

Navigating Protective Custody Classification: Examining the Lived Experiences of PC Inmates

by

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## Abstract

Classification systems in prisons have consequences in both formal and informal ways for inmates. Protective custody (PC) units are especially unique spaces in which traditionally the most vilified populations – informally often referred to as “skinner, rats, and scaredy cats” – have been housed. Increasingly, inmates with alternative reasons for seeking protection, such as first-time offending or exiting a gang are requesting protective custody placement and are granted such placement with relative ease. This has significantly altered the composition of protective custody units. Related to those compositional shifts, my research asked four questions: 1. How do inmates on protective custody units navigate their day to day lives? 2. How do inmates perceive the social dynamics and larger governance structure to be different in protective custody units in comparison to general population units? 3. Does protective custody serve a protective purpose? 4. How does the PC classification shape the institution and the lived experiences of inmates? To explore these questions, I conducted 23 interviews with protective custody inmates at a provincial prison in Western Canada. I found inmates request PC placement for various reasons ranging from perceiving it as a safer space for ex-gang members to simply wanting to socialize with other inmates they know on a different unit. As a second finding, I demonstrate that the protective custody classification is not fulfilling any protective function and protective custody units run similarly to general population units, especially with respect to violence among inmates and prison politics that shape everyday life inside. Once an inmate is placed on the protective custody unit it becomes clear that the politics and violence they aimed to escape on general population units are present on protective custody units as well. In addition, they have to navigate the added stigma of being labeled a PC inmate. As a result, inmates must

navigate the discredibility of PC through consistent and vigilant boundary work to prevent the permanent stain of the protective custody classification.

## Preface

This thesis is an original work by Ashley Kohl. The research project, of which this thesis is part, received research ethics approval from the University of Alberta Research Ethics Board, Project Name “Navigating Protective Custody Classification: Examining the Lived Experiences of PC Inmates”, No.00062785, on April 1, 2016.

The interviews conducted for this thesis are part of the Alberta Prisons Project, a larger research collaboration led by Professor Sandra Bucerius and Professor Kevin Haggerty. This dataset for the Alberta Prisons Project, including the interviews conducted for this research, is based at the University of Alberta.

## **Dedications**

To the men who have spent any duration of time incarcerated: your narratives and perceptions will be acknowledged. I will continue to work with your interests at the forefront.

## Acknowledgements

In doing this research I am eternally grateful for the experiences and opportunities that this larger research project has provided. The overwhelming support I have received over the duration of master's has allowed me to produce this work and hopefully more to come.

I would first like to acknowledge the men on the protective custody unit in which I conducted my research. They not only gave me their time, shared their experiences and perceptions, but also allowed me to enter their space to do so. At times when I was unsure about my own morality as a researcher and the effects of entering their space, I was reminded of the optimism these men had around this project. Getting their voices out, they hoped, would help future generations who may find themselves in the same place. It is this very hope that pushes me to continue this work.

Dr. Sandra Bucerius, I would not be where I am today if it was not for your support and encouragement. I appreciate how much you have challenged me to be critical yet realistic in my academic endeavors.

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The research team: Justin, Luca, Marta, Tyler, and Will – thank you for keeping me grounded throughout the fieldwork, analysis, and writing. All of our disagreements and discussions that naturally occur during team research were essential to finishing this thesis. As a larger team, I am honoured I had the opportunity to work with each of you. I look forward to our future research endeavors.

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## INTRODUCTION

In the fall of 2016 I was given the opportunity to be a research assistant on a large project headed by Drs. Sandra Bucerius and Kevin Haggerty at the University of Alberta. While I was not exactly sure which direction my research would take, I entered the master's program with the intent of focusing my thesis on vulnerable populations. Prisons as spaces that house some of our most vulnerable populations were of particular interest to me. Having both occupational/volunteer experience in policing and the court system alongside an academic background in criminology, I had built a sensitivity to the function of correctional facilities from a sociological/criminological perspective. Having an opportunity to essentially write my thesis on anything about "prisons" was overwhelming at first. We had access to many different aspects of prison life. Given how little is publicly known about the inner workings of Canadian prisons the research possibilities seemed endless.

When I first entered a prison alongside Drs. Bucerius and Haggerty's team I had the chance to shadow colleagues who had previously done interviews for their own thesis research. After being given a tour of the institution and shadowing a few interviews I quickly came to realize that units of different security designations had identical architecture features. A gang unit, a general population (GP) unit, or a protective custody (PC) unit could not be easily distinguished based on appearances. Maybe more striking to me, the on-unit programs seemed similar to those offered for the general population. I became intrigued by the PC designation which left me wondering what it was about PC units that made them more secure for those who needed protection.

In my understanding, a protective custody unit should provide some form of protection to those who cannot be on general population units, yet this was not directly apparent on the unit.

Having gained a preliminary understanding of the purpose of protective custody through the tours and interviews, I left this first introduction to prison research interested in the function of the protective classification. The conditions and resources on a PC unit should, in theory, be different or in some ways tailored to meet the needs and ensure the safety of those who have requested placement on such units. If this was the case, and the purpose of protective custody was to “protect”, I wondered how this was accomplished.

I began looking into scholarly literature on protective custody units to see what type of data existed, especially in the Canadian context. I quickly discovered, however, that there is little research. Most contemporary studies mention protective custody only in passing as a placement option (Skarbek, 2014; Ricciardelli and Moir, 2013). For a brief period in the late 1970s and early 1980s Canadian and American researchers, in collaboration with corrections ministries, took interest in protective custody. This was accomplished through comparative studies with general population units as well as attempts to understand the psychological composition of PC inmates<sup>1</sup> and predictive qualities for those who may consider a PC placement in the future.

Research that does exist is based almost exclusively on correctional reports, statistics and applications of psychometric scales and structured questionnaires (Brodsky, S., & Scogin, F., 1988; Robertson, J. 1987). Although there are no official or historical government/correctional statistics on protective custody enrolment, previous studies and current corrections officials suggested that the number of inmates on PC has been on a considerable rise since the 1960s with the highest rates appearing to be in the prairie provinces (Gendreau, Tellier, & Wormith, 1985; Vantour, 1979; personal conversation with Juan). Several factors have been posited as

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<sup>1</sup> There appears to be some academic consensus that ‘prisoner’ is the politically appropriate term, but the men I interviewed preferred ‘inmate’ which they viewed as less stigmatizing. For this reason, I use the term ‘inmate’ and ‘incarcerated men’ exclusively.

contributing to the increase in PC such as generalized overcrowding and increased frequency of first time offenders (Gendreau, Tellier, & Wormith, 1985). Another contributing factor is an increase in individuals with sexual offences being introduced into the system and serving time in correctional facilities (Wormith, 1983). There is an absence of more recent studies and detailed examinations focusing on the conditions of inmates who choose, or are forced into, protective custody units.

These units are primarily used to house “at-risk” inmates. The most notable population is that of individuals who have committed sexual offences, informed on others, or who fear prison dynamics, as I detail later (Ricciardelli & Spencer, 2014; Priestly, 1980). More recently, PC units have seen an increase in the number of individuals who have left gangs and fear retribution on general population units for abandoning their gang responsibilities (Skarbek, 2014; Winterdyk & Ruddell; 2010).

Although protective custody is also populated by individuals with other justifications than those just identified, placing these highlighted populations on the same unit creates significant conflict due to the implications and ambiguity surrounding why an individual *chose* to be or *was placed* on a PC unit. To contextualize this concern, ex-gang members and those who engage in the informal/criminal economy<sup>2</sup>, have often spent the majority of their lives in and out of correctional institutions (Winterdyk & Ruddell, 2010). As active gang members within prisons, they must adhere to an “inmate code” (or prison code interchangeably) which informally dictates how units are run and how inmates should act and interact (Liebling, 2012; Ricciardelli

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<sup>2</sup> Informal/criminal economy refers to any involvement in services or production that is executed “under the table”, is not claimed during taxes or is considered a criminal action under Canadian law. This includes, but is not limited to, drug production, drug dealing, weapons dealing, property theft for resale, and living off of the avails of prostitution.

& Moir, 2013, p.359). Inmate governance in prison follows these set of norms and expectations which are learned over time. This prison code also includes designations of hierarchical power that take different forms depending on the institution (Liebling, 2012; Winterdyk and Ruddell, 2010; Jewkes, 2002). In general population units, this hierarchy is often explicit, as reasons for imprisonment are readily shared to establish identity and power relations (Medlicott, 2004; Rowe, 2015). Traditionally, this code holds that informants and, more so, sex offenders are considered the lowest on the inmate hierarchy (Ugelvik, 2015; Jewkes, 2002, p.55; Priestley, 1980, p.16). As a consequence, they may become victims of coercive and violent abuse by other inmates, particularly those with gang affiliations and guards (Ricciardelli and Spencer, 2014; Waldram, 2007).

In cases where an individual has committed bad charges<sup>3</sup> (such as being an informant or having committed a sexual offence), which are not accepted by the larger inmate population, they may not be safe on a GP unit. While an individual can choose to check off<sup>4</sup> to another general population unit, the interconnected nature of prisons means that information about inmates is shared quickly between inmates on different units<sup>5</sup>. The only option, despite placing

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<sup>3</sup> “Bad charges” is a catch-all phrase used by both inmates and correctional officers to express that an individual is of poor moral character. Bad charges include informing on others both inside and outside the institution (also refer to as ratting or snitching), having committed a sexual offence, and aimless violence or murder especially against women or children.

<sup>4</sup> “Checking off” of a unit is a political action that an inmate can take. This action includes other individuals forcing an inmate to ask to be moved, or an inmate can request to move to another GP or PC unit of their own volition. Inmates may justify their placement request on the basis of safety, to prevent informing, general incompatibility issues, or health reasons. However, the reason for checking off of one unit to another can result in questioning and distrust from those on the new unit, ultimately impacting the check off’s reputation.

<sup>5</sup> There are many ways that incarcerated individuals have navigated correctional institutions to communicate. A common way to communicate on a unit and across units is the use of “kites”. Kites are tightly folded notes written by inmates that can be given to other inmates (in the case of zoned units, the cleaner) to bring to an intended recipient. It is also possible to transfer kites across units by sliding them under main entry doors from inside the unit or during movement through the institution for programming or court. Another creative method of communication is the use of 3-way calling. This requires a person outside of the institution to receive calls from inmates on different units and then connect them.

an inmate on a segregation unit (which is neither a long-term solution for the inmate or the institution) is for the inmate to sign a waiver to request placement on a PC unit.

Inmates generally face many difficulties, however those on protective custody units are often met with increased suspicion and aversion on the basis of their institutional placement/choice. As PC was originally designated for sex offenders and informants, it has historically been viewed by those inside as housing the ‘worst of the worst’. This stigma can also extend to inmates who personally do not have bad charges but have requested placement on PC. The fact they are willing to live on a unit with the ‘worst of the worst’ is enough to be stigmatized by the rest of the prison population. With an increasing percentage of inmates without bad charges asking to be placed on such units, there are enhanced concerns about overpopulation, crowding, violent encounters between incompatible<sup>6</sup> inmates, and the paradoxical increasing dangerousness of PC units. It is an open question then whether PC units, designed to protect inmates, are actually less secure and safe than general population units.

As my research continued I realized I needed to understand the fundamental differences, if any, of protective custody units as compared to other units. With this in mind, I framed my research questions to better understand protective custody with a focus on perceptions of how this designation affected the lives of PC inmates:

1. How do inmates on protective custody units navigate their day to day lives?
2. In protective custody how do social dynamics and larger governance exist compared to general population units?
3. Does protective custody serve a protective purpose?

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<sup>6</sup> “Incompatibles” refers to the institutional term for inmates who cannot be housed together due to gang affiliations or was a request by one or both inmates. Inmates have taken on this institutional terminology to also describe these relationships in their regular conversations.

4. How does the PC classification shape the institution and the lived experiences of inmates?

Although my findings are antecedent to theory, I believe that my analysis provides a better conceptual understanding of protective custody on both a micro and macro level. I investigate the dynamics of classification and its implications through the works of Geoffrey Bowker and Susan Star (2000) and Hughes (1945), the concepts of “discredited” and “discreditable” stigma of Erving Goffman (1986), and finally how these classifications and resulting stigma are navigated through “boundary work” as posited by Michele Lamont (2002).

## **LITERATURE REVIEW**

As noted earlier there is little empirical research on Canadian prisons (Watson, 2015; Comack, 2008; Wacquant, 2002), and almost no research on protective custody units. What literature does exist is preliminary and often guided by the cooperation of correctional institutions providing quantitative statistical information in effort to reduce the PC population. None of these studies offer descriptive accounts of how inmates “live, experience, understand, and organize their lives” (Comack, 2008, p.13).

The earliest work available on protective custody was a proposal drafted by Vantour (1979) in collaboration with Canadian Federal Corrections. Vantour provides a brief history of the changing federal routine and how protective custody as a unit only became a requirement in the 1960s (p.4). He notes that general overcrowding and increasing rates of first-time offenders may have contributed to the increase in PC units. The aim of this report was to provide solutions to control PC admission, reduce numbers, and provide accommodating facilities and programs that would “normalize” the experience of such inmates (p.66). Vantour indicates that PC inmates have significantly increased since the classification was formed. Although suggestions were

made to establish guidelines to assist in determining whether to grant protective placement (p.48) or introduce general populations inmates into PC to normalize the units (p.65), it is unclear whether anything has changed on the federal level in Canada today.

Gendreau, Tellier, and Wormith (1985) drew on 1978 data provided by Correctional Service of Canada (CSC) to call for further research into the increasing protective custody population on the provincial level. They pointed to the acknowledgement in the general literature that due to the perceived risk attributed to protective custody inmates, access to programming is not consistent or as frequent as it is for non-PC inmates (p.59). They suggest empirical research should identify characteristics specific to PC inmates and to return more authority to prison administrators (p.62). Such information, they believe, could establish a “system of predictors” to identify inmates who may potentially request PC classification.

A year later Tellier (1986) published a comparative piece on protective custody and general population inmates incarcerated in a provincial institution. This research was written in collaboration with the Ontario Ministry of Correctional Services and CSC to explore how the growing PC population could be managed and reduced. This study also suggested that a system of predictors could be used to detect inmates at risk of requesting PC placement (p.15). Through an analysis of psychometric questionnaires and file reviews, Tellier found there was no difference in height, weight, ethnicity, or religion of PC inmates. He did, however, state the rather self-evident finding that suggests there are higher rates of sex offenders on PC units than GP units. In terms of mental disorder, PC inmates had higher rates but were less “anti-social” and “criminally oriented” than GP inmates (p.2). Tellier also pointed out that PC inmates are denied the same work and leisure privileges as other inmates due to their PC classification (p.48)

and suggested that correctional officers working PC units should work towards not developing prejudice against PC inmates.

In 1988 Brodsky and Scogin provided what they slated the “first data” on emotional effects of protective custody in three large American maximum-security institutions. Through the use of “systematic psychological interviews” with 69 male protective custody inmates they found these individuals were being denied participation in program and facility access normally given to general population units. The individual isolation and restrictive housing that PC inmates faced had potential for long-term negative psychological effects, as has been suggested in the previous research.

While this research is important, none of these works address the notion of “protective” in protective custody and what determinations make these units any more or less safe than a general population unit. Further, no research has examined the social organization and interactions inside PC units and the implications of the classification outside of PC.

From a methodological perspective, structured questionnaires and corrections statistics have dominated the minor existing literature and restricted the ability to explore these topics. This is why I choose to employ a qualitative focus on narratives. Qualitative research has the potential to provide a more nuanced and simultaneously well-rounded understanding of how protective custody is experienced (Presser, 2009, p.8; Maruna, 2015, p.viii). In many ways, power and social identity are defined through the use of language. This is why I emphasize that individuals have the ability to subjectively construct their own identities in my research (Richardson, 2000). The major strength of focusing on narratives as a methodological approach is that it is best suited to accurately portray both individual and collective lived experiences.

## METHODOLOGY

To address the lack of empirical qualitative research on protective custody, this exploratory study benefited from the grounded theory approach which focuses on the narratives of inmates and additional observation data to guide my analysis (Charmaz, 2014; Creswell, 2013). This framework is particularly suitable for qualitative research because it aims for findings to emerge inductively from the views and narratives of interviewees as opposed to placing their viewpoints within a pre-existing theory (Creswell, 2013, p.83; Presser, 2009; Glaser and Strauss, 1967). Narratives are, in their most basic form, descriptions of human behaviour. The significance of narratives is the potential to illuminate how individuals interpret their own world, and how these behaviours are perceived by others (Presser, 2009, p.9). Therefore, the benefit of narrative analysis, especially with vulnerable and/or vilified populations, is the ability to gain a better understanding of their experiences (Waldram, 2007, p.9; Maruna, 2015).

Although I entered the field with general tenets of grounded theory in mind, I was sensitive to several orienting frameworks that arose through this research project. I navigated my prior knowledge using the technique of “bracketing” (Tufford and Newman, 2010). This technique advocates for prior theories and frameworks to be kept external to the interviews and data collection process only returning to them during the analysis stage. This method allowed me to mitigate, to the best of my ability, potential preconceptions that may arise due to prior theory, biases, and experience related to larger research project (Tufford and Newman, 2010, p.81). Grounded theory and bracketing require significant vigilance from researchers to ensure interviews and data are unguided. Therefore, I was open to the emergence of other conceptualizations during the process of data collection and analysis. Acknowledging themes

and points of saturation throughout the narratives and observational notes I was able to engage with literature and larger theories to convey the data in a more conventional way.

### **Methods**

When I first entered Harbour Bay Correctional Centre (HBCC), I had hoped to conduct 15 semi-structured interviews ranging from 45 minutes to an hour. However, over the two-week duration I conducted 23 interviews on East Wing with most interviews ranging from 1 ½ to 2 hours. Even so, I left on my last day with a list containing many still interested interviewees who I regrettably was unable to interview. During the two weeks at HBCC I was able to build positive rapport with inmates on the unit. I received numerous comments of appreciation from inmates for my time with many informing me that they perceived the interviews as a therapeutic experience.

My interviews initially investigated how participants viewed their protective custody unit in relation to perceptions of quality, sociality, and structure and then moved towards a participant guided conversational method (Charmaz, 1990). Although each interview was based on the different experiences of each participant, I prompted into particular topics in an attempt to explore the perceptions of protection on this unit. Initially, this was accomplished through establishing who made up protective custody units. I eased into this topic by asking questions comparing HBCC to other facilities, and then narrowed my question down to this unit compared to other units in the prison. This allowed me to get a perception of the unit compared to others and other institutions, without directly disclosing an interest in the dynamics of protective custody alone. Without any contemporary research on protective custody units I was careful how I inquired about protective custody for fear of potentially making a poor impression upon the respondents based on the perceived stigma tied to PC and their own classification.

Once these questions were answered and I sensed the interviewee was comfortable, I asked questions about the make up of this protective custody unit, starting with the confirmation that East Wing was indeed a protective custody unit. I asked respondents what protective custody is and who is usually placed on protective custody unit. I also asked about other aspects of life inside prison including daily routines, how inmates pass time, if inmates choose to stay in contact with loved ones on the outside and how that impacts their experience inside.

