11G Guy Harrison, Arizona State University
“Strength in Numbers: Using the Focus Group Method to Engage Marginalized Populations”

While the focus group interview has long been employed within the market research industry, the method remains on the margins of qualitative academic inquiry. Despite its marginalized status as an academic research method, the focus group interview is viewed as especially useful for privileged scholars who seek to engage interlocutors from subordinated populations (Barbour, 2007). This paper offers an illustration of the deployment and implications of using the method within such a context. The author—a cisgender male—explicates his usage of the focus group method for engaging with, and investigating the experiences of, a group of young women within a sports journalism academic program, historically a site of male dominance. The author justifies his usage of the method, describes the operationalization of the interview, and shares sections of the data that stemmed from the usage of the method. Whereas one-to-one interviews with each student would have resulted in a unilateral discussion that only served the researcher, the interlocutors in this instance were afforded a space in which they could commiserate with each other vis-à-vis their shared experiences and knowledges. The result, for the researcher, was a more capacious data set that unveiled concepts to which he was initially blind.

11G Mark Norman, University of Toronto
“Researching Sport in a Total Institution: Methodological Reflections on a Research Project on Prison Physical Culture”

This paper reflects on a research project on sport and physical culture in the Canadian prison system. Prisons are a classic example of what Goffman (1961) labels “total institutions”—that is, physically and socially isolated institutions that are closed to outside influence—and can be extremely difficult for researchers to access. Although my initial research plan proposed to conduct long-term participant observation inside two prisons, the restrictive nature of the Canadian corrections system made such an undertaking impossible. As such, I was forced to significantly adapt my research plan, widening the scope of the research and diversifying my sources of data, in order to explore my research questions. In doing so, I drew inspiration from Denzin and Lincoln’s (2011) suggestion that qualitative researchers act as “bricoleurs” who draw from whatever research materials are at hand and weave these together to produce an interpretive representation of their findings. Few researchers have explored sport and physical culture in total institutions, meaning that there is little methodological guidance to researching in such spaces. This paper will thus be of interest to researchers who seek to conduct research in inaccessible institutions and must find creative methodological solutions to inevitable research barriers.

11G Samuel Clevenger, University of Maryland, College Park & Oliver Rick, Springfield College
“Working Towards an Engaged Praxial Mode”

In the 1960s and 1970s a number of Post-Marxist writings were published addressing questions of the role of history and historical agency in the development of more nuanced social and political theories. Importantly, these publications also considered the role of political praxis in the development of such scholarship. Such writings help to reveal the modes through which critical scholarship are designed to intervene into the political world, a function we term the “praxial mode.” This presentation returns to a few of those writings, particularly of the historian E.P. Thompson, highlighting the precedent that was set for the relations that should exist between scholarly analysis and their political engagement. Through recognizing the existence of a core commitment to this approach embedded within the stated goals of the Physical Cultural Studies project and the Sociology of Sport field, we seek to demonstrate how this mode
can be fully mobilized at a time in which the collective NASSS community is focusing prominently on how to develop a more publicly engaged scholarship. Using our own work, developing more publicly engaged critical work through the production of podcasts and other digital materials, we want to highlight one way in which these commitments might be mobilized.

**11G Ronald Mower**, The College at Brockport, SUNY

“*Collaborative Qualitative Inquiry from Baltimore, MD to Rochester, NY: Engaging the Embodiment and Performance of Urban Physical Cultures*”

Drawing upon several years of failed, and successful, attempts to qualitatively engage the everyday lived experiences of “urban” physical culture in its complexly diverse, and simultaneously divisive, modalities of practice, this paper offers methodological considerations for collaborative, praxis driven, social justice research. More specifically, this paper discusses the messy realities of researching “in the street” where the embodied performances of dialogic interaction create new possibilities for understanding social divisions, breaking down traditional barriers, and moving towards a more working, fluid, and hybridized post-identity politics of human rights and justice. Empirical reflections of collaborative Photovoice projects in both Baltimore and Rochester will be explored to demonstrate both the complex challenges and deeply meaningful exchanges inherent to such forms of participatory inquiry.