

**REPRESENTATIONS OF SOLITARY CONFINEMENT
IN FOUR ONTARIO PENAL HISTORY MUSEUMS**

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Abstract

This thesis examines representations of solitary confinement at four penal history museums in the province of Ontario, Canada: the Olde Gaol Museum in Lindsay, the L'Original Old Jail in L'Original, the Peel Art Gallery Museum and Archives in Brampton, and Kingston Penitentiary in Kingston. Engaging with Brown's (2009) theory of "penal spectatorship" and Cohen's (2001) work on states of denial, I investigate how these representations of solitary confinement challenge and/or reinforce the idea that segregation is a necessary practice in operational carceral institutions. I identify three dominant themes. The first theme is who ends up in solitary confinement and why. The museums justify the necessity of solitary confinement by emphasizing its usefulness in neutralizing dangerous and unpredictable prisoners, along with its supposed ability to promote prisoner protection and the management of mental health needs. The second theme pertains to the duration prisoners spend in solitary confinement and the conditions they experience. The museums do not problematize prisoners' length of stay in solitary confinement, nor the conditions of the cells in which they are held, rather historical penal discourses are used to demonstrate improvements over time, without problematizing its present uses. The third theme arising from my analysis concerns the impacts of solitary confinement on prisoners. The museums emphasize the positive effects that solitary confinement can have on prisoners such as providing the opportunity for contemplation, while information on the negative effects of isolation including exacerbating or triggering mental health issues are largely absent. Taking these findings into consideration, I argue that the penal history museums I examined foster social distance between visitors and those in conflict with the law by legitimating the exclusion of the latter, while reinforcing the idea that solitary confinement is a necessary practice in carceral institutions today.

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CHAPTER 1: INTRODUCTION

Last year over 1300 men and women spent 60 or more aggregate days inside an Ontario Correctional Services segregation cell.

– Howard Sapers 2017

While the harms (e.g. Kelsall, 2014), media representations (e.g. Mason, 2003) and prisoner perspectives of solitary confinement (e.g. Piché & Major, 2015) have been the focus of criminological research, cultural representations of segregation in penal history museums have been understudied. Penal history museums are often overlooked as meaning-making sites (Wilson et al., 2017) that can reproduce or challenge the necessity for solitary confinement as a disciplinary practice.

A penal history museum can be defined as a decommissioned penitentiary, prison, jail or lock-up that has been converted into a museum for the purposes of tourism and education (Walby & Piché, 2011). These sites have increasingly become popular tourist destinations for many curious individuals across the globe (Wilson et al., 2017). The desire of individuals to visit penal history museums as a form of recreation and entertainment can be conceptualized as a form of dark tourism (Lennon & Foley, 2000), and more specifically a type of penal tourism (Strange & Kempa, 2003). Dark tourism refers to museum representations of death, disaster, trauma or atrocity for entertainment and commercial purposes, while penal tourism taps into individuals' curiosity and fascination with the opportunity to visit and experience displays of punishment that usually remain behind closed doors (Welch, 2012).

There are currently more than 45 penal history museums that are operational in Canada (Walby & Piché, 2015a). The vast majority of these museums are situated in decommissioned lock-ups, jails, prisons and other forms of carceral spaces (Walby & Piché, 2015a). In order to examine the narratives about solitary confinement, along with how they are curated and communicated in penal history museums, I visited four penal history museums in the province of Ontario that had exhibits or content on the practice: the Olde Gaol Museum in Lindsay; L'Original Old Jail in L'Original; the Peel Art Gallery Museum and Archives in Brampton; and Kingston Penitentiary in Kingston.

This study examines the representational practices and various cultural artefacts that depict solitary confinement in four penal history museums, situated in the province of Ontario. This includes the content of penal history museums, such as photographs, interactive displays, videos and written information. More specifically, my Master's thesis explores how solitary confinement is represented in penal history museums in Ontario, and whether or not these representations challenge and/or reinforce the idea that it is necessary in operational institutions. Drawing on field observations, I demonstrate the role that four penal history museums play as sites of penal spectatorship in Canadian society where meaning is made about the deprivation of liberty and more specifically solitary confinement. Prior to beginning my fieldwork, I knew that meanings about penalty would be present in penal history museums because previous research has noted that these sites inform visitors about the role of confinement and punishment in the penal process (see Walby & Piché, 2015b). However, the absence of information about solitary confinement was also possible. In either case, the depictions or lack thereof

provide insight into how the four penal history museums offer a framing through which visitors can engage or not engage with representations of solitary confinement.

The fundamental aim of this study is to gain a better understanding of the representational practices of penal history museums and generate important insights concerning the use of solitary confinement as a disciplinary and administrative measure in Canada at a time when the practice is increasingly scrutinized, especially within the province of Ontario. More specifically, the independent review of segregation in Ontario in 2017 by Howard Sapers was prompted by many stories of individuals being held in segregation for inordinate periods of time and under poor, even inhumane conditions that have been brought to public attention (Sapers, 2017).

My research investigates the capacity that museums have to educate visitors and influence broader social issues in particular directions, such as the use of solitary confinement. This topic is relevant because penal history museums are often the only contact that members of the public have with solitary confinement cells, thus necessitating scrutiny of the messages being conveyed by museum staff, as well as visual displays and interactive components. My research draws on Brown's (2009) theory of penal spectatorship, which states that ordinary individuals tend to engage with punishment in a way that is distanced from its actual practice, and this has the potential to reinforce support for harsh penal policies and practices. My research also draws on the theory of denial (Cohen, 2001), which allows me to explore which facts are avoided in penal history museums and the dynamics shaping this avoidance.

Based on these two theories, my findings indicate that all four penal history museums cast visitors into the role of penal spectators who can develop an understanding

of solitary confinement from a social distance. The representations of solitary confinement in the four penal history museums contribute to the idea that isolation is necessary in operational institutions. This leads to dominant narratives surrounding solitary confinement being reinforced. Penal history museums engage in various forms of denial, to a greater or lesser degree, through what they choose to put on display and what they feel should remain hidden from the public eye. The absence of certain information inside the four museums, some of which I briefly review below, does not position the public to critique the practice of solitary confinement.

The term solitary confinement refers to the physical and social isolation of an individual in custody for 22 to 24 hours a day, with the remaining time typically spent exercising in a barren yard or in a cage-like structure (Sapers, 2017). During these 22 to 24 hours a day, prisoners have little mental or physical stimulation, nor are they allowed to engage in social interaction. The deprivation of human contact that is inherent in solitary confinement is often accompanied by additional restrictions and controls that are applied to the prisoner. For example, an individual that is placed in solitary confinement may have limited to no access to educational, vocational and recreational activities (OCI, 2017). If they are allowed to participate in any activities, they are to do so in isolation.

The use of solitary confinement in Ontario's jails and prisons, where individuals are awaiting judicial proceedings or serving sentences of two-years-minus-a-day, is directly governed by Regulation 778, within the *Ministry of Correctional Services Act*. Regulation 778 sets out two forms of segregation: administrative and disciplinary (Sapers, 2017). Administrative segregation is used if the prisoner is in need of protection, requests to be placed in such a setting, or to protect the security of the institution or the

safety of other prisoners (Sapers, 2017). Disciplinary segregation is used when it is determined that a prisoner has committed a misconduct of a serious nature. While there is no definition of misconduct of a serious nature, this often includes assault against another prisoner or staff member, assault with a weapon, possession of contraband, causing significant damage to property, or inciting a riot or disturbance (Sapers, 2017). The Correctional Service Canada, which operates federal penitentiaries where individuals are serving sentences of two-years-plus-a-day, has administrative and disciplinary segregations that operate according to the rationales above. The difference between administrative and disciplinary segregation, however, is a difference in status rather than the material conditions of confinement, as the cells and the types of deprivation prisoners experience are typically the same (Bromwich & Kilty, 2017).

Beyond official reasons for segregation placements, solitary confinement is often used to monitor prisoners deemed to be at risk of suicide or who engage in self-injurious behaviour (Bromwich & Kilty, 2017). Unofficial reasons for placing prisoners in solitary confinement also include neutralizing the political activities of prisoners and keeping them silent, being deemed to have a gang affiliation and chronic illness such as HIV (Piché & Major, 2015). Solitary confinement has been used in “correctional”¹ facilities for many years, but became common with the rise of the modern penitentiary during the first half of the nineteenth century.

¹ Quotation marks are used around concepts such as “correctional” and “crime” to challenge state constructs that are reified to assert control over marginalized populations. “Correctional” is a stated objective of imprisonment, but it is arguably not central to the material experience of prisoners in jails, prisons and penitentiaries (Reed, 1993; Mayhew, 1993). “Crime” is a legal status of behaviour is defined by those in power (Hulsman, 1986).

The first Pennsylvania and Auburn prison systems both played pivotal roles in the reformation of prison life. The Pennsylvania prison system first instituted long-term isolation and solitude as an alternative to capital and corporal punishment. Prisoners saw no one except institutional officers and the occasional visitor. In theory, the Pennsylvania model was to allow prisoners to reflect on their misdeeds and truly experience the pangs of conscience (Rubin, 2014). The idea was also that the threat of solitary confinement would be a powerful deterrent for future prisoners. This system was believed to be rehabilitative in nature, because efforts were made to change the prisoner into an honest citizen. In 1821, in Auburn, New York, the building of the Auburn State Prison led to a new wave of penal reforms. This new system was labeled a “congregate system”, which meant that prisoners worked closely with one another and ate their meals together in silence, but went into small segregation cells at night (Rubin, 2014). By the late 1910s, the separate system of isolating prisoners was largely abandoned due to signs of mental distress amongst prisoners. However, by the 1980s the practice made a comeback with the rise of Supermax prisons in the United States (Rubin, 2014). Whether solitary confinement is used as punishment, crime prevention or moral remediation, the practice of isolating prisoners remains a prominent feature of Western prison systems today.

Solitary confinement is inarguably the most restrictive environment used to incarcerate prisoners, giving way to concerns about prisoners’ ability to adapt psychologically to their environment. Psychological effects may develop within the first few days of segregation and can worsen the longer a prisoner spends in segregation (Kelsall, 2014). The lack of an end date while in solitary confinement can be especially damaging to a prisoner’s mental health, ultimately creating a “prison within a prison”

(Charleroy & Marland, 2016, p. 144). Anxiety, depression and anger commonly occur, as prisoners have a difficult time separating reality from their own thoughts, which can in turn lead to confused thought processes, perceptual distortions, paranoia and psychosis (Kelsall, 2014, Gallagher, 2014).

The concern exists that “correctional” authorities use vague or broad placement criteria when placing individuals in solitary confinement (Sapers, 2017). Opponents of solitary confinement often question the appropriateness of these placements (e.g. OCI, 2017). In many institutions, segregation is used as a “default tool” to manage those with mental health needs, those who are at risk of self-harm or suicide, the disabled and the elderly, individuals who feel unsafe when left alone in general population units and transgendered prisoners. For example, prisoners living with mental health issues may find themselves inappropriately placed in solitary confinement because of a lack of other suitable options, for protective custody reasons, or for disruptive behaviour that is related to, or is symptomatic of their mental illness. According to a report by Howard Sapers (2017), Ontario prisoners who were flagged as having potential or confirmed suicide risk or mental illness were more likely to be placed in solitary confinement, and, once there, tended to stay longer than the rest of the segregated population. Similar trends have been observed in the federal penitentiary system.

The widely publicized death of teenager Ashley Smith in a “bleak segregation cell” at Grand Valley Institution, a federal penitentiary in Kitchener, Ontario demonstrates the detrimental, and ultimately deadly effects of solitary confinement on prisoners living with mental health issues (Sapers, 2008; Piché & Major, 2015, p. 29). Smith was born in the province of New Brunswick and was adopted at five days old

(Bromwich & Kilty, 2017). During her early adolescence, Ashley Smith began displaying challenging behaviour and questions were raised about her mental health. By age 15, she had been before juvenile court fourteen times for various minor offences such as trespassing and causing a disturbance (Bromwich & Kilty, 2017). Ashley was eventually admitted to a mental health care centre, where she was diagnosed with various conditions such as Attention Deficit Disorder, Borderline Personality Disorder and narcissistic personality traits (Bromwich & Kilty, 2017).

Ashley was first incarcerated as a youth at the age of fifteen, for throwing crab apples at a mailman. While Ashley had been in trouble for minor things before, such as disobeying teachers at school, she had never spent any time in custody. Her initial sentence for this offence was one month, during which she spent her time in solitary confinement (Bromwich & Kilty, 2017). While Smith's initial sentence was one month, she ended up spending three years in custody due to subsequent disciplinary offences that she incurred. When Smith turned eighteen, she was transferred to an adult facility, where she spent the vast majority of her time in administrative segregation. While incarcerated in the federal system, Smith was transferred seventeen times over a period of eleven months (Bromwich & Kilty, 2017; Sapers. 2008).

Each time Smith was transferred, her "segregation clock" was set to zero, which kept her time in isolation within the legally prescribed limits. This left "correctional" officers with no way of knowing how long she had spent in solitary at previous institutions, where her health had been steadily declining. Smith was periodically given the opportunity to speak to a series of psychologists, but only through a food slot in the door (Bromwich & Kilty, 2017). It has been widely reported that Ashley Smith suffered

from very serious mental health issues that were never properly assessed and thus went untreated. As a result, Ms. Smith ultimately choked herself to death with a piece of cloth inside her segregation cell while she was supposedly under suicide watch at the time. “Correctional” staff failed to respond immediately to this medical emergency and this failure cost Ashley Smith her life. Ms. Smith’s death was ruled a homicide by a coroner (Correctional Service Canada, 2013).

Another notable case that demonstrates the deadly effects of solitary confinement is that of Eddie Snowshoe. As Martel and colleagues (2011) explain, colonial policies, such as the residential school system and the 60’s scoop, have had disastrous impacts on Indigenous communities. Among these impacts is the deconstruction of the political, economic, and cultural foundations of Indigenous communities that has been linked to a host of challenging life circumstances such as under-employment, social isolation and unsound residential situations that contribute to intergenerational trauma. Mr. Snowshoe, as well as many other young people who lived in small Indigenous communities, seemed to have experienced this series of problems that stem from colonization and colonial institutions. Snowshoe was convicted in 2007 for shooting and injuring a cab driver in Inuvik during an armed robbery and was sentenced to five years in a federal institution (Globe and Mail, 2014).

Mr. Snowshoe arrived at Drumheller Institution in Alberta, and the Correctional Service Canada conducted an overall assessment of Snowshoe’s health. One psychologist suggested that he had an adjustment disorder, which is typically characterized by anxiety, impairment in functioning and reckless decision making when faced with situational stressors (Globe and Mail, 2014). This diagnosis is common amongst Indigenous

prisoners who are removed from small communities and placed into a large institutional setting (Martel, 2011). Despite this diagnosis, Mr. Snowshoe was transferred to Stony Mountain Institution, a few months into his sentence, where his early interactions with fellow prisoners were difficult, and “correctional” authorities described him as being paranoid and vulnerable (Globe and Mail, 2014).

Within an institutional setting it is a vicious circle: a troubled prisoner is more likely to end up in solitary confinement and, in turn, they are more likely to suffer there (Sapers, 2017). Over the course of his time in custody, Mr. Snowshoe had attempted suicide multiple times and he was demonstrating a gradual decline towards poorer mental health and acting out behaviour (Globe and Mail, 2014). Despite his distressed state, no efforts were made to address his mental health issues. Instead, Snowshoe was ultimately housed in solitary confinement for a period of 162 consecutive days for fabricating a “weapon” out of a juice box (Globe and Mail, 2014). Similar to Ms. Smith’s case, a combination of miscommunication, confusion and neglect led to Mr. Snowshoe’s extended period in isolation. In Mr. Snowshoe’s case, it would prove to be a death sentence. The 24-year-old took his own life inside his segregation cell.

In Ontario, the cases of Adam Capay and Christina Jahn raised considerable awareness about solitary confinement issues in provincial jails and prisons. Adam Capay is a 23-year-old Indigenous man from Thunder Bay, who was held in solitary confinement for over 1,500 days (Sapers, 2017). When he was 19 years of age, he was arrested on minor charges and sent to jail. While he was in custody, he got into a fight with a fellow prisoner and another man died. Capay spent four years waiting for his trial and during this time he was held in a Plexiglas-lined segregation cell within a windowless

segregation unit. His cell was illuminated by artificial light 24 hours per day and he was given yard time approximately once a month (Sapers, 2017). The former Minister of Community Safety and Correctional Services Yasir Naqvi said that, “Adam Capay’s conditions are completely unacceptable in this day and age of the Province of Ontario...and it is something that should never occur again” (Sapers, 2017, p. 39).

Christina Jahn, a woman suffering from Cancer, Schizophrenia and Bipolar disease, was serving a sentence at the Ottawa-Carleton Detention Centre for charges including assault and theft. Jahn spent over 200 days in solitary confinement, and during this time her physical and mental illnesses were not treated (Sapers, 2017). Jahn stated that the fluorescent lights were left on in her cell all night, she was forced to sleep on the floor without a mattress and her cell’s water was turned off for days at a time. After she was released, she launched a human rights complaint against the Ministry of Community Safety and Correctional Services, claiming that she had been discriminated against based on her gender and her mental health disabilities (Sapers, 2017). The Ontario Human Rights Commission became involved in the case, and in 2013, the parties reached a landmark settlement that incorporated ten public interest remedies that target the use of solitary confinement and mental health treatment in Ontario’s provincial “correctional” facilities. These remedies require the provincial government to ensure that prisoners living with mental health issues are not placed in segregation unless the Ministry can demonstrate that all other alternatives have been considered and rejected because they would cause an undue hardship (Sapers, 2017).

Solitary confinement is intended to be reserved for when other, less restrictive alternatives have been exhausted or have been rendered ineffective. However, it has

increasingly become a standard practice in Canadian prisons (OCI, 2017). For instance, while the number of individuals inside Ontario's jails and prisons has been decreasing for a decade, the number of people who are being sent to segregation is on the rise. On any given day last year, 575 people were detained in a segregation cell in the province of Ontario (Sapers, 2017). Public awareness concerning the harms of the practice has led to some reforms to reduce the use of isolation. For example, after years of increases, in the past year, the number of individuals in segregation in federal penitentiaries has declined from 780 in April 2014 to 391 in January 2017 (OCI, 2017).

I have gone into great detail about the current context of solitary confinement as it relates to provincial incarceration in Ontario and federal imprisonment in Canada to demonstrate the significance of this practice. The symbolic meanings of this form of isolation have material impacts, necessitating the study of the former in various settings, including penal tourism sites.

In *Chapter 2: Literature Review*, I discuss the existing literature on penal history museums. I explain how these cultural institutions have been studied in the past, the theoretical foundations of this work and the main findings emerging from it. I highlight how this thesis will enhance knowledge and understanding in the fields of criminology, museum studies and penal tourism studies.

In *Chapter 3: Theoretical Framework*, I provide a detailed overview of the theory of penal spectatorship as developed by Brown (2009), who attempts to identify and analyse the cultural domains where meanings surrounding punishment are shaped and constructed. I also explore Cohen's (2001) theory of denial and I suggest that his concepts can be used to better understand the representations of solitary confinement in

penal history museums. Specifically, it allows me to make sense of why certain information about solitary confinement is silenced.

In *Chapter 4: Methods*, I discuss the methodological approach of this research. I begin by identifying the four museums that are selected for investigation. I then discuss the epistemological framework of the research and explain why it is appropriate for a study on the representation of solitary confinement in penal history museums. Next, I outline the data collection and analysis methods, including the rationale behind the approaches chosen. Data for this thesis comes from field observations and this data is analysed through thematic coding. Finally, I discuss issues of reliability and validity as it pertains to the research design, as well as the ethical safeguards employed.

In *Chapter 5: Representations of Solitary Confinement in Four Ontario Penal History Museums*, I present the results from my data collection and analysis. I identify and analyse three dominant themes and their corresponding sub-themes, through which meanings about solitary confinement are constructed and communicated inside penal history museums. These themes are: 1) who ends up in solitary confinement and why; 2) the duration prisoners usually spend in solitary confinement and the conditions they experience; and 3) the impacts of solitary confinement on prisoners. In the process, links are made between my empirical findings, theories concerning penal spectatorship and denial, and relevant literature.

In *Chapter 6: Conclusion*, I discuss the main contributions of the study and highlight its limitations. I reflect on the significance of my findings for penal tourism literature and studies concerned with cultural representations of penality. Following this, I briefly discuss future directions in this area of study.

CHAPTER 2: LITERATURE REVIEW

This chapter explores literature relevant to the study of penal tourism. In doing so, it draws concepts from a number of areas of study. The first of these is cultural criminology, which consists of an exploration of the overarching theoretical framework guiding this research project. The second is visual criminology, which is situated within the broader field of cultural criminology and is geared towards making sense of visual images of related to “crime” and “criminal justice”. Visual criminology highlights the visual components of this research, namely how penal history museums represent solitary confinement using visual tools. This section of the literature review situates the study of penal history museums within this branch of criminological study. The third area of study explored is dark tourism, as well as a fourth related area of study known as penal tourism. Engaging with these two literatures introduces readers to explanations concerning why individuals may be drawn to visit cultural sites that are related to death and suffering, such as penal history museums, in the first place. The fifth area is museum literature, where I focus on the role of the museum as a cultural authority and a disciplinary institution. More specifically, I present the literature on the “new museology” movement that has emerged in recent years (Vergo, 1989). Drawing on this literature, I also explore the phenomenon on staged authenticity in penal history museums, along with the role that curators and museum staff have in “staging” former carceral institutions, including solitary confinement cells and exhibits. Following this, I identify gaps in knowledge that inform my research question and design.

2.1 - Cultural Criminology

“Cultural criminology” denotes both specific perspectives and broader orientations that have emerged in the fields of criminology, sociology, and criminal justice studies over the past few years (Ferrell, 1999). More specifically, cultural criminology is an interdisciplinary, theoretical, and interventionist perspective on “crime” and “criminality”, that places “crime” and the way in which it is represented in the context of culture. This perspective on the study of “criminal activity” would include a spatial analysis as a primary focus of study (Hayward, 2012; Ferrell, 1999), which is of particular interest to the examination of the representations of solitary confinement in penal history museums.

The first main tenant of cultural criminology is that its proponents believe that, as a discipline, criminology has often taken space for granted (Hayward, 2012). This means that there is an implicit notion of spatiality that approaches the environment simply as a geographic site and not as a product of power relations, cultural and social dynamics, or everyday meanings and values (Hayward, 2012). Because of this belief about space and the environment in which certain acts occur, cultural criminologists conduct research on various spaces that other criminologists might not believe to be relevant, such as graffiti walls, public memorials, comic books and other sites where visual representations of “crime” exist (Ferrell et al., 2008).