For the first few days on the unit my presence was acknowledged with consistent and distant observation. There were quite a few individuals that would come up to me to ask questions about the project and how long I would be on the unit as some individuals were close to release time. After the first two days of interviews I gained the impression that those who had not initially signed up for the interviews seemed to become less skeptical and subsequently, signed up for interviews. I can only assume that the participants I interviewed on my first two days had shared a positive impression of the interview with others on the unit.

I used a general interview guide with prompts developed by the larger research team as opposed to structured sequential questions. This interview format allowed participants to guide the conversations and helped avoid situations where participants felt “put off” by set questions that they may not view positively (Bucerius, 2013; Presser, 2009). An additional benefit of this approach for those incarcerated and other vulnerable populations is that the participant feels empowered in the interview process by virtue of being able to influence topic focus as was evident in my experience. This worked to lessen the existing power differential between researcher and participant, creating a more comfortable and conversational space (Crewe and Levins, 2015; Matsinhe, 2007; Ugelvik, 2014). This was also critical considering the historical precedence of subjection in correctional facilities, perceptions of intrusive administrative

interviewing, and the distrust of clinical and psychological assessments of inmates as noted through previous literature (see Liebling, 1999, p.156; Waldram 2007, p.9; Ricciardelli and Moir, 2013; Crewe and Ievins, 2015, p.135; Bowker and Star, 2000). In many cases I became the interviewee as inmates attempted to detect whether I had any affiliation with corrections or law enforcement. This included direct questions about my affiliations or whether I was an undercover police officer. After a brief introductory conversation, some inmates said it was obvious I was not an undercover officer based on my mannerisms and diction.

### **Research Site**

#### *Harbour Bay Correctional Centre*

Harbour Bay Correctional Centre (HBCC) is a provincial institution housing sentenced male inmates who have received a sentence of up to “two years less a day”. This institution manages four protective custody units to which I had potential access. This facility is unique as it represents diverse architectural styles of different eras in correctional history. The units and wings all represent different eras of corrections from open concept dorm spaces, full metal door cells, to classical barred cells. The layout of the institution, however, is repetitive, plain, and white. As I have no sense of direction it took me at least 2 days to remember the direction of where I needed to go to get to the East Wing. The entry security system contains a mix of doors that require physical keys and those that are remotely controlled, demonstrating the architectural piecemeal aspect of this institution.

The main hallway that splits left and right from the prison entrance is covered in correctional memorabilia. A pictorial evolution of handcuffs, photos of old CO crews, and recognition awards for the institution are on display. There are pictures of when movies were

filmed in different spaces in this prison found amongst flyers for safety surrounding fentanyl handling.

The structural layout and old age of the building is a concern of correctional officers as well as inmates. Windows in the hallways and on some units have direct access to the outside without any metal screens but are held marginally closed with old paint speckled chains. Correctional officers are concerned with the potential for drone infiltration; how easy it would be for someone on the outside to drop a package through these open windows. Beyond the contraband potential of these windows, the metal that frames these windows has become structurally unsound. Throughout our data collection, I learned that pieces of the window frames have been found on different units sharpened into shanks.

### *East Wing*

The unit where I conducted my research was architecturally unique compared to contemporary prisons. The entrance into East Wing is separate from the unit by a foyer type space that has remotely controlled doors at either length of the foyer. There is a convex circular mirror in the far corner allowing correctional officers and inmates slight vision of who is entering. Over time, I found that inmates were sensitive to sounds, more specifically, the particular order of clicks informing them when someone was coming into the unit. Therefore, when a set of clicking sounds occurred outside of the limited unit programming hours it brought significant attention to inmates.

The unit itself replicated the open concept design that was tested during the 1970s and 1980s which was a period of correctional “leniency”. The rehabilitative ethos was translated in prison unit design becoming more communal under the assumption that this model was more

“humane” (Hancock and Jewkes, 2011). The unit was built similarly to an office space with 60 cubicle bed spaces and around 15 bunkbeds at the far end of the unit referred to as the “trailer park”. The trailer park provides a temporary bed for the overflow of newly admitted inmates. Once someone leaves the unit, due to placement decisions or release, the most senior trailer park resident moves into their own bed space. The bed spaces are separated by half wall dividers that provide a nook at the end of the bed for a small desk and stool. The opposite side of the bed space has two shelves to hold personal possessions.

I was at first intimidated by how open the space was, and how tucked away the correctional officers were in their “bubble” (term used by inmates to describe CO office/desk space) just right of the entrance with a closed door. Across the duration of my fieldwork the unit was at capacity filling all available 60 inmate spots on the living unit. This intimidation did not stem from a fear for personal safety but a concern surrounding the overcrowding in a small space.

The interviews took place in separate TV rooms visible to the correctional officer bubble and to other inmates on the large range of East Wing. The TV rooms had plexiglass walls going from the mid-range of the wall up to the ceiling. This allowed for clear vision of the unit as well as easy view in. In terms of auditory privacy, the doors to the TV rooms were closed from the outside, and unless an individual spoke loudly, they were not audible from the outside. The rooms consist of a single table screwed to the floor and inmates are required to bring in their own plastic chairs if they want to sit. On the right-hand wall of both interview rooms is a 40-inch TV.

On April 18<sup>th</sup>, 2017, I entered the East Wing, a unit inmates and correctional officers described as one of the more problematic protective custody units at HBCC. I chose the East Wing over the other PC units based on its layout and the physical access I would have for

observation purposes. The other two protective custody units were cell block types with less movement out into a larger range. Therefore, if I were to spend a significant amount of time on one unit alone with the aim to observe interactions, East Wing presents the best opportunity for me to do so. Although I sat in on a few interviews at the previous institution as part of the UAPP, this would be the first time I would be doing my own independent interviews. Coupling this with the unit layout, I initially felt anxious and intimidated.

### **Sampling**

To establish and preserve rapport with the men on the unit, it was in the best interest of my research to enter the unit with only my supervisor Dr. Sandra Bucerius. The UAPP research team is relatively diverse, and it was best to not associate myself with others who could compromise how I was viewed. Following the practices employed at previous institutions, I made an announcement on the living unit to recruit participants. I described the project, its goals, and ensured they all knew that participation was both confidential and entirely voluntary. I provided a sign-up sheet on the East Wing, allowing interested inmates to indicate if they wanted to participate. Dr. Bucerius made a quick initial speech on the unit explaining the larger research project; that we are independent researchers with the University of Alberta and had no affiliations with Alberta or Canadian Corrections. Many of the men on East Wing came up to listen and stopped what they were doing. Immediately after, I had a list of 20 inmates and was informed that others would be interested but they were currently working in the laundry.

I decided to interview that day, as many were keen to speak with me about the project and their concerns with this institution and prison in general. The men were moving around the unit frequently. Many inmates tended to walk, what appeared to be intentionally, past the TV room where I was doing interviews. The inmates seemed curious about what was going on, in a

discrete and sly manner. There were lists for resource phone numbers, products available from canteen and hobby, and other paper work taped to the plexiglass separating the TV rooms from the unit range. Some of the men would inconspicuously analyze these papers while tilting their heads to view through the gaps between sheets of paper. Others were more direct. During my first interview I had multiple inmates knock on the windows or open the TV room door to ask what was going on, when they could sign up, and whether they could still participate if they were leaving the institution soon.

I had to learn to block out sounds coming from all directions. The sound of inmates speaking to correctional officers loudly through a doorway to the bubble, sounds of water running in the bathroom and showers, conversation on the range and at the tables where people beaded and played cards. On top of these sounds, there was another TV room directly beside me. I could hear the blast of movies being played. The men would crowd around the screen, usually 3 to 4 sitting directly in front, arms crossed and wide leg stances while a few would stand behind them watching as well.

#### *Correction Administrative Interview*

While much of the research focused on talking with the inmates, I was able to set up an informal interview with correctional staff to provide clarity on institution specific questions surrounding PC and classifications. During the data collection period I was able to build rapport with HBCC's DDO (Deputy Director of Operations), Juan. On my final day at the institution I inquired if Juan would be interested in doing a one-on-one interview at a later date. He agreed and provided me with his contact information. Once I had established an analytical lens of my own, I contacted Juan for an interview in hopes of answering some questions related to institution regulations and qualifications for protective custody that I could not answer through

my literature review or during data collection with inmates. I prepared a small list of around 10 questions asking about statistics and definitions and we set a time and day for a phone call which Juan agreed to have audio recorded. The day of the interview I called Juan for the interview. He then informed me that two others would be joining us and had also agreed to be audio recorded. As a Master's student, still junior, and having not engaged in many correctional staff interviews, I realized I had to alter how I presented myself to better fit the setting of the new formal conference call. As the conversation continued, Juan mentioned that we would have Heidi, an SIO (Security Intelligence Officer) who oversees all placement decisions at HBCC, as well as Allen, the newly appointed DDS (Deputy Director of Security) also joining us for the interview. The significance and seniority of these three correctional staff increased the importance and my initial stress of this interview. However, once I began the interview it transformed into a conversation in which Heidi and Juan very candidly spoke to the nature of working in a prison and more specifically to how protective custody is perceived and has evolved.

### **Ethics and Validity**

In terms of ethical considerations, I understand the vulnerable nature of inmate populations and as such stressed the voluntary aspect of these interviews (TCPS, 2014, p.10). I ensured that respondents understood they could stop the interview at any time and withdraw their participation (TCPS, 2014, p.28). In the event that a respondent experienced emotional harm as a result of revisiting certain personal histories, or if the nature of a particular question incited discomfort, they would be offered to take a break or stop the interview entirely. Although this was an option, I did not have any requests to pause or end interviews. I also notified the respondents of my final departure date, clarifying that they may redact their interviews from the larger research project until that time. Interviews were audio recorded after verbal consent had

been obtained in accordance with Tri-Council Policy (TCPS, 2014, p.42). I also provided paper consent forms for my participants if they preferred. To help guarantee anonymity, participants were encouraged to sign up using their bed numbers or nicknames instead of their real names. For the purpose of my thesis I also employed pseudonyms for the institution, unit, correctional staff, and inmates.

The validity of qualitative interview research is a complicated issue, especially when considering power relations between interviewee and interviewer. It is beneficial within this methodological frame to note that authenticity of responses and stories, ““trustworthiness” and not “truths”, is a key semantic difference” (Riessman, 1993, p.65; Maruna, 2015) that require critical reflexivity of the researcher (Maxwell, 2013, p.2; Presser, 2009, p.10; Rowe, 2015, p.366). Furthermore, it should be emphasized that narrative impression management is not evoked by “deviant” persons alone, it is a universal behaviour (Presser, 2009, p.13). When people share stories and their perceptions, even through personal reflections, we cannot resist selective representation and therefore, some form of social influence will always impact the formation of narratives (Presser, 2009, p.12). Although I focus primarily on narratives, it is possible to detect saturation across multiple interviews to validate certain data. For instance, it is fair to presume that multiple research participants have not collaborated to present similar stories, and this enables the researcher to determine certain levels of authenticity (Sandberg, 2010).

### **Coding and Analysis**

Following the key principles of grounded theory, analytical categories are expected to emerge from the data while simultaneously promoting individual participant voices to the best of the researcher’s ability. Through the interplay of data collection and data analysis, I refined the

interconnectedness between the collected data and theoretical frameworks. However, having received an undergraduate degree in Criminology, I have some prior knowledge of prison, gang, and sex offender literature. As a result, it would be dishonest to claim an absolutist adherence to grounded theory as such, although the key purpose of the method (letting the data guide one's work) was the crux of my fieldwork. Indeed, as Strauss and Corbin (1990) acknowledge, it is unrealistic to expect that researchers can enter the field without preconceived ideas, predetermined goals, or with an absolutely clean slate.

### **Positionality**

My positionality as a student researcher was instrumental in establishing positive rapport and decreasing issues related to power relations. Being a student researcher and a female probably provided me with information otherwise inaccessible (See Bucerius and Urbanik, 2018; Bucerius, 2013; Moolman, 2015; Liebling, 1999). It is common within qualitative and ethnographic studies that similarities between participants and researcher should exist, which may explain the prevalence of male researchers studying "male-dominant groups who engage in illicit activities" (Bucerius, 2013, p.691). However, some scholars have argued (as I have experienced) that it is possible to obtain a comprehensive understanding while being a "trusted outsider", especially in relation to vulnerable populations that have been involved with illicit activity and who, in many cases, may resist and distrust male researchers (Bucerius, 2013; Ugelvik, 2014; Waldram, 2015). For example, Bucerius (2013) found that male researchers are often suspected of being undercover police officers or potentially members from other gangs, while female researchers can more easily offer an "open ear" (p. 716). Prison researchers specifically have found that male inmates are less open to conversation with male researchers than female researchers (Earle and Phillips, 2015; Ugelvik, 2014, p.476). I was even personally

informed by an inmate participant, Leon, that he could “guarantee” that I would not have gathered as much information if I hadn’t been a woman; not as many people would have signed up if a male researcher had conducted the interviews.

My gender had an impact on how I was treated by both COs and inmates. I became an individual to whom some felt comfortable sharing their relationship problems with, whilst others informed me of other inmates’ true intentions for coming in to be interviewed (such as simply wanting something to do or wanting to interact with a female). I did not coerce by feeding into any form of flirtation and in most cases, through being respectful, I was given respect in return. Ultimately, my gender did play a part in initial access. For example, two male researchers, who were part of the larger research team did receive significant resistance on some units. For example, Dr. Kevin Haggerty, Co-investigator, and Justin Tetrault, a fellow graduate student researcher, had occasional trouble recruiting male participants when it became known that these two men would be interviewing them and not myself or Sandra, the two female researchers. As a consequence, some inmates removed their names from the list of potential interviewees. In one case, an interview participant entered the interview room, saw the male interviewer, said, “fuck that,” (referring to having a male interviewer) and left the room without participating in the study.

Beyond gender, our own biographies and identities can affect how we interact and relate to the people who allow us to enter their worlds (Phillips & Earle, 2010, p.363). During interviews, it was not uncommon for respondents to inquire into my background or as to why I was interested in doing this research. Information related to my background appeared to increase the comfort level of respondents in many ways. This was apparent through relaxed body language and verbal affirmation from some respondents that they could tell I was sincerely

passionate about my work. In one particular case, a mid 20s respondent inferred that I had “been through some shit” in my life and explained that this made him comfortable enough to speak with me.

### *Inmates*

Staying on East Wing for two and a half weeks allowed me to build considerable rapport with the men. I was often greeted when I entered the unit by men I had interviewed previously and people they associated with. I chose to interview as my authentic self. I used humour, sarcasm, and probed further into some topics that I felt certain interviewees would be comfortable with. I believe all of these factors further humanized my interactions into less of an interview and more of a conversation. Although I was using one of two TV spaces, which I felt guilty about (due to it limiting the entertainment options), I was reminded that my presence was welcomed and, in many ways, appreciated. For example, chairs were a hot commodity inside and only certain inmates would have them, yet when I came in, an inmate would always offer me a chair. More creative inmates proudly showed me the beaded lanyards and art they created while inside. Overall, I was treated with respect.

Inmates informed me that correctional officers were generally nicer to inmates when I was present and tended to follow institutional rules more closely. For example, during an interview with Idir, he informed me that correctional officers worked more to the books. He told me since I had been coming to their unit that counts<sup>7</sup> had been done differently. Since my arrival, they were told to go to their bed spaces for count which had “not happened in the entire time” Idir had been on East Wing, which at that point had been nine months. I inquired into what

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<sup>7</sup> Correctional officers do an inmate count at three different points throughout the day to ensure all inmates are present on their respective units. This is accomplished by counting the number of people on the unit and comparing it to the official list of inmates who were placed on the unit.

normal procedure was and he informed me that normally everyone would have to stand exactly still and not move, regardless of where they were. This included if an inmate was in the washroom, standing near the phones or in an uncomfortable position. If an inmate moved, count would restart, aggravating both inmates and guards.

After my final interview at HBCC a few of the men came over to thank me for my time and I mentioned that I wanted to thank everyone, even those who were not interviewed, for allowing me into their space. One of the long-term inmates and some of the people he associated with on East Wing called for the attention of all the inmates while I was speaking. Although I initially had no intention of rallying them to listen to my mildly emotional spiel of appreciation, everyone listened. At the end of my impromptu speech, the men made comments of appreciation and to my surprised, some applauded.

### *Correctional Officers*

I was careful in how I positioned myself in relation to correctional officers, both in interactions and in physical proximity. I understand and acknowledge the real power struggle that exists between inmates and correctional officers. This dynamic is heightened on protective custody units as the perception of “check ins<sup>8</sup>” and working directly with those with “bad charges” creates significant tension between officers and inmates. I was asked by numerous guards why I was “assigned” East Wing, and that I should be mindful I would be interviewing the “bad ones”. In one case, when an older male correctional officer realized I had chosen this unit and the focus

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<sup>8</sup> “Checking in” or to be a check in is referring specifically to the act of transferring to a protective custody unit. Checking in is different from “checking off” as an inmate can check off a GP unit and transfer to another GP unit. Checking in is exclusive to PC.

of my research, he suggested I simply be careful, especially being a female on an open concept unit.

Considering this research was relatively exploratory, and I was unsure how to navigate this power dynamic, I was careful to not be too friendly with correctional officers in direct view of the inmates. For example, I was often given the option to sit in the guard bubble which overlooked the unit. However, to avoid doing so I relied on the fact that I sat during interviews for hours and that I didn't mind standing outside and stretching my legs in the open space between the unit and the entrance. Although there was some truth to that statement, I was also conscious about the fact that sitting in the bubble might have aligned me too closely to the guards in the minds of some inmates.

It was, however, important to establish some rapport with the correctional officers seeing as they controlled my access and safety. Whether or not the inmates were open to me using the TV room, the correctional officers ultimately decided whether I actually got this access or not. I greeted and was always greeted by correctional staff when I came to the unit and generally had positive rapport with them. I was allowed to stay on the unit during counts and on some occasions during tray dispersal. This was a signifier of trust as often volunteers, external program coordinators (such as the John Howard Society), and even other researchers in our team would be asked to leave during these transition periods. There was also one particular female correctional officer whom I built a positive relationship with, and she had just started her East Wing rotation the day I came to the unit. The inmates interpreted her as stern but preferred having her on the unit over most other correctional officers. She explained how she felt empathy towards most inmates and that our larger research project had the potential to bring attention to the issues of corrections for both inmates and officers.

### **Classification and Boundary Work**

Categories and classifications are woven into the fabric of our everyday social interactions and how we negotiate our identities. Classifications are pervasive and have consequences. Therefore, it is important to learn about them in practice beyond a purely theoretical position, to understand the full breadth and consequence of classifications and how people navigate them. Borrowing from Bowker and Star (2000), Hughes (1945), and Lamont (2002), I understand classification as both enduring and malleable; classifications are often formalized through structures and institutions, as a component in efforts to govern people (such as in the healthcare system). Classifications also exist on an informal/social level that have their own set of significant consequences that impact reputation and how people interact and see themselves. My thesis is concerned with how institutional classifications influence the social world of incarcerated men.

