

HEALTHY, BEAUTIFUL HAIR:  
CULTIVATING THE SELF IN A WOMEN'S PRISON

by

Lori Labotka

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As members of the Dissertation Committee, we certify that we have read the dissertation prepared by Lori Labotka, titled *Healthy, Beautiful Hair: Cultivating the Self in a Women's Prison*, and recommend that it be accepted as fulfilling the dissertation requirement for the Degree of Doctor of Philosophy.

\_\_\_\_\_ Date: 5/16/14  
Norma Mendoza-Denton

\_\_\_\_\_ Date: 5/16/14  
Jennifer Roth-Gordon

\_\_\_\_\_ Date: 5/16/14  
Brackette F. Williams

Final approval and acceptance of this dissertation is contingent upon the candidate's submission of the final copies of the dissertation to the Graduate College.

I hereby certify that I have read this dissertation prepared under my direction and recommend that it be accepted as fulfilling the dissertation requirement.

\_\_\_\_\_ Date: 5/16/14  
Dissertation Director: Norma Mendoza-Denton

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SIGNED: Lori Labotka

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## TABLE OF CONTENTS

LIST OF FIGURES.....	9
LIST OF TABLES.....	10
LIST OF EXCERPTS.....	11
TRANSCRIPT CONVENTIONS.....	12
ABSTRACT.....	13
CHAPTER 1 – INTRODUCTION.....	15
“My Hair Look Nice”?.....	15
Anthropology of Modern Punishment.....	19
The Extraordinary Prison.....	25
Theoretical Background.....	28
Punishment and Humiliation.....	30
Hair Care.....	33
Doing Being Ordinary.....	35
Outline of Chapters.....	37
CHAPTER 2 – ENTERING THE FIELD: PARTICIPANT OBSERVATION IN PRISON.....	43
A Culture of Surveillance.....	43
ASPC Summerville.....	47
Ethnographic Context.....	50
Research Population.....	55
Entering the Field.....	58
Researching Beauty.....	64
Participant Observation in Prison.....	75
Conclusion.....	84
CHAPTER 3 – CARNIVAL.....	86

Bodily Transformation.....	86
Prison as Carnival.....	88
Tiny Toothbrushes: Hygienic Regulation.....	97
“I take care of my hair!”: Hair Care Restrictions.....	101
Hare Care Regulations.....	113
The Grotesque.....	119
Conclusion.....	126
<b>CHAPTER 4 – VOICING THE BEAUTY EXPERT: PRISON STYLISTS AS MEDIUMS OF FEMININITY.....</b>	<b>128</b>
Healthy, Beautiful Hair.....	128
Suspicious Styling.....	130
Cosmetologist Speak.....	140
Discourses of Beauty.....	147
Multimodal Voicing.....	159
Conclusion.....	169
<b>CHAPTER 5 – “I HAVE TO READ IT OUT LOUD”: NEGOTIATING AUTHORITY IN PRISON DISCIPLINE.....</b>	<b>171</b>
Animating Authority.....	171
Everyday Discipline.....	174
Informal Discipline.....	179
Formal Discipline.....	184
Drawing a Courtroom.....	188
The “I” of the State.....	193
Silence.....	198
Tucked in Shirts.....	202

Face-Covering.....	211
Conclusion.....	223
CHAPTER 6 – CONCLUSION.....	225
Undoing Being Ordinary.....	225
Mental Health in Prison.....	229
Broken Clippers.....	236
Flipping the Script.....	240
Anthropology of Confinement.....	245
REFERENCES.....	249

## LIST OF FIGURES

Figure 1.1. Women’s Maximum-Security Pod.....	16
Figure 1.2. Women’s Minimum-Security Pod.....	16
Figure 2.1. Arizona’s Adult Correctional Facilities.....	47
Figure 2.2. The Central Yard.....	54
Figure 2.3. Softball on the Yard.....	54
Figure 2.4. Me and Muñeca on the Prison Yard.....	77
Figure 3.1. Hair Standards of Compliance.....	89
Figure 3.2. Bling-Bling (early ‘90s).....	95
Figure 3.3. Bling-Bling (2003).....	95
Figure 3.4. State Issue Underwear.....	96
Figure 3.5. Prison Toothbrush.....	97
Figure 3.6. Nicole’s Chrono.....	117
Figure 4.1. Ge-Ma’s Crooked Barber Chair.....	131
Figure 4.2. The Barber Box.....	131

**LIST OF TABLES**

Table 2.1. Research Population, Prison Population, and Arizona Population Demographics.....	57
Table 3.1. Inmate Classification System.....	92
Table 5.1. Phase System.....	185
Table 5.2. Ticket Punishments.....	186

## LIST OF EXCERPTS

Excerpt 2.1. Berry and Cece.....	70
Excerpt 2.2. Ge-Ma and Toni (Part 1).....	73
Excerpt 3.1. Ciara and Corina (Part 1).....	101
Excerpt 3.2. Ciara and Corina (Part 2).....	107
Excerpt 3.3. Ciara, Ronda, and Corina.....	109
Excerpt 4.1. Rosie and Sapphire (Part 1).....	132
Excerpt 4.2. Laura and Lee-Lee.....	137
Excerpt 4.3. Scissors and Melody.....	142
Excerpt 4.4. Rosie and Sapphire (Part 2).....	143
Excerpt 4.5. Ronda and Gray (Part 1).....	148
Excerpt 4.6. Ronda and Gray (Part 2).....	150
Excerpt 4.7. Ronda and Gray (Part 3).....	152
Excerpt 4.8. Scissors and Cherry (Part 1).....	154
Excerpt 4.9. Scissors and Cherry (Part 2).....	156
Excerpt 4.10. Scissors and Cherry (Part 3).....	160
Excerpt 4.11. Scissors and Cherry (Part 4).....	161
Excerpt 4.12. Kat and Cheerio.....	166
Excerpt 5.1. Cherry Disciplinary Hearing (Excerpt of Part 3).....	171
Excerpt 5.2. Ge-Ma and Toni (Part 2).....	177
Excerpt 5.3. Olivia, Maxi, and China (Part 1).....	179
Excerpt 5.4. Olivia, Maxi, and China (Part 2).....	182
Excerpt 5.5. Olivia, Maxi, and China (Part 3).....	183
Excerpt 5.6. Cherry's Disciplinary Hearing (Part 1).....	189
Excerpt 5.7. Cherry's Disciplinary Hearing (Part 2).....	194
Excerpt 5.8. Cherry's Disciplinary Hearing (Part 3).....	198
Excerpt 5.9. Remmy's Disciplinary Hearing (Part 1).....	203
Excerpt 5.10. Remmy's Disciplinary Hearing (Part 2).....	205
Excerpt 5. 11. Remmy's Disciplinary Hearing (Part 3).....	207
Excerpt 5.12. Princess Di's Disciplinary Hearing (Part 1).....	212
Excerpt 5.13. Princess Di's Disciplinary Hearing (Part 2).....	214
Excerpt 5.14. Princess Di's Disciplinary Hearing (Part 3).....	216
Excerpt 5.15. Princess Di's Disciplinary Hearing (Part 4).....	219

### TRANSCRIPT CONVENTIONS

(1)	Length of pause (in seconds)
(.)	Brief Pause
=	Latching between utterances
[ ]	Overlapping speech
(( ))	Gestures, laughter, or other comments on activities
-	Sharply cut off sound or word
::	Elongated sound
(?)	An unclear word or part of the recording
( )	Words in parentheses indicate the transcriber's best guess at an unclear word
.	Full stop
!	Enthusiastic tone
?	Rising intonation
,	Continuing intonation
<u>Underline</u>	Speaker emphasis
CAPITALS	Yelled or spoken loudly
↑	Rise in pitch

From: Hutchby and Wooffitt (1998)

## ABSTRACT

Incarceration has long been understood to challenge personal identities. Upon entry into the prison, individuals undergo rituals of humiliation that reformulate them in the image of the institution (Goffman 1961). Daily life in prison is then shaped by rules, regulations, and surveillance constraining the possibilities for self-presentation. This dissertation focuses on the ways women incarcerated in the state of Arizona construct a sense of self in the extraordinary context of prison. My analysis is based on a year and a half of fieldwork in an Arizona county jail and in a minimum-security yard at Arizona's state prison for women. I explore the linguistic and semiotic mechanisms by which women negotiate imposed inmate symbolism in relation to gender, race, class, and other aspects of identity critical to their self-understanding. Hair care rituals are one site of this negotiation I analyze in detail. During intimate hair styling sessions, women draw on larger cultural discourses of beauty and cultivate their bodies in reference to particular aesthetic values. These rituals infuse long hair with value as a symbol of beauty, worth, and productive prison time. Growing your hair, then, becomes an avenue to make claims to something other than an inmate identity and to fill the empty time of prison punishment.

In light of the rapid expansion of the U.S. prison system over the past three decades, my analysis contributes to scholarship on modern incarceration. Attention to the practices women engage in highlights the constant humiliation of prison punishment. The mundane regulations of prison, such as uniforms, hair care restrictions, and limitations on hygiene, manipulate normalcy to such a degree as to cause a continual affront to the self. Beyond reformulating individual identity, I argue that the humiliation of prison punishment challenges the humanity of incarcerated individuals. The linguistic and semiotic practices women employ, like hair care

rituals, make claims to dignity in the face of that challenge. However, these practices also carry the potential to become sites of punishment as officers animate their authority in prison discipline. These moments of discipline normalize the state's domination over incarcerated women, opening the space for severe forms of punishment. The same threads of humiliation and degradation that have been explored in the extreme conditions of solitary confinement carry across spaces of incarceration, framing the mundane methods of minimum-security punishment. When growing one's hair becomes a critical claim to dignity, and that claim is contested through restriction, regulation, and control over hair, the constant threat incarceration makes to one's humanity becomes visible. The implications of this threat, I argue, can be realized in bodily violence, total domination, and even madness.

## CHAPTER 1 – INTRODUCTION

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### **“My hair look nice?”**

As I walked into the dayroom of the Arizona county jail where I began fieldwork for this dissertation, Muñeca<sup>1</sup> looked up at me and asked, “My hair look nice?” She looked to me as she always did, scruffy around the edges from jail life and wearing her neon-yellow uniform stamped with the jail’s initials. I sat next to her at the cold metal table, hesitating. I was confused by her question, unsure what was different about her hair that day. “Of course,” I smiled, but Muñeca knew I was just being polite. Used to my complete naiveté about jail life, she launched into a detailed explanation of her look, which she had styled for her court appearance later that morning. The night before, she had wet her hair and had her cellmate put it in French braids. Removed this morning, the braids produced a crimped-look that she now wore half pulled back and half down. Her hair style was accompanied by homemade lip gloss crafted out of the hair grease a friend had purchased “off of commissary.”<sup>2</sup> Finally, she described, she borrowed clothes from her friend. The last description caught me off guard, “They let you wear real clothes to court?!” I exclaimed, imagining someone dropping off a bag for her at the courthouse next door. She teased me for a bit, joking about incarcerated women wearing high-end fashions to court, and then explained what she meant—she had traded her uniform with a friend whose uniform matched (the tops and bottoms were the same shade of neon yellow).<sup>3</sup> Muñeca undertook these efforts to look good for court. By showing the judge that she took pride in her appearance, she

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<sup>1</sup> All participants are referred to with self-chosen pseudonyms. Similarly, to protect anonymity, any potentially identifiable information (including images, ID numbers, and officer names) has been obscured.

<sup>2</sup> “Off of commissary” is jail and prison cant for the process of purchasing commodities in the institution. A selection of pre-determined food, hygiene, and other items are available for purchase from a commissary list, rather than a physical store. If an individual has access to money, they can fill out a commissary sheet for a limited quantity of items, which they will receive on a specified day of the week. Individuals without access to money (considered “indigent”) are given a specified set of indigent commodities.

<sup>3</sup> While all women in the jail wear neon yellow uniforms, these uniforms consist of a surprisingly wide variety of shades. The bright color fades over time as the uniforms are worn by multiple individuals. Women entering the jail are usually issued used uniforms that vary in their degree of fading.

hoped to be taken seriously. Her task was made both necessary and difficult by the jail’s transfer routine. To leave the jail and appear in court, women are cuffed at the wrists and the ankles, the two cuffs then connected with a large metal chain. The result is the symbolic inmate: her bodily movements projecting confinement, her walk a shuffle, and her gestures constrained.

Muñeca’s hearing that morning was with Child Protective Services (CPS) to determine if she could maintain custody of her four children after her detention in jail. I waited with her as she desperately tried to distract herself from her nervous tension. As usual, we played spades—the most popular card game in the jail—but she found herself carving her kids’ initials into the chipping gray paint of the metal table, “mis hijos” etched in a heart. She waited and waited; her nine a.m. court appointment came and went. Asking the officer stationed in the dayroom, she was told she wasn’t on the court list. Her only recourse was to write a letter—called a kite in prison cant—to the sergeant on duty, to which she received no response. The day passed with no word until another incarcerated woman returned from her trip to court. “They were calling you,” she said, Muñeca’s heart visibly sinking. “Asking why you weren’t there.” The woman may have been messing with her, but it was the only word she got regarding her CPS hearing. Although nothing was decided that day, she did, eventually, lose custody of her children.

*Figure 1.1. Women’s Maximum-Security Pod*



*Figure 1.2. Women’s Minimum-Security Pod*



A 20-year-old Latina woman, Muñeca had a short, thin frame and baby face that made her look like she was no more than 14. I began fieldwork in the county jail by happenstance, while I was awaiting approval from the Arizona Department of Corrections to conduct research in the state prison for women. The process, long and complicated, left me anxious to start fieldwork, especially because I wasn't sure approval would ever come.<sup>4</sup> I knew the jail's librarian from a books-to-prisoner program<sup>5</sup> I had taken part in, and on a whim contacted her to see about fieldwork in the jail. The librarian ushered me into the field, and I started part-time fieldwork that lasted six months. Unlike prison, jail houses individuals who have yet to be formally charged or sentenced of a felony, as well as those charged with misdemeanor crimes. Individuals may be held in jail for days, weeks, months, or years, and often have no indication of how long they will be there. The context is heavily regulated, and there is virtually no freedom of movement. Women are dependent on officers to go anywhere, and even when, like Muñeca, they have court-scheduled appointments, they are not guaranteed to get to them. They spend roughly 23 hours a day in one of two large pods (one minimum-security, one maximum), consisting of a center dayroom and two tiers of two-person cells lining the walls (see Figures 1.1 and 1.2). Each night, and often for most hours of the day, women are locked down in the cells. Their dayroom is furnished with metal tables cemented to the ground, an officer station, and one TV hanging on the wall; it is drab and boring. There is practically nothing to do, as they are supplied only a shelf containing a few books, cards, a TV, and some board games. I spent most of my time in the

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<sup>4</sup> I originally was granted approval to conduct research in a Montana state prison. Before I started fieldwork, the warden retired and the administration retracted my research approval following their decision to suspend all "unnecessary" operations. I then attempted to get access to a California state prison, and my request was ignored. Finally I turned to Arizona. My initial request was denied by the Office of Planning, Budget, and Research. However, assisted by one of my advisors, Dr. Brackette F. Williams, I was able to contact the director of the Arizona Department of Corrections directly and renegotiate the initial rejection. After a face-to-face meeting with the director, my project was approved and I was able to enter my primary field site.

<sup>5</sup> When I first started graduate school, I helped to found Read Between the Bars, Arizona's books-to-prisoners program. A grassroots, collective organization, Read Between the Bars sends books to prisoners in Arizona.

dayroom, when I did not join women for recreation or, as they term this period, rec. Each pod is allowed one hour on the small, cement-walled rec yard a day, unless the jail is short-staffed, it is too hot, or it is raining. For most women, county jail was their introduction to incarceration. All of the women I worked with in the Arizona state women's prison had spent time in a county jail, and many had served multiple jail sentences before their first time in prison.

Muñeca immediately took me under her wing, teaching me jail slang, spades, and telling me about jail life. As this was her third time in jail, she was familiar with the routine and knew most of the other incarcerated women. She was housed in maximum-security because she made too much trouble in the more densely populated, minimum-security pod, where her sister was housed. Muñeca was kind, energetic, and welcoming, and I cannot say how my work in the jail would have proceeded without her. I can say that her trust in me, deciding for whatever reason that I was not a cop, or an officer in disguise, was an amazing gift that shaped my ability to conduct the research. In this beginning stage of my research, she was what is known in the anthropological literature as a “key informant.”<sup>6</sup> These individuals, who are usually thoughtful and reflective on their own culture, offer the ethnographer insight into the cultural norms and practices necessary for entering a community and engaging in participant observation (Bernard 2006). These relationships can create barriers to research of their own, however. Individuals may lie, and those willing to speak with ethnographers are often social outsiders, which may prevent other members of the community from engaging in the research (Agar 1996). The high turnover rate of incarcerated women in the jail meant that while some individuals may have avoided me due to my relationship with Muñeca, having a stable individual willing to show me the ropes was critical to understanding both the everyday operations of the institution and the cultural practices

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<sup>6</sup> In jail and prison cant, “informant” has a very different connotation. It refers to an individual who “snitches” on someone, giving information to the police or prison officials in order for a personal gain. I use the term here in the anthropological sense.

of incarcerated individuals. Muñeca's insights on jail life facilitated my entry into the community and helped to shape my research focus on the cultivation of the self in prison.

Soon after the interaction discussed above, Muñeca was released from jail "on drug court"—an expression referring to a program that requires intensive surveillance outside of prison, including regular meetings with a probation officer and drug testing. As she left the pod, with a huge smile on her face, she gave me a big hug. Her excitement about the release was short lived. She returned a week later, her outside support—a boyfriend who was also the father of three of her children—left her as soon as she got out. In response to the heartbreak, Muñeca ran away and resumed drug use. Her probation was quickly revoked, a condition commonly referred to as being "violated" because an individual has been determined to be in violation of the conditions of their probation. Although this loss of support would be heartbreaking for any young love, given Muñeca's entanglement with the law, it meant returning to jail with the knowledge that she was "getting a number"—the terms these women and prisoners use to refer to serving a first sentence in prison, where an inmate number is issued that will then be used on any subsequent sentence in that state's prison system. She was defeated. Her usual cheery demeanor was replaced by a quiet, anxious persona, as she sat in jail held for her move to prison.

### **Anthropology of Modern Punishment**

Muñeca's story introduces some of the cultural and ideological implications of legal institutions in U.S. society. This brief moment in her incarceration history points to the relation between institutional domination and individual cultural practices; the ideologies of gender, criminality, and motherhood both shaping and shaped by that relation with far-ranging consequences, such as the loss of one's children; and the complex entanglements individuals maintain with the institution that extend beyond the jail's physical boundaries. While the study

of institutions is well engrained in the discipline of anthropology, the field has contributed little to the growing conversation on the U.S. prison system in light of its rapid growth.

Anthropological investigation into institutions has pointed out their capacity to shape dominant ideologies, drive power dynamics, and form particular kinds of subjects (Shore and Wright 1997, Wedel et al 2005, Wright 1994). These concepts are at the center of anthropological inquiry, putting the field in a unique position to uncover the complex, nuanced, and dynamic role of institutions in society. For instance, Douglas' (1986) seminal work on institutions recognizes that their classification practices construct types of people and forge naturalistic connections between the made-up category and the group it comes to represent. Taken for granted social groupings, then, have intimate ties to institutions and their agendas. The field's tendency to study from the bottom-up, however, often obscures the impacts of these larger systems, an omission that has been critically pointed out in Nadar's (1972) call to "study up." Nadar argues that studying up is necessary to understanding the hidden hierarchies and public manipulations that hinder democratic processes.

Since then, a number of ethnographic works have taken societal institutions as the object of analysis, studying militarism, factories, schools, courtrooms, and public policy, to name a few (Wedel et al 2005). For instance, Ong's (1987) work on Malay peasant women working in Japanese factories captures women's navigation of ideological conflicts between peasant and industrial life, realized in episodes of resistance such as spirit possession as they take on new gendered subjectivities. Delving into the seemingly mundane act of waiting, Auyero's (2012) ethnography of welfare policy in Argentina reveals how the arbitrary and tedious practice of waiting for services constructs state domination over poor people as they become "those who wait." In linguistic anthropology, Mertz's (2007) study of U.S. law schools connects the

linguistic practices of socialization through which one becomes a lawyer to the power dynamics of the U.S. legal system. These and other anthropological works on institutions inform the core anthropological concept of culture, expanding the category beyond static notions of pre-existing relations and attending to the systems that shape it (Wright 1994).

This tradition offers an avenue for a critical analysis of the cultural implications of prisons, such as the construction of the cultural categories of the criminal and the proper citizen. Save a few notable exceptions (Aretxaga 1995; Feldman 1996; Rhodes 2004, 2005a; Williams forthcoming), however, ethnographic work into the belly of the beast has all but disappeared at a time when prisons are growing in size and prominence across the world (Rhodes 2001). Those works have made vital advancements in theoretical knowledge of prison systems in the U.S. and other societies. They share an emphasis on severe conditions of confinement, focusing on solitary confinement, political prisoners, and supermax prison facilities in which state domination over individuals is realized in (almost) total confinement, extreme practices of degradation, and physical violence. The mundane, minimum-security conditions in which the majority of U.S. prisoners serve their time have received little attention, obscuring the more subtle forms of state power and domination. This dissertation takes as its subject those mundane conditions, and argues that they reveal dominant ideological forces that shape the cultural category of prisoner and the lived reality for those classified as such.

Prisons in the U.S. have a long and complex history; arising in the early 19<sup>th</sup> century, the penitentiary was conceptualized as a tool to rid society of crime and save it from degradation (Morris and Rothman 1995, Rothman 1971). Isolation and silence were the dominant methods of punishment governed by principles of rationality to reform the criminal by removing outside, corrupting influence. The Progressive movement of the early 20<sup>th</sup> century sought to individualize

treatment, expanding parole, probation, and other community-style corrections. Institutions still remained prominent in the Progressive agenda, to be used according to an individual's needs. These became increasingly specialized through practices like segregating the mentally ill, a practice that continued to lead to the security-level divisions (minimum, medium, maximum, and, recently, supermaximum) dominant in prisons today. In the 1970s, rehabilitation became a dominant goal, accompanied by a deinstitutionalization movement that dominated agendas across institutions, including for the mentally ill and elderly (Rothman 2002). This led to a decline in prison populations as outside of prison corrections, including parole and probation, gained political and ideological dominance while actually expanding the numbers of individuals under state surveillance (Pollock et al 2012).

From the 1980s to the present day, the U.S. prison system has undergone large-scale changes, many of which most evident in the unprecedented growth of the prison population, increasing imbalance in the racial demographics of the population, and the rapid rise in the numbers of women incarcerated (Davis 2003; Feeley and Simon 1992; Garland 2001; Lynch 2005, 2008; Rhodes 2001; Wacquant 2009). Although still only around 7% of the total prison population, women are now incarcerated at the highest rate in U.S. history, and their numbers are growing at a much faster rate than for men (Belknap 2007, Sudbury 2010, 2005; Tapia 2010). The latest era of incarceration has been deemed the "new penology," characterized by containment and control as "waste management" (Feeley and Simon 1992), tough-on-crime policies and rhetoric, and a shifting understandings of the penal subject from one capable of rehabilitation to a dangerous, alien other (Garland 2001, Lynch 2008).

What appears post-facto a national, unified change in the prison system during this period, however, arose out of a series of highly localized legal, social, and cultural forces (Lynch

2010, 2011). Incarceration trends often begin in federal and local legal changes, which are interpreted in the county-level courtrooms that have the power to incarcerate, and only later find their articulation in political rhetoric. This rhetoric may then spread to other regions and gain the appearance of a national front, although in practice that rhetoric will influence corrections in locally-specific ways. For instance, Lynch's (2010) exploration of the history of Arizona corrections details the ways the state's culture of fiscal frugality, commitment to just deserts in corrections, and distrust of the federal government influenced legislative policy to foster prison growth in a unique trajectory. She points out that these legislative changes, such as the move to mandatory minimum sentencing and closing "back door" release policies that had previously kept the incarcerated population in check, often preceded the tough-on-crime rhetoric mobilized to gain public support and funding for the prison construction boom they made necessary. Some of the funding then came from no-frills policy changes within the prison, such as removing items touted as luxurious to save money and passing costs onto inmates through practices like charging co-pays for medical visits. What followed is the now familiar move away from rehabilitation and toward harsh, no-frills, punitive justice that has since gained national prominence (Feeley and Simon 1992, Garland 2001, Rhodes 2001, Simon 2007, Wacquant 2009).

Unlike Midwestern and Eastern states, Arizona had only briefly toyed with the concept of rehabilitation in corrections. Its late bureaucratization (the Arizona Department of Corrections wasn't established until 1968), vigilantly past, and punitive pride made the state "poised to become a leader in the harsh, no-frills mass imprisonment movement that was rising to hegemony" (Lynch 2010: 126). No-frills legislation has continued, including limiting prisoners' diets (providing only two meals on the weekends), removing educational programs, restricting the amount of property an individual can have, expanding the use of solitary confinement, billing

inmates for electricity and sometimes even rent, and charging inmates and their families for phone calls and visitation rights, to name a few. Coupled with the expansion of no-frills is a movement toward humiliating, degrading, and violent punishment practices. This is fostered, in part, by the removal of possible rewards, which leaves officers only with punishments to dole out to influence inmate behaviors (Hepburn 1989). In Arizona, and elsewhere, some of these humiliations have become public, such as the revival of the chain gang (Jacobowitz 1996, Lynch 2010, Sanford 1996, Weaver and Purcell 1998) and the corrections spectacle created by the infamous Sheriff Joe Arpaio of Maricopa County Jail, whose heavily advertised clothing policy requires all male inmates to wear pink underwear. The complex and sometimes divergent paths of federal, state, and local corrections since the 1980s have shaped modern punishment into an expansive, punitive, warehousing project implicated in the construction of alien penal subjects.

I situate these modern punishment practices in theoretical work on the body as a disciplinary mechanism (Aretxaga 1995, Feldman 1991, Foucault 1995, Scarry 1985). Discipline of the body underscores the penitentiary as it is predicated on the physical confinement and control over an inmate's body. This work, explored below, promotes an understanding of prison punishment as inherently humiliating. The mechanisms through which the state manipulates the confined body to create particular kinds of subjects (inmates) humiliate the individual by denying the cultural, symbolic body. The threads of humiliation and domination emphasized under the new penology are therefore well grounded in the historical penitentiary. Modern prisons have elaborated and emphasized these threads not only in their harsh, punitive conditions, but also in the articulation of the humiliation of prison punishment in the public domain (Brown 2009, Garland 2001, Hyde 1997). Together, these interrelated realms of the new penology have fostered the ideological shift in public conceptions of prisoners as alien others.

## **The Extraordinary Prison**

Based on a year and a half of ethnographic fieldwork with women incarcerated in the state of Arizona, evidence for this dissertation is drawn from two field sites. The first six months of fieldwork were conducted in an Arizona county jail, Zero County Jail,<sup>7</sup> (2011-2012), followed by nine months (2012-2013) in the largest minimum-security unit of Arizona's state prison for women, Arizona State Prison Complex (ASPC) Summerville. Additional evidence was gathered from follow-up contact with women after their release from prison. Data collection methods included interviews, focus groups, and participant observation. Using these data, my analysis aims to unpack the everyday reality of incarceration for women to consider its implications for modern punishment. As this dissertation will reveal, mechanisms of punishment such as iconic uniforms, regulations over hair, severe limitations on hygiene products, invasive routines like strip searches, poor medical care, and continual surveillance make clear that the primary intention of incarceration is punishment.

Although my analysis relies heaviest on evidence drawn from ASPC Summerville, it is also informed by both my initial research in Zero and contacts with released participants. The research in Zero was especially important in drawing my attention to women's linguistic and semiotic negotiation of their bodies in institutional life. For instance, my introduction to the significance of hair occurred during this research. On the day of her missed CPS hearing, Muñeca introduced me to this significance, because while I had already witnessed women constantly styling one another's hair, spending days on elaborate braided styles and even making their own makeup with hair grease and magazines (rubbing the color off of the pages and transferring it to their faces), I hadn't recognized the role of these practices in women's navigation of confinement. I had failed to attend to this significance because the activities

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<sup>7</sup> I refer to both the jail and the prison with pseudonyms.

quickly faded to the background, as I had implicitly accepted the common social science conceptions of these practices as trivial and unworthy of analytical attention (Furman 1997). Thus, Muñeca's efforts to devise a court-ready appearance opened my eyes to their value—beauty norms provided a realm of salvation from total degradation as she prepared herself for court. At the same time, they also drew my attention to the lack of control entailed in expectations for these practices as Muñeca's efforts simultaneously revealed incarcerated individuals' inability even to ensure that the officers get them to court. Muñeca could style her hair, put on lip gloss, and obtain a matching uniform, moves that allowed her to draw on cultural symbols of value and worth to try and present herself as a proper woman and a fit mother, but she could not assure the opportunity to display her construction of this worth in court.

As a student of Linguistic Anthropology, observation of these practices in Zero also focused my attention on exploring the role of linguistic practices as part of the everyday mechanisms through which incarcerated women construct a sense of self in the extraordinary environment of the prison. In particular, I attend to the linguistic and semiotic practices in which the women engaged to create a coherent self in relations that link gender, race, class, sexuality, and other aspects of identity critical to their being. Bodily practices, including hair care rituals, and the discourses around those practices, are key avenues through which I explored these efforts. I focused on these aspects of social life because they were both accessible to me as an outside researcher in the sensitive context and because, taking my cue from Muñeca's effort to produce a court-ready appearance, I came to see the importance of bodily practices—both the language used during them and the physical transformations they entail—for participants' daily lives as a struggle to constitute identities for the self that contested the restrictions of such identities to prisoner and the signal of worth, or lack thereof, of this identity to non-prisoners.

