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CRIMINOLOGY

ARTICLE

"That shit doesn't fly": Subcultural constraints on prison radicalization

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Abstract

Many observers describe prison subcultures as inherently and irredeemably antisocial. Research directly ties prison subcultures to violence, gang membership, and poor reintegration. In extreme cases, research has also suggested that prison subcultures contribute to incarcerated people joining radical groups or embracing violent extremist beliefs. These claims, however, ignore key differences in the larger cultural and social context of prisons. We examine the relationship between prison subcultures and prison radicalization based on semistructured qualitative interviews with 148 incarcerated men and 131 correctional officers from four western Canadian prisons. We outline several imported features of the prison subculture that make incarcerated people resilient to radicalized and extremist messaging. These features include 1) national cultural imaginaries; 2) the racial profile of a prison, including racial sorting or a lack thereof; and 3) how radicalization allowed incarcerated men and correctional officers to act outside the otherwise agreed-to subcultural rules. Our research findings stress the importance of contemplating broader sociocultural influences when trying to understand

the relationship between radicalization and prison dynamics and politics.

KEYWORDS
gangs, prisons, prison codes, race, radicalization, subcultures

1 | INTRODUCTION

Incarcerating people who have participated in terrorist-related activities raises scholarly and practical concerns about whether prisons can become a site for the spread of radicalization. Academics and policy makers have spent considerable effort discussing the scope, pace, and dynamics of radicalization in prisons. One line of thought presents prison radicalization as a pressing concern (Cilluffo et al., 2007; Roy, 2017; Wilner, 2010). Another suggests the nexus between prison and radicalization is exaggerated (Jones, 2014; Khosrokhavar, 2013). That said, no one dismisses the *possibility* of prison radicalization, despite downplaying its *probability* in North America and Europe (Decker & Pyrooz, 2019; Hamm, 2013; Useem & Clayton, 2009).

Research on this topic usually focuses on explaining how and why incarcerated people become radicalized. A dominant strand of work concentrates on institutional legitimacy, generally assuming that disorderly prisons, characterized by violence, crime, and overcrowding, possess less legitimacy in the eyes of incarcerated people. Scholars argue these legitimacy gaps provide credibility to the extremist proselytizing of incarcerated charismatic leaders (Hamm, 2009; Wilner, 2010). Such works have identified a strong correlation between illegitimate, so-called "failed" prisons and increased levels of ideological radicalization (Hamm, 2013; Williams & Liebling, 2022).

Although this line of research is productive, it is also based on presuppositions around institutional characteristics that foster radicalization. We argue, however, that subcultural constraints operating inside prisons may instead mitigate and impede the embrace of radicalization. This article examines how normative subcultural codes inhibit prison radicalization, irrespective of institutional legitimacy or disorder. We do so by drawing on 148 interviews with incarcerated men and 131 interviews with correctional officers in four different prisons in western Canada. We identify three vital but overlooked aspects of prison subculture that seem to hinder or mitigate radicalization, including 1) nationalist beliefs, 2) racial groups aligned against radicalization, and 3) acting as an informant.

2 | CONTEXT AND LITERATURE REVIEW

2.1 | Radicalization, Prison, and Subculture

Radicalization is a widely defined concept that seems to be understood differently depending on the institutional setting (Onursal & Kirkpatrick, 2019; Schultz et al., 2021a). Many researchers and practitioners now refer to radicalization as a component of ideologically motivated violent extremism (IMVE). This shift in terminology is designed to address inconsistencies and underlying problems with definitions in the field (Sedgwick, 2010). For our purposes, we employ the definition of radicalization produced by the Royal Canadian Mounted Police (RCMP):

> Radicalization is the process by which individuals are introduced to an overtly ideological message and belief system that encourages movement from moderate, mainstream beliefs toward extreme views … radical thinking becomes a threat to national security when it leads an individual to espouse or engage in violence as a means of promoting political, ideological, or religious extremism. (2016, p. 6)

Here, support for engaging with violence is the determinative variable. This emphasis makes it helpful in understanding a comprehensive array of groups, including White supremacists, religious extremists, so-called "Sovereign Citizens" (aka, "Freemen on the Land"), eco-terrorists, and even loosely coordinated movements like QAnon conspiracy theorists (Amarnath & Argentino, 2020; Basra & Neumann, 2016). Radicalization is typically conceived of as a cumulative process that affects a large group of individuals but that culminates in only a few individuals or groups becoming willing to engage in violence for a specific cause (Jensen et al., 2020; McCauley & Moskalenko, 2017; Vergani et al., 2020). Officials and academics agree that this process does not happen quickly, easily, or consistently (Horgan, 2008; Silke, 2014), although they often differ in assessing what factors contribute to radicalization.

Early models conceived of radicalization as a straightforward, sometimes linear process (Moghaddam, 2005; Sageman, 2008). Although useful, these approaches are now critiqued for relying on suspect assumptions, limited case studies, and shaky empirical foundations (Ahmad & Monaghan, 2019; Jensen et al., 2020; Vergani et al., 2020). Hafez and Mullins (2015) suggested that we should instead conceive of the radicalization process as involving a constellation of factors—a "puzzle," with different phenomena being influential depending on the specifics of the local situation and group (see also Sinai, 2014). Factors that contribute to radicalization include personal victimization, charismatic leadership, political grievances, a desire for excitement, and the influence of martyrs (see, e.g., Cottee & Hayward, 2011; McCauley & Moskalenko, 2017).

One of the more consistent factors apparent among radicalized individuals is a personal attachment to like-minded subcultural groups and a related desire for small-group solidarity, social cohesion, and a sense of belonging (Bosi & Della Porta, 2012; Cottee & Hayward, 2011; McCauley & Moskalenko, 2017). Abrahms, for example, concluded that "people become terrorists … to develop strong affective ties with other terrorist members. In other words, the preponderance of evidence is that people participate in terrorist organizations for the social solidarity, not for their political return" (2008, p. 94).

Recent work by LaFree et al. (2020) suggested that individuals who become radicalized while imprisoned are significantly more likely to engage in postincarceration violent extremist behavior. Likewise, researchers have identified prisons in various national jurisdictions as sites where radicalization occurs (Roy, 2017; Williams & Liebling, 2022). Hamm's (2013) research in California's New and Old Folsom prisons concludes that radicalization relates to how incarcerated individuals perceive the legitimacy of the facility in which they are incarcerated. Poorly administered prisons characterized by violence and overcrowding are less legitimate in the eyes of incarcerated people, thereby fostering and reinforcing radical messaging. Hamm also suggested that in his research sites, a group of charismatic individuals promoted a distorted form of "pris-lam" (prison Islam), which contributed to the radicalization process. He noted the existence of "small inmate cliques known for using gang methods of coercion and 'cut-and-paste' version of the Koran to recruit new members" (Hamm, 2009, p. 144).

