ‘subjectivity’, and explore the utility of his analytical framework as a way to make sense of prison practices and prisoner conduct. Such an analysis directs our attention to those heterogeneous processes that lock the institution, groups, and individuals into a complex web of knowledge and power that shape prisoner subjectivity and in which the prisoners also shape. Such a framework helps locate the prisoner within broader social processes that characterize prisoners as subjects to a variety of power-knowledge relations and as active in their own self-formation.

Prisoner subjectivity is investigated through the practices, relations, and perceptions of the prisoners as they unfold within the organizing practices of the prison. It is within this field that particular forms of knowledge are linked to technologies of power that seek to shape and guide prisoner conduct by creating a ‘truth’ through which prisoners are to understand themselves.

Power assumes a relationship based on some knowledge which creates and sustains it: conversely, power establishes a particular regime of truth in which certain forms of knowledge become admissible or possible (Dreyfus and Rabinow. 1983: 10).

Power and knowledge thus produce the rules that shape and guide conduct within the prison and influence how prisoners relate to themselves and others. While prisoners govern their conduct according to certain schemes and regulations found within the prison, they may also resist (either overtly or subtly) the confines of their environment.

A Foucauldian analysis of subjectivity offers an original and provocative way to frame the prison by looking at the various relations of power that emerge and the subjectivities that ensue in response to the organizing practices of the prison. As a mid-range interpretive framework of the philosophies of government and the study of social practice, for my thesis, such an analysis serves as a tool through which to investigate the prison. The following sections outline the theoretical foundations of the ‘governmentality’ literature, Foucault’s analysis of subjectivity, and the concepts used to examine the prison as they relate to my analytical framework.

## **Governmentality**

As discussed in Chapter One, Foucault’s notion of ‘governmentality’, is understood as the ‘conduct of conduct’ or as an ‘art of government’. Government as such conforms to particular sets of rules and certain forms of knowledge that direct conduct and thought towards certain ends. It is “[the] systematic, explicit, discursive, problematization and codification of the art or practice of government, as a way of rendering the objects of government in a language that makes them governable” (Dean, 1994a: 187). Foucault (1991), focusing primarily on Western cultures, argues that from the 16<sup>th</sup> century onward there has been a shift from a sovereign rule of the state to a modern ‘governmentalized’

State. In order to create state security and prosperity, rather than a focus on State rule and territorial mass, populations and economic life became the focus of concern. Foucault proceeds by chronologically presenting the different types of political rationalities that address the various problems of 'government' found in a modern governmentalized state<sup>1</sup>. The first of these modern government rationalities was the 'raison d'état', which emerged in Sixteenth Century Europe. State concern during this period was to know what needed to be governed among the citizenry in order to promote its strength and wealth. The second rationality, embodied in the political thinking of the 'raison d'état', was the 'police-state'<sup>2</sup>. This political rationality emphasized the strength and productivity of its population. During this period, which carried into the Seventeenth Century, the State objective was to police the happiness, health, and growth of the population, thus contributing to the strength of the State. Early liberalism came out in response against a 'police' rationality which was thought to be 'too much' government and state interference, along with a reasoning that the State could not be aware of all aspects of life and of its population. Liberalism emerged in the Eighteenth Century as a style of thinking concerned with making government more practical. In order for certain domains to function optimally (particularly that of the economy), the least amount of intervention was needed to allow self-regulating entities to function apart from complete State control. The goals of a liberal mode of thought are to have individuals align their conduct with the needs and demands of self-regulating entities, such as a free global

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<sup>1</sup> Although certain forms of government are more prevalent during particular periods, all forms of government co-exist and overlap, where some forms of government are more prominent in particular areas and at different times.

<sup>2</sup> Police here should not be mistaken as a regiment adhering to the maintenance of law and order, but rather as a particular technology of government used to ensure social well being.

market. The principles of early-liberalism were based upon a rationale that ‘freely choosing’ individuals enable particular domains to better function given the limited abilities of the State to control all aspects of life. “Government cannot override the rational free conduct of governed individuals without destroying the basis of the effects it is seeking to produce” (Burchell 1993: 271). It is here that the ‘free’ subject is particularly germane as individuals need to ‘willfully’ align themselves with political, social, and economic objectives in order for a ‘government at a distance’ to operate successfully. As particular rationalities emerge over time and space, certain forms of government technologies are employed in an attempt to ensure that conduct is aligned with its particular objectives. For example, practices such as public displays of torture were eventually replaced with penal servitude. The prison thus became a new technology that controlled certain segments of the population and provided free labour for certain domains. Government technologies thus attempt to align the conduct of certain groups and individuals with the aspirations of those authorities particular to that domain (Rose and Miller, 1992: 183). Although such an understanding does not fall outside a traditional investigation of the prison (i.e. political economy), it highlights the specific practices and strategies that are used and are reflective of the political rationalities present and the different technologies of government that accompany them. Within certain realms, particular techniques and strategies are thus employed to ensure that groups and individuals are managed and maintained according to certain political rationalities and modes of government. In terms of the prison, the ‘psy’ disciplines (i.e. psychology, psychiatry, etc.) emerged and came to dominate our particular understandings of the prisoner and the practices used to govern them (e.g. prison programs and psychological assessments).

At the turn of the nineteenth century psychiatry became an autonomous discipline and assumed such prestige precisely because it had been able to develop within the framework of a medical discipline conceived of as a reaction to the dangers inherent in the social body (Foucault, 1978: 134).

By aligning themselves to a previously established knowledge (i.e. medical science), and advancing themselves as an entity capable of promoting the 'security' and 'safety' of the citizenry, the 'psy' disciplines emerged as the dominant discourse and knowledge of 'truth' within the prison.

Foucault applies the notion of 'bio-power' to designate that which brings all aspects of life into the realm of explicit awareness and calculation (1978: 143). In other words, various institutions and agents study individuals, populations, and economic life in an attempt to create well being, security, and prosperity for civil society. Once individuals and populations are known, they are organized according to certain classification schemes and, through normalizing practices of government, become subject to the ways in which they *should* conduct themselves. Hacking (1990) for example, argues that through the accumulation of statistical data on certain phenomenon, regularities and irregularities are determined, classifications and categories are created, and laws of 'normalcy' emerge. It is through technologies of government that populations are studied, made known, and can thus be regulated. This knowledge of the citizenry is necessary for successful government since the State relies on such knowledge to sustain its strength. Foucault (1991) argues that the dominant contemporary form of government is that of an 'advanced' liberal mentality or 'neo-liberalism' and is characterized by its 'laissez faire' approach or 'government at a distance' (see Dean 1994c; Dillon, 1995; Hindess 1997; Graham 1993; Miller and Rose, 1995b; O'Malley, 1992; Rose, 1993). Similar to early-liberalism, neo-liberalism does not govern directly through the state, but

through ‘freely’ choosing individuals. In addition to this however, a neo-liberal form of government requires that individual choices be regulated and directed towards certain ends, rather than anticipating individuals to ‘naturally’ align themselves to political, social, and economic objectives. It is here where experts and authorities (e.g. psychologists) particular to certain spheres of life (e.g. the prison) mediate individual choices so as to align conduct with the goals and objectives of that domain and as they relate to broader rationalities of government.

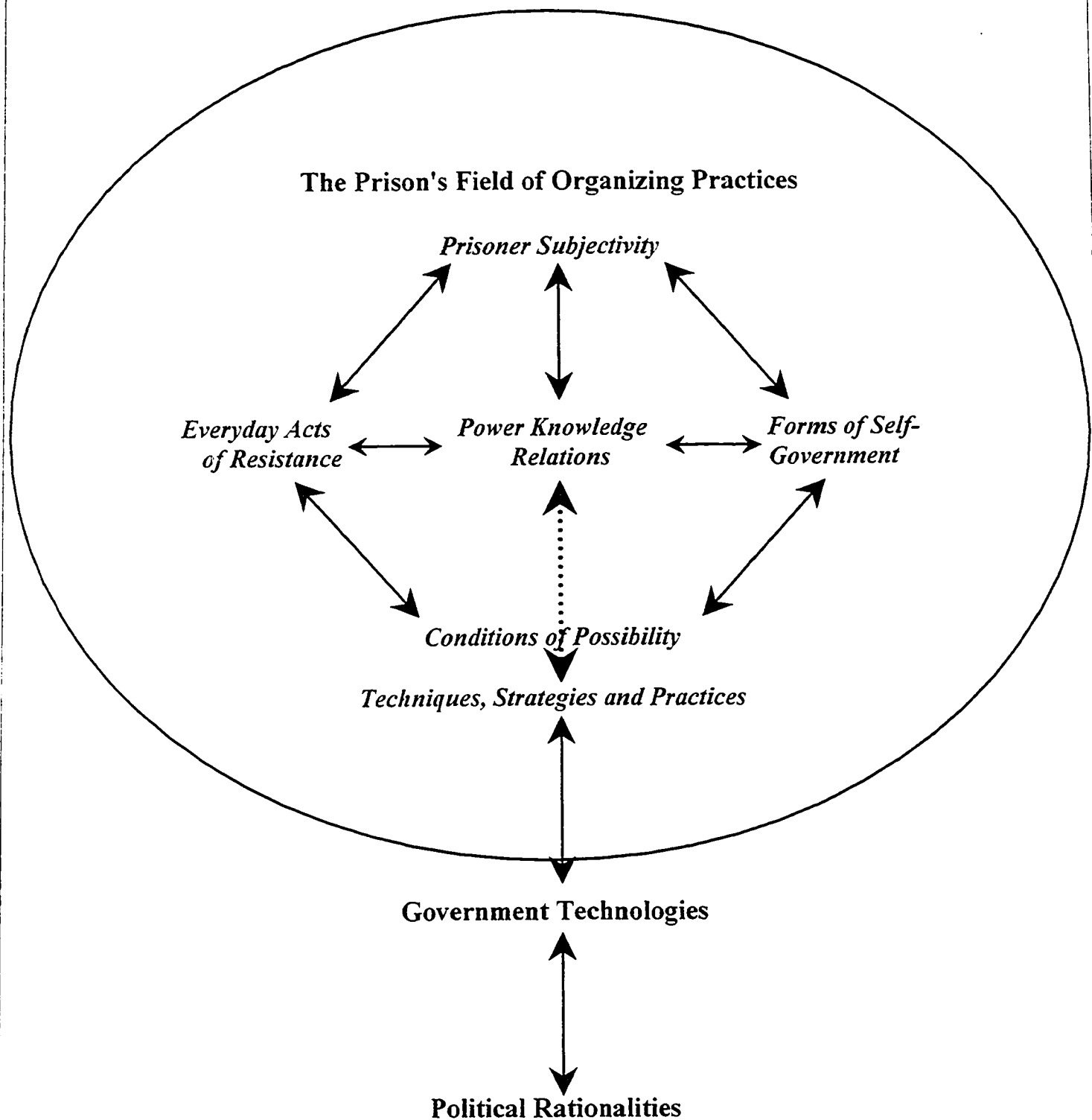
To attain successful government, Foucault (1982: 782-785) argues that an old power technique, based upon Christian ethics, has been integrated into the modern state; he terms this ‘pastoral power’. Pastoral power has taken on a new form today in that salvation is ensured in this world rather than the next, as we are made to feel that through health, wealth, security, and prosperity that we shall be ‘saved’. Pastoral power operates largely upon the confession through which individuals reveal themselves not only to others, but also to themselves. Only by exposing all aspects of our lives to ourselves and to others, particularly to those who are authorized as experts in certain domains, can we improve or safeguard our lives. Pastoral power is thus both totalizing as our desire to ‘improve’ or ‘save’ ourselves reaches all segments of the population, but also individualizing as saving ourselves is an individualized concern rather than a collective one. By revealing ourselves in all aspects of life, experts and authorities can better regulate the choices of certain segments of the population by offering advice, suggestions, and opinions that invoke particular desires, wants, insecurities, fears, and so on. With the advent of neo-liberalism, there has been a proliferation of experts and authorities specializing in various areas and who align themselves with political,

economic, and social goals and procedures in order to establish themselves as a knowledge of 'truth'.

Through pastoral power, humans have become 'confessing animals' to others and to themselves in all categories of life (Dreyfus and Rabinow, 1983: 174). This form of government is particularly prevalent within Canadian penitentiaries; individuals here are required to reveal all aspects of their lives for psychological evaluations, risk assessments, and classification schemes. In today's prison, those forms of knowledge that possess a 'risk' based orientation in their approach are given precedence over other proposals that fail to target 'risk' as their main objective (Hannah-Moffat, 2000). Throughout the organizing practices of the prison, strategies are employed to ensure that prisoners' 'risk' of re-offending is minimized by holding them accountable to self-improvement. These forms of knowledge, linked to technologies of power, provide a means to control and regulate such a population and shape prisoner subjectivity.

By briefly outlining these shifts in political rationalities and the various forms of government, I seek to highlight that problems of government arise at certain times and in certain ways. I further attempt to reveal how, through power and knowledge, particular populations are governed and regulated at certain times and in certain ways. It is important to note that particular forms of rationalities incite particular technologies of power and the emergent forms of knowledge. Power thus shapes prisoner subjectivity as it is linked to broader discourses of thought and ways of government. The following figure is an example of how forms of government, as they are linked to technologies of power, emerge and operate within the prison to shape and fashion the subject. It also reveals how the prisoners themselves are active in shaping the 'self' and dynamic relations of power (See Figure I below).

**FIGURE I – Prisoner Subjectivity and Relations of Power**



## **The Process of Subjectivity**

Foucault defines subjectivity as a process: “the way in which the individual establishes his relation to rule and recognizes himself as obliged to put it into practice” (1990: 27). Our subjectivity therefore directs our thoughts, conduct, understandings, and relations in our everyday lives. It is the result of;

. . . the presuppositions of human beings that have underpinned them, the languages, techniques, procedures and forms of judgement through which human beings have come to understand themselves as ‘selves’ of a certain type (Rose, 1996a: 296).

As such, although we are objects of a variety of discourses and practices, we are also active in our own self-formation within the relations of power and knowledge that seek to shape and guide our mode or way of being. Subjectivity, as explored by Foucault (1982), is a consequence of relations of power and knowledge within a field of organizing practices.

The organizing practices by which we come to know the truth about ourselves emerge in the practice of the knowledge-power relationship itself, not the individuals doing the inter-action or in some external structure thought to be controlling them (Castellani, 1999: 251).

The ‘truths’ by which we come to understand ourselves are therefore not absolutes, but are a result of the power-knowledge dynamic:

[They are] the procedures, which no doubt exist in every civilization, suggested or prescribed to individuals in order to determine their identity, maintain it, or transform it in terms of a certain number of ends, through relations of self-mastery or self-knowledge (Foucault, 1997: 87).