Classifications are historically contingent and often tied to different political ethos and discourses. I use Bowker and Star's (2000) theory of classifications to explain the invisibility and pervasiveness of classifications, which I apply to how they operate inside correctional facilities. Although classifications may be put in place to combat risk amongst inmates, they can also produce structural restraints that result in discrimination and precarity within the social governance practices found on PC units. Therefore, these classifications are consequential beyond their intention – informal and formal categories have consequences that ultimately reinforce each other (Bowker and Star, 2000, p.204). Hughes (1945) theory of “master status” complements Bowker and Star's (2000) insights. Master status refers to a trait or classification that overrides “any other characteristics which may run counter to it” such as mother or doctor (Hughes, 1945, p.357). Taking these theories together, classifications have instrumental and

social power. Categories can become taken for granted and self-sustaining. When undertaken by institutions, classifications impact the social world and affect life chances.

While categories can be helpful and even required in some situations, they can also serve as “blanket generalisations” that can be “simplistic, rigid, and erroneous”, based on discriminatory values that damage people’s actual social and personal identities (Pickering, 2001, p.10). Classification systems can be complex, and in many cases, combine nuanced information systems which have “deep consequences for those touched by them” (Bowker and Star, 2000, p.290). There is a natural inclination to apply morally loaded and reductive social categories to individuals because we fail to understand the full biographical distinctions of each individual, and how that can contribute to each individual’s place in society. Erving Goffman describes this distancing from typologies as such:

*“The language of this stance inspired by normal is not so much political, as it is psychiatric – the imagery of mental hygiene being employed as a source of rhetoric. ... He is not a type or a category, but a human being.” – 1986, (p.115)*

Classifications structure knowledge into something palatable and acceptable. They remove the guesswork and, in many cases, onus of responsibility from those who must work directly with them. It is not until we are faced with unconventional or novel classification systems that we begin to question how classifications are formed and settled upon (Haggerty, 2001, p.46).

Classifications differ in their consequences. Therefore, it is necessary to distinguish between different kinds of classifications, such as institutional and informal/social. While I make these distinctions, institutional and social classifications are not dichotomous and inform one other; they possess a dialectic relationship.

On an institutional level, classifications have objective value as they establish “the contours of the objects to be governed: it renders them knowable and potentially subject to

political intervention” (Haggerty, 2001, p.46). In the correctional setting, risk assessments and placement decisions, which inform one another, are based on classifications of inmates used to manage populations. In a risky environment such as a prison, hierarchical classifications present a quick shortcut for making institutional decisions. For some agents that engage with classifications, there are labels placed purely as a result of hypervigilance, especially when it comes to personal and communal security. Therefore, even minor indicators of certain traits can result in classification decisions. Once an official institutional classification is put into place it often has lasting and unchanging impacts.

A lasting impact of an institutional classification is its ability to inform how people are perceived and how they understand their own identity. Public perceptions of certain groups can influence how classifications are formed. However, they are also responsible for producing subjectivities (Haggerty, 2001, p.48). How people personally identify and the consequential life chances that are derived or restricted to these specific identities is informed by typologies and discourses deemed legitimate by official organizations such as the prison. Therefore, categories have significant implications for individuals, particularly for social interactions. Classifications can stigmatize other groups, making them intolerable or ‘othered’ by simplifying their identity down to a few specific factors or characteristics.

While classifications have significant consequences for lived experiences, this does not mean they cannot be challenged or negotiated. Lamont (2002) argues that classifications are inherently political and involve a considerable degree of ‘boundary work’. Boundary work encompasses how people resist and navigate classification systems and the morality tied to different categories. Boundary work allows incarcerated men who might face significant stigma to create a positive or moral self identity despite the social disapproval that comes with

possessing a criminal record and having served time in a correctional institution (Bucerus, 2014, p.17). Considering all of these aspects, exploring protective custody through an appreciation for the power of classifications offered significant analytical advantages. This is largely due to the fact that being placed on PC ultimately comes down to a simple note on an inmate's case file, that they were a "PC inmate". From that point forward, that inmate is treated markedly different inside the institution.

I use categories to better understand my sample population with the understanding that classifications are historically contingent and representative of a particular political discourse. Initially, I wanted to avoid imposing classifications or typologies that my participants did not identify with. Emerson, Fretz, and Shaw (2011) argue that field researchers concerned with "members' meanings" are often leery of any classifications that do not refer to the categories that the people recognize and actually use among themselves. (p.131). However, I quickly found that developing my own concepts was necessary for understanding and discussing inmate culture on PC units. While reductive, I developed a typology differentiating inmates on the basis of reputation and charges (re: debased, based, and solid inmates which I elaborate on in section II of my thesis findings). While I was initially reluctant to develop my own typology, I came to identify with Pickering's statement that categories are a "necessary way of organising the world", we rely on categories to understand and navigate everyday life (2001, p.2). They are also helpful for academics trying to identify and analyze differences. Classifications are implicit in our general speech and it would be difficult to conceptualize these interactions if classifications, as a productive whole, did not exist (Pickering, 2001).

## **FINDINGS**

### *Introduction*

In doing this exploratory research I quickly realized that a protective custody classification had many implications and meanings both inside and outside of the actual unit. For this reason, I have divided my research into two sections to make this distinction.

In the first section I briefly explore the history of protective custody, how protective custody is interpreted formally by the institution, the perceptions of correctional officers, and the perceptions of inmates outside of PC. I draw on interviews with both inmates as well as correctional officers to demonstrate how PC is perceived from outside the unit. I examine how 1) protective custody has been interpreted as safe, 2) supposedly provides inmates with an easier time than on general population units, 3) how easy it has become to gain placement on PC, and 4) how PC has been transformed into a pseudo gang exit unit at the provincial level. On the theoretical level, outside of a protective custody unit, PC possesses a singular identity; either you are a solid inmate, or you are a PC inmate and therefore belong to the group that is considered the ‘lowest of the low’.

In the second section of my findings I explore how the PC stigma changes for inmates living inside the unit, and how this affects the inmate culture. Drawing on inmate interviews and observational data on East Wing, I explore how the dichotomous protective custody versus general population classification dissolves, and the PC classification expands into its own PC hierarchy. I examine the discovery and treatment of discredited inmates and the precarity surrounding “discreditability” in PC. Lastly, I engage with the response to potential discreditability and how it requires consistent and vigilant boundary work to navigate.

## Findings Section I

### *What is Protective Custody?: Institutional Interpretations and Outside Perceptions*

I approach the category of ‘protective custody’ as a historically contingent organizational category. PC classifications are tied to institutional resources and normative assessments, and significantly affect inmate culture. As Lamont (2002) argues, classifications structure life chances, are inherently political, and involve a considerable degree of ‘boundary work’. In prison, categories such as ‘protective custody’ simultaneously have symbolic, normative, and material consequences for inmates.

In an ideal world, we can say that individuals “have a number of interrelated statuses and not a singular one that solely defines their behaviours and perspectives” (Phillips & Earle, 2010, p.361). In reality, classifications such as those imposed by the criminal justice system, actively remove aspects of agency and legitimacy from those designated as offenders (Waldram 2007; Ricciardelli & Spencer 2014). This is accomplished by attaching an offence to a person which reduces their identity to the charge. More specifically, there is a popular vilification of those who have committed sexual and/or violent crimes, especially against vulnerable populations such as children, the elderly, and individuals with disabilities (Ricciardelli and Moir, 2013). In the micro-society of a correctional institution, this diminishment of identity to offence is heightened due to the concentration of such denounced populations. Protective custody units are designed to house individuals with precariously “discredited” identities (Goffman, 1986), such as sex offenders. As a result, PC units are a source of conflict within the prison. When those who consider themselves “morally just” are housed on PC with those who have “bad charges,” significant animosity might arise in the form of coercion, threats, and violence.

As noted, literature on protective custody units inside prisons is limited and significantly dated. However, there is a sense that PC requests, placements, and subsequent PC dedicated units have been on a considerable rise since the 1960s, with the highest rates of PC-seeking inmates occurring in the prairie provinces (Gendreau, Tellier, & Wormith, 1985; personal conversation with Juan; Priestly, 1980; Vantour, 1979). Researchers argue that many factors have contributed to the increased population in PC including generalized overcrowding, increased frequency of first time offenders, and delays in court proceedings (Gendreau, Tellier, & Wormith, 1985; Ricciardelli & Moir, 2013, p.354). Another contributing factor is a marked increase in individuals with sexual offences being introduced into the system, which requires more designated spaces to house them separately from general population units where they would be at risk of intimidation, manipulation, and violence (Wormith, 1983; Ricciardelli and Moir, 2013).

As a unit designation and classification, ‘protective custody’ is a relatively new development in corrections, with such designated units being introduced for the first time in the 1960s (Vantour, 1979, p.4). Juan, the DDO at HBCC, recalls when he first started in corrections in the 1980s. PC units were more restricted (designed only for sex offenders), and most inmates resisted such placement:

*In '85, when I started at the old remand centre, [we] had a dorm with 20 beds for PC, we very rarely had anymore than 8 people in there. Inmates would do their best not to go to PC they would fight and fight and fight. Nowadays it's too easy for people to jump into PC – there's no honour between the inmates anymore.*

According to Juan, during this early period there was an easy solution to the prospects of harm against and incompatibility with those who had “bad charges” on general population units. This solution was to simply segregate them from others who could potentially harm them.

Juan's suggestion that PC placement requests have increased is also supplemented by literature which suggests that since the 1990s there has been an increase in incarceration of people with sexual charges (Ricciardelli and Moir, 2013). My findings suggest that segregating inmates who request PC has become more difficult due to the increases in sexual crimes, and the fact that inmates without "bad charges" are nowadays requesting protective custody placement.

According to my participants, PC was designed to house "skimmers, rats, and scaredy cats", a phrase repeated throughout my fieldwork by both inmates and guards. 'Skimmers' refers to individuals who have committed sexual assault, particularly against women and children. 'Rats' refers to inmates who have informed on others in relation to crimes both inside and outside of the institution. Finally, 'scaredy cats' refers to those fearful of the inmate politics<sup>9</sup> found on general population units pertaining to owing debts, gang recruitment, or lack of experience in the prison system. My findings suggest the PC composition has changed to include an increasing number of "first-timers" and those attempting to leave the "gang life" and/or the criminal/informal economy. First-timers are inmates who are coming into a correctional institution for the first time or have had very little interaction with the criminal justice system in general. Historically, new inmates would "do their time" on GP units and were either not given the option to check into PC or had no knowledge of the option. Considering PC was stigmatized by the individuals it held, it would not be worth it for a person to delegitimize their own reputation before they had a chance to build one while incarcerated. My findings suggest that

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<sup>9</sup> Inmate politics refers to the power dynamics that exist on units and across units. Inmate politics are complicated and differ depending on the unit but there are patterns across institutions. Some consistently held values are the hatred of pedophiles and the disapproval of informants. Inmate politics also have power implications. Inmate hierarchy on a unit is often dependent on the power and reputation held by that inmate and how they are perceived by others. When I talk about inmate politics, this also includes the inmate code which is a more specific and agreed upon set of rules defined by the inmates (see pg.4).

more people are choosing to now check into PC for their first offence. This placement choice can impact any future placement they may have at other institutions, as inmate Zane shared:

*You see some of these kids, they're just turning 19, 20 years old and they're in protective custody. So, they got to live their whole life in protective custody and that's a really stupid deal.*

The perception of ruining one's reputation in prison by choosing a PC placement early in life was held by many inmates I interviewed, especially those who were older, had spent many years in prison, and had seen their friends live with the implications.

The second and most rapidly growing PC group was inmates who self-identified as ex-gang members or have participated in the illegal/criminal economy and desired a way out of this lifestyle. When an individual wishes to "drop their colours" (leave the gang), they are likely to face retribution from remaining members through taxing, theft, and violence. Subsequently, staying on general population units with other gang members can become dangerous. Unlike in federal institutions in Canada and penitentiaries in the United States (Winterdyk and Ruddell, 2010; Knox, 2008), provincial sentenced prisons do not provide "renunciation programs" or other exit programming for inmates who decide to leave that lifestyle. Therefore, the only placement option for ex-gang members is protective custody units.

### ***Why People Choose PC***

#### *Easy Time*

Although PC holds a stigma, one factor that contributes to the allure of protective custody is the idea that living on a protective custody unit is an "easier time" than the general population units. From an outsider's perspective, PC units house inmates with questionable charges, not people who have a solid reputation to uphold. In other words, protective custody should hypothetically

have less gang politics, drug trade competition, and street and institutional ‘beefs’ (another term used by inmates to describe conflicts or issues between individuals and/or groups).

Brian, who grew up in a gang and recently dropped his colours after being expected to assassinate a family member while incarcerated chose to check into PC to escape retribution from other members. When I asked Brian what made PC different from GP he mentioned that you can simply serve your time. The politics of gangs and association should not apply, and reputation management wasn’t as important:

*People don’t gotta worry things like they do on GP, like they don’t have to care, like what they’re representing and stuff?*

Ozzy, a younger inmate who also identified as an ex-gang member explained that although some people may “still try to play a role” on a PC unit, it is ultimately supposed to be less political because there should be no reputation to uphold:

*We’re all PC checked in you know, like we should all just do our time. That’s all you’re supposed to do. It’s not meant to do other people’s time.*

Ozzy is alluding to the common narrative of inmates keeping to themselves and “doing their own time”, attempting to avoid interpersonal problems and politics, as opposed to getting into another person’s business. In theory, if inmates are living peacefully on a unit then correctional officers are less likely to administer restrictions or punishment on the unit, which ultimately makes serving a sentence as tolerable as is possible while inside a prison.

Leon, an inmate who requested PC placement his first time in prison, also spoke to this aspect. He heard from friends who had been in prison before that serving on PC was the easiest way to do time. That for him, because he was ‘solid’ (did not have bad charges) he had no issue returning to general population if he desired to:

*I could sign my waiver and go back today, tomorrow, whatever day but why would I want to do harder time when I could just sit in a PC range do easy time?*

The perception of easier time in prison can be appealing considering the loss of liberties amongst many other conditions. When presented with the option to enter protective custody and the prospect of easier time (as suggested by others), it is not difficult to understand why these men check into PC.

### *Perception of Safety*

Life inside prison is inherently risky for inmates, but the perception of safety in a protective custody unit also provides a sense of protection for family and friends of those incarcerated. For Santiago, it was his first time being incarcerated and being held on highly publicized charges resulted in his request to be placed on a protective custody unit. Santiago describes his and his family's initial perceptions of his decision to serve his sentence on a PC unit as opposed to GP:

*That was my biggest thing about coming to protective custody. I thought it would be like, I thought I'd be safe but, it's not like that. So that was kind of my biggest change and even my parents were like "oh well, you're safe now" and I had to kind of explain to them like "well, I'm not".*

Although Santiago had no experience on a general population unit, it was the perceived perception of safety and protection provided by PC units that prompted his placement request.

Russell had been in charge of moving drugs at another prison and had faced violent retribution for trying to leave the drug trade. He was convinced by his associate to sign into protective custody as they were both concerned that they may be forced to bring more drugs into prison. For Russell the concept of PC placement granted an opportunity to escape the pressure to deliver drugs. He suggests that in PC *"we got protection now, we got nothing to worry about"*.

Ozzy also spoke to the perceived protection that was supposedly provided for inmates who chose to make that placement request:

*Well, in protective custody it should be a peaceful unit, it should be like, not on general population where people should be, told what to do and act on someone that is innocent or not innocent or whatever. Like, PC [is] a place for people to feel like they're actually safe.*

Idir commented on the protection offered by protective custody, and more specifically on the expectations of correctional officers:

*It's [their] job to secure us, to protect us, you know what I mean. We sign a waiver so [those] guys can make sure that we are separated from general pop and/or other people because we are inferior or whatever the case, I signed the waiver but whatever.*

Although Idir acknowledges the stigma attached to “signing his waiver”, and that he would be perceived as lesser than others in prison, he still chose to make the placement request because he did not feel safe on GP units.

#### *Knowing People on PC*

Another perceived benefit of protective custody is how frequently inmates explained their desire to move to PC because they had family members or friends on the unit. This speaks to the contemporary increase in PC requests and how the perception of protective custody has changed. This view of protective custody as a place to hang out with friends was most relevant when I spoke to Leon. He shared with me his reasoning for choosing PC over doing time in general population:

*That's why I checked in, I didn't want to deal with the politics, I was 18 years old, fresh into jail. I had some friends on PC so I was like you know what, I'm going to check in and go spend time with my friends because I know them.*

Leon was candid about how he did not require any special placement criteria, but simply accessed PC because he was young, entering prison for the first time, and knew people on a PC unit.

For Ozzy, when I asked what it was like to make friends on a PC unit, or if it was more of a solo experience, he mentioned to me that he knew most of the people on East Wing from doing time on general population. Similarly, Brian had a close friend who also chose to ‘drop his colours’ on East Wing and had hoped Brian would stay on PC even though Brian didn’t feel he had reason to be on PC at that point:

Brian: *I was just like yeah bro, bro I don’t have to be here man. He’s like bro man, and he started getting all sad and shit and I told him like, “you know what dawg, for you bro, I’ll stay here with you”.*

Ashley: *That’s nice of you.*

Brian: *I’ll stay also ‘cuz we get out at the same time. I was like, “I’ll stay here with you, fucking, you know what but I’m just letting you know, next time I come in, I’m not gonna be PC... I’ll be general pop ‘cuz I have no reason to be here anymore”.*  
*He’s like, “Yeah, alright”.*

Although Brian had a jovial and laidback response to his placement decision, this reasoning is not always supported. Security Intelligence Officer Heidi elaborated on this; during her placement interviews some inmates provided “some stupid excuses”, such as “*my friend was in protective custody and I want to spend time with him*”. These types of requests are difficult for correctional staff to navigate on top of the overall influx of PC requests which can slow down the placement process.

### *Never Returning to Prison*

Another factor that affected PC placement was the expectation to never return to prison. Many of the men I interviewed spoke of this being their last time, wanting to change their lives, and either only coming to prison the one time or wanting to stop the cycle of returning to prison. The

perception of PC stigma may have carried less weight for men who had intentions to change their lifestyle after serving their sentence. Even inmates with solid reputations may be more willing to enter into protective custody if they never see themselves coming back and facing repercussions for their placement decision.

*Farley: I'm trying to change my life, I'm tired of this place. There comes a time in a person's life when he gets tired of something and he's gotta try to make a change. I'm trying to make a change even though, like, it took me this long to make a change. I'm tired of it; I'm tired of having to come back and forth back and forth in this place. I could [be] doing so [many] better things than sitting in this place.*

*Xavi: I'm a type of guy who sticks to myself and do my own thing...louder guys, they try to run the unit or something. I've done my share of trying to hang out with those people. I wanted to do better, change my life. So, I'm gonna keep myself busy and be good again. I've wasted my time behind these walls.*

*Felix: I can't do this shit anymore. I'm getting too old, I'm 24, don't tell [me] I'm not getting too old. Okay. Um, when I gave it up I took a beating. I had to go through, whatever. So, it's like, tell us what to do. What do you want us to do, do you want us to be better people, do you want us to contribute to society right? But you can't do that when people keep judging you.*

Protective custody placement should provide a reprieve from general population politics. If a person desires to leave the underground economy or exit a gang, then the expected absence of politics on PC, of being able to simply “do your own time”, should prevent potential coercion or incentive to rejoin. In other words, although PC is stigmatizing, the belief they will never returning to prison means the PC stigma would not present an issue outside of the institution. The appeal of PC is ultimately the perception of removing oneself from affiliations and resources that would promote gang or illicit activity.