A second tenet of cultural criminology that emerged from the literature is that it is often described as a combination of the ideas of sociological criminology, along with the insights and orientations towards the image and style that is characteristic of cultural studies (Ferrell 1999). Perhaps because of its emergence out of sociological criminology,

though, cultural criminology has to this point drawn less on the sociology of culture than it has on various other sociological orientations more closely aligned, historically, with criminology. Central among these is the interactionist tradition in the sociology of deviance and criminology (Becker 1963; Ferrell, 1999).

The interactionist perspective views society as a product of everyday social interactions between individuals. This theory asserts that individuals assign symbols and create meaning based on their interactions with one another. This is significant because cultural criminologists attempt to undertake “a structurally and politically informed version of labelling theory” by examining meaning and representation in the interplay of “crime” and “crime control” (Ferrell, 1999, p. 398).

Thirdly, cultural criminology mobilizes the idea that the meaning of both “crime” and “crime control” resides in the contested processes of symbolic display, cultural interpretation and representational negotiation. Because of this, the literature suggests that it is essential for criminologists to pay close attention to the various ways in which “crime” is imagined, constructed and framed in society (Hayward & Presdee, 2010). Cultural criminology has been described as an emergent array of perspectives linked by sensitivities to image, meaning and representation in relation to the study of “crime” and control (Bevier, 2015).

Fourth, cultural criminology views “crime”, as well as the various agencies and institutions of “crime control”, such as prisons and police, as both cultural products and creative constructs. Because of this view, criminologists must examine them in terms of the respective meanings that they may carry (Hayward, 2012). The criminalization process is thought to be a cultural process whereby those with power define and shape

dominant forms of social life, and give them specific meanings (Presdee, 2000). More importantly, the powerful have the ability to define both how and what we see (e.g. in penal history museums).

Cultural criminology interweaves particular intellectual threads such as the centrality of meaning and constructed social identity to explore the convergence of cultural and criminological processes in contemporary social life (Ferrell, 1999; Hayward, 2012). In a broader sense, cultural criminology references the increased attention that a large number of criminologists give to popular culture constructions, with an emphasis on mass media constructions of “crime” and “crime control” (Ferrell, 1999).

Cultural criminological literature is relevant to this project and my research questions, because as Michelle Brown (2009) explains, most people discern what they know about imprisonment and punishment through cultural representations. It is through these cultural representations that a social distance between authors of punishment such as the museum visitor and the punished exists, and penal spectators are created. According to Brown (2009, p. 9), “the penal spectator’s imagining of punishment is haunted by abstract possibilities of danger and insecurity”, which is facilitated by cultural practices. According to cultural criminology, we are in a contemporary world that is shaped by the endless circulation of images and symbols that collapse conventional dualities of the “real” and the “representational”. Because of this, cultural criminology emphasizes the permeability of images as they flow between the mass media, “criminal” subcultures, and “crime control” agencies, and likewise the essential role of image and ideology play in constructing “crime control” policies and practices.

Following this line of analysis, cultural criminology suggests that everyday “criminal justice” has now become in many ways a matter of a public display that is created, entailing an ongoing policing of public perceptions regarding issues of “crime” and threat (Ferrell, 1999). Shifts such as this are in turn seen to reflect other dimensions of contemporary life, among them the emergence of a globalized economy of image and consumption, the tension between late modern patterns of social inclusion and exclusion, and the uncertain dynamics of personal and cultural identity within these arrangements (Ferrell et. al., 2008). This focus on the importance of visual displays leads to a discussion of visual criminology, one of the sub-areas of criminology that is situated under the umbrella of cultural criminology.

2.2 - Visual Criminology

The cultural turn in criminology has resulted in a greater attentiveness to issues of representation and these issues are not restricted to images that depict “criminal acts”, but also any act of representation that transforms traumatic experience into visual art (Carrabine, 2012). Initially, criminology’s interest in images was somewhat limited. Researchers focused on media representations of “crime”, with a particular emphasis on issues of content and on concerns with effects. This would consist of asking questions as to whether images related to stereotyping could influence “criminal” behaviour or result in an increased fear of “crime” (Hayward, 2010). Subsequent scholarship placed an emphasis on representation in general, sometimes as a way to understand the attraction of “criminality”. This initial research was conducted under the heading of cultural criminology, as described above, but many scholars have argued that the need for a sophisticated understanding of the centrality of the image to “crime” has become

increasingly urgent to criminology in general “given the ascendant position of the image/visual in contemporary culture” (Hayward & Presdee, 2010, p. 9).

The accessibility of sophisticated digital photography and the increased mediatization of society has resulted in images of “crime” being ubiquitous. A result of this is that the story of “crime” is told as much today through visual image as it is through written word (e.g. video games, television shows, YouTube videos displaying criminalized activity, surveillance footage) (Hayward, 2012; Francis, 2009). Visual criminologists believe that the visual spectacle of “crime” is dynamic and it is ingrained into contemporary society through the image. Due to the prominence of the image, visual criminologists suggest that critical attention must be focused on the production and dissemination of the visual image (Francis, 2009; Hayward & Presdee, 2010).

Further, according to the existing literature on visual criminology, the last decade has witnessed an expansion in the nature, power and influence of visual images of “crime”, social harm and crime control (Francis, 2009; Carrabine, 2012). In the realm of new media, images collide and converge across complex media platforms and interfaces (Brown, 2014). For example, photodocumentary is now a practice whose product, the still photo, can circulate across numerous global circuits of distribution, viewing and downloading (Brown, 2014). For scholars and activists, new possibilities open up in their own work with regard to the emergence of the visual scene. For example, the image has been used to support the development of a range of participative and reflexive methodologies in social research, learning and teaching (Francis, 2009). This is also the case for the “criminal justice” system itself. Organizations such as the police and local authorities are more adept at managing their “public face”, their visibility and thus

“accessibility” to the public through image manufacturing and digital interfaces (Francis, 2009, p. 11).

Due to the increase of images being recognized as key sites for the production and incitement of critical thinking and feeling about human suffering and social justice, there has been a growing emphasis on the study of visual culture (Brown, 2014). By describing the different and difficult subjectivities (e.g. between photographer, “criminal”, victim, spectator, torturer and artist) that any work of representation involves, a key question that arises is, “What have I done to represent you?” (Brown, 2014, p. 181). In asking this question, the complex relationship between the photographer, the suffering subject and the very act of looking has increasingly become a subject of debate amongst scholars (Carrabine, 2012).

However, proponents of visual criminology state that it is not enough to simply import images into a discipline such as criminology, that is defined by words and numbers, because this will leave individuals with the belief that numerical analysis can somehow conquer the opaqueness of the image (Ferrell, 2007). Instead, a new, sophisticated methodological orientation, namely visual criminology, that goes beyond the traditional understandings of the image is required in order to encompass meaning, affect, situation, and symbolic power in the same frame (Hayward & Presdee, 2010; Carrabine, 2012). Photographs cannot be perceived as static or objective, and photography is never entirely sufficient in terms of understanding an object or the meaning behind it.

In order to achieve this new methodological orientation, visual criminologists often ask themselves a series of questions such as, “What does this photograph represent?”

And what does it mean to the viewer?” (Hayward & Presdee, 2010, p. 17). These questions are relevant to this project because it is important to ask questions such as these in the context of a penal history museum, as the story of penalty and punishment is largely told through images in a museum. Further, visual criminologists warn that individuals should not be seduced by the belief that a photograph is a direct representation of a given object or individual. The multitude of meanings behind a photograph makes it risky to trust raw images of marginalization and suffering to an often judgemental public (Brown, 2014). Scholars suggest that a photograph possesses many cultural and social dimensions that should be taken into consideration when conducting research into the visual representation of “crime” and its control.

Visual criminologists acknowledge the power of the image and its ability to socially construct “crime”, deviance and punishment (Hayward, 2010). Scholars believe that photographs have the ability to construct the parameters around which the acceptable and unacceptable, the good and the bad, the appropriate and the inappropriate are framed for consumption (Francis, 2009). Images are also directly linked to sentiment, affect and emotion, as they attempt to garner public attention. They often do this by moving us in some way, making us feel astonished, repulsed, outraged, or confused (Brown, 2014). The literature suggests that it is important to acknowledge the incorporation of emotion into the experience of looking. The personality, cultural values, and ideologies of the viewer, as well as the context in which the image is presented, all shape the meaning of pictures. As an extension of this, how museum visitors view images and displays in penal history museums must be studied as a social process and, “we must approach our subject matter as a person studies an album of photographs or as a visitor approaches a painting

in a gallery - from various angles and from diverse perspectives” (Hayward & Presdee, 2010, p. 13).

The rapid development and refinement of technologies of image creation, production, manipulation and dissemination means that the likelihood of its misuse and misinterpretation are high (Francis, 2009). There are ethical issues that surround image capture, use, dissemination, interpretation and storage, therefore it is important for visual criminologists to reinforce the idea that images require interpretation, which is something that is not always done in practice (Francis, 2009). Whether it is the dystopian visions of social control promoted in science fiction films, the construction of idealised spaces, such as solitary confinement exhibitions in penal history museums, through specific images and accompanying language, or the identification of wrong-doing through lens-based photography, there is a need for criminologists to further engage in careful analysis and understanding of the power and dynamics of visual culture, along with the meaning and purpose of the image in contemporary society (Francis, 2009). This leads to a discussion of dark tourism, where not only the images themselves require examination, but also the reasoning behind why individuals engage with certain visual stimuli to begin with.

2.3 - Dark Tourism

Over the past decades, the tourism industry has expanded and diversified to become one of the fastest growing economic sectors in the world (Aslan, 2015). Tourists and the activities that they participate in have increasingly become the focus of study. Some recent studies have demonstrated that tourists are increasingly interested in seeking to understand the experiences of others in ways that transcend the traditional, sanitized ways that tourism has often been practiced (Robb, 2009). While a large portion of

tourism literature focuses on the marketing and consumption of pleasant diversions in pleasant places, scholars have begun to explore the phenomenon of dark tourism (Strange & Kempa, 2003). Tourist destinations such as museums and memorials have typically been considered to be places of leisure and enjoyment, however in recent years, some authors have stated that there has been a surge in the number of individuals who visit places that are associated with human misery, such as former Nazi death camps (e.g. Auschwitz), sites of nuclear disasters (e.g. Fukushima) and mass graves (e.g. the Catacombs). This can be attributed to the fact that dark tourism has generated more than purely academic interest, entering the mainstream as a popular subject of media attention (Robb, 2009, Lennon & Foley, 2000), including a popular new series on Netflix entitled *Dark Tourist*.

Dark tourism refers to a form of cultural heritage tourism that involves visiting destinations in which disaster, trauma, death and tragedy are showcased for educational, entertainment, memorial or commercial purposes (Lennon & Foley, 1996; Miles, 2002; Stone & Sharpley, 2008; Wilson, 2008). Others describe it as the consumption of tourism related to the macabre or horrific (Robinson & Dale, 2008). Dark tourism destinations can include places that carry a violent legacy or places at which violence is an ongoing reality (e.g. tours of both decommissioned and operational prisons). The emergence of dark tourism studies as an academic field of inquiry marks a shift both in the motivations of tourists, as well as the marketing and promotional strategies of tour operators, to include sites of death and disasters destinations as visitor attractions (Bowman & Pezzullo, 2010; Foley & Lennon, 2000).

Some dark tourism sites use video, audio, as well as other sensory-amplifications devices in order to intensify the tour experience, and in an attempt to create an impression of authenticity (Miles, 2002). Even low-tech penal history museums such as Robben Island use recorded voices, photographs and tours led by former prisoners to recount the story of imprisonment (Strange & Kempa, 2003). A distinction can also be made between purposefully constructed attractions or experiences such as museums that interpret or recreate events or acts associated with death, and accidental sites such as war cemeteries or memorials that have become tourist destinations over time (Sharpley, 2009). Lennon and Foley (1999) and Robinson and Dale (2008) also point to the development of the global media village and communications-driven tourism because technologies are more accessible than ever, allowing for global events that involve tragedy and suffering to seem more local, while the images associated with the events can be reproduced, which greatly increases consumer interest.

While many authors consider dark tourism to be a relatively new phenomenon, there is disagreement about the timeline of the emergence of dark tourism. Some authors state that dark tourism has its origins much further back than the 20th century (Lennon & Foley, 1999; Robinson & Dale, 2008). Those arguing that dark tourism has a very long history, which has been described as being a “thanatopic” tradition, point to the visitation of sites such as the natural disaster of Pompeii and the catacombs of Paris (Robinson & Dale, 2008; Seaton, 1996). These authors also point to early examples of death-related tourism such as Roman gladiator games, attendance at medieval public executions and guided tours of morgues during the Victorian era. Many dark tourism researchers

acknowledge that individuals visited places that are associated with death and suffering even before the modern advent of the tourism industry (Bowman & Pezzulo, 2010).

With respect to the museums, these sites are subject to contested interpretations in terms of the motivation that lies behind the fact that individuals wish to travel to and visit exhibits characteristic of dark tourism (Walby & Piché, 2011; Wilson, 2008). Visiting a penal history museum is often the closest people will get to viewing the inside of a prison or jail, and that is appealing to visitors (Ferguson et al., 2015). Further, in their examination of travel reviews written by penal spectators, Ferguson and colleagues (2015) note that visitors dwell on the spectacular elements of their experience, such as stories of prison violence, notable prisoners, and prominent events that occurred behind the walls. Visitors highlight how much they enjoyed the experience of “knowing” what it is like to spend time being bars (Ferguson et al., 2015). Mundane stories or discussions of controversial aspects of prison life are absent from travel reviews (Ferguson et al., 2015). For example, stories of Indigenous prisoners who find themselves in colonial prisons, suicide, and mental health issues were notably missing from online travel reviews. Other explanations that exist in the literature is that tourists go to dark tourism sites to engage in a process of reflection that allows them to rekindle memories of horrific events (Robinson & Dale, 2008). Some of these individuals may be survivors of tragedy themselves or they may be descendants of survivors of tragedy (e.g. children of Holocaust survivors) who wish to mourn for ancestors lost in what they might consider to be a sacred site (Aslan, 2015).

In a sense, “death becomes real again for these individuals because the real is represented so that the represented may become real” (Stone & Sharpley, 2008, p. 588).

The death sites of famous individuals such as Princess Diana, Mother Teresa or President Kennedy have also become tourism shrines as a way for individuals to feel connected to these prominent figures (Strange & Kempa, 2003). In Africa, sites in Angola, South Africa, Sierra Leone and Rwanda have all demonstrated the appeal of dark histories and tragic events for visitors (Tarlow, 2005). Sites of extraordinary disasters, such as the terrorist attack on the World Trade Center, also draw curious individuals from around the world (Stone, 2009). Even every day “crime” scenes and traffic accident locations can become impromptu attractions where individuals can gather to mourn, pay their respects or simply gawk at the aftermath of tragedy (Foote, 1997).

Some of these tourists may be researchers or academics who are interested in learning more about the history of a particular event or some may simply be curious and so they pay a tour guide to tell them more about what they perceive to be a significant historical event (Jangula, 2006; Bittner, 2011). According to Niemelä (2010, p. 10), individuals may choose to visit dark tourism sites because of a fascination with death, and this is in part due to its “absent-present paradox”. This refers to the fact that places that are associated with dark tourism provide individuals with a channel to observe the themes that are associated with death and suffering safely at a distance. Individuals engage in voyeuristic consumption of representations, as well as images of violence and tragedy, because there is an aspect of illicit excitement that they may not be able to access in their daily lives without repercussions. Viewers are able to feel a sense of thrill because they are coming very close with instances of “crime” and “criminality”, and playing at their own social and personal boundaries of what is “acceptable” to enjoy seeing, while maintaining a state of “blissful non-responsibility” as audience members

(Presdee, 2000, p. 59). This is due to the fact that they can experience violence, suffering and death without feeling they are implicated in any way personally, whereas an individual who actually engages in violent behaviour may face repercussions (e.g. a prison sentence or retaliation) (Brown, 2009). Visitors of dark tourism sites seek the different in the protection of the familiar; they seek the danger of history in the protection of the known (Tarlow, 2005).

The connection between tragic events and their touristic representations has generated both academic and ethical debates about the way in which pleasure and leisure are increasingly being mixed with tragedy (Rojek, 1993). Several commentators on the heritage industry are concerned about the inauthenticity of these sites and have denounced dark tourism sites, both as an inappropriate and immoral way to present human suffering and tragic events (Hewison, 1987; Urry, 1995). This can be due to the fact that a dark tourism site cannot be expected to do more than simply stand for the events that it represents, and “these sites can erase as much as they reveal” (Walby & Piché, 2011, p. 452). The commodification of death and sadness, as well as history for mass consumption can often lead to the trivialization of events. However, some authors make the claim that the trivialization does not mean that counter-hegemonic stories or tales of injustice cannot also be presented (Strange & Kempa, 2003). On the other hand, some scholars argue that more authenticating devices are needed in heritage sites in order to differentiate between what is “authentic” history and what is “bogus” history (Strange & Kempa, 2003, p. 387). Seaton (1996) explains that the consumption of a disturbing past is driven by tourists’ tastes and marketing ploys, and they are also greatly influenced by current political and cultural climates.

One well-known example of a dark tourism site, and one that has received extensive moral criticism, is Ground Zero in New York City (Stone, 2009). Many scholars have named Ground Zero as a “quintessential dark tourist destination” (Joly, 2010, p. 200; also see Sharpley & Stone, 2009). For example, Sharpley and Stone (2009, p. 97) refer to the doubling of visitor numbers following the attack on the World Trade Center as evidence of a “greater willingness or desire on the part of tourists to visit dark attractions” and refer to the site as exemplary of some of the many ethical issues of dark tourism. One of the reasons for this is that the Ground Zero exhibit allows for voyeuristic visitors to stand alongside those who are present at the memorial as a way to mourn the loss of loved ones (Sharpley & Stone, 2009; Potts, 2012). This not only blurs the line between public and private expressions of grief, but it raises questions about the motivations of New York tourists who are seen as though they are gazing and gawking at a spectacle (Stone, 2005).

The other aspect of the Ground Zero memorial that aligns with the ethical concerns surrounding dark tourism is what Marita Sturken (2007) calls “a consumer culture of comfort objects, such as World Trade Center snow globes” (p. 166). Some authors have even referred to the Ground Zero site as “September 11 World” due to the production and consumption of “9/11” souvenirs, such as framed photographs of the burning towers, as though it were a theme park of some sort (Stone, 2009). The souvenir economy of the Ground Zero site is another example of how dark tourism sites can commodify death and tragedy (Potts, 2012).

Dark tourism literature is relevant to this project because penal history museums are another prominent example of a dark tourism site. This is due to the fact that penal

history museums convey a multitude of narratives about confinement, punishment and suffering. According to Pratt (2002), dark tourism sites such as museums should interest criminologists and sociologists of punishment because these cultural institutions tell us a lot about the social significance of prisons. As well, cultural institutions and processes have become more pivotal in cultural understandings and demands for heightened security (Pratt, 2002). This is a rationale for theorizing the role of cultural production in promoting certain visions of prisons and prisoners.

2.4 - Penal Tourism

There is a growing amount of literature that has examined Canadian penal history museums located in decommissioned penitentiaries, prisons, jails and lock-ups. Research in this area has examined a wide range of topics such as the creation of penal history museums (Walby & Piché, 2015a), the staging of authenticity by curators (Walby & Piché, 2015b), marketing and souvenir sales practices (Luscombe et al., 2018), representations of punishment and prison life (Fiander et al., 2016), and representations of prisoners and prison staff (Chen et al., 2016). Walby and Piché (2015a) highlight that penal history museums in Canada are cultural sites that influence how visitors make sense of punishment both in the past and in the present. According to some scholars, the “spectacle” of punishment did not in fact disappear when the shift from public corporal punishment to carceral punishment occurred (Barton & Brown, 2015). Instead, it persisted through mediated and cultural representations of the prison, and these representations allow for a far greater level of visibility than ever before in the history of the prison and punishment (Cheliotis, 2010; Walby & Piché, 2011).

Visiting a decommissioned prison that has been withdrawn from service as a “correctional” institution has become a common form of tourism and leisure (Wilson et al., 2017). Former sites of punishment and incarceration are often converted into museums or heritage sites (Strange & Kempa, 2003). In fact, former sites of incarceration, namely places where the intentional state-sanctioned infliction of punishment, pain and privation took place are amongst the most popular dark tourism sites (Strange & Kempa, 2003). Penal museums have become popular tourist sites across the globe, such as The Clink in England, the NS Dokumentationiszentrum Germany, Alcatraz in the United States and Robben Island in South Africa (Walby & Piché, 2011; Strange & Kempa, 2003). Strange and Kempa (2003) explain that individuals’ interest and curiosity about the hidden features of prison and punishment is not new, however, opportunities for prison history tourism have recently expanded.

Prison tourist sites are often referred to as prison museums due to the fact that they are generally concerned with the conservation and display of architecture and artefacts of historical, social and cultural importance, and so they share many of the same characteristics of standard museums (Barton & Brown, 2015). The museums are important for criminologists to study due to the fact that these cultural institutions tell a story about the significance of prison (Barton & Brown, 2015). Since their emergence, prisons have been of interest to many members of the public. For example, a study that was conducted in Australia (due to its history as a drop point for the punishment of transportation), which demonstrated that Australians tend to identify prisons, as well as

anything that has to do with prison life, as an aspect of heritage that they consider to be top priority when deciding how to spend their heritage-related leisure time (Smith, 2008).

Exactly why prisons and former prisons are so fascinating to so many people is a subject that has produced much discussion and ethical conflicts (Wilson, 2008). As with other dark tourist sites, the reasons for the preservation of structure and objects can range from purposes of aesthetics, education, and conservation to entertainment and commercial profit (Barton & Brown, 2015). According to Sharpley (2009), regardless of the aim of penal tourism, it involves the commodification of those who have suffered and died, and this affords the prison museum a political dimension, as well as a responsibility with respect to the authenticity and ethics of representation.

Almost all prison museums do market themselves as tourist attractions via websites and brochures (Aslan, 2015). Penal history museums are entrepreneurial in the sense that they seek to find out what tourists expect out of their visit to the museum, and how best they can meet these expectations (Chhabra, 2008). The museums themselves vary in terms of what sort of experience is being offered to visitors. Some museums allow for engagement with the exhibits such as allowing individuals to dress up as prisoners and spend the day in prison (Luscombe et al., 2018) and some adopt a more passive method of education such as guiding the visitors through the museum as they read what is written on signs and displays. However, not only do the tour guides and displays provide a narrative about imprisonment and punishment, but penal heritage museums also engage in the dark tourism process of “memorialization” (Bendix, 2002).