How prisoners understand and conduct themselves within the prison is a result of the forms of knowledge that emerge, the technologies of power that are set forth, and the practices and strategies employed within this organizing field. The process of

subjectivity is thus on-going and operates at different yet interdependent levels in the various and dynamic relations of power found within the prison.

### **Modes of Subjectification**

From Foucault's various works, there emerge three modes or means by which individuals are subjected to technologies of power. One is through *scientific classification*, as seen in "The Order of Things" (Foucault, 1970) and "The Archaeology of Knowledge" (Foucault, 1972). Here, discourse is structured into disciplines of life, labour, and language in which humans become objects to be known and conduct is governed by norms of 'truth' (Rabinow, 1984: 9). Within the prison, conduct is governed by the forms of knowledge which classify the individual within particular discourses of thought, that differ throughout time, and make particular aspects of the prisoner the focal point of modification, correction, and so on (e.g. a shift in focus from the body to the mind, from rehabilitation to risk management etc.).

The second mode of subjectification is known as '*dividing practices*'. The concept is developed in "The Birth of Clinic" (Foucault, 1963), "Madness and Civilization" (Foucault, 1965), and "Discipline and Punish" (Foucault, 1977). Dividing practices occur as certain forms of knowledge emerge that produce divisions and categories that provide human beings with both a social and personal identity (Smart, 1985: 107). This method also produces technologies of domination where those who fall outside of the defined norm are coerced towards certain ends. This is particularly seen in the prison where individuals are physically separated from mainstream society and their 'criminal' identities become an all-encompassing focus of concern for those experts who have established themselves in the field. A final mode of subjectification is the process of

*subjectivity* itself; through our own thoughts and conduct, we affect our own mode or way of being to transform ourselves toward certain ends (Smart, 1985: 108). This includes those practices of the self where individuals actively govern their conduct within the power-knowledge relation, and is based on what they *should* aspire to be or do. “[It is] an exercise of self by which one tries to work out, to transform one’s self upon self and to attain a certain mode of being” (Foucault, 1987: 2). It is with this final mode that I am particularly interested with for my research and how it relates to the other modes of subjectification. My focus therefore, is on how prisoners understand and conduct themselves as subjects of a certain type, on an on-going basis, and in the context of negotiating their ‘selves’ for release.

### **Power and Knowledge**

Foucault’s (1978) notion of power, heavily influenced by Nietzsche (1968), is understood as a relationship rather than something that is possessed or that comes from above. Power for Foucault is ubiquitous and everywhere.

In effect, what defines a relationship of power is that it is a mode of action which does not act directly or immediately on others. Instead it acts upon their actions: an action upon action, on existing actions or on those which may arise in the present or future (Foucault, 1982: 789).

Power is not centralized in existing institutions or possessed by certain authorities. It can only be exercised through relations with others, including the self, and involves various strategies and techniques. Foucault is not concerned with power as a function of the interactions between subjects, but rather, how subjects are shaped by the practices of power itself (Castellani, 1999: 254). The prison system, along with the rules and strategies of confinement, discipline, and government particular to this domain, are the means or technologies through which power operates.

Traditionally, power is analyzed and understood within a macro-sociological context. If power, on the other hand, is understood as something that is not possessed but rather as action upon others' action, we begin to look at the practices and relations within social structures and at how action is confined or directed to shape subjectivity. Power in this sense is not homogeneous but multidimensional and individuals are not only products of power, but the very agents of its exercise.

Power applies itself to immediate everyday life which categorizes the individual, marks him by his own individuality, attaches him to his own identity, imposes a law of truth on him which he must recognize and what others have to recognize in him. It is a form of power which makes individuals subjects (Foucault, 1982: 781).

In a system of domination, the flow of power is not highly variable and open to change, but is rather more set and stable, thus providing more predictable control over the action of others (Patton, 1998: 68). In the prison, power operates through physical space and control of movement and the regulations and rules that organize the daily activities and exchanges of those who reside and work there. Systems of reward and punishment, codes of conduct both written and verbalized, and mechanisms of discipline and surveillance are all examples of the technologies and strategies of power found within the prison. These structures, processes, and practices represent the multifaceted and multidimensional ways that power operates, and how subjects of a certain type emerge as power shapes and guides thought and conduct on an on-going basis, and over time.

Power is also always related to knowledge; particular forms of knowledge develop and shape the strategies and practices found within the prison, and it is through these strategies and practices that certain forms of knowledge emerge. Smart (1985) argues that there are three main technologies of power used in the prison to achieve its disciplinary hold. The first is *hierarchical observation*; a series of supports and relays

are established to ensure particular measures are developed and maintained to make prisoners more visible. By making prisoners more visible, it is possible to develop a certain awareness and understanding of them and alter undesirable conduct. In order to maintain continual and functional control throughout the prison, hierarchical regimes are put into place to provide on-going surveillance and regulation of both prisoners and staff. Such observation holds subjects accountable to their every action.

*Normalizing judgement* is the second instrument of disciplinary power within the institution and functions in accordance with hierarchical observation. Through the particular forms of knowledge set forth, linked to technologies of observation, certain conduct is constituted as 'proper' or 'improper' behaviour. Through particular schemes of 'scientific classification', certain forms of prisoner conduct are approved (e.g. 'institutionally approved behaviour') and conduct that falls outside of the 'norm' (e.g. 'disrupting the good order of the institution') requires disciplinary action.

Finally, through the *examination* of the prisoner, a multiplicity of agents using various strategies and practices seek to ensure successful normalization.

Power in the modern age operates distinctly through knowledge in the form of discursive practices [that] employ sophisticated technologies of surveillance, observation, normalization, calculation, evaluation, differentiation . . . (Dillon, 1995: 324).

Power and knowledge thus directly imply one another as knowledge determines the emergent forms of power and power ensures that certain forms of knowledge are set forth and furthered; together they structure the possible field of action of the prisoner and not only how they self-govern their conduct, but also how they resist.

## **Everyday Acts of Resistance**

Foucault (1990: 95) argues that where there is power, there is resistance. Just as forms of power emerge to shape and direct conduct, resistance is a consequence of the power-knowledge dynamic as individuals struggle against the imposition of particular subjectivities that do not correspond to their way of 'being' or 'doing'. An organized multiplicity of techniques and strategies within the prison serves to further define forms of power, yet as power relations multiply and transform, so do the conditions of possibility and various venues open-up for forms of resistance to emerge (Pickett, 1996: 459). Like power, resistance also comes in a multiplicity of forms:

. . . resistances that are possible, necessary, improbable; others that are spontaneous, savage, solitary, concerted, rampant or violent; still others that are quick to compromise, interested, or sacrificial; by definition they can only exist in the strategic field of power relations (Foucault, 1978: 96).

For power to exist, there must be a freedom to act, otherwise the power relation dissolves and the relation becomes one of absolute control and domination. As long as there exists a certain freedom to act, no matter how small such freedom may be, resistance is possible.

Through strategies and tactics, power attempts to induce others into agreement or submission, thereby directing in a fairly constant manner and with reasonable certainty, the conduct of others. Given the possible field of action, prisoners struggle against forms of subjectivity that submit them to themselves and to others in a particular way; such as, 'criminal', 'delinquent', 'abnormal', and so on. "[Individuals] are most profoundly affected when the way they are governed requires them to alter how they see themselves as governed subjects" (Burchell, 1991: 119). Although resistance in the prison is constrained to small spaces of action due to its controlling and regulating nature, there is

still room for acts of resistance to emerge as prisoners oppose the imposition of a certain mode or way of being instituted by the prison. Power, as an action upon action, attempts to shape and guide conduct, but does not determine it. Individuals resist attempts to alter their subjective realities or place limits on their freedom, where freedom is understood as not being constrained in such a fashion that other possibilities for action are eliminated.

Everyday acts of resistance differ from revolutionary acts: they are less obvious and occur more frequently, but are highly meaningful for those who engage in it (Scott 1990). While prison riots represent grand scale acts of resistance, these struggles are not as common in the prison compared to those less subtle forms, such as feigning compliance, ignoring directives, developing personal codes of conduct, and so on. These acts and behaviours attempt to defy or undermine the practices of power that are put in place to gain compliance, agreement, conformity, and to alter one's understanding of self. Everyday acts of resistance thereby occur when there is a desire to exercise action against those strategies that are not necessarily reflective of the prisoners' experiences and understandings of themselves. By looking at the strategies and practices the prisoners use to resist institutional demands and objectives, we shed light on the many ways in which power operates and when and why prisoners draw the line in incorporating certain understandings of themselves as part of their subject. This not only reveals the ways in which forms of power attempt to shape prisoner subjectivity, but also how the prisoners themselves are active in the dynamics of power and how both power and resistance alter and fashion the prisoners' way of life.

## Forms of Self-Government

Self-government<sup>3</sup> is how we manage ourselves throughout our daily activities and in our everyday lives and is reflective of our subjectivity as we govern our conduct in a certain manner and as subjects of a certain type.

[It is] the way in which the subject constitutes himself in an active fashion, by the practices of the self, and are patterns that he finds in his culture and which are proposed, suggested and imposed on him by his culture, his society and his social group" (Foucault, 1987: 11).

Foucault's notion of the government of self and of others is based on four dimensions of 'ethical' practices. "Ethics constitutes a practice for Foucault, a mode of being, a way of relating to self and thereby others" (Smart, 1998: 84). Ethical practices here should not be confused with issues of morality, but is rather how individuals reflect upon their conduct and subsequently act. The first ethical practice is of an *ontological* nature and is concerned with what we strive to govern in ourselves and in others (e.g. prisoner attitudes, behaviour). The second is *ascetics* and involves those self-forming activities that direct how we govern our way of being (e.g. an admittance of guilt, participating in prison programs). *Deontological* practices involve the stance we take or are given in terms of the rules and norms of particular domains (e.g. showing remorse, taking responsibility). Finally, *teleology* is concerned with the objectives, aims, and what we hope to produce in ourselves and others (e.g. turning prisoners into law-abiding citizens, 'pro-social' behaviour) (Foucault, 1985: 26-28: cited in Dean 1995: 564-5). One cannot therefore speak of ethical practices without looking at those technologies of the self that

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<sup>3</sup> Self-government should not be understood as the binary opposite to resistance, but is rather how prisoners understand and conduct themselves in their everyday lives. It is reflective of the forms of knowledge to which they subscribe and the relations of power in which they are involved.

compel one to reflect upon him or her self and to act in certain ways in order to achieve certain ends. They are the practices that we ourselves employ, that shape our understanding of ourselves, and are formed through the procedures, means, and instruments by which the self acts on oneself (Dean, 1994b: 195).

The relations we maintain with ourselves never fall outside of power-knowledge and are a reflection of broader technologies of power. Self-forming practices are offered to the individual by the experts and authorities particular to a certain domain. For example, prisoners are provided with a particular understanding of themselves (e.g. 'criminal') and are offered the 'necessary' tools (e.g. programs) to correct and modify this problematic way of being and to engage in 'normal' thought and behaviour. Prisoners are active in the process of subjectivity as they employ practices of the self which permit them to achieve a particular way of being and attain a certain state of living (Foucault, 1988: 19). For example, self-examination, self-control, and self-improvement all reflect particular technologies of the self. Certain practices might include looking in the mirror, counting to ten, or reading 'self-help' books. Practices of the self therefore constitute the ways by which we affect ourselves through our own means within the power-knowledge relation.

How we govern our conduct depends upon the aspirations and objectives of particular social and political domains and the practices and strategies used and applied according to certain schemes. For instance, prisoners who take institutional programs are expected to align their thinking with the program's objectives and are provided the tools to adjust their thought and conduct accordingly (e.g. clearer thinking, less impulsivity). Prisoner subjectivity is therefore not only a consequence of how they are governed, but is also a result of the prisoners' own self-forming conduct as they subscribe to certain forms

of knowledge that exist within the prison and act according to particular understandings of self. Within the power-knowledge relation, prisoners continually re-organize their subjectivities throughout their sentence as the organizing practices of the prison continually operate to prevent, thwart, and hinder resistance and shape prisoner conduct.

A Foucauldian analysis of subjectivity offers a unique and distinctive approach to examining the prison and presents a different means by which social reality can be understood. Prisoner subjectivity is not only a result of the social, economic, or cultural categories to which prisoners belong, but is also the outcome of the diverse relations of power in which they are involved and the forms of knowledge to which they subscribe. Investigating subjectivity as a process provides new lines of inquiry through which to conceptualize the prison and conceive the prisoner. This research is an exploration of how such an analysis can be applied to the prison and what new understandings it might offer.

## **CHAPTER THREE**

### **METHODOLOGY**

Gaining insight into prison life is often a difficult task as both researcher and researched are affected by the restrictive nature of the prison environment and also by the research itself. The researcher must therefore maintain an open and reflexive awareness of the conditions under which information is gathered and of the methods used for analysis and interpretation. In the following Chapter, I first describe the general approach to the research and the data collection methods employed, including sample selection, information gathering, and the strengths and limitations of such methods. Secondly, I discuss the data analysis procedures and techniques, and the ethical considerations involved with this type of research. I conclude this Chapter by operationalizing the key-concepts that guide my study.

#### **General Approach to the Research**

In order to gain insight into the prison and the prisoner's lived realities, a qualitative approach is used. Such an approach offers a rich and in-depth method to investigate prison experiences. "Qualitative techniques allow researchers to share in the understandings and perceptions of others and to explore how people structure and give meaning to their daily lives" (Berg, 1998: 7). Although a quantitative approach allows for large scale sampling of the prison population, this method may miss the nuances of everyday life and social practice, and thus certain meanings and understandings may be lost or ignored.

## **Data Selection and Gathering Methods**

For my data selection, I chose to investigate life-sentenced male prisoners (i.e. lifers) incarcerated for murder. As lifers, these men have been given a life-sentence, but reflect various parole eligibility dates (e.g. life-10, life-15, life-22 etc.). Since part of the purpose of my research is to understand how prisoners understand and conduct themselves with respect to release, the data needs to reflect how prisoners organize and negotiate their time in prison. Given the length of their sentences, this category of prisoners experience a great degree of exposure to the prison environment and must continually contend with their 'eligibility for parole' and their eventual release.

For my research, I selected seven video-interviews with life-sentenced prisoners living at Collins Bay Institution (medium security) in Kingston, Ontario. The interviews were originally part of a separate research project organized by the Infinity Lifers Liaison Group<sup>1</sup> (ILLG) at the University of Ottawa. The interviews were conducted by myself, and three other Master level students at the Department of Criminology at the University of Ottawa (i.e. Angela Arcuri, Brian Wahl, Jodi McDonough). All four interviewers were volunteers who had been members of the ILLG for a minimum of four years.