Attention to these practices, I argue, is critical to understanding modern punishment. Incarceration as punishment has long been understood to challenge personal identities, acting on the body to regulate, control, and construct individuals as inmates (Aretxaga 1995, Feldman 1991, Foucault 1995, Goffman 1961, Rhodes 2004). Goffman (1961) defines prison intake procedures as rituals of humiliation, the purpose of which are to strip an individual down to a bare body to be rebuilt in the image of the institution. This image acts as evidence of punishment while incarcerated, producing a particular kind of institutional subject—a prisoner being punished for a duration of time. Expanding on this, I explore the ways humiliation is integral to daily life in prison as regulatory interactions manipulate normalcy in ways that continually humiliate and distance prisoners from their desired identity stances. Beyond reformulating individual identity, however, I consider these practices as challenges to a prisoner's sense of humanity. A constant affront to dignity, incarceration suspends not only certain legal rights, but also freedom of movement, self-expression, and determination. The caging of individuals calls into question these taken for granted aspects of humanity that are at the core of anthropological inquiry. Ultimately, I consider modern punishment a ritual of humiliation predicated on a fundamental challenge to the humanity of prisoners.

Confined by right of legal dictates, Muñeca is further confined by her dependence on a state representative to shackle her body and escort her to court; during the transport, all her comportment and gestures are still more confined by the strictures of movement in shackles and chains. Her efforts to prepare for court despite these regulatory confinements produce more than identity practices; they also negotiate claims to dignity in ways that resist the humiliation of both confinement and appearing in a court of law reduced to nothing more than a uniformed, chained, and shackled image brought for a moment outside the carceral institution. Crimping one's hair,

rubbing magazine color on one's face, and even matching shades of neon yellow are critical moves in the creation of normalcy within the extraordinary. The incredible symbolic work in which incarcerated women engage within prison is by no means unique to that institution. Instead, across varied kinds of institutions, it mirrors the continual negotiation of identity in social life, the linguistic and semiotic moves by which individuals take on various gendered, raced, classed, and sexed identities during interactions (Agha 2007; Bakhtin 1981, 1984a; Bourdieu 1989; Butler 1990). However, attention to these moves in prison reveals what it means to be human under conditions where the minimum needed to be human is challenged daily. When styling one's hair becomes a critical claim to dignity, and that claim is rejected by the imposition of severe restriction, regulation, and control over hair, the threat incarceration makes to one's humanity becomes clear.

### **Theoretical Background**

In this context of inherent humiliation and bodily control, individuals are overwhelmed with symbolism of their positioning and restraint on the possibilities of self-presentation. Prison scholars have noted, however, that incarcerated individuals, even when utterly degraded and maximally confined in solitary conditions, and no matter how deeply they are marked by inmate symbolism, continue identity work (Aretxaga 1995, Feldman 1991, Rhodes 2005a). By focusing on the practices women incarcerated in the state of Arizona devise to contest the challenge incarceration makes to their humanity, I analyze how linguistic and semiotic practices contribute to the options they have for making claims to particular gender, race, class, and sexual identities. I note how incarcerated women formulate a coherent self by making claims not only to identity, but also to humanity. Their practices, I argue, aim to create the normal out of the extraordinary by reinterpreting the prison environment and its humiliating force.

Given that applying the concept of resistance is difficult in a context of confinement because it risks romanticizing individuals' efforts to navigate their life in prison (Abu-Lughod 1990, Bosworth and Carrabine 2001), I take these moves as challenges to humiliation, and what I will refer to as claims to dignity. Within the resistance literature, the everyday practices illustrated by Muñeca's efforts to prepare for court are most similar to "weapons of the weak," or small-scale acts of resistance to dominating power structures (Scott 1985). Indeed, they challenge the institutional insistence on an inmate identity, which in Muñeca's case entails formulating a proper woman and a fit mother through ideals of beauty and worth. However, while maintaining attention to the dominating structures of power incarcerated women face, this conception of resistance can easily imply that prisoners have more control than they do over their position and their bodies and therefore fail to capture the significance of these practices for individuals. Often, the practices women engage in have no impact on their position in the institution, don't improve conditions of daily life, and, critically, can at any moment be absorbed by the institution as an added option for punishment. For instance, Muñeca never made it to court despite her efforts to prepare. Yet these efforts were not useless because as Muñeca's case suggests, she made claims to dignity by cultivating her self-presentation in reference to proper femininity. She was not reduced to an inmate, but maintained dignity as a woman and a mother ready to go to court.

Dignity as inherent respect, while not equivalent to humanity (Agamben 2002, Lechte and Newman 2012), is intimately linked to conceptions of what it means to be human (Appiah 2001, Orentlicher 2001). As Ignatieff (2001) argues, dignity is intertwined with ideals of human rights and freedom, both of which are essential in the formation of a sense of self:

Ironically, it is often those who are deprived of their liberty, slaves and prisoners, who remind us of the connection between dignity and freedom. They refuse to surrender the tiny margin of autonomy that is left them, and they use it to assert their unvanquished

sense of self. Thus there is a chain of association that connects together the idea of dignity with the idea of freedom, and both in turn with the capability to maintain and express personal identity (165-166).

The practices women engage in that aim to construct normalcy, by which I mean the effort to create something other than an inmate identity, can be seen as moves to claim dignity. By continuing to assert their identity, women hold onto their humanity as they deny the total removal of freedom and the suspension of many rights that is embedded in incarceration.

Attention to these practices can therefore reveal the means through which women create a coherent self in a context where that self is under constant attack by the inherent humiliation of prison punishment. By attending to the realm of hair care, I explore the humiliating punishment practices institutional authorities deploy to regulate, surveil, and control women, against which women devise and more or less successfully deploy claims to dignity. The analysis reveals the ways women's claims to dignity are, in part, voiced (Bakhtin 1981, 1984a) in their hair care rituals and discourses of beauty and, in part, by the linguistic contestation over authority in their disciplinary interactions with officers. Both of these interactional spaces offer nuanced examples of women's claims to dignity in the face of humiliation.

To unpack these practices and their implications for modern punishment, I draw on theoretical work on the body in prison, which elaborates the ways humiliation is embedded in prison punishment. I combine anthropological theory and conclusions derived from work on hair care, which considers hair critical to social identity and cultural being, with Bakhtin's (1981, 1984a) concept of voicing, which reveals the role of language in creating a sense of self.

### ***Punishment and Humiliation***

The penitentiary was a key development in the liberal state representing a shift from direct domination of subjects to diffuse discipline (Foucault 1995). Prior to the early nineteenth century, state punishment took place largely in the public square through physical harm or

shaming of the criminal body, including practices such as the stocks and the gallows (Cohen 1985, Foucault 1995, Morris and Rothman 1995, Rothman 1971). With the rise of the penitentiary, however, state power took on a new relationship to the physical body, utilizing it as a tool for discipline rather than domination. Foucault's classic study of prisons, *Discipline and Punish* [1975] (1995) considers the aim of prison punishment to be the construction of docile subjects. The state contains, controls, and manipulates the prisoner's body, denying its function as a signifier of personal and cultural identity. Docile subjects are created through the surveillance and punishment of the body, which eventually fosters self-policing as state power is embedded into the subjectivity of prisoners. The body, then, is the material through which punishment is realized. Incarceration is predicated on this particular relation between the body and the state.

Humiliation is central to the dynamic reformulation of the individual through their body (Aretxaga 1995, Feldman 1991, Goffman 1961). First, the prisoner is humiliated by confinement, and then by the practices of punishment that control the prisoner to construct the inmate. Upon entry to the prison, an individual "begins a series of abasements, degradations, humiliations, and profanations of the self" (Goffman 1961: 14). These intake rituals of humiliation emphasize the physicality of the body to diminish its possibilities to signify cultural identities, and begin hollowing it out to rebuild it in the image of the institution (Goffman 1961, Rhodes 2004). Such rituals extend beyond intake, occurring before and after the formal classification period. Arrest, detention in jail, and court proceedings all may humiliate the individual in a continuous series of degrading events preceding incarceration in prison. Surveillance, regulation, punishment, and control continue the ritual through the duration of a prison sentence. After prison, an individual may face suspended rights; continued state surveillance for a duration of time, sometimes

extending to life, and including possible drug testing, ankle monitors, and regular parole or probation meetings; and restrictions on housing, jobs, and even social relations. The intake process of any subsequent prison term will be informed by previous experiences and so on. Each of these possibilities extends the humiliation of prison punishment, the ritual of intake one instance of the continual humiliation of prison punishment.

This dissertation focuses on the mundane ways humiliation is embedded into daily life on the minimum-security yard of Summerville. While extreme forms of degradation associating incarcerated individuals with the animalistic have been well documented (Aretxaga 1995, Feldman 1991, Rhodes 2004, Williams forthcoming), humiliation mechanisms also make use of uniforms, surveillance, hair regulations, and limits on hygiene. These mechanisms use the normal's inherent potential to humiliate that is part of every face-to-face social interaction to make practices that appear to be designed for prisoners as outside the ordinary:

Humiliation inheres every nook and cranny of the normal. We know it in the myriad of little humiliations we frequently suffer or risk suffering in every face-to-face interaction. The humiliation of the perverse, of extremis, of death camps and interrogation rooms is parasitical on the usual and the familiar, not the other way around (Miller 1993: 10).

The taken for granted aspects of daily life, such as hair care rituals, are constantly destabilized through institutional control over the body that formulates these practices as something other than ordinary, humiliating through the manipulated mundane. The normal in prison constructs an extraordinary environment through a constant affront to a prisoner's sense of self.

I demonstrate this by elaborating the complex ideological implications of the severe regulation of women's bodies. These regulations, I argue, manipulate the normal in such ways to constantly remind individuals of the institution's challenge to their humanity. I also consider more overt forms of humiliation as they were relevant to my participants. Some, such as the strip

search, are embedded into daily life, while others, such as solitary confinement, are initiated as penalties for misconduct. It is in reaction to these forms of domination that semiotic practices like hair care and the linguistic negotiation of the self make possible the construction of the normal through claims to dignity that challenge the constant humiliation.

### *Hair Care*

The symbolic significance of hair has long been recognized in anthropology. Early anthropological explorations debated whether hair symbolism was motivated primarily by the subconscious or by public consciousness (Banks 2000). Freud's (1922) psychoanalytic approach explored Medusa's hair as a symbol of female genitalia that inspired castration anxiety in men. Berg's (1951) elaboration of this subconscious motivation for hair symbolism, whereby hair was equated with the penis, inspired Leach's (1958) seminal work on hair in anthropology, *Magical Hair*. For Berg, castration anxiety was at the root of all hair care practices whether these entailed public or private rituals, such as shaving and cutting hair, respectively. Criticizing this extreme position, Leach's analysis of hair symbolism went the other direction. He rejected a subconscious motivation for hair care rituals and placed the meaning of hair in the cultural, public realm. Carrying the potential to be read as "body dirt," hair is a dangerous bodily sign. It is central to bodily symbolism as it threatens to associate the individual with the physical, material realm if not cared for in the culturally appropriate manner. Cultural rituals around hair contest the possible reading of hair as "matter out of place" (Douglas 1966), filling hair with magical properties to resist its association with the profane and allowing it to enter the realm of the sacred. I am inspired by Leach's assertion of hair's potentiality as "body dirt," which encourages a recognition that hair is, at its core, a dead product of the body. What requires explanation, then, is how it is that hair is removed from the category of bodily waste. This raises

the question of how strong the association remains between hair and dirt, and under what conditions dirt may take primacy over the cultural symbolism of hair.

Later anthropological work on embodiment continued this thread, as scholars defined hair as a critical cultural symbol in the formation of identity (Bourdieu 1989, Csordas 1990, Duranti 1992, Turner 1995). Embodiment recognizes that outward physical signs of the body are read as a representation of the inner person. These symbols, such as gestures, movement, hair, and dress, do not carry intrinsic meaning apart from social life. Everyday interactions fill them with cultural meaning, linking particular ways of walking or hair styles to certain kinds of people and social positions. Individuals cultivate a culturally appropriate, legible identity in reference to these links, becoming who they are within a particular cultural framework of the body. Manipulation of the body in prison, then, calls into question an individual's self-understanding (Goffman 1961). The vast rules, regulation, and control over the body redefine the self, repositioning the individual within the cultural framework of the body.

Theoretical work on gender and the body extends the embodiment literature by focusing on the gendered implications of social bodies. Gender is one realm of identity created in social life. Gendered identities are embodied in multiple ways, formulated in reference to gender ideologies that define appropriate and inappropriate gendered beings (Butler 1990) in ways that are always also raced and classed (Williams 1996). Mainstream beauty norms follow these gender ideologies to construct an ideal female body, a raced and classed gender ideal against which all women are read (Banks 2000, Bordo 1993, Butler 1990, Mendoza-Denton 2008). Stemming from white standards of beauty, the ideal image at various times emphasizes thinness, light skin, and long, flowing hair. While not all women strive for the ideal or measure themselves against it, beauty rituals are a critical avenue through which women cultivate their bodies in

reference to that or other culturally relevant gender identities. At the same time that these rituals may move toward the ideal, they also serve as a site of symbolic negotiation (Banks 2000, Battle-Walters 2004, Furman 1997, Jacobs-Huey 2006, Majors 2001, Mendoza-Denton 1996). Beauty rituals may mobilize multiple aesthetic values, negotiating aesthetic ideals that may challenge, support, or coexist alongside what is otherwise perceived as mainstream beauty norms. Apart from or in relation to hair as markers of feminine beauty, hair can also have deep spiritual significance (Banks 2000, Jacobs-Huey 2006, Parker et al 1995, Rubin et al 2003). Gender, race, class, sexuality, and a host of other identity categories overlap in the negotiation of aesthetic values for hair. Constituting hair as healthy and beautiful is therefore open to be filled in multiple ways with multiple implications by the elaborate cultural rituals around hair.

Combining these two major threads in the anthropology of hair, I will explore the significance of healthy, beautiful hair in prison. This includes both the distancing of incarcerated women from ideal femininity through reformulated beauty rituals, and women's attempts to navigate that distancing by growing healthy, beautiful hair. As women negotiate their identities through hair and hair care, long hair becomes infused with value as a symbol of femininity, beauty, worth, and, no less important, productive prison time. This symbolic value arises out of the complex interplay between mainstream beauty norms, alternative aesthetic values, and the state's efforts to control hair. Beyond performing a particular racial, gender, or other identity, however, the value invested in hair, I argue, voices a claim to dignity.

### *Doing Being Ordinary*

My analysis of the voices women take up to claim dignity through hair growth and linguistic practices focuses on face-to-face interactions on the prison yard, including beauty rituals among incarcerated women and disciplinary interactions with officers. Bakhtin's (1981,

1984a) concept of voice recognizes that language is inherently heteroglossic, or filled with many voices. Associated with different moral positionings and social personae, this range of potential voices allows for the formation of a sense of self. These linguistic options are necessary for individual consciousness, providing options for distinguishing and differentiating the self (Hill 1995). This self is then projected outward in social interactions through the voices one takes up or from which one demands distance. As a speaker utters a recognizable voice, it acts as an indexical linking them to a particular social persona, formulating their character, or public self (Agha 2007, Keane 2011, Silverstein 2003). The act of interpretation leaves the process open with potential disjuncture between voicing efforts and resulting public self.

The voices women engage in prison play a vital role in how they construct normalcy. They allow women to bring discourses of beauty and aesthetic values into the prison to contest and challenge an inmate identity through the creation of healthy, beautiful hair. Further, women can construct expert identities, claiming dignity, value, and worth in response to the degradation of their being through their voicing efforts. More still, the multivocal nature of language can be exploited in disciplinary interactions, engaging in a negotiation of authority when confronted with state representations of power. While these voicing efforts are akin to the practices all individuals engage in social interaction, they point out the role of women's symbolic work in navigating the extraordinary prison.

Sacks's (1984) discussion of the ordinary argues that a person should not be seen as just an ordinary person, "but as somebody having one's job, one's constant preoccupation, doing 'being ordinary'" (414). The activities one engages in, the things one talks about, and the way one talks about them are all critical acts in the construction of the ordinary. Although they are seldom subject to analysis, these ways of doing being ordinary are critical to a sense of self

within a particular cultural framework. The severe restriction, regulation, and control over women in prison challenges the taken for granted possibilities of being ordinary, through the extraordinary conditions and through the limitations on the negotiation of their identity. The techniques women employ, including the linguistic voices they take up, and semiotic practices, like crimping or growing one's hair, claim dignity by attempting to create the ordinary out of the extraordinary.

### **Outline of Chapters**

Chapter Two provides the necessary background information for the reader to interpret my analysis. I describe the ethnographic context including a brief overview of Arizona corrections and ASPC Summerville. I then detail my entry into the field; including my transition from fieldwork in the jail to the prison, my research population, and my research methods; as a way to illustrate the prison environment in detail, particularly highlighting the centrality of surveillance in the unit. I provide examples of the types of data I collected, mostly centering on hair care interactions, as a way to walk the reader through the unit. Moving outward from spaces of hair care, I describe the yard and its tools of surveillance, including officers and cameras. Presenting the reader with the types of data I chose to collect sets the stage for the significance of bodily practices in contexts of incarceration and illustrates the limitations on research in prison.

The questions I grappled with as a researcher—including my relationship to the research population, the appropriate methods of research, and the implications of ethnography in a prison environment—are not simply anthropological self-reflections. Rather, they help to define the unique aspects of the prison that both researchers and their research populations face (Owen 1998, Rhodes 2001). In particular, these questions point out the “culture of surveillance” my research participants were subject to, and the ethical conflicts of adding a level of

anthropological surveillance to that culture (Feldman 1991). When surveillance is a critical tool of punishment and humiliation, where does participant observation fall? As I grapple with this question, I describe the ways incarcerated women interpreted my presence, including the slow, marginal acceptance I gained on the prison yard. I conclude with the importance of ethnographic work in contexts of incarceration and the necessity of navigating these ethical questions.

Chapter Three follows the life history of Ciara, an African American woman in her early 30s who was first incarcerated at age 14. Her childhood transition from a loving home with regular, familial hair care sessions to juvenile detention, where she was unable to care for her hair, sets the stage to explore the bodily transformation implicit in incarceration. Following her from intake to the minimum-security unit where I conducted my fieldwork, I detail the role of humiliation in prison punishment. I focus on Ciara's efforts to negotiate her body in the prison, demonstrating that the hair care rituals in which she engaged, as well as her voicing of African American aesthetic values through language and semiotic practices, allowed her to create a coherent identity and to make claims to dignity.

By attending to the practices in which Ciara engages to normalize the extraordinary control over her hair, I unpack the ways rules and regulations for control over incarcerated women's bodies are formulated in reference to ideological conceptions of incarcerated women as "double deviants" (Owen 1998). The scrutiny over women's bodies is creative as women must perform the intimate daily rituals of the body in ideologically loaded ways. Drawing on Bakhtin (1984b), I extend Goffman's (1961) analysis of rituals of humiliation to consider these rules and regulations as creating a carnival of punishment. The state's regulation of women's bodies inverts the symbolic order such that the physical body takes primacy over the cultural, constructing incarcerated women as different and dangerous by associating them with the

ideologically loaded realms of the body and dirt. These humiliating practices set the groundwork for more extreme forms of punishment, such as time in the hole, the solitary confinement unit. The severe bodily restriction and isolation in the hole, I argue, draws on the imagery of the grotesque to punish. The chapter ends with Ciara's experience of the hole, where her body can no longer set up boundaries to the physical world, as mice continually invade her cell. Her efforts to claim dignity are challenged to the extreme, and she has what she calls a breakdown, flinging her property in a rage until she is moved to another cell.

Chapter Four follows women who style hair on the yard as officially hired bay barbers or as informal stylists. Bay barbers are inmates who are hired by the prison to cut and style other women's hair, while informal stylists are inmates that illegally style hair on the yard as a hustle. Unlike stylist/client interactions outside of prison, where expertise is displayed through tools of the trade, limited tools and symbols of professional identity required stylist/client interactions in prison to focus heavily on the negotiation of trust. In these interactions, stylists mobilize a number of voices, including discourses of beauty and cosmetologist speak, to gain the trust of their clients. Attending to these voices, I argue that stylists create a language of expertise through which they are able to become the beauty expert. Their construction of expertise constitutes a claim to dignity, which allows them to fill their persona with value and to perform normalcy in the prison environment.

The ways the language of expertise is produced allows incarcerated women to formulate a coherent self, at the same time it accounts for the value granted to long hair. Against the possibility of hair as body dirt, these interactions construct long hair as a symbol of value, worth, and evidence of productive prison time. By facilitating their clients' abilities to grow long hair, stylists challenge the rules and regulations of the prison yard that restrict hair growth, such as the

rule that hair longer than shoulder length must be worn up, and provide a mechanism for achieving beauty. These efforts reinterpret the empty time of prison punishment and allow women to mark progress and personal growth in prison. For stylists, this semiotics of hair associates them with an inner purity, taken as an innate ability to transmit femininity to others.

Chapter Five highlights the role of discipline on the yard. Although rules are constantly broken with no consequences, attention to practices such as informal hair styling reveal ways the women are also constantly conscious of the possibility of punishment. This possibility, I show, further cements the threat that incarceration makes to their sense of self, because even as the random rule enforcement makes possible the practices they adopt to make claims to dignity, at any moment it also threatens to punish them for the practices. The enforcement of rules capitalizes on humiliation by pointing out that everything that women may have on the yard is a privilege that can be taken away, thus constructing as pretensions their efforts at dignity.

State power must be enacted through its representatives, who negotiate their authority in moments of discipline. Officers have various strategies they use to assert their authority. Some of these strategies are unofficial, such as that which imposes a penalty that requires women who have gained the privilege of wearing a two-piece uniform to return to wearing an iconic one-piece jumpsuit for varying periods. Other strategies rely on official penalties such as issuing tickets and imposing the process that litigates the penalties for tickets. Once a ticket is issued, women are tried for the offense by the disciplinary sergeant. Through a linguistic analysis of these disciplinary interactions, I highlight the implications of the continual negotiation of authority. Goffman's discussion (1981) of participant roles provides a framework for exploring the disciplinary sergeant's assertion of authority through the animation of a disciplinary script. I show how, by using a number of linguistic mechanisms, the sergeant indexically points to a court

of law, takes on the voice of the state, and wields the power of silences in favor of the state power he represents. Proper use of the script allows this representative of state power to unify the many voices of the state. Confronting these mechanisms, incarcerated women attempt to fracture that voice, to explain their actions, and to claim innocence. While they participate in the negotiation of authority, they are limited to mechanisms possible for their social role as prisoner, and, therefore, reify the power structure that punishes them. The resulting analysis points out the priming of the prison context for acts of “extraordinary evil” (Katz 1993) as moments of discipline naturalize the state domination over incarcerated women and create a gap between them as individuals and occupants of prisoner as their designated social role.

In the final chapter, I consider the limits of women’s claims to dignity in the extraordinary environment of the prison by following one of the stylists, detailed in Chapter Four, Ge-Ma, from expert stylist on the yard to severe mental health issues as she loses her bay barber job near her date of release. In the return to this case, I reiterate the challenges incarceration makes to prisoners’ humanity. With her release date approaching, Ge-Ma loses the mechanism used to create normalcy in the prison environment. Making her situation more difficult, she also faces another extraordinary environment—released with no family support, resources, or other form of assistance. Confronted with the move from one extraordinary environment in which she learned to make claims to dignity, to another in which she will have to relearn mechanisms for making that claim, she began to engage in dissociative discourses and self-mutilating behaviors. Thus, I argue that her story illustrates both the ultimate implications of a system of punishment built around humiliation and degradation and informs the literature on mental health in prison. Further, it points to the important contribution an ethnographic and linguistic analysis of incarceration can make to prison studies, detailing the nuanced, dynamic

relation between individuals and the prison environment and its far-ranging consequences for the self. As a direction for future anthropological research, Ge-Ma's story exposes ways the management of women in prison can create conditions for madness even in minimum-security custody, as it entails constant challenges to their humanity, in response to which women learn ways to create dignity. It further complicates the notion of release as something after, and therefore apart from, the prison experience. The prospect of release can both shape the possibilities for adapting to and navigating prison life and continue the ritual of humiliation that is prison punishment.

## **CHAPTER 2 – ENTERING THE FIELD: PARTICIPANT OBSERVATION IN PRISON**

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### **A Culture of Surveillance**

The Arizona State Department of Corrections required me to attend a week-long, non-officer prison employee training before starting my fieldwork in Arizona State Prison Complex (ASPC) Summerville. In addition to some basic CPR, self-defense, and role-playing activities in which we learned to pick up dead bodies and avoid unseen attackers, the overall message of the course was not to trust anyone in orange (the color of the prison uniform). To make clear the boundary between those in orange and those not in orange, we were given some rules of conduct: we were not to wear orange clothes, not to call incarcerated women by their first name, and, most importantly, not to have physical contact of any kind with inmates. These rules point to the continual distinction between the free and the incarcerated in prison. The free are required to display this distinction in various aspects of face-to-face interactions, including clothing, terms of address, and body relations.

The history of prisons in the U.S. has seen variable emphasis on this boundary. Prior to the early 20<sup>th</sup> century, the distance between inmates and officers (often referred to as keepers) was maximal as isolation dominated prison practice (Rothman 1971). While throughout the 20<sup>th</sup> century many prisons minimized that distance, Arizona prisons tended to highlight the distinction of prisoners for most of their history (Lynch 2010). For instance, a policy instituted in the 1960s required that inmates be called only by the inmate number stamped on their clothing. Briefly, in the late 1970s, these boundaries were symbolically minimized through policies that gave inmates, then officially renamed “residents,” the potential to wear their own clothing. Since the late 1980s, Arizona revamped earlier distancing policies. Similar policies have also regained prominence nationally (Garland 2001; Lynch 2010, 2008).

These policies are a part of the unique challenges prison presents to ethnographic fieldwork. Anthropology's primary data collection method requires a delicate balance of closeness and distance between the researcher (both a participant and an observer) and the research population (Agar 1980, Powdermaker 1966). As this chapter will explore, prisons skew the balance in the direction of distance. My field experience in many ways mirrored traditional ethnography, but also differed in the significant gap between a free researcher and a population held against their will (Bosworth et al 2005, Rhodes 2001). Erasing or ignoring that gap was not my goal, but building rapport with research participants and gaining their trust required a minimization of distance in the interpersonal realm so that I could follow the norms of face-to-face interactions, rather than interact with participants only as an outside observer.

In order to exempt myself from the rules of conduct to the extent that it was possible, I planned to talk to the deputy warden in charge of the minimum-security yard on which I would be conducting my fieldwork about the necessity of building rapport with research participants. Before that discussion, however, I was given a tour of the unit by a high-ranking officer and granted official approval to start research. As soon as the tour ended, I was standing in the administration building when I heard "Lori!" I turned around to see Muñeca, the woman I had worked with during my previous fieldwork in an Arizona county jail, standing in the hall. "You really came!" She ran over and gave me a hug, "Muñeca, oh my God, how are you?" I replied, unable to refuse her warm gesture. I was simultaneously conflicted about breaking the rules on my first official moment in the field and genuinely happy to see her. Shaking off my worries, I followed Muñeca to the yard. The tour she gave me was very different than the one that the officer had provided. Introducing me to her friends and life in prison, she laid out the many ways the yard was different from county jail, a significant aspect of which greater freedom of

movement, but much less privacy accompanied with constant surveillance. I was incredibly grateful for the insider introduction.

Muñeca was in the administration building that day because she had just been released from suicide watch, where she had been held for four days in a solitary lockdown unit. In this unit, women are restricted to a cell twenty-four hours a day, seven days a week, where they are allowed no clothing other than a green, rubbery cloth (known as a turtle suit), which serves as a blanket. Under constant watch, the inmate is also not allowed showers. Muñeca told me she had put herself in the unit because she wanted to be alone. She was having trouble dealing with the constant noise, the lack of privacy, and the continual scrutiny of officers and other women in the dorm-style unit. Throughout my fieldwork, as recounted in this dissertation, I learned how in the extraordinary environment that provides a highly limited set of options, taken for granted logic of choice making does not prevail and the women chose what they saw as the best option under the circumstance. In response to these conditions, Muñeca's decision underscored this point. She reintroduced me to the environment of the jail—prison offered greater freedom but at the cost of less privacy. She chose the quiet and semi-privacy of solitary confinement over access to clothing, basic hygiene, and movement.