The process of memorialization requires the display of artefacts as “relics”, “by-gones” or as a matter of history (Walby & Piché, 2011).

In the context of tourism, memorialization hinges on the concept of authenticity (Bendix, 2002). The motive behind displaying relics is to suggest that they are a matter of the past and also to suggest that the present is different. In the case of prison museums, this often means that contemporary methods of punishment are presented to tourists as less punitive or that they have changed for the better in one way or another. Prison museums not only engage in the process of memorialization, but they encourage individuals to create a sense of themselves in relation to the relics that they are being shown (Walby & Piché, 2011).

2.5 - Museum Literature

In a broad sense, museums can be considered to be historical, scientific or aesthetic (Chobot & Chobot, 1990). Some collections are more general in nature, while others provide specialized coverage of a particular period or topic. Museums have been recognized as educational institutions since the early part of the 20th century and they are constantly evolving. Museums serve a highly diverse clientele, who are engaged in some form of informal learning, unlike the structured, formal learning that is offered in traditional educational institutions such as schools. While much of the literature has focused on museums’ ability to educate youth, it is important to recognize the role that museums have in educating adults as well (Chobot & Chobot, 1990).

Museums, including penal history museums, can be conceptualized as social institutions that are affected by the growth of cultural tourism and are dependent on

changes in society (van den Bosch, 2005). The museum's traditional role of collecting, preserving, and interpreting information for members of the public is necessary, but no longer sufficient in today's world. Museums have been exploring varied roles for themselves, including taking more active roles in helping the public communities place themselves in a wider world, sometimes providing forums for critical thinking and continuing dialogue of interest and concern (Weil, 1990). The unprecedented expansion and diversification of museums' activities in recent years has brought them not only considerable media attention and public controversy, but also increased scholarly scrutiny (MacDonald, 2006; Sherman, 1990; Vergo, 1989).

The concept of the new museology evolved from the perceived failings of the original museology and was based on the idea that the role of the museum in society had to undergo a change (Vergo, 1989; McCall & Gray, 2014). The new museology can be characterized as a movement that called for museum staff, as well as researchers, to direct increased attention to the role of the museum as a "cultural authority" and the purpose that it serves in society (McCall & Grey, 2014). As well, the movement mobilizes the idea that individuals must take questions of authenticity, interpretation, meaning and control seriously when studying museums (Vergo, 1989). The new museology is not just an initiative to promote constant innovation, but rather it seeks a radical transformation of the aims of museology, and it advocates for profound change in the thinking and attitude of the museologist (Mayrand, 2014).

Prior to the new museology movement, museum literature was lacking a theoretical basis and its prime focus was determining ways to attract visitors and manage

museum collections (MacDonald, 2006). In the 1970s, many in the field felt that museums, their place in society, and their relationship with members of the public needed to change (Ferguson, 2016; McCall & Grey, 2014). More specifically, museums were viewed as elitist, obsolete and disconnected from the publics who frequented them (McCall & Grey, 2014). The consequence of this was perceived to be that the interests of a narrow group dominated how museums operated on the basis of a claimed exclusivity in determining the role of the museum (Hooper-Greenhill, 2000). Some also claimed that museums effectively preserved the elite culture and sought to civilize the lower class (Bennett, 1995). Because of this, the new museology movement ultimately criticized the authoritarian model of museums, as well as the fact that museums tended to ignore the social and political contexts of its displays (Vergo, 1989).

According to MacDonald (2006), it has come to be accepted that museums have a social responsibility and accountability to the community. More specifically, the images, representations and stories that are told or appear in museums, as well as the ones that are left out of the public's view, have the potential to educate tourists and visitors, as well as influence broader social issues in a given direction (Ferguson, 2016). Because of this, many academics have explored how certain themes and topics are represented in museums such as Indigenous communities, social class, slavery, as well as women and minority cultures (Ferguson, 2016). As a result of the interest in the representational practices of museums, there have been calls for wide access to museums, as well as an increase in the amount of visitor input in terms of what is being put on display in museums (Ferguson, 2016).

Museum literature is essential to studying the representation of solitary confinement in penal history museums because the decision making process that goes on in museums in terms of what to display and what not to display carries a variety of meanings. More specifically, the way in which museums decide to represent an event in history symbolizes the dominant values of society and solidifies the culture, history, and identity of various social groups (MacDonald, 2006). Although the studies into representational-based critiques of museums extend back several decades, it is an area of research that continues to produce valuable knowledge about how certain groups and historical events are represented in museums (Ferguson, 2016).

2.6 - Staged Authenticity

Recent consumer research has indicated that tourists want better experiences and a deeper level of engagement in various consumption settings, such as museums, theme parks, and festivals (Milman, 2013). The prevailing contemporary thought is that the future successes of companies and other cultural entities no longer lies in their operational abilities, but rather in their ability to sustain consumers' perceptions of their experiential authenticity (Pine & Gilmore, 2011). In our contemporary society, people demand more of the arts and of museums as a way to understand authentic truths about the worlds of the past, as well as their own lives (van den Bosch, 2005). Scholars have also addressed the notion of authenticity in tourism studies specifically and much of this work has focused on how authenticity is created by tourism providers (Walby & Piché, 2015a; Taylor 2001). Tourists can be an important source of information on authenticity

based on their personal background and other sources of information about the phenomenon experienced (Chhabra et al., 2003).

Individuals who decide to visit museums are ultimately seeking a sense of authenticity and one of the first accounts of authenticity in the tourism industry was the notion of staged authenticity (MacCannell, 1973). Staged authenticity refers to “various forms of displays that are curated or designed to appear as though they are an entrance to the backstage or authentic world, when in reality they are deliberately created” (Walby & Piché, 2015b, p. 232). These front stage presentations of authenticity occur in decommissioned “correctional” facilities in a variety of ways. For example, in some of the museums, Walby and Piché (2015b) note that visitors are encouraged to spend time in a cell that contains personal belongings that are said to mimic what would have been in the cell when the prison was operational. In some other instances, dolls that are clad in a prison uniform are placed in a solitary confinement cell to show visitors what it may have looked like when the cell was in use.

While these experiences and displays may contain certain aspects of the original facility, as well as the original cells, a disjuncture still exists between the practice that is being depicted (e.g. solitary confinement) and the fleeting experience that the tourist may have in the museum. This is one of the largest challenges of attempting to represent penal institutions and practices (Walby & Piché, 2015a). The reason that representing prison is so challenging is due to the multiple voices that exist within the prison environment, as a form of narration. In telling a story about life in prison, one must include the stories of the prisoners themselves, the stories of the staff members, as well as the multitude of untold stories about what occurred in these carceral spaces. Yet, the voices of the

incarcerated are often muted in these spaces (Fiander et al., 2016), while those of staff and officials are readily showcased (Chen et al., 2016).

Another challenge that penal history museums face in terms of staging authenticity is that what is often represented in these museums is human suffering and pain, and this cannot easily be reproduced in a museum setting. While museum visitors can spend a short period of time inside a cell, they are not able to experience the feeling of being shackled, of being intimidated by guards, or being so cold inside your cell that you can see your breath. A museum is simply not able to achieve this. As Walby and Piché (2015b) explain, these complex layers make depicting what a prison was like a near-impossible task, yet penal history museums attempt to do just that. While there is variation in how the penal history sites attempt to convey a sense of authenticity, in the end they share a common goal of making visitors' experiences as "real" as possible.

This staging process occurs for several reasons, including raising revenues for the museums, as well as increasing the morbid appeal that draws people to visit penal history museums in the first place (Walby & Piché, 2015b). According to this perspective, there are different levels of performance, and different combinations of front stage and back stage (MacCannell, 1973). A parallel can be drawn between the work of Erving Goffman on institutional display and the notion of staged authenticity in the sense that staged displays can be manipulated and used to create safe, at-a-distance, tourist experiences (Walby & Piché, 2015b).

There has been much debate about the notion of authenticity in tourism studies. For example, according to Zhu (2012) authenticity has a performative element that is composed by tourism providers such as tour guides. As Ferguson (2016) explains, all

encounters at museums are staged and tour guides are key to this social process. Tour guides play a crucial role in facilitating the encounter between penal history museums and tourists. Furthermore, tour guides have often been referred to as teachers, pathfinders, entertainers and cultural brokers. The performances that tour guides give have the potential to bring feelings to life and in penal history museums they are able to bring “dead prisons” to life by portraying these sites as authentic (Ferguson, 2016). As well, Taylor (2001) explains that these compositions may be perceived as more authentic when tour guides seem sincere and make use of various performative techniques such as dressing up in period-specific costume.

While there is agreement amongst scholars that authenticity should be understood as part of a continuum (Walby & Piché, 2015b), there is some debate surrounding whether or not staged authenticity is necessarily a negative thing, and about where in fact it falls on this continuum. Chhabra and colleagues (2003) write that staged authenticity is a key indicator of tourist satisfaction and that tourists actually demand it. The authors explain that even though tourists may be very aware of the fact that the event or relic is contrived, and that the event is occurring far away from its historical space, attempts at staging authenticity are still expected by tourist and will enhance their experience (Chhabra et al., 2003). In fact, upon visiting a museum, tourists may even long for the staged elements of culture to look and feel more authentic than its original form, because it allows them to feel more connected to the display before them (Walby & Piché, 2015b). However, what is staged in a museum does not necessarily mean it is superficial in its entirety as long as there are some elements of the original tradition that are still present for tourists to see and engage with (Chhabra et al., 2003).

A key element of creating an authentic experience for museum visitors is curation. The choices that curators make are decisions that project ideas and messages about the social world to visitors (Sherman, 1990; MacDonald, 2006; Walby & Piché, 2015a). Curators, as well as other museum staff, are at the forefront of establishing this sense of authenticity, through placing an emphasis on supposedly “real” accounts of what prison life was like for prisoners and “correctional” officers when the prison was operational (Walby & Piché, 2015b). Edensor (2001) refers to curators as directors or stage managers within his typology of key workers that play a role in tourism performances. The decisions that are made about curation are not only shaped by the desire to maintain the historical integrity of a site, but also the staging of authenticity (Mordue, 2005). In Walby and Piché’s (2015b) study of staged authenticity in penal history museums across Canada, the authors identified four strategies that were employed by museum staff in an attempt to convey to tourists that their museum is in fact an authentic carceral sight. These four strategies represent a continuum of carceral “stage-setting” techniques, and each one possesses strengths and weaknesses in terms of what sort of authenticity the museum is attempting to achieve.

The first strategy that is used by museum staff is the preservation of building features and spaces, as well as objects and documents that offer a glimpse of what it might have been like to live and work inside a carceral institution. This strategy involves trying to “freeze” the heritage aspects of a site in a way that makes them appear more authentic. The second technique that is used by museum staff is restoration. Restoration work is executed in facilities that have fallen into disrepair or have been altered over the

years (Walby & Piché, 2015b). The third strategy is importation. This is when there is a lack of archival materials necessitating the importation of items from other carceral sites for display (Walby & Piché, 2015b). If this is not possible, the fourth strategy is creation, whereby curators will create items that may be missing based on their imagination and expertise in the field (Walby & Piché, 2015b).

These carceral stage-setting techniques are relevant to my study because they allow for an understanding of the performative, staged displays that are manipulated and used as a resource to facilitate at-a-distance tourist experiences (Walby & Piché, 2015b). Carceral stage setting allows for messages about penal practices, including solitary confinement, to be conveyed and it is used to convey a sense of authenticity. However, as Walby and Piché (2015b) explain, the practice of carceral stage setting and staged authenticity can also obfuscate critical narratives and reflection regarding confinement as a method of punishment. In addition, carceral stage setting includes some aspects of penal practices and not others (Walby & Piché, 2015b). As demonstrated in this thesis, the staging and curation that occurs in penal history museums can silence counter-narratives surrounding the use of solitary confinement and shield museum visitors from the harms and consequences that are associated with it.

2.7 - Conclusion

This chapter has provided a background of existing literature on and relevant to penal history museums. Based on a review of the literature, there is evidence that penal history museums construct popular knowledge about penality, and more specifically about solitary confinement as a method of punishment and discipline (Brown, 2009).

While dark tourism, penal tourism, as well as the elements of staged authenticity and curation techniques have been the focus of criminological research, no research has been conducted on the cultural representations of solitary confinement in penal history museums. My research project addresses this gap in the growing amount of scholarship on penal tourism by examining how solitary confinement is represented in penal history museums within the province of Ontario, Canada.

Drawing on these literatures, I address the following research question: Do representations of solitary confinement in Ontario penal history museums reinforce or challenge the idea that solitary confinement is a necessary practice in Canadian prisons? The goal of this study is not to assess whether or not representations of punishment, and more specifically solitary confinement, are accurate or not. However, I do point to relevant facts that are omitted from penal history museums that could challenge the necessity of solitary confinement in operational institutions. The examination of news articles, official documents, mandate letters, inquiries and investigative reports that have been published by the Ministry of Community Safety and Correctional Services, the Correctional Service Canada and the Office of the Correctional Investigator allows me to reveal what critiques and consequences stemming from solitary confinement were included or omitted from museums. These omitted facts are highlighted because they could, if incorporated in penal history museums, challenge and problematize the use of solitary confinement in operational institutions.

CHAPTER 3: THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

This chapter outlines the theoretical framework that guides my examination into how solitary confinement is represented in penal history museums in Ontario. My research engages with the work of Michelle Brown (2009) in *The Culture of Punishment: Prison, Society and Spectacle*, which explores the role of popular culture in the era of American mass incarceration. This chapter provides an overview of penal spectatorship, which is a concept developed to better understand how cultural forces generate and condition support for penal practices from people that are situated outside of the prison environment. In addition, I explore how Brown (2009) seeks to expand the study of punishment into one that demonstrates how its fundamental correlates, particularly pain, suffering and exclusion, are naturalized through the cultural realm. In addition to the theory of penal spectatorship, this project draws from the writings of Cohen (2001) on states of denial. I describe how penal history museums are engaging in several forms of denial by repressing certain information about penality in general and solitary confinement specifically, which in turn legitimates them.

3.1 – Penal Spectatorship

Until recently, much of the work on contemporary penality by criminologists and legal scholars has been directed towards investigating the institutions of punishment themselves (e.g. prisons and jails), as well as issues such as how politics and power-relations shape certain carceral practices (see Walby & Piché, 2015a). However, Brown (2009) notes that these efforts fail to acknowledge what she refers to as “penal spectatorship” or the wide range of everyday cultural sites where ordinary citizens come

into contact with representations of punishment. She explains that researchers must begin their analyses with the penal spectator, who by definition looks in on punishment and yet is also the author of punishment (Brown, 2009).

In her book, Brown (2009, p. 4) argues, “many American citizens access punishment through cultural practices that are removed from formal institutions like prisons in a manner which, although largely unacknowledged, massively extends throughout our social foundation”. This cultural realm provides a system of meaning in which everyday citizens who have little to no connection with the prison system construct their understandings about punishment in ways that tend to perpetuate support for current penal policies and practices (Brown, 2009). This practice of viewing punishment from a social distance is what Brown (2009) refers to as penal spectatorship.

Opportunities for public audiences to witness the punishment of another human being have been extensive throughout history, as demonstrated by Foucault (1977) in his studies on the disappearance of corporal punishment and torture as a public spectacle in 18th century Europe (Brown, 2009). However, this form of historical punishment required a close physical proximity to the punished, and the audience’s immediate presence was needed in order for the performance to take place (Foucault, 1977). While these public spectacles of punishment may have disappeared for the most part, individuals’ interest in punishment and violent spectacles has not diminished, but rather has changed in form. Brown (2009) explains that the opportunity for individuals to consume the punishment of others from a distanced position has in fact increased exponentially (Brown, 2009). This has been facilitated by an increase in the use of media in our daily lives. For example, television, movies and video games are all examples of cultural sites that have the ability

to influence how citizens construct understandings about punishment, as well as exaggerate widespread fear of criminalized harm (Brown, 2009).

It is of central importance to Brown (2009) that the impact that cultural representations of punishment have on individual and collective behaviour is recognized. As mentioned in the previous chapter, many scholars have drawn from visual studies (e.g. visual criminology) in order to gain a better understanding of the growing amount of images of carceral scenes, penal actors, and social suffering that permeate through society and mass media (Brown, 2009; Carrabine, 2012; Walby & Piché, 2016). One of the main concerns are the subjectivities that are fostered by representation, which as Carrabine (2012: 486) explains, “are not just restricted to images that evidence criminal acts, but also figure in any act of representation that transforms traumatic experience into visual art”.

Understanding the subjectivities that arise out of indirect ways of looking at the infliction of pain is of central concern to these scholars, including Brown (2009). This is because subjectivities are an important way that citizens give meanings to punishment and those in contact with the law. These subjectivities indicate the process of thinking through one’s sense of self and relations to others, a dynamic process which is constantly changing and opening new ways of thinking about other people. Brown (2009) explains that penal spectatorship is an example of subjectivity practice that is widespread and normalized across our social foundation that limits the reflection of one’s capacity to contest hegemonic discourses and develop a sense of empathy towards marginalized groups, namely those who are incarcerated.

Subjectivities can be understood as the process of thinking about one's sense of self and relations to others around them. Brown (2009) explains that they are an important way that citizens give meanings to punishment and those in conflict with the law. Importantly, then, subjectivities give way to feelings, values, thoughts, and experiences that can possibly contest hegemonic discourses and build empathy with groups, providing an opportunity for what Brown (2009) calls "alternative ways of being". She notes that penal spectatorship is a form of subjectivity practice that is widespread and normalized across our social foundation that prohibits any reflection or capacity to contest hegemonic discourses and build empathy with marginalized groups, such as the incarcerated.

Brown (2009) explains that punishment is both practiced and played with in our daily lives, however cultural engagement with punishment (e.g. in penal history museums) occurs because it is easier, convenient and more accessible to members of the public. Brown's theory of penal spectatorship states that individuals choose when and under what conditions they would prefer to see prisons, and this particular form of engagement reproduces certain kinds of logic and explanatory frameworks surrounding prison and punishment that limit critical reflection. Brown looks to places within the prison-industrial complex where this sort of engagement is occurring, and where punishment arises popularly and culturally. She asserts that more and more, individuals are consuming cultural representations of punishment without any direct connection to prison, which can be problematic.

In this looking from a distance that goes on, Brown (2009, p. 21) argues that the

individual acts as a bystander and as an outsider instead of an engaged participant or witness, “she may stare curiously or reflectively, peer sideways from her peripheral vision, or gape and gawk directly, but the object of her gaze is inevitably other people’s pain”. Brown explains that it is this lack of engagement that complicates any form of penal spectatorship. Further, there are multiple different ways of looking and participating in others’ pain, in which we all participate (Brown, 2009). These forms of looking can be understood as existing as part of a continuum. On one end there is the simple act of witnessing and on the more extreme end is the act of killing or torture. In this sense, “looking is always a form of action and human will” (Brown, 2009, p. 22).

What is important to note is that these ways of looking are connected to exclusion, pain, blame, accountability and judgement (Ferguson, 2016). One feature that defines penal spectatorship is that there is often a striking amount of enthusiasm and energy in the looking that individuals engage in, as well as the inability to turn away, much like when you drive past the scene of a car accident (Brown, 2009). Brown writes that this fervour often translates into a sort of peculiar energy in the call for punitive modes of social response, and one is led to wonder to what extent this eagerness to demonstrate the value of imprisonment is a reflection of the “otherness” of those being imprisoned.

According to Brown (2009), because of the uniqueness of punishment as a social institution, theory plays a critical role in our understanding of it. This is echoed by the words of Michel Foucault (2000), “To punish is the most difficult thing there is. A society such as ours needs to question every aspect of punishment as it is practiced

everywhere” (p.462). There are many different ways that individuals can look or participate in people’s pain and according to penal spectatorship theory we will participate in these various methods of looking at some point in our lives whether we are conscious of it or not. Because of this, Brown (2009) highlights the methodological need to begin investigations outside the traditionally rigid borders found in the study of punishment.

Brown (2009) draws on the work of Jonathan Simon (2007) in *Governing Through Crime* to provide readers with an explanation of why individuals may choose to engage in penal spectatorship. Simon (2007) provides a model of penal spectatorship in his analysis of the ways in which state and subjectivity building capacities privilege “crime” and construct dangerous solidarities. As “crime” becomes the primary way in which a wide variety of social problems and social action come to be configured, the penal state itself becomes a framing logic for the sites and centres for the performance of middle-class life (e.g. workplaces, universities, medical centers, housing). Within this convergence of “crime” and middle-class lifestyle, the subject position of the citizen is reshaped around a new identity (Simon, 2007). According to Simon (2007, p.47), “this new identity is one that depends upon a collective image of themselves as victims, more specifically as victims of “crime” and it is within this identity that individuals feel united and authorized to take radical steps”. More specifically, to the extent that individuals identify with the victim identity, lawmaking will systematically favour ritualized rage over prevention and fear reduction. It is this way of thinking that can further move prisoners away from any secure place in the social order, thus making penal spectatorship

seem like a justified practice to engage in (Brown, 2009).

Penal spectatorship serves as a theoretical framework for my research project because Brown (2009) explains that the realm of prison tourism is another “cultural arena” in which penal spectatorship is achieving new and unprecedented possibilities. Along with prison films, Brown (2009) highlights tours of decommissioned prisons such as Alcatraz as key sites of penal spectatorship where citizens make sense of punishment from a social distance. Brown (2009) examines the cultural work that these sites perform (e.g. how solitary confinement is curated and presented through visual displays), including the penal discourses and mythologies that they invoke through an examination of depictions of the prison as a tourist site (Ferguson et al., 2015). Penal history museums also have the potential to construct popular knowledge about punishment, and more specifically about solitary confinement as a method of punishment and discipline (Brown, 2009).

Brown (2009) explains that incorporating penalty as a structuring concept for the sociology of punishment provides scholars with a way to study punishment, and more broadly the social production of pain, beyond formal institutions of punishment (e.g. operational prisons and detention centres) and into the realm of culture. Punishment becomes less of a social institution for dealing with deviant behaviour but rather, “a central site from which to understand the most hopeful of social – and human – aims, the infliction of pain and its prohibition through compassion and mercy” (Brown, 2009, p. 33). In many ways, punishment is the practicing of ‘othering’ and stigmatizing certain populations through the collective decision to inflict pain, and regulate individuals and

groups through social control practices. Thus, Brown's theory of penal spectatorship allows me to examine punishment as both a social practice from which we consider frames of social inclusion and how members of the public attend to matters of violence, 'crime', punishment and more specifically the practice of solitary confinement (Brown, 2009).