The subjects consisted of seven lifers and one long-term<sup>2</sup> prisoner, all men, with various parole eligibility dates and sentence lengths. The interviews as such, were well

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<sup>1</sup> The Infinity Lifer's Liaison Group is a volunteer prisoners' rights and political advocacy group, organized through Ottawa-Carleton Universities. The group acts as liaisons for the Infinity Lifer's Group at Collins Bay Institution in Kingston. Their aim is to raise awareness about the struggles affecting life-sentenced prisoners specifically and Canadian prisoners generally, by initiating endeavors, along with seeking out and participating in the activities of similar groups across the country.

<sup>2</sup> For consistency in sample selection, the interview conducted with the long-term prisoner was not used as part of my data as the interview subject did not fit the characteristics of my sample selection. Although his prison sentence was lengthy he still possessed a statutory release date and a warrant expiry date.

suited to my own research as the subjects had spent various amounts of time within the prison (e.g. from two years to twenty years) and their reflection upon their experiences of the prison offered insight into their everyday realities and perspectives on release. These eight video-recorded interviews were conducted on December 7<sup>th</sup> and 8<sup>th</sup>, 2000. Brian Wahl and myself conducted the first four on December 7, 2000 while Angela Arcuri and Jodie McDonough conducted the other four the following day. Prior to the interviews, the subjects were provided with a sheet of paper that listed three areas of discussion (see Table I below).

**Table I – Prisoner Interviews: Topics of Discussion**

|                                                                          |
|--------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| <i>Loss – identity, family, friends and death</i>                        |
| <i>Adaptation – surviving and coping</i>                                 |
| <i>Aftermath effects of a life sentence – despair, humiliation, etc.</i> |

At the beginning of each interview, we asked each subject his age, sentence length, and time served. During data organization, this information was compiled and served as a ‘quick reference’ (Berg, 1993: see Table III, p. 59) sheet for easy access to compare the variables of age, time served, and parole eligibility. Apart from these specific questions and the general topics of discussion, the group members chose to use open-ended questions and non-directive interview techniques to allow for a free flow of ideas and to avoid leading the subject towards our own personal understandings of the prison. The questions we asked during the interviews were derived from the immediate topic of discussion (where we asked for further explanation or elaboration) or were based upon topics that came-up in previous interviews. Each subject was interviewed by two of the

four researchers involved in the project (based upon previous relations of trust that had been established between the ILLG member and the interview subject). During the interviews, only the two interviewers assigned would ask questions, while the other members would observe. Following the interview, the other two members of the team would review the video recorded interview with the lifer in order to permit the subject to edit or remove any material which he considered compromising. After each interview, the four researchers met alone to discuss the interview and determine whether there were any themes which should be explored further in later interviews. Given this approach, we touched upon the themes we wished to address, but also often strayed well beyond these topics.

Once the interviews were completed, Brian Wahl and myself transcribed the interviews to make them available for future use. The interviews were transcribed verbatim and, to maintain the conversational tone, we left in the “likes” and “you knows” that seemed to serve as a point in speech that allowed the speaker time to gather his thoughts.

### **Strengths and Limitations**

With any study, there are particular strengths and limitations that the researcher must identify and reflect upon before and during the analysis phase. One limitation is with the data collection. Since the material was collected from a secondary source, the interviews may not provide the researcher with the direct information of the issue under investigation. Firstly however, in this case, the prisoners did address their individual and collective concerns about the prison and release, and thus spoke directly to my research. Secondly, the analytical approach used for this particular research does not require that

particular phenomenon be addressed. That is, as discussed in Chapter Two, since power is everywhere and where there is power there is the possibility for resistance, it is not necessary for prisoners to directly reflect upon such topics, but rather to discuss their experiences in general. Finally, the use of secondary sources also excludes the possibility of the researcher influencing or leading the subjects for the purpose of their research.

Another potential limitation of my research is the sample size. Although the interviews only represent a small proportion of the prison population and particular to life-sentenced prisoners, after initial reading, certain themes continued to emerge and it became apparent that sufficient data were present for my research. While it is not a representative sample of the population under study, the interviews are nonetheless informative and offer insight into the daily practices of prison life and similarities among the interview subjects emerge. Another concern with the sample size, as well as the sample selection, is the ability to generalize the findings to other prisons and prisoners. While the research can somewhat be generalized to other lifers across Canada, it is difficult to determine if the findings speak to other categories and classes of prisoners. For example, prisoners serving less time, female prisoners, and minority groups may have different experiences than life-sentenced prisoners. While there may be certain commonalities between prisoners in general, particularly amongst those who share an uncertainty of their release, it remains to be seen whether the findings can be generalized to other prisoners. Another limitation of this sample is the failure to have prison administration or staff members inform my research. Although time constraints do not permit for such an investigation, these individuals would nonetheless provide a very different insight into the prison complex.

A further potential difficulty with my sample is the environment from which the research was conducted. Due to the controlling nature of the prison, the information the prisoners are willing to convey may be limited. For example, although staff members were not present at the time of the interviews, CSC representatives have access to the video recordings at any time and prisoners may be reluctant to reveal some types of information or convey certain feelings or personal understandings. This is particularly germane to my own research since prisoners may be unwilling to share any information that may jeopardize their potential for release. Although an ideal arrangement would entail actual field observation, access to the prison environment is highly limited and prisoner interviews are therefore the best available method of gaining an understanding into this highly contained and secretive world.

In terms of transcription, the written word is a constricting medium and it is sometimes difficult to capture sentiment, body language, and tone of voice on paper. At times, certain meanings may be lost. While limited in their approach, transcription provides us with a written record of the everyday realities of prisoners as they relate their personal experiences and points of view. Furthermore, by transcribing the interview verbatim from the spoken word, the conversational tone is maintained; this allows for a certain degree of sentiment and expression to emerge on paper. A final circumstantial limitation of the research is the lack of follow-up information. During the data organization and analysis, I realized that at various points in the interviews, a further elaboration and clarification would have been beneficial to the research. However, follow-up interviews were not possible at this time due to issues of access, time constraints, and limited resources. Although the initial interviews would benefit from further clarification, they still provide the researcher with valuable data for analysis.

## **Epistemological Standpoint**

While I have not conducted actual fieldwork in the prison in relation to my own research, I have nonetheless gained certain insight into prison life and prisoner culture through five years of volunteer work with a prisoner rights advocacy group. As a member of the Infinity Lifers Liaison Group, I visit Collins Bay Institution in Kingston, Ontario on a bi-weekly basis. During these visits, certain relationships have been developed with the prisoners (including the interview participants) by sharing in personal experiences and perspectives. This insight into the prison has provided me with some understanding of the issues and particularities involved in my present research. This personal involvement with the prisoners however, might result in my subjective feelings biasing my work. On the other hand, having established a relationship of trust over the years could also serve as a benefit as the subjects may have been more willing to share in their experiences with individuals with whom they are familiar and who have no affiliation with CSC. Throughout my analysis of the prison research, it is necessary to maintain a reflexive awareness of my understandings of the prison, given the nature and quality of my previously established familiarity with the prison and prisoners.

## **Data Organization and Analysis**

Having chosen to investigate the prison through a Foucauldian analysis of subjectivity, particular attention was given to how prisoners understood and conducted themselves in the prison. With this in mind, after reviewing the videos and editing the transcripts, analysis began with an initial reading of the seven interviews. Here, general themes and patterns emerged as they related to a Foucauldian understanding of subjectivity. Throughout my analysis, I focused attention on those themes that

corresponded to the practices in which prisoners engaged, the relations prisoners had with themselves and others, and their perceptions of themselves and of others. Particular themes emerged and were noted in the margins. A secondary and third reading of the interviews were performed which allowed for a more detailed familiarity with the interview material. Throughout subsequent readings, new themes emerged while further understandings of the existing themes were developed. The themes (or text segments) were then separated from the rest of the text and coded into their respective categories, i.e. prisoner practices, relations or perceptions (see Table II below).

**Table II – Categories and Themes**

| <b>Prisoner Practices</b>     | <b>Prisoner Relations</b>                | <b>Prisoner Perceptions</b>                    |
|-------------------------------|------------------------------------------|------------------------------------------------|
| <i>Routine</i>                | <i>Relations with Staff</i>              | <i>Perceptions of their 'crime'</i>            |
| <i>Living Day to Day</i>      | <i>Relations with Others</i>             | <i>Perceptions of How Others Perceive Them</i> |
| <i>Doing Time</i>             | <i>Relations with Family and Friends</i> |                                                |
| <i>Institutional Programs</i> | <i>Relations with Self</i>               |                                                |

As Crabtree and Miller (1999) suggest, a broad conceptualization of the categories was used to preserve larger segments of the text. After each text segment was coded to its respective category, a further revision of the themes was conducted. Particular sections of the text segments that were repetitive or did not contribute to a further understanding of the text were removed.

In order to determine which part of the text to select, I adopted Tesch's (1990:116) definition of text segments; "a segment of the text that is comprehensible by

itself and contains one idea, episode, or piece of information". Terms used by the prisoners or 'in vivo tags' (Berg, 1998: 227) served as a guiding tool to identify particular segments of the text. For example, while looking for episodes of prisoner practices, statements such as "doing my own thing", "doing time" or "minding my own business" fell under the theme of 'doing time'. The corresponding text that related to an understanding of 'doing time' was maintained. Based on my own analytical framework, sociological constructs were also developed to identify certain meaning units within the text. For example, the sociological construct of 'relations with self' consisted of those statements such as "self-examination" or "thinking".

Throughout the data analysis process, to ensure methodological rigour and systematic and consistent coding of data segments, I adopted what Glaser and Strauss (1967) refer to as 'the constant comparative method'.

Horizontal comparisons . . . [are] a cross-sites comparison strategy based upon the assumption a richer and more complete understanding can be derived by determining similarities and differences regarding the same phenomenon . . . In contrast, vertical comparisons . . . attempt to retrace the analytical and methodological decisions made (quoted in Glassner and Corzine, 1982: 310).

While coding for a particular theme, text segments were compared with other incidences previously coded and with other themes within all three categories to ensure similar themes were emerging and that no categories were missed.

Since a qualitative approach involves latent and subjective interpretations of the data, analytical notes were taken to keep track of the decisions made throughout this process. As themes were refined and developed, a reflexive and open dialogue between the data and analytical framework was necessary to allow for flexible categorization, versatility of the analysis, and for new understandings to emerge (Altheide, 1987: 68). Negative instances of the themes were also retained to test emergent understandings of

the patterns and to offer alternative explanations during interpretation (Morgan, 1993: 120). After initial coding, a review of the themes and selected text segments was conducted and a narrower conceptualization of the themes emerged and patterns were established for comparison and interpretation.

Throughout the interpretation process, not only were patterns in the data investigated, but careful consideration was also given to the context in which the messages were produced (that is, how the message was delivered, the circumstances under which it was delivered, and when it was delivered). Referring back to my 'quick reference sheet', I considered the age of the prisoner, their sentence length, the amount of time served, as well as the amount of time remaining before parole eligibility, or time served past parole eligibility. In considering this information, possible and alternative explanations were explored and a better understanding of the patterns was developed. Thomas (1994) suggests that the interpretation of the data requires a 'defamiliarization' process in which researchers revise what they have seen into something different. This allows the researcher to distance themselves from taken-for-granted assumptions and identify alternative interpretations. "In this sense our results are never final, but only partial and always subject to re-thinking" (Thomas, 1994: 45). In order to actualize this process, I borrowed a term from a phenomenological approach known as 'bracketing' in which ontological judgments or a priori knowledges are suspended, while focusing on how subjects organize and reproduce their realities (Holstein and Gubrium, 1998: 63)

As previously stated, given the nature of my research, this type of study required an analysis of the latent content where "... analysis is extended to an interpretive reading of the symbolism underlying the physically presented data" (Berg, 1998: 225). By applying my analytical framework, an interpretation of the patterns and themes present

were thus formed. The final stage of the interpretation process involved legitimating my research findings by verifying the analytical relationships with my framework, exploring alternative explanations, and reviewing negative cases that disconfirmed explanations provided (Marshall and Rossman, 199: 157). In order to exemplify interpretations made and clarify the findings section, direct quotes from the interview subjects are used. Not only does this illustrate the themes present in the data, but also provides the readers with a better sense of the meanings conveyed in the messages and the prisoners' experiences as presented in their own words.

### **Ethical Considerations**

Throughout the research process it was important to bear in mind that the prison population is a highly vulnerable group. Any information they impart about themselves or others may have ramifications for the prisoner or those in the community. In addition to this, it was important to ensure that the subjects were made aware of the purpose of the research, and to protect their interests as a highly vulnerable population. These concerns were thus given priority over the research itself.

During the recruitment process, prisoners were individually approached and asked if they would be interested in discussing their own experiences on the effects of incarceration. They were told the results would be presented at a public seminar at the University of Ottawa. Eleven subjects were approached. One possible subject declined as his case was on appeal and two more withdrew their names. The eight remaining participants were interviewed during the day in the 'sports room', located within the gymnasium. Apart from the four researchers and the personal development officer, who was only present before and after the sessions, no one else was permitted into the room

during the interviews unless the subject stated otherwise. The gymnasium was also free of distractions during this time. Each participant was first verbally made aware of his rights to anonymity and confidentiality and that he had the option to withdraw from the study at any time without prejudice. The participant was then presented with a consent form that reiterated this information. Upon signature, the researchers and participants each retained a copy. Before the video-recording began, participants were instructed not to speak directly or specifically of their 'crimes' or about those involved. The subjects were also told they could stop the interview at any time and could refuse to answer any particular questions, again without prejudice. The subjects were also offered the opportunity to review their interview upon completion and to edit any portion if they so chose. All but one subject reviewed their interview and two asked for certain portions to be omitted. The sections for omission were noted and were removed during transcription. To maintain prisoner confidentiality, the interview subjects were given pseudonyms and any other revealing criteria or imparting information was altered or removed. This was done to ensure the anonymity of the prisoners and to protect their safety and personal interests.

Although these interviews became accessible to the public upon signing Correctional Service of Canada release forms, for my research, further ethical steps were taken. After completion of the transcriptions, I approached each research participant individually and verbally asked their permission to use their interviews in my research. I explained the nature of my research and provided them a copy of their individual transcripts to review and to decide if there was any information they did not want disclosed. All seven of the life-sentenced participants gave verbal consent. After several months had elapsed, I again approached each subject individually with a consent form

that again outlined my research and guaranteed his anonymity and confidentiality. All seven interview subjects signed the release form and both the participant and the researcher retained a copy.