I left the field that first day in a state of confusion and shock. How was I supposed to conduct myself? It was my first day in the field, and I had already broken the rules of conduct, and in all places for such a lapse, the administration building. They're going to kick me out, I thought, or, much worse, decide to punish Muñeca for the infraction. Neither of which happened, but these are issues I struggled with throughout the nine months of fieldwork. I didn't exacerbate distance by requesting that a person not touch me, and while I never initiated contact, I also didn't refuse it. I always called women by their first names, or the nicknames they offered when

they introduced themselves to me. I didn't wear orange (of course, I wouldn't have made it past security and onto the yard if I had tried). I did explain to the deputy warden of the yard that anthropological methods require following people's greeting habits, and calling them their preferred names. This seemingly exempted me from the rules of conduct, or, more likely, officers simply didn't know how to interpret me and my presence. From the administrative side, I was very lucky. For the most part, I was left alone to conduct my research as I saw fit. The deputy warden was helpful in navigating my presence on the unit, letting officers know who I was and what I was doing. There were only a few instances where confused officers (usually newly transferred to the unit) would ask who I was and why I was intermingling with inmates.<sup>1</sup>

This chapter offers the contextual background necessary to interpreting the remainder of my analysis. After a brief history of ASPC Summerville and the minimum-security unit I studied, I focus on my entry into the field. Through a description of the design of the unit, the research population, my relationship to that population, and research methods, I lay out the ethnographic context as a culture of surveillance (Feldman 1991). The culture of surveillance is critical for understanding the daily lives of my research participants. Their semiotic and linguistic practices that I explore throughout this dissertation are framed by the rules and regulations of the yard, which I describe in the following chapter, and the (near) constant gaze prison officials aim to maintain over these practices. At the same time, this culture shaped my research methods. While I was able to build rapport with my research participants, I could not fully immerse myself in the culture or the context. There were large parts of my participants' daily lives I could not participate in, such as obtaining punishments or even sleeping in the

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<sup>1</sup> Only once did I get a stern talking to from an officer, who accused me of "getting too close" to the incarcerated population. I immediately apologized, gently explained the methods of anthropological research, and thanked him for bringing it to my attention. From then on he was friendly. One of my advisors experienced in prison research, Dr. Brackette F. Williams, offered the suggestion that possibly he just wanted to meet me and didn't know how.

facility. My focus on bodily practices, in general, and hair care, in particular, facilitated the collection of data, including face-to-face interactions, in this sensitive ethnographic context.

Challenging the possibility of ethnographic work in a culture of surveillance, Feldman (1991) explains, “Participant observation is at best an absurdity and at least a form of complicity with those outsiders who surveil” (12). Although ethnographic methods are imperative to moving beyond the façade of the prison and understanding the institution (Rhodes 2001), ethnographic work in a culture of surveillance must carefully consider its moral and ethical implications, recognize the limits of its analysis, and adapt its methods to these limitations. I discuss my entry into the field in relationship to traditional ethnography, including its similarities and differences, in order to address these issues. Ethnographic work in contexts of incarceration is in some ways unique and, in many ways, difficult. However, it offers critical insight into the practices of modern punishment, the implications of these practices for incarcerated individuals, and the role of prisons in society.

### ASPC Summerville

*Figure 2.1. Arizona’s Adult Correctional Facilities (Arizona Department of Corrections 2014a)*



There are currently 15 adult correctional facilities in Arizona, five of which are privately operated (Arizona Department of Corrections 2014a). These facilities are located across the state in both urban (near Phoenix and Tucson) and rural locales (see Figure 2.1). Lynch's (2010) history of Arizona corrections traces the unique trajectory of prison expansion in Arizona. Prior to 1978, and for over 100 years since the first territorial prison was built in Yuma in 1876, Arizona operated one adult correctional facility (the prison was transferred to Florence in 1908). Prison expansion was kept in check by the state's commitment to fiscal frugality and a lack of bureaucratic oversight. For much of its history, the sole prison operated under a penal philosophy of tough justice that diverged from the penal philosophies of reform that shaped early penitentiaries elsewhere in the U.S. After the 1950s, Arizona, like other Sunbelt states, saw a population increase encouraged by post-World War II economies, including the service sector and information technology. The population quickly became younger and more urban, with the majority of growth in the sprawling urban centers of Phoenix (Maricopa County) and Tucson (Pima County). Arizona continued to run only one prison until a variety of political and cultural forces opened the financial and political doors for prison expansion.

Once opened, by 1984 the state would rapidly move from an incarceration rate near the national average to its current rate, which is among the highest in the nation. This unprecedented growth began in the 1970s and was, in part, fostered by the establishment of the Arizona Department of Corrections in 1968. With the Department, the Arizona prison system gained oversight, a representative voice, and out of state influence. Another force driving growth was the political turn from conservative Democrats to Republicans in the state legislature. Although federal oversight demanded a reduction in the population of the increasingly overcrowded prison, the state legislature overhauled sentencing policies in 1977. The "presumptive

determinate” prison code ended many backdoor policies that let inmates out before their release date, and, at the same time, reduced judicial power in sentencing by establishing mandatory minimum sentences and reduced parole authority with truth-in-sentencing that increased both sentence lengths and the portion of a sentence a prisoner had to serve before a parole hearing. These policies were put into place despite the considerable financial investment they would require in prison construction, marking the first time the legislature prioritized a tough stance on crime over fiscal frugality.

At the time, the Arizona Department of Corrections was headed by a director from out of state, MacDougall. The director was one of the few in Arizona focused on a penal philosophy of rehabilitation, following the national trend of individual treatment and community corrections in the 1970s. Despite this philosophical bent, he led Arizona’s prison construction boom and the dramatic growth of the prison population, largely due to policies enacted beyond his control. During the boom, MacDougall pushed for prisons in urban areas in order to diversify staff, promote rehabilitation, and ease the transition from prison to the community. The legislature was convinced by the cost-savings promise of urban settings, yet the community organized in opposition pushing for rural prisons to prevent the degrading of urban centers. The Department won, and Summerville was one of the prisons built during this period. It opened in 1981 outside of a major Southern Arizona city in the Sonoran Desert. Until 2000, when it was converted to an all-female facility, Summerville had both male and female units.

Arizona’s prison population and number of institutions continued to grow throughout the 1980s when it rose to one of the top ten incarceration rates in the nation. Although the violent, serious felony population remained near average national rates, the lower-level felony population rapidly expanded as tough sentencing laws continued to dominate policy. Republicans gained

power in the legislature by accusing Democrats of being “soft on crime,” expanding the political power of tough-on-crime laws. These laws, including a 1982 policy requiring a minimum of six months in state prison, rather than the usual county jail time, for a third DUI conviction, which was “celebrated as the toughest drunk-driving law in the nation” (114), drove the prison growth that was later seen at the national level. This very brief history of Arizona corrections points to the unique prison landscape of Arizona, locating ASPC Summerville in the brutal desert right outside a major metropolitan area.

### *Ethnographic Context*

While Summerville was built during the brief rehabilitative period in Arizona corrections, that influence quickly fell out of favor and the state returned to its tough justice roots after MacDougall’s tenure in the early 1980s (Lynch 2010). The facility, and the Department of Corrections as a whole, changed its rehabilitative slant and led the nation-wide move towards no-frills policies along with other Sunbelt states. In 1985, all state prisons were renamed “prison complexes,” from the earlier term “correctional facilities,” and incarcerated individuals were again officially called “inmates,” rather than “residents.” By the next year, rehabilitation was removed from the Department’s mission and security was deemed its priority. No-frills policy changes in Summerville included the reinstatement of uniforms, increased regulation over grooming and appearance (including hair), a co-pay for medical care, limitations on property, the removal of educational programs, and even strict rules of appearance for officers (clean uniforms and shined shoes). No-frills policies went hand-in-hand with the Department’s emphasis on security. The 1980s saw the implementation of razor wire, closed-circuit cameras, and increased surveillance of visitors, including the possibility of strip searches. In 1987, the Department began recording all inmate phone calls and, in a no-frills policy shift, passed the cost onto inmates

through a partnership with a private phone company that charged inmates or their families for phone calls. Similar private partnerships grew along with other no-frills policies.

These policies and a commitment to tough justice shaped the design of Summerville and the punishment practices within the institution. Prison research indicates that both design and punishment philosophy have an influence on individuals' adaptation to the prison environment (Goodstein and Wright 1989, Kruttschnitt et al 2000). Kruttschnitt et al (2000) compared two women's facilities that differed in their commitment to rehabilitative and new penal ideology. Although they demonstrated that both institutional context and ideology shaped inmate culture, under the new penology, women were less likely to have strong social bounds with other inmates and were more likely to have negative feelings about officers. The prison context is thus important to situating an ethnographic study of a prison.

The Arizona Department of Corrections operates eight general population units for women—four minimum-security, two medium-security, one maximum-security, and one segregation unit to house persons punished for infractions in prison. I conducted research on a minimum-security unit that housed over 30% of Arizona's female prison population. It represents the mundane conditions of confinement that the majority of incarcerated individuals spend part or all of their sentences in. Only three years old at the time of my fieldwork, the unit was built under the influence of the no-frills and heavy surveillance approach discussed above. Constituting the largest of the general population units, its population is comprised of persons serving short sentences on low-level felony charges and longer sentences on high-level felony offences. It is classified as a "release yard"—intended to prepare individuals near their release date. Thus, women who have achieved a minimum-security status may serve the last three years of longer sentences on the unit. This leads to a population of both "old numbers"—the term

women use to refer to incarcerated individuals with a low inmate number, indicating they were either in prison for a long time or have served multiple sentences—and “new numbers”—the term women use to refer to those incarcerated for the first time and for a short period of time.<sup>2</sup> The prison classification system and rules of appearance promotes these categories, as the inmate numbering system is displayed on the ID tags women are required to wear on their t-shirt anytime they are out of their bed-area. Ideological conflicts of how properly to “do time” were common, with old numbers seeing new numbers as naive, disrespectful, and breaking the convict code (this latter characteristic prompted many old numbers to call new numbers “inmates” while referring to themselves as “convicts”). Given that the yard was only three years old, and many officers staffing it were new to corrections, old timers often claimed that the combination accounted for the officers being petty and harsh in their implementation of rules and punishments. Consistent with Kruttschnitt et al (2000), I observed a high level of mistrust and dislike of officers among women on the yard.

To describe the design of the unit, I begin in the dayrooms wherein I situate my study as the official space for styling hair on the yard. In this space, I observed and collected data on many hair care sessions. For part of the day, incarcerated women hired by the state, called “bay barbers,” would cut other women’s hair in the stark white rooms at a pay rate of ten cents an hour. Located at one end of large, dorm-style rooms, known as runs, with each run housing 120 women, the dayrooms face an officer station located at the opposite end of the run. Housing units, also known as bays, are comprised of two or three runs. These housing units shared a striking resemblance to airplane hangars, or large gray barns. This design is one of Arizona’s

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<sup>2</sup> Inmate numbers began at 1 with the first woman incarcerated in Arizona, and at the time of my fieldwork were in the hundreds of thousands. Women could judge roughly the year an individual was first incarcerated in Arizona based on the number on their ID tag, a number they maintained for life. Numbers beginning with 0 (099999) or 1 (100000) were old numbers and a point of pride. Anything beginning with a 2 was a new number.

alternative ways of cheaply adding prison beds, including the current use of tents, and in the 1980s, an actual airplane hangar (Lynch 2010). Although there are no cameras in the dayroom, the placing of large glass windows in front of the officer station makes visible the activities in the room. Women knew that one corner of the room was invisible to the officer's gaze. It provided one of the few zones of (partial) invisibility free from the eyes of the officers and cameras, and bay barbers would often step into that corner to give their clients a rule-violation hug. Once, Ge-Ma, a bay barber, sick of her inability to properly cut her own hair with the state-provided electric buzzers, cowering in this corner, cut her own hair with a razor blade, which she made from taking a blade out of the plastic, disposable razors for shaving legs which are available from commissary. As she did so, another woman, complicit in her action, served as lookout, keeping her eye on the officer.

Four rows of beds, some of them stacked into bunk beds, and each demarked only by waist-high cabinets, separated the dayroom from the officer station. The unbunked beds were highly coveted, and after a certain amount of time women could put in a request for a bed move and hope to get one of the beds some old timers referred to as condos, generally, and next to a wall, elevated them to beachfront condos. The showers, laundry room, toilets, and the CO4 offices were located behind the officer station. An advanced officer (CO4) assigned to each run is supposed to assist incarcerated women with problems, parole, and other logistics. Thus, women in the dorm were under the watchful eye of the officer stationed in the housing unit and also security cameras placed to provide a view of all of the beds. These cameras were not watched in real-time, but maintained as information to be consulted should it be necessary to scrutinize an activity that had occurred in the run.

*Figure 2.2. The Central Yard*



*Figure 2.3. Softball on the Yard*



Four housing units and four other airplane-hangar-like buildings for administration, education, medical, and the cafeteria enclose a central yard (see Figures 2.2 and 2.3), with officers stationed to watch women on the yard, and cameras placed to maximize visibility when women are outside. These cameras are watched in real-time by the officers in the main control room, who make announcements to the yard when on the video they observe rule violations. Much activity occurs outside on the yard, which contains all the brown, dusty, rocky, dirt, and heat of the desert with none of its beauty. Except in Arizona's brief winter, the yard is usually scorching hot. The circular design traps in heat and holds out wind, and summer temperatures in the area where this prison is located often exceed 115 degrees Fahrenheit. The layout of the unit requires women to wait outside for many daily activities, protected from this relentless heat by only a few small shade structures over picnic tables. The temperature acted as a continual, structural punishment, echoing the incredible heat of Arizona's first territorial prison, built in Yuma, which holds a nostalgic place in the state's penal history as a site of vigilantly, tough justice (Lynch 2010). The yard also includes a basketball court, a volleyball court, a few bleachers, some old, rusty exercise equipment (cemented to the ground), and a track that encircles the center. The majority of the yard is dirt and rocks, with various paths laid out for

walking. Many incarcerated women new to the yard are assigned to work on the “yard crew.” Workers are paid ten cents an hour to rake the rocks into neat rows each morning. Despite a rule that requires people to stay on paths, the neat rows are quickly trampled by their movement.

Surveillance is built into the design of the unit, making it, at first blush, Foucault’s (1995) panoptical dream/nightmare come true. However, despite the state’s efforts to achieve a constant gaze, state power is necessarily dependent on its representatives to implement its gaze, to identify rule breaches, and to impose the consequences that enforce the power of visibility. As the description and analysis of disciplinary practices in Chapter Five reveal, to achieve these ends and to bring that gaze to life in prison, state representatives must construct their authority in interactions with incarcerated women. Officers did so in various ways, some of which required aligning with the voice of the state, while others required diverging from it. For incarcerated women, this meant that rule enforcement appeared arbitrary and chaotic. Consequently, while surveillance was a constant backdrop for women’s practices, the variable enforcement of rules provided the space for women to develop linguistic and semiotic practices to contest their inmate identities, such as growing their hair. Women’s awareness of living in a culture of surveillance was not disrupted by the practices. Nevertheless, much of their social work contested the authority of state representatives. As they devised and implemented these practices, they understood that, at any moment, the authorities had the power to punish them. The culture of surveillance was a constant backdrop to my ethnographic work and required continual navigation as I entered the field and developed my methods.

### ***Research Population***

I had anticipated difficulty gaining participants because of the social distance between the researcher and research population that has been cited as a barrier to ethnographic work in

prisons (Bosworth et al 2005, Rhodes 2001). I planned to recruit a small number of participants with whom I could work closely. To do so, I first located the women, like Muñeca, with whom I had worked in Zero County Jail that were by then housed on the prison yard. At the beginning of the prison phase of my research, six women constituted this pool. During the field period, a few more were moved to the yard. After confirming whether in the new context they wanted to continue participating, I employed snowball sampling to increase this pool by recruiting participants from their social groups. To further increase the pool, I distributed flyers on the yard, and, as my research centered on hair, I met with and added women hair stylists that were interested and willing to participate. Soon the response was overwhelming. After considering the project's goals, some decided not to participate. Although the pool that remained was larger than I had anticipated, at 70 participants, I decided the size would offer insights into differing experiences of incarceration and different backgrounds. Over the nine months, I worked with this large, diverse group of women who were willing to share some of their lives with me.

Table 2.1 provides a rough demographic sketch of the resulting research population, situating it in Arizona's total incarcerated female population, which, at the time, was 3,688 (Arizona Department of Corrections 2013a), and in the state's demographics as a whole. Women made up 9% of the total incarcerated population in Arizona in 2013 (40,686), slightly higher than the 2010 national rate of 7.5% (Bureau of Justice 2010), the last date for which such data is available. The rate of incarceration for women has been increasing faster than that for men since the 1980s, although women remain a small percentage of the total prison population (Belknap 2007; Sudbury 2010, 2005; Tapia 2010). This increase has a number of causes. Nationally, it has been attributed to shifting policies, such as a reduction in social services and increased criminalization of non-violent acts, including drug abuse and prostitution, which

disproportionately impact poor women of color (Davis 2003, Rierden 1997, Sudbury 2010). In Arizona, specifically, the increased penalties for low-level crimes, such as DUIs, as well as the offences described above, and the state's status as one of the poorest in the nation, combined with a removal of many social services, likely fostered this increase.

*Table 2.1. Research Population, Prison Population, and Arizona Population Demographics*

	<b>Research</b>	<b>Prison<sup>3</sup></b>	<b>Arizona<sup>4</sup></b>
<b>Race</b>			
Caucasian (White)	50% (35)	54% (2,027)	57% (3.7 Million)
African American/Black	21% (15)	9% (338)	4.5% (290,000)
Native American	3% (2)	8% (300)	5.3% (350,000)
Mexican American/Hispanic	20% (14)	24% (900)	30% (2 Million)
Mexican National	1% (1)	2% (75)	
Other	4% (3)	2% (75)	2.5% (160,000)
<b>Age</b>			
18-24	14% (10)	11%	
25-39	44% (31)	52%	
40-54	37% (26)	33%	
55+	4% (3)	5%	
<b>Prior Prison Term</b>			
Prior Term	47% (33)	40%	
No Prior Term	53% (37)	60%	

My research population reflects some of the national trends associated with this increase, and diverges in others. Following national trends, almost all of my participants identified their income level as low to lower middle-class growing up, only 18 were incarcerated for violent crimes, and their average sentence length was 3.5 years (ranging from 4 months to 18 years). Further, all but 15 of my participants were mothers, following the larger trend that most incarcerated women are mothers, and are more likely than incarcerated men to have been the

<sup>3</sup> Racial demographics for the prison are from February 2014 (slightly after my fieldwork, with a total prison population of 3,715) (Arizona Department of Corrections 2014b); the other figures are from the inmate population fact sheet for 2013 (Arizona Department of Corrections 2013a).

<sup>4</sup> State demographics are from the U.S. Census Bureau (2013). The figures are from 2012, the latest date racial demographics for the state are available. The total population of Arizona in 2012 was 6.5 million.

primary caretaker before incarceration (Tapia 2010). While, by state demographics, African American women are indeed overrepresented in the women's prison and in my research population, Latina women are underrepresented (although, including men, Latino/as make up 30% of the Arizona prison population (Arizona Department of Corrections 2014b)). This is partially explained by the large numbers of undocumented immigrants detained in jails or immigrant detention centers in Arizona. Mexican citizens are only incarcerated in prison if they are charged with a felony in addition to being undocumented. Unlike national trends, African Americans actually make up a smaller portion of the total Arizona prison population today (13% (Arizona Department of Corrections 2014b)) than they did before the prison boom, ranging from 16 to 23 percent of the state's prison population between 1958 and 1968 (Lynch 2010), although for women alone they make up a larger percent (21%). Prisons have been explored as a tool of racial control historically, particularly in the post-slavery era as the convict lease system rose to prominence (Davis 2001), and in the era of the new penology (Davis 2001, 2003; Wacquant 2009). Arizona indicates that for some states, this role may never have waned as it did between the two eras in other states (Lynch 2010). Finally, it is important to recognize that more than 50% of the prison population, and half of my research sample, identified as white, a group that is often ignored in academic and activist representations of the racialized prison.

### ***Entering the Field***

Showing up on a prison yard and trying to talk to people while wearing street clothes and carrying the hand-held radio the administration required is a good way to create suspicion and distrust. Rumors started flying that I was a cop, an officer in disguise, a reporter, a documentary film maker, a counselor, and some inmates even called me TMZ—after the abbreviated title of a televised gossip program—the range of rumors covered everything but an anthropologist. With

over 1200 women on the unit, my reputation was largely out of my hands. It was not possible to meet with and explain the project to everyone, but even if it had been possible the high turnover rate meant the addition of new individuals without knowledge about me and the project. Further, imprisoned women are justifiably suspicious, given that they are held against their will, housed in deplorable conditions, under continual surveillance, entangled in legal troubles, and because many have been manipulated by cops, officers, lawyers, judges, and other legal representatives. To add another obstacle to ethnographic work, incarcerated women, while held accountable for obeying numerous rules of conduct, none of these rules address how they were to interact with an ethnographer, and, no less important, the short- or long-term consequences of doing so.

Suspicious toward an ethnographer are common and are not unique to prison ethnography. The methodologies typically employed to ease or get around these suspicions for the purposes of fieldwork, such as reciprocity (Stack 1974, Wax 1952) and, as discussed in the Introduction, working with a key informant (Agar 1980, Barnard 2006), however, can be difficult in a prison context. Considered a vulnerable population, the Institutional Review Board (IRB) prohibited gifts or rewards for participants in order to prevent coercion into research. Among prisoners, property is scarce and valuable, and providing commodities to certain individuals could potentially lead to resentment, differential treatment, and violence, not to mention the moral implications of improving conditions (no matter how minimally) for a few over many. Where and when it was possible, I attempted to return the favor of allowing my presence on the yard to my research population and other women. For instance, many expressed gratitude that I talked to them as a person, rather than prisoner, informed them about life outside of prison, and listened to their stories. I spent a great deal of time hearing both participants' and non-participants' life histories and complaints about prison life (which, in turn, shaped my

research). An unanticipated way I was able to give something back was through my research equipment, providing an opportunity to document the passage of time. For instance, whenever I would take a photo of a participant, groups of women I did and didn't know would run over asking for their picture to be taken. For the duration of women's incarceration, they can only get pictures taken on a few designated occasions, if they can afford the fee charged by the prison. The overwhelming desire for their picture to be taken, even as I explained that they would immediately be deleted for non-participants (required by my IRB), indicates women's efforts to resist the emptying of time discussed in the next chapter—a photograph, even if only momentarily recorded, marks the progress of time. I spent many afternoons photographing groups of friends and showing them the digital photos, allowing them to stage the pictures until they got it just right. These actions allowed me to give back, if only slightly, during my fieldwork and eased suspicions against me largely because, as my participants noted, it was rare for anyone in the institution to trust them and treat them as people.

The other common method ethnographers employ to navigate suspicions is through a key informant. The limitations of this method in general were discussed in the Introduction. While I found my close relationship to Muñeca productive in the jail context, prison presented unexpected challenges to this approach. Despite its high turnover rate, the prison yard had a much more stable population than the jail and, as noted, much less privacy. The lack of privacy faced by women is not limited to state surveillance. Their actions and activities are also observed by other incarcerated women, and this had a profound impact on my fieldwork. Everything I did was on public display, and my ability to represent women in prison under evaluation. Who I spent time with was a point of critique, and I quickly realized spending too much time with one individual would alienate others depending on who it was. For instance, some women thought I

shouldn't talk to any new numbers, like Muñeca, because they don't know "how it really is." When they brought this up with me I tried to explain that I was interested in getting a wide representation of prison experiences. Usually women were satisfied with my explanation, but some that did not talk to me directly let me know their lack of acceptance through glares or sideways comments. I learned to navigate such tensions by spreading my time across the various different social groups my research participants belonged to. While I remained in close contact with Muñeca and other participants from the jail (most of whom were new numbers), I did not continue to rely on any one of them as a key informant.

The lack of privacy and scrutiny over my methods it fostered, in addition to the culture of surveillance, created an uncomfortable field situation for the first few months. During this time, I told myself that my research participants wanted me there, wanted their stories told, and that understanding modern incarceration was imperative to civil rights and social justice. Those lofty concerns, however, provided little comfort to my visions of Coco Fusco and Guillermo Gómez-Peña's performance art piece, *The Couple in the Cage*. Documented in film, the couple displayed themselves in a cage as "undiscovered AmeriIndians," inviting the audience to take on the anthropological gaze (Fusco and Heredia 1993). Commenting on the anthropological and colonial project of creating "others" through that gaze, they drew on racist imagery of the primitive and the savage to present themselves to onlookers, who eagerly stepped into their role as gazers. While the larger question of my relationship to my research participants is explored below, I felt the most conflicted about those with whom I did not interact. They couldn't go home, leave, or opt out of my presence, and I was simply adding a layer of invasiveness to their daily lives. Some women let it be known that I wasn't welcome. I did my best to respectfully give them as much distance and privacy as I could provide. Yet, the culture of surveillance was

amplified simply by my being there, and although I didn't observe or attend to women's activities who didn't want me to, or record in any covert way, the total lack of privacy prevented me from shielding those women from my gaze. The legacy of anthropology makes an ethically difficult transfer of its methods to a forcefully confined context, and I felt this tension heavily throughout my long entry into the field.

As time went on, however, these tensions dissipated somewhat. People got more used to my presence, or got bored of caring about me. More and more women would talk to me, and some who earlier had given me glares and glances of distrust even told me I had earned their respect. There were several factors that assisted in this marginal acceptance, or tolerance, of me on the yard. One was time—simply sticking around proved to many people that I was legitimate. Another was my avoidance of officers. While I had planned on interviewing officers, I quickly realized that talking with officers would build suspicion and only did so after I felt comfortable in the field. My previous fieldwork in the jail was also invaluable to entering the prison. The women I had worked with there, like Muñeca, were amazing character references, telling others that they knew me from County, and that I was “cool” (as in, not a cop). Even those suspicious of new numbers seemed to be eased that insiders trusted me, and word spread quickly that I was trustworthy. I am incredibly grateful to these women not only for their willingness to share a small part of their life with me, but also for their help in my transition into the prison. I had followed through on my word to come to prison, and this, I believe, escalated their trust.

Perhaps the most important factor in gaining some trust on the yard, however, was card playing. As mentioned in the Introduction, spades is a very popular card game in contexts of incarceration. The game is a four-player bidding game in which partners bid on their hands and try to take the same number of books they bid. It is called spades because spades are always the

trump suit. I had slowly started learning the game during my preliminary fieldwork in the jail, mostly sitting in for people, until Muñeca took me under her wing. She taught me how to bid and work with my partner to match the bid. At the time, when she realized I sort of knew how to play, she asked where I learned. When I said here (jail), she replied, “You learned in here? That’s what’s up! Huh? She’s like I learned in here, I’m a jailbird.” Muñeca appreciated my eagerness to learn, showing her respect by referring to me with the insider term “jailbird.” Women in prison similarly were impressed by my card playing abilities, and learning to play in jail was an accident critical to my fieldwork. In prison, once I sat down at a table, picked up the cards, made bids, and somewhat successfully played spades, people’s guards went significantly down. Likely it was not only my knowledge of the game that earned people’s respect, but also my willingness to join in such an intimate activity, something no other non-incarcerated individual, uniformed or not, would ever do on the prison yard.

I recognized women’s acceptance of me not only as more people talked to me and less people glared at me, but also as women started to refer to me with insider terminology, negotiating my relationship to them and the prison context. I first realized the importance of this terminology not when Muñeca referred to me as a jailbird, but when, much later in prison, she referred to the office I used as my “house.” Most women on the yard called their bed-area in the dorm their house, which contained a bed, plastic chair, tiny desk-table, and cabinet. The administration provided me with an office to use while I was in the field, and this is where I would go during count.<sup>5</sup> We were walking around the yard with some of her friends one day, and Muñeca said “we can go to Lori’s house if you want.” Thankfully, they decided to play volleyball instead, as I am not sure how the administration would have felt about a group of

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<sup>5</sup> Five times a day everyone had to return to their beds (unless on the out-count for work or school) and wait to be counted in a face to ID count, where officers went around matching everyone’s faces to their ID card.

incarcerated women and me hanging out in the office, but Muñeca's gesture was an inclusive one. Other women would ask me "how much time do you got?" or "how long to the gate?" which are both insider ways of asking the length of an individual's sentence. Some would even claim I was "doing time" with them, trying to convince me I was even when I protested. This is not to exaggerate my integration into the community in any way—I remained very much an outsider, only given a glimpse into women's daily lives to the extent that they wanted to share, and there was much I had no access to, as I elaborate below. But it does point out the importance of longevity and ethnographic methods for unpacking the experience of incarceration. My research methods evolved along with my acceptance into the community, at first heavily focused on women's hair care and beauty rituals, as this topic minimized invasiveness and deflected heightened surveillance stemming from my activities.

### **Researching Beauty**

I can't say that it was that important to me before. I can say I didn't, you know, I dyed my hair, I got my hair cut, but I never, uh, thought about, you know, uh, styles the way I do now... You know what I mean? I think, I think my self-confidence has grown, and I think my beauty, my, my vision on female beauty on my own has grown along with it, with my confidence.

During an interview with Rose Rogers, a white woman in her mid-30s nearing the end of a twelve-year sentence, she described coming into femininity through hair care during her incarceration. Rose had long brown hair and small red glasses, although she sometimes went without the glasses to display her newly acquired eye makeup skills. Before she was in prison, she didn't think much about hair, makeup, or other techniques of feminine production. However, throughout her incarceration she worked on her hair, improving its health through careful maintenance. As it grew long and healthy, she gained self-esteem and a vision of female beauty. Her interview points out the common link between "healthy, beautiful hair" and femininity on the prison yard, a link I analyze throughout this dissertation. Although required to wear their hair

up, which I explore in Chapter Three as a form of humiliation, hair was a site of much social practice and individual concern, with many women focused on growing their hair. Rose orients to mainstream beauty norms as she defines her journey into healthy hair as a coming into femininity. These norms, which stem from white standards of beauty to define femininity itself through symbolic markers such as long hair and light skin (Banks 2000, Bordo 1993, Butler 1990, Mendoza-Denton 2008), were commonly mobilized on the yard. Rose's hair growth added femininity to her body, a critical semiotic practice through which she negotiated the humiliation embedded in the institutional control of her hair.