3.2 – Theory of Denial

Cohen (2001) writes that statements of denial are assertions that something did not happen, does not exist, is not true or is not known about. Phrases such as “turning a blind eye” or “looking the other way” imply that we have access to reality, but we choose to ignore it because it is convenient to do so. Denial includes multiple components: cognition (not acknowledging the facts); emotion (not feeling and not being disturbed); morality (not recognizing wrongness or responsibility); and action (not taking steps in response to knowledge) (Cohen, 2001, p. 23). Cohen (2001) goes on to explain that there is a common thread that flows through the many different forms of denial and it is that people, organizations, governments or whole societies are presented with information that is too disturbing or threatening to be openly acknowledged. This information may be readily available and registered, but because it leads to uncomfortable or unpleasant conclusions, it is repressed, reinterpreted and silenced.

While one possibility is that these assertions are indeed true and correct, there is also denial that consists of a deliberate intention to be deceptive. That is, the truth is clearly known, but for many reasons, “personal or political, justified or unjustifiable”, it is concealed (Cohen, 2001, p. 4). At the individual level, words such as lying,

concealment and deception can be used, and at the organizational level words such as disinformation, misinformation and cover-up come to mind. Cohen explains that another form of conscious denial is the conscious decision to not expose oneself to certain unpleasant information, such as the suffering endured as a result of torture. Cohen (2001, p. 4) writes, “we make a conscious decision to switch off the sources of such information”. However, Cohen makes the point that sometimes we are not entirely aware of switching off or blocking out information and that, “denial may be neither a matter of telling the truth nor intentionally telling a lie” (Cohen, 2001, p. 4).

This statement by Cohen (2001) suggests that there are states of mind, or even whole cultures, which we know and do not know at the same time. Cohen writes that this may be a case of simple fraud, which means that the information is available and registered but the conclusion is evaded. Knowing, however, can be far more ambiguous because individuals can be vaguely aware of choosing not to look at the facts, but are not quite conscious of what it is they are evading. Cohen (2001, p. 5) writes that dominant groups seem “uncannily able” to shut out or ignore the injustice and suffering that is happening around them. Various forms of denial draw on shared cultural vocabularies to be credible. Cohen (2001) adds that they may also be shared in another sense, namely the commitment between people or an entire organization to collude in each other’s denials. These collusions work best when individuals are not aware of them, and so facts are reinterpreted using techniques such as minimization and normalization.

Cohen’s (2001) work on denial has been used in criminology in a variety of ways. One example of Cohen’s contributions to criminological literature is his work on making sense of harms of the powerful. More specifically, Cohen explains that the criminological

agenda should take into account the subject of crimes of the state and the criminality of human rights violations (Cohen, 1993). Cohen (1993) uses his framework of denial to explain how the standard vocabulary of official government denial can cause ordinary, even good people to react inappropriately to knowledge of the terrible. In turn, this can mean that mass human rights violations and state crimes are downplayed and not met with criminal sanctions. Further, he writes that the conditions under which perpetrators behave can be translated into the very bystander rationalisations that allow the action in the first place and deny its implication afterwards (Cohen, 1993). Another example of the use of Cohen's (2001) work on denial in criminology that is relevant to my study is the problematization of carceral tours. Piché and colleagues (2016) engage with Cohen's work to explore how proponents of carceral tours have disregarded critiques of the practice to justify their continued use. Techniques of neutralization allow for carceral tours to be defended and occasionally "praised" (Piché et al., 2016, p. 154). The authors use the concept of denial to examine how hegemonic practices, that would otherwise be considered problematic in other contexts, are maintained both in prison and academic settings.

3.3 - Conclusion

In this chapter, I discussed Brown (2009)'s theory of penal spectatorship and Cohen (2001)'s theory of denial. This thesis brings these frameworks into conversation to take a fresh and critical look at the role of cultural forces that shape penal spectatorship and what this means for the application of political power (Keefer, 2010). I have observed how solitary confinement is represented in Ontario penal history museums, and

whether these representations challenge or reinforce the idea that solitary confinement is necessary in Canadian prisons. I have examined the elements surrounding solitary confinement that were emphasized in the penal history museums and the elements that are missing from the museums. As I discuss later, museums allow for a sort of voyeuristic framework that divides lived realities of imprisonment and cultural imagination (Brown, 2009). Because of this, what is depicted in penal history museums takes advantage of individuals' fascination with visual representations of pain and punishment by shifting the "reality" of solitary confinement to something that is more visually appealing and easier to accept (Brown, 2009). The theory of penal spectatorship allows me to conceptualize the fact that individuals who visit a penal history museum can learn about solitary confinement without being exposed to many of the realities of its use in Canadian prisons and because real prisoners are often far removed from the storytelling process, the vision of solitary confinement is often very different than other discourses on the practice in Canada.

Cohen's (2001) work on various forms of denial and the rationales behind them allows me to examine how and why certain information is concealed or left out of penal history museums. Whether this is the result of conscious decisions or not, unpleasant information about the use of solitary confinement and its effects on prisoners was missing from the museums. In this project, I focus on the ways in which penal history museums are engaging in various forms of denial, as explained by Cohen (2001) and what the implications of this may be for museum visitors. Penal history museums have the power to engage in meaning making about punishment and can represent solitary confinement in a way that makes it appear normal. Techniques of denial that are used in penal history

impede deep consideration and critical reflection about solitary confinement. This ultimately reinforces the idea that solitary confinement is a necessary practice in operational institutions.

CHAPTER 4: METHODS

This chapter describes the research methods that were used during the course of this study and the rationale behind the procedures selected. My main research objective is to examine how solitary confinement is represented in Ontario penal history museums, through tours, displays and interactive components, as well as to determine whether or not these cultural sites reproduce or challenge the idea that solitary confinement is a necessary practice in Canadian prisons. As noted in the previous chapter, I have examined the content of the penal history museums using the theories of penal spectatorship (Brown, 2009) and denial (Cohen, 2001). The goal of this study is not to determine whether or not the museum representations are reflective of the “reality” of solitary confinement, as it is impossible for museums to depict every aspect as it is used in operational institutions and the polysemy in which solitary confinement is experienced by different prisoners, prison staff and other actors. Instead, when I focus on specific details and information about solitary confinement that is present and missing from the museum content provided to visitors, I examined how what is (in) visible can reaffirm or challenge the need for this form of isolation.

In this chapter, I begin by providing a description of the four penal history museums and explain why each site was chosen for analysis. Next, I describe the techniques that were used to collect the data, as well as the coding procedures that were undertaken to analyse it. Finally, I discuss the reliability and validity of this research, as well as the ethical concerns that informed my fieldwork.

4.1 - Fieldwork Sites

Drawing on the work of Walby and Piché (2015a), I determined that there are over 45 penal history museums dedicated to imprisonment in Canada. Next, I narrowed my search and focus on the 25 museums that are located in the province of Ontario. I chose to focus on sites in Ontario because of the prominence of the issue of solitary confinement in the province in the wake of several deaths resulting from the harmful effects of the practice federally (e.g. Ashley Smith at the Grand Valley Institution for Women) and other high-profile provincial cases (e.g. Christina Jahn and Adam Capay). Since the focus of this study is on the representation of solitary confinement, I then made telephone calls to every penal history museum in Ontario and asked whether or not their museum contained any information on solitary confinement such as cells, video displays, or images. Of the 25 museums, I was told that 5 of them included solitary confinement as a part of their exhibit, however the Cobourg Jail had permanently closed by the time I began my fieldwork. This left me with 4 penal history museums to study, which are discussed further below.

The overall lack of solitary confinement exhibits in Ontario is significant due to the fact that although there were over 20, 000 admissions to segregation just at the provincial level in 2016, information about the practice is silenced at 85% of penal history museums. This means that the majority of penal history museum visitors in Ontario are not given the opportunity to engage in any critical analysis of solitary confinement. Penal history museums are in service to the public, who deserve a fair interpretation of penalty, and omitting any displays about a common practice like

solitary confinement reinforces rather than challenges dominant discourses on its use in “correctional” institutions.

Table 1: Penal History Museums Selected for Study

Location	Penal History Museum
Lindsay, ON	The Olde Gaol Museum
L’Orignal, ON	L’Orignal Old Jail
Brampton, ON	The Peel Art Gallery Museum and Archives
Kingston, ON	The Kingston Penitentiary

4.1.1 - The Olde Gaol Museum

The Lindsay Gaol was completed in 1863, and the building was constructed of limestone and white brick, a design that was very popular in that period (see *Figure 1*). The Gaol and its courtyards were in continuous use as until the late 1960s, when the Province of Ontario assumed the structure and operated it as the “Lindsay Jail”. In 2003, the jail was vacated and the renovations to convert it to a museum began. The Victoria County Historical Society runs the museum, which is a non-profit heritage organization that works to increase community awareness, appreciation, involvement and support of the local museum and Victoria County’s cultural heritage. It seeks to collect, preserve, exhibit, and publish material pertaining to the history of the County of Victoria (now the city of Kawartha Lakes) in particular and Canadian heritage generally. The museum is open year-round; however, it is visited by appointment only during the winter season. It is considered a “hybrid site” as it is a site where penal history content is not the sole attraction (Walby and Piché, 2015a). The Olde Gaol Museum currently contains twelve

different exhibits such as a First Nations exhibit, a World War I exhibit and a model trains exhibit, all of which are central to the city's history.



Figure 1: Exterior of The Olde Goal Museum

Upon entering the museum, visitors are greeted by one of the museum staff and are given the option of partaking in either a self-guided tour or a tour led by one of the staff members. Visitors are then given a small booklet entitled “Olde Gaol Museum: Self

Guided Tour”. The booklet contains a detailed map of the museum, which is located on the first two floors of the jail, as the third floor is closed to the public. Each room in the jail is numbered in the booklet, which allows visitors to find an exhibit of interest more easily. The booklet also provides visitors with an outline all of the exhibits in the museum, as well as a brief description of each of them. At the end of the tour, visitors are welcome to explore the museum’s gift shop where architectural ornaments of the County Gaol are sold.

4.1.2 - L’Original Old Jail

L’Original Old Jail is the oldest jail in Ontario and the second oldest jail in Canada (see *Figure 2*). It was the only Francophone prison facility in Ontario and the jail is considered a central part of Francophone history in the province. Built in 1825, the neoclassical, loyalist style building expanded several times. The original building had east and west wings added in 1850 and 1862 respectively. Its bright orange roof has become a focal point of L’Original, which is now part of the township of Champlain. In 1988, Ontario’s oldest prison closed its doors. However, the first floor is still occupied by the oldest courthouse in Ontario and to this day is still in function. Open to the public since 2007, visitors can tour the jail as it was in the year it closed, minus the prisoners and jail staff. This historical site now falls under the *Ontario Heritage Act*, which means that municipalities and the provincial government have the power to preserve the heritage of Ontario. It draws in many visitors from surrounding regions. The museum is open year-round, however, they will only accept visitors by appointment and subject to staff availability during their off season which is Labour Day to May 31.



Figure 2: Exterior of L'Original Old Jail

Visitors are greeted by one of the many tour guides at the Old Jail, and are given the option of either a guided tour or a self-guided tour, both of which are offered in either English or French. The jail is quite small and visitors are guided through the entire facility. The displays are very detailed and include topics such as the history of women in the Old Jail, infamous escape attempts and information on the hangings that took place on the grounds. Visitors are also shown artefacts from when the jail was in operation such as uniforms that were worn by “correctional” officers and original keys that were used to lock the cell doors. At the end of the tour, visitors are told to take their time looking around and are invited to go back through the jail at their own pace.

4.1.3 - Peel Art Gallery Museums and Archives (PAMA)

PAMA is a place for visitors to explore and learn about Peel Region’s culture and heritage. Located at the historic Peel County Courthouse and Peel County Jail buildings, PAMA consists of three facilities in one – an art gallery, a museum and archives (see *Figure 3*). For this reason, it is also considered a hybrid site (Walby & Piché, 2015a). PAMA provides a space for preserving and storing cultural artefacts, and is also a place where visitors can gain a better understanding of the history of their community. Throughout the year, visitors can visit multiple exhibits on a “pay what you can” basis. The Peel County Jail was opened in 1867 and was used as a jail until it was condemned in 1977. The facility was converted into a museum, opening to the public in 1986. The building is protected by the *Ontario Heritage Act*.

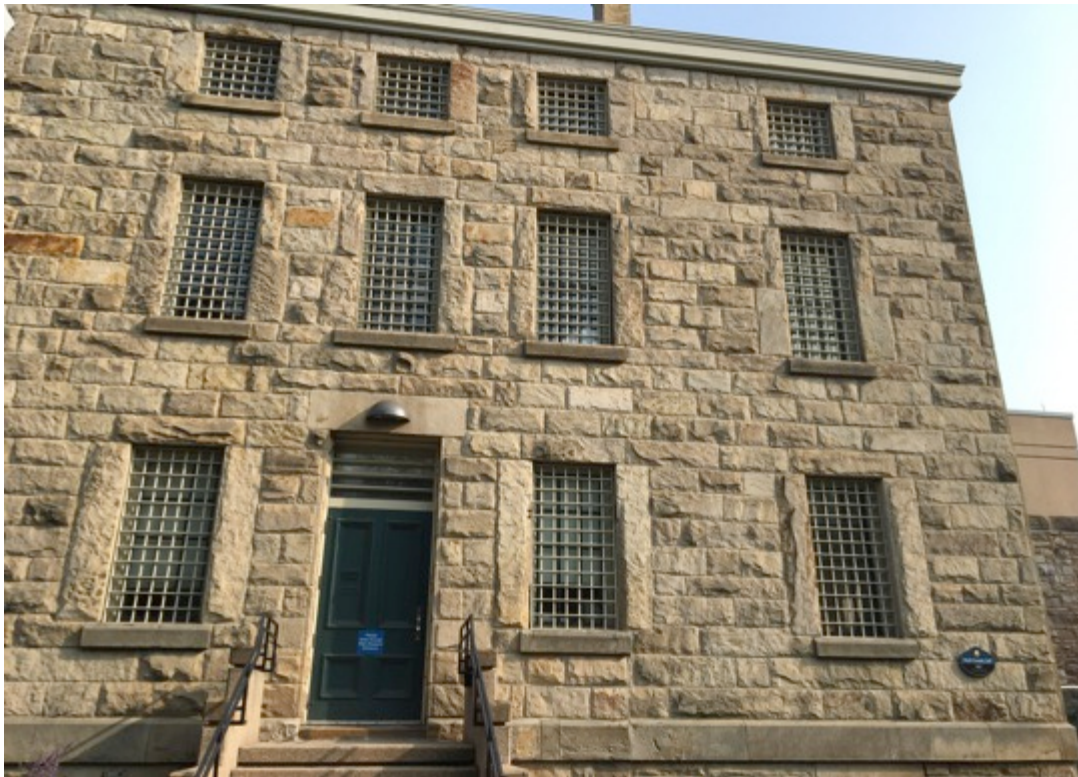


Figure 3: Exterior of The Peel Art Gallery Museum and Archives

Now that the Peel County Jail is a museum, much of the interior has changed. However, some of the initial walls and cells from the 1800s remain intact. Upon arrival, visitors are asked what part of the museum they are interested in seeing or if they would like to see it in its entirety. Those who are interested in seeing the old jail are taken to the second floor of the museum, where several artefacts are on display, including an old medical examination table, video recordings of former prisoners and written stories of infamous captures of captives who were once held in the Peel County Jail. On the main floor of the “Jail Gallery” there are three cells. Visitors are encouraged to go into the cells, close the metal door and imagine spending time in the tiny space.

4.1.4 - Kingston Penitentiary

Kingston Penitentiary, British North America’s first penitentiary, sits on 8.6 hectares of land on the shore of Lake Ontario in the city of Kingston (see *Figure 4*). Originally called the Provincial Penitentiary of the Province of Upper Canada, it was constructed through 1833 and 1834, and it was heavily influenced by the system in place in Auburn, New York at the time. In most recent history, Kingston Penitentiary provided accommodation to a static prisoner population classified at the maximum-security level. Many of these prisoners were deemed unable to safely integrate into other institutional populations. In 1990, Kingston Penitentiary was designated as a National Historic Site of Canada due to the sophistication of its plan, its size, its age and the number of its physical facilities of special architectural merit that survived from the 19th century. On April 19, 2012, the federal government announced that Kingston Penitentiary would cease operations in the fall of 2013 due to aging infrastructure that could no longer manage the

challenges of institutional routine and the diverse prisoner population, as well as to save money as a part of broader deficit reduction efforts (Ferguson et al., 2014).



Figure 4: Exterior of Kingston Penitentiary

When visitors first arrive at Kingston Penitentiary today, they are led into a waiting room where they must fill out waivers before the tour commences. Each group of visitors is assigned a tour guide and they are given coloured bracelets to ensure that nobody wanders off from their group. Visitors are then given a colourful booklet that is extremely detailed with historical information about the facility and pictures of the different parts of Kingston Penitentiary. Visitors can follow the booklet through the grounds of the penitentiary, where they visit areas such as the main cellblock, the

Regional Treatment Center and the shop wing. Each stop on the tour is numbered so visitors can easily follow along with their tour guide. The tour ends at the museum gift shop, where visitors can purchase pins, t-shirts, mugs and other souvenirs that are stamped with a photograph of the infamous Kingston Penitentiary.

4.2 – Epistemological Framework

The methodology that guides this project is grounded in the critical perspective. The underlying assumption of the critical perspective is historical realism. This is the idea that reality cannot be known independently of the social, political, cultural, economic, ethnic and gender-related forces that give meaning to it (Guba & Lincoln, 1994). These forces shape reality and crystalize a series of structures that are now “real” and natural (Guba & Lincoln, 1994). Within the critical perspective, the investigator and the investigated object are interactively linked, with the values of the investigator (and of situated “others”) inevitably influencing the inquiry (Guba & Lincoln, 1994). The findings of an inquiry are therefore value-mediated. In other words, what can be known is inextricably intertwined with the interaction between a particular investigator and a particular object or group. The transactional nature of inquiry requires a dialogue between the investigator and the subjects of inquiry in order to transform ignorance and misapprehensions into more informed consciousness (Guba and Lincoln, 1994). More specifically, this would involve seeing how the structures might be changed and comprehending the actions required to effect such change. This approach is well suited for a study of the representation of solitary confinement in penal history museums because in order to analyse how solitary confinement is represented, we must be aware of

the various forces at play (e.g. when visitors at Kingston Penitentiary are being exposed to “realities” of incarceration from Correctional Service Canada’s vantage point).

As a critical researcher, I am interested in uncovering how we create norms and practices through discourse, and how different discourses will affect the way things are or can be perceived by a museum visitor, including myself and other members of the public. For example, penal history museums are diverse and they will make use of different curation techniques in unique ways. They may put a variety of content on display such as an actual segregation cell that was used when a prison was operational or photographs of ones that were used in the past. This difference in representation will produce different discourses about solitary confinement, and “make it” out to be a certain way, when it could be made to be something else by another penal history museum in a different city. More specifically, one museum may create the impression that solitary confinement is an extremely punitive method of punishment, while another may represent it as relatively harmless and a necessary tactic to use in prisons. Because of this, the “story” of solitary confinement will differ based on the museum that is under observation.

As a critical discourse analyst, I agree with Gee’s (2011) assertion that whenever individuals speak or write, they are often in the process of constructing several areas of reality and we build things in the world through the use of language. I believe that, with regards to language use, questions about politics and the distribution of social goods are relevant to my project. Social goods are potentially at stake any time an individual speaks or writes in that they explicitly or implicitly suggest that something or someone is “adequate”, “normal”, “good” or “acceptable” (Gee, 2011, p. 20). Researchers must ask

themselves what perspective on social goods a piece of language is communicating. I argue that solitary confinement is an example of a “social good” and that language being used in penal history museums can convey a certain perspective (e.g. support for punitive measures) on the nature of this method of punishment.

The discourses that are produced and the language that is used to talk about solitary confinement in various penal history museums has the ability to convey a message as to what is the “proper” way to treat imprisoned individuals, and whether or not it is “appropriate” to be using solitary confinement in a “correctional” facility. For example, a tour guide may say something along the lines of “only the most misbehaved and dangerous offenders get placed in solitary confinement because it is a way for them to reflect upon their actions”, as opposed to “individuals with mental illnesses that are perceived to be security concerns are neglected and placed in solitary confinement until some of them turn to suicide as a way to cope”. Because of this, individuals may leave the museum with the impression that the use of solitary confinement in prisons is “the way things should be for those individuals who break the law” and this message has the power to fuel punitive discourses. I think that it is important to continuously ask myself as a researcher what is being communicated and how it is being communicated in order to be able to recognize that the politics of imprisonment are shaped by how penal discourse is phrased.

While this approach focuses mainly on discourses, there is also an emphasis on research that is concerned with the visual and images drawing on semiotics in visual anthropology, sociology and criminology (Hammersley, 2013). This is relevant to my

research project because within the field of cultural criminology, and more specifically the field of visual criminology, the central emphasis is on the power and influence of visual images and displays of “crime” and its control (Ferrell, 2007), such as representations of solitary confinement in penal history museums. As noted in *Chapter 2*, these fields assert that images and anything else that the eye can see and engage with has the power to produce and disseminate various meanings and discourses surrounding “crime” and “criminality”. Michelle Brown (2009, p. 212) argues that, “penal meanings will always be plural and tricky to harness”. This sentiment is echoed in the work of Walby and Piché (2011) when they explain that penal relics offer a polysemy of meaning to visitors that generate critical, indifferent, and punitive interpretations.

4.3 - Data Collection

The research design for this project is qualitative in nature and relies mainly on data gathered during field observations. I visited each museum during the summer of 2017, taking field notes (Walby & Piché, 2015b) and pictures (Walby & Piché, 2016) at each location. I also participated in the guided tours (Walby & Piché, 2015b) at each of the penal history museums that I visited. Field observations were important for achieving my main research goals as a critical researcher. My first research goal is to explore how the representational practices at the four penal history museums communicate meanings about solitary confinement to visitors. I conducted field observations of the visual and interactive displays, as well as the use of curation techniques by museum staff (e.g. stage setting and preservation of artefacts) that appeared in the penal history museums that I visited. The aim of these field observations is to critically examine how curators and tour

guides use the tools that are available to them to represent solitary confinement to museum visitors, and how these representations are negotiated within the four penal history museums across Ontario that I described above.