*PC as a Gang Exit Alternative*

‘Dropping colours’<sup>10</sup> can have significant effects on the person leaving the gang. What happens to that person depends on their relationship and how much work they put in for the gang. Senior gang members, for example, may be able to leave the gang without dispute. Some of the most common methods of gang retaliation include “taking a minute”, where the inmate who is leaving gets taken into a cell or a blind spot inside the prison and is beaten by two or more gang members (Taylor, 2009). In more severe cases, if the ex-member has “patches” or “stickers” (terms describing different levels of gang reputation, often represented by tattoos), they will be “stripped”, or forced to have the tattoo burned or cut off of their body (Judah, 25, HBCC; O’Neill, 2015). These exit measures are used to intimidate other inmates and discourage members from leaving (Brotherton and Barrio, 2004, p.292). However, in cases where relationships with mid to high level gang members dissolve or turn bad, there may be significant threats to the leaving member’s life including their family and friends depending on how much they have done for the gang (Skarbek, 2014, p.113; Knox, 2008, p.333). Higher level members in gangs have the ability to call “hits” (requested assassination) their own members and their members’ families (Skarbek, 2014, p.119). These conditions and threats ultimately can lead a member to want to leave the gang and remove any potential interactions with members and affiliates that may harm them or force them to remain members.

Due to the proximity to and the prevalence of other gang members it can be difficult to leave a gang while incarcerated. In provincial prisons, there are no programs that assist members who are considering exiting their gang (Winterdyk & Ruddell; 2010). In most cases, because of how easily information travels throughout prison, it is not as simple as moving to another general

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<sup>10</sup> “Dropping colours” refers to the act of leaving a gang. This includes no longer representing, affiliating, or gaining any benefits from gang membership. Dropping colours specifically refers to the literal abandonment of wearing the gang’s official colours. Although this is not possible in provincial prisons as inmates are provided with coveralls, the term still carries meaning.

population unit, as gang affiliates are often found throughout all general population units. The next best option for many who want to leave their gang is checking in to protective custody.

*“Sketching into” Protective Custody*

Drug use can also have an impact on placement decisions. Some inmates who have used drugs, usually meth, may become paranoid and believe they are at risk of violence or theft. Inmates and correctional officers commented on strange behaviour that can result from drug use. When drugs enter a unit, there is a ‘unit effect’ that occurs dependent on the types of drugs. In the case of meth, inmates may become paranoid and believe that other inmates and correctional officers want to hurt them or take their belongings. They may engage in a self-imposed segregation or lapse into what correctional officers have identified as a “psychosis”. They may become loud, belligerent, and violent. However, it is more frequent for inmates to become on edge and engage in activities alone. These inmates may then request removal from general population or directly ask to be placed on PC.

SIO Heidi explained to me that this method of entry into protective custody was referred to as “sketching in” and described the issues with navigating the permissions for placement in sketch-in cases:

*Heidi: So, I ask a lot of the guys basically in the PC waiver form, we have to know why these guys are PC. There's several reasons why they claim that they are... one big one is a lot of these guys [...] they call it sketching in. So instead of checking in they call it sketching in. So, methamphetamine is the biggest, well it's the drug that's most misused on the streets of Alberta right now.*

*Ashley: Ok yeah.*

*Heidi: And what happens with meth is when an individual takes it they get paranoid and when they're paranoid they're afraid that you know even their best friend and their mother are out to get them so whether they're in the cop car or they're in APU, because they got, they had some hidden in their pockets, they always take the last I guess hit before they come into jail so when they come into jail they're paranoid, they're afraid that there's weapons*

*everywhere they're afraid that people are going to harm them so they basically check into PC.*

Drug use and addictions can then have a marked impact on the classification of an inmate. Inmates that are high on drugs or are suffering from the withdrawals of drug use may consider requesting PC out of fear that they may be coerced, or the drugs may cause hallucinations and paranoia. Alternatively, placement officers, such as Heidi, may be forced to place an inmate on PC even if she knows that the fear is rooted in drug use. In the case of “sketching in”, officers are bound to PC placement as they do not have any other option.

### ***How People Get on PC***

#### *Ease of Entry*

While the aforementioned reasons for entering protective custody may encourage a person to request a waiver, entry into PC is dependent on the placement officer’s choice to sign off on approval. My findings suggest that getting approval for PC placement is relatively easy for inmates. As mentioned earlier, one of the significant issues with PC is the lack of guidelines for correctional staff in determining if PC placement should be granted (Vantour, 1979). This absence of guidance continues to affect placement decisions and has resulted in a continually growing PC population. Heidi the main SIO at HBCC, who overlooks all placement applications expressed it this way:

*No honestly, I don't really deny anybody. If a guy's adamant enough that he wants to sign into protective custody, then I can't deny him.*

Heidi understands that rejecting a PC request can pose potential issues for her and the larger correctional institution. As mentioned previous, inmates are capable of sending requests into higher level administration if they perceive their rights are being infringed upon. Some may consider initiating lawsuits, which both SIO Heidi and DDO Juan would prefer to avoid.

Russell, an inmate on East Wing, suggested that his decision to sign into PC at first didn't matter, and that he was indifferent to the classification. In other words, Russell did not perceive the PC classification as stigmatizing before he entered the unit. He was struggling on GP units due to altercations with other inmates who sold drugs. He explained that there was significant drug dealing competition inside, and he often was sent to segregation because of fights. During his last experience in segregation, correctional officers told him that unless he signed his waiver, he would remain there until his probation hearing, which was over 2 weeks away. When describing the prospects of PC, Russell noted that *"there's less jail politics, but you got to deal with some fucking bad ones obviously."*

Russell was awarded access to PC with little resistance. Russell was not shy to mention in our interview that he had a violent streak and had checked into PC at a different institution because he was "banging it out" – fighting. Even with this knowledge, the institution felt it was best for him to not only be approved for PC placement but suggest it. Despite his history and his disclosure of having an angry temperament, he was placed on a unit with individuals he could potentially get into conflict with, especially because he perceived them as lower than him. This distinction is similar to what Bucarius (2014) describes of drug dealers when distinguishing their own actions from those whom they perceive to be lower. Ultimately, Russell did not perceive himself as needing any form of protection, he simply did not want to spend any further time in segregation.

#### *Previously PC: Remand as the Root of the Problem*

It is not difficult or uncommon for inmates to attempt to influence their placement decisions. However, prior placement determinations restrict the future placement officer's discretion. In SIO Heidi's opinion, remand is where most mis-classifications occur. A key issue with the

current classification system, especially how PC is designated, is how it can impact any future placement options – often becoming a permanent classification. In remand these classifications segregate inmates as PC cases without the option to try and serve the sentence on a general population unit (Gendreau, Tellier, and Wormith, 1985, p.57).

While classifications have significant implications at all levels of correctional institutions, placements and their effects begin in remand facilities. Contributing factors for increases in PC placements include the significant incoming volume of inmates, lack of training of correctional staff, and/or are negligent of the potential impacts of placement decisions. If PC placement was previously accepted by a remand facility, they “*can't move him out into general population because maybe GP transferred in the same tank as them*”. Heidi is speaking to the charge/unit interrogations that often occur amongst inmates during transfers between institutions (Priestley, 1980, p.18). She acknowledges that inmates knowing who was on a PC unit at remand, immediately mandates the PC inmate stigma onto that person in all other prisons.

The decision to request PC placement is often most consequential for people entering prison for the first time. Most inmates enter remand centres before other institutions. Remand centres offer protective custody to first-time inmates who may be feeling vulnerable and intimidated. DDO Juan notes how this situation generally plays out and why the fault is often in remand classification:

*You'll get the first timer, a young kid, 18 years old, first time in jail, and “I'm scared, I'm scared”, and next thing, the remand centres aren't doing their classification properly “well maybe you want to go PC?” “ok sure” and the kids in here for armed robbery, right? Just scared the kid up.*

Heidi further elaborated on how placement decisions in remand make it difficult to ever reverse a potentially unnecessary PC placement in the future:

*If a guy is PC at [remand centre] our placement officer will assume that he's going to be signing protective custody and will already have assigned him a unit that is in protective custody...maybe they've been PC for 2 years and because of that, their name has gotten around that they're PC offenders, you know it makes it very difficult for us to then to place them in that GP unit.*

This consequently poses a safety risk for anyone who desires to return to or enter a GP unit for the first time. In deciding placement options at a new facility for example, if a placement officer determines on all conditions that an inmate would be better fit on a GP unit, if the inmate was classified as PC in the past, it may restrict them to PC units exclusively. Remand placements, therefore, have significant consequences for all inmates, but may pose greater long-term risks for first-timers who enter protective custody due to a lack of knowledge and/or the perceived safety PC would provide them with.

### ***Protective Custody: The Realities and Complexities of Life on PC***

#### *Misperceptions of Safety*

The 'protective custody' classification was created for inmates who did not feel safe on general population units. PC began as a unit specifically for sexual offenders and evolved to provide "protection" for anyone who requested it. Although PC units are designated as "protective", in reality, it is unclear what exactly distinguishes a PC unit from any other unit inside a correctional institution. The number of correctional officers, cameras, and safety mirrors, as well as the number of inmates who are incompatible with each other on a protective custody unit are identical to what would be found on a general population unit at HBCC. This would then suggest that placement classifications are no longer resolving compatibility issues in prison.

The perception of safety is often what makes protective custody an attractive option when entering a correctional institution. However, this idea is predominately held by those who have never entered a PC unit, and especially by those who have no prior experience with the prison

system. Heidi, the SIO at HBCC candidly notes that protective custody is more so a “generalized term”; “*You are requesting protective custody to get out of general population, they think that they’re safer*”. Heidi is essentially admitting that in PC, in its current form is not any safer than GP.

Another aspect of safety that is perhaps more specifically tied to East Wing is the physical layout. As mentioned earlier, East Wing is an open bunk space with no individual cells but simply cubicle-styled bed spaces and a section of bunkbeds. This unit design was representative of a political response to crime and incarceration characteristic of a different era. In theory, open bunk spaces would provide inmates with more freedom of movement and were viewed as a more humane way to house those serving time. However, my participants expressed that the openness of the unit made them feel more vulnerable to theft and violence. When I spoke with Knox, I asked him specifically how “protective”, PC units were:

*Knox: Not at all, it’s no more protective period. Actually, you know what? If anything, I think it’s probably worse.*

*Ashley: Why is that?*

*Knox: To a degree. Uh, at least a guy can go and lock himself in his house at night if he feels threatened.*

*Ashley: Right.*

*Knox: Here you can’t go [any] where.*

For Knox, PC units were “not any more protected than GP”, and the open bunk space contributed to why he felt unsafe on the unit. Knox and others mentioned that in the provincial system, inmates often cycle in and out of the institution relatively quickly, making it difficult to determine who they may be doing their time with, and why those men were placed on PC.

Leon had spent a total of 4 months on East Wing when I interviewed him. Throughout the interview he reflected on the realities of protective custody versus what he thought PC would be like:

*You know I didn't have bad charges, I didn't snitch nobody out, I have no problems...I could sign my waiver and go back today, tomorrow, whatever, but why would I do harder time when I could just sit in a PC range, do easy time? I mean you know, you have a lot of bullshit to deal with, but PC it's, actually, they say its protective custody. Go look on the range, see how open bubble the space is? That's not protective. Anybody can walk in, somebody pay me "Oh here's 6000 dollars, go beat the shit out of him." Money trumps all.*

Leon's perception of protective custody changed as he reflected on the realities of life on the unit. He explains that he does not have any 'bad charges' or issues that would require him to stay on a PC unit, but why leave PC when it is advertised as being safer? Leon changes his opinion when he realizes that the ability to call hits<sup>11</sup> on protective custody units are just as possible as on a general population unit therefore, countering the protective aspect.

Farley builds on Leon's perspective when describing the number of people on East Wing alone. I also asked Farley whether he found East Wing to be protective and he quickly replied: *"It's not even, there is no protection in this place. Well, look, there's how many of us here? At any time one of those guys can start not liking you and cause a problem."* With East Wing at full capacity with 60 inmates in an open bunk space and only two correctional officers who tend to hold negative views of protective custody inmates, protection doesn't seem to be a perceived factor for inmates once they experience the PC unit.

### *Mobility and Programming*

While the 'protective' aspect is not immediately apparent when on the PC unit, the institution also limits access to resources and programming on the basis of the safety of protective custody inmates. At HBCC, all units were "locked down" (restricted movement to their units). Inmates did not have privileges to walk throughout the institution as is possible at other, usually lower

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<sup>11</sup> To call a hit is an action taken by a person inside or outside of the institution to either severely hurt or kill another person. Hits are considered tasks or jobs given to another person to execute in which they may or may not receive payment in the form of money or drugs. In the case of gang members, some will be given prestige and reputation in the gang.

security ranked institutions. Although programming is available on all units, some programming can only be accessed in certain parts of the prison. This includes specific job opportunities, religious services, and access to the gym. GP inmates can access all programming options. Citing safety, the institution suggests PC inmates should not have the same accessibility because attending programs requires movement throughout the institution and potential contact with GP inmates to attend such services and programs. During my interview with administrators, Heidi provided some insight into the issue of moving PC inmates around the institution although she admitted she didn't personally agree with the justification. She suggested that perhaps the superiors may be concerned with mass movement of PC inmates through the institution while GP inmates tasked with cleaning the institution are out in the hallways even though the cleaning occurs at a specific day and time every week.

*We have a liability on our hands because basically, how could we allow GP offenders to get at protective custody [inmates]? So, we'd have you know, lawsuits and different things like that.*

Although this can be considered a safety measure, the reality is that protective custody inmate's access to programming and other useful resources is restricted on the basis of unit classification rivalry. The correctional administrative staff determine this level of interaction as a concern, yet interunit conflicts and incompatibilities are often overlooked or minimized.

### *Incompatibles and Politics*

While East Wing does not provide any architectural semblance of safety or added security for inmates, politics are still present on protective custody units and this contributes to hostility and violence. Permitting individuals to transfer onto protective custody for any reason may be inadvertently bringing politics to PC.

Brian noted that PC was in theory supposed to be an easier time. Having experience in both gang and general populations, he said he was surprised to find the very politics he was trying to escape were inside protective custody:

*Usually all the politics are in GP, but for some strange reason, in the past couple of months, there's been politics here. I'm sitting here thinking like "yo, isn't this PC bro, yo what the fuck is there politics doing in here man?"*

Many inmates expressed their belief that prison politics, conflicts, and violence are just as prominent on East Wing as elsewhere. Idir commented on the idea of being "check ins":

*We're all checked in, we left that politics shit out the door...to be honest with you, there's a lot of politics here too.*

Although many say politics on PC are comparable to GP, some inmates stated that the issue surrounding charges makes PC more problematic than GP. Both Albert and Bruce spoke independently to this sentiment of less politics, and it being an easier time:

Albert

*Albert: You get more politics in PC than you do down in [general] population. From what I've seen.*

*Ashley: Seems like so many people are signing into PC then, what's your opinion on that?*

*Albert: I don't know. 'cuz people think it's quieter up here. Less politics. But it's not.*

*Ashley: They're bringing it with them it seems?*

*Albert: Exactly.*

Bruce

*Bruce: I thought it would be more laid back, but it's not.*

*Ashley: Oh, really?*

*Bruce: No, no.*

*Ashley: Oh. Are the politics worse here? Or the same?*

*Bruce: Yeah. It's like the guys that can't make it on GP come here to try to be the big guys. That's what -- in my opinion, right? I -- like I say, I don't play that role in here, so that's what it seems like to me. Because I thought when I signed off, it would be just a bunch of little quiet guys and I'd be like great, I can get some sleep.*

What Albert and Bruce are speaking to is both a literal and figuratively quieter unit. General population is notorious for being uneasy and in many cases, a hostile environment. With protective custody being known to hold more stigmatized populations, there is a running

assumption they will naturally be meek and quiet. However, as noted with the broadening of PC admission, PC resembles GP politically. PC has transformed from its original purpose of housing sex offenders to a catch all for inmates who want off of GP for various reasons. This undermines any potential “protective” aspect to PC and in many ways creates conditions akin to those found on general population units.

### *Gangs*

Although inmates suggested that “dropping colours” was one of the main reasons that they and others have chosen to check into PC, gang politics are increasingly being found on PC. This is the consequence of remaining politics surrounding gang membership, inmates continued repping<sup>12</sup> of their colours, and the formation of PC-specific gangs. The presence of gang politics is the result of having no alternative placement or programming in place on the provincial level to prevent ex-gang members from returning to gang life.

Several participants who had experience in gangs as members or affiliates attribute the increase in gang breakdown and resulting ex-gang PC admissions to 1) a lack of loyalty among gang members and 2) a weak gang structure. The inmates on East Wing suggest that gangs are becoming unstable, dissolving, and reforming under new leaders who may not have the skills to run a gang effectively. On the other hand, ex-member participants suggest that some new leaders may also intend to take control of a gang for self benefit (such as obtaining a cut of drugs and drug profits). When people are gang involved it is common to transition between different gangs. Albert said one of the biggest factors for why gangs break down at such a rate is due to a lack of

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<sup>12</sup> “Repping” is another term for “representing”. The men I interviewed referred to the outward display of gang membership as “repping colours”. At HBCC the men do not get to wear outside clothing and do not necessarily have ways to literally represent their gang’s colours. In the prison context then, this would include gang related tattoos, drawings of gang symbols, and verbal confirmations of gang membership.

loyalty among members. Although this sentiment was held by other inmates who identified as ex-gang members, Albert spoke to issues of power dynamics in gangs and the concept of “crew-hopping”:

*They're crew-hoppers. They'll jump from crew to crew to crew to crew. I've experienced that my whole life. When I first joined I was Alberta Warrior, then—and that was, it wasn't for long at all, it was like a couple months.*

The concept of crew-hopping described by Albert point specifically to the issue of loyalty which he believes is not present in gangs today. He suggests that older/superior members are “preying on the weak”; getting young kids in the gang to “do their own dirty work for them”. This results not only in a lot of ex-gang members but often younger members who will likely be inexperienced in prison and feel the need to represent themselves as possessing a ‘solid reputation’ inside even when on PC.

Albert was a member of a gang that disbanded and then reformed into a different gang. Many of his family members also grew up in gangs. He had signed his PC waiver over 12 years ago due to politics and gang violence and, had been in and out of prison for most of his life. During our interview I asked him, if his gang disbanded and therefore was not competing for control over a unit, why did he still feel unsafe to go back to GP. He explained that, due to the people he knew, the issues surrounding his past gang membership, and the enemies he made, for Albert his gang affiliation will “never stop... it'll follow [me] for the rest of [my] life”.