My initial interviews focused on women's daily practices, such as hair care and beauty rituals. Women often made connections between healthy hair and ideal femininity. Participants would both point out the threat rules and regulations over their bodily presentations made to their feminine identity, and, like Rose, describe personal growth in prison through hair care. In addition to these initial interviews, I also held an in-depth, life-history interview at the end of my fieldwork, or before a participant's release. My interviews were shaped by the public nature of the yard. Although I was provided an office where I could conduct interviews, which was really more of a storage closet, the office was located in the administration building right next to the deputy and assistant deputy wardens' offices, and, with a photocopier located in the same area, was subject to the high traffic occasioned by its users. Conducting interviews under these conditions seemed like a bad idea, because it was a situation consistent with making participants uncomfortable. Therefore, I conducted most interviews on the yard, where I tried to find a secluded spot on one of the picnic tables or sets of bleachers.<sup>6</sup> Although not free from officers' view, it was one space that was more my participants' own. This, however, meant that it was on

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<sup>6</sup> This was a common practice among other outsiders who came to talk to incarcerated women, such as counselors or reentry assistance programs. The attempt to create private space on the highly public yard was therefore not unique in the context.

display for other incarcerated women. While most often women were respectful and gave us space, this was not always the case and some interview data was shaped by who was within ear's reach. I never pushed women to talk about anything they hesitated to answer, and sometimes shifted my questioning to less personal topics when I sensed unease. Thankfully, none of my participants reported differential treatment from officers or other women for their participation, but this potential no doubt shaped their interactions with me as it shaped mine with them.

Focusing on the topic of bodily practices rather than illicit activities or crimes, however, helped women talk about their experience honestly under a framework that was minimally threatening. This was especially important during initial interviews where my role on the yard was under scrutiny by multiple parties. The ideological view of women's beauty practices as insignificant (Bordo 1993, Furman 1997) inadvertently worked as a detour, preventing officers or other incarcerated women from attempting to gain information through my activities while allowing me to collect naturalistic data for linguistic analysis. In particular, officers saw incarcerated women's hair care efforts as trivial at best, and an indication of their inability to improve themselves at worst—that is, they assumed instead of working on valuable skills for their release, women simply concerned themselves with the trivialities of female aesthetics. One of my first days in the field, an officer asked me why I was studying at a women's prison when men's prisons are much more interesting (this was a common question I got at all levels—officers, administrators, incarcerated women, and academic peers—echoing the academic literature's skewed focus on men's prisons as somehow more authentic or real as sites of state punishment (Belknap 2007, Howe 1994, Rhodes 2001)). Here, he explained, women just do their hair all day. Although I disagree with his sentiment that this is unimportant, his observation that

hair care is integral to many women's daily lives in prison is consistent with my findings.

Women spend a lot of time talking about and doing their hair.

In addition to deflecting excess surveillance, the topic of bodily practices was minimally threatening and easy for my participants to talk about. After initial interviews, women continually informed me of their hair care issues. This provided not only a focus for conversation, but also elaborated the meaning of women's semiotic practices on the prison yard. For instance, Lee-Lee, an African American woman in her 50s, always invited me to join her at visitation. Every other Sunday her brother-in-law and a very old, almost silent white man that lived with them, would visit. The two visitors were much quieter than Lee-Lee and I, and we would chat while playing cards with them. A common topic of conversation was her hair care issues, which became a prominent concern after her friend, who had acted as her stylist, was released. Lee-Lee had been keeping her hair braided in an effort to grow it, but now that her friend was gone she didn't trust anyone to braid her hair, a common issue discussed in Chapter Four. This led to hair care conflicts:

Cause I don't wanna comb my hair no more. Sometime I go to school with my hat on, and I keep it on 'til I get out. Then I put my li-, ha-, hat on, when I lay down and then I take, and then I take. And then when I know when it gets evening and I'm like, oh I didn't even comb my hair today. And that's not good, being a woman. No, you gotta comb your hair.

Lee-Lee explained to me that keeping her hair braided helps to grow it, in part, because you don't need to comb it, and combing it too much makes your hair fall out. Now that she couldn't keep it braided, she was conflicted between combing it (and risking hair loss) and her femininity, which required proper hair upkeep.

As I discuss in Chapter Three, the restrictive context of the prison also fosters such conflicts because the women do not have the proper tools for hair care. Lee-Lee's conflict points to African American women's unique hair care issues in prison, and underscores the multiple

aesthetic values that are at play in defining healthy, beautiful hair. While mainstream beauty norms dominate the symbolism of femininity, not all women orient to the mainstream in the same way. Women may mobilize multiple alternative aesthetic values in their hair care practices, as they negotiate not just gender, but also race, class, sexuality, and other overlapping realms of identity (Banks 2000, Battle-Walters 2004, Jacobs-Huey 2006, Mendoza-Denton 1996). Many African American women, like Lee-Lee, were growing their hair in prison. Their hair-growing efforts were not simply a reproduction of mainstream beauty norms, however, because they also drew meaning from African American aesthetic values. These values often connect hair care to spirituality and other realms of being, such as politics and self-care, outside of beauty (Banks 2000, Jacobs-Huey 2006, Parker et al 1995, Rubin et al 2003). For Lee-Lee, hair is a symbol of femininity, and, following African American aesthetic values, “God’s glory.” Keeping up her hair is imperative to being a woman in good standing with God. Lee-Lee can cover her hair with a hat and escape the concerns of feminine symbolism on the yard, but she cannot ignore that not combing her hair threatens her identity as a woman on a spiritual level.

Rose and Lee-Lee’s observations begin to point out that one of the ways women challenge the humiliation implicit in incarceration is through the elaborate symbolism of hair. I focused my data collection largely on observing hair care rituals in prison, although I also spent a lot of time just hanging out with women on the yard—playing spades, gossiping, or waiting (they were always waiting in line for something—medical, commissary, the cafeteria—brutal in the desert heat). Observing hair care sessions was ideal for collecting data on women’s linguistic and social practices. Women happily talked about hair and welcomed me to observe their hair care sessions, which were often large social events. I used field notes, audio, and video recording. I audio recorded most often, deluding myself at the time into believing that the audio recorder

faded into the background. However, my participants would sometimes bring it up or address it in interactions, indicating that it (and my presence) never escaped their awareness. The video recorder only amplified my outsider role. While video data is useful for capturing the visual semiotics of hair care rituals and other bodily practices, as well as non-verbal realms of communication, the video recorder often remained the site of much discussion and interest. Participants often addressed the camera and the future audiences of the video directly. Further, the camera would draw the attention of non-participants, sometimes becoming a focal point of activities. I therefore limited video recording to well defined, bounded hair care rituals, which helped bring the focus away from the recording device to some degree.

One of the first hair care interactions I observed was with Muñeca and two of her friends, Berry and Cece. I reproduce the interaction here to introduce the reader to the types of interactions I most often observed, as well as to illustrate the complex layering of women's identities during hair care rituals. I knew Berry, a white woman in her late 20s, from county jail. She and Muñeca had met in jail, and maintained a friendship after they were transferred to prison. Berry told me that although Muñeca was a troublemaker, always gossiping, making bad deals, and therefore enemies on the yard, and getting in trouble from officers—she just couldn't help but love her for her childlike innocence. They met Cece, a twenty-year-old white woman, in their housing unit, after which the three of them spent a lot of time together on the yard. Berry had worked as a stylist before her incarceration, and in this interaction she was cutting Cece's hair with an electric razor she purchased. Cece hadn't had a haircut since her arrest almost a year before this interaction. She didn't trust any of the bay barbers with her long brown hair. The haircut she received in this interaction was against the rules, as only state-hired stylists were allowed to style other women's hair. Despite this, Cece sat on a plastic chair, her hair falling well

below the seat, as Berry trimmed her V-shaped style. Muñeca sat next to them, listening to a clear plastic walkman that belonged in the early 1990s<sup>7</sup>:

*Excerpt 2.1. Berry and Cece*

1 Muñeca: ((Singing)) [You didn't have to] cut me off!  
 2 Cece: [Oh my God it's so short!]  
 3 It was down to here dude.  
 4 Berry: It was not ((Laughing)) down to there.  
 5 Muñeca: ((Laughing)) [Cece this is um,]  
 6 Cece: [Yes it was, Muñeca?]  
 7 Muñeca: The song to you from your hair.  
 8 Cece: Wasn't my hair down to here?  
 9 Muñeca: This is the song from, [um, you to your]  
 10 Berry: [First of all,]  
 11 Muñeca: From your hair to you.  
 12 Berry: It's still down to there.  
 13 Look at when you're [sitting right now.]  
 14 Muñeca: [Is it static?]  
 15 Cece: I can't even, it's fucking static dude.  
 16 Berry: Look,  
 17 (.) and this is how much I cut off,  
 18 On the very [longest part].  
 19 Cece: [See I told you] it was down to there.  
 20 Berry: ((Laughs))  
 21 Lori: ((Laughs))  
 22 Berry: On the longest part, I didn't cut that much off the front.  
 23 Cece: Ok.  
 24 Berry: You dip.  
 25 Cece: I just don't want to look like a little girl.  
 26 Berry: Oh yeah, cause I'm giving you a fucking bob right now.

Goyte and Kimbra's (2011) *Somebody that I used to know*, a popular song at the time of my fieldwork, was playing on the radio on Muñeca's walkman. Singing along to the line, "you didn't have to cut me off" she decides that it is dedicated to Cece's hair. While she attempts to tell Cece (lines 5, 7, 9, and 11), Cece is more concerned with the length of her hair and is busy accusing Berry of cutting off too much (lines 2-3, 6, and 8). While Berry is defending her cut, explaining that she only trimmed a little (lines 4, 10-13, 16-18, and 22), Muñeca tries to get Cece to listen to the song (line 14). However, Cece brushes her off, in line 15 telling her "it's fucking

<sup>7</sup> Prison technology lags significantly behind—in the age of smart phones and tablets, women in prison can only communicate through letters, (very expensive) payphones, and, for some, visitation.

static dude.” Poor reception is a common problem of the cheap Walkman, and Muñeca gets the hint that Cece is unconcerned with hearing the song and stops trying. Finally, in line 25, Cece explains she doesn’t want to look like a little girl, and in line 26 Berry defends her styling abilities, claiming she’s not giving her a “fucking bob.”

Despite their matching bright orange uniforms stamped with ADC, Muñeca, Berry, and Cece are challenging their bodily symbolism of an inmate identity. Not only are they breaking the rules through the hair care session itself, but they are also cultivating alternative identities. Hair care rituals are a significant realm of identity construction, and they continue to play this role in prison. These rituals provide one avenue through which women negotiate inmate symbolism in relationship to their own gender, race, class, and sexual identity stances. Mainstream beauty norms play a prominent role in the interaction, constructing the value in long hair. Muñeca’s ballad to Cece’s hair jokingly questions her decision to cut her hair in the first place, turning a breakup pop song into an ode to hair length. Cece follows Muñeca’s emphasis on length and is hyper-concerned with the amount of hair being cut off, and Berry recognizes the need to prove she isn’t cutting too much.

At the same time that they follow mainstream beauty norms, their language use contests the image of ideal femininity embedded in it. Gender and language are ideologically intertwined, such that “proper” women (read white, middle-class, straight) are imagined to speak in a particular style (Lakoff 1975). This style is marked by politeness, indicated through linguistic features such as indirectness and collaboration. I do not claim women use that style, but rather that there is an ideological link between the style and a gendered identity—the ideal woman carefully crafting her words to display her powerless position in society. This style remains available, then, as a performative enactment of that identity and the various traits with which it is

associated (Barrett 1999, Eckert 2004, Gaudio 2004, Hall 2004). Berry, Cece, and Muñeca do not engage that semiotic system. Instead, they construct an ideal femininity through the semiotics of hair. Their linguistic interaction centers around a disagreement about how much hair has been cut, and, in resulting conflicts, there is little hedging of their disagreement with one another. Cece begins the conflict with an exclamation criticizing Berry's cut (line 2), and while Berry does hedge her initial response with laughter in line 4, starting in line 10 ("First of all...") she goes on forcefully to claim Cece is mistaken. As their utterances overlap, they allow little room for collaboration (lines 1-2, 5-6, 9-10, 13-14, and 18-19), and they are uninterested in Muñeca's efforts to bring the song into the interaction. Cece uses the discourse marker *dude* twice (lines 3 and 15), once as she complains about the length and once to brush off Muñeca. *Dude* indexes a stance of "cool solidarity" (Kiesling 2004), allowing Cece to comment critically on the behaviors of her interlocutors while maintaining a friendly interaction. Finally, both Cece (line 15) and Berry (line 26) use the word "fucking," an expletive that is markedly direct and not polite. Thus, while the value of long hair is open to debate, it is assumed by all parties to be the goal of the ritual. That value, however, is mediated by alternative identity practices that enhance long hair in prison as more than a display of ideal femininity.

An analysis of language and semiotics in this interaction reveals that women are not simply trying to be the mainstream ideal women, or even trying to present themselves to me as proper women. Instead, mainstream beauty becomes one of many semiotic markers of identity engaged in the negotiation of the self in prison. Thus, the meaning of healthy, beautiful hair cannot be understood as a predetermined mainstream ideal transferred into prison, because one must take into account that hair also becomes one of many sites of humiliation in prison, making both possible and necessary the ways mainstream beauty and alternative aesthetic values are

engaged to reinvest hair with cultural value. This process, I argue, makes hair care a site in which one can explore incarcerated women's construction of a coherent self. Within the limitations of my research in the prison context, this was a productive site of focus.

Much of my observational data was collected in the dayrooms, as the official space for styling hair on the yard. The dayrooms were barren, stark, and white, containing only a folding table and (on a good day) a few plastic chairs. When I started my fieldwork, they also contained ping-pong tables, but those were removed after a few months, for reasons I was not able to discover. One of the dayrooms included a crooked barber chair, its only indication that the rooms functioned as beauty salons for part of the day when incarcerated women working as bay barbers were allowed to cut other women's hair with tools used in barber shops to cut men's hair.

Despite the stark, restrictive context, the interactions in these rooms were often full of life, as the participants emulated beauty shop culture outside the prison. Described and analyzed in Chapter Four, these interactions illustrate the ways incarcerated women draw on language to construct a hair care expert identity. To achieve this identity, bay barbers often associate their clients with health and beauty as they negotiate aesthetic values in their consultations. For instance, Ge-Ma, a white woman in her early 50s and one of the most popular bay barbers on the yard, immediately voices the value of long hair, exclaiming, "Look at how long your hair is!" to Toni, a white woman in her early 30s with long brown hair, sitting in the crooked barber chair. Toni is one of Ge-Ma's regular clients, and after complimenting her hair, Ge-Ma explains that she only needs to trim a little off of the ends, but Toni protests that she needs more taken off to ensure the health of her hair:

*Excerpt 2.2. Ge-Ma and Toni (Part 1)*

1	Ge-Ma:	Ok.
2		Huh, God.
3		[I'm so happy] when I saw you, on my

4 Toni: [I feel I]  
 5 I feel I should go shorter cause there's [a lot of split e-].  
 6 Ge-Ma: [No!]  
 7 Toni: No?  
 8 Ge-Ma: No!  
 9 Toni: It's healthy?  
 10 Ge-Ma: Toni,  
 11 Toni: Is it healthy?  
 12 Ge-Ma: Yes, listen  
 13 Toni: Ok.  
 14 Ge-Ma: Toni,  
 15 Toni: What?  
 16 Ge-Ma: You are young,  
 17 And I love long hair.  
 18 You know it's [sexy and people, yeah], yeah  
 19 Toni: [Oh I would never cut my hair short].  
 20 Never ever [cut my] hair short.  
 21 Ge-Ma: [Yeah,] well.  
 22 Toni: Would never, ever, ever cut my hair short.  
 23 Especially in prison, they're like oh we want a different look,  
 24 Why you're in prison.  
 25 Are you freaking out of your mind?

Questioning Ge-Ma's opinion about how much hair to trim, Toni seeks affirmation that her hair is healthy, directly asking Ge-Ma (line 9), and repeating her question when Ge-Ma doesn't immediately respond (line 11). After affirming that Toni's hair is healthy, Ge-Ma supports her opinion by describing long hair as sexy and valuable (lines 16-18), and associating Toni with the culturally valuable symbols of youth, femininity, and beauty. Sexiness as an aesthetic value is complicated in a prison context where sexual relations are prohibited, homosexual identities are policed,<sup>8</sup> and there are minimal chances to display heterosexual orientations. Short hair was associated with homosexuality on the prison yard. Toni's declaration that she would never cut her hair short (Lines 19-20) and her elaboration "especially in prison" (lines 22-25) hints at these connotations, judging women on the yard who undergo drastic haircuts. The strong association between hair length and sexual orientation can create conflict for those who need to cut their hair (because of damage) and the message this may send. Bay barbers often navigated this tension by

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<sup>8</sup> Physical contact of any kind could result in disciplinary sanctions, and sexual contact, colloquially deemed "homosecting" on the prison yard, could lead to a range of consequences including sexual assault charges.

suggesting that women trim off damage slowly, or, if close to their release, wait until they got out of prison to cut it. Ge-Ma's declaration that Toni's hair is sexy may not mean sexy for someone or some group in particular, as the term commonly indicates, but a marker of a type of (mainstream) femininity and a particular sexual orientation.

While the kind of interactions that commonly filled the dayrooms are inconsistent with the larger environment of surveillance and control, they are consistent with the image of a beauty shop as a counterhegemonic space in marginalized U.S. communities (Alim 2004, Battle-Walters 2004, Furman 1997, Jacobs-Huey 2006, Majors 2001). Beauty shops are one of the few spaces independent from dominant culture in these communities. Stylists and their clients engage in political and cultural debate in addition to aesthetic negotiation, often making mainstream beauty norms and other dominant values visible and subject to critique. The dayrooms in prison sometimes mirrored this atmosphere. While not free from state and officer surveillance, and commonly characterized by distrust among women, interactions in these rooms could at times feel distinct from the prison context as women debated aesthetic values and challenged inmate symbolism. Conversations often centered on critiques, complaints, and horror stories of prison life. The dynamic, comfortable atmosphere, when it emerged, was conducive to ethnographic work. Here, more than other spaces on the yard, I felt less aligned with the culture of surveillance and more able to participate in the flow of interaction. In addition to my focus on hair, the dayrooms became a key site of data collection that helped navigate my dual identities as an observer and a participant in the prison context.

### **Participant Observation in Prison**

To forget one's position as an outsider is to be in danger, not only from interpersonal trouble of various kinds but, more enduringly, from alarming emotional and intellectual identifications. Here the ethnographic desire for (perhaps fantasized but nonetheless compelling) alignment with one's subjects must be relinquished or at least bracketed... (Rhodes 2001: 76).

Anthropological fieldwork is characterized by the need to balance the dual identities of observer and participant in a particular context, “learning, as far as possible, to think, see, feel, and act as members of its culture and, at the same time, a trained anthropologist from a different culture (Powdermaker 1968: 418). This balance can easily be skewed in one direction over the other. While “going native” is heavily critiqued in the field, Rhodes (2001) discussion of ethnographic methods in prison implies that ethnographers sometimes align with participant to the neglect of observer, and warns that, in a prison context especially, this may carry negative implications for the researcher. Much of my fieldwork followed traditional ethnography—I integrated myself into a community, learned culturally appropriate means of interaction and self-presentation, and was subject, quite literally, to the rules of the context which shaped my behaviors. Above, I explored some of the obstacles prison presents to ethnographic work, such as limitations on reciprocity. The biggest challenge, however, was the inability to fully immerse myself in the context. I could not follow participants through an entire day, as there were areas, activities, and times I did not have access to. These limitations skew the balance toward observer over participant yet, I argue, they do not impede the important work of ethnography in contexts of incarceration.

One benefit of fieldwork is its ability to make taken-for-granted cultural norms and unspoken rules of conduct visible. Short-term studies or other methods may not uncover these difficult to discern aspects that both make context and shape interactions in it. The ethnographer must learn, somehow, the customs that cannot be breached even for an outsider, such as the appropriate ways of caring for your body and expressing an appropriate identity. As Lamb’s (2005) discussion of her fieldwork with Hindu women in Bengali, India illustrates, exploring what is culturally considered clean and dirty was necessary not only to her ethnographic analysis,

but also to conducting the ethnography itself. The elaborate cleanliness rituals she undertook to perform a culturally appropriate woman and gain entrance into the community were exhausting, and brought to light the importance of appropriately clean bodies, the gendered ways cleanliness and dirt was defined, and even when and where women could resist these strict bodily regimes.

*Figure 2.4. Me and Muñeca on the prison yard*



In a context in which my participants' bodily regimes were heavily regulated, I quickly realized that my self-presentation was held to high standards. As one of the only people on the yard not wearing orange, everything about my body—hair, clothes, cleanliness, makeup—was on display and up for critique (see Figure 2.4). It was difficult to maintain cleanliness on a yard where, during my field period, temperatures typically exceeded 100 degrees Fahrenheit. It became immediately apparent that my participants valued cleanliness, as many would point out any semblance of dirt or sweat on my body and advise me to go clean up, which also meant removing the desert dirt which on the yard constantly got on everything and everyone as it gathered on benches and chairs. I did my best to present myself in an appropriate manner, as I constantly wondered how officers, subject not only to administrative rules of cleanliness but also to the scrutiny of incarcerated women, kept their uniforms looking so clean and crisp. I knew they were able to maintain their required jet-black shoes from a visit to the prison's shoe-shiner. The prison hired incarcerated women to provide free shoe shining services to officers and others

working in the facility, when they found time to use the service. Their ability to lack sweat and dirt marks after hours in the heat, however, remains a mystery.

There were other, more controllable aspects of my self-presentation that I didn't even realize were structuring my own daily practices until I reflected on them much later. While I entered the field with an interest in feminine production, I had never been much of a makeup wearer, and had never taken an interest in intricate hair styling. As my fieldwork progressed, I found myself starting to wear makeup, and even waking up earlier and earlier to style my hair. While, as previously noted, multiple aesthetic values coexisted on the yard, mainstream symbols of femininity were heavily valued, especially for a white outsider who had privileged access to the tools of feminine production. Although it wasn't spoken, I somehow felt the need to feminize my self-presentation, no longer comfortable presenting myself as a woman lacking in this aspect of mainstream cultural production. Thus, without even thinking about it at the time, I adopted a mainstream beauty regimen and reformulated my own body in a culturally appropriate manner. The extreme heat and my makeup inexperience, however, were a lethal combination. It took many flawed makeup applications, leaving telltale signs of mascara streaks under my eyes, and some Youtube makeup tutorials, before I was able to "do mainstream femininity." Thankfully, the big sunglasses I wore during daytime hours because of the omnipresent sun helped hide these signs of failed production. Nonetheless, the transformation of my own bodily regime highlights the significance of symbols of femininity on the prison yard, despite the intent of institutional regimentation of my participants' bodies to achieve the opposite.

While these aspects of my work closely align with participant observation, other factors make prison ethnography unique. Most glaringly, I only joined women for a small part of their daily life in prison. I was not allowed on the yard once it "closed" for the evening and

incarcerated women were required to stay in their dorms (between 8pm and 5am). For the beginning of my fieldwork, I did not have access to any spaces off of the yard, such as work detail. I eventually was given permission to follow my participants to work, however these occasions required prior approval and thus were rare. Participants worked along with women from other yards, so most of my time at these work duties involved explaining who I was to incarcerated women, officers, and non-uniformed employees who supervise their work. Further, I did not have access to the punishment unit or other security units where my participants were sometimes moved for rule violations. There were thus a range of activities I could not participate in. For a very brief list, I never: wore orange, was confined, risked punishment, ate the questionable food or went hungry, slept on the one inch-thin foam mattress, got a ticket, questioned how long I would be in prison or when I would next see my family, was denied medical care, feared for my life, worked hard labor for ten cents an hour, or lacked communication with the outside world. I maintained a clear outsider status through these restrictions and my status as a free individual who could come and go at will. Critically, I never experienced the humiliation and degradation that challenged my participants' humanity on a daily basis.

Such limitations prevent a full emersion in the ethnographic context. Rhodes' (2001) call for an anthropology of prisons points this out, claiming that "no outsider/observer can participate in the situation of the prisoner" (76). She sees anthropology as uniquely positioned to understand modern punishment, and ethnographic methods as necessary to move beyond the public façade of the prison and resist the common view of prisons as abstract sites removed from society (Davis 2003). At the same time, ethnographic work in prisons requires attention to its limitations. The aspects of daily life an outsider is barred from are significant. Further, the dynamic between

domination and resistance is at the core of prison ethnography, and yet being on the outside obscures what is being resisted from the observer. Although I position the relationship between the institution and incarcerated individuals as a negotiation of humiliation/dignity, rather than domination/resistance for reasons described in the Introduction, Rhode's point remains relevant to my analysis. The ethnographer necessarily aligns with the culture of surveillance that is at the center of women's humiliation (Feldman 1991). For another, Rhodes points out that there is an implicit danger of becoming one of the social roles under analysis. The ethnographer risks taking on the role of officer or inmate, as prisons have a habit of "making up people" (Hackings 1986). She cites the infamous Stanford Prison Experiment as a cautionary tale of the institutional prowess to turn people into the roles they fill, structuring their beliefs, behaviors, and world-view. This propensity of the prison context, which may be shared by other ethnographic contexts, requires awareness during fieldwork and analysis.

Owen (1998) describes her navigation of these issues in her prison research, explaining, "my role as an outsider was never in question" (22). Remaining distinct from both staff and inmates, she navigated "an awkward 'no person's land'" as she employed ethnographic methods to understand prison life from the perspective of incarcerated women. Maintaining her outsider status, she was able to place analytic value in the limitations of her research. For instance, being unable to enter women's cells granted her insight into the extreme confinement of her participants and the critical value of privacy in such conditions. I similarly remained distinct from the social roles of the prison. To my research participants, I was someone to talk to not in orange or brown (the color of officers' uniforms which I also was not allowed to wear), someone to laugh at as I fumbled through navigating the unofficial rules of the yard, and, often, a distraction from the mundane daily life of prison with my funny recording equipment and crazy

questions about hair. To the staff, I was also an anomaly. Not only did they think I was strange for wanting to spend time in prison when I wasn't forced to do so (whether by the law or the need for money), but, no less important, because of the interest I took in what they saw as the trivial pursuits of incarcerated women.

At the same time, there are levels at which I experienced the prison environment to an intimate degree, gaining more familiarity with it than simply an outsider looking in. In addition to taking on culturally appropriate means of self-presentation discussed above, I also had my bodily regimes shaped by the institution. I went through something akin to airport security every time I went into the field, including the removal of shoes, a metal detector, and a search of my belongings. Further, I had to wear an ID tag, my actions were under scrutiny, and I was subject to rules of appearance (no orange, brown, and jeans only on Fridays<sup>9</sup>). Removing all unnecessary items from the required clear plastic bag I carried, I made sure to keep on my person at all times multiple copies of approval letters for my equipment. I wore easy to remove shoes that would keep the dirt off of my feet, and professional clothes that were loose and airy. On weekends, during visitation, I joined participants' families as they waited to go through the same procedure, only they were also subject to dogs that sniffed them. Adults, children, and the elderly all had to stand against a chain link fence while a dog sniffed them up and down. They were subject to this intensive surveillance and often rude treatment after they had been charged 25 dollars per person to be on the visitation list, and, sometimes, after having traveled for hours from across the state. My participants often asked me about my entry/exit procedure, asking if I got searched, sniffed by the dogs, and/or strip searched (they were subject to a strip search anytime they left the yard, whether for visitation, work, or any other reason).

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<sup>9</sup> They had casual Fridays for non-uniformed employees in the facility.

While these processes do not approximate the management to which incarcerated women are subject, they are part of the culture of surveillance which I was not only a part of, but also subject to. That culture was terrifying: officers, cameras, huge fences, locking gates, barbed wire, and containment all dominated the landscape. As someone without a clearly defined role in the prison, I constantly feared getting disciplined, yelled at, and kicked off the yard. I didn't know how to act, and constantly encountered situations I had no clue how to navigate legally, ethically, and morally. These tensions promoted nightmares throughout my fieldwork that continued for months after. My first nightmare, right when I began work in the prison, was that I was incarcerated. The sentencing judge decided that I could no longer conduct my study as an inmate. The fear of incarceration seeped into my dream state, along with deep questions about the anthropological gaze discussed above. My subconscious was working out the ethical implications of an outsider looking in: As a middle-class white girl, with long blonde hair of my own, who, before my research, had never set foot in jail or prison, am I able to represent the experience of incarceration? Why can my participants not represent themselves?

A former incarcerated woman of the state of Arizona did write her story. I read Sue Ellen Allen's (2011) auto-biography of incarceration, *Slumber Party from Hell*, while in the field. Some of my participants loved her book, recommending I read it and explaining she "tells it how it is." Others hated it, seeing her as a privileged misrepresentation of the common experience. Her story captures well the humiliating force I saw ingrained in daily life on the yard, and the cover gives a glimpse into the dramatic change in her self-presentation during incarceration: her face is split down the middle, half dull with the telltale prison orange hat, the other half vibrant with makeup and blonde hair falling over her forehead. While incarcerated, she gets cancer and loses her hair to chemo. She explains, "Hair loss is a symbol of this disease, of death. It's

painless, but it still hurts” (29). Her experience of losing her hair in prison mirrors the fear of one of my participants, Sam, who starts to value her hair just before she will likely lose it (discussed in Chapter Three). While Allen’s story takes up many of the same themes, my analysis is markedly different. She comes from personal experience, the emotions and feelings linked to being incarcerated. I illustrate what I saw as an outsider, taking the pieces of the prison world shared with me and placing them in theoretical frameworks that I believe help advance knowledge of U.S. prisons.