Secondly, I observed and took detailed notes of what was said, or not said, by tour guides and other staff to visitors of penal history museums. This allowed me to examine the “stories” that are told in penal history museums in exhibit content, as well as by tour guides and other museum staff, and how these stories have the ability to produce and contribute to broader punitive discourses about solitary confinement, which in turn contribute to or challenge penal spectatorship. The stories are told through the museums’ use of visual displays and the language that is used by tour guides who accompany individuals through the decommissioned prison. This allowed me to determine whether or not a certain type of information is being silenced or denied from circulation within penal history museums, or whether certain elements of solitary confinement are repeatedly being highlighted to visitors. For example, the lack of information regarding the mistreatment that often occurs when an individual is placed in solitary confinement or stories of prisoners with mental health issues being placed in solitary confinement as a result of “bad” behaviour that is ultimately a symptom of their illness, but is perceived as a security threat to the prison staff.

Third, I analysed the content of news articles, official documents, mandate letters, inquiries and investigative reports that have been published by the Ministry of Community Safety and Correctional Services, the Correctional Service Canada and the Office of the Correctional Investigator. These bodies are responsible for establishing,

maintaining, operating and monitoring “correctional” institutions for adult prisoners in Ontario at the provincial and federal levels. The documents that they publish include information about the use of solitary confinement in both provincial and federal institutions, and the conditions under which prisoners are held in isolation. This includes how it is used, in what situations it is used, how long a prisoner can spend in solitary confinement and which captives are more likely to be sent to segregation. This information is used to reveal what critiques and consequences stemming from solitary confinement were included or omitted from museums. Further, this information highlights how these spaces can reinforce and/or challenge penal spectatorship, and more specifically the use of isolation behind bars.

Once I had finished visiting a museum, I filled out an open-coding grid that was initially developed by Walby and Piché (2015a) during their study on penal history museums (see *Appendix A*). The sheet was separated into three categories: 1) General Reflections/Notable Observations; 2) Notes on Method; and 3) Analytical Thoughts. In the first section, I wrote down a summary and key highlights on each museum visit. In the second section, I wrote notes on methodology and wrote down any ideas for new coding fields. In the third section, I wrote down any analytical thoughts that I had during the field visits and how these thoughts may relate to criminological theory, as well as literature and reports on solitary confinement. Through analysing the cultural artefacts of solitary confinement described above, I was able to determine how the representations of solitary confinement in penal history museums challenged or reproduced the idea that this form of isolation is necessary in operational institutions.

4.4 - Data Analysis

Data analysis was separated into three stages. The first stage of data analysis is referred to as the *preparation phase* (Elo & Kyngas, 2008). In this first stage, I familiarized myself with the data and obtained a sense of the data as a whole. Next, I selected the unit of analysis and undertook an initial reading of the data. As this thesis is qualitative in nature, the unit of analysis is the individual themes that existed within the data. I conducted a thematic analysis (Elo & Kyngas, 2008) on the data that I had collected. This method allowed me to identify the patterns of meaning that existed within the qualitative data in relation to my research objectives and my research question. In accordance with traditional thematic analysis, I was concerned with assigning codes/themes to the various elements of the data that relate back to the research objectives of the project. Within the thematic analysis, I considered both the latent and manifest content before proceeding to the next stage of data analysis. Both latent and manifest content deal with interpretation, but latent content requires a deeper level of abstraction (Powers & Knapp, 2006). The assessment of the latent content was necessary to capture the underlying meaning of what is communicated to visitors in each museum.

The next stage of data analysis is the *organizational phase*, during which a coding scheme was created through a deductive thematic analysis (Elo & Kyngas, 2008). The purpose of the organizational phase was to provide a means to describe the phenomenon by breaking down the data and examining all aspects of it. The data from my field observations was categorized into a mixed-coding grid that was initially created by Walby and Piché (2015a) in their investigation into penal history museums (see *Appendix B*). Along the left-hand side of the coding grid was the list of codes that I generated based

on my analysis of the data. These included: Who ends up in solitary confinement? What institutional processes are involved in sending prisoners to solitary confinement? What reasons are given to justify the placement of prisoners in solitary confinement? What purposes does solitary confinement serve? How long do prisoners usually spend in solitary confinement? What conditions do they experience? And what are the impacts of solitary confinement on prisoners? I then conducted a second stage of coding where I collapsed some of the themes together because there was overlap and three of the themes had the most applicable data. The three themes that I ended up with after my second stage of coding are: 1) who ends up in solitary confinement and why; 2) the duration prisoners usually spend in solitary confinement and the conditions they experience; and 3) the impacts of solitary confinement on prisoners.

The top of the grid (i.e. header row) was separated into four columns: spatial arrangements (i.e. the way the space is setup and the description of the material space), visual arrangements (i.e. what people see in the museums and the aesthetics), narrative arrangements (i.e. the ideas that are conveyed to museum visitors), and performative arrangements (i.e. approaches used by paid and unpaid museum staff to convey ideas to visitors). These four categories are derived from existing museum studies by Walby and Piché (2015a), based on the idea that the internal ordering of museum elements work together to produce meaning for visitors. Coding the field notes consisted of categorizing the specific themes and sub-themes in relation to the four header rows of the mixed coding grid.

The final stage of data analysis is the *reporting stage* (Elo & Kyngas, 2008), the results of which are presented in *Chapter 5*. The next chapter will report the results of the

thematic analysis in a thoroughly descriptive manner in order to maintain the integrity of and richness of the original data (Elo & Kyngas, 2008). The discussion and analysis of these findings is guided by the existing literature on penal history museums, solitary confinement and the theory of penal spectatorship (Brown, 2009). However, before discussing my findings, the reliability and validity of this project will be discussed, as well as the ethical safeguards.

4.5 - Situating the Researcher and Ethical Considerations

As a researcher within the critical paradigm of study, I position myself with subjectivity. I believe that ideologies work to distort reality and that reality is shaped by historical realism. Historical realism refers to the fact that life is a virtual reality that is shaped by social, political, cultural, economic and gender values that are solidified as time goes on (Guba & Lincoln, 1994). As a critical researcher, I must work to reveal and critique these distorting ideologies and the associated structures, mechanisms, and processes that help to keep them in place. To observe how solitary confinement is represented in penal history museums and elsewhere, I recognize that there is not one single truth that exists, but rather solitary confinement is represented in a multitude of ways. More specifically, I stand with critical subjectivity because I am interested in understanding how social structures and elements shape what is displayed in penal history museums, and how this compares to what is known about the use of solitary confinement in operational prisons.

In terms of the politics of my research, I believe that science is intrinsically political and it is a tool to maintain or transform society. Critical theory researchers, such as myself, see research as a political act because it not only relies on values systems, but challenges value systems (Usher, 1996). I use critical reflexivity to be transparent about my own experiences and my social position so that I can say what I want to say based on what I have documented and analysed (Hammersley, 2005). As a critical researcher I create space. However, by recognizing the political responsibility to create space, I do not simply speak for myself because this discounts the notion of community, and challenging structures. Instead, I speak for and with the prisoners who experience solitary confinement by including their perspectives in my research and acknowledging that institutional opinions are only one component of analyzing the representation of solitary confinement. I accomplished this by engaging with academic literature that explores prisoner perspectives (see Piché & Major, 2015) on solitary confinement in an attempt to achieve a well-rounded picture of its use in operational institutions.

I also reveal unexamined assumptions among museum exhibits and tours, and the ways in which they may be accepting explanations of the dominant cultural group that serve to oppress certain individuals (e.g. prisoners). Namely, this would be the acceptance of solitary confinement as an appropriate and effective method of punishment for those who have committed a “crime” or have been deemed to have transgressed prison regulations. My aim is to challenge learned restrictions, compulsions or habits, and through this I identify ways to change current relationships or structures, such as the social distance of punishment, which results in penal spectatorship (Brown, 2009).

As a researcher, I acknowledge that data has intrinsic value and implicit in having access to data is the ability to promote advancement in a field of investigation. However, in the research project that I describe above, data ownership is not a concern of mine. This is due to the fact that as a researcher, the material that I observed, collected and analysed is all publically available. While I do not own the data, I am able to use the data. More specifically, I conducted observations in penal history museums and read through official documents about the use of solitary confinement in operational prisons, both of which can be accessed by members of the public at any given time.

In terms of status of the material, my research project falls under the specimen perspective. This is because within the specimen perspective, research material is not treated as a statement of, or a reflection of reality, but rather is only a part of the reality that is under study (Alasuutari, 1995). A specimen may be poorly representative of the whole, and I believe that this applies to the fact that my observations about depictions of solitary confinement in museum settings should not be considered as representative of the practice of representing solitary confinement as a whole. As well, my observations do not reflect a single reality about this disciplinary practice and I am not seeking the truth about solitary confinement. Rather, I am comparing how museums convey solitary confinement whether they are “honest talk” or mere fabrications in their own ways in so far as they address and omit discourses about its use (Alasuutari, 1995). I am not concerned with “the truth”, but rather my focus is on discourse analysis. Specifically, I examine whether or not punitive discourses emerge from penal history museums, such as downplaying the

practice of solitary confinement or representing prisoners as deserving of this punishment through visual displays, while including or omitting other discourses about the practice.

In terms of the ethics of my research, this research followed ethical guidelines, as specified by the Social Science and Humanities Research Ethics Board at the University of Ottawa. The first ethical consideration that is relevant to this research is confidentiality. To protect anonymity, the names of staff members who led the museum tours, as well as the names of fellow visitors were not included in this project. In the findings section, I do not specify the staff member or visitor that made the comment. As well, this project analyses information circulating in public settings, so the permission of the research participants was not required. Aside from issues of confidentiality and anonymity, no risks were anticipated for the study population.

In addition, I agree with the work of Bauman (1994), which states that “the novelty of the postmodern approach to ethics consists first and foremost is the rejection of typical modern ways of going about its moral problems, namely the philosophical search for absolutes and universals” (Bauman, 1994, p. 4). As a researcher I situate myself under post-modern ethics, within the relativist perspective. This is because post-modern ethics are not based in universal or unchanging principles, but rather there is a belief that everything is relative, morality changes and everything is context specific (Bauman, 1994). As well, as a critical researcher, I do not believe that anything can be objectively defined as being “right” or “wrong”. Instead, I believe that the definition of what is right or wrong hinges on the prevailing view of a particular individual, culture, or historical period, which is consistent with the critical paradigm that framed my research project.

4.6 - Conclusion

This chapter has outlined the methods that were used in this thesis to answer my research questions and ultimately uncover the role that penal history museums play in challenging and/or reinforcing the idea that solitary confinement is a necessary and humane practice in prisons. My fieldwork took place at four penal history museums in Ontario: 1) the Olde Gaol Museum in Lindsay; 2) L'Original Old Jail in L'Original; 3) the Peel Art Gallery Museum and Archives in Brampton; and 4) Kingston Penitentiary in Kingston. These research sites were chosen because they contain exhibits about solitary confinement as part of the museum tour. Data was collected through field observations at each site. Specifically, I explored how objects, photographs and texts located within the penal history museums conveyed meanings about solitary confinement through representational practices. This data was analysed through a thematic analysis involving a qualitative coding scheme developed in part from prior research on Canadian penal history museums (see Walby & Piché, 2015a). In the next chapter, I present the results from my data collection and analysis.

CHAPTER 5: REPRESENTATIONS OF SOLITARY CONFINEMENT IN FOUR ONTARIO PENAL HISTORY MUSEUMS

This chapter examines the representations of solitary confinement circulating in four penal history museums in Ontario. Guided primarily by penal tourism literature and the work of Brown (2009) and Cohen (2001), I highlight museum areas that provide visitors with the opportunity to engage with solitary confinement and its correlates of pain, suffering, judgment and exclusion. I have included photographs to allow readers to familiarize themselves with the spaces and visuals that penal spectators encounter in these cultural institutions.

In what follows, I identify and analyse three dominant and recurring themes and corresponding sub-themes, through which meanings about solitary confinement are constructed and communicated inside the penal history museums. These themes are: 1) who ends up in solitary confinement and why; 2) the duration prisoners usually spend in solitary confinement and the conditions they experience; and 3) the impacts of solitary confinement on prisoners. The findings and analysis presented below highlight the extent to which museums challenge and/or reinforce the idea that solitary confinement is a necessary and humane practice in prisons.

5.1 - General Observations About the Museums Examined

Before presenting my findings and analysis, a few general observations can be made about the four penal history museums where I conducted fieldwork. Importantly, while there were similarities between the four penal history museums that I visited, each of the sites were quite different from one another. The first difference between the museums is that they all had a unique structure and character. Structure refers to the

overall shape and construction of the building itself. The character of a building refers to its architectural qualities that give it a particular structural style such as its decorative details, interior spaces, and its materials and craftsmanship. This shapes the overall viewing experience for museum visitors, as well as the way in which each site engages the public with the history of punishment. For example, the Brampton museum recently underwent a large expansion and it combines historic and modern structures. The original county jail structure remains intact, but glass atriums and skylights have been built into it. On the other hand, the L'Orignal museum invites visitors to soak in the prison atmosphere of a long time ago, and there are no modern elements to be found.

Another difference between the four museums is that they have different organizational histories and cultures. One of them is a decommissioned federal penitentiary (i.e. Kingston Penitentiary), while the other three once operated as county and then provincial jails. The museums also had unique local histories. This meant that they had diverse collections of artefacts and photographs on which to base their displays.

Each of the four museums also emphasizes certain content areas over others. Because of this, topics that are prominent at one site were sometimes absent in another. For example, visitors at the Brampton jail were told about a prisoner's experience in solitary confinement and what conditions he experienced, while the other museums made no mention of prisoners' negative experiences in isolation. In addition, the museums differed greatly in terms of their size, the number of cells and the number of prisoners they could accommodate. For instance, the Brampton Jail, the Lindsay Jail and the L'Orignal Jail are quite small in size, whereas Kingston Penitentiary is a very large structure. Due to the fact that the four museums differed in size, the tours also differed in

length, with the smaller jails having shorter tours and the Kingston Penitentiary tour spanning 90 minutes in length.

Another difference that emerged through my fieldwork is the number of museum staff involved in leading the tours and the number of visitors allowed per tour. At Kingston Penitentiary, the maximum number of people allowed in a group at a time is 10 and we had one tour guide assigned to our group. However, throughout our tour, we met with 3 former Correctional Service Canada employees who were guards at Kingston Penitentiary when it was operational. Museum visitors were not allowed to deviate from their tour group, and we were told that the reason for this was that certain parts of the institution were considered to be “off limits” to tourists for reasons such as personal safety and dangerous infrastructure. As a way of enforcing this, the tour guide did “head counts” at every stop along the tour to ensure that nobody had wandered off into areas of the institution that were not part of the tour. At the Brampton Jail, the Lindsay Jail and the L’Orignal Jail, there was no limit as to how many people could be in a tour group, although there was no need for one as the sites have considerably fewer visitors at any given time than Kingston Penitentiary. Our tour was led by a single tour guide, and we were also given the option of conducting a self-guided tour where we could read posters and examine photographs at our own leisure.

Upon entering the sprawling historical site that is Kingston Penitentiary, located in Kingston, Ontario, I was struck by the sheer number of individuals who had made the trip, whether long or short, to visit the museum. According to the tour guide who greeted us at the main entrance, approximately 1,500 individuals pass through the penitentiary on a given day. In comparison, we were told that 1,500 individuals had passed through the

Brampton Jail throughout their entire summer season of tours. Kingston Penitentiary has the reputation of being the country's most notorious prison, incarcerating individuals perceived to pose the greatest danger to society before and after Confederation in 1867 (Ferguson et al., 2014). Once the institution closed, tours were organized by the United Way, with the permission of the Correctional Service Canada. Prospective penal tourists were encouraged to take tours of Kingston Penitentiary to gain access to a previously inaccessible space for a limited time only and to get an authentic look at the "realities" of imprisonment (Ferguson et al., 2014). Our tour guide proudly informed the group that the Kingston Penitentiary tours had exceeded its sales target for the year and they were already booking tours for the following year. We were then told that the museum tour guides have a world map in their break room on which they track just how far visitors travelled to see Kingston Penitentiary (e.g. from Brazil and Poland) and it is rapidly filling up as the tours go on. In fact, since 2016, tours of Kingston Penitentiary have contributed approximately 1.5 million dollars to youth homelessness initiatives through the United Way (Stafford, 2018).

One of the things that I observed hanging on the walls of Kingston Penitentiary were large signs that read, "Do not drink the water. The water is not potable". Before the tour started, one of my fellow group members asked one of the senior staff members whether or not the water was potable when the prison was operational. The staff member laughed and responded by saying, "It was potable when it was operational, but when the prison closed we didn't know what to do with some of the inmates, as there was not enough room in neighbouring institutions, so we just told them to drink the water as a solution to that problem". This comment, while disturbing and dehumanizing to me, was

received with laughter by those around me, and one woman proclaimed, “We should do that more often!” This demonstrates the fact that penal history museums offer a polysemy of meaning to viewers, as critical, indifferent and punitive interpretations are possible (Walby & Piché, 2011). This was a moment that stuck with me during my field research at penal history museums across the province of Ontario.

Below, I present my own interpretation of the content of the museums and the meanings that are attached to the relics found inside them. Museums have a polysemic quality, which leaves them open to a multitude of understandings, “holding plural, cross-disciplinary, alternative and sometimes conflicting meanings” (Cameron, 2010, p. 86). Objects in an exhibition are carefully arranged, and are often accompanied by text and labels in an effort to limit ambiguity and encourage the point of view that the museum is attempting to achieve. In this chapter, I examine the three major themes that arose from my research data and I consider the ways in which they provide penal spectators with a lens through which to consider how solitary confinement is represented, and whether or not it is depicted as a necessary and humane method of punishment in Canadian carceral institutions today.

5.2 - Who Ends Up in Solitary Confinement and Why

This section examines what visitors are told at the four museums that I visited in terms of the reasons for which a prisoner might be placed in solitary confinement. I have included this theme because it is present and readily visible at all four penal history museums that I examined. In all four sites, verbal explanations and visual displays about reasons for time spent in isolation represent an important part of the museum tours and reasons mentioned in guided tours were offered, alongside other meanings of penality

conveyed to visitors. In this section, I demonstrate how representations of “deserving” prisoners ending up in solitary confinement validate its use as a method of discipline in carceral institutions, providing support for the isolation of prisoners that are deemed to be “dangerous” to prison staff and the general population within the facilities.

According to a report by Howard Sapers (2017, p. 39) on the use of segregation in Ontario, while there were 22,509 distinct admissions to solitary confinement in 2016, it is difficult to get a full picture of the reasons why people are placed in solitary confinement at the provincial level. A significant proportion of these placements (i.e. 18%) list multiple reasons for the segregation stay, which complicates the analysis (Sapers, 2017). However, a few trends are clear. One of these trends is that officially the most common reason for placing a prisoner in solitary confinement is their own protection or the safety of the institution or the safety of other prisoners. Other official reasons for placing a prisoner in segregation are misconduct of a serious nature or if a prisoner refuses or resists a search, in which case they can be held until the prisoner “submits to the search or until there is no longer a need to search the inmate” (Sapers, 2017, p. 25).

In Piché and Major’s (2015) article on prisoner writing in and about solitary confinement, it is made clear that there are a number of issues that arise that are officially met with prolonged segregation on administrative grounds. One prisoner explains that an elderly person was placed in solitary confinement because he could not make his bed due to arthritic hands and asked another prisoner to help him. Other rationales for placing a prisoner in solitary confinement are for possessing benign forms of contraband, public displays of affection and refusing to be searched by someone of the opposite sex. Prisoners describe the prison environment as a “milieu of forced interactions” in which

the transgression of the “good order” of the institution is often met with time in isolation (Piché & Major, 2015, p. 8)

At the federal level, there are several commonly cited reasons for placing a prisoner in segregation. According to the *Office of the Correctional Investigator’s Annual Report* in 2016-2017, reasons for placing a prisoner in segregation include whether a prisoner is suffering from a mental health issue, if a prisoner is suicidal and if they are chronically engaging in self-injurious behaviour (OCI, 2017). In a 2014 report, the reasons for placing a prisoner in segregation were varied (OCI, 2014). The report explains that some were held voluntarily, at their own request, and some involuntarily, for their safety or the safety of the institution. A few prisoners were segregated for disciplinary reasons, as well as chronic “high risk” suicidal prisoners. Below, I highlight how the rationales for placing prisoners in solitary confinement are depicted in museums in ways that reinforce official accounts as opposed to those of prisoners.

5.2.1-Prisoner Protection

At Kingston Penitentiary, a former guard, who spent 13 years working in the institution, greeted our tour group. She then brought us down to short-term segregation, a solitary confinement range (see *Figure 5*). She began her presentation by emphasizing the fact that a lot of the prisoners who were deemed to be “incompatible with the general population” by staff made an “active choice to place themselves into segregation” as they felt that they were unable to interact with the general population due to the notoriety that their offences had generated amongst fellow prisoners. We were told that these prisoners did not feel that they were safe in the general population and therefore long-term segregation served as a form of “protective custody, within protective custody” due to the

fact that Kingston Penitentiary was considered to be a protective custody institution as a whole.



Figure 5: Long-Term Segregation Range at Kingston Penitentiary

The tour guide at Kingston Penitentiary went on to explain that placing prisoners in solitary confinement ensures that the institution can “run smoothly” and the use of segregation is one of the reasons why there was not a repeat of the 1971 riot (see Culhane, 1991) during the remaining years that the penitentiary was operating. The three other museums implied that solitary confinement was necessary to maintain the good order of the institution, by emphasizing that institutional security was of utmost

importance in the facility, and solitary confinement was a tool that allowed for safety and security to be maintained.

The theme of prisoner protection was echoed in the L'Orignal Jail, the Lindsay Jail and the Brampton Jail. The tour guide at the L'Orignal Jail explained that prisoners who had been convicted of sexual offences against children and had been labeled pedophiles by other prisoners were very likely to end up in segregation. The tour guide also emphasized the fact that solitary confinement was considered to be protective custody and even went so far as saying that it was "better than being in cellblock" as you were protected from "dangerous offenders". She went on to explain that some prisoners would get placed in solitary confinement if they needed to be alone after hearing unhappy news, such as the death of a family member or after a break-up. Visitors were also given the impression that prisoners were placed in solitary confinement as a method of discipline for various institutional offences, but it was under the guise of being beneficial for their mental well-being. The tour guide at the Brampton Jail emphasized that when a prisoner was placed in solitary confinement, it was done to "keep him safe, and keep the other ones safe".