Other authors have been more sanguine about the apparent connection between prisons and radicalization. Useem and Clayton (2009) interviewed 270 incarcerated people and 210 prison

officials in 10 different U.S. states and found widespread solidarity among incarcerated people against radicalization (see also Decker & Pyrooz, 2019). Likewise, Liebling et al.'s (2011) study of Whitemoor Penitentiary in the United Kingdom downplayed the potential threat of Islamic prison extremism. They also suggested, however, that confirmed radicals occupied influential positions in the prison hierarchy as new converts to Islam relied on those individuals for spiritual guidance. In a recent article, Williams and Liebling (2022) suggested this finding remains true and advanced this area of study by describing specific prison characteristics that shape and influence potential radicalization.

These studies help us understand how prison radicalization functions. None of them, however, contemplated how radicalization interacts with broader features of prison life or whether such features might limit or interrupt extremist messages. Specifically, if subcultural dynamics can help to *foster* radicalization, then could the distinctive set of norms, beliefs, and behavior expectations that are part of the prison subculture also *attenuate* the radicalization process, thereby explaining why prison radicalization remains confined to a "spectacular few" (Hamm, 2013)?

Criminological thinking about subcultures has traditionally focused on studying the belief systems characteristic of criminally involved groups, such as gangs. In early works, authors conceived of the gang itself as exerting a consistently influential normative force that shaped and explained members' behavior (Cloward & Ohlin, 1960; Cohen, 1955; Hazlehurst & Hazlehurst, 2018; Thrasher, 2013). More recent interpretive and cultural theory has embraced a broader and more flexible understanding of subculture as systems of meanings, codes, and values shared (to varying degrees) by a subset of individuals who may or may not identify with a particular group (Jimerson & Oware, 2006; Martin, 2009).

In studying prison subcultures, researchers have focused their attention on the content and operation of the "convict code" (aka "prison code" or "inmate code"), something understood to be a characteristic attribute of prison life. Prison codes typically entail prescriptions and proscriptions for how incarcerated individuals should behave, thereby shaping interpersonal and organizational dynamics behind prison walls (Irwin & Cressey, 1962; Jacobs, 1977; Mitchell et al., 2017). As Hensley et al. (2003, p. 298) noted, "To survive in prison, inmates must learn to reject the norms of free society and adopt the new normative order."

A somewhat standard set of prison code attributes seem common to prisons in different locations, although some variations occur based on local institutional dynamics (see Kaminski, 2018; Liebling & Arnold, 2012; Mitchell et al., 2017; Sykes & Messinger, 1960; Symkovych, 2018). Some of the code's standard expectations are that incarcerated individuals should "do their own time" and should not act as informants or fraternize with correctional officers or sex offenders. Incarcerated men should also "act like a man," a wide-ranging dictate touching on gendered behavioral and interpersonal dynamics relating to emotional comportment (Crewe, 2014; Evans & Wallace, 2008).

Analysts studying such codes must be attuned to their dualistic nature. On the one hand, the prison code includes prescriptions that exert a regulatory force over individuals, steering behavior in prescribed directions to varying degrees depending on situational specifics. On the other hand, incarcerated individuals can invoke the code in a flexible, pragmatic, or contextualized manner to justify and rationalize different behaviors (Jimerson & Oware, 2006; Schultz et al., 2021b; Wieder, 1974). Consequently, the prison code can be both a cause of conduct and what Mills (1940) referred to as a "vocabulary of motive" that incarcerated individuals use strategically to account for their actions.

A large volume of research on the prison code has focused on spectacular and dysfunctional elements, including how it valorizes violence (Byrne et al., 2008; Mears et al., 2013; Trammell,

2012). The code can also have a countercultural or oppositional influence that undermines community reintegration and future success (Baffour, 2021; DeLisi et al., 2011; Nagin et al., 2009). Research on how criminally involved groups operate in the community, however, has suggested that such subcultures may have positive effects in preventing or limiting antisocial behavior, even extending to prosocial influences for local neighborhoods. Pattillo (1998), for example, found that the gang she studied sought to minimize the immediate harms of criminality by taking steps to limit street-corner drug selling, gang rivalry, and vandalism. Venkatesh (2008) found that gang members worked to settle neighborhood disputes and prevented residents from engaging in unwanted behaviors such as drinking in building lobbies and engaging in the sex trade (as buyers or sellers) around children. Likewise, Bucerius (2014) described how German drug dealers prohibited heavy drug users from loitering in what they considered "their" neighborhood and tried to prevent younger relatives from getting involved in the drug trade. Being attentive to the possibility that aspects of prison culture could have comparable prosocial dimensions opens new avenues for contemplating prison subcultures, thereby providing unique insights into forces that may oppose the emergence of radical groups.

2.2 | Research Setting

On any day in Canada, approximately 38,000 adult men and women are detained in a correctional institution. In the most recent comprehensive data available (2018–2019), this amount represents a national incarceration rate of 127 per 100,000 individuals (Malakieh, 2020).[1] Depending on their crimes' seriousness, these individuals will be held in one of Canada's two correctional systems: 1) the federal system or 2) the provincial/territorial system, divided along jurisdictional lines into 13 separate administrations. The federal system detains those sentenced to a period of incarceration of 2 years or more. These individuals account for a comparatively small percentage (2.3 percent) of all people who receive a custodial sentence in Canada, resulting in a daily federal prisoner population count of approximately 15,000 individuals (Malakieh, 2020).

We conducted our research in prisons that are part of the provincial/territorial correctional systems. Provincial/territorial governments operate 177 such institutions across the country and detain an average of 23,738 adult individuals daily (Malakieh, 2020). Although considerable variability exists in the structure of provincial and territorial institutions, they comprise two types of facilities. First, sentenced institutions detain adults serving a term of incarceration of less than 2 years. Second, remand facilities (often called "jails" in the United States) hold people awaiting trial. Depending on trial outcomes, remanded individuals may transfer to a federal penitentiary, a provincial sentenced institution, released for "time served," or released after being found not guilty. Therefore, remanded people can include individuals arrested for comparatively minor offenses, such as administrative breaches, minor theft, and impaired driving, and those accused of serious and high-profile crimes, including murder or terrorist activities. All remand facilities are maximum-security institutions and provide little educational, rehabilitative, or vocational programming (Office of the Correctional Investigator, 2017; Pelvin, 2019). In 2019, more than 70 percent of provincially incarcerated people were held on remand status (Malakieh, 2020).

The median sentence length for all prisons in Canada in 2018–2019 was approximately 35 days. Such comparatively short sentences result in a stark discrepancy, particularly at the provincial

[1] Policies implemented during the COVID-19 pandemic have changed Canadian incarceration rates. Although dated, these statistics accurately reflect the system when we collected these data.

level, where annual prison admissions are high (~369,000) compared with the daily provincial prison count (~38,000). Individuals incarcerated in remand facilities tend to serve short sentences, usually less than 1 month and often less than 2 weeks (Malakieh, 2020). Some incarcerated people, however, spend years in remand for various legal and organizational reasons.[2] Many individuals also repeatedly return to provincial prison, often dozens of times over many years.