With no dedicated programming or unit to assist those who want to leave a gang, PC becomes a stand-in unit. The result is a mix of individuals with different and antagonistic issues related to personal histories, affiliations, and charges. The most common gang related politics among my sample were those related to intra-gang politics as a result of individuals moving between gangs or beefs resulting from inter-gang rivalry. If the gang no longer exists, and they

have no allegiance to any gang, individual beefs persist. They may have been recruited into another gang yet still harbour a grudge for a past or rival gang member. Issues surrounding the complicated nature of gang politics are explored further in the second half of my findings.

### *Violence and PC Politics*

In prison, violence is considered an inherent risk due to the restrictions of privileges, loss of liberties, and the overall tense atmosphere and purpose of correctional institutions. The ease of entry, the pseudo-gang exit function of PC, and the ever-present prison politics which are amplified by mixing inmates at various stages of the prison hierarchy, all contribute to heightened levels of tension and potential violence.

In the case of ex-gang members, although they may request to sign their waiver to distance themselves from the prospect of retribution from their own gang members, they may be entering a unit that is housing ex-members of a different gangs who may have ongoing issues with them. This implies ex-gang members are faced with new potential confrontations that they are required face alone without other members to support them.

As mentioned earlier, inmates may also “sketch” into PC as a result of the changing “drug culture” (Jewkes, 2002, p.56). Individuals experiencing paranoia or other psychological issues as a result of drug use, regardless of their charges, may be more prone to violence and verbal confrontation than other inmates. Once the effects of drugs have worn off, the variability of the individual’s temperament, if they still agree with their PC placement or do not trust who they are housed with also contributes to issues on the PC unit. Drugs have a significant unit effect and on an open unit such as East Wing, violence may be more prone to occur.

On top of all of these individual factors, there is now the added issue of defending one's own moral status in relation to their decision to sign into PC which also contributes to flaring politics and in many cases violence.

### ***Consequences of PC Classification***

#### *Stain of PC, Institution, and Unit*

Formal classifications greatly impact how the institution and correctional staff structure the lives of inmates. Institutional categories and classifications create a reality that become embedded in a larger correctional discourse which reinforces and propagates the power of these stigmatizing categories (Foucault, 1995; Presser and Sandberg, 2015, p.3). These historically contingent discourses possess power that limits the agency of the labelled individual. This is largely due to the formation of beliefs and expectations about certain categories and therefore of the people within them. The consequence is the creation of a stereotype that is used as a tool to alter how individuals interpret and relate to those under these stigmatized classifications (Hughes, 1945, p.355). Although stereotypes do not “necessarily correspond to the facts”, within the confines of a correctional institution, they can heavily impact the lived reality of those negatively categorized (Hughes, 1945, p.355). Therefore, the combined factors of morally ranked criminal acts with remissive attention of the institution to the impact of classifications has contributed further animosity to the pains of imprisonment (Sykes, 1958).

Classifications inside a correctional institution are based on the nature of the charges a person has committed and the risk associated with their charges and behaviour. These classifications function as a “master status” for inmates (Hughes, 1945). A master status is a trait or classification that “tends to overpower, in most crucial situations, any other characteristics

which may run counter to it” (Hughes, 1945, p.357). Inside a correctional institution, but external to a PC unit itself, general population inmates and correctional staff understand being a “PC inmate” as the master status for those who choose or are placed on protective custody units. In this section, I explore the function of the PC classification as an externally applied master status by those outside of the PC unit. This is accomplished by examining how the stigma of protective custody functions on a personal classification level, as a living unit, and how it has the ability to implicate and structure an entire institution.

*‘Lowest of the Low’*

*“But here’s what I keep hearing from PC people, we’re in PC we can’t go any lower.”* Arthur is describing the hierarchy inside a correctional institution, where protective custody inmates are considered the ‘worst of the worst’. It is socially acceptable outside of an institution to demonize those who have committed sexual offences, and it is easy to see how this might be replicated inside of a prison. However, beyond this point, one of the major rationales for inmates is the desire to differentiate the self from those they see as worse. Having a criminal record and doing prison time is a stigma in itself. Outside and inside the PC unit, an individual incarcerated for a sexual crime possess a stigma that designates them as not quite human (Goffman, 1986, p.5). In the opinion of those not on PC, there is the perception that choosing to live on a unit with ‘the worst of the worst’ and tolerating their presence makes them no better than the stigmatized individuals. Heidi, the SIO for HBCC, elaborates on this factor when considering the tradition of protective custody and the stigma of association tied to this placement.

*...bottom line is, even though you’re not a sex offender, so you have you know, sex charges, the whole traditional you know rat, skinner, diddler, bottom line, is you lived with those individuals on the same unit and did nothing about it, so it doesn’t make you any better than the individuals charged with those crimes.*

This point is often illustrated in the narratives of individuals both inside and outside of a PC unit. The hatred for those who poses ‘bad charges’ is understood in general society but is often heightened within the institution and held fiercely by those working directly with them (Mann, 2016; Sampson, 1993; Priestly, 1980, p.19). This has promoted a “naturalization” of PC inmate disapproval that is so pervasive it has “become relatively invisible without losing any of [its] power (Bowker and Star, 2000, p.319).

During my interview with administrators, DDO Juan suggested that many correctional officers prefer to work general population over protective custody units, or refuse to work PC units because of the stigma attached their classification.

*Some officers just don't like dealing with protective custody inmates...because they have children...but that's one thing you signed up for, essentially, you signed up to work in a male jail that has sex offenders and you will work with them.*

Although Juan acknowledges that correctional officers understood this would be part of the job description, it was common for them to treat PC inmates differently and vocalize their disapproval of those who check into protective custody. I had numerous correctional officers question why I would ever want to interview PC inmates, especially East Wing, because they are the “worst types of people you can find here”.

Lee, a general population inmate from HBCC, provided his perception of a PC inmate and why they wouldn't be welcome on a GP unit:

*I've heard that PC is where they keep all the hard sexual assault...if you're PC and you go back to GP you instantly have a huge target on you because they're like “Oh, why did you go to PC?”*

Idir, a PC inmate himself, also reflected on the composition of PC units, distinguishing between those who need protection and those who do not:

*You got a lot of people who got like politic reasons for why they came in and then you got people who need to be protected. Like you got them people who are fucking 60 years old, touching fucking 5 year old girls, 5 year old boys and shit, you got the child molesters, you got the fucking diddlers, you got the fucking dirtiest fucking scumbags, like fucking scum, you got fucking Douglas Garland type people who fucking, you know what I mean? Fucking murder two people and a fucking kid and fucking get turned on by women and old women in diapers and some disgusting shit, you know what I mean? Those type of people need protective custody, because they're the lowest of the lowest.*

Although protective custody holds individuals with many different types of charges, not just sexual assault, this is the perception that non-PC inmates hold of checked in inmates. PC has grown to take in individuals for other serious and sometimes unnecessary reasons yet still possesses an inescapable stigmatizing identifier. Dylan suggests that although he had never been to PC that politics and fighting is rampant and that PC units are “getting crazy”:

*There's fights everyday in PC because you know, you're fucking scared and you hit the button and you check off. Well now you're fucked, you're in PC for good and a lot of guys in PC shouldn't be there, you know what I mean? Now you got half the guys that are PC and you got the other half of guys in PC that shouldn't be there.*

Dylan is referring to is the increase of atypical PC admissions. By admitting ex-gang members and potentially violent offenders in with first-time inmates and those with bad charges creates a potentially hostile environment with increased violence.

Less frequently, for inmates who have a significant reputation on the streets and/or amongst gangs, PC placement can create issues for them outside the institution. For instance, Timothy, who used to be an enforcer for a gang, explains how it would be more dangerous for him to go to PC than to remain on a GP unit because it would suggest to others that he had something to hide. This would then promote others to be against him:

*Actually, I think it would be more dangerous for me if I went to PC, because then they'd have—'Ah, see?! See?! I told you he's no good! I told you! I told you he has skeletons, he's got stuff to hide.' You know what I mean? and then they can rally more people to hate on me, and then, who knows? It might be more dangerous for me on the street, more dangerous for me all over I guess after that.*

With this being a provincial institution, Timothy had a relatively shorter sentence to serve at HBCC. Therefore, dealing with confrontation on GP was worth it over potentially being seen as an informant and requiring protective custody while inside. At HBCC, those with gang affiliates who request protective custody would often be placed on East Wing, a unit considered one of the more volatile units by both inmates and correctional officers.

*East Wing: The Worst of Protective Custody*

Acknowledging that protective custody holds significant categorical power, it is important to contextualize the unit I conducted my research on through the perceptions of those inside HBCC. East Wing had a terrible reputation amongst correctional staff and even inmates outside of the unit.

Kayden, from North Wing, another PC unit at HBCC used to hold primarily older inmates, suggested that East Wing is where the more violent PC offenders end up; *“If you want to bang it out, then that’s what East Wing is for.”* More specifically, Kayden tells of an inmate that was originally on his PC unit. This problematic inmate often would set expectations and create issues, trying to play “the part” as Ozzy mentioned earlier, with others on the unit and therefore was not suitable for this PC unit:

*There used to be one guy, used to you know, toss his weight around a little bit, it’s like [he wanted] certain things done, I mean, he got sent over to East Wing.*

While inmates like Kayden suggested East Wing was where PC inmates go who subscribe to prison politics and cause issues for others, correctional officers also suggested East Wing had a reputation for being difficult unit to work on with some of the worst kinds of inmates. Casey, a younger correctional officer working at HBCC spoke to this point:

*I hate East Wing. That's the worst unit. It's so big. And we had a riot in there and guys could get spun up so easily and you could lose control like that. It's insane. I mean it's the worst, I wish they would change that, I wish they would build a wall in [the middle] and just split it.*

Casey explicitly comments on the layout of East Wing being one of his largest contentions with the unit. Although South Wing, a “privileges” general population unit, also possesses a similar layout, the same disapproval was not applied. Casey also contributed to the escalation of a riot that occurred on East Wing years prior to the layout of the unit. The difference for East Wing is the aspect of politics and precarity that exist. Fights are quick to occur because inmates are unsure of who they want to live and socialize with based on the interpreted immorality of other inmate’s charges.

Another correctional officer, Zach, spoke more directly to the riot that occurred years ago on East Wing and why working the unit is considered difficult:

*The riot a couple years ago there. We were talking about that for the whole time I've been here. When I started, all the older staff were talking about how wrong that is. But the, the offenders being housed in there and, and zero control, zero protection. The writing was on the wall for years with that. Too many people and the wrong people. At the time of the riot, I think in that open dorm, they had four people that were either in on some kind of murder charge or had recently completed one.*

When asked how East Wing is best managed, Zach suggested you simply “hope for the best”:

*This place [East Wing] is always hot. It's always at a boil. Your job is just to keep it from boiling over, to keep it at a steady simmer.*

On the same note, CO Duane spoke further to the inability to manage East Wing:

*If you don't have the rapport of the inmates, you're not running that place... You gotta remember, in most of these units, especially East Wing, the inmates run it. They let us have authority. If they didn't want to listen to us, there's sixty against one.*

Not only did inmates consider East Wing to be a problem unit, but also correctional officers. The unit had a reputation for holding the most confrontational of PC inmates resulting

in plenty of fights, including a riot in the past. The open layout of the unit also contributed to perceptions of the unit as unsafe, even for the correctional officers working on the unit.

### *HBCC: PC Institution*

As mentioned, checking into a PC unit not only impacts future placement but, in some cases, how inmates will be viewed outside of the institution. HBCC has a significantly higher PC population and is known for housing sex offenders. This impacts the reputation of those who served time there and how they would be treated if that information were to be discovered that they also served on a PC unit. Due to this stigma, many inmates resist being placed at this institution or will request transfers once placed. This institutional stigma is obvious even to correctional staff. Juan notes for his particular institution, due to the high PC rate that this could have negative affects outside of the institution:

*Inmates that are GP, in my opinion, are going to refuse to come to this jail like “fuck that I’m not going to go to HBCC” because when you think about it, you’re on the street they’re going to say “where’d you do your time?”, “Harbour Bay”...right now there’s a 71 percent chance that you’re PC.*

Luis, 31, an inmate who has been in and out of correctional facilities since he was 18 years old notes that if you are attempting to maintain any sort of reputation, inmates will resist placement at HBCC to the best of their ability including requesting transfers:

*Luis: Pretty much if you're going over there people are going to classify you as PC you know you can't go over there unless you know, you're still trying to uphold your name, like say if I was getting a provincial bit and they're like “oh you're going to HBCC” I'm like “no, no, no I'm not going to HBCC not a chance in hell” you know...if they tried to send me over there I'd you know, I'd get my lawyer to get involved, like I'm not going over there. I just wouldn't want to take the risk, right? I'd rather just go to [named sentenced facility] or something.*

### *Why Not Return to General Population?*

For an inmate who chooses to check into a PC unit with the aim of doing easier time, due to lack of knowledge about prison subculture, or improper classification, they may have difficulty returning to or entering a GP unit in the future. If they check out of PC and sign back into general population they are likely to be viewed as suspicious or untrustworthy.

It is common for inmates to inquire about new inmates on a unit. This is a normal aspect of social governance that occurs on a general population unit to ensure that inmates “deserve” to be there. There are many ways for inmates to figure out whether another inmate is solid or if they should be investigated. Prisons generally have scheduled times for when new admissions arrive on different units. If an inmate enters a unit and they are transferred alone, with few other inmates, or they appear to have already spent time in the institution (normally determined on the basis of their appearance), other inmates on the unit will ask questions to find out where they came from. If previous PC classification is revealed whether through admitting it, coercion, or obtaining information from correctional officers, inmates, or people outside the prison, the new inmate may not be safe to live on the GP unit. For Miro, an inmate on East Wing, when describing how reputation works inside prison, he notes that it can be helpful to know others on the inside because this provides insight into how legitimate a new inmate may be:

*They wanna know where you're from, who you know. Because you could be PC, if they don't know who you are, or there's no story to you, nobody knows you, then no one trusts you.*

Bowker and Star (2000) suggest that movement to a less privileged classification is much more “permeable than the concept of “passing “up”” (p.204). This is relevant when speaking to the ability to check in to protective custody in comparison to checking out of PC and entering (or re-entering) a general population unit. Inmate participants indicated that while they had the option to go back to GP, they decided against it because it was not worth the effort of requesting

re-integration and risk being 'outed' or needing to prove they are 'solid'. Amari succinctly describes the realities of trying to re-enter into general population that I heard from other inmates. Once you are found to be PC, you will be subject to interrogation which often results in coercion or violence:

*If you get—if someone knows that you're in PC, then they're gonna tell everyone else and then pretty much you're gonna get...someone's gonna punch you out, you're gonna get jumped by someone or else they're just gonna tell you to go check-off. That's pretty much how it goes.*

Bowker and Star (2000) note the impact of simple association under apartheid, the consequences of "merely associating with someone of the wrong group could become evidence of membership" which is analogous with the conditions of social interaction on a PC unit (p.212).

Therefore, PC inmates must prove their social standing within the prison. SIO Heidi connects the difficulty of GP re-integration with the inmates' moral hierarchy:

*Once you're PC, you're always PC. I mean it's, to get a guy from the [named remand centre], or even [named remand centre] who've been in PC for a number of years and then try to come here and fit into general population...you can't.*

Albert also speaks to the issues of trying to return to general population and how that translates in terms of politics and the inability to stay on a GP unit once on PC:

*You get a lotta people who see you in PC, they're like oh, buddy was in PC, right? Buddy was this, right? And this means skinner, alright? Anyways, now buddy goes into a [another institution]. Oh, hey this guy was in fuckin' PC, right? Oh, fuck that, he's fuckin' PC, you know what I mean? And the next thing you know, you're fuckin' whole crew is questioning you. And when you get cornered by a whole bunch of people, who can tell when you're lying or not. 'Cuz people start stuttering...and then people asking the same question fuckin' a couple minutes later and then they gotta think about it and it's changed. People don't know how to keep their stories straight is what it is.*

Albert's narrative suggests PC is equivalent to bad charges. The stigma associated with PC can carry between institutions. When charges are in question, the inquiry and battery of questioning

is used to try and catch people in lies which provides reason that they are likely lying about their charges and hiding them from others on the unit.

While some inmates may regret entering PC, it is rare to reintegrate into general population successfully. This is especially difficult if the inmate does not have a positive reputation to justify their legitimacy. Whether they do attempt to make it back in GP, their stay does not often last. Of the inmates that I interviewed, only two had attempted to return to general population in the past and both ultimately returned to protective custody.

*You can come back, but most people don't. PC is something people stick with, you know?  
– Beau (inmate)*

In section I of my findings, I focus on the institutional classification system in correctional facilities and how non-PC inmates and correctional interpret the stigma associated with being a protective custody inmate. I explored the diverse expectations and reasons for entering PC which include, but are not limited to, providing protection, an easier time than general population, to simply knowing others on the PC unit. This speaks to the issue surrounding ease of entry and previous placement decisions – especially on the remand level – as a result of the classification system no longer designed to deal with the contemporary increase and diversity of requests for PC placement.

In section II of my findings, I explore the internal workings of East Wing, a PC unit at HBCC. I examine how the contemporary mixed population of PC navigate living together on a shared unit. With a higher rate of inmates with bad charges on PC it becomes an added stressor to carefully choose who you associate with. Simply associating with an inmate with bad charges will bring into question the reputation and morality of the inmate. I found that most incarcerated men go to great lengths to determine the charges of other inmates and use information to obtain

benefits. Even if an inmates charges are not up for question, I found that inmates engage in consistent and vigilant boundary work (Lamont, 2002), beyond simple association, to ensure others do not question their reputation.

## **Findings Section II**

### *Navigating Classification Inside Protective Custody*

The stigma of protective custody carries significant risks outside of the unit and is perceived poorly by both general population inmates and correctional staff. The impact of classification inside the unit, however, increase in complexity and volatility. The main reason for this increased volatility is the ambiguity and uncertainty surrounding the reason why others chose or were placed on a PC unit. Many inmates have the perception that protective custody is used to house people with “bad charges” and that PC placement *should* be resisted. As such, simple association with PC raises suspicions among the inmate population about the nature of someone’s charges.

Once entering the PC unit, an inmate’s “master status” switches to one of further moral precarity and consistent vigilance (Hughes, 1945). Inside the PC unit an individual is amongst other PC inmates. As a consequence, the designation of “PC inmate” loses potency and becomes universal. It is no longer a dichotomous and formal classification. Once on PC, inmates have entered a new social and moral hierarchy that requires consistent work to ensure they are not wrongly labelled. The binary classification of ‘General Population’ inmate and ‘Protective Custody’ inmate is no longer effectively reducing issues inside correctional institutions. Due to the lack of official placement guidelines, PC units are increasingly replicating the issues found in

GP with the added stigma of proving the ‘solidness’ and morality of one’s self through continued boundary work.