During the Kingston Penitentiary tour, the group was then taken to a newer segregation unit in the institution. When asked what sort of prisoners might find themselves in short-term segregation, the former guard provided the group with several reasons. She explained that a prisoner could be sent to short-term segregation if they had concealed a weapon in their cell and an officer discovered it while doing their rounds, if a prisoner had assaulted another captive, or if they had assaulted a staff member. The former guard highlighted that, "the men coming down into short-term segregation were

often angry and combative”. The tour guide at the Brampton Jail explained that another reason for placing a prisoner in solitary confinement was if they were “coming off of a drunken tear” and needed to be separated from the general population until they sobered up. A sign in the museum also explained that prisoners who were “disobedient” or “tried to escape” went to solitary confinement (see *Figure 6*). In the museums, prisoners are merged into one homogenous “othered” group considered to be inferior, dangerous and therefore deserving of punishment. The museums construct prisoners as unpredictable, cunning and dangerous people. By presenting discourses of fear and dangerousness surrounding prisoners, the museums reinforce the necessity of solitary confinement as a strategy for institutional safety. As Brown (2009) explains, these processes of vilification also expand the social distance between penal spectators and prisoners, and justify punitive ideologies that inform carceral practices.

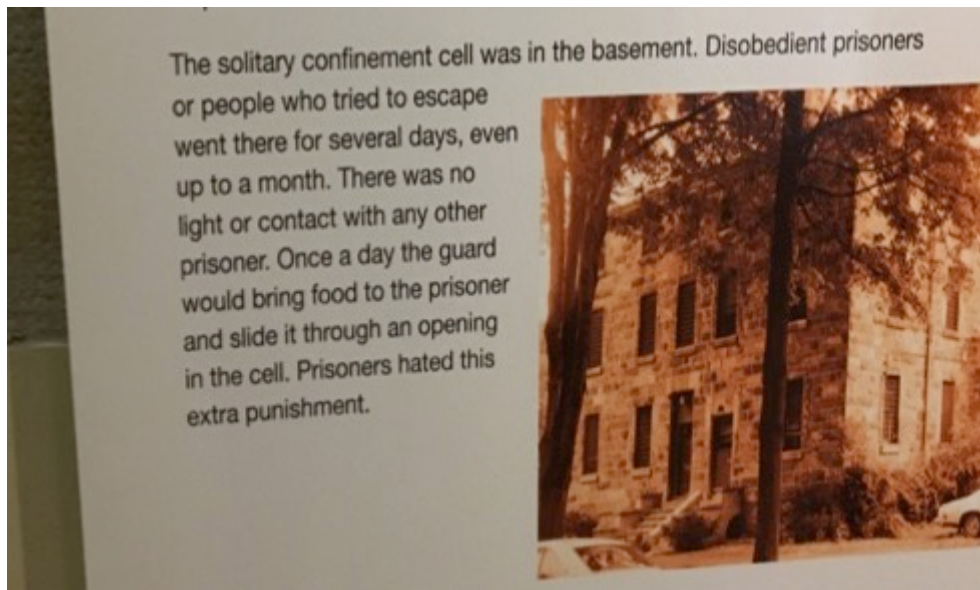


Figure 6: Placard on display at the Brampton Jail

According to a 2014-2015 report by the Office of the Correctional Investigator, it became clear through investigations that were conducted that it is much easier to deal

with tensions and conflicts in the prison by placing a prisoner in solitary confinement (OCI, 2015). The report also states that the legal distinction between voluntary and involuntary segregation is largely illusory and increasingly unhelpful. According to the report, there is nothing “voluntary” about segregation, and many prisoners who do seek refuge in segregation do so because they fear for their personal safety. Most prisoners who voluntarily request to be placed in solitary confinement would return to the general population if the risk to their physical integrity was removed and their safety could be ensured by the Correctional Service Canada (OCI, 2015). This statement is echoed in a 2016-2017 report by the Office of the Correctional Investigator, which explains that the divide between involuntary and voluntary segregation has always been dubious and is increasingly indefensible. According to the report, assuming that risks and threats to personal safety were removed, no reasonable person would “voluntarily” agree to be housed in the most restrictive and depriving form of custody that the state can impose (OCI, 2017).

The fact that the museums omitted the fact that no reasonable prisoner would voluntarily agree to be housed in the most restrictive form of custody that the state can impose is significant. By omitting this information, the museums conceal the fact that prisons, and more specifically segregation cells, are not safe places. This omission fails to challenge the necessity of solitary confinement based on the need for protective custody. The museums portray solitary confinement as a necessary solution for maintaining a prisoner’s security inside the institution and no alternatives to isolation are provided to visitors during the tours, which reinforces its use in operational institutions. Solitary

confinement is presented as a tool for maintaining a prisoner's safety, yet the safety of the segregation cells is not questioned in the museums that I visited.

The Sapers (2017) report also notes that in the province of Ontario, only 7% of prisoners in solitary confinement were there based solely upon their own request. Sapers explains that if a prisoner requests to be placed in segregation, it is often due to problems at the institutional level (Sapers, 2017), but as outlined above, that was never mentioned during the tours of decommissioned carceral sites. Sapers (2017) goes on to say that it is important to understand that segregation occurs in the context of broader "correctional" issues, which in turn arise in the context of how the "criminal justice" system is working (Sapers, 2017).

Prisoners who feel unsafe in general population units or who prefer an individualized cell may feel that their only option is to request segregation, particularly if they are housed in a crowded facility where double or triple-bunking is practiced (Sapers, 2017). What is absent from the information that was provided at the four penal history museums is a discussion about whether general population housing was or could be made humane enough and safe enough to alleviate these concerns (Sapers, 2017). In practice, this would mean that a prison would adhere to the Canadian law, international standards (i.e. The Mandela Rules) and the *Charter of Rights and Freedoms*, which set out standards of care that are expected in custodial settings (Sapers, 2017). Carceral institutions have, at least on paper, a responsibility to take reasonable measures to preserve and protect the safety of prisoners. In practice, this would mean that prisoners would not live in constant state of fear that another prisoner or a guard will attack them. As well, prisoners would have access to work, education, mental health treatment and

leisure activities inside the prison. The current Correctional Investigator of Canada, Ivan Zinger (2017), has said that in order to reduce the amount of prisoners who feel the need to be placed in segregation, there must be an increase in specialized units, enhanced intelligence and information systems, and surveillance technology to protect vulnerable prisoners.

5.2.2 – Management of Mental Health

A theme that was common to all four sites observed was that a prisoner was likely to be placed in solitary confinement if they were experiencing suicidal thoughts or behaviours, or various symptoms of mental illness more generally. At Kingston Penitentiary, the former guard explained that they had two cells in the segregation ranges that were designated for prisoners who were suicidal. Our tour group was told that the last two occupants of the suicide cells had never spent any time inside a carceral institution prior to being admitted to Kingston Penitentiary and they had both received a sentence of 25-years-to-life. She went on to explain that these two particular prisoners were “down here a lot longer than 30 days” and the reason that we were given for this was “so we could better monitor their mental health”.

At the L’Orignal Jail, we were told that oftentimes prisoners would experience psychological and physiological symptoms that they did not know were a result of “mental illness”, seemingly placing the onus on the prisoner to sort out their mental health concerns. The belief at the L’Orignal Jail was that spending time in solitary confinement would allow prisoners with mental health issues to address their behaviour and ultimately cure them of their condition. However, the tour guide also informed us that one prisoner who was placed in solitary confinement due to suicidal thoughts

ultimately tried to commit suicide by placing his head inside the toilet that was in the cell in an attempt to drown himself in it. This particular example suggests that solitary confinement is not effective at preventing suicide attempts in custody and the conditions of segregation are not conducive to treatment for their mental illness, yet this kind of reasoning was largely absent at this museum.

Solitary confinement is frequently used as a default tool to manage individuals living with mental health issues and those identified as being at risk of self-harm or suicide (Sapers, 2017). Those who have been flagged as having potential or confirmed suicide risk or “mental illness” are disproportionately placed in segregation in Ontario. This was evident at the four museums that I visited. Moreover, an investigation that was carried out by the Office of the Correctional Investigator demonstrated that mental health problems are often exacerbated and escalated during a prisoner’s placement in segregation (OCI, 2017). A segregation unit is not an appropriate environment for prisoners who are under observation for mental health problems, especially suicidal or self-harming intentions (OCI, 2017). In the museums that I visited, the placement of prisoners living with mental health issues was reified, as tourists were not presented with the problems with this application of isolation or available alternatives such as outsourcing mental health care for complex needs prisoners to health professionals.

As I discovered through my fieldwork across Ontario, the displays and photographs at penal history museums have the tendency to position prisoners as a threat to either themselves, institutional staff or other prisoners, and therefore they are in need of some form of control, restraint or serious punishment. The texts, scripts and displays implied that prisoners are unpredictable and they stressed the need for additional security

measures and safety precautions when working with this type of population. Previous research on Canadian penal history museums has demonstrated the sharp contrast in the way penal actors and those in conflict with the law are represented to visitors. Chen and colleagues (2016) explain how museums tend to emphasize prisoners as dangerous and cunning, while portraying museum staff through narratives of heroism, duty and sacrifice. Museum visitors are positioned via the objects and narratives they encounter in these penal heritage sites to feel empathetic towards those in the line of duty due to the fact that they voluntarily take on the task of protecting society against prisoners.

Such an arrangement increases the potential of fostering solidarity between penal spectators and enforcers of the law, while simultaneously expanding the social distance between tourists and the “othered” group of prisoners (Brown, 2009). In this process, the division between “us”, namely law-abiding citizens versus “them”, incarcerated individuals, increases (Wilson, 2008). This dichotomy becomes clearly defined and the representation of prisoners in penal history museums can allow penal spectators to detach themselves from the lived realities of the incarcerated, and this further implies that the “natural” answer is to lock up these “dangerous others”, rather than address the myriad of social conditions that are often at the root of criminalized conflict (Brown, 2009). The responsibility owed by this “dangerous other” for their violent or deceitful act overshadows any responsibility owed by the penal spectator for the treatment of those in conflict with the law.

The displays I encountered give legitimacy to the idea that effectively dealing with criminalized harm is a process that involves incapacitating “dangerous” or “bad” others, including through the use of solitary confinement. These findings are consistent

with the lack of information on the negative effects of solitary confinement, because in the four museums, prisoners are portrayed as “deserving” or “requiring” segregation due to reasons that place the onus on the prisoner, rather than the prison staff. This was the case at the Brompton Jail, where visitors were able to listen to and read about the experience of a prisoner who spent time in solitary confinement. We were told that this captive had been awaiting trial after being charged with car theft and when he tried to escape he was subsequently placed in solitary confinement as a form of punishment. The portrayal of prisoners as deserving to be in isolation has the ability to reinforce the idea that solitary confinement is a necessary practice in carceral institutions.

Overall, the reasons that were given in the penal history museums that I visited for why prisoners are sent to solitary confinement include being incompatible with the general population, the need for separation because of the notoriety of the “crimes” they committed, treatment or monitoring for mental health troubles, as well as punishing prisoners for having concealed weapons and escape attempts. While some of these reasons for placing a prisoner in solitary confinement are close to the realities of today, such as prisoner protection, others are quite distant. Namely, not one of the four museums informed visitors of the fact that prisoners are currently being placed in solitary confinement for reasons such as benign forms of contraband, public displays of affection and refusing to be strip searched by someone of the opposite sex (Piché & Major, 2015). Another reason that prisoners are segregated, as mentioned earlier, is to silence their political resistance and involvement (Piché & Major, 2015). These reasons were omitted in the four museums that I visited. Once again, it seemed that the reasons for placing a prisoner in solitary confinement that were highlighted in the museums were ones that

place the onus on the prisoner, rather than on prison staff for placing the prisoner there, and frames captives as in need of time in isolation for various reasons.

According to Barton and Brown (2015), when a discourse of dangerousness is used to represent prisoners, as was the case in all of the museums that I visited, it fosters public and official indifference to their mistreatment, a form of social distancing that Brown (2009) argues fosters penal spectatorship. Where produced, this social distance can allow members of the public to conceive of prisoners as somehow foreign or alien and prisons, or more specifically solitary confinement, as necessary to contain them. As Walby and Piché (2015a) explain, cultural sites such as penal history museums may also influence punitive sentiments towards prisoners and this has the potential to foster what David Garland (2001) calls an intensification in penal policies and practices (also see Ferguson et al., 2015). Penal intensification refers to an increased intolerance of criminalized persons, support for harsher penal sanctions, longer carceral sentences and austere prison conditions (Sim, 2009).

5.3 – Length of Stay in Solitary Confinement and the Conditions Prisoners’ Experience

Come take a look at the penthouse suite!

– Former guard at the Kingston Penitentiary Tour

In this section, I examine museum representations of the various lengths of time that a prisoner may spend in solitary confinement and the conditions they experience while in isolation. The decision to place a prisoner in isolation for an extended period of time can result in long-term effects such as impaired memory, confusion, depression and

personality changes, and this may affect a prisoner's ability to successfully reintegrate into society upon release (Kelsall, 2014). At the four museums that I examined, visitors were provided with factual information about the length of time that a prisoner may spend in isolation, but the sites did not problematize prisoners' length of stay in solitary confinement. Museum visitors were also provided with information about the condition of solitary confinement cells at the Brampton Jail; however, this topic was omitted entirely at two other museums.

5.3.1 - Length of Time in Segregation

In terms of how long prisoners would usually spend in solitary confinement, the tour guide who was a former guard at Kingston Penitentiary told us that some who were placed in long-term segregation would serve their entire sentence there (see *Figure 7*). It was clear that at Kingston Penitentiary there was no limit to the amount of time a prisoner could spend in segregation. It is important to note that these extended periods of segregation occurred even though the *Corrections and Conditional Release Act* incorporates key procedural safeguards to govern the use of solitary confinement in federal penitentiaries. These legal provisions include release from segregation at the earliest appropriate time and requires reasonable alternatives to solitary confinement to be first be explored and exhausted. As noted in the previous section, visitors on the tours were provided with reasons for which a prisoner might spend an extended amount of time in segregation. These reasons included having someone in the general population that they were incompatible with, attempting to create a weapon out of something in their cell or being aggressive with any of the staff that worked on the segregation ranges.



Figure 7: Long-term segregation range at Kingston Penitentiary

While our tour group was freely exploring the long-term segregation range, the former guard told us to direct our attention to the artwork that was left on the walls of “Cell 17”, which was one of the segregation cells (see *Figure 8*). We were told that the Indigenous prisoner who had occupied this particular cell spent “years and years” in segregation. When this particular prisoner found out that the institution was shutting its doors for good, he wanted to find a way to leave his mark. You can see in the photograph below that the prisoner incorporated the four colours of the medicine wheel that signify health and healing in Indigenous culture, as well as a feather in the middle of the painting. While the piece of art was left for visitors to admire, the former guard mentioned several times that under normal circumstances prisoners who were in segregation were strictly prohibited from having paints or any other art supplies in their

cell. We were told that this prisoner's ability to paint on his cell walls was highly exceptional and he was only allowed to paint because the institution was closing. Once again, visitors were given the impression that at Kingston Penitentiary, solitary confinement was not considered to be a temporary measure, whether for disciplinary or administrative reasons, but rather a permanent status for some prisoners if it was deemed to be necessary.



Figure 8: Artwork by a prisoner in a long-term segregation cell at Kingston Penitentiary

The Kingston Penitentiary tour was not an exercise in challenging how the Correctional Service Canada operates its facilities generally and their use of solitary confinement specifically. The lack of information that was given about the lived realities of segregation for federally sentenced captives and the emphasis on staff viewpoints arguably impedes any deep consideration on the part of the onlooker about the

experiences of the people who are subjected to prolonged periods of segregation. The museum failed to provide visitors with the framework needed to interrogate the consequences of lengthy stays in solitary confinement and foster empathy for the experiences of those in segregation today. Ultimately, this contributes to framing solitary confinement as a necessary practice in carceral institutions today.



Figure 9: Interior of the solitary confinement cell at L'Orignal Jail

At the L'Orignal Jail, our tour group was invited to step into the solitary confinement cell, to “get a feel for what it might have been like in the hole” (see *Figure 9*). The tour guide emphasized several times that solitary confinement was meant as a punishment and that prisoners “are in jail after all”. The prisoners would get 10 minutes of light per day, but otherwise they were in complete darkness. To demonstrate how dark

it got in the cell, visitors were invited to stand in the cell while the tour guide shut the heavy wooden door for about 30 seconds (see *Figure 10*). The guide warned us before she shut the door by saying that, “some people can’t even handle being in there for a second”. We were asked to put our hands out in front of us to see if we could see them in the extreme darkness. In this jail, prisoners in solitary confinement were not allowed to go outside in the yard. Their food was given to them through a food slot and a prisoner would only know what they were eating by touching it. We were told that a guard was supposed to check on a prisoner in solitary confinement every 15 minutes. If a prisoner was suicidal, they had to sleep without a mattress or pillows, as seen in the photo on the preceding page, and they were not allowed to have any clothes.

Through my observations, I noticed that during the tour, the extended length of time that prisoners spend in solitary confinement was simply stated as a fact for museum visitors to take at face value, and it was not problematized or challenged in any way. More specifically, neither our tour guide, nor the former guards explained the fact that sensory deprivation, which defines the conditions of solitary confinement, can have major psychological effects on a human being, especially when they are deprived for long periods of time (Grassian & Friedman, 1986). Furthermore, there was no mention of the fact that depending on the facility and jurisdiction, between one third to 90% of prisoners experience some negative impacts of solitary confinement (Shalev, 2008). These symptoms can include insomnia, confusion, feelings of hopelessness and despair, distorted perceptions and hallucinations (Shalev, 2008). The UN Special Rapporteur of the Human Rights Council on Torture and other Cruel, Inhuman, or Degrading Treatment

or Punishment (2011) concluded that solitary confinement in excess of 15 days should be prohibited due to its negative impact on the health and wellbeing of those subjected to it.

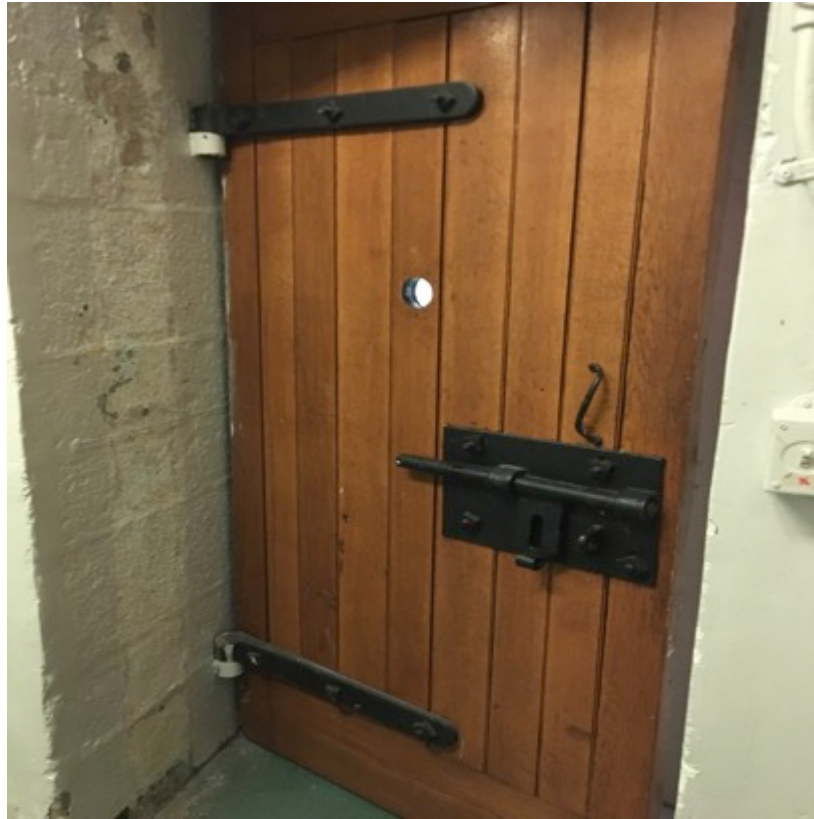


Figure 10: Door of the solitary confinement cell at L'Original Jail

While the museums did mention that prisoners who are suicidal or suffering from various forms of mental health issues are sometimes placed in solitary confinement, only the museum in L'Original mentioned the possibility of death as a result of segregation. And, while visitors were told at Kingston Penitentiary that suicidal prisoners were sent to solitary confinement so that they could be better monitored within the federal system, there was no mention of the fact that prisoners such as Ashley Smith have died while being supervised as penitentiary staff failed to respond (Sapers, 2008). The Ashley Smith

case is a demonstration of how the federal penitentiary system failed to provide an identified “mentally ill”, high-risk, high-needs prisoner with the appropriate care, treatment and support (Sapers, 2008). This case is also an example of the lack of communication, cohesiveness and accountability within a large organization such as the Correctional Service Canada (Sapers, 2008). However, none of this information was revealed during the tour, which, while focused on Kingston Penitentiary, could certainly address the realities of imprisonment and isolation at other federal institutions. The suicide of Edward Snowshoe was not mentioned at Kingston Penitentiary either, even though the combination of prolonged segregation and mental illness ultimately cost him his life (Globe and Mail, 2014). Once again, we can see how the absence of information regarding deaths in custody as a result of segregation fails to challenge or raise questions about the idea of solitary confinement being necessary and humane.

For example, segregated prisoners in federal penitentiaries do not have access to basic activities, facilities and services such as showers, out of cell time, health care visits and personal effects (OCI, 2017). Even if some prisoners do get outside time, it is often in segregation “yards” that can easily be mistaken for dog kennels (OCI, 2017). In terms of the length of stay in solitary confinement, not one of the four museums mentioned that the reliance on segregation is not uniform. Omitted is the fact that certain groups are placed in solitary confinement more often than others, and spend longer periods of time there, namely Indigenous prisoners (see for example, OCI, 2017).

Although the smaller museums did mention some of the impacts of solitary confinement on prisoners with respect to the length of segregation placements and conditions of confinement that have been addressed in reports concerning the provincial

institutions (e.g. Sapers, 2017), certain aspects were not visible to the public such as remedial measures flowing from the Christina Jahn settlement. As mentioned earlier, Jahn spent over 200 days in segregation at the Ottawa-Carleton Detention Centre and subsequently received a cash settlement along with an agreement from the Ministry to change the way it operates by screening all prisoners for mental health issues, devising treatment plans and training staff to better deal with prisoners that are suffering from mental health issues (Sapers, 2017). This case was not mentioned during any of the museum tours. Instead, the message that prisoners living with mental health issues should be placed in solitary confinement was reinforced, once again reproducing the idea that segregation is necessary.

5.3.2 – Cell Conditions

The physical design of solitary confinement cells varies between institutions (Sapers, 2017). This was my experience at the four penal history museums that I visited. The museums in Brampton, Lindsay and L’Orignal all had a single solitary confinement cell that was on display for museum visitors. At L’Orignal, Brampton, and Kingston, visitors were invited to step into the cells, whereas at the Lindsay Jail, the cell was roped off and visitors could simply look into it and imagine what it would have been like to be in it. In an attempt to make the cell seem more realistic, a dummy that was dressed as a prisoner was placed in the Lindsay solitary confinement cell (see *Figure 11*). The doll was dressed in an orange jumpsuit with a blanket draped over it. The doll was sitting on the floor in the corner of the cell. A metal pot that was assumingly used as a toilet was also placed on the floor of the cell, as well as an imitation food tray. We were told to imagine this cell, but with a “big, heavy, steel door”, which our tour guide explained was

for an additional measure of protection for the prisoner to protect him from other captives.