Although terrorism and radicalization do not have as much salience in Canada as in some countries, it is a concern for security officials (see Crelinsten, 2012; Thompson & Bucerius, 2019; Tishler et al., 2020).[3] Security agencies have struggled to identify returning "foreign fighters" who left Canada to fight for ISIS in Syria and Iraq. Recent media coverage suggests important gaps exist in the Canadian security establishment's understanding of in-prison radicalization (Tunney, 2022a). In the province where we did our research, officials monitor growth in the Sovereign Citizen and alt-right/White supremacist movements, something that has come to the fore in recent protests in Ottawa, Canada's capital city (McCoy et al., 2019; Perry & Scrivens, 2016; Tunney, 2022b; Weir, 2015). Consequently, observers have contemplated whether the link often seen in Europe between imprisonment, criminal behavior, and radicalization is emerging in Canada (Wilner, 2010).

3 | SAMPLE, METHOD, AND ANALYSIS

3.1 | Sample

Our data set consists of semistructured qualitative interviews with 587 incarcerated men and women and 131 correctional officers from four provincial prisons in western Canada. We conducted these interviews in four 3–4-week periods between September 2016 and October 2017. In this article, we rely on 148 interviews with incarcerated men (what we refer to as the "study group" in table 1) across four different institutions (P1–P4). Many incarcerated participants did not have detailed views on or experiences with radicalization. Generally, when we asked these individuals about radicalization, they told us they had not experienced or even heard of radicalized people or groups in prison and had not thought about the topic before our interview, a finding consistent with the limited nature of prison radicalization found in other studies (Hamm, 2013; Khosrokhavar, 2013; Liebling et al., 2011; Useem & Clayton, 2009). These participants agreed with the major findings we outline below but were keener to talk about other aspects of prison life more immediately relevant to them. Of the 492 men we interviewed, 344 fell into this category (referred to as "control group" in table 1). The remaining 148 participants—30 percent of the men we interviewed—had detailed views and insights into radicalization, and the topic represented a major component of our discussion with them.

[2] Incarcerated people stay for a prolonged period for many reasons. For example, laws dictate that if a case has not been decided by the court within a 2-year window, the charges are dismissed. If the incarcerated person changes lawyers within those 2 years, however, the 2-year clock starts anew.

[3] Canada has a lengthy history of ideological violence. Among others, the Front de Liberation du Québec (FLQ) crisis peaked with kidnappings, murders, and 137 bombings between 1968 and 1970 (Maloney, 2000). Sikh extremists planted suitcase bombs on Air India flight 182 in 1985, killing 329 passengers, crew, and groundcrew in two explosions (Failler, 2009). And three lone actor attacks in 2014 culminated with an October incident in which a lone gunman murdered a soldier and exchanged gunfire with police in the halls of Parliament Hill (Perry & Scrivens, 2020).

TABLE 1 Participant demographics

	All Participants					Study Group					Control Group				
	All (492)	P1 (199)	P2 (55)	P3 (113)	P4 (125)	All (148)	P1 (76)	P2 (16)	P3 (23)	P4 (33)	All (344)	P1 (123)	P2 (39)	P3 (90)	P4 (92)
Age (Years)															
Mean	34.1	35.0	37.1	32.1	32.7	33.7	35.1	33.3	28.0	32.0	34.3	35.0	38.5	32.5	32.9
Range	46	43	44	31	44	43	43	18	6	27	46	39	44	31	44
Race															
White	48%	35%	42%	53%	56%	49%	42%	67%	52%	52%	47%	26%	29%	53%	58%
Indigenous	39%	46%	58%	38%	31%	27%	33%	33%	22%	18%	45%	60%	71%	42%	35%
Black	6%	7%	0%	4%	8%	12%	11%	0%	9%	21%	3%	4%	0%	2%	3%
Other	7%	12%	0%	6%	5%	12%	14%	0%	17%	9%	4%	10%	0%	3%	3%
Marital Status															
Married	14%	26%	19%	12%	2%	18%	31%	22%	9%	3%	12%	23%	18%	13%	2%
Relationship	32%	48%	48%	20%	25%	34%	54%	11%	17%	21%	32%	44%	64%	21%	26%
Single	54%	25%	32%	67%	73%	48%	15%	67%	74%	76%	56%	34%	18%	66%	72%

We recruited participants from four different prisons (see table 1), representing between 22 and 35 percent of the total prison population at each institution (with P1 being the largest institution). The demographics of our study and control groups (see table 1) reflected the makeup of the Canadian provincial prison population during our research period (Malakieh, 2020).

White men represented the largest group in this sample but were underrepresented compared with the Canadian population. Indigenous people, who comprise approximately 4.5 percent of Canada's overall population, and 6.5 percent in the province where we collected our data, were dramatically overrepresented, representing 39 percent of the men in our study. Although high, this percentage is slightly lower than provincial averages of incarceration of Indigenous men in some parts of the country and significantly lower than the incarceration rate for Indigenous women in Canada (Bucerius et al., 2021; Malakieh, 2020).[4]

Our participants in the study group were more likely to be married or in relationships than those in the control group. We speculate this variable may be spurious, generally reflecting that our study and control groups averaged 34 years of age, slightly higher than the Canadian average of 31 years for men's first marriage (Milan, 2013). Relationships played no role in radicalization narratives or perspectives in these specific data (but see Schultz et al., 2021b).

Many participants were still awaiting trial, meaning we did not acquire detailed information on their sentence length. All participants had been incarcerated for at least 4 weeks at the time of the interview, however. Participants' mean length of time incarcerated was 11 months,[5] and several participants in the remand facilities (P1 and P4) were expecting federal

[4] Ninety-two of our 587 incarcerated participants were women. Although the incarcerated men who discussed radicalization had personal experiences with radicalizations or strong opinions on the subject, the women in our sample uniformly stated that radicalization was not a topic of concern on women's units. Recognizing that the gendered dynamics at play warrant further analysis (Berko et al., 2010), we exclude incarcerated women from our analysis and focus on the subcultural factors that incarcerated men discussed.

[5] Most participants described lives characterized by repeated imprisonment, averaging 9 separate incarcerations (with 15 incarcerations, on average, for our Indigenous participants, 6 for our White participants and 1 for our other participants). As such, sentence length or "time since incarcerated" is a misleading category for us to consider as our participants' views on prison dynamics were shaped by multiple incarcerations in multiple institutions over prolonged periods of time.

sentences (greater than 2 years). Each participant had well-formed opinions on prison life as a result.

3.2 | Method

We interviewed correctional officers and incarcerated people in two remand and two sentenced prisons. One remand center detained more than 700 individuals, and the second—the largest prison in Canada—housed 1,800 incarcerated people on units ranging from 50 to 80 people. The third institution, a facility holding approximately 300 incarcerated men, was one of Canada's oldest prisons. This facility's living units included open dorm units housing between 40 and 60 incarcerated people and Alcatraz-style tiers made up of barred cells. The final prison was a hybrid facility housing approximately 500 people, including 70 percent remanded and 30 percent sentenced people. The prisons in our research setting were broadly representative of the mixture of western Canadian institutions (based on age, size, prisoner population, supervision style, and remand vs. sentenced composition).[6] These institutions also possessed attributes other researchers have associated with radicalization, including violence, overcrowding, a disproportionately marginalized population, and minimal perceived legitimacy in the eyes of some incarcerated people (Hamm, 2009; Liebling & Straub, 2012; Williams & Liebling, 2022).