The classification of PC inmate by those outside of the unit holds significant power as noted in the previous section. However, due to the need to negotiate and posture one’s own place on a PC unit, the stigma of being a PC inmate with particularly bad charges affects how individuals relate to each other. Throughout this section I refer to inmates as debased, based, and solid as both a theoretical signifier and to preserve fluidity. ‘Debased inmates’ are inmates who are discredited, possess the ‘worst’ kinds of bad charges, especially those who have received media coverage and are considered “high profile inmates”. Bad charges are often verifiable through public records, media coverage, or in some cases word of mouth through other inmates. ‘Solid inmates’ are those with positive reputation on the basis of charges, gang membership, and/or if they have spent significant time in prison or have served time in the penitentiary. ‘Based inmates’ refers to inmates who are unknown to others inside the institution. This may include first timers but also inmates who have committed charges considered relatively neutral, in other words they are neither solid nor debased.

If an individual is of a “less desirable kind – in the extreme, a person who is [considered] quite thoroughly bad, or dangerous, or weak ... he is thus reduced in our minds from a whole and usual person, to a tainted, discounted one” (Goffman, 1986, p.3). I argue that the higher concentration of debased inmates leads to a restructuring of the inmate hierarchy and renegotiation of the inmate code. Based inmates feel they must remain vigilant in identifying, policing, and removing debased inmates. This ultimately leads to precarious living conditions for PC inmates, particularly for debased inmates.

I use Erving Goffman's (1986) notion of "discredited" and "discreditable" stigma to understand how identities become stigmatized on PC units, and how this leads to precarious living conditions for PC inmates. A "discredited" stigma is understood as a difference that is immediately evident and inescapable (Goffman, 1986, p.4). Inside an institution, this stigma would be reserved for those who have committed crimes that are high profile or known amongst others; debased inmates. In some cases, inmates suggest that when a new inmate comes to the unit it is evident that they possess "bad charges" and therefore treat them accordingly. In the second case, "discreditable" stigma is what heightens issues on PC due to the reputation of an inmate being ambiguous and not immediately known.

In other words, the PC classification alone applies a discredited stigma, but once inside the unit, this PC singular stigma dissolves and the individual enters another layer of classification found within the PC unit. This secondary informal stigma classification is applied based on the severity or notoriety of their charges. Therefore, most individuals who enter PC become "discreditable". This liminal classification is often constantly in negotiation. In the cases of those with "bad charges" there may be an effort to remain within this realm by managing information about ones failing (Goffman, 1986, p.42). If "bad charges" are discovered through information sharing by inmates or correctional staff, or through media, the individual then becomes "discredited".

In the following sections I explore further 'discredited' and 'discreditable' identity and how this has forced negotiation of the inmate code inside PC units. I focus more specifically on the process of 'discredibility' as opposed to 'discredited' to fully explore the contemporary changes seen in PC units. I elaborate on the complications and precarity that exists on PC units by unpacking the narratives of inmates on East Wing who were deceived by a debased inmate

who was charged with significant sexual crimes. Lastly, I explore how and why based inmates and even some solid inmates must engage in consistent boundary work (Lamont, 2002) on PC units to preserve their reputation and negate undeserving consequences.

### *Re-negotiating the Inmate Code*

Inside protective custody units, two major social and structural aspects merge. The first major factor, as explored in section I, is that protective custody is not protective and actually resembles general populations units with the same types of politics many were trying to escape. Secondly, PC units continue to be used to primarily house debased inmates. The result is a unit with tumultuous issues based on population composition, personal politics, prison code, the need to preserve reputation, and promote individual masculinity. The response to this risk and uncertainty of PC is a re-negotiation of the inmate code.

The inmate code demonstrates, to some extent, a level of comradery that exists amongst inmates especially in resistance to the correctional institution, but also against those lower in the inmate hierarchy. This solidarity inside prison is understandably challenged to a greater degree on PC units due to the ambiguity of new inmates entering these units. On the sentenced provincial level and more so in remand centres, inmates are often cycling through institutions due to the fact that incarceration periods vary from inmate to inmate. This results in inmates engaging in constant vigilance when deciding who to socialize with when serving a sentence (Hughes, 1945, p.356).

The PC population composition has expanded beyond the traditional “skinnners, rats, and scaredy cats” and a new form of hierarchy within these units resulted. This PC hierarchy allows inmates to navigate the stigma of generally serving time in prison by forming a better moral

sense of self in comparison to others they share a unit with. On a GP unit, inmates with any form of “bad charge” will be sought out and required to remove themselves from the unit or be forced off through threats, coercion, and/or violence. As previously discussed, bad charges are generally any form of physical or sexual assault against children, women, or the elderly. However, in PC there has been a shift in the inmate hierarchy in which the weight and severity of certain “bad charges” are evaluated. Those with severe sexual offences, which is usually determined by the perceived vulnerability of the victim, will still be checked off of PC units (as mentioned prior, they will be transferred between PC units, request segregation, or be transferred to another institution). This often results in consistent movement between PC units or potential institution transfers.

There are generally two beliefs held by inmates once they have entered protective custody about the composition of the unit, however, overlap can occur resulting in moral conflict. One perception is to treat protective custody as they would any other unit. If a person has bad charges, they will face the same consequences, as dictated by the inmate code, regardless of the unit they are on. The other perception, which will be explored first, is that protective custody is a unit designated for debased inmates (especially those with sex offences). In this sense, by checking into protective custody as a based or solid inmate you simply do your own time and leave debased inmates alone. This philosophy is generally held by older inmates who often have spent a significant portion of their lives incarcerated:

*The whole range knows, I mean, at the end of the day people are going to be like “oh punch him out, get him off the range” it’s like, well look where you are man, you’re on their turf right. You’re in their PC facility and you want to act tough, there’s a door check back into GP.*

Leon speaks largely to this concept of PC being the “turf” of debased inmates, and even further suggests that if other inmates want to bring prison politics into PC then they may as well go back

to general population. I refer to this idea of protective custody being the turf of debased inmates as “turf philosophy”. Mason also speaks to the change in PC composition and how it has become the only alternative for people trying to leave a gang. For this gang-exit strategy to work, inmates must look past the original PC designation and view PC units as if they have transformed for another purpose:

*There used to be a time when it was just skimmers and rats. Well, you know what, it goes a little deeper than that. There are people that are trying to get away from gang life. That's their only alternative while they're in here.*

Olaf, an inmate with over a decade of gang involvement also spoke to this turf comment. Olaf considers his decision to continue to abide by the prison code (hatred and poor treatment of debased inmates) is the result of the values and expectations relayed during his time in gangs still hold even though he has dropped his colours:

*That's their unit, it was their unit before we came there. It's made for ex-gang members too. Just because we're ex gang members, we still think the way, or just because we're PC we still think the way GP do, we don't like skimmers, we hate them.*

For those who do follow the turf philosophy of PC, negotiating the inmate code and co-existing with debased inmates is required to prevent them from being removed. For inmates who intend to never return to prison or those aiming for early release this becomes the best course of action. Even for inmates who believe in the turf philosophy, there is still a tendency to engage in coercion and violence depending on the severity of the crime and vulnerability of the victim.

Ozzy describes this liminal space between doing your own time and inflicting ‘deserved’ punishment for a bad charge. Ozzy suggests that based and solid inmates tend to “*leave them [sex offenders] alone, let them do their time*” but if they have committed “*against children or anything like that, then it becomes an issue.*” Joe also speaks to this contradictory philosophy; “*It's not my choice to judge you...unless you give me a reason. Or you fuck with kids or women*”.

It becomes evident that while this turf concept is acknowledged, PC units are not entirely a safe space for those who are socially categorized as debased.

The decision to live amongst debased inmates contributes to issues surrounding personal morals. The result is the creation of a hierarchy within the larger prison hierarchy; a PC hierarchy. Correctional staff and inmates both expressed to me that debased inmates can preserve some self-worth if they perceive their own charges as less serious. DDO Juan speaks to this hierarchy shift:

*There's a hierarchy of PCs, "I might have raped a woman, but you raped a child, you piece of shit." So, I'm trying to make myself less of a PC than you are.*

Even further, some inmates argue that PC has increasingly become more political than GP.

Albert had been in and out of correctional institutions since the age of 16. He chose to check into PC almost 12 years ago due to gang politics and disbandment suggesting that PC may actually be more political than GP:

*Albert: You got your inmates—you know we're in a protective custody unit—there's more politics in this unit than there is in the general population unit.*

*Ashley: What kind of politics would you say?*

*Albert: Buddy's a rat, or buddy's a skinner, or this and that...then you got [inmates] come up here and then people prey on the weak, right? You know, they're trying to prove that they ain't PC.*

Albert is speaking to the difficulties surrounding PC classification. He suggests that it takes work to prevent becoming deemed a debased inmate and resisting the consequences that come along with the discredited stigma.

*Discredited: Bad Charges*

Transfers to protective custody do not remove the threat of violation or violence against debased inmates. This is largely because the classification of “skinner” still holds damaging power in protective custody (Mann 2016; Sampson 1993, p.83). To reiterate, discredited stigma applies to

and becomes the identity of those with significantly “bad charges”: debased inmates. Those who have been discredited as a sex offender or having “bad charges” enter a further hierarchy within the PC hierarchy itself (Waldram, 2007). There is a temptation for people who have committed sexual offences to negotiate and promote that they are unlike others within the “sex offender” classification (Hughes, 1945, p.358). In the same way, based inmates may subscribe to this secondary hierarchy to navigate their own PC classification. This PC hierarchy enables a unique horizontal power structure at the lower end of the inmate hierarchy related to perceived depravity or severity of certain sexual offences in comparison to others.

As mentioned earlier communication is quite effective and easy to navigate inside an institution. If an inmate’s case was highly publicized it becomes very simple for other inmates to determine how they should be treated and whether they deserve to be removed from the unit. Further, permission to treat debased inmates, especially those who have committed sexual offences, poorly is condoned, if not promoted, by some correctional officers and other inmates even if it may result in restrictions of institutional freedoms. In this section I will explore the consequences of the discredited stigma for debased inmates. This includes the isolation technique of “blindness”, the continued checking of charges, and in the case of suspected or discovered bad charges, the repercussion in the form of taxing, coercion, and violence.

### *Blinders*

When it comes to the social dynamics of a PC unit, some inmates felt free to call out individuals they knew or suspected of being sex offenders. Some inmates, however, made an effort to “put up blinders”. Blinders is the intentional act of ignoring other inmates’ charges and doing their own time. Those who put up blinders may give no open recognition to those lower on the PC hierarchy. This intentional “disattention” (Goffman, 1986, p.41) can result in increased tension,

uncertainty, and ambiguity. However, even for individuals who chose the “blinder” mindset, learning about other’s charges may become public due to the connected nature of inmates, even across units.

The practice of putting up blinders is understandably a tactic to negotiate levels of agency within an institution that heavily restricts it. In order for incarcerated men on PC units to communicate freely and confidentially; to preserve and engage socially, inmates “must be able to take a good deal of each other’s sentiments for granted” (Hughes, 1945, p.356). In other words, for PC to run smoothly, and specifically on East Wing, to prevent sanctions<sup>13</sup>, inmates must try to coexist with minimal hostility. While this application of blinders as an attempt to look past the charges, this is executed in a minority of cases. Most of my participants that referred to their use of blinders said it would result in either personal isolation, a form of personally employed segregation or the seclusion from others.

For Hector, seclusion was the best way for him to navigate his PC placement. He has been in and out of the system after he turned to drug dealing because of significant lay offs in his field of work. In his case, he signed into PC during his last period of incarceration because of ‘dope sickness’. He was not familiar with the institution or the inmates on that GP unit and consequentially some inmates took advantage of this and stole from him. Hector mentioned that for those who made the relatively permanent decision of PC placement after having been on general population units, he found that politics were equally strenuous on PC as they are on GP.

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<sup>13</sup> Sanctions are a disciplinary action employed by correctional officers. Sanctions are often discretionary and vary depending on who is working the unit. On East Wing, due to the open bed-space concept, sanctions would require inmates to stay in their bed spaces treating it as locked cell. The difficulty with this is that it is open space, and therefore requires mindfulness of the inmate to not accidentally step out of their bed space during sanction hours. Sanction hours varied on East Wing from 12 hours to 4 days. The inmates had to request to use the washroom or to shower and only one inmate was allowed out at once.

He mentions the issues of being housed with “skinner” and “rats” and how that makes PC units worse, but he nonetheless has to cope:

*In PC everyone says GP is a bit better 'cuz there's not much politics right, there's not like I don't know, there's the skinner and then there's the rats, they're all here you know what I mean? There's a few good guys. I guess in my lifestyle, I'm not like fucking straight, but I'm not a rat or a skinner, I'm not just into the like, I don't know, there's a couple over there I'm looking at right now, you know what I mean. I'm not really into that kind of thing. Even though I don't like them, I still put my blinders up, I don't pay attention. Right, I try to fucking get out of here, I know it's not easy to lose good time, but I don't wanna any chance doing that. I'm not a fighter, I'm a dealer, I don't scrap.*

In this account, Hector employs many reputation tactics used to differentiate himself while on PC. He acknowledges the composition of PC and ensures that I knew that although he had committed crimes and dealt drugs, he was not a debased inmate. Further, his desire to get out of prison without having to serve any extra time for additional charges was why he chose to employ blinders.

Alternatively, some inmates may engage in nonviolent exclusionary tactics in alignment with the blinders philosophy to discriminate against those with bad charges. This often resulted in debased inmates, or those suspected of being debased, having restricted access to resources and spaces around the unit and staying in their bed spaces. This also included little to no access to the TV rooms or even the newspapers. Fahad described an example of a debased inmate confronting him as to why he was often one of the last to receive the newspaper, if at all:

*You have to let these guys do whatever. Like there's simple stuff like the use of the paper. The newspaper comes. I get it first and then I put all the numbers on. Like for example, one of the guys came up to me three weeks ago, he says “listen, I've been here for four months. I notice I don't get my number put on the paper”. And I was like, “yeah, that's because your name comes up on the sex offender data bank. You're number two. Your name shows up number two”. And he's like, “oh really?” I'm like, “Yeah. It says your name and your brother's name”. He's like “that's why you won't put me on the paper?” I'm like. “Yo, I got nothing against you, but 'cuz you're a sex offender you're gonna get the newspaper last. It's gonna go to all the guys that aren't in here on that bull shit and*

*then to you, whether you like it or not. You wanna do something, do something". But they're not gonna do anything.*

Fahad was conscious of the perceived depravity of the debased inmate's charges and engaged in his own form of exclusionary resistance. Because he had to be housed with discredited inmates but, didn't want to add any more time to his sentence, he punished these inmates in his own way. Fahad spoke openly about larger dynamics including how many inmates still attempt to hideout while in PC:

*Ashley: A lotta the people that are here, it's not necessarily what they say...skinners, rats...*

*Fahad: A lotta people make it look like they're not, but they are. Trust me. The streets have their own rules, too, right? A lotta people in here aren't considered sacred characters in the street, right? They still have—they have a bad reputation inside and out. But you have to accept it here. This is PC. You have to up the blind eye to some people, or whatever, or else you're just gonna make problems for yourself.*

The ambiguity and precarity surrounding charges in PC have resulted in the same tactics found in GP to check inmate's charges. Regardless, for inmates who employ the turf philosophy or subscribe fully to the traditional inmate code, charges are still being checked and inmates are being coerced and checked off.

### *Checking Charges*

The PC classification stigma holds significant weight outside of the unit alone and has the power to alter the structure of knowledge about a person once they enter PC (Goffman, 1986, p.67). The precarity of this stigma results in attempts to control information about oneself. This is found not only in those who possess "bad charges" but also inmates who do not have proof or others to support whether they are "solid" or not. The moral disgust felt towards men who have committed sexual offences allows other individuals that are incarcerated to form a better sense of self and morality. This is based on the fact they have perpetrated comparatively less socially disgraceful

acts. It becomes a moral duty as described by the inmate code to remove people who have bad charges from general population units. In other words, by continuing this ritual (for lack of a better term) within a PC unit, based and solid inmates can differentiate themselves from those who are in protective custody because of the depravity of their charges.

Although PC was designed to house those with bad charges, protecting them from coercion and violence on GP units, inmates with what are perceived as the most immoral charges are still forced by other inmates to check off of PC units. The result is involuntary cycling through PC units (if that is an option), until the debased inmate eventually retires to segregation or is transferred to another institution. During my fieldwork I spent some time in segregation doing interviews. One inmate who I was informed was in on significant sexual assault charges had to have a plexiglass shield around his cell bars to prevent other inmates from throwing things ranging from spoiled foods and liquids to bodily waste into his cell. However, it was pointed out to me that this was a relatively uncommon and high-profile case.

There are multiple ways for inmates to discover the charges of other inmates. The most common tactic for checking the charges is through the use of search engines. Depending on the severity of the charge information about individuals may be found on news outlets. These types of individuals would be considered “high-profile”, as their charges are easy enough to find through simple searches.

*Omar: I notice a lot of guys that come on the unit, they get googled right away, there are [sites] you can go on and punch their name in and that's how we find out a lot of these guys right? They check themselves off, if they're like child molesters or whatever we usually check them off ourselves.*

Although while incarcerated, there is no access to news and social media outlets, many will use their phone calls to contact others outside of the institution to look up the names of people that

they want to learn more about. In terms of transferring this information across units, inmates may use three-way calling to confirm the charges if they transferred from another unit. SIO Heidi also noted similarly to inmates that there are interrogation tactics for discovering the charges and previous placements within the same institution:

*These guys are getting a lot smarter and they know, you know they'll ask the right questions like "what unit did you come from?" and they'll know other guys in the same unit, so they'll do some checking to see if these guys, you know, were former PC offenders.*

Another aspect that may tip off that someone is potentially a debased inmate from inside the institution is when they are introduced to the unit. When a person is initially admitted to a correctional facility they are held in an admissions unit for a period of time. There are set days of the week in which certain units receive new inmates in large groups. Therefore, if an inmate is introduced to a unit outside of these scheduled days there may be further suspicion surrounding their charges. For example, on East Wing new inmates would arrive to the unit on Thursdays only and usually in large groups. If one or two inmates were admitted alone, especially on a different day, they would be questioned about their background even more than the average admission.