### **Operationalizing the Concepts**

In Chapter Two, I outlined the particular concepts related to understanding a Foucauldian notion of subjectivity. In this section, I operationalize the concepts for methodological consideration. As the research process developed, it became apparent that there was a myriad of ways that the material could be contextualized. Although I initially planned to code instances of self-government and resistance, the direction my research took was not conducive to this format and it became apparent that the data was being forced into the theory. I therefore allowed the themes to speak for themselves and developed three broad categories that coincided with both the analytical framework and the data. Although the data did not fit my initial intent, it was not however necessary to discard the analytical tool as I came to realize that forms of self-government and resistance were part of a latent understanding that directed my analysis.

### **Power**

By investigating the three main categories of prisoner practices, relations, and perceptions, how power operates within the prison is revealed. I therefore reviewed the data on the basis of these specific questions: What are the practices and strategies of the prison that shape how prisoners conduct themselves? How do the prisoners understand themselves and others in light of these practices and relations? What strategies and practices within the prison support or maintain forms of power and its reproduction? By

investigating subjectivity as an ongoing consequence of power-knowledge relations. attention is given to how the prisoners understand and conduct themselves.

### **Resistance**

Everyday forms of resistance consist of any acts (written, spoken, or physical) and which act in opposition to power formations that seek to shape or control individuals towards certain ends. They can be sudden outbursts or a subtle expression of thought. Resistance involves those acts or thoughts that do not directly reflect or coincide with institutional goals. I therefore examined the interview material on the bases of the following set of questions: How are the prisoners' practices, relations, and perceptions reflective of or are contrary to prison objectives? What forms of resistance do prisoners engage in and when? What are the conditions that make resistance possible or facilitate it? When does prisoners' resistance become problematic within the prison? How does resistance alter the power dynamic? Within the power-knowledge relation, resistance was identified as an act, thought, or expression that did not necessarily disrupt the everyday living arrangements of the prisoner, but did not correspond with institutional protocol, demands, or objectives.

### **Self-Government**

Self-government represents the various ways that prisoners conduct themselves in their everyday lives and as subjects of a certain type. Forms of self-government are those acts that are reflective of the practices that shape prisoner conduct and how they understand themselves and others. To gain insight into the ways that prisoners self-govern, I focus on questions such as; how do prisoners govern their conduct in a prison setting? What are their aims, goals, and aspirations in doing so? What do the prison and

the prisoner perceive as instrumental in attaining release? How are the prisoners understanding of themselves organized according to certain schemes? How prisoners self-govern reveals the forms of knowledge that are established within the prison and how prisoners understand themselves in light of them. These three concepts guide not only the data collection, but also my research analysis. In the following Chapter, I will attempt to ground these concepts within the data to reveal how a Foucauldian analysis of prisoner subjectivity can provide us with different insight into the processes and practices that emerge within the prison.

## **CHAPTER FOUR**

### **FINDINGS**

The organizing practices of the prison are designed to shape and guide conduct to produce prisoners as subjects of a certain type, e.g. ‘productive’ workers, ‘law-abiding’ citizens, ‘pro-social’ beings etc. As discussed in Chapter Two, by framing my research within a Foucauldian analysis of subjectivity, I investigate how the prisoners themselves are active throughout this process. Through the various strategies and techniques that operate within the prison, and through their own means, prisoners conduct and understand themselves as subjects of a certain type.

To gain such insight, I explore three categories; prisoner practices, relations, and perceptions. Within each category, I look at how prisoners self-govern or resist within power-knowledge relations as they are played out in the context of the organizing practices of the prison. Throughout this Chapter, I address each category and its respective themes separately. These do not however represent separate spheres of life realities for the prisoners, but are rather interrelated and reflect dynamic realities. Consequently, there is some overlap between the three main categories which serves to highlight the complex nature of the prison.

The notion of self-government provides a general understanding of how the prisoners live and organize their daily lives within the institution and how they make sense of their imprisonment. Forms of resistance on the other hand, are those acts or behaviours that contradict or undermine the practices of the prison. When speaking of resistance, we most often conceptualize such acts as violent outbreaks or verbal assaults. Although they constitute a type of resistance, they do not encompass all forms. Like

power, resistance reveals itself in many ways and includes various acts that are significant to those who engage in it. Within the prison, this type of resistance provides individuals with a means to position themselves against their confinement and oppose the imposition of particular modes of being and ways of thinking. In so doing, the prisoners maintain some individual autonomy and a relatively autonomous concept of self.

By looking at how prisoners conduct and understand themselves, I hope to reveal some of the various ways power operates within the prison, how it is linked to forms of knowledge, and how such power creates the conditions against which prisoners resist. By not only exploring how the prison system directs and shapes conduct, but also at how the prisoners themselves are active in their self-formation, a space is opened for agency to emerge and for prisoner resistance to be significant in the relations of power found within the prison.

### **Life-Sentenced Prisoners**

Table III below, lists the pseudo-name, age, sentence, and time served of each lifer interviewed. This introduces my subject base and illustrates where each individual stands in relation to their release. This information is important as prisoners, at certain stages in their sentence, may provide different insight into their experiences as a result of their varying degrees of exposure to prison life. The prisoners may also offer a particular frame of reference depending on whether they reflect on how much time they have already served, or how much time they have remaining before their parole eligibility. Despite these differences, the findings suggest that prisoners share similar experiences and some common understandings of prison life.

**Table III: Reference Sheet of Interview Subjects**

| <b>Name</b>  | <b>Age</b> | <b>Sentence</b> | <b>Time Served</b> |
|--------------|------------|-----------------|--------------------|
| <i>Gregg</i> | 20         | <i>life/11</i>  | <i>2 years</i>     |
| <i>Alex</i>  | 26         | <i>life/15</i>  | <i>4 ½ years</i>   |
| <i>Ted</i>   | 26         | <i>life/18</i>  | <i>5 years</i>     |
| <i>Scott</i> | 25         | <i>life/22</i>  | <i>7 years</i>     |
| <i>Gary</i>  | 38         | <i>life/10</i>  | <i>8 years</i>     |
| <i>Simon</i> | 36         | <i>life/12</i>  | <i>16 years</i>    |
| <i>Miles</i> | 36         | <i>life/10</i>  | <i>20 years</i>    |

Unlike other prison sentences<sup>1</sup>, life sentenced prisoners do not possess warrant expiry dates, nor do they qualify for statutory release. That is, lifers have no set release dates and are not eligible for parole review after two-thirds of their sentence has elapsed. Lifers are eligible for parole three years prior to their parole eligibility dates, and if sentenced over 15 years, they can apply for a judicial review under section 745 of the criminal code<sup>2</sup>. With little possibility for early parole and without a warrant expiry date, this category of prisoners serve long periods of time in prison and experience some different realities compared to other prisoners with a particular respect to release.

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<sup>1</sup> This is with the exception for those individuals possessing indeterminate sentences. These individuals are eligible for full parole after seven years for prisoners sentenced after August 1, 1997 and three years if sentenced prior to August 1, 1997 (NPB Policy Manual, 1999, Section 2.4).

<sup>2</sup> Under section 745 of the Criminal Code, prisoners sentenced to more than 15 years of imprisonment can apply to have their trial sentence reviewed. If their judicial review is successful, they can appeal to the parole board for a reduction in their eligibility dates.

*Simon: I'm motivated to get out. How I'm going to do it, I don't know. . . So that's a long ways away. And how long, I don't know. I can't even get down to a lower medium.*

Due to the length of their sentence and the uncertainty of their release, lifers must continually balance the lived realities of their confinement with what is expected of them in their daily lives and with the indeterminate amount of time before they are considered for release<sup>3</sup>.

### **Prisoner Practices**

The prison is a unique system that monitors and regulates conduct in complex ways. The prisoner's actions, responses, and relationships are exposed within the institution and are thus always subject to control and supervision (Goffman, 1961: 5-48). While prisoner conduct is constantly monitored and regulated, their everyday lives are reflective of the organizing practices of the prison, i.e. through routine, diet, sleep, work, leisure etc. All aspects of prison life direct the daily conduct of the prisoners on a continual and on-going basis.

*Gary: It's like being regimented you know what I mean, like that. I think that's a good thing actually. I'm not saying like you know, where as you're a robot but you have a good routine and following it is a good thing because you know what is pretty well expected of you*

In light of the institutional regime, the prisoners are required to fashion a lifestyle for themselves that corresponds to the rules and procedures that confine them to small ranges of possible action.

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<sup>3</sup> Notions of release should be understood as all forms of decisions that bring lifers closer to parole, e.g. cascading to lower security facilities, unescorted temporary absences, positive conduct reports etc.

## **Routine**

Daily activities of the prisoners are highly structured within the prison environment. Regimented time schedules and prisoner 'counts' allow for a greater degree of observation, monitoring, and control of the prisoners. These living schemes not only create a particular lifestyle for the prisoners, but also provide them with an understanding of what is expected of them while incarcerated, i.e. programming, education, work, and day to day living. All the prisoners elaborated on the mechanics of their daily routine, and three even expressed the inevitability of it.

***Gregg:** I didn't want to get into a routine at first but I slowly started getting into a routine. So now I'm basically everyday, like I said I get up every day, I look forward to it, and when I go to bed at night it's another day down.*

***Ted:** That's how my lifestyle has turned into and I like it, you know, it's so much easier to get things accomplished if I, if I follow a strict routine.*

***Scott:** At the beginning its rough, like you're just getting yourself accustomed to the routine, and knowing that's where you're going to be living for a long time. It just came easy, just over a while*

While the prisoners found that developing a routine was inevitable, they also found it very purposeful and necessary as it made their prison sentence 'easier' to handle. The prisoners expressed that 'easy time' is the result of the days passing quickly. Developing a daily routine to occupy their time therefore made for 'easy time'. While the prison shapes the daily living arrangements and lifestyles of its occupants, it also serves the purpose of providing the prisoners with 'something to do'.

***Gregg:** I work all day and then I do my own time at night, I read books, I watch TV, or I come out, I socialize down here in the gym, I play hockey. That makes the time go by pretty quick.*

***Alex:** Now I've started whatever, playing sports, or playing on my computer, or doing something else to occupy my time, you know?*

*Scott: You come down to the gym, or get a couple guys to play a basketball game, or go inside your cell and do whatever you do in there, play a game, or whatever you're playing, play cards. Just keep busy.*

*Simon: Then I finally got my job and I'm happier. At least it gives me something to look forward to each day when I get out. It occupies seven eight hours out of my day.*

By developing a routine, the prisoners also develop a reassurance that the days will be full and they will be kept busy with activities to occupy their time. So, although the activities themselves may be legitimate and productive according to institutional protocol, the prisoners partake in them partially to dispel the boredom of prison life, and not only as a means to 'improve' their styles and habits of living or to maintain the 'good order of the institution'.

*Scott: Do whatever you do outside, except that in here you have to do it in one space. We do exactly the same things as you do, except that you don't have access to go wherever you want. It's boring, more than anything.*

As a result of the organizing practices of the prison, following a routine becomes a form of adaptation to the prison environment and the prisoners manage their sentence (at least in part) by making use of the prisons' own physical arrangements. This allows the prisoners to take a certain degree of ownership over their sentence and maintain a sense of autonomy by indicating that such living arrangements make for 'easy time', and are thus able to transform institutional protocols and demands to their benefit.

### **Living Day to Day**

Developing a routine also provided the prisoners with an ability to live their life on a 'day to day basis'. Living out their sentence 'one day at a time' is important for the prisoners as, similar to the idea of developing a routine, they also found that living day to day made their time spent in the prison 'easier'. All of the prisoners interviewed

elaborated on how they live 'day to day', regardless of how far they were into their prison sentence.

*Gregg: I live my life day to day. I don't plan about nothing or anything. I just worry, okay I get up the next day, there's another day down.*

*Alex: I don't know, I try to, whatever happens in the day, I just go with the day. I try not to make plans.*

*Ted: But the here and now is more important than the future as far as how I cope on a day to day basis in here.*

*Scott: I do my little thing that I do everyday, and that gets me by the day, makes my day feel nice. In the night, I'm nice and tired, sleep, wake the next morning, do it again. So, I do my time all right. When it's time to come out, come out.*

*Miles: I don't always determine things in time, like you know, the bit or time, like I mean I live in the moment. I think that that's so important cause that's where you're at, and that's where your concentration and energy is focussed on.*

Just as the prisoners develop a routine to escape their confinement, living one day at a time helps them forget the amount of time left in their sentence or remind them of the amount of time they have served. This again presents the idea of 'easier time' since living in the past or future only serves to draw out the prison experience.

*Ted: I think more about the here and now and, really I do think about the future, but I don't think about what I'll be doing when I get out.*

*Miles: If you focus on the past or look into the distant future, then you're unfocussed and I guess remaining focused is important.*

By living for the day, rather than anticipating release, prisoners and particularly lifers, can safeguard themselves against disappointment or 'getting their hopes up too high'. Since prison sentences are determined by a certain time period, time in the prison is a significant aspect of the prisoners' lives. Despite the importance of time, the prisoners interviewed generally rejected a view of anticipating release.

The prisoners expressed the importance of living day to day, and did not find it productive or helpful to count each day remaining before their parole eligibility. While this may be reflective of the uncertainty of their sentence length, the prisoners also expressed the importance of not concentrating themselves on their release from the prison, as it only prolongs how they experience their time spent inside. Regardless of the amount of time served, not anticipating release was an important aspect of their daily lives.

*Gregg: I lose track of days to tell you the truth. You know what I mean, you got guys who put calendars up and they count the days off this and that. I've never done that cause I find it so hard, it makes the time go slower.*

*Ted: You know I really don't keep track of the days in here like regularly. I don't even know what the date is or anything in here and I really don't care. Time flies by for me that way.*

*Gary: No I can't do that, actually like having a date to get out, like I know when I'll be going up in front of the board for the next time and I don't have any expectations to walk out of that board hearing with anything.*

Even lifers such as Miles, who at the time of the interview had spent twenty years in prison, did not anticipate parole, nor did he want to discuss life after his release from prison.

*Miles: I'll probably go back to my family in Oakville, spend a little time there, and from there, see I can't say for sure exactly until I, I get there, but to look at not-too-far distant future, something like that is probably the route.*

Although in his interview Miles stated he would be released upon completion of three clean urinalysis tests, he nonetheless maintains the importance of not focusing on the future and living for 'the moment' despite his foreseeable release.