While I hope my ethnography reflects women’s experiences accurately, there are many limitations to my analysis. For one, I did attempt to align with my research participants, risking romanticizing them (Thomas 1993). Although I remained cognizant of my role as an outsider, I treated my participants as human, I trusted them, and looked at the prison through their lens. This means I took their word for what they told me, and, unless immediately apparent, I did not question if what they told me were lies or made-up stories. It also means that my analysis is from their perspective. While I discuss the role of the state in punishment, I present it as I came to it—from the women who are impacted by it, their interpretation of it, and their reactions to it. I bring in limited official rules and regulations as they are necessary to understanding the prison dynamic, but do not give the state a chance to represent itself. My analysis centers on the social aspects of my participants’ daily lives, including hair care rituals and socializing on the yard. Other aspects of prison life are informed by interview data, but my analysis has a limited scope. Finally, in the interest of my participants, I do not delve into illicit activities outside the realm of the everyday—the hair styling, bartering, and small-scale rule breaking that officers are well aware of. Drug use, sexual activity, gang relations, and criminal plans are not the subject of this dissertation, and I provide no information regarding them.

## Conclusion

ASPC Summerville was one of the first prisons marking the beginning of the expansion of the correctional system in Arizona. Sited outside a major metropolitan area in the desert, its early rehabilitative slant was quickly abandoned and replaced with an emphasis on punitive justice and security. My field site, the youngest and largest of the prison's units, was built with an emphasis on surveillance, encapsulating the ethos of containment and control. The minimum-security yard represents the mundane conditions of confinement the majority of incarcerated individuals experience, at least for part of their prison sentence. Incarcerated women navigated this culture of surveillance, carving out a few spaces, such as the dayrooms, that had the illusion of some privacy where there was none. They adapted and shaped their practices in relationship to constant surveillance and control over their bodies and their self-presentation. This dissertation explores some of those practices and considers the dynamics between humiliation and dignity that characterize daily life in prison.

Ethnography is uniquely positioned to reveal the mechanisms and implications of modern punishment, providing an in-depth analysis of the lived experience of incarceration. While my research was limited in a number of ways, I hope this discussion inspires further ethnographic projects that work within those limitations to expand theoretical knowledge of prisons. Those limitations, indicative of the conditions of incarceration for my participants, are central to my analysis. My own struggles with surveillance—shaping my methods, my interactions with participants, and my bodily presentation—highlight the pervasiveness of the context itself in women's daily life. By engaging in ethnography, I hope to have minimized my own participation in the culture of surveillance, adapting my methods to respect incarcerated women and treat them as human. This treatment in and of itself speaks back to the culture of surveillance, deflecting its

humiliative force. Further, I aim to minimize the ways anthropological work tends to make peoples appear other and exotic. Presenting women's experiences through a lens that is common to everyone—the mundane linguistic and semiotic practices of social life—I hope my analysis to be relatable. Hair care and bodily practices are not exotic or different, they are integral to our daily lives in such intimate ways they escape notice. The potential for punishment through the manipulation of such intimate daily regimes of the body is something I hope the reader can identify with, grasping the humiliation embedded into daily life in prison.

### CHAPTER 3 – DOING TIME: THE CARNIVAL OF PUNISHMENT

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#### **Bodily Transformation**

Oh my God, I think I was like eleven. And I couldn't wait for my cousin to come, and I tried to put it on myself and I didn't know, I had to mix, the chemicals. And I, that was the biggest mistake I ever made in my life because it took a big patch, of hair in different spots. In my head. ((Laughs)) So I had to go to school with a hat on.

Ciara's cousin had been doing her hair for years when her grandmother finally decided she was ready for her first perm.<sup>1</sup> Excited to graduate from braids and hot combs to what she saw as a more mature form of hair care, Ciara felt like her cousin would never arrive. When she couldn't wait any longer, she snuck into her grandmother's bedroom to search for the magical box from the drugstore. Unskilled in the harsh chemical treatment, her self-application led to significant hair loss. Ciara laughs at her eager young self as she recalls the memory more than twenty years later, providing a glimpse into her socialization into a rich beauty culture. Hair care in the African American community serves as a site of cultural production, the ritualized practices negotiating questions of identity, aesthetics, and cultural value as they unfold within the intimate spheres of the kitchen and the beauty shop (Jacobs-Huey 2006, Majors 2001). Ciara's self-perm reflects not only a *faux pas* in hair care, as she overstepped her novice role, but also a moment of becoming as she attempted to embody particular aesthetic values. Perms soon became integral to her hair care routine, a natural part of her feminine performance.

When Ciara was fourteen, however, this routine was dramatically interrupted. Her grandmother, who had been raising her, passed away. Ciara explained the change in her circumstances, "I was, her princess, she loved me very much, I didn't want for nothing, didn't need for nothing, I had everything. Everything, love, everything. And then when she died, um, I became a ward of the state, so. I was in the system." After she was put into a group home, Ciara

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<sup>1</sup> For African American women, the word "perm" refers to a chemical relaxer meant to straighten hair.

started getting into trouble and running away. For the next four years, she moved between shelters and juvenile detention. During her extensive time in juvenile, she had no choice but to wear her hair natural.<sup>2</sup> She was given only a small plastic comb and a “white girl” brush to care for her hair, which caused significant problems in maintaining the natural style. Explaining the brush to me, a white researcher, she asked, “You know the brushes you guys use? With the spikes?” When I affirmed that I understood the plastic bristles to which she was referring, she continued, “That’s the kind of brush they had, that’s not for us, so it’s hard.” Ciara described juvenile, a context of restriction, regulation, and control, as rough. In that context, her familial hair care sessions were replaced by a significant lack in the tools of cultural production. Unable to participate in the wider cultural practice of hair care, she soon gave up on her hair. This lack of attention symbolized the numbness she developed to her surroundings, a symbol she wore on her head until she was released from juvenile at midnight on her eighteenth birthday.

Ciara’s transition from a loving home to juvenile detention points to the bodily transformation implicit in incarceration. At fourteen, her hair shifted from cultural to bodily product, a site of humiliation as it was regulated in culturally inappropriate ways. Now 33-years-old and incarcerated as an adult, Ciara’s body was again regulated by the state. This chapter centers on the rules, regulations, and surveillance over incarcerated women’s bodies on a minimum-security unit of ASPC Summerville. Extending Goffman’s (1961) description of prison intake procedures as rituals of humiliation, I consider the institutional regulation of the body as a form of humiliation embedded in daily life in prison. The manipulation of the daily practices of the body, such as dress, hygiene, and hair care, distance incarcerated women from cultural ideas of proper bodily care, causing a constant affront. These practices emphasize the

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<sup>2</sup> Natural hair describes African American hair “that is not chemically altered or straightened...” (Banks 2000: 172). When combed, but not styled into braids, afros, or other styles, the hairstyle is referred to as a Natural.

material body in a carnivalesque inversion of the symbolic order (Bakhtin 1984a, 1984b). The prison context constitutes a “world inside out” (Bakhtin 1984b: 11), a carnival created by the bounded, circular appearance of prison time and its emphasis on the physical over the cultural properties of the body. This carnival of punishment constantly humiliates, and carries the potential to construct the grotesque.

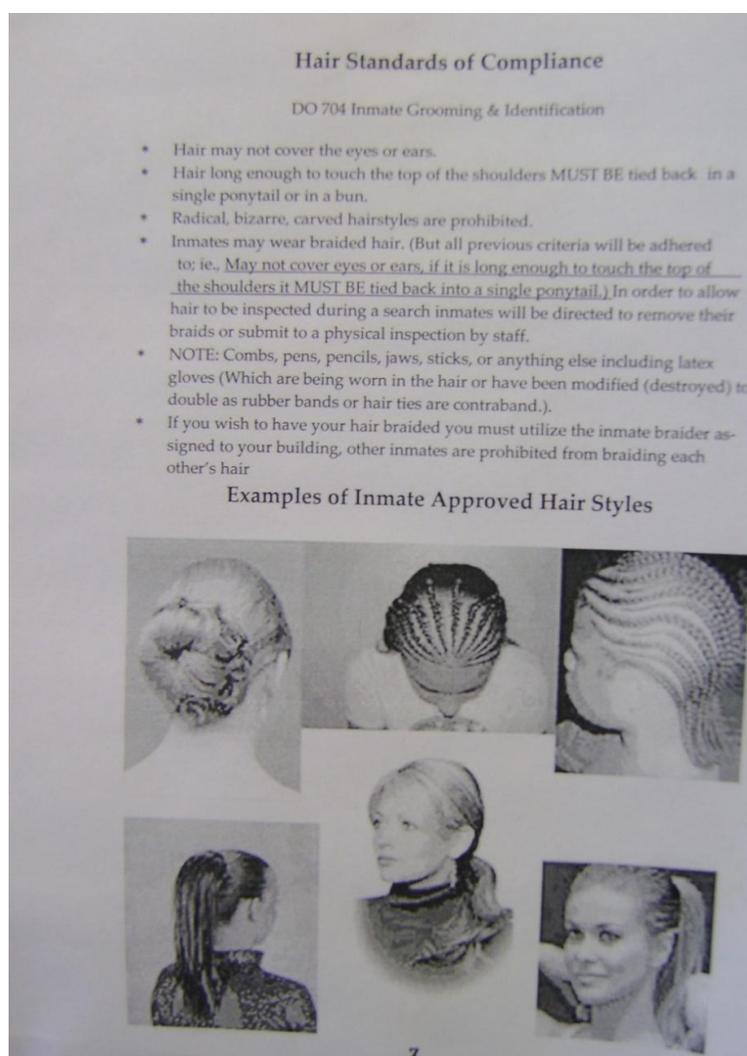
Following Ciara from intake to release, I explore the carnival of prison punishment and her efforts to maintain a culturally appropriate body. In particular, I analyze the intake procedure, regulations over hygiene and hair, and the extreme conditions of solitary confinement. Attending to incarcerated women’s negotiation of these institutional forces, I argue that larger societal notions of inmates as dangerous, Black, masculine, others (Barak 1995, Delgado 1994, Muhammad 2010, Robinson 2000, Russell-Brown 2009) are presupposed and performatively created in the carnival. The indexical order is inverted (Inoue 2006) such that women’s bodies are reformulated to justify their position as inmates. Attention to this dynamic reformation of women’s bodies extends literature on the body as a disciplinary mechanism (Aretxaga 1995, Feldman 1991, Foucault 1995, Scarry 1985) to include less-extreme, mundane conditions of confinement as profoundly about the body.

### **Prison as Carnival**

When I met Ciara she had four months left of her five year prison sentence, or, in prison lingo, she was four months to the gate. Her fourth time incarcerated as an adult, she had much to share about life in prison. She was almost always with her wife Corina, and the two had recently succeeded in getting beds across from one another in their dorm. Also 33, Corina identified as half Black, half Mexican. Mostly keeping to themselves, they nonetheless were eager participants in the research project. Whenever they saw me on the yard, they called me to share the latest

gossip or prison horror story. Ciara was anxiously awaiting her release and made sure to keep up her hair so she would be ready when the date came. She wore her short hair relaxed, often keeping it wrapped so that her perm laid straight.<sup>3</sup> Tall and thin, Ciara explained that she was skinnier than she liked because, having lost her prison job, she had trouble getting enough to eat.<sup>4</sup> Unable to purchase much food from commissary, she forced herself to eat the cafeteria food every once in a while, although she described it as “not fit for human consumption.”

*Figure 3.1. Hair Standards of Compliance*



<sup>3</sup> Hair wrapping involves taking a bristle brush and brushing hair into a circular pattern around the head.

<sup>4</sup> She was previously paid 35 cents an hour on a retention job—an off-site job requiring a phase three and a GED that allows you to save up money while incarcerated (although the prison charges rent once you have such a job).

Ciara found the minimum-security yard on which I was conducting my fieldwork petty, explaining that the officers would ticket you for any minor rule violation, such as having a shirt untucked or hair out of compliance. In order to be “in compliance,” hair must be worn in one of the styles illustrated and explained in Figure 3.1. Hair had to be off the eyes, ears, and shoulders, meaning hair long enough to touch shoulders had to be worn up. It could be worn in a single braid, bun, or ponytail; braided styles were also acceptable, although they were subject to extra scrutiny—including potential searches. These and other strict rules of appearance were implemented during the Arizona Department of Correction’s no-frills policy changes of the mid-1980s discussed in the previous chapter. They are one of the ways the body becomes a site of regulation, control, and punishment. While they apply to all state prisons, the rules are differentially enforced both across and within state prisons, as Ciara’s description of the minimum-security yard as petty indicates.

Her assessment is informed by her movement across the prison’s units, which were divided into three security levels: minimum, medium, and maximum, and a solitary confinement punishment unit, the Complex Detention Unit (CDU, or the hole). Before arriving in the field research unit, from intake Ciara moved to maximum-security, CDU (three separate times while in maximum), medium-security, three different minimum-security units, and, then, back to medium-security (for a rule violation). She had been in the minimum-security research unit four months before I met her. She preferred a cell to the dorm-style of this unit, a common sentiment among women who had done time in both cell and dorm conditions. Although Ciara decided it wasn’t worth it, some women committed major rule violations in an attempt to raise their security classification and get moved to a medium unit. Most women felt that cells held a semblance of privacy and personal space. They also believed that officers tended to leave you

alone while you were in your cell, only gazing at you when they did their checks. In the dorm, no space was completely free from the officers' scrutiny and cameras. On the other hand, the air conditioning and washing machines unique to this unit were seen as privileges sometimes outweighing the lack of privacy. Women considered doing their own laundry a privilege in particular because it allowed them to maintain control over their minimal property. On yards without washing machines, women often (illegally) washed their clothes and linens in their garbage cans, hanging them to dry over their beds, rather than sending them out to the prison laundry. This indicates the significance of maintaining control over the minimal property women can have, and the fear of losing control over that property. Officers often let this practice go unpunished, although it always carried the potential for disciplinary sanctions.

Like all women, Ciara started this prison term in Reception and Assessment (R and A), an intake unit located on the grounds of ASPC Summerville. During intake, women are locked down 23 hours a day, seven days a week without knowledge of how long they will spend in the unit. They may be housed there for a few days to months, although two weeks was said to be standard by the prison administration. Ciara spent three months waiting for her unit assignment while her security score was evaluated. Women's security classification, made up of an outside-inside score (see Table 3.1), consists of two numbers, with 1-1 the lowest (minimum), and 5-5 the highest (maximum). The custody classification (outside score) is based on the initial crime and the length of the sentence, while the internal risk level (inside score) is based on behavior (or anticipated behavior) in prison. Both scores can move downward, after a six month period, if the individual is eligible based on their good behavior and the amount of time remaining on their sentence. The inside score can be raised at any time based on behavior. The outside-inside score links incarcerated individuals to two realms at once: their position in prison based on a threat

assessment across the divide of inside/outside. They are thus punished not only for their crime, numerically evaluated based on its societal harm, but also how they do their time. Prison punishment is not simply “doing time,” then, as the time itself is creative, constructing and evaluating criminality throughout a prison sentence. The identity of the prisoner is liminally bound across these realms, defined by their relationship to society and their position outside of it.

*Table 3.1: Inmate Classification System (Arizona Department of Corrections 2011)*

Custody Classification (Outside score)	“Determining the custody level based on the risk the inmate presents to the public and staff, as well as the time remaining until the inmate is released.”
Internal Risk Level (Inside Score)	“Determining the internal risk level based on the risk the inmate presents to the public and staff and other inmates in order to assist in making decisions regarding housing and work assignments.”

The classification process involves medical, psychological, mental, and physical evaluation of the individual. Goffman’s (1961) classic study of total institutions argues that this evaluation process symbolically reduces an individual to their physical body through a series of rituals, such as fingerprinting, photographing, and examining, that emphasize the physical body while removing outside identity markers, such as clothing and hair styles. These rituals, which “can be characterized as a leaving off and taking on, with a midpoint marked by physical nakedness” (18), humiliate the individual as they mark a clear transition into institutional life. After the ritualistic reduction to a physical body, the individual is then rebuilt in the image of the institution, symbolically portraying an inmate identity.

While Goffman’s analysis presents intake as a discrete ritual, similar rituals of humiliation continue throughout prison punishment and extend both before and after a prison term. For instance, an individual’s arrest, detention in jail, and required state surveillance after release from prison are other possible sites of ritualistic humiliation. Those who have been to prison before may experience the intake process differently than those who haven’t. For instance,

some women would prepare for prison by cutting their hair above the shoulders or removing extensions to be in compliance before they were detained. Others would self-humiliate with the knowledge that they were returning to prison when they swore that they never would.

The intake period in prison, however, does mark a symbolic divide between prison and the outside and, I argue, characterizes prison time as carnivalesque. Bakhtin's (1984a, 1984b) analysis of the carnival defines it as a period in which the symbolic order is inverted, the high becoming low and the cultural material. It is characterized by a mocking of the social order, the laughter of the oppressed filling the carnival. While this last point is a critical difference between prison and the carnival, Bakhtin (1984a) recognized the similarity between prisoners and other members of the carnival, such as gamblers: "Both the life of convicts and the life of gamblers-for all their differences in content-are equally '*life taken out of life*' (that is, taken out of common, ordinary life). In this sense, both convicts and gamblers are carnivalized collectives" (172, emphasis in original). For the prisoner, the carnival is imposed; they are not carnivalizing, but rather carnivalized, forced into a world inside out.

Carnival time is circular and bounded, clearly delineated from the social order and maintained within its time and place. While linear time defines an individual's relationship to the prison, determining the length of time they must remain incarcerated and impacting their security score, life inside the prison is *symbolically* distinct, appearing both circular and bounded. Many women talked about the cyclical nature of prison life, everyday feeling the same as the outside world moved on without them. The only distinction between days occurred on the weekends, when the prison provided only two meals, instead of three, and some individuals received visitation. In addition to the cyclical time, the symbolic inversion that begins in intake continues throughout prison time, granting the material primacy over the cultural.

The rituals of humiliation in R and A dramatically cut women off from the outside, creating a clear entry point into prison time as outside symbols of identity are removed and the physical body is emphasized. Women are stripped down to a bare body not only through these intake rituals, but also through the degrading conditions of R and A. Ciara was given only one hour out of her two-person (or, when over-crowded, three-person) cell a day, and had to scramble to get a shower, and, if she was lucky, get her hair braided, before she had to return to her cell for another 23 hours. She wore a bright orange jumpsuit, stamped with ADC (Arizona Department of Corrections), and was provided with only the “indigent” hygiene supplies.<sup>5</sup> These supplies include denture tabs, a miniature toothbrush, toothpaste, soap, deodorant, shampoo, and the same tiny plastic comb Ciara was given in juvenile. Placed in dirty, stuffy, hot cells in close proximity to a stranger, with limited hygiene products and shower access, women’s sensory regimes are dramatically altered. Sensory regimes are formulated out of the daily, intimate practices of the body—the washing, dressing, eating, etc.—that cultivate the physical body into a cultural being (Jacobs 2009, Roth-Gordon 2012, Stoler 2002). These regimes, integral to an individual’s sense of self, unfold in reference to cultural ideals of proper and improper bodies. During the classification period, women lose control over their bodily cultivation as their sensory regimes become integral components of punishment.

Stripped down and hollowed out, women’s bodies become “empty signifiers” (Inoue 2006), available to be filled with symbols of their position as inmates. Describing the intake procedure at a maximum-security prison, Rhodes (2004) notes that when inmates emerge in their new denim uniforms, “they have been remade—symbolically at least—in one another’s likeness” (102). When Ciara finally got to a prison unit, or “hit the yard” as prison slang refers to the transfer, a new bodily regime was provided. She wore a neon orange uniform—consisting of a t-

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<sup>5</sup> Indigent refers to an incarcerated individual without access to money from family or a prison job.

shirt and pants (similar to hospital scrubs)—stamped with ADC on the back of the shirt. This uniform originated in the late 1990s, appearing alongside a range of other no-frills changes in the Arizona prison system influenced by the state’s emphasis on tough justice and the less eligibility principle, which assumes that prison conditions should be worse than the conditions experienced by the least fortunate members of society (Lynch 2010). Before the oranges, women wore blue jeans and white tee’s, a uniform that was earlier implemented under the influence of no-frills, replacing their own clothing, but later became seen as a privilege too great for prisoners. Old timers often reminisced about the days of blues, when their family could send in (prison approved) blue jeans, shoes, and even jewelry; and when they had access to irons, blow dryers, curling irons, and nail polish. While these may have carried less outward symbolic weight, they nonetheless constituted prison regulation over identity practices, a challenge to dignity in and of itself. Bling-Bling, a Hispanic woman nearing the end of her seventeen year incarceration, showed me a photograph she purchased of herself in prison before the uniform change (see Figure 3.2). Her long hair worn down, the inmate symbolism was minimal. Now, in her most current photo, her position as an inmate is clear (see Figure 3.3).

*Figure 3.2. Bling-Bling (Early '90s)*



*Figure 3.3. Bling-Bling (2013)*



*Figure 3.4. State Issue Underwear*



*Note: Ande holding a pair of state issue underwear, or “granny panties,” she made at her prison job, working at the garment factory. She was paid 35 cents an hour—one of the highest paying jobs on the yard—to sew for ten hours a day, six days a week. She pointed out the irony that while they sewed furiously to meet quotas, women were issued used underwear.*

Ciara’s symbolically loaded state issue clothing consisted of three uniforms (two used, one new), a sweatshirt, socks, bras, underwear, pajamas, and slip on shoes. The state issue underwear, which resemble “granny panties” as they sit high above the waist, were stamped with ADC on the rear (see Figure 3.4). In addition to being stamped, the underwear were not guaranteed to be new, and women were often provided with at least one used, worn, stained pair in their state issue. Most women refused to wear this pair, but worn or not the used intimate garments were symbolically loaded, reminding women of their position as state property in their most intimate realm of dress.

If she had the funds, Ciara could purchase more of these items, as well as better quality pants and shoes, shorts, long sleeve shirts, sweatshirts, hats, sunglasses, and belts from commissary. New uniforms were a valuable commodity, as the oranges quickly wore, faded, and stained. Women often hustled for new oranges, trying to get a uniform with a matching shade of orange in the shirt and pants. New or worn, women had to wear their uniforms in a particular way: shirt fully tucked in with ID tag clipped to the front and visible, pants not sagging or rolled up, socks under the shoes, and no pajamas, or “whites,” under the uniform. The iconic uniform,

along with the bodily practices explored below, inverts the indexical order and “actively constructs the very reality that it claims to be representing” (Inoue 2006: 51). After being stripped down in R and A, women’s bodies are reformulated in the image of the ideological inmate, symbolically constructing and justifying their bodily position in the prison.

### **Tiny Toothbrushes: Hygienic Regulation**

The reformation of women’s bodies continued throughout their incarceration, going beyond uniforms to include hygienic regulation. This regulation constantly manipulates women’s sensory regimes. The hygienic set available on the minimum-security yard did not completely deny cleanliness (although this was sometimes the case), but rather provided a set of tools that fell short of cultural standards of bodily care. Hygiene products were all limited and of poor quality, but perhaps the most iconic were the toothbrushes (See Figure 3.5). Those available both from commissary and provided to those without money (indigent) were miniature emulations of a standard toothbrush, with a round handle rather than a straight one.

*Figure 3.5. Prison Toothbrush*



The rationale behind these toothbrushes was that regular ones carried the potential to be used as weapons, their straight handles made to provide prime instruments for stabbing. The iconically reformulated intimate hygienic tool thus associated women with danger and violence; the straight handle semiotically significant in its absence. Beyond the construction of a violent nature, the toothbrushes linked women with improper hygiene. Women complained that they could never clean the backs of their mouths, and the cheap bristles continually fell out, defying

their efforts to clean the rest of their teeth. Manipulating such a taken for granted aspect of cleanliness embeds humiliation into the fabric of prison life. As defined in the Introduction, humiliation carries the power continually to punish, arising out of failed social and cultural expectations in everyday interactions (Miller 1993). Things like tiny toothbrushes tweak normality, humiliating women every time they use them by falling short of cultural expectations. Women could almost perform the cleanliness ritual of tooth brushing, but not quite, their toothbrushes almost humorous in their design. For example, Lee-Lee, a 52-year-old African American serving her third prison sentence, described a failed encounter with her toothbrush: “I almost swallowed one yesterday. ((*Laughs*)) I was like ugh! The girls were like do you need help, help at removing it? I was like ugh! I couldn’t even talk! And then finally I, I, I coughed a little bit and got it.” Lee-Lee’s retelling of her tooth brushing incident recognizes the humor of her failed encounter, pointing to the comic genre of humiliation and cultural inversion (Bakhtin 1984b, Miller 1993). As women are not participating in the creation of the carnival, they become the object of its ridicule. Although Lee-Lee negotiates this position by mocking the absurdity of her hygienic tool, she still must use it in her daily brushing.

These slight inversions of normalcy reformulate women’s sensory regimes in reference to cultural ideologies of proper and improper bodies, engaging historical tools of racialization to construct difference. Hygiene practices are embedded with racial meaning as they evolved out of societal negotiations of whiteness (Anderson 2006, Berthold 2010, Burke 1996, Heneghan 2003, McClintock 1995). Whiteness itself was threatened in contexts of colonization. The purity associated with the racial category was called into question in the harsh environments of the tropics, where physical and cultural barriers between whites and native others were minimized. Discourses on race, science, and hygiene converged in ways that allowed hygienic rituals to

symbolically protect and display the inner purity of the white bodies that engaged in them. Unmarked skin, free of dirt, germs, and impurities, became critical to white identities, creating “cleanliness as civilization” and “dirt as a sign of savagery” (Jacobs 2009: 230). This symbolism pervaded efforts to tame native others, and gave the tools of hygiene almost magical powers to civilize. Tooth brushing, the intimate, private ritual so critical to individuals’ sense of self and notions of civilization, carries with it this long legacy. Tiny, round toothbrushes bring these ideological underpinnings to the surface; as women engage in the routine practice of the body with an inefficient, abnormal tool, they are reminded of their position outside the boundaries of civilization. The manipulation of such a taken for granted piece of hygienic equipment captures racist ideologies and constructs difference across the raced bodies of imprisoned women.

Like uniforms, these hygienic manipulations structure women’s intimate bodily practices in relationship to societal ideologies about inmates. The ideological inmate is predicated around racist ideologies of innate difference. Largely conceptualized as a black man, this ideological image permeates media, activist, and even academic representations of the penal subject (Barak 1995, Delgado 1994, Muhammad 2010, Robinson 2000, Russell-Brown 2009, Wacquant 2001, Weaver and Purcell 1998). While black men are overrepresented in the prison system, this image obscures the racial and gender diversity of incarcerated individuals as it highlights young black men as the face of the inmate. That face is then implicated in the punitive punishment practices becoming increasingly common to modern punishment, societal racism justifying harsh treatment. Davis’s (2001) analysis of the history of race, gender, and U.S. prisons points out the critical role of ideologies of racial difference in the experience of all prisoners, “Whether brutal punishment within penal settings is inflicted on white, Latino/Latina, Asian, Native, or African American men or women, the typical prisoner—the target of this brutality—is generally

considered to be a black man” (42). The conflation of criminality and a marginalized racial and gender identity in the cultural imaginary supports the oppression of prisoners, as they become recursively (Irvine and Gal 2000) associated with the danger, threat, and outsider status ideologically tied to black men.

The absurd, inadequate toothbrushes humiliate women in the direction of that image as they perform the intimate bodily practice of brushing their teeth. This creative realm of hygiene as punishment was sometimes more overt in the case of extreme hygienic limitations that constructed dirty, uncivilized bodies. For instance, women were provided only one roll of toilet paper and 12 sanitary pads a month. Those without money to purchase more supplies soon became desperate; hustling, trading, and sometimes stealing these basic necessities. Others were forced to use clothes, washcloths, and various other items for pads or toilet paper. In addition, some women got no hygienic products at all, ineligible for indigent supplies because they had a job, but all of their meager earnings were garnished for restitution. This was especially the case for women incarcerated on DUI charges, who had a percentage of their income taken automatically to fund programs like Mothers Against Drunk Driving (MADD).

For instance, Princess Di, a middle-aged Latina woman, was given no indigent hygiene because of her ten cent an hour job. However, her vast medical conditions required constant trips to medical, each one costing her a four dollar co-pay. The co-pay was established along with other no-frill policy changes in the mid ‘80s, described in the previous chapter, in part to help fund the prison construction boom made necessary by harsher sentencing laws. If Princess Di didn’t have enough money in her account, the prison would garnish her wages, leaving her no money for hygiene products. For a time, her daughter was also incarcerated on the yard, and would share her hygienic products. Once her daughter was moved to CDU, however, Princess Di

was left with no access to hygiene. Soon she stopped going to medical for her failing kidneys and refusing treatment (she explained that medical treated her poorly and didn't help her anyway) so that she could buy some basic supplies like soap and toothpaste. Her choice of cleanliness over health demonstrates the deep ideological power in hygienic rituals and, critically, the state's disregard for the protection of inmates' health and well-being.

While Princess Di's decision represents an extreme challenge to basic human rights through a denial of hygiene and medical care, less extreme forms of humiliation, like tiny toothbrushes, were continually negotiated in social life. Another form of this daily humiliation was the institutional control over women's hair. Restrictions on hair care technology and regulations over hair styles both inverted the symbolic order, highlighting the material properties of hair as women lost control over cultural production. Thus, careful analysis of women's hair care rituals reveals the ideological implications of state control over hair, as women negotiate the carnivalization of their hair and reassert its cultural value.

### **“I take care of my hair!”: Hair Care Restrictions**

#### *Excerpt 3.1. Ciara and Corina (Part 1)*

1      Corina:        That's crazy, my head's not even burning, just m-, my edges. And not where my  
2                      hair is either Ciara.  
3      Ciara:         You wanna say it one more time for the record?  
4      Corina:        FOR THE RECORD  
5                      ((All Laugh))  
6      Ciara:         For the record.  
7      Corina:        My face is on fire!  
8                      ((All Laugh))  
9      Ciara:         Well you know I didn't put no grease on your face.  
10     Corina:        Ciara Jones 195786  
11     Ciara:         Ok, Corina Rondy Smith 189743  
12     Corina:        Sh:it.  
13     Ciara:         Yeah.  
14     Corina:        Sh.  
15     Ciara:         Hell, I'm fighting a war right now.  
16     Lori:          ((Laughs))  
17     Corina:        Are you?  
18     Ciara:         Yeah all this damn hair.