Figure 11: The interior of a mock solitary confinement cell at the Lindsay Jail

In contrast to the Lindsay Jail and the L'Orignal Jail where the meanings of isolation were principally conveyed through encountering the space and tour guide narratives, at the Brampton Jail visitors were provided with extensive information about the conditions of solitary confinement when the facility was operational. This was done through a video that visitors could watch inside a mock solitary confinement cell (see *Figure 12*). The video showed images of the Brampton Jail and it played audio of a former prisoner who spent 30 days in segregation during his three-month sentence. Years later, he returned to the Brampton Jail to share his story. On the video, the former

prisoner described the conditions that he faced during his time in solitary confinement, which was called “the hole”. He explains that the solitary confinement cell was in the basement of the jail, which was described as being like a little dungeon. He was given one “old tattered wool blanket” and was barefoot. The only furniture in the room was a steel mesh bed, bolted to the floor and nothing else. There was no toilet and no sink, but rather a metal potty. If a prisoner wanted a drink of water, they had to ask for a guard’s permission when they came by during their rounds. Even then, a prisoner’s access to drinking water was entirely dependent on the mood of the guard.

He goes on to explain that the only light that came into the cell was through a small window above the top of the cell, but it was almost completely dark. This prisoner was locked up in his cell for 24 hours a day and was not allowed to speak to anybody. He was not allowed any exercise or any time outside in a yard. Once a week, he was taken out of the cell to shower, get dressed and attend court. He was not allowed any reading material, although he says it was too dark to read in the cell anyway. The cell was so small that a prisoner serving time in solitary confinement could only stand up straight in the very middle of the cell. It was damp and infested with spiders and centipedes. This former prisoner recounts the feeling of waking up to spiders crawling all over his body and claims he still has nightmares about the bugs. In terms of the length of time that prisoners would usually spend in solitary confinement, a sign beside the cell in Brampton claimed that people were often there for several days or even up to a month at a time.

This is an example of a representation of solitary confinement that challenges the use of solitary confinement. The Brampton jail confronts the topic of the negative effects of solitary confinement and makes use of an opportunity to educate museum visitors

about some of the lived experiences of isolation. By including information about the cell conditions and environment of isolation, visitor perceptions about solitary confinement may be challenged and changed. As Brown (2009) explains, embracing critical memorialization practices could play a much-needed role in producing an environment of critique, challenge, and interrogation that is necessary to close the social distance between penal spectators and the criminalized.



Figure 12: The interior of a mock solitary confinement cell at the Brampton Jail



Figure 13: The interior of a long-term segregation cell at Kingston Penitentiary

At Kingston Penitentiary, visitors were able to see multiple solitary confinement cells throughout the tour. First, we were shown the “Lower A” range and the “Lower H” range, which both consist of 36 cells each. Our tour guide set the scene for our tour of the segregation cells by saying that they were the “typical, dingy, dirty cells that come to mind when you think about isolation cells” (see *figures 13 and 14*). The former guard started off by explaining that upon their arrival to segregation, prisoners would often be escorted by the Emergency Response Team, they would be strip-searched, cavity searched and then redressed before they were placed in their cell. The cells had solid doors and Plexiglas windows, which we were told was to “prevent anything from being

thrown into the cell or coming back out of the cells”. Visitors were told that prisoners in segregation spent 23 hours a day in their cell and the only time they could leave their cell was to take a shower or to have time in the yard. Anytime a prisoner in segregation was being moved they were always in handcuffs. They were allowed to take the cuffs off to shower, but as soon as they finished, the cuffs would go back on.



Figure 14: Interior of a long-term segregation cell at Kingston Penitentiary

Our tour guide explained that prisoners who are in short-term segregation were reviewed by Kingston Penitentiary’s Warden within the first 24 hours of being placed in segregation. After that, prisoners are reviewed again at the 5-day segregation review board, and they are reviewed again at the 30-day segregation review board. We were told

that prisoners that were in long-term segregation were reviewed every 30 days after their initial 30-day stay in isolation, for as long as they spend in long-term segregation. Visitors were then asked to consider a “typical scenario” that would have occurred when Kingston Penitentiary was operational. Our tour guide used the example of a prisoner that has reached the initial 30-day mark that he was “incompatible” with the general population, yet he either had to be released or transferred. Because of this, penitentiary staff would be looking to relieve this prisoner’s segregation status and have him return to the general population. We were told that the Inmate Committee², the Range Representatives³ and the Security Intelligence Team⁴ were brought in to see if “we can safely put him back out there”, and they could come to the conclusion that there is no way of doing so due to a lack of cell space or the presence of another incompatible prisoner. The tourists were then told that the Kingston Penitentiary staff would now be looking at transferring this prisoner to another institution, such as Millhaven Institution, to remove him from segregation. However, the former guard highlighted the fact that one of the biggest challenges that the institution faced when it was attempting to close its doors in 2013 was finding a safe location for “these guys”, namely those men who were in segregation. She explained that “we were a protective custody facility and there is a stigma attached to that”. This meant that prisoners who were eligible for the relief of their

² Inmate Committees establish a means for prisoners to provide input regarding institutional operations, thus contributing to safe and secure institutions (<http://www.csc-scc.gc.ca/>).

³ Range representatives will liaise with the unit’s Correctional Manager regarding issues that involve the range. Range representatives may also serve as liaisons between the prisoners of their range and the Inmate Committee (<http://www.csc-scc.gc.ca/>).

⁴ The Security Intelligence Team is responsible for the collection and analysis of information from all sources and the development of intelligence in a stated effort to enhance public safety (<http://www.csc-scc.gc.ca/>).

segregation status, but had nowhere else to go, would have to remain in segregation for an undisclosed amount of time.

This example is significant because it reinforces the idea that solitary confinement is a necessary practice in Canadian prisons. During the tour, there was no opportunity for questions about solitary confinement to be examined nor were any alternatives to isolation presented. The portrayal of solitary confinement in Kingston Penitentiary does not allow it to be a site of critique, but rather it gives the museum visitors the impression that segregation was the only option for certain prisoners, and therefore discontinuing its use in Canadian prisons would not be feasible.

While visitors at the L'Original Jail, Kingston Penitentiary and the Brampton Jail were given the opportunity to step inside an "authentic solitary confinement cell" and take photographs of themselves smiling behind bars, there are many implications that go along with this. As Walby and Piché (2011) explain, one minute spent in the gloomy darkness of a segregation cell cannot give tourists an idea of what several days, weeks, months or even, in rare cases, years in the same carceral space would be like for a prisoner. In these museums, the solitary confinement cell is used as an attempt to convey an authentic sense of incarceration for visitors, the "chill one catches when faced with immobilization" (Walby & Piché, 2011, p. 463). However, these so-called experiences of authenticity that are created by tourist operators and museum curators are dark in the sense that they deal with the subject matter of punishment, but they also have the ability to make light of what living in prison is like. Cells are used in penal history museums to invite the tourist visitor to consider themselves as prisoners, which ultimately mocks the experience of imprisonment through a brief, fleeting tourist encounter.

5.3.3 – “Past” Versus “Present” Discourse

Another issue with the representation of solitary confinement cells is that they generate discourses of “past and present” or “then and now”. The solitary confinement cell can be used as a way of representing the differences between an “imagined barbarous past” and a “civilized present” in the field of imprisonment (Walby & Piché, 2011, p. 463). The institutions that are fundamentally closed and exclusionary serve now as a border that is open and accessible, but also “dead” in the sense that they represent institutional failure and they are implied as a marker of national history in which the present is often nowhere to be found. This ties in to the curatorial role in setting up displays, photographs, and reconstructions within penal history museums (Brown, 2009).

This was most evident in the Kingston Penitentiary tour when visitors were being shown long-term and short-term segregation ranges. As our tour group was led into short-term segregation, the former guard explained that this area was “relatively new, as it was built in 2002”. She went on to say that “what you’re gonna see here is the new standard of corrections”. She continued by saying that “the cells are a lot larger than they used to be, and they now have solid doors as opposed to the open bars”. She even referred to one of the segregation cells as the “penthouse suite” due to the fact that it was quite a bit larger than the other segregation cells in the range. She highlighted the fact that in recent years, prisoners were given the opportunity to bring personal belongings, their stereos and television sets down to segregation, which would not have been previously allowed.

The suggestion that solitary confinement is more rehabilitative and humane than in the past was also demonstrated in the Brampton Jail. At the Brampton Jail, museum visitors were shown a side-by-side comparison of what the size of cells, including those

tasked with segregation, used to be and “how big they are now”. Lost in this narrative of the humanization of punishment and penal reform is the fact that prisoners continue to suffer in solitary confinement, and in some cases die as a result (Sapers, 2017). By showing visitors that segregation cells have gotten bigger, it makes it seem as though the conditions of segregation have improved as a whole. Even if the physical space of a solitary confinement cell may be larger, most prisoners are still alone in their cells for hours or even days, weeks or months at a time without any stimulation, and are often deprived of light (Sapers, 2017). The size of the cell is not the only predictor of a prisoner’s experience in segregation, although the tour guide at the Brampton Jail made it seem like this was the case. This way of comparing how segregation “used” to be with how it is now, allows visitors to believe that a wave of substantive and transformative penal reform has occurred, and although prisoners used to be treated badly, they are now living in spaces with plenty of privileges and comforts.

At the Lindsay Jail, an informational display sets out for visitors what it was like to live for captives living in an 1863 jail cell, describing the cells as “no bigger than a closet”. Our tour guide explained that prison life was a “wake-up call” and something that prisoners did not want to return to. At the L’Original Jail, similar to the Brampton Jail, we were shown two sets of cells. The first set were the size that the cells used to be, and then we were shown a comparatively larger set of cells. The tour guide told us that the solitary confinement cells that prisoners are confined in today are like “5-star hotels”, compared to how solitary confinement used to be. Once again, the tour guide gave us the impression that not only are prisons not so bad these days, but that modern penal institutions are even more comfortable than the public perceives them to be. This can

ultimately legitimize “tough on crime” mentalities that support increasingly austere prison conditions.

The displays are staged in a way that portray a wave of reform that has left outmoded facilities behind, while advancing new or transformed prisons across Canada into sites of relative relaxation, rather than sites of deprivation (Walby & Piché, 2011). While the museums make several references to the penal practices of the late 19th century and early 20th century, there are little or no materials that represent the current realities of punishment and imprisonment in Canada. The division between discourses of past and present can foster social distance between museum visitors and prisoners by allowing penal spectators to feel relieved at the “progress” made or possibly to view prisoners today as “having it easy” (Chen et al., 2016, p. 32). The focus that is placed on institutional practices of the past creates a gap in knowledge with regards to the continuities in penalty in Canadian institutions that are still in operation. The penal history museums that I visited suggest to visitors that there has been a shift to a new rehabilitative era of ‘corrections’ that will benefit prisoners in a number of ways and therefore the reasons to challenge the use of harsh administrative and disciplinary measures such as solitary confinement are non-existent, with the exception of the prisoner testimonial at the Brampton Jail.

The museum representations observed portray solitary confinement as a penal practice that has changed for the better over time, reproducing the idea that solitary confinement is more humane today. This way of framing the history of punishment, and specifically that of solitary confinement, implies an especially deprived past has been left behind. This in turn suggests that prisoners no longer experience these conditions in the

present-day carceral state. If museum visitors end their visit believing that solitary confinement is no longer a harmful practice, then why would they question it? This goes back to the literature on cultural and visual criminology, as this is an example of how images and visual displays are essential in constructing meaning surrounding punishment and penal practices (Francis, 2009). Visual representations of punishment are linked to affect and emotion (Carrabine, 2012), and in this case they have the effect of reassuring the public about the use of solitary confinement.

This tendency to promote inertia in prison policies and practices can also be examined through the work of Brown (2009) on penal tourism. She explains that in decommissioned prisons that have been converted into tourist destinations, fantasy is privileged. By this she means that the stories that are told in penal history museums depend upon particular codes of representation, including not what is simply known about prisons in general, but what the consuming public desires (Brown, 2009). Even though prisoners across Canada are currently suffering in solitary confinement due to abhorrent conditions, crowding and the lack of resources (Zinger, 2017), members of the public who decide to visit a penal history museum for entertainment and leisure purposes would likely not want to hear about these realities in such a way that they are problematized. This is highlighted through the work of Ferguson et al. (2015), which analyzed online responses expressed by tourists who visited penal history museums. This study demonstrated that visitors often praised the conditions of confinement and focused on spectacular elements of penal display that rarely translate into humanizing conceptions of the criminalized or views that challenge punitiveness in “correctional” institutions.

For example, even though a couple of the museums mentioned that prisoners who were suicidal were placed in solitary confinement, this was not problematized. This does not position members of the public to critique the practice of solitary confinement, nor does it position them to consider whether or not solitary confinement is a necessary practice in “correctional” institutions. As well, this ends up shielding visitors, many of whom do not have a direct connection to formal institutions, from the pain and suffering that occurs in operational institutions (Brown, 2009). As Walby and Piché (2011) explain, the murkiest project of all would be to close the museums to tourists rather than to confront the ongoing challenge of interpreting incarceration, punishment and forced isolation. The solution here is not to stop showing solitary confinement cells or discussing why prisoners find themselves in isolation, but rather it is a matter of giving visitors a fuller picture of isolation, one with its harms and alternatives on full display, even if it is not pleasant to hear.

What is of interest here is how the positioning of aspects of punishment as part of the past fosters certain prominent cultural narratives pertaining to prisons and prisoners. It is not only a question of how visitors interpret the past, it is a question of how penal history sites can provide a set of narratives through which to understand present meanings of imprisonment and punishment (Walby & Piché, 2011). More specifically, by emphasizing a so-called shift towards less punitive practices in solitary confinement, visitors may be under the impression that since the conditions of confinement have gotten better, a prisoner’s time in segregation today is not that bad. In turn, this can lead to the endorsement of harshly punitive carceral regimes that currently exist in “correctional” institutions because solitary confinement in the museums is portrayed as being an

improvement from what it used to be like. It could also prompt museums visitors to call for a return to the more punitive practices of the past or to not call for further improvements to solitary confinement, or an end to solitary confinement altogether.

5.4 – What Are the Impacts of Solitary Confinement on Prisoners?

In this section I examine the portrayals of the various harms that a prisoner may experience while serving time in solitary confinement depicted in the four penal history sites where I conducted fieldwork. The decision to place a person in segregation results in the most complete deprivation of liberty as authorized by law, and thus it is important to consider how its effects are depicted in penal history museums. The four museums that I visited grappled with the impacts of solitary confinement in different ways. Museum visitors were provided with information about the negative impacts of solitary confinement on prisoners at the Brampton Jail, however, this topic was avoided completely at three other museums. These three sites only highlighted the fact that solitary confinement could have a positive impact on a prisoner. Any mention of the negative impacts it can have were absent. Instead, visitors were provided with many justifications and rationales behind the use of solitary confinement in carceral institutions. This ultimately reinforces the idea that solitary confinement is a necessary and beneficial practice.

5.4.1 – Benefits of Solitary Confinement

Two of the four museums I visited highlighted the positive effects that solitary confinement can have with respect to disciplining prisoners and providing them with a space to reflect on their actions. For example, the Lindsay Jail had two placards on

display in front of their solitary confinement cell for visitors to read. The text explained the rationale behind the use of segregation as a disciplinary measure in “correctional” institutions. The passage starts off by noting that John Howard, “the father of solitary confinement”, believed in rehabilitation and, through his work, he emphasized the fact that prisoners were capable of feeling both shame for their misdeeds and the desire to become a better citizen. He considered spending time in solitude to be a prerequisite to a moral re-education. The text goes on to say that John Howard believed that if prisoners were left in total peace and quiet with ample time to reflect, they would eventually come to recognize the error of their ways. This is explained by the fact that if they were placed in complete solitude, nothing “would divert offenders from contemplating their own guilt”. This rationale for the use of solitary confinement as a disciplinary measure is similar to the explanation that our tour group was given at the L’Orignal Jail. At this museum, there was a sign that was placed on the wall just before visitors entered the solitary confinement cell. The text on the sign explained that a prisoner may “need isolation” after they have experienced a particularly troubling event (see *Figure 15*). This seemed to suggest that solitary confinement could have a positive impact on prisoners, namely it may have the ability to help them control and process their emotions.



Figure 15: Sign on the wall outside the solitary confinement cell at the L’Original Jail

While the Lindsay Jail and the L’Original Jail touted some positive impacts of this disciplinary method, at Kingston Penitentiary any information of its impacts were silenced. The discussions centered on the logistics of solitary confinement, what the cells looked like, who might end up in segregation and the day-to-day operations in long-term and short-term segregation. However, the tour guides and former guards scripts stopped there. As a museum visitor, I was given the impression that solitary confinement – like the prison itself (Davis, 2003) – was a penal practice that was taken for granted as a necessity in the institution.

Brown (2009) highlights that one factor that is unavoidable when it comes to the tours of historic prisons is the emptiness of them; the one-way penal gaze that of the penal spectator. More specifically, the construction of meaning happens in an empty prison, despite the total silence of institutional space or the removal of the punished.

Tourists are invited to walk through empty cells, hospital wards, mess halls and exercise yards all without encountering a single prisoner served time in the institution when it was operational. The imprisoned voices of the past and present are largely, if not completely missing from the representation of solitary confinement in the penal history museums that I visited with this one example standing out as the exception. One reason for this is that one of the main reasons for visiting a tourist site is to purchase an experience that is removed from ordinary life (Brown, 2009). More specifically, tourism is dependent on spatial change and temporal dislocation. However, as Brown (2009) explains, this dislocation is problematic because it means that commercial tourism largely occurs through positions of relative isolation and distance. Visitors face no real danger in observing from afar and there is no chance of that look being returned. In the majority of tours of decommissioned carceral sites, if accounts by those with any direct connection to the practice of punishment are included, they tend to be those of captors rather than captives.

Penal history museums, such as the four that I visited, attempt to document human pain and experience. However, the individuals who were once subjected to this pain are often rendered faceless and disembodied (Brown, 2009). Out of this emerges a kind of penal spectatorship, which permits privileged glimpses of a world that is defined by the observer and is distanced from the observer. The idea of pain is reworked into a context of leisure and entertainment with very little, if any, interaction with those largely imagined others. This was the case at every museum that I visited, with the exception of the Brampton Jail where they did incorporate the voice of a former prisoner who served time in solitary confinement into the tour content, which I elaborate upon further below.

The displays and tours at the other sites failed to bridge social distance. This leads to what Brown (2009) calls cultural fantasizing in which tourists are free to develop thoughts and opinions about what life in prison was and is like because they do not have anyone telling them otherwise.

5.4.2 – Impacts of Solitary Confinement on the Mental Health of Prisoners

Only one of the four penal history sites that I visited made any reference to the negative impacts of solitary confinement on prisoners. It is worth noting that the only information I received on the negative impacts of isolation came in the form of testimony from a former prisoner who decided to speak about his experience in “the hole”. The Brampton Jail was an example of discrepant data with regards to the representation of the impacts of solitary confinement on prisoners. Our tour guide introduced the audio recording by a former prisoner who spent time in the jail’s solitary confinement cell by saying that “his experience was very bad” and that because of this bad experience, he wanted to ensure that members of the public were aware of the conditions he faced. The content on a sign that was placed on the wall of the jail is also noteworthy in that it ran counter to this commitment to share the horrors of the jail (see *Figure 16*).



Figure 16: Sign on the wall outside the mock solitary confinement cell at the Brampton Jail

The sign was entitled “Solitary confinement: 30 days in the hole” started off by saying that in 1986, when the decommissioned jail became part of a museum, a number of former staff members and prisoners came to visit. It goes on to highlight the fact that “for the most part the memories were positive and many involved laughter”. In prefacing the account of a former prisoner’s terrible experience in solitary confinement, his experience could arguably be perceived as an anomaly among the happy times that were had in the jail.

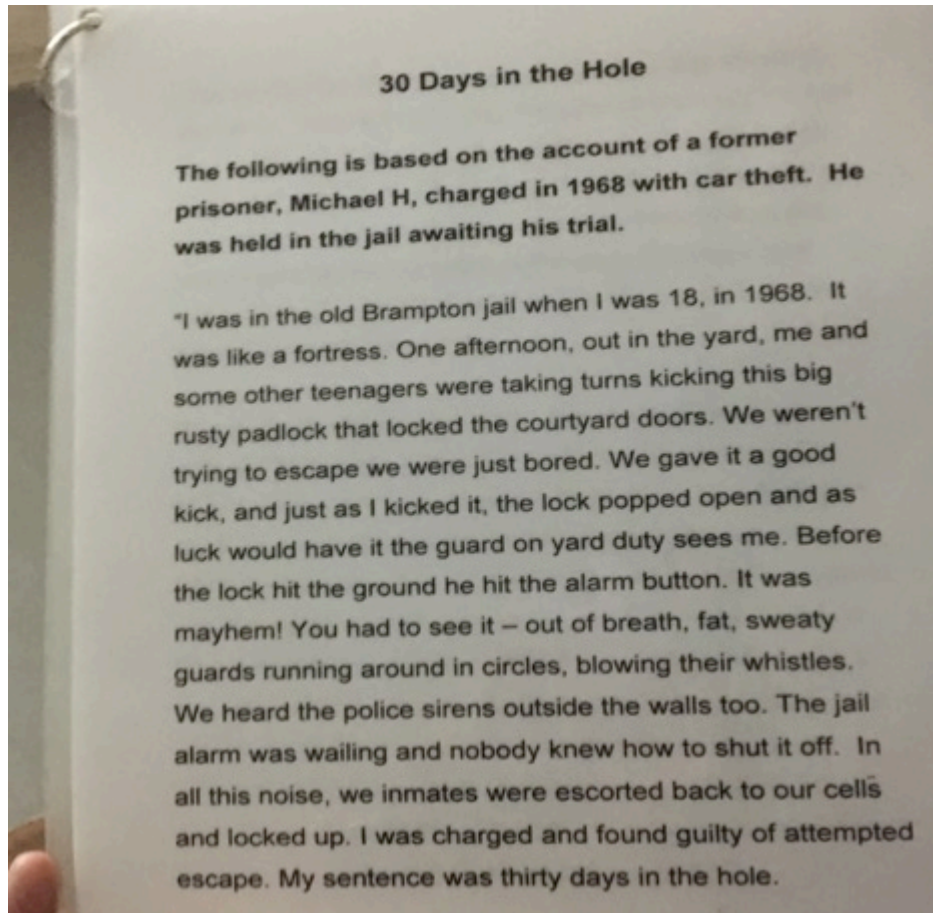


Figure 17: Written testimony of a former prisoner's experience in solitary confinement at the Brampton Jail

With this said, the prisoner's account in the audio recording, as well as the written version of the testimonial that visitors could read at their own leisure (see *Figure 17*) was profound. In the audio recording, the former prisoner explains that the silence in the solitary confinement cell was overpowering and every sound, such as keys scraping in locks, echoed in the cell. He goes on to say that he would sometimes hear people's voices in the halls and he would stand by his cell door in an attempt to hear what they were saying. He says he was dying for any form of human contact, but none ever came. Except for daily feedings, a prisoner in solitary confinement never knew what time of day it was,

which made it very difficult to sleep. On the day this individual was released from segregation, he still had time to serve in jail, but he explained that “after being in the hole, it felt like I was being set free”.