Some inmates chose to enact a type of psychological manipulation on top of interrogation. A few inmates noted that others will tease inmates by suggesting they "knew" about their charges, even in cases where they did not know, or could not confirm they were a debased inmate. Inmates may draw attention to others that are quiet and avoid others. This type of isolation behaviour is often identified as a hallmark of sex offenders. In other words, without knowing charges but purely under suspicion, inmates may intentionally be publicly humiliated and hassled. Hector spoke of a specific manipulation tactic he had used in the past when I inquired how to determine who has solid charges or not:

*Um, I don't even know. Um, ya I guess, the way they fucking walk around, the way they look. You could tell when people are getting nervous, like sex offenders, that's when you can tell too. 'Cuz you be like, you tell someone to Google a name and you see like, 5 or 6 heads pop over and looking around.*

Correctional officers can also aid in checking the charges of an inmate. Depending on the rapport inmates have with an officer, and if the correctional officer condones the perpetration of violence or coercion against debased inmates, they may be willing to provide information about an inmate's charges. Correctional officers have multiple means of sharing or hinting that certain inmates are debased. In some cases, COs will 'accidentally' misplace inmate paperwork out in the open for inmates to look at. More often correctional officers may mention in passing to certain inmates that they trust or believe will act upon this knowledge that another inmate has bad charges or should at the least be looked into. Officers may also provide warnings about new admissions to those already on the unit even during regular admission days. In a more forward method, Albert suggests that some COs may be willing to have trusted inmates view the official charge records of other inmates:

*Guards are flipping the computer around or show them charges and stuff...A lotta people are quiet about it and then but once somebody knows then the whole unit knows and it's nothing but trouble for that person.*

At the same time, there can be levels of comradery amongst inmates. If a CO suggests that an inmate is in on bad charges, they will often wait until they have real proof, as Andre offers that COs will sometimes use the discredited stigma of being a sex offender for example to give another inmate a hard time:

*If a staff member doesn't like you, he'll put in a word that your bad charges are like this. Some guys will act on it on some units without paperwork. Mostly any good unit will wait for the guy's paperwork.*

Once a discreditable inmate transforms into a discredited inmate, and this is shared with others on the unit, that person will face many consequences. The consequences for these debased inmates can range from teasing, threats, taxation, and violence if they do not check off the unit.

*Taxing, Coercion, and Violence*

Discredited inmates face consequences. The inmate code, collective politics, and morals held by based and solid inmates heavily influence how the social hierarchy is maintained. Those with more solid reputations, often those who have spent time in gangs, drug dealing, and/or have been in and out of institutions, are considered a heavy and given power by other inmates to make decisions on a unit.

On East Wing the heavy group was predominately comprised of those who self-identified as ex-gang members and those who worked as dealers or movers for gangs. Therefore, the sentiment of disgust and non-leniency towards debased inmates, often found on general population units, was also present in East Wing. This again suggests that the inmate hierarchy within GP, and the social mechanisms working to punish those at the bottom also exist in protective custody. My findings suggest, however, that the secondary hierarchy found inside PC may permit fewer substantial consequences for debased inmates who are interpreted as having committed less serious bad charges.

When the nature of an individual's charges are discovered, inmates may use this information against them to obtain benefits in exchange for not outing them or assaulting them (Goffman, 1986, p.84). This is due to the immoral underpinnings of "bad charges" in which other inmates may view keeping other inmates' bad charges 'quiet' as an opportunity to gain benefits.

Discovered debased inmates with less severe bad charges may only face verbal confrontations, exclusion, and taxation. Taxation can be executed in multiple ways. If a debased inmate has access to funds from outside the institution or has someone on the outside who puts money into their phone account, they may be forced to subsidize another person's phone account. This is accomplished by getting their outside contact to also put money into the coercive inmate's account. In terms of canteen, other inmates may simply take items or make requests for items from debased inmates. If an inmate is running a store<sup>14</sup> they may charge debased inmates more than based or solid inmates in exchange for product. Xavi describes specifically how inmates on East Wing would create envelope art, tattoo designs, general artworks, and lanyards on the unit which they would sell to others on the unit or to those outside of the institution. However, Xavi mentions that some individuals are taxed higher than others:

*I've seen it when people are new on here [or] people take advantage of them just because they're a sex offender. Just tax 'em. If they're willing to pay for it, they'll take it. They'll make anything and tax 'em. Instead of 10 dollars, it's an extra 5 bucks, 10 bucks.*

Another way to tax debased inmates is through limiting access to laundry. In the case of East Wing, doing laundry was this unit's only job opportunity as the laundry facility was close to the unit and did not require as much movement throughout the institution. It is not uncommon for inmates who work specific jobs to gain benefits. In terms of laundry, extra undergarments or coveralls would be shared amongst inmates, with those at the highest level of the inmate hierarchy receiving such extras first. However, I was informed that a debased inmate, who was

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<sup>14</sup> If an inmate "runs a store", this is referring to the collecting of products found available on the canteen list in which other inmates may purchase from them between canteen release days. However, to make a profit, inmates offer deals such as "2 for 1", "3 for 5", etc. For example, a "2 for 1" dictates that an inmate may purchase 1 item from the inmate's store, but they must repay the store owner 2 of the same or similar items. In other words, an inmate run store is similar to a loan service.

permitted to stay on PC, would not receive any extra garments and in some cases receive less than based and solid inmates.

Another significant consequence for being discovered as a debased inmate was the psychological manipulation and isolation as mentioned previously. Many inmates I interviewed spoke about how they felt debased inmates deserved the coercion and abuse they endured in prison purely because the acts they had committed were so heinous they could not be considered human:

*Gideon: They either get muscled for their food. They get muscled for their money. Whatever, they get fucking abused. They get beat down. Whatever it is, they don't have nothing. They're no longer a citizen, a person, a human, anything.*

*Caleb: It could [have been] my kid that was touched. I would hope that down the line, if I can't get my hands on them, I'm gonna. So I think, I stomp this guy out and I think you know, that's for the kid, for the kid's mom. You know. I put myself in that situation, and I think shit, I hope that guy gets beat up every day of his life. I hope he doesn't die...I hope he lives a life of terrible humiliation, pain, everything right. That's what I think.*

Gideon and Caleb both illuminate the non-human aspect applied to discredited and debased inmates which may justify act of violence to occur more freely. Many inmates on East Wing suggested that if the crimes committed were heinous enough the inmate is best to check themselves off the unit unless they want to be checked off by force and violence:

*Leslie: As soon as people find out that you're a sex offender, you better pack your stuff and bounce because there's gonna be 4 or 5 guys rolling on you.*

*Emiliano: You google, you get someone on the street, you google it, on the phone you google their name you google their FPS number or their worker number, and it shows up if you're a sex offender. And once people know that you usually leave, or you're going to get done in.*

In rare cases inmates are able to hide their charges. If they are discovered, they will face retaliation from others on the unit, especially those that had spent time and socialized with them

without knowing their background. These hideout inmates once discovered will often not be given as many options to stay on the unit, regardless of the severity of their charges. In the case of hideout inmates, my respondents suggested that they will be required to check off the unit whether of their own volition or through force:

*Karson: We don't put up with that kind of stuff, you know like, if we had a guy that came on the unit and he acted like he was big shit and then somebody else found out from some other source that this guy raped this many girls and he's on your unit, technically some of the hierarchy guys you mentioned there would take him into the room and kick the living crap out of him cuz like I said we don't put up with that kind of shit— anywhere. They're considered as bugs, little people, they're nothing to us... really, we don't want that... [they would be] checked off with bruises and probably bleeding.*

Although Karson was speaking in theory to how a hideout inmate would be dealt with, during my two-week duration on East Wing, an inmate who was a member of the main heavy<sup>15</sup> group was found to have lied about his charges and personal history. This deceit was met with consequences not only for the hideout inmate but also those who trusted his word as will be explored below.

#### *Discreditable: Hideout*

In protective custody if the unit became aware of “bad charges”, as mentioned, the inmate code which dictates the poor treatment of debased inmates is still followed through. I witnessed such a scenario first hand during my time on the East Wing. After spending two weeks on the open dorm unit at HBCC, I became familiar with most of the men on that unit. I noticed that one of the more outspoken inmates of the main heavy circle was absent. While interviewing Thomas, who at the time associated with him, shared with me that he had been checked off the unit because he

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<sup>15</sup> “Heavy” inmates are those who possess power inside an institution whether it is through building a solid reputation and/or through being physically large and intimidating. Often these inmates will be respected by other inmates inside the institution and given positions of power and extra benefits.

had hidden that he had bad charges that were significant enough to justify his removal from the PC unit.

- Thomas: Yo, yeah, it's like...he's my bro, you know? Like he used to be my bro.... like no one knew about this, you know?*
- Ashley: Ok, so how did it come out, what happened if you thought he was solid, why would you look up his case?*
- Thomas: Because like you still have to check it, right? We're in PC, right, so we checked him out and I guess.*
- Ashley: Was it a bad one?*
- Thomas: It was, yeah. It was bad it was like you know like your West Edmonton Mall, like those, yeah, I don't...like 15, 14 [year olds].*
- Ashley: [...] So, how do you confront [him]? Did you and bunch of people confront him or how did it [happen]?*
- Thomas: Yeah, we had a bunch of guys confront him and we just.... you know. It was midnight and we were like, we were going to wait until like canteen day, and then we're all like... no... we have to get it done right now, you know? Like you know we all felt like shit because he [was here], you know. And then we went and took him to his bed and we talked to him and shit.*
- Ashley: Did he say he had solid charges when he came in?*
- Thomas: Yes. He said he was getting charged with trafficking and you know conspiracy, bringing fucking meth in. He was just fucking, you know what I mean?*
- Ashley: Wow [...]. So [...] did he just admit to it [...]?*
- Thomas: No, he said that it was made up right. [...] But, at the end we're like... ok... what about the 6 previous convictions? [...] Yeah. And he was, he was like "I don't know about this". So then [...] we were like "don't bounce until canteen day" and then he bounced that night.*
- Ashley: Right, right, right. So why wouldn't you want him to leave until canteen? [...]*
- Thomas: Because he owed money.[...]*
- Ashley: Yeah. So, he checked himself off. Do you know what he said to get out of here?*
- Thomas: He said that he had, he was hearing voices.*
- Ashley: So being his friend do you feel kind of lied to or is this kind of, does this happen sometimes? How do you deal with the fact you were friends basically with this guy or at least you know ac--*
- Thomas: You're actually really right you know like I got, you know, like I used to go visit this guy every night, talk to him and shit right. We got pretty close right and then fucking just to hear this shit you know.*

Thomas and many others who considered him a friend shared with me that they felt deceived and undermined. Not only were they upset with the immorality surrounding his charges but, how they trusted his word and allowed him to be part of their social circle in which he benefited from the shared reputation of being one of the heavies.

The heavy inmate who hid his “bad charges” for months on the unit was briefly successful at “passing” as a “solid inmate” by managing undisclosed discrediting information about himself (Goffman, 1986, p.42). Stigmatizing labels can impact people differently in different situations. The stigma may have deeper consequences, however, when a “secret failing” is revealed to people they hold established relationships with. If disclosed, this stigma may severely impact their reputation within these circles therefore, the stigma and “effort to conceal it ... become “fixed” as part of the personal identity” (Goffman, 1986, p.65). In the case of the outed heavy, he stood by his story until he checked off of the unit. It should also not be surprising that individuals may want to present themselves under other different classifications or under the pretense of different charges. This is highly related to the disparity in both power and privilege given to those considered of higher moral status than those at the lower end of the hierarchy (Bowker and Star, 2000, p.216).

In the case of generalized stigma, which is applicable for individuals with sex offences and are in the liminal space of “discredibility”, it is not how he must face prejudice, but that he must navigate the space and social interactions with individuals “who are prejudiced against persons of the kind he can be revealed to be” (Goffman, 1986, p.42).

During the interview with Russell, I inquired about the politics of PC and he explained his perception of the hide-out situation:

*I mean there was a guy here, up till two days ago he's been here pretty much the whole time I've been, playing it off like he was a king pin on the streets right. Someone googled his name and they found out he got 6 fucking priors of sexual assault. So a few guys went up to him and said, hey man, time to kick rocks or you get the shit kicked out of you right.*

Attempting to hide PC placement and *bad charges* is near impossible due to the highly connected networks of inmates and the ease of confirming charges through those outside the

institution. In cases where individuals choose to disclose from the outset their reasoning behind their PC placement, they are likely to suffer significant distrust, isolation, and potential violence based on the ambiguity and trustworthiness of their statements. In the cases of individuals with sexual offences, like this heavy hideout, the stigma related to their charge is often inescapable. This example elucidates one of the many reasons that based and solid inmates on protective custody are required to put in consistent work to prove they have not committed bad charges. In other words, inmates are often constantly in a state of “discredibility” and therefore must construct their identity to prove that, although they have committed crimes, they are still moral individuals and higher in the inmate hierarchy.

*Discreditable: Based Inmates and Solid Charges*

In the second section of my findings I have explored the social innerworkings of a PC unit, more specifically how debased inmates are detected and treated once a discredited stigma is applied to them and becomes their master status. I will now explore, based on the real consequences for debased inmates, how based and solid inmates, especially ex-gang members, navigate discredibility through the use of boundary work.

Inmates on a PC unit without “bad charges” begin the process of negotiating their identity both cognitively and socially. This resides in the acceptance, to some extent, that he is now part of the precarious PC hierarchy. The individual may construct others as “patently stigmatized”, not human, as was made most clear in Gideon and Karson’s previous narratives (Goffman, 1986, p.37). Outside of a protective custody unit an individual who has some experience within a correctional institution will be cognizant of the “stigmatized” before he may consider or be placed on a PC unit. Once placed, this may result in issues of reidentifying oneself and potentially developing some level of disapproval of the self (Goffman, 1986, p.34). For this

reason, many based and solid inmates subscribe to this PC hierarchy to navigate their own morality when choosing who they socialize with. As was made clear in the case of the East Wing hideout, even choosing who to socialize with requires significant work to ensure they are not befriending a debased inmate.

This decision to choose to be placed on PC therefore still poses significant issue based on the engrained politics and social codes that exist in prison culture. This is especially true for based and solid inmates who are ex-gang members or were involved in the drug trade. As mentioned these individuals follow an inmate code and often have spent a significant period of time in and out of correctional institutions spending time in general population units in which this inmate code was articulated. This code reinforces the inmate hierarchy and promotes the victimization of debased inmates. As my findings suggest, ex-gang members are increasingly viewing PC as an option for dropping their colours and removing themselves from potential retaliation from other gang members. Once placed on PC, based and solid inmates must live amongst a higher concentration of debased inmates and ex-gang members are not afraid of taking on leadership roles to punish debased inmates.

#### *Ex-Gang on PC*

Gang cultures, codes, and lifestyles still exist inside PC. Aspects of masculinity, which entails a proclaimed respect for women and children, resonate among all inmates I interviewed on East Wing. The most vocal and visceral aversion to debased inmates, especially those who have committed sexual offences, was expressed by self-identifying ex-gang members. Gang members, whether incarcerated or not, have been instructed through membership and institutionalization to vehemently hate those who victimize whom they view as vulnerable. Their position of power on a unit, where they are characterized as heavies, is generally determined by their reputation both

inside and outside the institution. Factors that impact being designated a heavy include: history of incarceration (how long of bits, federal time, types of charges), affiliation and position within a gang (were they a higher up, did they have a patch/sticker), or whether they dealt drugs (worth of what they traffic, is it street level, international, connections with dealing inside/outside of the institution).

As mentioned previously, PC has seen an increase in ex-gang or gang affiliated men. This was also substantiated and explored during my interview with prison administrators. According to SIO Heidi, gangs are dissolving at a higher pace:

*Ashley: Have you seen an increase in ex-gang affiliated people coming into PC now or has that always been a thing?*

*Heidi: Definitely more and more now because that's a large part of the population that I deal with. There's definitely a lot more guys because, certain gangs are no longer around like White Boy Posse or Alberta Warriors. There's a lot of gangs that aren't around anymore As result they're ex-gang, and basically because they're ex-Alberta Warriors they don't get along with Red Alert or Hell's Angels or different groups. So yeah, for sure, there's a lot more ex-gang guys.*

The increase in ex-gang members making requests to be on PC may be influenced by changes in gang structure, perceptions of loyalty, increases in drug volatility, and generalized disillusionment in the gang lifestyle. All of these factors have been suggested as contributing to the breakdown of many gangs within Alberta. However, at this stage these could be treated as suggestive contributing factors based on my exploratory research and require further inquiry to potentially substantiate.

On East Wing the perception of an inmate as having “dropped their colours” and no longer having an affiliation with a gang did not necessarily mean that the habits and mentality of a gang member will also be dropped. With higher rates of ex-gang members and affiliated inmates embracing persistent inmate hierarchy mentalities it is not unexpected that these politics

would be found on protective custody units. Hector, who shared that he was in on drug trafficking charges and had friends on the unit, also confirmed that East Wing had a significant ex-gang population and that he did not agree with the politics that come along with it:

*I've been around gang members my whole life but never fucking been that interested, never into politics, didn't like people telling you what to do. That's all this place is about right now. The people on the unit, who run this, like they fucking act like they run, are ex-gang for sure.*

Chase also spoke to how gang politics and power structure can be found in protective custody. He mentions that there have been more ex-gang member admissions in PC but that dropping colours does not mean they drop the posturing that comes with it:

*There are guys that I've heard that had done that, [dropped their colours], and you know they're trying to change over a new leaf or whatever, but they're still trying to be hard. You know what I mean, they're trying to control the situation.*

Leslie also spoke to this concept of gang politics and power structures found in protective custody. For Leslie, although they are ex-gang, they still subscribe to sentiments found on general population units:

*Most of these guys are ex-gang members, and they still got that gang mentality in them, they still think like we're gangs, like let's take over this unit.*

For ex-gang members, regrouping with other ex-members or affiliates is one of the only ways they can navigate their PC classification and continue to socialize with others. Therefore, regrouping may not always happen with the explicit aim of taking over the unit but, simply be a potential side effect. Dawson, who identified as an ex-gang member, mentioned the stressful aspect of being on a unit with people with bad charges. He spoke about his fear of people lying about their charges, which is why he is cautious about who he speaks to:

*They hide out and that's why I'm really, really careful of who I talk to. I only talk to the people that I know are ex-gang members. If they know somebody else, then I'll talk to them too. But other than that, I do stay away from other people.*

From a different, and perhaps more rare perspective, placement on PC can even be seen a space allowing connections to be reformed. For Brian, spending time in solitary confinement for a period of 2 months was a better option than the stigma of checking into a PC unit. After a certain point segregation became too much for him and he signed his papers to enter protective custody:

*I came here, and I see a bunch of people that I used to roll with, like back in the day ... I see them and I'm like, "yo, this is where all the solid fucking people went".*

Brian is referring to his surprise at finding members of his gang and affiliates, whom he viewed positively, in a protective custody unit. This allowed him to feel more comfortable with the placement which he at first fervently resisted. Having these associations and friends in East Wing, he could comfortably serve his time there. Therefore, gang politics are not necessarily being brought in exclusively from general population, but also the result of regrouping and recreation of gang politics with in PC.

Although people check into PC with the intent of leaving the informal economy/gang life behind, it is common for ex-gang members to regroup on PC. Although gang members may not be explicitly repping colours, the gang mentality is not easily abandoned. Therefore, based and solid inmates, even when regrouped with peers, need to continuously provide proof of their reputation. This is due to the multiple levels of politics found on PC. Not only do inmates need to prove to unknown others that they are in PC on good standing, but they also have to demonstrate this to their peers. Furthermore, the fact that even within the heavy group on East Wing they could have been deceived by someone with significant sexual charges for a long duration of time, puts even greater pressure on every inmate to prove (or pretend) they have a solid

reputation. This navigation of stigma, reputation, and identity is accomplished through consistent vigilance and boundary work (Lamont, 2002).