We entered each prison as a group of six to eight researchers (two principal investigators and four to six research assistants). To recruit incarcerated people, we made public announcements on the living units explaining that we were conducting research on incarcerated life experiences and group memberships and asked for volunteers. Typically, one researcher conducted the interviews on one living unit, allowing us to disperse the team across different units and reach a broad cross-section of incarcerated people. Many incarcerated people were eager to participate, and we recruited participants from almost all units at each field site, including protective custody, gang, special handling, segregation, and solitary confinement. We excluded health and mental health care units because of concerns about informed consent. Interviews were one-on-one and took place in private rooms, usually on the living units.

To recruit officers, we made general announcements at preshift staff briefings and through e-mail announcements sent to all prison staff. Officers usually signed up after seeing us on "their" prison units and having built initial rapport by talking to us about our study's goals. We also relied on chain-referral ("snowball") sampling (Biernacki & Waldorf, 1981) to recruit additional officers. Officer interviews took place in either private offices or empty rooms in the prisons or coffee shops. Before the interviews started, we explained to both incarcerated and officer participants that we would keep the interviews strictly confidential and anonymous. We also informed them that we would assign pseudonyms to participants in any publications stemming from the data and that we would obscure identifying information.

We employed a generalized interview guide, but as is common in qualitative studies, participants' experiences also shaped the interviews' directions (Charmaz, 2014). By allowing our participants' unique perspectives to drive the conversation, we created an interactional situation that enabled us to collect and co-create a larger story-arc of how life experiences shaped

[6] Although variety in prison design and philosophy make it difficult to generalize, these facilities were reminiscent of stereotypical American prisons (although less racially segregated; see Tetrault et al., 2020), as opposed to more progressive Nordic-style institutions (Eriksson & Pratt, 2014).

and influenced perceptions and involvement with subcultures both in and outside of prison (Presser & Sandberg, 2015). In Scheper-Hughes's words, we became the "minor historian" for people who otherwise would have no history (1992, p. 29). We requested permission to digitally record each interview, which participants (with one exception) consistently granted. Interviews averaged approximately 90 minutes for incarcerated men and 50 minutes for correctional officers. Recordings were transcribed verbatim and thematically coded using NVivo 11.

3.3 | Analysis

To ensure analytical rigor, we drew on grounded theory's principles and heuristic devices when coding and analyzing our data set (Charmaz, 2014). The authors and three research assistants initially coded the first six interviews line by line to identify our data categories and themes. After this initial coding phase, we modified our interview protocols to explore emerging themes in greater detail. Throughout each data collection and analysis phase, we used a constant comparative method to compare our initial themes and codes with new emergent themes, identified patterns and gaps in our initial coding scheme, and developed new conceptual categories (Silverman, 2015).

We developed twin coding schemes: one for incarcerated people and one for correctional officers. We used basic tabular data to identify similarities and differences in the data and to verify the overall strength of patterns. This method also helped us identify cases that deviated from our observed patterns. Our inductive analysis around the themes of subculture, the inmate code, and radicalization began by exploring how incarcerated men and officers think about radical groups and recruitment in prison, whether these individuals or groups of radicalized people hold prominent places in the prisoner hierarchy, and whether uniform measures exist to govern recruitment and radical groups. After completing our interviews, the authors and three research assistants coded six randomly chosen interviews to determine whether our coding scheme needed additional amendments. We coded the transcripts once we consistently reached between 85 percent and 90 percent overlap on any given interview.

4 | FINDINGS

Our research team interviewed several incarcerated men who fit the definition of "radical" based on the RCMP definition, established extremist group membership, or self-identification. Incarcerated men and correctional officers told us about the existence of other such individuals. That said, we found no evidence in our research sites that radicalization was a prominent structuring force or that charismatic leaders were promoting radical messages (Hamm, 2009; Roy, 2017). Officer Jason, for example, was adamant that we would find few radicals in his prison: "Fuck your research on radicals man. … I bet you're coming back with under three percent. And I would say even under one percent." Although correctional officers did not dismiss the possibility of ideological group recruitment (Schultz et al., 2020), most officers were not concerned this posed an immediate danger. This finding aligns with research findings that prison radicalization is uncommon in North America (Hamm, 2013; Useem & Clayton, 2009).

As we explored this topic, we found incarcerated men articulating a strong sense of solidarity against any perceived radical beliefs (Jones, 2014). In the following exchanges, we separately asked

Daniel and Raphael, two White men, what would happen if it became known that a radical or terrorist was on their unit:

Interviewer: …like if some guy here [was radical]?
Daniel: No, he gets locked right up a 100 percent.
Interviewer: By you guys?
Daniel: Oh, yeah, right in the range [living unit]. … We're so against that.

Interviewer: And what if a couple prisoners were saying some pro-terrorist stuff here? How would you respond to that?
Raphael: They'd get hurt. … If there's any of that ISIS part, they'd be hurt bad.

Benjamin, an Indigenous man, also spoke to this theme, drawing a clear line between routine "criminals" and radicalization:

> No. They would never be able to recruit in this area [prison] because the majority of us—99.9 percent of us—are Canadian. We're criminals, and some of us are here because we support our habits. Some of us were drinking and driving. Some of us have weed. Some of us have different things. Yes, fine, we break the law. But when it comes to doing something against our country, no. It just doesn't happen.

Interviewees provided subtle details about the subcultural values opposing radicalization and how these shaped group dynamics. Despite experiencing prison conditions ostensibly conducive to radicalization, our participants understood these subcultural factors as a check on radicalization, influencing how radicalized messaging was informally policed. In what follows, we identify three specific factors that seem to play a role in making incarcerated men resilient to the prospect of radicalization: 1) nationalist beliefs, 2) race relations within the prison, and 3) unofficial rules relating to informing. We present these in turn.

4.1 | Nationalist Beliefs

Most participants focused on stereotypical jihadist-style groups when discussing radicalization. They also knew of and had encountered other ideological groups, however, including White supremacists and antigovernment extremists known as "Sovereign Citizens." Although they engaged in contextual and fluid forms of boundary work (Lamont & Molnár, 2002) to distinguish "good Muslims" from "bad Muslim terrorists," things were more straightforward with these other groups, which incarcerated men denounced in unambiguous terms.

This finding held true for participants of all ethnic and racial backgrounds. Muslim participants, however, strongly emphasized why those belonging to or supporting jihadist-style groups were misguided and out of step with the teachings and their understanding of Islam. Abdi, a man of North African heritage, described it this way:

> [In] the media, we are the worst people, we are ISIS, we are the terrorists, showing always blood and stuff [when they discuss our religion] and we are not. The most peaceful people in Canada—it is Muslims. It's the highest doctrine in all the entire of North America, it is Muslims and Arabic people.

Men like Abdi made statements that reflected the general post–9/11 burden that Muslims face, simultaneously "justifying" a separation between Islam and terrorism and resisting suspicions that they were part of a "suspect community" (Cherney & Muphy, 2016). In contrast, White participants emphasized their discontent with supremacist (and jihadi) groups and/or Sovereign Citizens but did not feel the need to justify that their Whiteness differed from that of these groups.