Given the lack of information about the negative impacts of isolation at the other three museums, it would be interesting to know whether or not visitors at the Brampton Jail would have received this same amount of detail and information had this former prisoner not come forward to share his story. The lack of information about the negative impacts of solitary confinement on prisoners elsewhere leaves very little room for critical reflection about the impact of solitary confinement as an administrative and punitive measure within carceral settings.

Another reality of solitary confinement that was rendered invisible in the penal history museums that I investigated were any mention of the profound effects of severe restrictions of environmental stimulation and social interaction on an individual’s mental functioning, which can cause severe psychiatric harm (Grassian, 2006). In addition, solitary confinement often results in the exacerbation of a previously existing mental condition such as depression, anxiety, aggression or paranoia (Haney, 2003). Even among prisoners who do not develop overt psychiatric illness as a result of solitary confinement, such an experience almost inevitably imposes significant psychological pain during the period of confinement and often significantly impairs a prisoner’s ability to successfully adapt to the broader prison environment (Grassian, 2006). The majority of research on the effects of solitary confinement on the mental health of prisoners suggests a wide range of psychological and physiological effects associated with the practice (Haney, 2003; Smith, 2006). For this reason, it is imperative to identify the effects of

solitary confinement on prisoners, and the extent it exacerbates and creates new issues in penal history museums. By understanding the psychological and physical effects of solitary confinement, museum visitors can be placed to raise questions about solitary confinement and make an informed decision as to whether or not it should continue to be used in prisons (Smith, 2006).

Prisoners in solitary confinement often experience various physiological symptoms, even after a short time in segregation. Prisoners in isolation often report symptoms that are similar to those of hypertension, such as chronic headaches, trembling, sweaty palms, extreme dizziness and heart palpitations (Smith, 2006; Haney, 2003). Prisoners also experience trouble with their eating and digestion, especially within the first three months of solitary confinement (Smith, 2006). They may also have difficulty sleeping and some may experience insomnia (Smith, 2006; Haney, 2003). Furthermore, many researchers conclude that some adverse consequences of solitary confinement are a direct result of sensory deprivation. The College of Family Physicians of Canada has stated that the negative consequences of sensory deprivation can be seen as early as 48 hours after segregation (Sapers, 2017). For instance, they may demonstrate an oversensitivity to normal stimuli, such as the sound of doors closing, which may exacerbate their sleeping difficulties (Smith, 2006).

According to Shalev (2008), a leading international authority on solitary confinement, 90% of those held in solitary confinement experience adverse emotional effects that can range from acute to chronic, depending on the individual and the length of time spent in isolation. Prisoners who are in solitary confinement also report feelings of panic and rage, including irritability, hostility and poor impulse control. Prisoners also

experience symptoms of depression, such as hopelessness, mood swings and withdrawal. These depressive symptoms may escalate and lead to thoughts of self-harm or suicide (Haney, 2003). Many of the issues that prisoners in solitary confinement have during isolation are also prevalent post-isolation. Those who are isolated also exhibit maladjustment disorders and problems with aggression, both during confinement and afterwards (Briggs et al., 2003). In addition, prisoners have trouble adjusting to social contact post-isolation. This can result in an increase in instances of prison misconduct and increased hostility towards “correctional” officers and prison staff. While cases in which prisoners have demonstrated a positive behavioural change after a period of time in solitary confinement do exist, they are rare (Smith, 2006). That these consequences are not addressed in three of the four museums where I conducted my fieldwork highlight whose side (Becker, 1963) these cultural institutions are on.

5.5 – Discussion

My findings generated from fieldwork at the four penal history museums revealed the Brampton Jail museum as being the site where visitors learn the most about the impact of solitary confinement on prisoners. This museum was also the only site that included testimony from an actual prisoner who spent time in solitary confinement. This detailed display is beneficial due to the fact that it provides visitors, who tend to otherwise be largely removed from penal practices, an opportunity to become more aware and informed about the use of solitary confinement as a method of punishment in jails, prisons and penitentiaries. The other three museums I studied avoided any discussions about the impact of solitary confinement on prisoners, despite some of the laws surrounding the use of solitary confinement in Canada being recently found to be

unconstitutional (e.g. *BCCLA v. Canada*, 2018). These rulings recognize the real harm that is caused by the deprivation of liberty and security that takes place when a prisoner is sent to solitary confinement.

As Brown (2009) explains, social distancing happens in cultural sites like penal history museums partly through what is rendered visible. For example, overarching themes such as prisoner protection, benefits of solitary confinement, incompatibility of prisoners with the general population, and the management of mental health issues through isolation can justify the use of solitary confinement in Canadian prisons. This is a result of the discourse of dangerousness that was present at the museums as a way to represent prisoners. Prisoners were portrayed as highly blameworthy in one-way or another, and therefore deserving of harsh conditions of confinement. At all four museums that I visited, the onus was placed on the prisoner for ending up in segregation, thus shifting responsibility away from the prison staff for their role in solitary confinement placements.

However, there must also be an account of what is invisible in these spaces and Cohen's (2001) work on denial supplements Brown's (2009) work on penal spectatorship to make sense of this. Cohen (2001) explains that victims are individuals to whom things are done, perpetrators are those who are the ones who do these things, and observers are those who see and know what is happening. Victims suffer from something "terrible" that happens to them or is deliberately done to them. I would argue that because prisoners who are placed in solitary confinement are represented as deserving of their time in isolation, they are unlikely to be perceived as victims by museum visitors, and so it is easy to deny that there are any problematic elements to their isolation. Cohen describes

that if citizens are unable to identify with a victim, let alone identify that there is a victim at all, this leads to indifference to suffering and the lack of desire to help a victim.

The same can be said for staff who currently work in carceral settings. If they are represented and commemorated in penal history museums as heroes that are simply fulfilling their duty, it becomes easy for museum visitors to deny the meaning of what they are doing to prisoners with regards to solitary confinement or other forms of punishment. These denials can play a causal role in allowing atrocities to be committed in facilities that are still operational and expecting perpetrators to continue with the rest of their lives as if nothing unusual is happening. The discourses surrounding deserving prisoners and guards that are just doing their job that were most prominent in the four penal history museums that I visited deflect any criticism of solitary confinement that could call into question its necessity as a facet of punishment.

Through my fieldwork, I also observed that the length of time that prisoners spend in solitary confinement was not problematized or challenged in any of the four museums that I visited. Visitors were told that prisoners could spend an indeterminate amount of time in segregation. Cohen's (2001) concept of implicatory denial can be used to explain the absence of information on prolonged segregation. Here, we see no attempt by the museums to deny the facts, namely that prisoners are spending several days, months and years in isolation. However, with the exception of the Brampton Jail, what are denied or minimized are the psychological or moral implications that conventionally follow. Visitors were told that the prisoner in "Cell 17" at Kingston Penitentiary spent years in there, but in no way was this portrayed as psychologically disturbing or as carrying a moral imperative to make a change in how segregation is used in "correctional"

institutions today. What visitors were left with by our tour guide was a portrait of an Indigenous prisoner painting an image of healing. To combat the numbing effects of implicatory denial, museum staff and those who are in charge of curating the tours must engage in what Cohen (2001) refers to as consciousness raising. Assertions such as, “I did not know that spending years in solitary confinement could lead to suicide or other forms of mental illness”, that I heard during my fieldwork at Kingston Penitentiary, call for changes in what is shown or told to visitors in penal history museums. Penal history museums must make it difficult for people to say that they “do not know”.

A gap in the knowledge was also evident at the four penal history museums that I visited, in terms of the division between past and present penal practices. All throughout the museums, the information is largely directed towards the past, with the exception of the discussion at Kingston Penitentiary about the cell sizes being the “new standard of corrections”. People learn about how prisoners “were” treated and how solitary confinement “used” to look, exemplified in side-by-side segregation cells. When it comes to the topic of prisoners being placed in solitary confinement, the present is rarely found. As Cohen (2001) explains, if individuals are not provided with any information about atrocities that occur, and this can apply to the treatment of prisoners who are currently in solitary confinement, people may be encouraged to act as if they did not know about the present. Current discourses of punishment, and specifically solitary confinement, are based on forms of cruelty, discrimination, repression or exclusion, which are “known”, but are not openly talked about, including in the museums that I visited. Such framing serves to cover up on-going suffering and mistreatment behind bars.

The fact that the negative impacts of solitary confinement on prisoners are silenced in all the museums that I visited except for the Brampton Jail, can be examined through Cohen's (2001) work on blocking out, turning a blind eye, not wanting to know, and seeing what we want to see, which are all expressions of denial. Cohen explains that the most familiar usage of the term denial refers to the maintenance of social worlds in which an undesirable situation is unrecognized, ignored or made to seem normal. It is through these forms of denial that uncomfortable truths such as suffering and injustice are avoided. I argue that penal history museums engage in various forms of denial, to a greater or lesser degree, through what they choose to put on display and what they feel should remain hidden from the public eye. Because of these curatorial techniques, the information about the negative effects that solitary confinement can have on a prisoner are repressed, disavowed and pushed aside. This can ultimately lead to the neutralization of harms and the encouragement of a dulled, passive acceptance of the use of solitary confinement as a necessary and humane method of discipline and control in carceral institutions.

Cohen (2001) explains that denials draw on shared cultural vocabularies to be credible. He says that denials may also be shared in another powerful sense. In practice, this would consist of a commitment between people or an entire organization to back up or collude in each other's denial. He goes on to say that these collusions work best when we are unaware of them, making them a literal blind spot for individuals who are on the receiving end (Cohen, 2001, p. 64). Without conscious negotiation, museum tour guides including the former guards at Kingston Penitentiary, know which topics to avoid and which facts are better left unnoticed. Given this and other ways that penal history

museums tend to reproduce the idea that solitary confinement is necessary and more humane today than in the past, there is a need to transform narratives of segregation within these cultural institutions. In the concluding chapter, I summarize the main contributions of this study and suggest a way forward for representing solitary confinement in decommissioned carceral sites transformed into tourism spaces.

CHAPTER 6: CONCLUSION

Discussing the phenomenon of penal tourism, Brown (2009, p. 120) states, “the nature of this engagement – its distance, its easy comfort, its sustenance of cultural fantasy – demands a deeper engagement of the ways in which punishers are linked to the punished”. This certainly applies to the penal history museums I examined and their depictions of solitary confinement. From the posters at the L’Original Jail and the Brampton Jail, to the mock segregation cell at the Lindsay Jail, as well as the Lower A and H ranges at Kingston Penitentiary, all four museums cast visitors into the role of penal spectators who can develop an understanding about the deprivation of liberty and solitary confinement from a social distance.

Penal tourism is a fast growing area of research within the field of criminology (Piché and Walby, 2016). Yet, there have been no attempts to connect this research to the representation of solitary confinement in penal history museums. I have started a conversation within the body of penal tourism literature about the various ways that solitary confinement is represented in museums and whether or not these representations contribute to the idea that the practice is necessary in operational institutions. In doing so, my thesis has made three original contributions to criminological research.

The first contribution to criminological research is that this thesis identified what was visible at four penal history museums in Ontario. First, the themes of prisoner protection and incompatibility with the general population as a reason for isolation were emphasized at the museums. Second, the four museums discussed various benefits of solitary confinement such as providing prisoners with an opportunity for contemplation, allowing prison staff to better monitor captives with mental health issues and reducing

conflicts amongst prisoners in the institution. Third, solitary confinement was portrayed as a tool for the management of mental health issues. By highlighting these themes that emphasize an overall discourse of institutional order and security with regards to dangerous or otherwise unstable captives, the museums tend to widen the social distance between penal spectators and those in conflict with the law. These representations can foster connections between prison staff who are tasked with controlling prisoners and penal spectators, which justify punitive ideologies. The museums provide spaces where the use of solitary confinement is normalized and constructed as an acceptable and necessary way to respond to criminalized harm.

This study also revealed the absence of certain information inside the four museums, which can be grouped into four main areas. First, the museums lacked information about the wide variety of reasons for which an individual is placed in solitary confinement in operational institutions, such as possessing benign forms of contraband, public displays of affection and refusing to be searched by someone of the opposite sex. Second, the voices of the criminalized are noticeably absent from three of the four penal history museums I examined. Individuals who spent time in solitary confinement are spoken about in the museums, written about on posters that hang on the walls, and are recreated in the form of dolls. However, their individual stories are silenced with the exception of the Brompton Jail, which gives an account of some of the damaging aspects of isolation. Third, while the fact that prisoners suffering from various mental illnesses and suicidal prisoners are routinely placed in solitary confinement was acknowledged, it was not problematized and alternatives to isolation for these populations were not explored. Fourth, the penal history museums do not mention the current use of solitary

confinement and its consequences, which may cast “correctional” institutions in a negative light. The absence of these themes in the museums constitutes a failure to challenge the necessity of solitary confinement, and is an example of Cohen’s (2001) concept of denial. The harms that stem from the use of solitary confinement are neutralized in the museums and any critiques circulating in other spheres are disregarded. There is a denial of the pain that is experienced by prisoners in isolation.

The third and final contribution that this thesis has made to the criminological literature is that in exploring what is and is not visible about solitary confinement in four Ontario penal history museums, I reveal part of the cultural infrastructure that produces meanings that contribute to penal inertia when attempts are made to diminish or eliminate the use of solitary confinement in Canada. In fact, the representations of solitary confinement in the museums have the ability to motivate people to punish and can drive penal practices in more punitive directions. The normalization of solitary confinement as a tool for dealing with a wide range of institutional problems can lead to the entrenched perception of isolation as a seemingly permanent fixture of the modern penal landscape. Again, in the four museums, there was little problematization of solitary confinement and no alternatives to the practice were presented for visitors to consider.

In addition to these contributions to the criminological literature, this thesis emphasizes the fact that dark tourism sites, such as penal history museums, should interest criminologists because they tell a story about prisons (Piché & Walby, 2016). More specifically, the museums tell us about the social significance of prisons (Pratt, 2002). Further, penal tourism research, with its focus on the negotiation of meanings of punishment at penal history museums, interrogates the role of “criminal justice” in given

societies. These museums are venues where representations of those in conflict with the law and those employed to uphold it inform public understandings of “criminal justice”. For these reasons, it is crucial for criminologists to continue to examine the intersections of dark tourism with criminology and criminal justice studies. Criminologists can make important contributions to understanding how common sense around what constitutes “crime” and responses to criminalized harms are negotiated in tourism sites (Piché & Walby, 2016).

While it is a difficult task to tell uncomfortable stories in a museum, penal history sites are in service to the public, who deserve a fair representation of events of the past in order to have a clearer understanding of the events of the present (Ferguson et al., 2016). Further, I would argue that penal history museums, through their curation and tour guide work, must take steps to move towards what Cohen (2001) refers to as the acknowledgement phase, where they begin engaging with the harms of imprisonment generally and solitary confinement specifically. Cohen explains that denial, in the sense of shutting out awareness of others’ suffering, has become the normal state of affairs. However, he goes on to say that it is precisely for this reason that efforts must be concentrated on breaking out of this frame. A long period of normalization and denial is often broken by a sudden moment of acknowledgement. Given the accumulation of media reporting (e.g. Globe and Mail, 2014), government and ombudsperson reports (e.g. Sapers, 2017), academic work (e.g. Bromwich & Kilty, 2017), and legislative changes with respect to solitary confinement, we are taking steps in the right direction, but more work needs to be done.

As an illustration of how far we still need to go, the Ontario Public Service Employees Union (OPSEU) and the Union of Canadian Correctional Officers (UCCO) are resisting acknowledgement and change with respect to solitary confinement in Ontario jails and prisons, as well as federal penitentiaries. Representatives from these unions have made claims that the curbed use of solitary confinement as punishment for prisoners will result in “open season” for jail guards (The Ottawa Citizen, 2018). This means that members of the unions believe that the move to place limits on the use of solitary confinement will result in an increase in violence towards staff, and the only way that prisoners will not be violent is if the deterrent is strong enough, and often this deterrent is solitary confinement. OPSEU representatives claim that if prisoners know that they will not receive time in solitary confinement as a punishment, due to the 15-day limit that has been implemented, there is nothing stopping them from assaulting jail and prison staff (The Ottawa Citizen, 2018). Rather than acknowledging the progress that has been made with regards to limits on solitary confinement or recognizing that limits must be in place in attempt to mitigate some of the negative effects of this form of punishment, penal actors are placing the emphasis individual safety of staff, rather than the well-being of prisoners, as if these cannot be reconciled in a responsible way.

While penal actors such as jail and prison guards are resisting reforms, penal history museums have the potential to engage in cultural work that promotes progress and change. For this to happen, there must be open lines of communication and venues for critical conversations about solitary confinement as a method of punishment in operational institutions. This would make it more difficult for individuals and groups such as the unions that represent guards to deny the harmful effects of solitary

confinement. In doing so, members of the public would be placed in a position to questions claims that limiting solitary confinement necessarily places staff in a dangerous position. As mentioned earlier, it is often the case that individuals may be aware of certain harms, such as the negative effects of solitary confinement, but they have not had the venue to talk about it or there are individuals who never saw anything wrong, but they can be provided with an opportunity to open their eyes (Cohen, 2001). Ultimately, we must find ways to transform ignorance into information, information into knowledge, knowledge into acknowledgement and finally acknowledgement into action. One way of doing this is to disclose.

It is my view that penal history museums should include a critical display of solitary confinement that shows members of the public the negative effects that solitary confinement can have on prisoners. I think that this would be beneficial for closing the social distance between law-abiding citizens and those who have come into conflict with the law who are serving time in isolation. Previous research has theorized that critical memorialization practices inside penal history museums can play an important role in reducing the social distance of penal spectators. According to Fiander and colleagues (2016, p.4), including these subjects has the potential to “challenge the predominant discursive focus on prisoners as dangerous”. A display about the harmful physical and psychological effects of solitary confinement may not be something that members of the public would enjoy encountering, however, I believe that exposure to this information is crucial if we want changes to “correctional” practices, such as solitary confinement, to occur.

While this study pushed theoretical boundaries by incorporating Cohen's (2001) theory of denial, there are theoretical limitations of the literature on penal history museums informed by Brown (2009) that must be acknowledged. Brown's (2009) theory asserts that penalty and its meanings circulate through cultural practices to large numbers of people who tend to be disconnected from formal institutions of punishment. However, it leaves room for the possibility that transformative learning can occur in sites such as penal history museums. Yet much of the literature surrounding penal tourism does not empirically test these ideas, as studies in the field tend to focus on the meanings that are conveyed to those who frequent these sites. In doing so, a behind the scenes analysis of the curation and tour guide work that is being performed, and how they shape understandings of "crime" amongst visitors, which is crucial to understand whether meanings of penalty contribute to penal spectatorship or are transformative, is often missing.

Moving forward, gaps that require future investigation in penal tourism research include conducting interviews with paid and non-paid museum staff to better understand how the representation of solitary confinement materializes. This would allow for a "behind the scenes" look at how solitary confinement displays are curated, who writes the scripts for tour guides, and who gets a say in what is included on the tour and what is ignored. My project was limited by not conducting interviews with museum staff.

This project would have also benefitted from further knowledge about penal tourists. More research into visitor experiences and the overall consumption-side of penal history is necessary for increasing knowledge about how meanings of penalty are negotiated generally and specifically related to museum content on solitary confinement.

This research could include interviews, questionnaires, observations of visitor behaviour and examine dialogue on social media or travel review sites. This would have allowed for an investigation into why people visit penal history museums in the first place and their reactions to solitary confinement displays.

Finally, this project could have also benefited from research in other Canadian provinces. Such work would help determine whether the representation of solitary confinement in penal history museums differs depending on jurisdictional focus.

This thesis was a study of penal spectatorship and solitary confinement at four penal history museums in Ontario. These are sites that allow the public to engage with the deprivation of liberty, the infliction of pain and solitary confinement at a social distance. For this reason, I think it is important that penal history museums become sites of learning that have the potential to also be sites of critique, where questions can be raised about punishment in general, but also solitary confinement and its alternatives. As, Brown (2009, p. 200) explains, “Amid such discontinuities, there are, surprisingly, numerous starting points for altering the path we are on”.

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Appendix A: Open Coding Grid

Date of Visit:

General Reflections / Notable Observations

- Summary and key highlights of field visit

Note on Method

- Ideas for new coding fields
- Ideas for new interview questions
- Reflections on the role of the research and positioning on ability to collect data -- Other methodological observations

Analytical Thoughts

- Reflections on how observations / data collected relate to theories, ideas and concepts articulated in literatures relevant to the study

GENERAL REFLECTIONS / NOTABLE OBSERVATIONS
NOTES ON METHOD
ANALYTICAL THOUGHTS

Appendix B: Mixed Coding Grid

Location: _____

Definitions:

- Spatial arrangements (i.e. the way space is setup, the way people are directed and description of the material space)
- Visual arrangements (i.e. what people see when they glance around in given museum spaces and the aesthetics)
- Narrative arrangements (i.e. ideas conveyed to museum visitors)
- Performative arrangements (i.e. the roles and functions of museum staff and volunteers, and how they were performed).

THEMES	NOTES			
	SPATIAL ARRANGEMENTS	VISUAL ARRANGEMENTS	NARRATIVE ARRANGEMENTS	PERFORMATIVE ARRANGEMENTS
Who ends up in solitary confinement?				
What institutional processes are involved in sending prisoners to solitary confinement				
What reasons are given to justify the placement of prisoners in solitary confinement?				
What purposes does solitary confinement serve?				
How long do prisoners usually spend in solitary confinement				

and what conditions do they experience?				
What purpose does solitary confinement serve?				
What are the impacts of solitary confinement on prisoners?				