While all of the prisoners expressed their desire to leave the prison, they did not think it was beneficial to organize themselves around prospects of leaving the institution. The prison on the other hand is structured so that from the moment the prisoner arrives at

the institution, they are being prepared for release. Psychological assessments are conducted and correctional plans are developed on an on-going basis to determine the 'needs' of the prisoner and the programs necessary for their 're-integration' into society. Although the prisoners are concerned with leaving the prison, in the interviews, they seemed to give little consideration to how they would live their lives once on parole and despite all the preparation that goes into their release. By living 'day to day', rather than give consideration to their needs on the outside, the prisoners fashion a lifestyle for themselves that 'eases' the burden of a prison-sentence and specifically of a life-sentence, given the uncertainty of release. Similar to the idea of 'following a routine', here again a notion of adaptation to the prison sentence emerges. While the prisoners interviewed avoid contemplating the possibility for release as a means to safe-guard themselves against disappointment, such conduct nonetheless undermines the goals of the institution, and the prison thus creates the conditions by which prisoners resist and hinder the 'success' of prison practices and institutional mandate.

### 'Doing Time'

As prisoners' lives are organized according to certain schemes and along certain time dimensions, prisoners resist the formal operation of the prison by "doing their own time". Sykes in "The Society of Captives" sets forth the notion of a 'convict code' and how prisoners 'do their own time' by prescribing to an informal prisoner value system (1958: 86-87). 'Doing your own time', as part of the 'convict code', allows for prisoner solidarity and cohesion and thus alleviates the pains of imprisonment as it provides the prisoners with their own rules of conduct. In the interviews, four of the prisoners exemplified Sykes' argument by expressing the importance of "doing time".

**Gregg:** *Like personally myself, I do my own time I do my own thing, I don't get involved in other people's problems.*

**Ted:** *I would say it's probably not too bad in here, as long as there isn't a lot of pressure from the officers and that in here so. But they[i.e. the prisoners] seem to fuck things, when they start stirring up shit and that people forget about how to do their time and you know, they start thinking about how much the 'Man's pissing him off and what they can do to get back at them and you know?*

**Gary:** *But I can admire a guy for being able to do for the better instead of having to get his nose in shit and do that.*

**Miles:** *Well that's, those are the two number one things that I remember that I was told was that, "Don't get involved with politics and don't get involved with debts and you can survive, anyone can survive."*

For the prisoners, 'doing your own time' was generally reflective of an attempt to keep to yourself in all aspects of life, and was understood as such by all the prisoners interviewed, whether they prescribed to such a value system or not.

As part of an informal 'inmate code', learning how to 'do time', is passed on from one prisoner to the next. Those prisoners who have served longer periods of time in the institution provide direction and guidance on how 'to do time' to those first entering the prison. This learning experience is particularly fundamental for those lifers who are new to the system, as they face 'hard time'.

**Gregg:** *I've talked to a few people like older guys doing the life thing giving me a little insight into how I should go about things.*

**Scott:** *When I came in here, I hung around, like older guys who showed me, like things. How to do time, right? So, I learned a great deal in prison.*

**Gary:** *Like the old timers, you know what I mean? And you would be surprised how they use to teach the young guy how to do time, "Mind your own business".*

Learning to 'do your own time', passed on from one prisoner to the next, allows prisoners to live out their sentence with the least amount of conflict with staff and other prisoners.

For example, although Gary stated he respected those men who could do 'their own time'

he on the other hand discussed his own active resistance against staff and administration, (i.e. 'the man') and the 'trouble' such resistance caused him.

*Gary: I always thought that trouble used to find me, but when I look at it a little bit differently, no it used to be the other way around . . . Well probably it had a lot to do with staff. Like I used to be very abusive and that, and I would say nine out of the ten times it wasn't my, like I was sticking my nose where it didn't belong. I would just have an opinion, like blah, blah, blah.*

While prison staff and the administration cannot always control prisoner outbreaks, active prisoner resistance is limited or stifled by curtailing chances for parole through various measures such as 'write-ups' and 'institutional charges'. Two other prisoners also discussed similar experiences as Gary's, in their relations with staff<sup>4</sup>.

*Alex: and I look at it as it doesn't matter who you are, if you disrespect me, I'll disrespect you back. . . Like I'm already stressed out for being here as one, and then I have to worry about the stress that they're giving me, and then it leads to charges, and to segregation, and stuff like that. It's like when will it end, type of deal, you know what I mean?*

*Simon: They want to get in your face, but the moment you, cause nobody wants to sit there and listen to anybody's shit, especially in different clothing right? I don't want to listen to them but I know if I don't shut up I'm being charged for some bullshit, possibly thrown in the hole, and then possibly getting an involuntary transfer. And they're the ones that say we need the programs to better ourselves.*

In the above two quotes, we see how overt acts of resistance are taken-up within the prison through disciplinary measures, which only creates further conflict and problems for the prisoners. 'Doing your own time' on the other hand, provides the prisoners with a means to resist institutional goals as it is not formally sanctioned by the prison, but is

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<sup>4</sup> It is important to note the discrepancy in time served for both prisoners. While Alex has served four and a half years of his life-sentence, Simon has served sixteen years and is four years past his parole eligibility date. This suggests that time served is not necessarily a factor in determining when prisoners overtly resist.

rather informally organized and understood amongst prisoners. At the same time, it allows the prisoners to avoid conflict and thus better position themselves for release.

While ‘doing your own time’ is a common value amongst prisoners, each prisoner maintained their own sense of what works for them. This provides them with a certain degree of autonomy and a means for individual expression.

*Gregg: I picked up pretty quick on how life goes in here. Like how to follow rules, what to do, this and that. But other than that, like I said everybody does their own thing differently. So me for myself, I just do what I have to do.*

*Scott: For some people it's different things. For some people it's their next hit, you know, for junkies, getting high, that's their way. For religious people, it's you know, whatever everybody does. For me, it's just being comfortable.*

*Ted: I make the best of my time in here and there isn't much I really want for. And I feel pretty comfortable with the way I live and you know I try to make the absolute best out of things in here.*

*Gary: But you know now, if I look at a guy that's serving twenty-five years, for the past twelve, thirteen, fourteen years I would have known that guy and I would admire him for his ability to, you know what I mean, just focus on himself and do what he had to do.*

By taking different approaches to how they ‘do their time’, the prisoners seek out and develop the best way possible to live out their sentence. Such practices also allow the prisoners to resist the relations of power that emerge from the organizing practices of the prison as the prisoners personalize ‘what works for them’ rather than such an understanding stemming from institutional demands. The different approaches also set the prisoner apart from other prisoners by providing them with a separate and individualized sense of self.

### **Institutional Programs**

The prison offers a range of activities and programs for the prisoners to organize their days and what they need to accomplish throughout their sentence in order to gain

parole. In order to assess their 'risks'<sup>5</sup> and subsequent 'needs', the prisoners' lives become public domain to those various officials whose task it is to inform and determine their correctional release plans. Each prisoner is assigned to a case management officer who documents the 'necessary' personal information on the prisoner. This knowledge is particular to the specific criteria needed for 'risk assessment' and to establish a correctional release plan (Correctional Service of Canada, 1999: 700-20). Through the information collected, many aspects of the prisoners' lives are brought into full view and programs are thus offered to correct or alter the behaviour(s) that need attention. For example, prisoners are offered cognitive skills programs which focus on modifying the prisoner's interpersonal reasoning skills for 'effective' life management. By focusing on the "impulsive, egocentric, illogical and rigid thinking" (Correctional Service of Canada, 2000:1) of the prisoner, such programs attempt to have prisoners think and act differently in their everyday lives. Without institutional programming, prisoners delay their chances for early parole, and in the case of lifers, such a delay is indefinite. Programs are therefore a large part of the prisoner's life, particularly as treatment programs are taken into consideration in parole decisions.

*Simon: They give you programs up the wazoo. I've done so many programs I don't know what to do anymore. I'm programmed out.*

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<sup>5</sup> The type of information used to assess risk includes: "the nature of the current offence(s) and any precipitating factors, as identified in police reports, pre-sentence reports etc.; the offenders criminal and social history, including marital and family relationships, especially any evidence of violent behaviour; the role of alcohol and/or drugs in the offender's criminal behaviour; identification of the offender as a member or associate of a criminal gang or of organized crime by CSC; information about antisocial behaviour and its impact on the victim(s); previous breaches of supervision conditions and performance on any earlier conditional releases, including those under a previous sentence, especially any record of being at large without authorization or escape attempts; any indication of violence or abuse of family members, and/or people in relationships of intimacy, dependency or trust with the offender, or who may be otherwise vulnerable; issues surrounding other relationships as they relate to risk of reoffending; issues surrounding employment; information relating to the performance and behaviour of the offender while under any prior sentence; benefit resulting from treatment programs and subsequent behaviour, the offender's mental health status as it affects the likelihood of future criminal acts" (NPB, 1997 2-3)

Programs attempt to have prisoners identify themselves with the program goals and re-organize their understandings of 'self' accordingly. The prison system relies upon certain forms of knowledge about the individual 'offenders' in order to assign them to the proper programs according to their 'needs'. Prisoners are expected to develop a reflexive, self-monitoring knowledge of themselves within the institution and develop the 'right' skills and acquire the 'right' ways of thinking in order to reduce their 'criminal risk'. This necessary self-awareness is exemplified in the following quotes:

*Ted: I'm kind of more interested in what gets the person down so I can learn from it in a way and you know see what, how other people are affected by other stimuli and make sure, like I said, make sure it doesn't happen to me.*

*Gary: But once you are, you know, deemed an offender, now it's like it's something that's gotta' be done consciously you know what I mean? Guys learn to live, like using these skills if someone gets into your face then, "Okay hey well I don't want no problem." being able to you know talk to the guy, instead of getting aggressive yourselves and escalating the situation or whatever you know? It just comes naturally to people. Eventually it just becomes natural to us.*

*Simon: Nobody's gonna' learn, well some guys are going to learn something out of a program. Okay, so you learn to choose your words and talk differently which is okay instead of coming off as aggressive or whatever.*

Through practices of the self, such as self-reflection and the confession, the prisoners are required to expose all aspects of their lives to themselves and others.

"One needs for his own salvation to know as exactly as possible who he is and also, that he needs to tell it as explicitly as possible to some other people . . . the main moral obligation for any subject is to know oneself, to tell the truth about oneself, and to constitute oneself as an object of knowledge both for other people and oneself" (Foucault, 1997: 73).

Once the 'proper' instituted knowledge and awareness of themselves is accepted and revealed to others, prisoners can then correct their way of being through prison based programs. Such institutional practices specify the norms and standards to which individuals should subscribe as subjects and to discipline themselves by internalizing and

seeking to live according to these criteria (Dillon, 1995: 325). Program objectives are not only designed to shape how prisoners self-govern in the presence of staff or authority, but also in relation to other prisoners, with themselves, and ultimately after their release.

In the interviews, taking prison programs was a notable concern for lifers. The prisoners expressed their interest in taking programs by recognizing it was a crucial step towards their eventual release.

*Mike: I'll sit here till whenever. I'll do whatever I have to do, do my work, do my programs, and then I'll see if I can get transferred to lower security and just keep going. Keep doing my programs.*

*Scott: I'm starting a program Monday. I don't know what it's called, but it's like some kind of psychology program, some shit, some crap, something like that. . . They told me they're gonna recommend me to like, leave here [i.e. Collins Bay Institution] next September or whatever, if I pass this test. So I'm gonna try.*

*Simon: "Okay, what do I gotta' do now? What's my next move? How am I going to go about it?" And it's hard to when you get a different C.O. every two, three months or a unit manger. Each person that comes along they change your correctional plan.*

*Miles: Hopefully [I will leave] next year sometime, if I complete certain programs, programming.*

The prisoners are expected to align behaviour and conduct with the goals of the programs, but are 'free' to choose whether or not they partake in them. The form of agency sanctioned by the institution is however skewed as treatment programs are taken into consideration in parole decisions and institutional transfers. Since 'programming' is part of a prisoner's correctional release plan, programs become part of institutional demands. Consent is thus manipulated and although the prisoners may find value in programming, the prisoners interviewed reveal that such value is never separated from their desire to leave the prison.

*Gary: You know getting back to the prior going to NTC [i.e. National Treatment Centre], I didn't have any hopes at all about getting out. And then that whole*

*year cleaned me up, got me thinking again, got me on track. And yeah I'm looking forward to it and I expect it too now its not like it's not going to happen. As long as I stay on track, but two years ago, two and a half years ago, it was one of the furthest things from my mind was getting out. And I didn't like thinking about it too often because I didn't think it was happening you know what I mean?*

*Simon: They wonder why "his participation was marginal at best but at the time we felt he does his best". What they don't realize these programs that they instituted now, I took voluntary when I first came in. Cause they weren't mandatory.*

Through its disciplinary power, the prison succeeds in arranging for prisoners to take programs that are geared to shape how they understand and conduct themselves. But, from the prisoners' point of view, the motive is less to align their conduct with the program goals, than it is to manage themselves in a manner that will improve their chances for release. That is, the value of programs for the prisoners is not so much in the 'programming' itself, but rather the benefits they carry for increasing the prisoners' chances for parole, whether the prisoner subscribes to the program rational or not.

While the prison is structured to maintain order and shape the conduct of the prisoners, certain fields of possibility exist for them to resist or hinder prison strategies and practices designed to fashion them as self-regulated subjects. Despite the prison's efforts, the prisoners govern their conduct in a way that is not necessarily reflective of the rules and codes organized within the prison, but rather to serve their own ends for release. Although conduct is directed and shaped by the organizing practices of the prison, prisoners maintain a sense of self and a degree of autonomy by 'doing' and 'acting' in ways that are not reflective of institutional goals, but nonetheless provide them with 'credibility' or 'good standing' within the institution. If prisoners overtly resist (e.g. acts of aggression, verbal outbreaks, failing to take correctional programs, etc.), their chances for parole are reduced as such incidents are fixed on their institutional records and are

considered in their parole reviews. Subtle acts and less direct forms of resistance (e.g. doing your own time, keeping to yourself, etc) allow them to maintain a sense of autonomy, and at the same time, improve their prospects for release. Given the conditions of possibility, through their daily living arrangements and individual practices, the prisoners resist the confines of their imprisonment and the power-knowledge relations that seek to limit their autonomy and impose on them a certain way of 'being'.

### **Prisoner Relations**

Just as the prison structures the daily lives of the prisoners, it also fashions the type of relations the prisoners have with family and friends, staff, other prisoners, and with themselves. Within the organizing practices of the prison, strategies and techniques are used to regulate prisoner relations. While the prison determines the types of contacts prisoners can maintain while incarcerated (e.g. with other prisoners, through limited visits and phone lists, etc.) the prisoners negotiate the nature and quality of their relations within and outside of the institution, as well as with themselves (i.e. how they act upon themselves as subjects of a certain type).

Practice requires negotiation, the manner by which individuals resist and act as free agents, even in situations of dominance and oppression, becomes central to understanding the very practices by which they are controlled (Castellani, 1999: 268-9).