Themes of race were reflected in our demographics (table 1) as fewer Indigenous men and more Black men were represented in our study than in our control group. We speculate the lower representation of Indigenous men is related to the fact that our Indigenous participants were more marginalized (Bucerius et al., 2021) and were more eager to discuss their life histories vis à vis Canadian colonialism, as opposed to radicalization. Our Black participants were disproportionally drawn from Somali and Ethiopian backgrounds—two ethnic groups connected to radical groups in Canadian media and security circles (Thompson & Bucerius, 2019). Unsurprisingly, these men had critical comments and experiences with radicalization and antiradicalization programming in their communities. Like other Muslim participants, these men were particularly vocal about distancing themselves from radical groups (Cherney & Muphy, 2016). Musa, a Canadian-born Muslim man of Somali heritage, provided an example:

> *Interviewer*: Do you ever see anybody sharing radical beliefs in prison?
> *Musa*: Hell no! I'm a Canadian, man. I'd kick their ass. … Wouldn't you kick someone's ass if they're talkin' crazy about your country? … I wouldn't rat him out. I'd just kick the shit out of him, and then that would be about it.

Our participants' rationale for condemnations explicitly drew on perceptions of broader Canadian values. Incarcerated men referred to a restrained but palpable form of Canadian nationalism/pride and what they saw as a series of related Canadian values (Tetrault et al., 2020). Although Canadians often agonize over the nature of Canada's national identity, perhaps the most consistent point of reference is multiculturalism (Day, 2000), which Canadian politicians often celebrate. Incarcerated individuals repeatedly mentioned multiculturalism when discussing why radicalization was not a phenomenon in these prisons. Here both Tyler (a White man) and Christopher (an Indigenous man) pointed to such multicultural "Canadian-ness" as helping to explain the antipathy to radicalization in prison:

> *Tyler*: Yeah, we're all Canadians here. We're all big-hearted even though we're all criminals. But oh yeah, we don't appreciate that shit [terrorists or radicals]. We don't wanna hear any of that talk. We hate those kind of people. Like, even skinheads, stuff like that, I don't see that either.
> *Christopher*: That's the thing. …We all coincide in jail together. There's no real skinheads. There's no real Nazis. There's no real White Aryan resistance. There's no Aryan Vanguard. There's no … Islamic extremists … because we all do business together.
> *Interviewer*: Have you ever met people like that?
> *Christopher*: Not that I've met, no. Nothing. Because look, Canada is a multicultural society, right?

These excerpts connected nationalistic values with prison subcultures, suggesting such values shaped specific prison codes, especially those about radicalization. Fifty-two percent of our study group ($n = 148$) mentioned how such beliefs were contrary to or worked against the prospect of radicalization. This percentage was true concerning forms of extremism comparatively common in western Canada, such as White racism (Perry & Scrivens, 2016). Tyler was clear that his imprisonment and criminal activities did not preclude him from nationalistic pride. He directly credited a shared Canadian identity as a key factor in explaining why the men on his unit were "big-hearted" and, therefore, explicitly antiracist.

As Christopher suggested, Canada's celebrated multicultural values directly shaped the prison subculture. Many participants indicated that racism or radicalization were "un-Canadian." Most told us they found radical groups' violent terroristic actions repulsive and explicitly cited their "Canadian-ness" in rejecting extremist ideological viewpoints.

A related component of this perspective drew explicit comparisons between Canadian and U.S. culture. Incarcerated men frequently saw Canadian culture and values as different and better than those in the United States in some crucial respects. This characteristic "not-American" patriotic/nationalistic narrative contributed to participants expressing disgust with what they perceived as violent, radical, and racist prison subcultures in the United States, which they consistently (and positively) contrasted with Canadian prisons. As Tyler, a White man put it, "There's nothin' like that in here, [but] in the States, [racism is] huge." As we outline below, many of these comments directly compared how Canada and the United States treat ethnicity and race differently (see also Phillips, 2012).

Our participants made these claims in a context that, although unique compared with the well-known racial inequalities of the United States, was nonetheless not as free from racism nor as embracing of multiculturalism as study participants implied (see, e.g., Dua et al., 2005). For example, when drawing on their understanding of Canadian multiculturalism and their interpretation of Canada being less racist than their Southern neighbor, our participants misinterpreted the dramatic levels of racial inequality in the prisons they lived in (see the overrepresentation of Indigenous people). In particular, they tended to interpret the fact that the prison contained a wide range of individuals from different cultures and ethnicities as a sign of "Canadian multiculturalism at work" rather than seeing this as the severe overincarceration of specific ethnic groups (see Tetrault et al., 2020).

4.2 | Racial Groups Aligned Against Radicalization

U.S. research has shown that incarcerated people group together along racial lines (Skarbek, 2014). As Wacquant (2001) and Walker (2016) observed, race is the master status for incarcerated people in the United States. These racial cleavages can involve institutions sorting incarcerated people into units based on their racial background and incarcerated individuals self-selecting into such groupings. That situation stands in marked contrast to the racial dynamics in the prisons we studied. Institutions did not sort units or work groups based on racial background. Likewise, incarcerated individuals constantly downplayed any suggestion that race or ethnicity governed their social interactions, claiming that such interactions ran counter to Canadian multicultural values. Alex, a White man, spoke for many participants when he pushed back against suggestions that racial tension contributed to prison violence:

> *Alex*: I've never seen a fight that was like to do with religion or skin color. It's always to do with something else, right? Like the way you carry yourself, if your word is good.

Regarding incarcerated Muslims, approximately five to ten percent of participants identified as Muslim.[7] Most incarcerated people and correctional officers immediately envisioned Muslim-affiliated groups like ISIS when discussing radicalization. A young Black man, Rylan, provided an example: "[My roommate] was singing songs at night. Like he was a Muslim, right? So he would sing like a terrorist song." Their views about any apparent connection between Islam and terrorism involved differentiating between a quasi-mythical "radical Muslim" and the "non-radical Muslim" incarcerated men they knew and interacted with regularly (Lamont & Founier, 1992; Lamont & Molnár, 2002). As Jayden, an indigenous Muslim man, put it, "Most people understand, everybody has their own opinion. That person might be anti-Muslim, but the guy next to him is pro-Muslim [even though] both are not Muslim, right." Leo, a Hispanic man, agreed: "The Muslims are not like these ISIS guys, you know? They just follow Islam."

Although Muslim participants reported facing suspicion from their peers about the sincerity of their religious adherence, that was not necessarily different from those who conspicuously observed other forms of religion. In the day-to-day operation of the prison, however, both incarcerated men and correctional officers occasionally drew attention to an ostensible connection between Islam and terrorism. Depending on the situation and the people involved, such comments would fall along a continuum of teasing, mocking, or harassment. Extreme instances of harassment were rare, however, and most incarcerated men did not conflate Islam with "extremism." As Ethan, a White man, described, "There's a lot of racism against them, but it's because of media and things that. I've had roommates that are Muslim that pray, you know. They're cool dudes." Generally, non-Muslim participants respected or were indifferent to practicing Muslims and what they deemed sincere Islamic practices.