*Response to Discredibility and Heightened Precarity of PC: Boundary Work*

For based and solid inmates placed on protective custody, it is more important than ever to engage in what Michelle Lamont calls *boundary work* (2002, p.3). In attempting to differentiate themselves from those with even “worse” charges they are aiming to heighten their own sense of morality. This negotiation of identity is understandably a useful mechanism for navigating the significant loss of freedoms and in many cases loss of dignity. Through the implementation of a charge-based hierarchy, some inmates are able to maintain a better sense of self than others.

Inside PC, inmates apply a concrete “us” and “them” dichotomy (Lamont, 2002, p.4). This dichotomy describes those who chose PC to leave the gang or street economy lifestyle versus those out of necessity because they possessed “bad charges”, respectively, and would suffer on a GP unit. Although these men are incarcerated, their boundary work helps them hold onto what they consider a higher moral standing as a way to affirm their own dignity (Lamont, 2002, p.44). Although they are all incarcerated, which is a stigma in and of itself, there is a level of compensation by suggesting their charges are less morally repugnant than those of other inmates. Stressing this morality allows incarcerated men to “affirm their own value and dignity and reject the notion that one’s station, [both literally and figuratively], defines one’s worth”. (Lamont, 2002, p.129).

As has been explored in previous research, masculinity is a key dimension of correctional institutions (Comack, 2008; Jewkes, 2002). Within the confines of a PC unit masculinity can also become a component of boundary work. This is seen most clearly in an inmate’s desire to

differentiate themselves from those who need to *take* from women and children to fulfill sexual needs as opposed to obtaining it consensually with women. This is another factor for performing masculinity, especially while on a PC unit where the hardness or solidness of a person is immediately in question just because they are “checking in”. Throughout my interviews it was common for inmates to share, unprompted, both the quantity and quality of the more legitimate/solid crimes they had committed as a way to further differentiate themselves from debased inmates. Inmates would go into detail describing some of their (non-predatory) charges and methods of executing crimes as a way to authenticate their narratives.

For others, even the idea of signing a waiver, and the related perceptions of PC challenged their masculinity. Before signing into PC, Emiliano had been bringing drugs into institutions for specific gang affiliates. He decided to stop doing this and was rebuffed by his affiliates. He no longer felt safe on most GP units and knew that it would not be long before this information about him travelled. When he first came to HBCC it was proposed that he return to a unit he knew held many gang members he had previously done work for. He no longer wanted to be part of that lifestyle and was only given the option to sign into PC:

*“He said, “well do you want to sign your waiver?”, I said “what does that mean?” “Do you want to check in?” Oh my god, do you have to say it that way? You know?”*

However, for inmates that do not have others to provide them with credible reputation, or have spent very little, if any time in correctional institutions they may fabricate aspects of their life to provide them with some legitimacy. This pretense also requires significant work to maintain and, in many cases, does not always work out. SIO Heidi also elaborates on the use of identifying as an ex-gang member as measure of boundary work:

*If they come in and they’re not in on sex charges they try to show everybody else they’re more solid than those types of guys. So, you know, a lot of the guys will be like “yeah I’m*

*ex gang” even if they’re not because that kind of bumps up their credibility in the whole PC subculture.*

During my interview with Brian, he also expressed the issues surrounding inmates who have no reputation within the institution, or are not known by others, that they will often be faced with a lack of trust:

*I’ll be straight up with you, it really disgusts me...I don’t know who all is a skinner, but who ever has those prior charges or whatever. I don’t know man, none of them really talk about their charges and that makes me question them like, like who are-, what the fuck man, what the fuck are you doing? Why are you in here, why are you in PC man? Like for the ex-gang members, I can under-, but for like the people that are like, they’re nobodies and they’re PC man. What the fuck are you in for man?*

Here he highlights the significant distrust and social negotiations that take place on a PC unit and what that means for his own sense of morality. Having some form of street credibility and knowing others in the prison was one of the only ways to dissuade others from questioning an individual who chose to be on PC.

Inmates can bolster their solidness on PC by representing as an ex-gang member, or at least being minimally affiliated with gangs, such as suggesting they have dealt drugs for particularly high-level gangs. However, manufacturing such an identity can have negative impacts. Goffman explores further the significant emotional and psychological affect that passing can have on the passer (1986, p.87). Existing within a liminal reputation space, such as PC, can result in high levels of anxiety. In part, this is because it is not only people with verified bad charges who have been victimized but also individuals who are perceived as having bad charges due to having an inability to prove their “solidness”. This can create a sense of psychological distress for everyone on the unit and can contribute to the overall volatility of PC units.

Joe spoke candidly to me about how a long-term friend of his on the unit had testified against a family member on a murder charge and would technically be considered an informant and therefore a debased inmate. However, Joe suggests his friend attempts to navigate this tainted identity by presenting intolerance of inmates who have committed similar actions:

*Joe: And I've known him a long time. Like we grew up together, right? So, yeah, he's—it's all about how he postures himself, right?*

*Ashley: That's fair.*

*Joe: How he carries [himself], the words [he uses], you know—beating up snitches or rats or pedophiles and shit. He'll go have at that guy, you know?*

Vocalizing a hatred of debased inmates, as described by Joe, was a consistent method of boundary work employed by inmates during interviews to ensure I knew they perceived themselves as solid inmates. It was common for inmates to acknowledge they have committed crimes and that this is why they were serving time in a correctional institution. However, they were quick to suggest that although they have committed certain crimes, they are not as bad as others and therefore more moral. This was a recurring dynamic. During my interview with Graeme, he clarified early in our conversation that although he had voluntarily disclosed that he committed some serious crimes, there was bad actions he would never consider:

*I don't do anything to kids. I don't do anything to women. I don't do anything to old people. Okay? Anything like that, man. I'll stop and help an old lady across the street. I swear to God I do. Like some of them might think I'm gonna rob them or something. Some of the reactions I get are pretty funny, right? But still, that's the type of man I am, right? I'll help you with your groceries, you know what I mean?*

It is clear Graeme is not only struggling with the stigma of being an inmate, as suggested by his willingness to help others, but further being on PC in which his reputation may be called into question by others. In this context, he feels the needs to reiterate that he has never victimized women, children, or the elderly.

Some inmates acknowledge more openly that navigating identity politics inside prison is considerably more difficult once you are affected by the PC classification and are inside the unit. Simon spoke to this in relation to the situation of inmates on PC who might have been wrongly accused:

*I couldn't imagine being accused of something like that and being innocent of it, because you know to stand up and fight for what you believe in would be a lot harder in here, because you check in, you're checked in for life. Right?*

Simon's statement highlights how consistent vigilance and boundary work is a required survival tactic for living on a PC unit. To be stigmatized and discredited as a debased inmate and having not actually committed the crime would affect that inmate, in Simon's and many other's opinion, for life. The complications surrounding a PC classification has many more implications than simply signing a waiver. It impacts the social dynamics of the unit, how individuals personally identify, how they present themselves, and how they interact with each other. In other words, the organizational classifications of the institution impact social classifications and ultimately impact life chances.

### **FUTURE RESEARCH**

Prison research, especially, on-the-ground empirical enquiry, must take place inside of Canadian correctional institutions. Although only a small volume of qualitative research on Canadian prisons exists, there is even less mention or attention to the growing concerns related to protective custody units. My research is a starting point, but it is limited in its scope. My thesis only highlights the issues apparent at one unique field site; a single protective custody unit in one prairie province institution. To assess the situation of PC more broadly and gain greater understanding of whether the issues underlined here are generalizable, more qualitative research, conducted in different Canadian institutions, is needed.

While each institution may classify and handle their protective custody populations differently, the local specifics of correctional facilities may result in diverse compositions of age, race, or ethnicity being more present in PC units. It is also key to determine if differences in PC placement exist depending on whether the institution is a sentenced or remanded facility. It would be pertinent to compare how corrections manage and dictate protective custody, if differences or similarities exist, and how inmates can best navigate protection while incarcerated. Further research and attempts to fill these gaps in knowledge, would provide a more holistic understanding of classification implications inside Canadian prisons.

My own empirical research provides an on the ground understandings of protective custody by exploring the experiences of those actually on the unit. This focus provides insights into multiple dimensions to understanding PC. Qualitative research permits the analysis of language, the narrative story itself, and most importantly the raw emotion that often accompany narratives. While I did not focus on linguistic analysis in my thesis, my approach allowed me to describe the contemporary situation based on the experiences that my participants shared with me. Unfortunately, lived experiences and people's stories are often overlooked by quantitative research and therefore, statistics, for the purpose of this research, can only be supplementary.

### **POLICY IMPLICATIONS**

As my research is not representative, it should only be cautiously used in relation to any particular policy suggestions until further research has been conducted. However, further research could provide potential opportunities for policy and regulation changes for protective custody units, classification decisions, and those affected by the classification.

Based on the conversations I had with the incarcerated men in my study, it seems that protective custody holds little benefit for inmates in terms of safety from intimidation, violence,

or even prison politics. This points to the need to re-evaluate the purpose of protective custody and how it has potentially evolved into a new type of general population unit.

We should reassess the classification system and how decisions about incompatible inmates are made. My findings also speak to a need for sensitivity and in-depth placement training for correctional officers, especially those working in remand, as they play a key role in determining protective custody placements.

### **LIMITATIONS**

This research was exploratory and the scope of access we gained to inmates was unprecedented in Canadian prison research. As for any study, however, my study came with limitations. I did not aim to present findings that could be generalized to all protective custody units in the country or even the province. HBCC was a unique field site, and as mentioned, the entire prison housed approximately 65-75% protective custody inmates. Although the majority of inmates whom I had interviewed had been PC classified at other institutions and experienced the same political and stigmatizing implications of the categorization, I still do not aim to generalize these findings.

I interviewed a total of 28 participants and 3 high-ranking correctional staff. By the time I completed my fieldwork 12 new inmates had entered and exited East Wing. This gives a sense of the contingency of any prison research and means my research can only present the experiences and opinions of a small proportion of individuals housed on this specific PC unit. While I acknowledge the limitations of this research, the experiences and narratives provide more than enough insight to justify further inquiry. If nothing else, they speak to the clear need for greater research on the implications and experiences of protective custody.

Additionally, my research is limited in the ability to present it in the context of any reliant comparative findings relating to the purported shift in protective custody populations. The notion

that PC has changed in composition relies on minimal and relatively dated research. I did not have access to reliable statistically-tracked information on East Wing or PC units in general. Therefore, it would be difficult to firmly identify any shifts in population dynamics. However, this is where qualitative research shines and bridges the gaps presented by quantitative data. Although inmates spoke to how PC politics had changed over time and increased in numbers, quantitative data would have substantiated these findings.

Lastly, and most significantly, although I remained honest in my research and reflexive throughout the process of this project, power dynamics inherent in prison research will always exist when entering the worlds of vulnerable populations such as those incarcerated (Presser, 2009). The narratives they provide are rich with information, but can also be shaped by the circumstance and their perception of audience expectations. The narrative itself will be, humanly, “complicated, nonlinear, and unique” (Maruna 2015, p.ix). Therefore, even if I attempted to even the playing field to the best of my ability, I will never fully understand the experiences or the perceptions of those who have spent time in a correctional institution in which their freedoms and agency were diminished. Ultimately, I hope to have presented the perseverance of the individuals’ narratives who have experienced protective custody and how the PC classification may have impacted their lives.

## **CONCLUSION**

Protective custody does little to ‘protect’ inmates. My findings demonstrate that PC units and the related designation of ‘PC inmate’ can put inmates at greater risk of violence than on GP units. The low threshold for placing inmates on PC units means we’re placing more and more inmates into a unit where incompatibilities and overcrowding further contribute to unrest.

My research accentuates many factors for understanding protective custody in provincial sentenced institutions. I show how inmates perceive the impacts of how they are classified. My findings help us understand the institutional and interpersonal consequences of the protective custody classification. Organizational conditions within the institution in the form of structural restraints and the discrimination and precarity within the realm of social governance found on PC units are consequential – these informal and formal consequences ultimately reinforce each other (Bowker and Star, 2000, p.204).

Most of the incarcerated men I spoke with are cognizant of the stigma attached to a protective custody classification both outside and inside their living unit. However, they often did not become aware of the extent of the PC stigma until they had already made the decision to transfer or be placed on a PC unit.

For general population inmates, the stigma of PC is dichotomous, either you are a PC inmate or a GP inmate. The stigma associated with the PC classification is encapsulated by the phrase “skinner, rats, and scaredy cats”, which suggests that PC units contain the worst kinds of inmates. By contrast, some inmates entering the prison perceive the PC unit as safe, an easier time, and free of prison politics. However, as my findings suggest, PC units share similar politics and safety concerns as GP units, with the added stigma of being labeled a PC inmate for being housed with a higher concentration of debased inmates.

My findings show that inmates believe the dynamics of PC have changed, where PC units house a more diverse group of inmates, including first-timers, and those who identify as ex-gang members or affiliates. The latter two groups tend to subscribe to the inmate code, which considers those normally housed on PC to be deserving of threats, coercion, and violence.

Therefore, these debased inmates still face violence and being forced off of PC units as much as can occur on GP units.

Inside the PC unit, factors surrounding classification and the stigma associated with being a PC inmate expands into a complex, ambiguous, and precarious situation. Debased inmates are affected by a discredited stigma that is unescapable. Those who are based inmates, and even those with solid charges are often stuck in a liminal space of discredibility. In other words, because the contemporary PC population has expanded to include based and solid inmates seeking PC placement while still housing debased inmates, these incarcerated men are unsure of who they should socialize with and to not be miscategorized as a debased inmate. Therefore, based and solid inmates must engage with consistent and vigilant boundary work to navigate the discredited stigma. This is accomplished through checking the charges of others, promoting what they have accomplished, and displays of masculinity.

Ultimately, protective custody classification is not fulfilling any protective needs for inmates and in many ways, runs exactly like a general population unit. Inmates with bad charges are still facing retribution for their charges, and with inmates who do not have bad charges, they are constantly working to prove their moral reputation. All of these factors contribute to high levels of volatility in correctional facilities that need to be addressed.

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## Appendix I

### Information and Consent Form

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#### Background

I invite you to participate in this study 'Protective Custody: Prison Life in the Canadian Context. Through these interviews, I hope to understand your experiences and opinions about prison and how you navigate daily life inside. This research is being conducted independently by Professors Sandra Bucerius and Kevin Haggerty from the University of Alberta.

#### Purpose

The aim of this study is to explore how individuals navigate life inside prison. This research project specifically aims to understand the inner workings of protective custody units. This research would largely benefit scholars due to the lack thereof current research on Canadian correctional centres, especially the dynamics in protective custody units. The narratives provided from your interview will be used towards my Masters' Thesis research by providing a basis for knowledge on correctional conditions, identity construction, social relationships and program access.

#### Study Procedures

This research project will be conducted for over a 12-month period beginning in April of 2017. As a consenting participant, you will be asked to take part in an interview that may span from 1 hour or more in which you may share different aspects of prison life. The interview will be semi-structured and conducted in a narrative method which is meant to ensure that the participant can comfortably share personal experiences and beliefs in a story-telling or instance based format if desired. As part of the interview I will audio-record the interview to allow for analysis at a later date. Once the audio-recordings have been transcribed and analyzed they will be destroyed to ensure consistent anonymity. The information gathered will only be shared between me and my fellow research investigators.

#### Benefits

Participants in this research may consider the contribution of their narratives as beneficial to scholarly works in narrative criminology and structure/agency research. The act of reflecting upon personal identity and experiences within the prison may be interpreted as a liberating process. Through this research, we hope that the information obtained will allow us to better understand the dynamics of prison life, identity, and social relations.

Risks

Considering the topic of reflection for this research, there is a potential to generate negative emotional responses or memory recollection during the interview. There may be other risks to participating in this study that are unknown. If any potentially negative implications do arise during the process, we can slow down, take a break or end the interview immediately.

Voluntary Participation

You are under no obligation to participate in this study and through your consent; your admission into this study will be completely voluntary. Under no circumstances are you required to answer any particular question or provide information you are uncomfortable with sharing. At any point during the process of the research you are permitted to opt out without penalty. Once notified any information/data accumulated may be removed from the research prior to the research group leaving the institution on May 6<sup>th</sup>, 2017.

Confidentiality & Anonymity

The research obtained from these interviews and observations are intended to be used as part of my Masters’ thesis research. As participants, your information and data will be non-identifying. Pseudonyms will be utilized to preserve anonymity e.g.) use of randomly assigned numbers; Respondent 12. The information will only be accessible to me and my supervisors Dr. Sandra Bucerius and Dr. Kevin Haggerty. All data including transcripts and analysis will be kept on an encrypted cloud drive and will be destroyed after a minimum of five years following the completion of the research project.

Further Information

If you have any further questions regarding ethical guidelines as stated by the Research Ethics Board (REB) at the University of Alberta, please refer to the Tri-Council Policy Statement (TCPS) Tri-Council Policy Statement: Ethical Conduct for Research Involving Humans or contact the Research Ethics Office (REO) at 780-492-0459 or reoffice@ualberta.ca.

Consent Statement

I have read this form and the research study has been explained thoroughly to me. I have been given the opportunity to ask questions pertaining to the research and ethics surrounding the research and have had them answered satisfactorily. If I have additional questions, I have been informed of who to contact. I agree to participate in this research study as described above and will receive a copy of this consent form after I have signed and agreed.

\_\_\_\_\_  
Participant’s Name (Printed) & Signature

\_\_\_\_\_  
Date

\_\_\_\_\_  
Name (Printed) & Signature of Researcher Obtaining Consent

\_\_\_\_\_  
Date

## Appendix II

### Interview/Prompt Guide

*The current state of the interview guide is the result of topics that have occurred in other prison population interviews. This interview guide will evolve progressively as interviews occur to adjust for new topics that may be brought up by respondents.*

*These questions may also not all be touched on in all interviews as the interviews will be guided by respondents. Generally, prompts 1 and 2 will be answered across all interviews and otherwise be guided by the respondents.*

1. Biographical Data
  - a. Tell us a little bit about yourself
  
2. Experiences in prison System
  - a. Daily activities (self/others)
  - b. Food quality
  - c. General population?
  - d. Protective custody?
  - e. Access to information and resources in the prison
  
3. How do you stay in contact with people outside?
  
4. Political/social/religious causes?
  
5. Leadership?
  - a. Gen population?
  - b. Protective custody?
  
6. Composition of Protective Custody?
  
7. Have you been to prison before?
  - a. Were you on Gen. Pop?
  
8. How did you end up on protective custody?
  
9. In now for sex offences, how have things changed?
  - a. Inmate relations/CO relations?
  
10. Are beefs a problem on this unit?
  
11. Perception of snitches/ex-gang/skinners?

12. Radicalization – freemen on the land, white supremacists
13. Three things you would change if you could?
14. Any suggestions for other topics or questions you think would be useful?

**Appendix III**

**Sign-up Sheet**

<b>Name/Cell/Bed Number</b>	<b>Unit/Wing Number</b>	<b>Date</b>