- 19 Corina: Well come on. (1) Come on war. Go on to the next one.  
 20 Ciara: (2) See how I get worked Lori, do you care? ((*Laughs*))  
 21 ((*Lori and Corina Laugh*))  
 22 Corina: Are you done? Cause this sh-, [damn] sure is burning.  
 23 Ciara: [Yes.]  
 24 I'm done. Here wait a minute.  
 25 Corina: Oo, it's burning too. Ooo!

Sitting on a plastic chair, Corina complained that Ciara wasn't applying her perm fast enough. Ciara was thrust back into her childhood role of novice playing expert, applying a perm beyond her skill level. The reversal of expert and novice roles was common on the prison yard, a carnivalesque inversion that framed many hair care rituals. In Chapter Four, I explore the construction of expert hair stylists in prison as novices, and detail the linguistic moves through which they claim expertise in interactions with their clients. In situations like this one, the novice becomes the expert. Corina, although well aware of her wife's novice abilities, didn't trust anyone else "on her head" for fear they would sabotage her long, thick, dark hair. She always wore her hair straight in elaborate updos, perming it every six months without fail right before a food visit.<sup>6</sup> The intricate ponytail styles she wore looked professional, causing her cousin to remark, "What did you just come from the salon?" when she saw her at the next food visit. What her cousin didn't see, or, perhaps, selected to ignore, was that her style for the visit was carefully crafted to hide a missing patch of hair, the result of Ciara's improper perm application.

Corina's perm is an intricate process, requiring three boxes of the chemical treatment. As the treatment is time sensitive, Ciara needs to move much more quickly than her novice status allows. Corina negotiates Ciara's novice role by giving her directives throughout the interaction, like the one in line 19, instructing her when to move to the next section of hair. The directives create tension, as Ciara is offended by the scrutiny. In this excerpt, the tension is apparent. In line

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<sup>6</sup> Food visits occur up to four times a year, depending on your privilege phase (the highest phase gets four visits, the next down phase two, and the lowest phase gets zero). During these visits, your family can bring you food. Greatly anticipated, many women would spend weeks planning their menu, asking their family for the food they most missed. Families would often travel very far for the special visits, and bring elaborate feasts with them.

1, Corina informs Ciara that her face is beginning to burn, indicating the perm needs to be rinsed out soon, and pushes Ciara to move quickly. In line 3, Ciara responds by reminding Corina that there are multiple audiences, which makes Corina's critique a serious affront. She gets her message across through a multivocal utterance, revealing ways language has the potential simultaneously to point to multiple "voices" that represent both the individual speaking and other types of people (Bakhtin 1981, 1984a; Hill 1995). Referring to my tape recorder, Ciara takes the voice of the legal institution by asking Corina if she wants to go on record with her complaints. Corina continues the voicing in line 4, taking up the challenge and going on record.

This juxtaposition of voices is met with laughter by all participants. Laughter in social interactions is not random; rather it arises in reaction to something else and offers insight into the ongoing negotiation of meaning within an interaction (Holt 2011). Often, humor and laughter are used by oppressed groups as a response to, and an interpretation of, the social inequalities and power differentials they face (Basso 1979, Carty and Musharbash 2008). Here, Corina's double-voiced utterance is interpreted as a joke, or a "play upon form" (Douglas 1968: 365), toying with her position as an inmate. They continue the joking frame through double-voiced play pointing out that they are "on record"—being observed both by me and the prison. In line 10, Corina gives Ciara's full name and inmate number, voicing the institution by speaking like an officer giving a ticket (the formal consequence of rule violations). This not only mocks the fact that their actions can become punishable offences should an officer choose to ticket them—an accidental chemical burn cause for serious consequences—but also informs Ciara that the burning is a serious problem. Ciara responds by doing the same in line 11, matching Corina's threat. Their joking recognizes the multiple audiences of their hair care session, including the present participants, the prison, and future academic audiences. Speaking to all three at once, they negotiate Ciara's

novice status while mocking the forms of surveillance they are under. Their laughter marks their critique of their place in the prison, recognizing the hierarchies that frame their interaction.

Interactions like this one negotiate women's relationship to restricted hair care technology. Unlike Ciara's time in juvenile detention, the prison offered perms for purchase off of the commissary list. While she made sure to save enough money from her previous job to afford perms and other hygiene products, those without access to money remained dependent on the same indigent shampoo and tiny comb provided in R and A. In addition to perms (only straight perms, not curly perms), hair gel, grease, hair spray, conditioner, better shampoo, hair ties, foam rollers, and "white girl brushes" were available from commissary, although the amount that could be purchased and held at the same time was limited. Ciara's ability to keep her hair wrapped (and therefore her perm laying straight) was dependent on her access to a bristle brush. Described by one of my participants as "gold" on the yard, these were not available from commissary. Ciara was one of the few women who had one, having had the opportunity to purchase it from a prison fundraiser years before.<sup>7</sup> Her perming session with Corina, however, indicates that even with access to certain tools, application may be problematic as expert and novice roles are inverted. The chemical burn left on Corina's head is not an accident of childhood; it is a physical reminder of the institutional control over her hair care.

Fostering improper applications, the prison hair care toolset carries the power to humiliate. This power is further evident in the contents of that toolset, which are embedded with assumptions of ideal femininity. The shampoo and tiny comb given to indigent women to the exclusion of grease and even conditioner follow mainstream beauty norms as they presuppose

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<sup>7</sup> The prison held "fundraisers" every so often. The administration picked various items to sell (in this case, it was African American hair care products, though during my fieldwork I saw fundraisers for McDonald's, pizza, ice cream, and beauty supplies from Sally Beauty Supplies). Incarcerated women could order the products for a 100% markup (a \$4 fish sandwich from McDonald's was \$8, for example). Some of the proceeds would then be donated to a charity of the administration's choice.

the texture of white hair, while at the same time restricting the range of beauty practices that can be performed on that hair texture through the omission of tools for curly perms and hair coloring. The few provisions for other hair textures—perms, grease, gel—favor mainstream rituals over maintaining a natural texture. While presupposing ideal femininity, the poor quality, limited access, and fractured technology denied the performance of mainstream beauty rituals. This prevented women from engaging in their normal hair care routines even when these were consistent with the mainstream, but especially when they were not. The disjuncture between presupposition and performance created an indexical tension between the (fractured) tools of cultural production and their performative outcomes.

This tension represents ideological contradictions surrounding the female inmate, a “double deviant” who, unlike the ideological male inmate, has violated both legal and gender norms (Owen 1998). Poised against the ideal woman through their relationship to crime and deviancy, incarcerated women are considered overly sexual and manipulative (Belknap 2007, Davis 2003), their femininity unbound by the cultural constraints and control central to hegemonic femininity. De-feminization through uniforms, hygiene, and hair care responds to these ideologies to tame incarcerated women, thus distancing them from ideal femininity. As that ideal is entangled with whiteness (Banks 2000, Bordo 1993, Butler 1990, Cain 2008, Mendoza-Denton 2008), they are both de-feminized and racialized.

This ideologically tense framing as double deviants is most apparent in incarcerated women’s relationships to motherhood. Many women in prison lose custody of their children as they are considered unfit mothers (Tapia 2010). Like Muñeca’s interactions with CPS described in Chapter One, her incarceration put her status as a mother on trial, a status that she eventually lost. In addition to custody concerns, pregnancy is largely treated as a problematic medical

condition in contexts of incarceration. Pregnant women are often held in medical segregation—solitary, lockdown conditions—and sometimes are handcuffed to the hospital bed during delivery. While not handcuffed, the women I spoke to that delivered babies while incarcerated explained that they were closely monitored by officers during labor and handcuffed to the bed before and after. Their babies were quickly taken away from them, and they were only able to see their infants if they were in the care of an individual willing and able to bring them to visitation. The distancing of incarcerated women from ideal femininity evident in their relationship to motherhood also occurred more subtly in hair care regulation by denying the performance of mainstream beauty rituals and formulating women's bodies in relationship to the ideological inmate.

The new bodily regimes in which women must engage cultivate a body distinct from ideal femininity and other feminine identities. Women of all ages and racial backgrounds experienced hair care problems. In addition to Corina's chemical burn, common problems included hair loss, thinning, premature graying, and unmanageability. African American women especially experienced hair loss, either from perming it too often, a lack of moisturizing products leading to severe dryness, or combing it out too much in an attempt to maintain it naturally. Older women complained of the return of gray hair that they had been dyeing since it first appeared, a defiant sign of their age. Hair, "a highly symbolic part of the body" (Jacobs-Huey 2006: 4), becomes a threat to the cultural identity of the individual as it takes on a life of its own outside the realm of cultural production, highlighting its physicality and its associations with body function, maturation, and decline.

These ideological implications were continually negotiated in hair care rituals. Interactions around hair served as a site to cultivate a coherent self, making claims to various



film even after I told her I hadn't seen it in line 12. Her strategy likely is an effort to get Corina to assist in the description of the film, encouraging a jointly constructed narrative (Ochs et al 1989) that would collaboratively situate their hair care practices in particular aesthetic values. Corina, however, disaligns in lines 16-21, expressing that I won't remember if I haven't seen it.

Ciara goes on to describe the scene, positioning the practice of perming not in white beauty culture, but in black cultural history, even giving chemical burns historical significance. Her reference to Malcolm X also genders perming as potentially masculine, further distancing her hair styling efforts from mainstream femininity. Ciara's narrative points out that hair straightening does not necessarily represent a desire to be white, or to embody white beauty ideals, as it situates her hair care ritual in black aesthetic values. Individuals in the African American community chemically treat their hair for a wide array of reasons not necessarily as an emulation of white beauty culture, including for manageability and as a strategic move to prevent race discrimination based on hair (Banks 2000, Gibson 1995, Rubin et al 2003). These motivations exist in a complex relationship to mainstream beauty norms, which frame ideas of manageability and appropriate self-presentations even as alternative beauty norms are valued within a particular hair care context. In the context of prison, the fractured toolset favored straightening as a means for managing hair.

Ciara and Corina's perming session demonstrates the negotiation of hair care restrictions and their complex ideological associations. Situating their practices in a rich cultural history of hair care, they highlight their black identity and deny the possible reading of their perming as trying to be white. The significance of women's hair care rituals extends beyond identity practices, however. Ciara and Corina are also making claims to dignity in the face of constant humiliation, cultivating a sense of self. This is evident in Ciara's discussion of her hair care:

I keep it washed, I keep it greased, I keep it wrapped. I keep it combed, I take care of it! You can't just give up on your hair, it's, a, a lot of people, some of 'em can't afford to get, you know, the things they do have on the store, so, it's dry, and it's breaking, because it's not being properly taken care of.

Her hair care routine, and its symbolic outcomes, provided a realm for Ciara to negotiate not just her identity, but also her value and worth. Taking care of her hair becomes a proxy for doing her time well, creating a sensory regime in prison that allows her to hold onto her cultural identity. Relaying this to me, she distances herself from the ideological inmate who gives up on their hair. While she recognizes that the physical signs of this giving up (dryness and breaking) may be a direct outcome of a lack of funds, she still associates those signs with improper bodily management, investing the prison hair care toolset with humiliating force.

The claims to dignity Ciara makes through hair care are under constant scrutiny. The next section explores the institutional regulation of women's hair styling efforts. For instance, her perming sessions with Corina technically are punishable rule violations (only state-hired barbers can style other women's hair). In addition to this state scrutiny, the highly public nature of the yard fosters aesthetic critique among incarcerated women. While Ciara critiques those who don't take care of their hair, she is chastised for over-managing her hair:

*Excerpt 3.3. Ciara, Ronda, and Corina*

1	Ciara:	I be glad when Friday comes my head itchy.
2	Lori:	It's [almost there].
3	Ronda:	[What you] doing Friday? What you doing Friday?
4	Ciara:	Perming it.
5	Ronda:	You bet not put another perm in [your hair!]
6	Ciara:	[I am] girl look at my hair.
7	Ronda:	Ciara, your hair is not [got nothing (?)]
8	Ciara:	[Yes it is and my] mommy is coming Sunday, so yes::.
9	Ronda:	You getting a visit?
10	Ciara:	Food visit.
11	Ronda:	And you going home when?
12	Ciara:	((Laughs))
13	Corina:	Thursday, Friday.
14	Ciara:	Hush, ok? Hush. It's nappy. I know you can see it.
15		Feel it. Touch it.

- 16 Ronda: It ain't nothing wrong with it! ((Laughs))  
 17 Ciara: It is, touch it. (?)  
 18 Ronda: That's a damn shame.  
 19 Corina: Ciara? Girl please.  
 20 Ronda: That ain't nothing Ciara.  
 21 Ciara: It is! It is Ronda.  
 22 Ronda: She fixing to waste a perm, ra-  
 23 Ciara: I'm not gonna waste anything.  
 24 Corina: That'll be her last one wasted in the penitentiary.

Corina often scrutinized Ciara's hair care, complaining that she permed and wet it too often, both efforts she saw as damaging to Ciara's hair and to the bristle brushes they shared. During this interaction, Ciara and Corina were playing cards with their friend Ronda, a woman who styled hair on the yard as a hustle. In contrast to the perm interaction explored above, there is a much heavier use of African American English (AAE). For instance, Ciara uses two distinct features of AAE in line 1: future be ("I be glad when Friday comes," which conveys a sense of future time) and copula deletion ("my head itchy," which indicates that the itchiness of her head is a fixed, onetime event) (Smitherman 1977). The AAE features continue throughout this excerpt, used by all participants except me: be-omission (lines 3, 11, 22), deletion of final /r/ (bet, line 5), lexical items (the discourse marker girl, lines 6, 19; nappy, line 14; perm, lines 4, 5, 22), double negative (lines 7, 16), and the tense marker "fixing to" (line 22).

The use of AAE in this interaction has a number of interactional consequences. It highlights their black identities; they are taking the "voice" of a black persona as they draw on indexical links between features of AAE and that social persona (Baret 1999, Bucholtz 2011). This may be a move to negotiate their identities in front of me, a white researcher, and to silence my participation in the interaction as it becomes outside my racial domain. Indeed, my one utterance (line 2) is not taken up, and I do not engage further in the interaction until later after the topic shifts. Further, the use of AAE offers a way to talk about black hair care outside of the frame of mainstream aesthetic values. Not only does black hair care have specific lexical items

that preclude white usage, but it also is a highly contested cultural topic within the African American community (Banks 2000, Jacobs-Huey 2006, Majors 2001, Smitherman 1977).

Talking about Ciara's perming in AAE mobilizes black cultural ideals and aesthetic values as the framework for evaluating Ciara's perming practices. Despite her efforts to disagree, this framework is deployed to critique Ciara's hair care, constructing her as over-managing her hair. She is about to be released, and the others feel she should wait for a better quality perm on the outside. They deny her claims that her hair has become unmanaged (lines 14, 15, and 17), with Ronda telling her there is nothing wrong with it that needs to be fixed (lines 16, 18, and 20). Ciara's efforts to negotiate her identity through proper hair care rituals reach too far, she overexerts the management of her hair and becomes wasteful, even careless. Ronda's claim that she is going to waste a perm (line 22) is loaded in the restrictive context—perms are a valuable commodity, something Ciara should take with care and consideration.

This interaction demonstrates the highly symbolic nature of hair and hair care rituals, which were debated in interactions reacting to the restrictive context. The meaning of hair was never solidified, and women continually negotiated their own hair and its implications for their identities. Some women were able to interpret the restrictions on hair through personal frameworks that minimized their humiliating force. Sam, a 43-year-old white woman, serving a six year sentence, drew on her ten years of service in the army to downplay the implications of hair restrictions. Explaining that she just played their game so that they would leave her alone, she wore her hair in a French braid every day. This was the most professional look she could manage for her job as a teacher's aide. During my first interview with Sam, she explained that she rarely thought about her hair. She was more concerned with the cleanliness of the prison's units and the condition of her body. She called this yard the "fifth layer of hell" because of the

large number of women and the lack of privacy, although she did find it cleaner than the three other units in which she had been housed. She thought R and A was disgusting, but the medium-security yard was even worse—the unit was dirty, overcrowded, and infested with flies and cockroaches. In addition to her confinement to spaces she found unhygienic, her body differed dramatically from the body builder physique she maintained on the outside through a healthy diet and intensive exercise regimen. Sam developed these habits to gain self-esteem after her husband left her, and the poor food and the limited provisions for exercise on the prison yard left her feeling weak and unhealthy. These bodily concerns were common, representing another realm of symbolic inversions: as bodies became too skinny (like Ciara's), too fat (many women were deeply concerned with weight gain fostered by the prison's poor diet and limited movement), or too weak like Sam's, they became unknown to them, containing material properties that defied their cultural control.

Since Sam mostly kept to herself, going to work and staying in her bed area, I rarely saw her on the yard after our first interview. When I ran into her one day much later, she informed me that she was developing colon cancer. Although she thought the doctors were treating her well, a rare sentiment among women I worked with in need of medical care, she had to wait months for approval from the Department of Corrections to get the necessary biopsies. When we sat down for our second interview seven months after the first, she felt confident that she was following her mother's fate into deadly cancer. As her physical body became more and more out of her control, she started thinking about the restrictions on hair care differently, no longer able to frame them through her military experience. Remembering when her mother lost her hair during cancer treatment, she explained:

I took my mom to a wig shop, and once she had a, a few wigs, it was like a, a, a complete 180. I mean she had such a different outlook, she, she came out of her depression, and she just started feeling better. I look back on that, I think about what I might have to go

through. Um, (.) and it's, it's kinda like, it's almost like a security blanket. Um, I don't put a lot of thought into it here, because I don't, number one we don't have the, the:::, the right tools, the right, um, hygiene items to (take care of it), to look neat and professional. If I lose my hair I don't have the option here in prison to get a wig, so I'm worried about that, and I'm worried about what it's doing to my, my, to my self-esteem.

Sam recognized her mom's depression stemmed partly from her deteriorating health and partly from the vast bodily changes she experienced from her cancer and treatment, including hair loss. She was able to combat that depression by taking her mother to get a wig, giving her a powerful symbol to gain some control over her self-presentation. Reflecting on this experience, Sam defines hair as a security blanket and worries what will happen as she loses hers. Her body is deteriorating in the prison environment from a lack of good food and exercise and an invasive disease she is at the mercy of the prison to treat. Watching these changes to her physical being, she realizes that her baldness will symbolize bodily defeat. Unable to mask hair loss like her mother, she fears her body will overcome her symbolic practices and threaten her cultural being.

Sam's fears are more subtly realized in Corina's perm. As she is put into a context in which she only trusts a novice to apply a harsh chemical treatment, she fears physical pain, hair loss, and burn marks, outcomes that—while always potentially arising from any perm—tend to be mitigated through expertise (Jacobs-Huey 2006). These material implications of the highly cultural practice invert the symbolic order as they rise to the surface, becoming a reality as her head is marked with a chemical burn. The potential humiliating force of women's reformulated hair care rituals is elaborated in the regulations and surveillance over incarcerated women's hair.

### **Hair Care Regulations**

“Beep! Beep! Beep!” three loud beeps constantly rang over the loudspeaker, indicating the officer stationed in main control was about to make an announcement to the yard. “Put your hair in compliance!” often followed the invasive beeps, reminding women that their bodies were under surveillance and their hair care projects up for scrutiny. Hair has long been a site of bodily

discipline in prison (Goffman 1961, Hallpike 1969, Singer 1971). Beyond formulating an individual into an inmate, the regulation over hair “impinges on his[/her] dignity” (Singer 1971: 703). Women’s identity stances through hair are not only challenged through regulation, but they are reformulated under an ideologically loaded symbolic system embedding hair with danger and threat. The rules of compliance for hair styles described above (see Figure 3.1) dictate how women may wear their hair. The regulations over hair length—requiring hair that touches the shoulders to be worn up—infuse long hair with the ability to conceal, despite the arbitrary connection between hair length and danger (Singer 1971). Indeed, some of my participants had been incarcerated in other contexts where they had to wear their hair down for the same reason (during my fieldwork in Zero County Jail, women could wear their hair up or down). Women are implicated in manipulation and danger vis-à-vis their hair, its length an index of their threatening nature requiring taming and control. The challenge hair regulation makes to dignity is only amplified by requiring long hair to be worn up, harkening back to historical practices of forced head-shaving, a form of prison discipline that began in the early 19<sup>th</sup> century to create uniformity and initiate inmates into prison life (Singer 1971).

Thus, while the linguistic and semiotic practices women engage on the prison yard fill long hair with value (see Chapter Four), women’s claims to dignity through hair growth are swallowed up by the institution as a metric of criminal nature; the longer the hair, the greater the ability to conceal. In addition, African American women who chose to maintain their hair naturally through braided styles, whether growing it or not, are more intensely scrutinized. The Arizona Department of Corrections Inmate Regulations Manual (2013b) states, “For the inspection of inmates’ hair for contraband during searches, staff shall direct inmates to remove braids or other concealing hair styles.” It goes on to stipulate, “If inmates are unable or unwilling

to comply with a directive to remove braids or otherwise loosen their hair: Staff shall, wearing latex gloves, physically search inmates' hair." In addition, the individual may receive disciplinary sanctions for not taking out the braids. Although no women reported being forced to take down their braids, this rule places a potential burden on African American women whose intricate braided styles may require assistance to remove, and thus non-compliance may be an outcome of an impossible demand by staff. Following mainstream assumptions, the braided styles associated with natural African American hair are suspicious, considered "concealing" in a manner that buns, ponytails, and single braids are not. Racist ideologies are mobilized in the heavy policing of women based on their racial identity as displayed through hair care. Often interpreted as threatening claims to a racial identity, these styles face discrimination in many realms (Banks 2000, Battle-Walters 2004, Gibson 1995). In prison, they amplify the link between hair and danger, styling attempts an index of criminal nature.

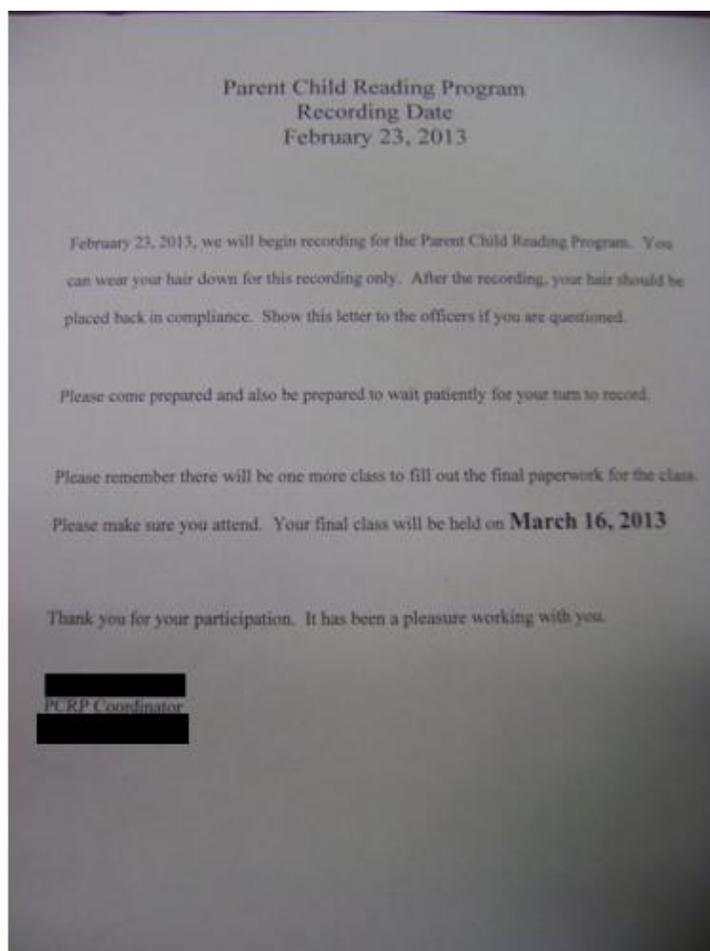
These same links are elaborated in the remaining rules over hair. "Radical, bizarre, carved, double-parted or other types of exotic hairstyles shall be prohibited." Radical, bizarre, and exotic are left undefined, the hairstyles that fall into this category left open to the interpretation of officers. Some officers in R and A would decide hair dyed certain unnatural colors (blue, pink, etc.) were radical, forcing a state-hired barber to shave off the woman's hair, while others did not. Extensions and wigs, however, were always prohibited and forcefully removed. Hair's threatening nature was solidified in the restriction against radical changes in style: while women could grow their hair, they could not drastically cut it without prior written permission. A dramatic change in appearance was a rule violation, assumed to be an attempt to avoid identification, conceal identity, and perhaps a conspiracy to escape.

These rules were state-wide, applying to the women's prison and all state-run men's prisons in Arizona. The rules, however, are far from gender-neutral. Their implementation intersects with gender (whether in a men's or women's prison). The construction of hair as dangerous, as a site in need of taming and control, captures not only racial ideologies of inner danger but also the cultural links between hair, femininity, and sexuality. As discussed above, women in prison are considered distinct from ideological femininity vis-à-vis their association with crime and deviance. They are seen as master manipulators unable to control their sexual nature, deserving of harsh sentencing and punitive punishments (Belknap 2007, Davis 2003). These links play out as women's hair is scrutinized into a symbol of their femininity unbound, an expression of their manipulative nature. Hair, at the crux of ideological notions of idyllic femininity, becomes a site for the symbolic taming of the hyper-feminine inmate.

The scrutiny over incarcerated women's intimate bodily practices saw little relief. Even when exempt from the rules of hair, women required a document (a chrono) citing an exception to a rule, either provided by or approved by the institution, which they had to carry at all times to avoid punishment. For instance, Lucinda had a military shoulder injury that prevented her from being able to put her hair up. She was given a chrono, but the constant questioning from officers got to her and eventually she decided to cut her hair short so it was above her shoulders. Another participant, a 25-year-old white woman Nicole Thomas, took part in a reading program in which inmates read a story on video to send to their children. Nicole was excited to read two story books for her daughter, a four-year-old who had been raised by Nicole's mother from her birth. The day of filming was filled with nervous anticipation, with women primping, prepping, and practicing their stories for hours beforehand. The most exciting part of this preparation was that women were allowed to wear their hair down for the filming, their identity as mothers given

weight over their assumed manipulative nature for a brief moment. The chrono in Figure 3.6 informed officers that their untamed hair was acceptable for this time only. Nicole's hair reached well down her back. She had been growing it throughout her four years in prison, with the specific goal of getting it long enough to cut off her bleached ends before her release. After four years of putting her hair up every time she left her housing unit, she was nervous to wear it down on the yard even with the approval letter. As she relayed the story to me, she told me her long hair felt strange walking on the yard. Sure enough, she was immediately called over by an officer. She smiled as she told me their interaction—she showed him the letter, and he grumbled that she better be careful in the future.

*Figure 3.6. Nicole's Chrono*



This piece of paper is a rupture in the carnival. Prison time, like carnival time, appears circular. The routine monotony of prison life promotes this cyclical nature, everyday feeling the same with little opportunity for advancement of the self, and with a cutting off of ties to the outside. Women felt like the world went on without them; like they were stuck in time while their friends and families moved through time. The only linear structure is the sentence women are serving, for most women giving an end point to this empty time, and the ability for security scores to change based on time served. This created a tension between two chronotopic visions: historical time marched forward, while their daily life did not. Women had various strategies to negotiate this tension. For many women, growing their hair served as a symbolic marker of personal progress and growth in prison (see Chapter Four). Some women kept track of time literally, marking X's off of a calendar or counting down cyclical events (for instance, one participant Kitty would inform me "seven more toilet papers," counting down to release through the number of toilet paper rolls she would get before she left). Others refused to keep track of time. Melody, an older white woman, made her bunkie turn her calendar to face the wall, saying "it's just time that has to pass." She explained that when the psychiatrist told her it was important she know the date, especially because she was an older inmate, she racked her brain but couldn't figure out why she would think about time before release.

Nicole's paper breaks this empty time, placing her within a chronological chronotope represented as a specific date and time, a time in which she may resist the symbolic inversion of the prison environment. In the middle of the filming of women's stories for their children, however, there was an emergency count. Emergency counts usually meant someone in the prison was missing, or they saw someone in orange outside the prison gate. In the entire prison, all women must return to their housing unit, and in the case of the dorms stay on their bed while

officers did a face to ID count (matching an individual's ID tag to their face). The only exception were individuals on the "out-count" who were at work or school, and were counted in that location. The emergency count lasted hours, and when it finally ended the women were called back to the storybook program. I met up with Nicole to walk with her, and she was wearing her hair up. I asked why, and she said she just wasn't comfortable walking back with her hair down, even with her letter. Perhaps the emergency count had thrust her back into the carnival, the endless waiting denying the chronological break in her day.

Intake initiates the circular time of prison punishment, stripping down women's bodies and rebuilding them in the image of the institution. This rebuilding continues throughout prison punishment. Women's bodily practices, including dress, hygiene, and hair care, are reformulated in ways that point to the ideological inmate. While women negotiate their relationship to these ideologically loaded bodily practices in social life, the humiliation inherent in bodily regulation carries the potential to deny their cultural efforts. The same threads of humiliation carry across spaces of confinement, overtly realized in extreme forms of bodily domination and violence that create the image of the grotesque. The formation of the grotesque significantly challenges the practices by which women maintain dignity and cultivate a sense of self.