Within the power-knowledge dynamics of the institution, prisoners actively negotiate how their relations with others and with themselves are managed, thus opening the door for agency and resistance to emerge, even within institutions of control.

## Relations with Staff

Goffman describes an 'us-them' division created between staff and inmates as a result of the social organization of the institution (1961: 7). This split between the guards and prisoners was also apparent throughout the interviews. Four of the seven lifers interviewed discussed their general avoidance of staff, while two articulated their outright hostility towards them.

***Interviewer:** What's your interaction with the staff?*

***Gregg:** None really. Only time I've seen them, the guard is going up the strip when I'm going to work. Other than that, I don't really talk to nobody.*

***Alex:** I'm trying to behave myself, but it's the few officers in this place that have a problem with me, that take it and spread it around that I'm no good, like I'm a piece of shit or whatever, like I'm a bad guy.*

***Scott:** They don't really see me, they don't even bother me, or call me or nothing. I don't, because of the length of my sentence there's just no need to be talking to me right now.*

***Simon:** I don't walk around here, I don't get in their face, I don't argue with them, I don't do nothing. I avoid them as much as possible and they don't like that too.*

***Gary:** And I used to ask too, like I used to go to my C.O. in Millhaven, "Don't expect me to stay out of trouble because you're asking way too much."*

***Miles:** Well, I don't bother them, they don't bother me. Although we have bothered each other in the past. [laugh] on many occasions.*

While the division between the 'keepers' and the 'kept' was apparent throughout the interviews, the relations that the prisoners maintained with staff was also similar to the notion of how prisoners "do their time". In avoiding staff, they can also avoid antagonistic relations which could result in institutional charges that work to their detriment with respect to release.

***Simon:** And they told me when I came here, "fresh slate". Whatever I did was in the past as long as I didn't do nothing here, none of this shit would be used*

*against me. It's supposed to be a new start it's a medium. I can't get out of nothing. They're still putting stuff on my file from ten, eleven, twelve years ago and it's frustrating.*

In avoiding staff as much as possible throughout their sentence, prisoners reduce the risk of accumulating incidences on their records that build over time and are 'used against' them when they apply for temporary absences, institutional transfers, parole, etc. Prisoners also experience 'easier' time by avoiding staff, as a result of the decrease in conflicts that disrupt their daily routine.

*Ted: I would say it's probably not too bad in here, as long as there isn't a lot of pressure from the officers and that in here so*

Gary, who has a history of conflict within the institution, explicitly stated the repercussions of getting involved with matters that concerned staff and the consequences that accompanied 'getting into trouble'.

*Gary: [Now] for me it's better, for me cause I'm not suffering any more consequences or whatever right?*

Gary also expressed that later in his sentence he realized that such conflict provided him with little hope for release.

*Gary: I'm only going to be prepared to ask for ETA's or UTA programs and that's the only thing I'm going to go in and ask for, you know what I mean? I probably have about four years of semi-credibility built up behind me, you know what I mean?*

While all the prisoners expressed or realized the importance of staying out of trouble and avoiding staff, Alex was an exception to this form of self-government.

*Alex: Like staff or other inmates or someone will piss me off and then they say stuff to me that I don't like and then I'll say stuff back to them that they don't like. And I look at it as it doesn't matter who you are, if you disrespect me, I'll disrespect you back.*

In overtly engaging in conflict and resisting staff, Alex also elaborated on the 'trouble' that would just 'stick to him'.

*Alex: Like I'm already stressed out for being here as one, and then I have to worry about the stress that they're giving me, and then it leads to charges, and to segregation, and stuff like that. It's like when will it end, type of deal, you know what I mean?*

While for Alex it is important to confront those who challenge his autonomy and sense of well being, he must contend with the consequences that such open acts of resistance incite, which also include limiting possibilities for release. Within the power dynamic, actively and overtly resisting staff only results in counter-strategies used to force prisoners into conformity or at least 'agreeable conduct'. Within the prison, staff use the facilities and methods available to them to stifle and suppress these direct acts of opposition.

*Gary: But after four and half, five months of continuous fires, and up all night because the goon squads doing their walks on the hour and smashing your door, and doing this and doing that, it gets quite taxing you know what I mean?*

In avoiding staff and keeping a 'low profile', prisoners not only prevent potentially harmful conflict that can lead to reprimand, but also maintain a certain degree of autonomy as it relates to 'doing your own time'.

While the prison itself serves as an impetus for guiding and shaping conduct, staff also act in a similar fashion to maintain the 'good order' of the institution. This is done by ensuring that prisoners conduct themselves in a manner that is that is respectful of the rules and regulations of the institution. Although prisoners appear compliant through avoidance of staff, they demonstrate a willingness to remain detached from the system by not involving themselves in direct hostile contact that will prolong their time spent in the prison.

### **Relations with Other Prisoners**

The type of relations prisoners develop with other prisoners is not only limited to those who reside within the prison, but also limited by the prisoners themselves who strategically and purposefully develop and maintain certain relations with other prisoners within the institution. Similar to relations with staff, the prisoners interviewed also expressed a desire to generally 'keep to themselves' with respect to associating with other prisoners. Four of the seven lifers interviewed stated that they maintained a very limited and select group of friends.

***Gregg:** I've got friends I hang out with and stuff. I mean, I'm with other people and all that but I try not to let people get too close to me.*

***Ted:** But as far as my day to day interaction with other inmates in here, I really don't care too much outside of my few friends.*

***Scott:** I got a couple friends that I've known for a number of years in here, and those guys are my only friends and the rest of the people, I don't choose to make new friends.*

***Simon:** It's hard to make friends, acquaintance is a better word, you know what I mean?*

Establishing relations with other 'inmates' provides the prisoners with the solidarity and companionship desired, while limiting such relations to only a few close associations allows prisoners to keep their lives more personal and private. As previously discussed, the prisoners' lives become public domain to the various individuals that work and live within the institution. By maintaining a close group of friends, they avoid potential conflict within the prison since less personal information can be made known to administration and staff. Forming close relations with a select group of similar and like minded individuals provides the prisoners with a sense of security within an environment that is designed to have various aspects of their lives exposed and controlled.

*Alex: Because in prison they integrate this place with all these little infested rats and stuff like that. And those are the people that obviously, if you're living a certain lifestyle, you don't like those people, you know what I mean? And when you're in prison, you got certain people who'll bring information to the 'Man'.*

Since prisoner conduct cannot be under constant surveillance, particular strategies and techniques are used, such as soliciting information from other prisoners, to gain such knowledge and awareness of the prisoner. Prisoners thus carefully and purposefully choose the friendships that they establish; these are based on levels of trust, their own standards of living within the institution, and how they choose to do their time.

*Ted: They choose to do drugs and live in a pigsty and that's, you know, that's their choice. And that's how most people in here do live cause that's I guess how they live on the street but people that I associate with don't live like that and never will.*

*Scott: But, you have to live with other people too like, you're not really friends with, or people that you don't like to look at every morning, like, people that you just don't like to look at their heads. You're surrounded by thieves, crooks, and murderers twenty-four hours a day.*

In addition to safeguarding their best interests in the prison, the prisoners can maintain a sense of autonomy as they decide with whom they do or do not associate with, and to a certain extent, can preserve elements of the lifestyle they had developed outside of the institution. By sustaining only select relations with other prisoners that share common ways of doing their time, prisoners can develop their own sense of 'self'. They also avoid those attempts made within the prison to gain a greater awareness of them and to stifle any ways of 'being' or 'doing' that act against institutional demand.

This understanding is also reflected in the prisoners' expressed desire to avoid involving themselves in other prisoners' problems.

*Gregg: If I see some people talking, arguing I'm not going to hang out and see what goes on, it's none of my business, I just keep going.*

*Ted: But as far as helping out and all that, I will to an extent but I don't like to invade people's privacy too much even if they're friends of mine.*

*Scott: If somebody else wants to come by your door and knock, they'll knock, you say "fuck off" or whatever and they leave. They ain't gonna keep banging. If they keep banging, then you got a problem, right? [laugh]*

*Gary: And then it was just more of a classy environment because guys were always looking out for each other too. Doesn't matter if we knew you, as long as if you needed help and you were a good guy . . . Nowadays, it's more like, "Oh it doesn't concern me."*

*Miles: Like what most people do, I'm not really interested because I'm more interested in what I'm doing, because that's more important, it's the focus.*

Again, similar to the notion of 'doing your own time', remaining detached from some of the problems that arise in the institution helps prisoners avoid conflict. In so doing, they live out their sentence in a manner that is respectful of their own time and also allows for 'easier' time within the prison regime.

*Gary: But actually when I think about it, I'm quite proud of myself, considering this environment too. We all know what this place is like too right? But that goes back to me right, not taking anything personally anymore. . . For me it's better, for me cause I'm not suffering any more consequences or whatever right?*

Getting involved in the politics of the institution or with the concerns of other prisoners, only invites the potential for problems to arise in their daily lives.

Staying out of trouble or avoiding conflict was a common and prominent concern that was elaborated upon throughout the interviews and that carried across several themes. It has become apparent that such an avoidance of conflict with staff and other prisoners, and 'doing your own time', provides the prisoners with the means to do their prison sentence with the least amount of inconvenience and adversity as possible. This not only allows for easy time, but is also in the long-run, is beneficial to their chances for parole.

### **Relations with Family and Friends**

The relations prisoners maintain with family, friends, and partners are highly limited, controlled, and monitored within the institution. Diverse strategies and practices are used to filter the type of relations the prisoners are permitted to have with those on the outside, and the extent to which these relations can develop.

*Alex: Like how you have an approved visiting list, it's an approved phone list where you submit an application with the names, the phone numbers, the address and the relationship to you. Like it could be friends or whatever you want to put down on the paper and then they send it somewhere and it gets approved. or denied or whatever for whatever reason.*

In controlling the type of people that are allowed in the institution and when, the prison sets limits to the prisoners' ability to develop or sustain meaningful or significant relationships. In the interviews, the prisoners discussed the difficulty of maintaining relations with those individuals outside of the prison.

*Gregg: Your friends, you lose a lot of friends because, I don't know like I said they're out there, you're in here, they go on with their lives and like I've said, you gotta' start a new life over so.*

*Scott: Yeah, it just ended in, in June. The June social was the last day she comes up. I got a little angry, and I just told her to leave. Since then things have been negative, they've decayed or whatever.*

*Miles: And it's tough for them because you know, I understand that. Like I mean, I've lost a couple of intimate relationships with women. Some of the women that I've known, it was cause of this environment. It is a harsh environment for people and I mean it's a lot to put up*

While the prisoners discussed the difficulty in maintaining relations with friends and partners, the loss of family contact and support was expressed to be the most difficult part of prison life for those prisoners interviewed.

*Gregg: Not being with my family, not being able to go around them, Mom, not being able to see them on a regular basis like I usually do.*

*Alex: He [i.e. my son] doesn't really know me more than from the phone or visits and stuff like that. He doesn't know me to that extent, and I don't know, those stuff kind of hurts still.*

*Ted: The toughest part about prison would be probably the loss of communication with my family. You know not being able to spend time with them.*

*Gary: A lot of times I have a lot of regret and like watching my daughter, or not watching my daughter grow up, major regrets and when it comes in my mind sometimes its quite upsetting.*

*Miles: I love my family, like my Mom and Dad, there like through the years we've had a lot of experiences together and understanding what life's about.*

Despite the physical separation from their family, the prisoners expressed that remaining in contact and maintaining relations with them was still an important aspect of their life while incarcerated.

*Gregg: For me, I just depend on my family. That's my higher power. That's what helps me get through, as long as I have contact with them and they're behind me then. That's my higher power. That's what gives me the edge to keep going.*

*Alex: Maybe at first it used to be hard for me, but then after you get used to it, and I guess you just kind of live with it, I guess to a certain extent. Like at first and stuff, I used to always think about all of them. I used to get pissed off and say, "I want to see you guys and you don't even come see me", and this and that.*

*Ted: The only thing that really worries me is going to be, like I said, a loss of my family members on the street because they give me a lot of strength and support too.*

*Scott: It is just because, you know, they show their support, and I appreciate them being around and stuff.*

*Simon: I'm a lifer that's got, going on seventeen years and right now the only thing I have for me is my son and that's it.*

*Miles: I phone [my family] pretty regularly, and I write them.*

The prisoners interviewed maintained a view that friends, and particularly family members, provide them with the support they need within the prison to get through their sentence, and particularly compared to their relations with those who work and reside

within the institution. There was however an exception to this as one lifer expressed that family visits were not very important. Another lifer interviewed also stated he limited his contact with his son.

*Scott: Its all right, it's good to see them, though. But it don't matter if no one comes up, if somebody comes up, it doesn't matter. Truthfully, either way, they have to go back at the end of a visit a whole lot quicker if they just didn't do it.*

*Simon: I try to keep it down because if I don't like something, especially when it comes to my son, that stuff gets me in a mood and then I just kinda' downslide so I try to keep that to a minimum.*

Given the very unique and varied types of relations the prisoners all have, and the nature of the prison environment, these two prisoners felt that they could handle their time better if they remained free of any emotional burdens that outside contacts might present.

Despite the two exceptions, family nonetheless remains an important part of the prisoners' lives. By setting limits on the length and types of contacts the prisoners are allowed to have however, prison life limits the prisoners to spending more time with other prisoners who, in a like minded fashion, are observed and monitored within the prison. By monitoring the quality of relations the prisoners have with family and friends, the prison limits the influence those on the outside have on the prisoner. Within the organizing practices, contacts with those who are not affiliated with the prison are limited and fashioned in such a way that the prison can maintain better control over all aspects of the prisoners' lives. Despite loss of relations and limited contacts with those on the outside, five of the prisoners interviewed maintained a view of the importance of their families support and of the greater influence they had in their lives. The institution is fashioned in such a way that it encompasses and bears upon the prisoners in all aspects of life in an attempt to reduce 'risk' for the purpose of preparing them for release. Most of the prisoners interviewed however, resist demonstrating a dependence upon the

institution in improving, changing, or developing their lives for the better and maintain the importance family has for them in factors such as self-change and personal development.

### **Relations with Self**

In response to the organizing practices of the prison, the prisoners develop relations with themselves by which they affect their own mode of thought and way of being. This self-formation takes place through a variety of operations individuals perform on their own bodies, thoughts, and conduct (Foucault, 1987: 34). By investigating the relations prisoners develop with themselves, that is, looking at the practices and techniques they employ to understand themselves and make sense of their incarceration, we gain insight into how the organizing practices of the prison shape prisoner subjectivity and how the prisoners are active in their own self-formation as they negotiate themselves with respect to release. Relations of power are thus inverted back onto the prisoners as they align themselves with the goals of the prison in order to eventually leave. "To govern individuals is to get them to act and align their particular will with ends imposed on them through constraining and facilitating models of possible action" (Burchell, 1991: 119). As a consequence of the organizing practices of the prison, the prisoners thus employ particular practices on themselves that promote self-awareness and individual change.