Incarcerated people explained their tolerance toward Muslims and other racial/religious groups by again invoking a set of Canadian values that they distinguished from their impressions of racially segregated American prisons. Darnell, an incarcerated person who identified as biracial and had served time in both U.S. and Canadian prisons, explained:

> *Darnell*: In the States, you stay with your race [in prison]. I'm mixed, but I would go with Black. … You don't hang with others. … Look a man in his eyes when you speak to him, you know? Talk with confidence. I would say for Canadian prisons, I would say [if you do] that, you're fine. For American prisons, get with your [racial] group of people as quick as you possibly can and let them know that you've got their back as long as they've got your back.

Perceived differences between Canadian and American prisons were particularly apparent when participants discussed neo-Nazis, a group overlooked in the radicalization literature until recently. Neo-Nazi groups are firmly established in U.S. prisons and fit common prison

[7] We did not ask explicit questions about religious affiliation in the first two institutions. In the latter two, we added religious affiliation as part of a methodological addendum. Participants who identified as Muslim, however, frequently brought up their faith as part of these discussions. In addition, even though Islam is a religion and not a race, in practice, both incarcerated people and correctional officers displayed considerable slippage in this area, routinely marking Islam as a "brown person's" religion.

radicalization profiles (Earle & Phillips, 2015; Skarbek, 2014). Canada also has White supremacists, many of whom live in the province where we conducted our research (Perry & Scrivens, 2016). Our research team interviewed several men with conspicuous "White power" tattoos, but these individuals generally distanced themselves from White supremacist affiliations. Grayson told us, "I used to be a White supremacist. I got tattoos and everything. But, I don't really like it cuz I was being retarded." Other participants voiced comparable dismissive views. Abe, an Indigenous man, told us that men with racist tattoos usually brushed off their markings as "something stupid I was into when I was young." As James (a White man) described, however, this attitude was not necessarily a matter of having "aged out" of their White supremacist beliefs:

> *James*: There are some of them, I've met a few guys in here with [swastika tattoos]. They either try to hide it or say "that was in my bad days. I'm over that now, but I'm going to cover it or something." Still in their hearts they believe it, but *they know not to bring it out in here*. Some guys'll hide it, and some won't.
>
> *Interviewer*: If you have a tattoo and a Black guy on the unit is like, "Hey, what's that?" and you say it was your younger days, that's enough for the guys to leave you alone?
>
> *James*: Yeah, most of them … as long as you're not preaching out to people. (Emphasis added)

We routinely saw men with White power tattoos or long-standing neo-Nazi affiliations socializing and playing cards with men from Indigenous, Asian, or Middle Eastern backgrounds. Participants said mixed-race bunking was inconsequential and provided firsthand examples, which would be highly unlikely in many American jurisdictions (Skarbek, 2014; Walker, 2016). Participants with swastika or "White power" tattoos told us they also had Black, Indigenous, or Person of Color (BIPOC) cellmates, citing it as an example of tolerance. Whether such individuals had truly disavowed their racist views is uncertain. Sometimes, cliques of White supremacists resided on the same unit, but both incarcerated people and correctional officers indicated that they observed no meaningful White power messaging or recruitment. Although incarcerated people were not blind to racial categories,[8] White supremacist groups had little legitimacy, and participants almost uniformly condemned membership in these groups.

One notable exception to the racial categories we encountered relates to the stark overincarceration of Indigenous people in western Canada, where we conducted our research (Tetrault et al., 2020). Despite making up only four percent of the Canadian population, Indigenous people comprise well over a quarter of Canada's overall prison population. These rates are closer to 45 percent in western Canada (Malakeih, 2020; Office of the Correctional Investigator, 2017), where "native gangs" are also a regular presence (Tetrault et al., 2020). Some prison units we studied held more than 50 percent of incarcerated people who self-identified as Indigenous (Comack et al., 2013). Notably, then, most people in any given prison unit were likely to perceive themselves as the target of racist or White supremacist views, which they labeled "bad action." Consequently, 47 percent of our pertinent 148 participants pointed to the prison's racial profile as playing a role in curtailing any prospect of prison radicalization. Tommy and Phillip, two Indigenous

[8] Prisoners would often congregate in groups they referred to as "cliques," some of which had a racial component. Those based on a race, however, tended to be grounded in a shared sense of kinship, solidarity, and biographies (see also Phillips, 2012) rather than in hostility toward other racial groups. Being part of such a clique did not preclude an individual from socializing or doing business with someone of a different race.

men, separately observed how the presence of Indigenous individuals limited certain forms of extremism:

> *Tommy*: A Nazi guy would have no chance on a unit like this. Look around: Most people are Natives. They would have to fly under the radar or they'd get jumped.
> *Interviewer*: So, do they actually believe in these White power type things?
> *Phillip*: Yeah. But if you're in an Indian-run institution, and you got a big Indian like me lookin' at you, you're kinda like "Okay, well, I'll keep it over here."

Francois, an Indigenous man who was a top-level council member of a powerful Indigenous street gang, reinforced these impressions. He indicated his disgust at ISIS's activities and seemed to revel in imagining how he might coordinate assaults on such individuals:

> *Francois*: Oh fuck yeah. They'd fuckin' be done in a heartbeat. I would not hesitate for a second. … I have kids [gang members] everywhere that'll fuckin' kill for me. And I ever hear of an ISIS … (laughing) I will NOT—I will go to any length possible to get that person. … I'm not a fan of them. If I had a choice between a rat, skinner, and ISIS, I'd get the ISIS first. And I'd—rats and skinners are everywhere. ISIS, they don't come around very often, so I'd get them first.

Prior to this point, Francois had extensively discussed his gang membership, street activities, and connections in the criminal underworld. But, when the conversation turned to radicalization, he ardently expressed his disgust for such individuals by positioning them among the despised categories of sex offenders (skinners) and informants (rats), groups that usually occupy the lowest rungs in the prison's social hierarchy (Ievins & Crewe, 2015; Sykes, 1958; Ugelvik, 2015).

These views were firmly held—so much so that a prisoner espousing White supremacist beliefs sometimes found his racial kin aligned against him. Racial groupings were generally loose and not particularly consequential across our data. Still, when someone openly expressed extremist views, other incarcerated people expected that person's racial kin to quickly confront and censure that individual for the greater good of everyone. Julian, an Indigenous man, gave a sense of this dynamic:

> *Interviewer*: Can you talk to me a little bit about that [referring to instances of racial hostility between prisoners]?
> *Julian*: Most of the time, those people end up getting checked off [transferred to other units].
> *Interviewer*: Yeah, so who checks those people off?
> *Julian*: The group of their own people. … The one that starts shit we'd leave it to them, like, give them the opportunity to take care of it. So that way, it keeps us from like, kicking his ass. Like, that shit doesn't fly. So, like … we talk with the guy they talked with, tell them to straighten out their buddy or else get them to leave. So, if he doesn't straighten out then, he leaves one way or another.