### **The Grotesque**

the grotesque ignores the impenetrable surface that closes and limits the body as a separate and completed phenomenon. The grotesque image displays not only the outward but also the inner features of the body: blood, bowels, heart, and other organs. The outward and inward features are often merged into one (Bakhtin 1984b: 318).

Bakhtin's analysis of grotesque realism explores the emphasis on bodily products and orifices in the carnival. Exaggerated mouths, genitalia, and bodily fluids characterize the imagery of the grotesque, pointing to the obvious parts of the body that challenge its cultural borders. This imagery takes the individual body and unbinds it, initiating its rebirth as cosmic and

universal, of the cyclical, worldly realm. The humor of the carnival is thus ultimately realized in the denial of the cultural body through the creation of the grotesque. The threads of the carnivalesque that permeate daily life on the prison yard find their ultimate articulation in grotesque imagery. The restrictions, regulations, and surveillance over incarcerated women's bodies that toy with normalcy, humiliating through a slight manipulation of the tools of cultural production, are extended and exaggerated in acts of extreme domination, capturing the physical properties of the body and using them to punish.

Bodily emphasis moves downward from the hair and mouth to the other orifices of the body in the creation of the grotesque. One of my participants, Ande, chose a striking story to introduce me to her life in prison. She had been in prison since 2007. In her third incarceration, Ande still struggled with the setup of this yard, which she had been on for the entire three years of its existence. A white woman in her 40s with long, gray-streaked brown hair, she was planning to dye her hair as soon as she got out of prison as she felt the streaks misrepresented her age. Beyond her lack of access to a common hair care technology, Ande was denied basic bodily control on three separate occasions during count. Count is a process that occurs five times a day in the prison, and all state prisons, during which all inmates are required to remain in their bed area until everyone in the facility has been accounted for. Depending on how smoothly the process goes, clearing count can take from a half hour to hours on end. Three times during her residency on the yard, Ande was forced to use her trashcan as a restroom, crying and pleading with the officer in her bay to let her leave her area during count to take care of her bodily needs. Already counted herself, confinement to her bed was an arbitrary rule that could be followed or broken by the officer in charge. Ande was quick to point out the humiliation of the events, telling me the story to capture the absurdity of her experience.

Like the humiliation embedded into daily life in prison, the formation of the grotesque image occurs beyond incarcerated women's control. They are not active participants in the carnival, and as such they are not reborn through the grotesque but rather punished through the unbinding of their body. Urine—an abject fluid—requires appropriate cultural rituals to dissociate the body from its waste (Kristeva 1982). Publically humiliated through her inability to perform these rituals, the borders between her cultural and material body are blurred. Ande is associated with dirt, waste, and improper bodily control. Engaging racial ideologies of cleanliness and filth, Ande's punishment is creative. She becomes the ideological inmate, her body the site of punishment, an enemy to her navigation of prison life.

Even in this minimum-security unit, I heard countless stories like this one, with women publically degraded through their bodily functions. Strip searches, required every time someone returned to the yard from a visit or work, were the most common form of such overt degradation. These routine searches were performed to prevent contraband, including drugs, hair ties, makeup, weapons, and other prohibited items, from entering the yard. Contraband of all kinds commonly found its way onto the yard despite the strip search. The search, during which women were forced to stand naked, squat and cough, as an officer searched their body, carried symbolic connotations in addition to the effort to deter and remove contraband. Women's bodily orifices, much like their hair, became sites of danger. The association of the vagina with threat has been elaborated in the law, constructed as a searchable orifice embedded with the potential to conceal (Hyde 1997). Within legal discourse, the vagina becomes a fetishized representation of the female body, “dangerous to women except as tamed by male authority” (172). The links between criminality and unbound femininity are again engaged in the strip search, the invasive gaze over the naked body justified as necessary to taming the threatening women. Her most private spaces

opened, she is denied her bodily boundary as her orifices are of public concern. The potential for humiliation through the strip search was maximized by the denial of sanitary products to women menstruating during the search. I am sure the reader can imagine the utter degradation that arose from this practice.

Another common realm for the creation of the grotesque was the practice of random drug testing. Women would be called to give a urine sample (or “drop a UA”) in the prison’s continual (and ineffective) attempt to get drugs off the yard. The random UA’s further associated incarcerated women with inner danger, their bodily fluids scrutinized by the state. Ciara once spent 18 out of 22 months in the hole for her body’s failure to perform compliance. She explained:

Well, back then they wanted the cup really full, and then they would have you doing all this embarrassing thing like get naked, stand up on the toilet with your feet, and open your legs real wide. So that kind, that just did it for me, oh just write the ticket ma’am, just write it, please. So I’ll go to the hole for six months. I get out, they UA me again, I can’t pee, they send me right back. And this happened three times within twenty-two months.

The prison’s requirement that women stand naked on a toilet to urinate in a cup constructs their bodily waste as “the bearer of a narrative” (Hyde 1997: 205) about their inner criminal nature and emphasizes the connections between the body and its waste. Humiliating through the state’s gaze over their naked, and in this case urinating, bodies, the grotesque image dominates. The boundaries of the individual, cultural body all but dissolve, reduced to its physicality. Ciara’s refusal to produce, to control the abject fluid, is an attempt to maintain her dignity, her only recourse to the challenge being made to her humanity.

The institution may not be able to force her to urinate, but the testing officers asserted their authority over her body by confining her to solitary. Each time she completes her six month punishment for refusal to produce, she is subject to another UA and another six month stint in the

hole. After her third time in the hole, the testing officer gets tired of the game, or forgets about it, and lets her return to the maximum-security yard. Those eighteen months, however, pick up the humiliating threads of bodily regulation and amplify them, attempting to remove her cultural being and formulate her as a (symbolically) naked body. Ciara explains the extreme domination and bodily restriction in the hole:

The hole is terrible too, I mean 'cause you're locked down twenty-three hours a day, and then when you, if you decide to come out on your rec hour, you're handcuffed to the shower. You're handcuffed to a cage. They let you out the handcuffs once they lock the cage. And all you can do is walk around, in a square. For an hour until they, handcuff you. Put you back in the room.

Her extreme confinement threatens to reduce Ciara to her physical being. She, however, despite this threat, manages to engage in cultural practices. She talked with other women held in solitary through the vents and even stood on the toilet to show them pictures of her children. When women from other yards would come to CDU for their job assignments, they would give their friends or girlfriends cigarettes, as Ciara put it "take care of them." Although they were not allowed to smoke, a woman would pop a socket (taking the casing off of electrical wires; according to Ciara, the prison has since cut off the electricity to the cells to prevent this practice) to light her cigarette. She would then connect the lit cigarette to a long stick made of paper and pass it to another cell through the vent so another woman could light her cigarette, or share the cigarette. These practices indicate the difficulty in removing the cultural being, which can even find articulation in the reclaiming of filth, shit, and other bodily wastes as tools of identity construction in conditions of utter domination (Aretxaga 1995, Feldman 1991, Rhodes 2004). These reclamations resist the creation of the grotesque image by denying the abject status of bodily waste, claiming instead its value as a tool of cultural production.

While Ciara did not engage her bodily waste in cultural production, she did embody the madness of the inmate in a final effort to claim dignity. At one point during her 18 month

solitary confinement, Ciara was placed “all the way back” in D-pod (the hole is made up of four pods, each with two-tiers of twelve or thirteen cells). Metaphorically moved the furthest down one could go in prison—the back of the hole—Ciara was maximally confined. Perhaps someone was sick of her refusal to produce a UA, asserting their domination by placing her in D-pod and distancing her from other women in the hole. Likely, her placement at the bottom of the bottom cut her off from the cultural practices she had developed in the hole to resist reduction to a body.

While in D-pod, Ciara broke down. She passionately tells me that she went crazy, a madness spawned by an invasion of mice she could not resist no matter what she did to be rid of them. For two weeks, she fought a battle against the mice, who were overtaking her cell, eating her food, and messing with her in her sleep. “I don’t know what the hell was going on!” she exclaims, telling me that she tried blocking the vents and complaining to officers, even showing them her chewed up food to convince them that they needed to move her. These complaints were to no avail, and she finally wrapped up her whole body to protect it from the mice. She explains:

I used to wrap, wrap myself up because they were in there! You know so I used to just wrap myself up real tight. But I had my face open. And he was like right here. And I’m like oh my freak-, you could just see the silhouette of it. And when I moved, he ran. I was like oh my God! So ((*Laughs*)). Can you just imagine what they were doing to me while I was asleep?

The mouse invasion represents the removal of Ciara’s bodily boundaries, the formation of the grotesque through extreme confinement. As the physical body is utilized to punish through maximal confinement and deprivation, the sensory regimes integral to the cultural being are all but eliminated. The inversions of normalcy at their maximum, Ciara is utterly humiliated. The mice symbolize this humiliation, contesting any semblance of individuality as they take over her space and her being. Ciara is unable to reseal her body’s borders to the material world even as she swaddles herself, using the few physical resources she has to construct a symbolic boundary.

The mouse defiantly staring her in the one open pour, her face, she loses it:

Finally I got fed up. I went to slinging food, all kind of shit in there. I, I was getting ready to throw my TV...It did it when I woke up and, just, he was just sitting there and I, oh God, I mean I literally jumped. I went from the top, the bottom bunk to the top because I'm thinking that will make a difference, but then he started crawling up the freaking TV cord, and, and I woke up with just like right there like he was getting ready to come accro- I flashed. I jumped all the way from the top bunk down to turn on the light and I went to slinging shit. And the officer came in.

One mouse becomes the center of the narrative, taking on a gender identity as male and becoming the catalyst for her breakdown. The personification of the mouse implies that Ciara's mouse invasion was influenced by her extreme isolation in some way. Hallucinations and paranoia are part of the complex PTSD-type symptoms recognized as outcomes of long term solitary confinement (Arrigo and Bullock 2008; Benjamin and Lux 1977; Grassian 1983; Haney 2003; Rhodes 2004, 2005b; Romano 1996). The mice in Ciara's cell may have been real or hallucinated, but either way she began to personify one mouse as a symbol of the removal of her bodily boundaries that she could not take.

Ciara had no recourse but to throw her property. Always valuable in prison, her food and TV were at this point invaluable, the only things she had giving her a connection to the world outside her cell. Her inability to get the mice away caused her to trash all that was valuable to her, becoming the mad, unbound persona of the ideological inmate, the image that supported her brutal punishment in the first place. Ciara was broken, about to throw her most prized commodity—her TV—when her embodiment of the untamed women succeeded in what her pleas could not. The officer finally called the sergeant, who was furious at the situation and insisted she be moved immediately. They attempted to move her into another cell in D-pod, but she refused, and they agreed to move her up to A-pod. While she remained in solitary confinement, Ciara was able to resist total domination and reduction to a body by getting the officers to agree to the material reality of the mice, consenting that her body has boundaries that should be free from the grotesque invasion.

## Conclusion

Ciara was released from prison while I was still in the field, soon after her friends criticized her perming practices, and I was able to meet her at the gate. Her family sat in their car anticipating her emergence; they had to remain in the car because women's families were not allowed on prison property. Given only a vague time, sometime after nine a.m., they waited over an hour for her to walk outside, carrying two legal boxes full of her remaining property. As I saw her for the first time in civilian clothes, she looked like a different person, glowing with a big smile on her face and her hair neatly wrapped. I gave her a hug and we exchanged promises to keep in touch before she road off in her brother's neon car, a retired taxi cab.

Although she faced 11 months on parole, she was confident that she would complete it, one hundred percent certain she wouldn't end up back in prison. Ciara was too tired to return, she told me, and was excited to get on with her life. She had plans to open an all women auto-body shop, and had been thinking up clever names and design concepts. We kept in touch for a while, Ciara's optimism at her future diminishing with every phone call. By the last time I talked to her, she had been treated poorly by a temp agency, taking the bus at 5 a.m. across town to a non-existent job, and was at the end of her rope trying to make it. The next time I tried to call, her phone was shut off, and I later learned that she had been violated (her parole revoked due to a violation of its terms). At the time of this writing, she is back in prison, presumably doing time until her max end date, or the date at which her sentence officially ends and the prison can no longer hold her.

Ciara's movement in and out of prison throughout her life indicates the difficulty of escaping the institution's grips once deemed criminal, a designation given to her in childhood. Her prison history continually constructed difference through the reformation of her body. It is not only the extreme conditions of intake, solitary, or even maximum-security that punish

through the body. Rather, prison punishment is predicated on bodily discipline that continually humiliates incarcerated individuals. Ranging from the slight, almost humorous inversions of normalcy like uniforms, miniature toothbrushes, and fractured hair care technology to the near total domination of solitary confinement, these bodily manipulations are creative. The carnival of punishment mobilizes powerful body symbolism to create the ideological inmate. Ciara's various symbolic practices—hair care rituals, mocking, and the embodiment of madness—demonstrate the many ways she attempted to formulate a sense of self in the carnival.

The next chapter expands on women's linguistic and semiotic practices that aim to formulate a sense of self in relation to the humiliation of prison punishment. In particular, it follows women who act as official or informal hair stylists on the yard, exploring the language of expertise they deploy to create value and worth as beauty experts. While these moves to maintain dignity, like Ciara's practices, are critical to women's navigation of daily life in prison, the reach of the prison environment cannot be underestimated. In addition to the potential to create the grotesque, Ciara's difficulty at reintegration reminds us of the far-ranging implications of incarceration. Her experience is by no means unique, and illustrates the severe consequences of a punishment system that constantly humiliates. Containment, control, and domination threaten humanity, constructing difference that extends beyond the prison, even while that threat is continually negotiated within the social life of the prison.

## **CHAPTER 4 – VOICING THE BEAUTY EXPERT: PRISON STYLISTS AS MEDIUMS OF FEMININITY**

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### **Healthy, Beautiful Hair**

I'm just so into healthy hair and you're gonna love your hair when your, get out of this place. Believe me. It's such a, I mean there's no reason every girl in here shouldn't leave with long hair, with healthy, beautiful hair. Given any, you know, you got any time in here, eh, you can have your hair, so beautiful.

Holding a large pair of electric hair clippers in her hand, Ge-Ma assured her client that the few inches she wanted to trim off of her hair was a worthy beauty investment. Her expert opinion rests on the symbolic value of long hair on the prison yard, where mainstream beauty norms significantly frame the semiotics of femininity. Based in white standards of beauty, these norms present a particular aesthetic vision of the female body as the ideal (Banks 2000, Bordo 1993, Butler 1990, Mendoza-Denton 2008). Mainstream beauty practices promise movement toward ideal symbols of femininity, such as long hair or light skin. Ge-Ma's mobilization of long hair invokes these norms, presenting herself as an expert stylist capable of desirable beauty techniques. In addition to creating a professional identity, Ge-Ma's consultation reinterprets the empty time of prison punishment. With her guidance, time becomes a valuable beauty tool, filled with the ability to cultivate the ideal feminine body through long, beautiful, healthy hair.

Incarcerated herself, Ge-Ma was one of the four "bay barbers" on the yard hired by the state to cut hair. At a pay rate of ten cents an hour and without most of the typical tools of the trade, including scissors, she was responsible for the hair-cutting needs of the 120 women in her housing unit, or bay. This demand was increased by other women on the yard who risked a rule infraction to patronize her salon rather than the one in their dorm. In addition to state-hired barbers, many women styled hair as a hustle. Although against the prison rules, informal styling was an integral part of daily life that was rarely punished, carrying with it the constant potential

for disciplinary sanctions. Framed by the prison context, both these forms of hair styling were interwoven with a deep aura of suspicion and distrust among potential clients. Despite this, many stylists, including Ge-Ma, earned reputations as hair care experts.

This chapter will explore the various linguistic and semiotic mechanisms through which prison stylists construct expertise. Building on Jacobs-Huey's (2006) work with African American stylists who must legitimate their professional abilities with regard to a rich cultural practice of home hair care, I consider the context of the prison to make severe threats to stylists' abilities that must be negotiated in the social realm. By infusing their speech and actions with multiple voices; including cosmetologist speak, discourses of beauty, and multimodal representations of their skill; inmate stylists are able to gain trust, clientele, and a professional identity. Attention to the language of expertise stylists deploy informs more than their claims to a professional identity. In the extraordinary context of the prison, stylists cultivate a sense of self through these displays of expertise. That self, a beauty expert, makes claims to dignity in response to the constant humiliation of prison punishment, aiming to construct normalcy. Hair's incredible cultural and symbolic force primes hair care as a valuable skill in both the legitimate and black market of prison economies.

The humiliating control over hair and other realms of appearance discussed in Chapter Three further promotes this value. Regulation and scrutiny over hair skews its indexical field to emphasize hair as bodily waste over cultural production. The lack of hair care tools in particular fosters hair's unmanageability. This limitation manipulates the powerful semiotics of hair, producing symbols that contest women's control over their hair such as baldness, graying, and thinning. Hair threatens to become associated with the bodily realm, a potential site of abjection as it defies cultural cultivation (Kristeva 1982). The social realm of hair care provides a small space

for incarcerated women to negotiate these tensions around hair. Stylist/client interactions are “symbolic collaborations” not only of expertise, but also of identity and hair aesthetics (Jacobs-Huey 2006: 17). The discourses of value and worth mobilized in stylists’ language of expertise reinterpret the symbolic force of hair in prison. Their interactions with clients co-construct ideals of beauty and inscribe them onto women’s bodies through hair care. These rituals, then, serve as one focal point of the linguistic and semiotic construction of dignity in prison for both stylists and their clientele. Successful stylists in particular are associated with an inner purity. They become mediums of femininity as they translate the restrictive context of the prison, most prominently the empty time of prison punishment, but also everyday rules and regulations over the body, into mechanisms for achieving beauty.

### **Suspicious Styling**

An energetic and caring middle-aged white woman with grown-out frosty blonde tips, Ge-Ma was proud of her work in the prison salon. She typically talked with her clients about her long and varied hair styling career, including her alcohol and drug-related fall from hair shows and high-end salons to a cheap, strip mall chop shop. This drug use, which she related to the abusive marriage she stayed in far too long in order to maintain appearances in her upper-class circle, led her down a path to homelessness and, eventually, to prison. She saw her hair styling work in prison as a gift from God rejuvenating her love of hair care and teaching her important lessons about the world. Her inspirational narratives opened the space for lively conversations. Women in her barber chair often opened up to her, telling their own life stories and expressing their appreciation and gratitude for her services. During my fieldwork, she quickly became the most sought after and popular barber on the yard, one of the only barbers who had waiting lists weeks and sometimes months in advance for an appointment.

This level of professionalism was surprising, given that the only indication that the stark white dayroom Ge-Ma worked in doubled as a hair salon was a crooked barber chair, leaning just enough to one side to require clients to situate themselves slightly at an angle before Ge-Ma could perform her craft. The barber chair, symbolic of a beauty shop’s atmosphere of hope, trust, and change (Battle-Walter’s 2004), had to be brought to life as its perpetual tilt reminded clients of the suspicious circumstances of their haircut (see Figure 4.1). Despite its tilt, Ge-Ma was glad to have the iconic chair. Other state-hired stylists relied on their own plastic desk chair, stacking the flimsy gray chairs on top of one another to raise up shorter clients.

*Figure 4.1. Ge-Ma’s Crooked Barber Chair*



*Figure 4.2. The Barber Box*



The classic barber chair is only one of a collection of professional tools missing from these prison salons. Barbers checked out a “barber box” from an officer on the yard, if he was available, containing electric hair clippers, clipper guards, a shaving brush, neck trimmers, some combs, and a plastic cape (see Figure 4.2). A classic set of barber tools associated with men’s haircuts, they did little to bolster a professional stylist identity, and contributed to the de-feminization of incarcerated women discussed in Chapter Three. The job title itself—“bay barbers”—furthered the de-feminizing force of haircuts. Mirrors, styling products, blow dryers, and even scissors are all semiotically significant in their absence. These tools are figures of personhood, or the linguistic and non-linguistic “indexical images of speaker-actor” (Agha 2007: 39), central to a professional stylist identity. Beyond challenging a professional identity, the lack of these tools speaks to an

aura of distrust constructed by the state's restrictions. Scissors are not typically considered a violent instrument in a salon, but their absence fills them with the potentiality for violence and links the prison salon with a danger that must be controlled.

Combining with this meaningful lack is the precarious nature of the job itself. Despite being hired by the prison to cut hair, state-hired stylists are not granted expertise based on their position. Clients typically question the abilities of bay barbers, assuming that the institution doesn't check their credentials or skills before hiring. In addition, the job title gives a sideways glance of distrust as it contrasts with the more skilled titles of stylist or cosmetologist. While Ge-Ma managed to gain significant trust through her construction of expertise, the symbolic trust that clients put into their stylist through the iconic act of sitting in their chair (Battle-Walter's 2004, Jacobs-Huey 2006) is far from a given in prison salons. The verbal negotiation of trust therefore becomes a central aspect of stylist/client interactions.

Rosie, a middle-aged white woman with long gray hair pulled into a low ponytail and glasses set low on her nose, was new to the yard when she was hired as a bay barber, a position she held only briefly before being transferred to staff barber.<sup>1</sup> Her quiet, calm demeanor carried through her interaction with a new client, Sapphire, even after Sapphire threatens her. Sapphire brought a friend with her to the haircut, a common practice especially when women visited a new barber. Seated in Rosie's chair for a trim, Sapphire quickly destabilizes any assumption of trust:

*Excerpt 4.1. Rosie and Sapphire (Part 1)*

- |   |           |   |
|---|-----------|---|
| 1 | Rosie:    | I'm not taking a terrible amount [of hair |
| 2 | Sapphire: | [Oh that's                                |
| 3 |           | I know.                                   |
| 4 | Rosie:    | Just getting the worst of it for you.     |

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<sup>1</sup> The unit typically has one staff barber who works in the administration building, where prison employees can go for a free haircut. The unit went through staff barbers quickly, as they were often fired for getting too close to the staff. A few of the bay barbers I worked with had also worked as staff barbers.

- 5 Sapphire: I trust you, I know where you live.  
 6 Rosie: Yeah I know ((*Smiling*))  
 7 Sapphire: ((*Laughs*)) Just kidding.  
 8 Rosie: I had somebody yesterday who, literally was threatening me before I cut her hair.  
 9 ((*Laughs*))  
 10 Friend: Are you serious?  
 11 Rosie: And she was like, but she was nervous, is what she was  
 12 Sapphire: Yeah.  
 13 Rosie: More of what she was saying was that,  
 14 But she was saying “if it, if it gets too short I swear I’m gonna,” I don’t know  
 15 what  
 16 Uh, it’s ok, (don’t worry about that) ((*Laughs*))

I met Sapphire, a 41-year-old Native American woman in prison for the first time, months before this interaction when I began my fieldwork on the yard. At that time, she explained her focus on growing her hair as a spiritual quest for self-discovery. She had cut her hair short in a defiant move to make herself ugly after she divorced her abusive husband years before. Now in prison, she felt ready to reclaim her hair and her beauty, a goal that was amplified when her daughter ended up in prison in the bed next to her. Every time I saw her after our initial interview, she proudly showed me her hair’s progress. Although Rosie didn’t have access to the background knowledge of Sapphire’s hair growth that I did, she, like Ge-Ma, oriented to the value of long hair assuring Sapphire she wasn’t compromising her length as she started the trim. Despite this mitigation, Sapphire mobilizes trust in a soft threat that references the larger context of potential violence and points out Rosie’s position as an inmate (line 5)—Sapphire has the ability to retaliate for a bad cut in a manner not typically associated with salon interactions.

This is the first vocal indication of the conflicting figures of personhood at play in the interaction. Agha (2007) uses figures of personhood to extend Bakhtin’s concept of voice<sup>2</sup> beyond the linguistic realm, a move necessary to parse Sapphire’s threat. The concept of voice is stretched

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<sup>2</sup> Bakhtin’s (1981, 1984a) concept of voice, described in the Introduction, understands language to be filled with many voices. These voices are linked to different types of people and moral positionings. An individual’s social persona is formulated through their relationship to various voices in the dynamic realm of interaction.

thin when non-linguistic signs are taken into account. “*Any* kind of perceivable behavioral display (features of gesture, utterance, clothing, appurtenance, etc.) can serve to index characteristics of actor” (Agha 2007: 240, emphasis in original). In Rosie’s case, not only is her persona read through a lack of professional tools and the prison context, but she is also drenched in semiotic displays of incarceration: her bright orange uniform, her ADC stamp, and a host of other signs associate her not with expertise and trust, but with an inmate identity. These aspects of her presentation of self are enregistered emblems—or indexical icons of personhood (Agha 2007)—directly linked to social stereotypes and characterizations of inmates. They associate Rosie with the unclean, unskilled, untrustworthy, untamed prisoner discussed in Chapter Three. Rosie’s relationship to the voice of the prisoner stretches beyond the interactional moment, governed by institutional forces that forge links between people and particular voices according to their social positioning (Irvine 2009). These forces are strong: Rosie must speak inmate, her bodily display largely beyond her control. Sapphire is, in a sense, calling Rosie out as an inmate, and foregrounding the prison context.

Rosie’s conflicting voices of stylist and inmate, however, are up for negotiation. Voices are continually competing for dominance in the moment-to-moment construction of fluency, or disfluency, in regards to social personae (Hill 1995, Keane 2011). Institutional attempts to cement an inmate identity are therefore not complete. It is in moments of interaction that women contest this image, pledging allegiances elsewhere. While in line 7 Sapphire mitigates her threat by laughing and claiming she is only kidding, Rosie begins a narrative in line 8 that negotiates the relationship between the threat and her professional identity. Describing her experience cutting another woman’s hair, Rosie engages a battle of voices. She creates the character of the iconic inmate, representing the enregistered characteristics of an inmate persona through a direct threat

to Rosie. The narrative form allows Rosie to respond to Sapphire's threat, instructing Sapphire not to go there, without actually calling it a threat and risking an affront to her client.

Relaying her message through a narrative also creates distance between Rosie and the iconic inmate. When Rosie shifts her deictic reference in the middle of line 14 from "she" to "I," she voices the iconic inmate through direct reported speech, both animating and constructing the character. Voloshinov's (1973) exploration of reported speech recognizes that it is not simply "speech within speech, utterance within utterance," but is "at the same time also *speech about speech, utterance about utterance* (115, emphasis in original). Far from a neutral mechanism through which to relay a past speech event, reported speech is "constructed dialogue" navigating social relations in the current context (Tannen 1989). Regardless of how accurately it represents what was (or wasn't) said in the past, constructed dialog enters the current context with new goals, fundamentally shifting the utterance's original purpose (Koven 2001, Matoesian 2000, Tannen 1989, Voloshinov 1973). These "quoted performances" are social indexicals themselves, pointing to stereotypical personae for motivated reasons (Koven 2001). Rosie's direct reported speech points to an iconic inmate, allowing her to comment on the absurdity of the display. She displaces Sapphire's threat, linguistically moving the threatening inmate to the past.

Rosie takes a significant risk in voicing the iconic inmate, however. Even when clearly marked as the voice of another, animated voices "can leak, spilling some portion of their potentially toxic contents onto their speaker" (Irvine 2011: 23). Rosie may be held responsible for the threat if she spoke it, re-centering the violent context and potentially linking her to an inmate persona. She navigates that risk by returning to her voice at the end of line 14. Instead of voicing the actual threat, Rosie shifts voices and says "I don't know what." This move points out the danger and violence embedded in the unvoiced threat. Her mid-utterance shift out of the direct

reported speech of the iconic inmate creates clear boundaries, maximally distancing her from her character. Finally, in line 16, Rosie ends the narrative and takes up the voice of the professional stylist. Her narrative allowed her to fill in her fluency in that voice—she displayed her ability to manage a threatening client.

Informal stylists face a similar challenge gaining the trust of potential clientele, joining state-hired stylists in the quest for fluency as the emblematic inmate identity competes for dominance over their stylist persona. Unlike state-hired barbers, who are paid by the state, informal stylists charge their clients goods or services, such as food from commissary or cleaning their area, for hair styles. Pricing schemes varied widely. Often, a stylist charged more for clients that were far from her own social network, and stopped charging a client if they developed a friendship. Informal stylists did hair in various locales. Plastic desk chairs, beds, picnic tables, and cement steps all took on the symbolic role of the barber chair. These stand-in chairs also required social work to bring them to life as sites of professional abilities. However, the lack of a professional setting and title was, in this context, ambiguous because the operations of state-hired barbers stood in an awkward relationship to professional styling outside the prison. For informal stylists, doing hair without recognition or structure has the potential to share more continuities with larger cultural forms. Informal beauty practices have iterations in many beauty cultures, including mother/daughter hair styling, teenage experiments with makeup in “bedroom culture,” and adolescent alternative beauty practices (Battle-Walters 2004, Jacobs-Huey 2006, McRobbie and Garber 1978, Mendoza-Denton 2008). These informal practices are a strong part of African American hair care culture wherein “enterprising adolescents and women earn capital or other bartered rewards as informal ‘kitchen beauticians’ to their friends, relatives, and acquaintances” (Jacobs-Huey 2006: 18). Kitchen beauticians are so prominent that African American professional

stylists make conscious efforts to distinguish their expertise from the informal realm. Informal hair care thus has various cultural reference points that may make informal inmate stylists more recognizable and trustworthy, particularly for African American stylist who may draw on a rich history of kitchen beauticians.