As an institution purposefully designed to confine individuals to small spaces that limit and restrict freedom, the prison creates an environment in which prisoners keep to themselves, develop few relations, and have less varied activities to occupy their time.

As a result of such organizing practices, the prisoners interviewed elaborated on the amount of time they spend in self-reflection.

*Gregg: So that was basically the first time. I was really alone being able to think about it and yeah, just trying to make the best out of a bad situation. . . Like, I've had a lot of time, like I've said, I've had a lot of time to do a lot of thinking.*

*Ted: I spend a lot more time thinking to myself, basically about myself and the situation that I'm in and my future and how I'm going to cope for the, you know next seventeen years.*

*Gary: And thinking back on all the problems I had in my life, thinking back on all of them, ninety percent of them probably weren't problems to start-off with. We made them problems. We made them problems by the way we approached them.*

*Simon: It's boredom. I don't know, I just gotta' learn to relax for myself and think for me instead of worrying what I gotta' do for others.*

*Miles: In here the person, because they have more time to themselves, they have more time for reflection and they can go within themselves, which is very important.*

As the prison is structured to promote a lot of thought and contemplation, the prisoners reflect upon themselves and their situation within the institution and how they are going to organize themselves over the course of their sentence. In the interviews, the prisoners illustrated that through self-reflection and self-examination, they were able to understand their way of 'being' and 'doing', as it related to their lives within the institution.

*Ted: Yeah [I have morals] more so now then prior to my arrest. I went through a lot of self-examination and a lot of different feelings and emotions after I got arrested and I've changed a lot of my morals almost immediately after my arrest and through my own self-analyzing phase.*

*Scott: I think if you break the law period you have to be those, get those qualities automatic, no? To steal you have to be dishonest, you gotta lie at times, you know what I saying? If you want to break the law, you gotta be all these things.*

*Dave: I kinda' like tried to analyze my verbal you know, outbursts and how come I was getting into so many fights. And it's because I was just, was probably taking everything so personally you know what I mean? . . . But when I think back of what I was capable of, of what I was willing to do when I was angry and I think back on that I could probably say I was thankful that I was stuck in prison..*

**Simon:** *It's like one of the programs. I forget which one it was. I agree to disagree, or whatever vice versa, right? If it ain't going no where, yeah okay whatever right, but it's still in my heart. That's the way I believe, and that's how I feel it's going to be, and that's the way I think, and I'm not changing my opinion on nothing. Yeah I feel I'm alright.*

Through the practices of self-examination and self-reflection, the prisoners develop a particular understanding of themselves with respect to their incarceration (e.g. as 'moral', as a 'criminal', as 'violent', as 'alright'). Such understandings of themselves are not only a consequence of the power relations found within the prison that shape prisoner subjectivity, but are also a result of the prisoners themselves who carry very distinctive and unique ways of understanding and negotiating themselves in the prison and as prisoners. Through self-reflection, the prisoners expressed that there is not only a need to change how they conduct themselves, but a need to change the way they think (i.e. their very 'being').

**Gregg:** *But like I said ten, fifteen years down the road who's to say that person is the same person?*

**Alex:** *Maybe this world might change, and I don't know, if one person changes, at least somebody changed, but you can't change everybody. There'll always probably be prisons and stuff like that, so I'm not sure, you know? We'll see.*

**Ted:** *You can change only if you want to change and you know. I made those changes a long time ago, where if I was to come out to society now or if I was to come out to society about three years ago, I would be able to function a lot better than prior to my arrest.*

**Gary:** *There's a lot of potential, not all of it's good, give it time though because everybody does change I think, and usually it's for the better, if the guy's got any sense about him.*

**Simon:** *Like this criminal attitude program, as I say, well if somebody's thinking that way for thirty years, that's the way they were brought up to believe in, you just can't change that over night, you just can't.*

*Miles: And those that do take the opportunity when they come to jail to learn about themselves, can change their whole life-course and can really you know, take responsibility of their life or for their actions.*

While some prisoners stated that 'change' is possible, others such as Simon and Alex resisted this idea. All of the prisoners however, expressed an understanding of a need to change their way of conducting and understanding themselves in order to affect the type of change that is expected by the institution. Through particular practices of the self, prisoners are encouraged to know themselves and affect through their own means, individual change and improvement. Although the prisoners understand the fundamental necessity for change, their desire to leave the prison is the driving force behind such an understanding as release is a subjective concern for these individuals.

Regardless of their outward appearance and compliance few people taken into custody would accept their loss of liberty so willingly if the full potential force of state coercion was not handcuffed to their wrists (Scranton et al. 1991: 61).

All of the prisoners interviewed expressed that their freedom was their utmost concern.

*Gregg: So, I don't worry too much about what's going on out there. I just worry about what's going on in here, what I can do for myself, better myself in here and get back out there.*

*Alex: Crime is something that, it can wreck you, it can make you, and it can break you, you know what I mean? No matter how much money you get out of it, nothing beats freedom, and your family, and stuff like that, you know?*

*Ted: I could have done a lot more on the street and should that opportunity arise again for me which I expect it to, I would like to make the best of things out there... So now I'm just putting in the hours until, putting in the days, and years I guess really until I'm released*

*Scott: I came right from the street into life. I wish I had an opportunity to get a two or three year sentence, go to a serious place where I was, look at these people and say "I don't want to look like these guys", cause this is some shitty-ass time. . just the opportunity to come out again, and learn from that mistake, do something different.*

*Gary: I watched everyone around me for years, and years, and years, move on get out and start a life and it finally dawned on me, "How come the fuck can't I do*

*that?" And like I can but I just didn't have them expectations of myself to be able to do that you know, stay out of trouble.*

*Simon: Its not, it's all changed and I want to get the fuck out, but they're saying I'm not ready, but what do they know... But that's a long ways away. And how long I don't know. I can't even get down to a lower medium.*

*Miles: Well, I think ultimately we all want freedom, and some people look for freedom in different ways. Like when you get locked up, physical freedom, you know sure I want to get out, and eventually I will, but what I say is that I'll be out there when it's time for me to be out there.*

Since the prisoners' understanding of themselves and their need to change is combined with their desire to leave the prison, they not only fashion their daily lives and relations in a manner that is conducive for release, but the relations they develop with themselves is also couched in this same objective. The prisoners limit their potential for personal change to that which will provide them with the means for release. While the prisoners develop relations with themselves that are reflective of the goals of the institution that seek to transform them into 'law abiding citizens' with 'pro-social' values, the prisoners' concept of change is also aligned with their desire to leave the prison.

### **Prisoner Perceptions**

While conduct is observed and monitored by others within the institution, prisoners must also govern their own conduct and are continually expected to adjust and realign their concept of self. The prisoners nonetheless suggest an ability to preserve their sense of self as they discuss their perceptions of their 'crimes' and how others perceive them. The prisoners' perceptions of themselves and of others reveal a particular understanding of the prisoners' subjectivity. In the above categories, the prisoners expressed their understanding of institutional demands and goals and thus conduct themselves in a manner that allows them to avoid conflict, while subtly and reflexively

resisting relations of power that attempt to shape their subjectivity. Although such conduct may make the prisoners appear to be passive objects of prison control, the reasoning behind such conduct illustrates otherwise. Here, the prisoners demonstrate ulterior and alternative understandings and reasoning for the ways they govern their conduct and which do not fall directly in line with the prison's attempts to shape their subjectivity according to certain schemes. This understanding is further exemplified through the perspectives of the prisoners as they reveal the ways they understand themselves and others in light of and despite the organizing practices of the prison.

### *Perceptions of Their 'Crime'*

Prison studies have often been criticized for not exploring the nature of the prisoners' 'crimes' or the prisoners' perceptions of their 'crime' (see Fielding et al., 2000). The purpose here is not to understand why such acts are committed; it is rather to investigate how the prisoners make sense out of their criminalization and subsequent incarceration. While the official reasoning of the use of prisons is to "contribute to the protection of society by actively encouraging and assisting offenders to become law-abiding citizens" (Correctional Service of Canada, 1999: Mission Statement), the prisoners interviewed accepted and agreed with their incarceration, not as a means to 'protect society' or in order to become 'law abiding citizens' however, but as a form of punishment.

*Scott: Time is time that's it. You do the crime, you do the time, and that's it.*

*Gary: People make mistakes, you gotta you know, you gotta pay for your mistakes*

*Miles: I was in a place there where I shouldn't have been, like I had choices, and I chose to be there, and a person died from my actions, and I'm here.*

So although the prisoners did not “reserve a room” within the prison, as one of the lifers stated in his interview, they do not however completely disagree with their arrangement. While the prisoners accept their punishment for the ‘crimes’ they committed, they nonetheless reject a view that such actions should be a defining quality of who they are.

**Gregg:** *As for somebody like doing a life sentence, well they did an act of violence obviously, know what I mean but who's to say that, it could have been a spur of the moment thing; it could have been just a freak accident*

**Ted:** *A lot of people that have only committed that one crime in their entire life and probably will never commit another crime and they're probably going to do what, twenty years for the one crime and really our senses you know, they don't really reflect the person's true nature.*

**Scott:** *I did my thing when I was young, and I'm doing my time now, I'm doing a lot of time*

**Gary:** *People make mistakes, you gotta you know, you gotta pay for your mistake but while you're paying it, it doesn't make you any less of a human than actually the people out there judging you, you know what I mean?*

**Simon:** *All of the people that are in here for murder, it is only because they killed their women or something like that and was probably, just probably out of a drunken rage or jealousy because of that.*

Three of the prisoners interviewed also expressed the futility in dwelling on their past ‘crimes’.

**Gregg:** *Like whatever you had done in the past is in the past. You can't dwell on it you have to look forward to the future.*

**Alex:** *So people have to get over it, and learn to live with whatever happened, then move on you know?*

**Miles:** *The past is the past, and hopefully I learned from it, and like I said, I like remaining in the moment, and looking to the not-too-distant future.*

While the prison is organized so that the prisoners correct individual ‘deficiencies’ (e.g. thinking skills, violence, alcoholism) that contribute to their ‘criminality’, the prisoners view their actions as situational rather than reflective of who they are. In addition to this,

while the prison continually revolves around treatment and correcting behaviours that are linked to their 'criminality' (e.g. past social and historical 'criminal activity'), the prisoners felt that such matters should be left in the past and attention should be given to the present and to 'look forward to the future'. The prisoners' perceptions of their 'crimes' further supports the idea that the prisoners' subjective understanding of themselves revolve around their desire to leave the prison, and not to change the very nature of their being, as sought out by the institution.

### **Perceptions of How Others Perceive Them**

At the end of the video-recording of the interviews, the prisoners were asked what they would like to say to those individuals who would be watching them or to those individuals who believed they belonged in prison. In all of their responses, they stated the importance of not judging them and were dismissive of those who did.

***Gregg:** Well people don't know exactly what happened so you can't judge a person based on what you've heard or what's being said unless you know the person.*

***Alex:** It's one thing to have direct knowledge of somebody and judge him, and not have direct knowledge and just go with whatever information is set before them, you know what I mean?*

***Ted:** Well the people who say that are usually pretty close minded individuals anyway, and they wouldn't want to know the details behind[the crime]t or anything else related to it. So I really don't care what they think about it what so ever because people with such closed minds, you can't talk much sense into anyway.*

***Scott:** I don't give a shit what they think because these people, truly deep inside don't give a fuck about me. Like, let's be honest, I'm not a child, right? These people are gonna sit there and do their thing, and they look at me and they judge, or whatever they say, or they're writing, and they already have their perception of people in prison. And what I tell them will not change that.*

*Gary: But that's just it, we're no different than you guys, that is just it you know what I mean? We're all human you know what I mean, and we're all capable of the same emotions.*

*Simon: Everybody is entitled to their opinion, they can't change that. Opinions are like assholes, everybody's got one [laugh] . . . But hey, for people to do that they should be judged case by case or whatever. See what the guy has done or how bad it was.*

*Miles: In by labelling we take away, we don't look at the intrinsic, we just look on the surface, and it's always important, just as important to look at things underneath, intrinsically, as on the surface.*

So although the prisoners accept the punishment for their 'crime', they again reject the view that such an act should be used against them in relation to our perceptions of who they are. For the prisoners, reflecting upon their respective cases, evaluating extenuating circumstances, and discovering who they are as individuals are as important as the 'crime' itself.

By looking at prisoner perceptions in addition to practices and relations, we gain deeper insight into prisoner subjectivity as the prisoners reveal their thoughts and feelings on themselves and of others. Such insight provides a sense of how the prisoners, within greater schemes of power, ultimately resist aligning themselves with the goals of the institution that seek to transform prisoners from 'criminals' to 'law-abiders' who self-govern their conduct accordingly.

## **Conclusion**

By looking at the three categories of prisoner practices, relations, and perceptions, some of the various ways that the organizing practices of the prison operate are revealed. Such practices and strategies, as they are played out in the power-knowledge relations, seek to align prisoner conduct with the goals of the institution by shaping subjectivity. As active agents in their own self-formation, the interviews revealed that prisoners

conduct themselves in a fashion that promotes individual autonomy and does not offend their sense of self, while at the same time trying to self-govern in manner favourable for release. Similarly, the quality of relations the prisoners develop and maintain with those who work and reside within the prison safeguard them against potentially damaging consequences that would jeopardize release. These relations also provide them with the tools necessary to understand and govern themselves in an institutionally acceptable manner. While not all prisoners conduct themselves in such a discreet fashion (e.g. those engaged in overt and more assertive acts of resistance), these prisoners nonetheless elaborated on the consequences their acts carried, and asked; “when would it all end?”. This illustrates that such forms of resistance further minimize their opportunities for release. While the more subtle acts of resistance may not provide the prisoners with a greater sense of remaining their own person by opposing the controlling nature of the prison, the prisoners fashion a lifestyle for themselves that allows them a certain degree of autonomy while improving their chances for release. So, while the organizing practices of the prison shape how the prisoners affect their own mode of being, it is through their desire to leave the institution that such change occurs. In investigating prisoner perceptions, we reveal that prisoner subjectivity, although altered as a consequence of the on-going process, is not completely modified or ‘corrected’ despite the technologies of domination and control that emerge within the prison, as prisoners resist accepting their ‘criminal’ definitions. While conduct may be restrained and the prisoners resign themselves to more ambiguous forms of resistance, their perceptions of their ‘crimes’ and of how others perceive them reveal that such attempts to alter subjectivity through the organizing practices of the prison have a limited impact. ‘Where there is power there is resistance’ and such resistance always acts in opposition to those

attempts made to direct individuals against the ways they understand and conduct themselves.