As Julian described, men were expected to "take care" of radicals within their racial groups. White participants indicated that they were "responsible" for "dealing with" outspoken White supremacists, warning them to tone down their racist activities or be beaten (a widespread phenomenon; see Goodman, 2008, for the United States). James, a White man, concurred:

James: If you want to be like that, then most people are going to check you off because we don't want that here.
Interviewer: Even the White guys?
James: Oh, I would in a heartbeat, and I've been jumped by six Black guys.

Incarcerated people who did not listen to the warnings from their "own" people could face violence from the larger prisoner population. These informal expectations seemed to be effective, and incarcerated people across our data told us that they addressed divisive ideological beliefs in this manner before they became a problem for the prison unit.

Prison management practices implicitly reinforced these forms of informal governance as correctional officers commonly punished entire units for violent incidents by indiscriminately locking up everyone for extended periods (Schultz et al., 2020). Consequently, incarcerated people had external motivation to peacefully "deal" with racism and ideological extremism before issues escalated and became a problem for everyone on the unit. Consequently, White supremacist messaging was rare across our data, with incarcerated people interrupting the expression or promulgating of radical and/or racist ideas.

4.3 | Informing

Accounts of the prison code often foreground a set of unofficial rules and values related to the routines and dynamics of prison life. The prospect of radicalization, however, also raised questions about some of these strictures' scope and day-to-day operation. For example, the prohibition against "snitching" or "ratting" is one of the oldest and most well-documented rules in prison and street subculture (Clemmer, 1958; Mitchell et al., 2017; Natapoff, 2009; Sykes, 1958; Sykes & Messinger, 1960). Previous studies in California have demonstrated that incarcerated people would rather stay in solitary confinement than inform on their gangs (Hunt et al., 1993; Trammell, 2012). Likewise, our incarcerated participants vigorously condemned so-called "rats" and spoke of violently enforcing the "no-snitching" rule. Confirming this, we interviewed several suspected informants isolated on specialized units for their own protection.

This antipathy toward informants, however, sometimes came into tension with the widespread condemnation of terrorists or radicals. A subset of participants indicated that rather than "dealing with" prospective radicals by violently assaulting them, they or other incarcerated people would "take care" of the situation by informing correctional officers about such individuals. Although we did not directly ask participants about informing, 15 percent of our 148 pertinent participants openly volunteered that they would tell officers about suspected radicals. Officers were then expected to directly control that individual's behavior or transfer them to a different unit (Schultz et al., 2020, 2021a). Evan, a White man, provided an example of one such situation:

Evan: There's ISIS guys in [one unit] that one time, but they got them off the unit as soon as people found out about it. … All the inmates and guards heard about it and then got them off the unit right away.
Interviewer: Would prisoners help out the guards that way or no [telling them about the ISIS members]?
Evan: They would, yeah.
Interviewer: So that wouldn't be snitching?

> *Evan*: People would go up to the guards, whoever it was. … Anybody in their right mind would agree with it [telling officers], unless you were part of that stupidity.

Evan's comments align with Pyrooz et al.'s (2021) quantitative findings from the Texas-based Lone Star project, which found that 75 percent of participants believed snitching might be permissible in certain circumstances. Those findings suggest that informing codes may be more flexible than previously believed. Participants routinely agreed that snitching was acceptable if it prevented severe violence or served a self-protective role (2021, p. 1149). Although Pyrooz et al. did not identify radicalized incarcerated people as a justification for snitching, we believe that such informing could be a form of violence prevention (to intervene with a potential future terrorist act) and self-protection to avoid victimization of oneself or other incarcerated people.

Informing was, of course, also in tension with another firmly held subcultural norm. Participants told us they carefully maintained a distance from correctional officers, deriding peers who unnecessarily spoke to officers (for example, asking officers for toilet paper when other incarcerated people could provide it) as "bubble boys" and "panel rats." Some breaches of this strict divide, however, were permitted or rationalized if they helped to "deal with" potential radicals.

A similar situation seemed to operate in relation to correctional officers. Officers disparaged and harassed "con-loving" coworkers who expressed too much sympathy for incarcerated people. But when it came to perceived radicals, officers softened such narratives, as officer John explained in his assessment of how officers and incarcerated individuals related to ISIS-supporting individuals:

> *Officer John*: In the case of some of these Islamic guys, when we go back into incidents in Canada or across the world where these guys all of a sudden are saying, "Yeah, good for, way to go ISIS, or ISIL" or whatever you want to call them. It actually disrupted the inmates' mentality. … You saw that change on the unit, and people, and inmates started to react negatively to these individuals. We kind of really … don't see the recruiting because of that. There's going to be people who say, "Whoa, this guy shouldn't be here, we don't like him, we might assault him because he's overly preaching to people" [laughter]. *You know what … it almost changes how you think of the inmates, where it's that us-versus-them mentality, 'cuz they're actually saying*: *"This guy, you've got to get rid of him, 'cuz he is a bad person."* It's interesting. (Emphasis added)

Both officers and incarcerated men saw the prospect of radicalization as complicating the regular normative order in prison. When necessary, they would set aside institutional antagonisms to counter the perceived threat posed by ideological extremism. Officers knew that incarcerated men hated "radicals." Furthermore, they suggested they were not overly alarmed by the prospect of prison radicalization because they believed incarcerated people would not tolerate ideological recruitment or proselytizing. As officer John pointed out, the strength of this shared bond caused him to reassess his antipathy toward incarcerated people as both correctional officers and incarcerated people focused on a perceived common enemy. In the absence of a shared "threat," however, the separation between the two sides quickly reasserted itself.

5 | DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSION

Prison radicalization has entered the consciousness of the public, academics, and security practitioners during the past several years, primarily as a result of highly publicized attacks in Europe involving protagonists with strong connections to prison (Roy, 2017). Consistent with other North American research, however, our study found little evidence of systematic radicalization (Hamm, 2013; Useem & Clayton, 2009). Consequently, we have primarily focused on "the dog that didn't bark," investigating subcultural factors that seem to mitigate the prospect of prison radicalization. In doing so, our findings demonstrate the utility of studying radicalization by understanding how it might be constrained.

Our participants made it clear that prison subcultural values were hostile to radical groups and messaging. Our findings point to three main factors that work against radicalization in our setting: 1) nationalist beliefs, 2) the prison's racial profile, and 3) informing. As such, our findings advance our understanding of prison subculture as it pertains to a prominent social and political concern (Irwin & Cressey, 1962; Jacobs, 1977; Mitchell et al., 2017).

Incarcerated people hold and reproduce a range of broadly prosocial values about multiculturalism and a valorized understanding of "Canadian-ness" found in wider Canadian society. As self-identified "big-hearted Canadians," our participants suggested that incarcerated people were open to and tolerant of other cultures and races and did not stand by idly if perceived radicals discriminated against or voiced hatred toward others. Although participants frequently reproduced the media framing of radicalization as a "Muslim thing," most non-Muslim incarcerated people accepted or were indifferent toward Muslim men on their units. Such approval involved drawing comparisons between the "good Muslims" they knew and semi-mythical "bad Muslim terrorists." Incarcerated men also suggested that White supremacists rarely publicized their views as such perspectives were marginalized. These beliefs about Canadian multiculturalism and antiracism permeated the subcultures of the prisons we studied (Tetrault et al., 2020) and provided incarcerated people with a degree of resiliency toward radicalization (see also Thompson & Bucerius, 2019).