While the categories were presented separately, several themes emerged in all three cases. By relating the three categories, we begin to understand how subjectivity is a complex and dynamic process and the particular lines of inquiry that such an investigation explores. “The point was fixed before I was born, I myself was fixed by it before I began to think of points or of anything else – yet finding this point is still my task” (Bauman, xxxv). Although it is impossible to completely grasp the full extent of prisoner subjectivity, this research nonetheless provides us with a certain insight and a perspective into its complexity.

## **CHAPTER FIVE**

### **DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSION**

Exploring prisoner practices reveals how the prisoners themselves are active in shaping the context of their lived realities and how they experience the prison. By developing a routine, living ‘day to day’, and ‘doing their own time’, the prisoners manage their sentence in a way they feel promotes their personal well-being, while at the same time, improves their chances for release. As the prison regulates and structures the daily lives of the prisoners, the prisoners subtly resist the regimen of the prison. By actively fashioning their lifestyles in a manner that is conducive to ‘easy time’, the prisoners make use of the prison’s own mechanisms of control to somewhat improve their experience of the prison and take a certain ownership over managing their sentence. In those negative instances where prisoners do overtly resist against the prison regime, they nonetheless express the hardships that such a lifestyle promotes. Such an understanding further supports the idea that although large scale acts of resistance may potentially provide the prisoners with a greater sense of satisfaction, such acts work to their detriment. To maintain good standing in the ‘eyes’ of the institution and improve their chances for release, prisoners must develop other ways, apart from hostility or violence, to maintain a relative degree of autonomy and sense of self.

As the prison determines the types of contacts and relations prisoners develop inside and outside of the institution, the prisoners themselves selectively and purposefully form the nature and the quality of these relationships. In so doing, the prisoners subtly resist the controlling nature of the institution by ‘keeping to themselves’. The prisoners are therefore careful about developing relations with staff or maintaining numerous

relations with other prisoners, despite the close proximity the prison creates between those who work and reside there. Most of the prisoners interviewed found it more beneficial to maintain contact with family members, friends, and/or partners, despite the physical separation and difficulty in maintaining such contacts. Such practices of the prisoners are reflective of their desire to leave the institution; they minimize the potential for conflicts that might develop between them and those within the prison, while those on the outside are looked to for support and represent a link to release.

Within the prison, prisoners are expected to understand themselves in a manner that is reflective of institutional goals and program rationales. However, their perceptions of themselves and their desire to change continually relate back to their desire to leave the prison rather than for the sake of self-improvement. So while the prisoners themselves may subscribe to a particular understanding of themselves (e.g. as ‘criminals’, ‘murderers’ etc.) and accept a need to change, they maintain a view of their ‘crimes’ as circumstantial and situational and not as a part of who they are. They similarly reject those representatives of the general public who believe they belong in prison or who might hold a poor opinion of them. The contradiction between the prisoners’ desire to change their ‘criminal ways’ with their refusal to accept a view of themselves as ‘different’ highlights their resistance against the confining and forming practices of the prison and their attempts to maintain an autonomous concept of self.

By employing a Foucauldian approach to the prison, the researcher reveals those formations and operations of the prison that seek to shape and direct prisoner subjectivity. Such an approach makes visible the ways in which the prisoners themselves are active in shaping relations of power as they resist their confines, while at the same time, how prisoners position themselves for their eventual release. Prisoners purposefully manage

their time spent in prison not only to alleviate 'the pains of imprisonment', but also as a means to maintain a certain sense of self and a degree of autonomy as they resist the imposition of particular subjectivities that do not coincide with how they understand and conduct themselves. Through an interpretive investigation of the findings, prisoner conduct is thus revealed to be meaningful for the prisoners as they manage their sentence according to the prison schemes and protocols, but purposefully fashion a lifestyle for themselves that is reflective of who they are. As the prison operates to align the interests of the prisoner with the interests of the governing authorities along certain productions of 'truth', it fails to consider the prisoners' own capacities for self-determination. Kogler suggests that the task of the researcher is to reveal how certain technologies of power and forms of knowledge exclude, constrain, limit, or exclude the prisoners from possible forms of life, while leaving the choice of who or what they want to be, to the prisoners themselves (1996:38).

The purpose of this exploratory research was to determine if a Foucauldian analysis of subjectivity could offer some insight into the prison. While the research findings touched upon previously developed understandings of the prison (e.g. convict code, total institutions etc.), the approach framed our understandings of such phenomena through an investigating of how particular practices, strategies and techniques operate to shape the prisoner. More importantly, the research explored how the prisoners themselves are active in this process. By locating the prisoners within the dynamic relations of power-knowledge, they are revealed to be autonomous agents, who not only resist power, but whose acts of resistance 'make sense' within the prison's field of organizing practices.

Investigating subjectivity within the power-knowledge relation, directs our attention to the ways prisoners are constituted and how they constitute themselves as subjects; it thus organizes our own understanding of the prison and prisoner in a particular way. While interaction, social organization, and political economy all play a part in the production of the prisoner, investigating power formations offers new ways of locating the prisoner. By understanding the operations and the practices of the prison, we reveal the diverse ways that the prison attempts to shape, direct, fashion, guide, and impose a certain way of 'being' and 'doing'. We also reveal how the prisoners actively shape themselves according to certain schemes and regimes of 'truth' in order to leave the prison, but also how such self-forming activities are fashioned around their own subjective understanding of 'self'. Prisoners are not only passive recipients of prison practices; they are also active in the dynamics of the prison and in their own self-formation. By looking at subjectivity as an on-going process, we relocate prisoners not simply as objects of control, but as active in the process of subjectivity itself.

### **Limitations and Future Research**

While this type of research contributes to a larger understanding of the prison, it is limited to the population under study and may not reflect the realities of various categories of prisoners, or account for those prisoners serving shorter sentences or in other countries. These topics would be interesting future areas of study, using a Foucauldian analysis of subjectivity, to determine any similarities and differences between the diverse categories of prisoners. Given the focus on the prisoners in this particular study, other possible venues for future research would also include prison administration and staff, and a more detailed study of the forms of knowledge that exist

within the prison. There is also a need to look at how life-sentenced prisoners conduct themselves after release. Although these prisoners generally tend to have lower recidivism rates (Correctional Service of Canada, 1992), it does not necessarily gauge the success of the prison as these individuals need to establish themselves in the community. Possible future work might involve following several prisoners over the course of their sentence and after release, in order to gain better insight into how knowledge and power transform the individual, and the effects this has on the prisoner while in society. Such an investigation for future research would be of great value as it serves as an alternative discourse to the more common approaches to understanding the prison and its occupants. Prisoner subjectivity changes over time and space, not only as prisoners grow older or serve more time in prison, but also with the changing practices and strategies that emerge within the prison. On-going research of prisoner subjectivity is not only beneficial to reveal the changing dynamics within the prison, but also shapes and further develops this particular analytical tool for others to use.

### **Social Implications**

A Foucauldian analysis of subjectivity directs our attention towards relations of power and knowledge that seek to transform prisoners into self-governing subjects. The prison imposes an individuality on the prisoners that holds them to self-account and self-improvement. Through such an investigation we begin to see how individuals refuse the imposition of particular subjectivities that do not coincide with their lived experiences and understandings of self.

Given that where there is power there is resistance, one way to conceptualize some of the failures of the prison is to understand when and why prisoners resist. This

approach directs our attention towards those individualizing and subjectifying practices of the prison that submit prisoners to themselves in a way that ignores the broader context by which prisoners live and understand themselves. Focusing on prisoner technologies of power and prisoner resistance provide an entry point into developing new ways of contextualizing the prisoner and new ways of thinking about imprisonment. In order to challenge current understandings, we need to listen to the prisoners themselves who provide different insight and a unique understanding of how they conceive themselves and others:

*Gary: Like I thought of that third question about 'after-math effects' and its not just something you can pin point into one like, you know okay directly after your conviction, or with your family, or even with myself. It's a process, there's effects for the rest of your life, you know what I mean?*

Just as specific fields of knowledge contribute to subjectifying technologies, so do our own discourses. I re-introduce here Foucault's own suggestion that "We have to promote new forms of subjectivity through refusal of this kind of individuality which has been imposed on us for several centuries" (Foucault, 1982: 785) to illuminate the necessity to entertain the question of how our own knowledge contributes to a process of subjectivity. It is therefore important to develop a reflexive approach to our own research which "... can aid in thinking out the political and social conditions that would facilitate contestation and make room for diversity and help develop and refine strategies for confronting or interrogating problematic regimes and technologies" (Osborne, 1994: 499). Caution must be exercised so the alternatives or reforms we do offer are not absorbed into existing forms of knowledge and power and that fail to consider the complex ways that subjects are fashioned in particular instances and through certain productions of truth.

## **Conclusion**

Any attempts to reform the prison inevitably contributes to the forms of power-knowledge that emerge within. The failures of the prison are not simply rooted in its practices or delivery, but in the emergent political rationalities and government technologies upon which it is based and the forms of power which prisoners resist. “The question is: how are such relations of power rationalized? Asking is the only way to avoid other institutions, with the same objectives and the same effects, from taking their stead” (Foucault, 1981: 254). It is therefore essential that we continually question emergent forms of knowledge and dislocate commonly held assumptions of the prison and prisoner. In so doing, other forms of knowledge and understandings can emerge and challenge those discourses that continue to dominate our understanding.

Although it could be argued that prisoners conduct themselves in a manner that is reflective of their ‘criminality’, ‘irrational thinking’, ‘thrill seeking’ or ‘hedonistic tendencies’, such understandings fail to consider those factors, other than individual characteristics, that may undermine the potential of affecting social change. “We continue to produce ourselves as a subject on the basis of old modes of thought which no longer correspond to our problems” (Deleuze 1995: 107). The intent of this thesis is not to provide alternatives to the prison or to our current shaping of the prisoner. I leave it to future research to build on this understanding and discovering new ways of framing the prison and its occupants. My intent here rather, has been to open a space for different understandings to emerge and to reflect on those individualizing practices that tie us to norms of truth, while giving us the impression that we are ‘free’ in our pursuit to improve ourselves and others.

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## **APPENDIX A – Foucauldian Dictionary**

**bio-power** – “A power over life operating at the level of whole populations” (Dean, 1994a: 175).

**economic rationality** – “(i) the increasing reliance upon an analytical language of risks and rewards, rationality, choice, probability, targeting and the demand and supply of opportunities – a language that translates ‘economic’ forms of reasoning and calculation into the criminological field; (ii) the increasing importance of objectives such as compensation, cost-control, harm-reduction, economy, efficiency, and effectiveness; (iii) the increasing resort to technologies such as audit, fiscal control, market competition and devolved management to control penal decision-making” (Garland 1997: 185).

**ethical subjectification (self-formation)** – “practices, techniques, and discourses of the government of the self by the self, by means of which individuals seek to know, decipher, and act on themselves” (Dean, 1994b: 156).

**ethics** – “A mode of being, a way of relating to self and thereby others” (Smart, 1998: 84). “one concerned with the exercise of freedom in the formation of the self” (Dean, 1994a: 194).

**freedom** – “fated to chose, and to shape his or her own life through everyday decisions as to conduct – and of responsibility – that is to say the locus of address of moral, spiritual and commercial obligations concerning conduct” (Rose 1996a: 302).

**games of truth** – “employed by human beings to understand themselves” (Smart, 1998: 79). “The rules, procedures, and methods by which truth is produced in a more or less orderly fashion” (Dean, 1994a: 194).

**government** – “Generally understood as the ways in which individuals conduct themselves given the possible field of action” (Burchell, 1993: 268). “Acting on the actions of individuals, taken either singly or collectively, so as to shape, guide, correct and modify the ways in which they conduct themselves and others” (Foucault, 1988).

**governmentality (government rationality)** – “A way or system of thinking about the nature of the practice of government (who can govern; what governing is; what or who is governed), capable of making that form of activity thinkable and practicable both to its practitioners and to those upon whom it is practiced” (Gordon, 1991: 3). “Ways of thinking and styles of reasoning that are embodied in a particular set of practices. It points to the forms of rationality that organize these practices, and supply them with their objectives and knowledge and forms of reflexivity” (Garland 1997: 184).

**government subjectification** – “ways in which various authorities and agencies seek to shape the conduct, aspirations, needs, desires, and capacities of specified categories of individuals, to enlist them in particular strategies and to seek defined goals” (Dean, 1994b: 156).

**government technologies** – “A domain of strategies, techniques and procedures through which different forces seek to render programs operable, and by means of which a multitude of connections are established between the aspirations of authorities and the activities of individuals and groups” (Rose and Miller 1992: 183).

**liberalism** – “A permanent problematization of the limits of government” (Dean, 1994a: 195).

**political rationalities** – “The relatively systematic, explicit, discursive, problematization and codification of the art or practice of government, as way of rendering the objects of

government (i.e. populations) in a language that makes them governable” (Dean, 1994: 187).

**political subjectification** – “practices and discourses that treat individuals as if they were political subjects in their diverse forms, particularly the treatment of individuals as sovereign subjects or citizens within a self-governing political community under the conditions of liberal democracy” (Dean, 1994b: 155).

**strategy** – “Referred to the operationalization of the social field in different ways, such as the attempt to produce an orderly, obedient, productive population” (Patton, 1998: 66).

**subjectification** – “looks at the processes of self-formation in which the person is active” (Rabinow, 1984: 11).

**subjectivity** – “inquiry concerning the instituted models of self-knowledge and the guiding thread is constituted by techniques of the self and care of the self” (Foucault 1997: 87). “Those processes of self-formation in which the person is active” (Rabinow, 1984: 11). “The relations which human beings have established with themselves” (Rose, 1996b: 130).

**tactics** – “Referred to as the disposition of forces employed to achieve certain ends” (Patton, 1998: 66).

**technologies** – “specific ways of acting” (Garland 1997: 174). “how knowledge is inscribed” (Dean 1996: 50).

**technologies of domination** – “determines the conduct of individuals and submit them to certain ends” (Foucault, 1988: 18).

**technologies of the self** – “permit individuals to perform, by their own means, a certain number of operations on their own bodies, on their own souls, on their own thoughts, on their own conduct, and this in such a way that they transform themselves, modify

themselves, and reach a certain state of perfection, of happiness, of purity, of supernatural power, and so on” (Foucault, 1997: 181). “reflection on modes of living, on choices of existence, on the way to regulate one’s behaviour, to attach oneself to ends and means” (Foucault. 1997: 89).