Equally importantly, our participants had the opportunity to congregate across racial and ethnic groups partly because race and ethnicity did not serve as institutional separation markers, as is often the case in the United States (Walker, 2016). This lack of separation, in turn, may offer incarcerated individuals more opportunities to share views, exchange opinions, and form mutual resilience against radical groups. This finding reflects Allport's (1954) "contact hypothesis," which suggests that prejudices rooted in race or religion, for example, tend to decline or diminish when interacting with members of groups against whom you hold prejudices. In our data, whether it was White participants dismissing neo-Nazi perspectives in conversations with Black or Indigenous people or Muslim participants expressing their discontent with jihadist groups to non-Muslim audiences, the social dynamics seem to allow for fostering mutual counternarratives that hinder opportunities for radicalization (Joosse et al., 2015). The opportunity to share views and discuss discontent is crucial in understanding the emergence of counternarratives to radicalization while contributing to fewer racial tensions in prisons.

Our participants also told us that even though subcultural norms suggested incarcerated people should keep their interactions with correctional officers to an absolute minimum, this admonition was more flexible when it pertained to communications about potential radical or extremist incarcerated people. Because institutional cultures disparaged radicalized individuals, other incarcerated people were willing to delicately engage with correctional staff to ensure that officers were aware of such individuals in hopes of having them censured or removed from

general population units. The mutual disdain for "radicals" among both incarcerated people and staff allowed these usually antagonistic groups to temporarily align against an identified "common enemy" (Durkheim, 1895/1995).

What this specific alliance says about prison subculture and the "inmate code" is open to two possible interpretations. In keeping with the dualistic nature of subcultural codes, we may have observed a straightforward instance of subcultural deviance—of incarcerated individuals violating a well-established "no snitching" prescription and subsequently rationalizing the decision as being in the service of some greater good or motivated by antipathy toward "terrorists" (Sykes & Matza, 1957). Alternatively, we could approach our participants' accounts of informing on ostensible radicals as instances of them "telling the convict code" (Wieder, 1974)—using their behavior and accounts to set the parameters of the code such that informing on radicals (or perhaps a specific subset of radicals) is not deemed to be either snitching or a code violation. It may be that when it comes to perceived radicals that a normative expectation exists around informing, such that such ostensible "ratting" is a component of the code rather than an example of a subcultural breach.

Beyond possibly curtailing radicalization, the efforts by incarcerated individuals to confront radicals, and the stories they tell about doing so, have an added value while incarcerated. Their actions and narratives allow incarcerated people to use their agency to craft and perform an ethical subjectivity (see Williams, 2018). By confronting and condemning radicalization, either in their actions or accounts, incarcerated individuals align themselves with broadly prosocial norms that seem to operate in both prison and broader society.

Notably, the resiliency toward radicalization we identify here is not derived from official "antiradicalization" initiatives. Officials in other jurisdictions have introduced policies explicitly designed to confront prison radicalization. Such initiatives include new models for identifying and managing risk (Silke, 2014), entire prisons dedicated to terrorists and violent extremists (Patel, 2017), and having police units focus exclusively on monitoring and investigating radical activities in prison (Maley, 2018). In contrast, our participants cited local prison subcultures as factors impeding the spread of radicalized messages. In that sense, our findings challenge portrayals of such subcultures as predisposing incarcerated people to radicalization (Cilluffo et al., 2007; Mulcahy et al., 2013; Wilner, 2010) and support Crewe and Laws's (2018) argument that prison subcultures can vary depending on location and context. Thus, we caution against implementing real-world antiradicalization strategies based on research from different prisons and socionational contexts without considering whether adopting the strategy makes sense contextually. At the same time, our findings urge us to consider whether top-down strategies, such as antiradicalization strategies imposed on communities (prison or otherwise), are the most effective solution when trying to counter radicalization. Instead, our findings point to the strength of allowing counternarratives to form organically through conversations and sharing across racial and religious groups (see also Thompson & Bucerius, 2019; Joosse et al., 2015).

Concerning the limitations of our study, we would like to emphasize that we did our interviews in institutions where people typically stayed for less than 2 years. As a result, this article adds to the still-limited body of research on jails and shorter term institutions, which Turney and Connor insightfully referred to as "the front door … of the criminal justice system" (2019, p. 266). Although provincial prisons (in Canada) and jails (in the United States) contain significant proportions of each nation's overall incarcerated population, the unique pressures and stressors experienced by people held in these institutions are not well understood. These pressures provide both a strength and a limitation to our work. Although we shed light on how radicalization functions in short-term institutions, we cannot conclusively state that the same result applies to long-term prisons.

Likewise, people incarcerated for short periods could retain close connections to deeply held community values, which may not be as salient in long-term institutions. Examining the situation in federal penitentiaries in Canada (which contain individuals sentenced to longer than 2 years) may yield different results.[9]

The findings around race and national identity also present intriguing possibilities and caveats. Our findings suggest that policy makers in other contexts should consider the implications of the contact hypothesis (Allport, 1954) in their institutions. In other words, administrators may want to consider whether separating incarcerated people along racial and ethnic lines hinders opportunities to form united subcultural counternarratives against radicalization. Race often serves as an (unofficial) organizational construct in prison (Skarbek, 2014; Walker, 2016), potentially hindering conversations between people of different racial background because they live on different units. In our context, where race does not serve as an organizational construct determining housing situations, it is easier for people to interact with people of different racial backgrounds. These interactions fostered the broader national–cultural imaginary of being "big hearted Canadians" that almost wholly subsumed racial separation in our data. Consequently, these interactions also fostered the strict subcultural rules that limited radicalization of all forms. Even in cases of racial tensions on a unit, the broader pressures of learning how to share spaces amicably seemed to help prevent the emergence of hostilities between groups.

The larger concept of the national–cultural imaginary, however, is also a potential limitation. Broad conversations about race and national identity have become increasingly heated in Canada and the United States during the past 5 years. It is, therefore, reasonable to ask whether the national–cultural imaginaries of multiculturalism, color-blindness, and acceptance are still the primary narratives employed by people when discussing what it means to be "Canadian." Our data do not allow us to speak to this issue, but the increased public profile of alt-right ideologies and narratives could shift acceptance levels around White supremacism specifically. We view this point as particularly compelling for future research in Canada and beyond.

Broader shifts in society have brought concerns about ideologically motivated violence to the fore, and animated anxieties about prison radicalization have reemerged (Tunney, 2022a). Our findings suggest the best approach for conceptualizing, addressing, and perhaps reducing prison radicalization need not necessarily focus on the prison itself. Larger social and cultural pressures shape radicalization within prison, meaning that the wider society and sets of meanings condition prison as a site of radicalization. We believe this point is important to bear in mind and is a significant reason why it may be unwise to frame prisoner radicalization as an inherent risk of incarceration.

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[9] Having collected interviews and surveys in federal prisons subsequently to this study that have yet to be fully analyzed, we personally suspect that findings will not differ.

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