Indeed, African American women who knew each other from the outside, such as old friends Laura and Lee-Lee, often took on such a relationship. Both in their 50s, they had known each other on the streets and from their various terms in prison. They quickly told me hair was God's glory when I asked them about its importance, explaining that taking good care of your hair, in particular growing it long and healthy, was a reflection of your spiritual purity. Influenced by that belief, they made strong efforts to maintain their hair despite the difficulties they faced in the prison environment. Their comfortable, trusting hair care interactions mirrored that of informal hair care between friends even though Laura was hired by the state as a "bay braider." Bay braiders were hired without tools to braid women's hair (also at a pay rate of ten cents an hour, bay braiders worked "on call" whereas bay barbers worked set hours delegated by the availability of their toolset). Rather than highlighting this aspect of her stylist persona and working in the official space for braiding—the dayroom—Laura usually tapped into the informal, home aspect of the kitchen beautician (illegally) braiding Lee-Lee's hair on her bed. During one of these braiding sessions close to Laura's release date, Laura is redoing a braided style Lee-Lee wore to visitation the previous weekend. Sitting at a picnic table on the yard, their conversation turns to an evaluation of another woman's hair care practices:

*Excerpt 4.2. Laura and Lee-Lee*

- |   |          |   |
|---|----------|---|
| 1 | Laura:   | I told her 'bout letting no more people on her head anyway= |
| 2 | Lee-Lee: | =Mhm, believe me shouldn't do that.                         |
| 3 | Laura:   | They put a, been a put a hoochy-dooky on=                   |

4 Lee-Lee: =I don't believe in that, that (lie) ((Laughs))  
 5 Lori: ((Laughing)) Wha:::, [what are you saying over there?]  
 6 Lee-Lee: [I tell her that]  
 7 A hoochy-dooky.  
 8 ((Laughs))  
 9 Cause it's weird, I don't let,  
 10 Just anybody do my hair.  
 11 Lori: Right, right.  
 12 Lee-Lee: So I said when Laura go home in February I guess I'll be putting my ponytail  
 13 back on ((Laughs)).  
 14 Lori: Oh yeah?  
 15 Lee-Lee: Yeah I don't,  
 16 Uh,  
 17 Cause you gotta be careful with some women, it's so much envy in here,  
 18 Lori: Mhm.  
 19 Lee-Lee: They would actually sit up there and do your hair too tight, and break it?  
 20 Lori: Ewe.  
 21 Lee-Lee: Or whatever, they don't, you know,  
 22 So you gotta be really careful.

Discussing another woman who was letting too many people “on her head,” a common critique among African American women on the yard referring to letting more than one stylist braid your hair, Laura exclaims they put a “hoochy-dooky” on her head to explain the negative hair consequences the woman was experiencing (hair loss). When I ask what they are talking about, Lee-Lee explains a hoochy-dooky through her own limitation in hair stylists—Laura is the only stylist she will let do her hair, which she recognizes will be an issue after Laura’s release. She figures she will put her ponytail back on (meaning she won’t get her hair braided and will just wear it in a ponytail daily), and goes on to explain that you need to be careful who you let braid your hair as certain people may cause damage through improper styling.

Hoochy-dooky is loaded with significance. Laura’s use of the concept expresses the importance of sticking to one stylist, taking the voice of the hair care expert and anecdotally instructing Lee-Lee not to get her hair styled by anyone else. At the same time, her construction

of the concept hoochy-dooky highlights the mystical quality of hair care, as a stylist's envy may be transmitted through their braiding to your head, resulting in hair breakage and loss, conditions that can be read as an indication of impure social relations. This mystical quality reflects the spiritual significance of hair care in African American culture (Banks 2000, Jacobs-Huey 2006, Parker et al 1995, Rubin et al 2003). Hair is seen as a physical part of the body and a metaphysical representation of the spiritual self, a reflection of "who we are as human or social beings" (Banks 2000: 25). Indeed, Lee-Lee and Laura's view of a woman's hair as God's glory emphasizes the importance of keeping up hair as maintaining a relationship with God. Hair braiding—and the strength it fostered in hair—was therefore an important outcome of a healthy stylist/client relationship, a physical manifestation of purity in social relations and spiritual growth in prison.

These relationships were often central to women's social networks and personal well-being. While Laura and Lee-Lee had an established bond before this prison term, clients new to the yard sometimes joined their stylist's social circle. This usually depended on shared aesthetic values and the stylist's ability to successfully voice the beauty expert. Informal stylists often maintained extensive social networks. When hair care relationships extended beyond styling, clients could turn to this network for emotional support and help solving problems on the yard. These relationships, however, could be difficult to form for women who had been on the yard a significant amount of time and lost their stylist. Indeed, as explored in Chapter Two, Lee-Lee did return to her ponytail after Laura's release, which stunted her quest for hair growth. She struggled to find another braider, and her few attempts to let someone else on her head were met with disappointment, each time she was put off by outrageous pricing schemes or unprofessional practices that left her unconvinced of their expertise. Her quest continued, however, informing the significance of her hair upkeep and growth for her prison journey.

## **Cosmetologist Speak**

Both official and informal stylists continually wove together multiple voices in order to gain fluency as an expert stylist and improve the conditions for gaining and maintaining the trust of their clientele. One of the common voices stylists adapted is that of cosmetologist speak. Agha's (2007) analysis of voice and professional identities recognizes that the successful achievement of a professional persona depends, in part, on the deployment of specific registers associated with that profession. Through those registers, professional identities become socially readable. Indeed, Jacobs-Huey (2006) observed that novice African American stylists were trained to use expert terms over their lay counterparts, pointing to the significance of technical jargon for the construction of expertise in stylist/client interactions. Voicing the cosmetologist in the various contexts of doing hair in prison not only constructs expertise, but also negotiates women's relationships to the prison context and its humiliating force. Through this voice, stylists effectively bring their make-shift chair to life and enliven wider social practices associated with the beauty shop, including the negotiation of aesthetic values and social identities common to the cultural space. This negotiation provides a space for stylists and their clients to reinterpret the humiliating force of the prison environment.

The most common mechanism for cosmetologist speak to enter into hair care sessions in prison was through correction—stylists often translated their clients' use of lay terms for hair care products or practices into their technical, professional term. In her ethnography of African American cosmetologists, Jacobs-Huey (2006) recognized the importance of technical terminology when she wrote an essay in which she called her mother "a hairdresser." Her mother translated the term to hairstylist, protesting: "I am not a hairdresser—I don't dress the hair. I cultivate the hair!" (10). In the stylist/client interactions I observed, the translation of lay terms

into cosmetologist speak was sometimes similar in its overt explanation, and at other times subtle. Their clients' use of lay terms opened the space for stylists to voice the beauty expert, diversifying their projection of an inmate identity through professional speak.

The following interaction, between Scissors, another popular bay barber, and her client, Melody, demonstrates this translation. Scissors was a month to the gate when I started my fieldwork. A young white woman with short, spiky hair and small plastic glasses, Scissors blamed the state of Arizona for her ridiculous two-year incarceration over a Facebook photo.<sup>3</sup> Her incarceration reflects the growth of the middle-class white population in prison following the passage of tough-on-crime laws in Arizona in the 1980s. Discussed in Chapter Two, these laws include the felony sentencing for crimes previously considered misdemeanors, such as DUI's, and fewer leniencies for probation. Scissors couldn't wait to get out of prison and get back to Illinois where she had family support and opportunities for salon work, if her parole allowed the inter-state transfer. Melody was a first-time client of Scissors in her 50s. A white woman with straggly gray hair left thin from illness, she had multiple medical conditions that were getting worse from the poor conditions on the yard and the almost complete lack of medical attention. Melody told me that she knew she'd die in prison if she ever came back. She often made serious critiques of the prison by joking about the absurdity of it all. For instance, she commonly joked that the prison stole her wheelchair. The back of the seat was stamped with the name of a county jail, having come with her when she was moved to prison from the jail's infirmary unit. She had been in solitary confinement and on 24/7 lockdown for ten months in the infirmary because of her need for the wheelchair. When her daughter asked her what the hell she did in there all that time, she

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<sup>3</sup> Originally put on probation for driving a stolen vehicle, her probation was extended when a roommate left a gun in her home. A Facebook photo of Scissors holding a BB gun after the extension was grounds for a probation violation, and she was sentenced to 2.5 years in prison.

explained, “I said baby girl, I can either sing to myself, read if I’m lucky enough to get a book, or masturbate.”

Wary of getting her hair cut after losing so much of it to illness, Melody’s bunkie pushed her reluctantly to Scissors’ salon, where she resisted Scissors’ attempts to even out her hair:

*Excerpt 4.3. Scissors and Melody*

- |   |           |   |
|---|-----------|---|
| 1 | Melody:   | Do you have blade wash and all that kind of stuff?          |
| 2 | Scissors: | Nope.   |
| 3 | Melody :  | They won’t let you have blade wash even?                    |
| 4 | Scissors: | Nope, chemical.   |
| 5 |           | I wash the combs every night when I take ‘em back, and,     |
| 6 |           | But they won’t le- let me have Barbicide in here of course. |

Melody challenges Scissors’ expertise by pointing out she doesn’t have basic styling tools, while recognizing, in line 3, that this limitation is fostered by the prison environment. Her question about blade wash, referring to the familiar blue liquid that bathes a stylist’s tools in a professional salon, implies that the prison forces unclean services. She continues to carry out the linkage between prison and dirtiness later in the interaction, citing the threat of Methicillin-resistant *Staphylococcus aureus* (MRSA) from the unsanitary conditions created by the prison’s limitations on hygienic materials such as blade wash. The prison is dirty on multiple ideological levels that conjure up historical linkages between race and hygiene. Elaborated in Chapter Three, one of the realms of the continual humiliation of prisoners is a regulated and restricted relationship to hygiene, a historical tool in the construction of blackness as excluded from the purity associated with whiteness (Anderson 2006, Burke 1996, Heneghan 2003). Cain’s (2008) exploration of beauty in Antebellum America demonstrates that idyllic femininity grew out of this link between white skin and purity, which became encoded in beauty practices that accentuated and exhibited “unmarked” white skin as a projection of inner value. Cleanliness is loaded with racial and gendered connotations, interwoven into seemingly neutral, intimate grooming practices, as

Berthold (2010) reminds us “Today’s zealous preoccupation with hygiene is part of our living heritage in a racist culture” (1). These practices are transformed in prison as they become regulated, restricted, and ideologically dirty. This reformulated relation to hygiene humiliates as it distances women from humanity through the daily practices of their body.

Despite their white skin, both stylist and client are threatened with the connotations of unclean grooming practices. Whiteness depends on the proper display of its inner essence through proper bodily practices (Bashkow 2006, Heneghan 2003, Stoler 2002, Weismantel 2001). Both their femininity and their racial identity are challenged by the prison’s regulation of their bodily display and the limitations of the prison environment. Scissors’ cosmetologist speak negotiates these connotations, utilizing the voice of a professional stylist to speak against her bodily display. In lines 4-6, she agrees with Melody’s concern, explaining that she must compensate for the forced omission of a basic sanitary tool in her salon. She then voices the cosmetologist by translating her client’s use of “blade wash” into its technical name “Barbicide.” Through this voice, she associates herself with a cosmetologist identity, claiming knowledge and fluency in the tools of the trade despite their absence. In addition to indexing her expertise, this move distances Scissors from the prison environment, placing her allegiances in cleaner pastures.

The same professional voicing occurs in the interaction between Rosie and Sapphire explored earlier. Later in the haircut, their conversation turns to Sapphire’s hair care plans when she gets out of prison. Sapphire is discussing her plan to darken her hair:

*Excerpt 4.4. Rosie and Sapphire (Part 2)*

- |   |           |   |
|---|-----------|---|
| 1 | Sapphire: | It’s like when I get home I have two bottles of dye, waiting for me |
| 2 |           | To go back to medium brown (( <i>Laughs</i> ))                      |
| 3 | Rosie:    | It’s color,   |
| 4 |           | (( <i>Patting Sapphire’s shoulder</i> )) It’s color.                |
| 5 | Sapphire: | Color, (yeah), dye.   |
| 6 | Rosie:    | Our bodies die,   |

7       Sapphire:       Oh,  
 8       Rosie:           We color our hair.  
 9       Sapphire:       Ok color.  
 10                    [And then people that], oh it  
 11       Rosie:           [We tweeze our brows]  
 12                    Just like we tweeze our brows, we, our brows, we pluck a chicken.

In this case, Rosie's translation is overt. After Sapphire discusses her hair color plans in lines 1

and 2, Rosie directly instructs her that she is using the improper term for changing the color of your hair, dye, as opposed to color, patting Sapphire on the shoulder as she does so. This patting is a diminutive move indicating Sapphire's inferior position in relation to hair care knowledge.

When Sapphire misses that this was a translation, treating it as a synonym in line 5, Rosie goes on to elaborate the technical jargon, not only describing the distinction between "color" and "dye," but also making an analogous one between the common term "pluck" and the technical term "tweeze" for removing eyebrow hair. Rosie's cosmetologist speak draws a clear line between her expert identity and her client's novice position, constructing Sapphire as a pupil in the proper language of hair care. Like Scissors' claims to cleanliness, it also speaks to the humiliation of incarceration. Rosie makes a clear delineation between her hair styling abilities and animalistic, natural practices: bodies die, chickens get plucked. She, however, colors hair and tweezes eyebrows. In the extraordinary prison, where hair and other cultural symbols threaten to become abject, bodily signs, Rosie's cosmetology speak situates beauty practices in the cultural realm. She claims dignity as a purveyor of culturally valuable beauty techniques.

The technical jargon voiced in these two excerpts reveals the intertextual relation between stylists' language use in prison and wider beauty shop culture. Their cosmetologist speak engages connections to the social practices associated with beauty shops. Beauty salons, and barber shops, play a prominent role in aesthetically (and otherwise) marginalized communities in the U.S.,

serving as a counterhegemonic space for political and cultural debate (Alim 2004, Battle-Walters 2004, Furman 1997, Jacobs-Huey 2006, Majors 2001). By aesthetically marginalized, I refer to those ignored or rendered distinct from hegemonic aesthetic values. The conflation of race, age, class, gender, and sexuality in mainstream beauty norms assumes the feminine ideal as “white, rich, female, and heterosexual” (Barrett 1999: 321). A collaboration of semiotic markers point to this ideal, at various times highlighting long, straight hair; smooth, tight skin; and/or thinness as markers of femininity (Banks 2000, Bordo 1993, Butler 1990, Mendoza-Denton 2008), oppressing women of color in particular as the ideal is marked as not black (hooks 1994) or other racial identities. Whether excluded from this image by race (Battle-Walters 2004, Jacobs-Huey 2006, Majors 2001), age (Furman 1997), or other visually distinct realms of identity, hair care in these communities takes on a culturally powerful role.

The social significance of hair care is visible in the prominent, central role of beauty salons and barber shops in socialization and cultural practice. Organized around aesthetic and cultural values outside the mainstream, these spaces are counterhegemonic. In African American communities, they constitute “black public space” wherein African American cultural practices are expected and necessary for participating in social relations within the space (Alim 2004), a rarity in U.S. culture as public spaces are covertly marked as “white” through various semiotic markers excluding cultural practices that are considered not white (Hill 2008). Within these counterhegemonic spaces, marginalized individuals not only engage in political and cultural discussions relevant to the community, but also debate aesthetic values themselves (Banks 2000, Battle-Walters 2004, Jacobs-Huey 2006, Mendoza-Denton 1996). While typically maintaining significance to some degree within all spaces of beautification, mainstream symbols of femininity become visible and open to evaluation and critique within the beauty shop. These spaces thus

allow for the negotiation of alternative aesthetic ideals as notions of race, gender, and beauty are mobilized and embedded into hair care rituals.

Prison salons do not erase the larger prison environment becoming independent, counterhegemonic spaces of resistance. Women's confinement, lack of liberty, and suspended rights are non-negotiable. Further, the prison context significantly frames stylist/client interactions, through the ideologically loaded tools and enforced displays of inmate identity that foster distrust. Multiple disciplinary forces are always primed to take over any styling session. Cameras, officers, and regulations continually construct hair care interactions, and at any moment stylists' and clients' words or actions can become the means for disciplinary sanctions. Nonetheless, the multivocality of stylists' speech indexes a salon environment, the dayrooms becoming spaces to challenge the constant humiliation of prison punishment through the cultivation of women's bodies in relationship to larger discourses of value and worth. Women who are marginalized from mainstream femininity vis-à-vis their position as inmates engage mainstream beauty norms and alternative aesthetic values to formulate a sense of self.

For instance, Sapphire's declaration that she is going to dye her hair when she gets out of prison mobilizes alternative aesthetic values. She explains to Rosie that being out in the sun, a condition necessitated by the open design of the prison yard, results in a lightening of her hair through the appearance of blonde highlights. Normally, she would color it back to the same brown she had growing up as a child, but she does not have access to hair dye. Despite the mainstream value on light hair, Sapphire engages in the beauty shop culture of aesthetic debate distancing herself from mainstream beauty ideals and considering her hair color an important part of her identity as a Native American. This alternative aesthetic value coexists with her quest for long hair, interpreting the mainstream symbol of beauty in relationship to her racial identity. This aspect

of her identity is compromised in the current context as she is forced to spend large amounts of time outside without any products available to remedy the lightening process, and the salon provides her with a space to negotiate these bodily signs of incarceration.

### **Discourses of Beauty**

The aesthetic debate engaged in the beauty shop provides another realm for stylists to construct the beauty expert by the ways they voice mainstream beauty norms or alternative aesthetic values. As Ge-Ma's consultation to her client at the opening of this chapter indicates, mainstream symbols of femininity are commonly engaged in hair care interactions as stylists display their abilities to do hair in the linguistic realm, associating their clients with valuable cultural symbols such as healthy, beautiful hair. Mainstream ideals, however, coexist with multiple aesthetic values within stylist/client interactions. Women may thus enter into a stylist/client relationship with varying positionalities in relationship to mainstream ideals, even as their overarching beauty goals overlap (for instance, in the widespread value of long hair). Sometimes, the beauty values of stylists and clients conflict. Such conflicts were common in cross-racial hair care interactions, as well as in stylists' interactions with male-identified incarcerated individuals and butch lesbians who signal their sexuality through short hair. These conflicts are continually negotiated in hair care interactions, with stylists often ignoring or reframing clients' desires to render their skills legible under the overarching framework of mainstream femininity or another aesthetic value system. Their voicing efforts in these situations sometimes backfire, requiring a continual negotiation of their expertise through aesthetic debate.

The various positions women may take toward mainstream beauty norms is evident in the following interaction between Ronda and her client Gray. Ronda, an African American informal stylist, had a reputation on the yard as a skilled braider and was an adept hustler. She even

smuggled hair into the prison, allowing her to compensate for the limitations on the soft technology of hair care, such as hair for extensions. African American women suffering significant hair loss could get some of Ronda's contraband hair weaved into their braided styles. Ronda was incarcerated for her fourth and, she hoped, last time. Keeping in close contact with her kids and her grandkids, Ronda planned to open a joint business with her partner of 27 years and father of all of her children—she'll do hair, and he'll run a janitorial business. The plan grew out of a lifelong love of doing hair, originating in childhood styling sessions with her siblings.

On this sweltering June day on the prison yard, Red's friends had gathered in the dayroom to play cards. Although the group most often could be found playing Pinochle on one of the yard's picnic tables, the heat made sitting outside nearly impossible. One of the perks of this yard was the air conditioning, something not installed on most other units. The dayroom was an increasingly popular place to hang out in the summer, and getting a place to sit in the small room became more difficult as temperatures rose. It also became riskier to socialize with friends, as entering a housing unit that is not one's own is a rule infraction. This day, the group found a table and chairs, and as they were settling in Ronda took the opportunity to braid her friend's hair.

Although Gray, an older white woman with salt and pepper hair cut into a bob who sat in a wheelchair with wheels so low to the ground she was unable to push it herself, wasn't looking to get her hair done, Red and their friend Sweetie, an older African American woman, decide that was what was going to happen:

*Excerpt 4.5. Ronda and Gray (Part 1)*

1	Gray:	Well I'm thinking if the yard opens I wanna go smoke.
2	Ronda:	[You gonna wait!]
3	Sweetie:	[You gonna sit] down!
4	Ronda:	You gonna sit down and get your hair cut.
5	Gray:	[He:::y!]
6	Lori:	[((Laughs))]

- 7 Ronda: So that the people out there can see that you don't look like a clown no more.  
 8 Gray: Oh, they gonna see it eventually.

While most of the women on the yard that maintained braided styles were black, many white and Latina women also wore braids, usually one large braid for special occasions or French braids as a daily style to follow the hair-up regulation, described in Chapter Three. One or two braids could pass for white or Latina styles, while more braids, styled into cornrows, twisties, or singles, were considered black styles (both in and out of prison). When white or Latina women wore these styles, they sometimes became the subject of policing by other women on the yard. For instance, a Latina woman Jennifer told her friend Bling-Bling that she wanted to go rip out a white woman's hair that was in cornrows, exclaiming "she thinks she's black!" Muñeca, the young Latina woman introduced in Chapter One, got her hair braided in cornrows for the "crimp effect" and was the subject of relentless teasing by her friends. Most often, however, these styles were worn by white or Latina women whose close social networks were African American, such as Gray. In this case, Ronda is forcing Gray to get her cornrows re-done after Gray let a young white woman put them in. Ronda denies Gray the option of going out on the yard before she gets her hair done, marking the urgency at which she feels the need to rectify the poor hairstyling job of this other braider. Together, Ronda and Sweetie demand that Gray sits down and gets her hair done in lines 2 to 4, overlapping in the delivery of the demand emphasizing their shared position. Although Ronda uses the word cut instead of done (line 4), she isn't corrected, perhaps indexing her authority over hair. In line 7, Ronda explains that people on the yard will see Gray looking like a clown through her hair style, which she aims to prevent.

Gray, however, challenges Ronda's styling abilities in line 8, implying that her hair will look like a clown no matter who styles it. This is a point of tension throughout the interaction, as

Ronda is claiming an expert identity through her ability to control, and specifically to grow, Gray's hair, while Gray is taking up the stance that her hair is unwieldy, denying the taming abilities of an expert stylist. This becomes explicit later in the hair braiding session:

*Excerpt 4.6. Ronda and Gray (Part 2)*

1 Ronda: (.) Y-, I don't know what the hell was, was wrong with them braids they had in  
2 your head but they was standing up.  
3 Sweetie: Who uh braided it?  
4 Gray: Stephanie.  
5 Sweetie: Oh the little girl?  
6 Ronda: What Stephanie?  
7 Gray: Mhm.  
8 Ronda: This one over here.  
9 Sweetie: The little girl over there.  
10 Gray: (0:05) You know my hair does what it wants to, when it wants to.  
11 Ronda: That's what the beau- beautician is supposed to do, do it the way it's supposed to  
12 be did.  
13 Gray: Well it, ugh, you know my hair don't listen.  
14 Ronda: Listens to me.  
15 Gray: (.) Yeah you use thirty tons of grease too.  
16 Sweetie: Oh she didn't put no grease on it?  
17 Gray: [Yeah, she put conditioner] in it.  
18 Ronda: [No she put conditioner]  
19 Yeah she  
20 Sweetie: Ok.  
21 Ronda: Even if I braided it without the grease  
22 but we gonna put grease in it that's what's growing it, shit.  
23 Sweetie: I don't think Gray want her hair to grow, she want it short.  
24 You know she be going to cut it some more.  
25 Ronda: She ain't cutting it while I'm here, that's for sure.=  
26 Gray: =She won't let me cut it!  
27 Ronda: She is not chopping on nothing!  
28 Sweetie: Well Carla done chopped it, you missed it.

In lines 1-2, Ronda returns to her complaint that the other braider did a poor job. This leads to Sweetie's description of the braider as a "little girl" (lines 5 and 9), a diminutive description that distances her from an expert status. In line 10, Gray protests that it wasn't the braider's abilities that led to her bad do, but her hair itself which does what it wants to regardless of its style. Ronda defends her own abilities in lines 11-12, indexing her identity as a stylist by claiming a

beautician—using the professional title—can wield unwieldy hair. Gray continues her protest in line 13, and when Ronda again defends her position, stating that Gray’s hair listens to her, Gray complains that she uses too much grease. In lines 21-28, the conflicting goals of the hair care interaction become apparent: Ronda is trying to grow Gray’s hair, while Gray, as Sweetie states, wants it short. Ronda asserts control over her client’s hair in lines 25 and 27, demanding that Gray not cut her hair while she is around, which Gray playfully agrees with in line 26.

Ronda’s use of African American English (AAE) in the interaction positions her desire to grow her client’s hair in relationship to African American aesthetics. Through this linguistic style, she engages indexical links between AAE and an African American identity, voicing a black persona (Barett 1999, Bucholtz 2011). Ronda uses several features of AAE in this excerpt (from Smitherman 1977), including: them braids (line 1), simplified be (lines 2 and 25), zero copula (line 22), and double negative (line 27). In the realm of hair care, AAE is intimately tied to black aesthetic values (Jacobs-Huey 2006, Smitherman 1977). While this is Ronda’s primary speech style, it nonetheless engages these links and allows her to voice African American aesthetic values in her interaction with her client. Her use of “be did” (line 12) in her explanation of what the beautician is supposed to do, “do it the way it’s supposed to be did” (lines 11-12) is particularly telling. African American English substitutes “did” for the English “done,” a linguistic move that adds emphasis (Smitherman 1977). She is voicing a black stylist to emphasize her expert abilities to do hair in braids. Gray challenges this aesthetic value system in line 15, critiquing Ronda’s use of grease, which stems from African American beauty practices.

Toward the end of the interaction, Ronda’s subtle voicing of African American aesthetic values becomes more overt, as Gray has continued to challenge the goal of hair growth. Sweetie initiates the mobilization of African American aesthetics:

*Excerpt 4.7. Ronda and Gray (Part 3)*

1 Sweetie: I ain't cutting (on) mine, I'm trying to grow mine.  
 2 I wanna be able to sit on it.  
 3 Lori: A lot of people are growing it here, huh?  
 4 Ronda: Yeah.  
 5 Gray: It's like a trend, you know, it's like people cut their hair real short and then  
 6 everybody grows it out.  
 7 And then they'll go through a short phase again, and then  
 8 [everybody'll grow it out].  
 9 Sweetie: [I don't never go through] the short phase.  
 10 Lori: ((Laughs))  
 11 Ronda: I ain't going though no short phase either.  
 12 Gray: Oh I do.  
 13 Ronda: I started [to cut all mine off]  
 14 Sweetie: [only thing I did [was the neck]  
 15 Gray: [I'm talking about], I'm thinking about cutting the  
 16 back of my hair again.  
 17 Sweetie: Don't mess with your hairdo.

In this excerpt, Gray orients to white beauty norms in response to Sweetie's desires to grow her hair and my question about the prevalence of growing your hair in prison. She takes the stance that hair styles are individual moves reflecting personal desires, voicing the postmodern notion of beauty as individuality (Bordo 1993). This view erases the connections between race and hair underlying those projects, seeing hair as simply hair (Jacobs-Huey 2006). Long hair can be in style and so can short, but either way this ideological view holds that women's hair choices are trivial and subject to the influence of larger trends. Ronda and Sweetie, on the other hand, value long hair. Their stance on long hair recognizes the role of race in hair, as for African American women growing hair is a long, dedicated project that involves much care and styling skill (Jacobs-Huey 2006). They voice this aesthetic value in lines 9 and 11, both claiming that they don't go through a short phase. For Gray, cutting and growing hair is an individual choice that can be made on a whim, for Ronda and Sweetie these decisions are heavy, loaded with racial and ideological

implications. Ronda, as Gray's stylist, wants to display her expert ability through her client's hair, and preventing her from cutting it is critical to her stylist persona.

In this brief interaction, the complex interplay of aesthetic values and stances toward hair are articulated. Ronda's desire to grow Gray's hair can be read as a negotiation of dignity in reaction to the prison's humiliating control over hair. She aims to craft hair into a powerful cultural symbol of femininity, beauty, and spirituality in relationship to African American aesthetic values. The value of long hair in this aesthetic system arises out of a complex interplay between mainstream beauty norms and alternative ideals, such as the spirituality invested in hair discussed earlier (Banks 2000, Gibson 1995, Rubin et al 2003). Ironically, in this interaction, Gray's orientation to mainstream beauty norms allows her to disregard a conscious concern with the state of her hair in prison, considering it trivial and unwieldy. To her stylist, however, her hair is much more than that—it is a symbol of dignity, value, and worth if properly cultivated through her skills.

Another ideological conflict occurred during an interaction between Scissors and a new client, Cherry. Cherry is a middle-aged African American woman and self-proclaimed diva who I met during my previous fieldwork in a county jail and ran into during my prison research after she violated her probation. She had short black hair, and was very concerned with keeping it appropriately styled. After checking out Scissors' skills by finding women on the yard whose hair she'd cut, Cherry took the plunge into Scissors' chair. Scissors was about to be released from prison, and had a waiting list of women who wanted her services before she left. Cherry's friend gave Cherry her appointment, and Scissors was not pleased with the exchange.

At the same time, even though she sought her out, Cherry was highly suspicious of Scissors' abilities. In addition to her display of an inmate identity, Scissors was a white woman

about to cut a black woman's hair. The commercialization of hair typically excludes black women from white stylists' barber chairs as beauty schools largely ignore black hair and textures, their lesson plans shaped by the racial ideologies of white as normative and the mainstream beauty norms born through those ideologies (Jacobs-Huey 2006, Majors 2001). Finding a stylist in a white community can be a trying, nerve wracking experience for those outside of prison. In prison, it takes on a whole new level of significance. On this yard, black women who wanted a haircut had little choice but to go to a white barber. Out of the nine months I conducted ethnographic fieldwork, an African American barber was employed only for a few months, and even then only women housed in her unit were supposed to patronize her services. The prison's lack of attention to the politics of hair meant that some African American women chose to go without haircuts for the duration of their incarceration. For those that took the plunge into white hands, the experience was often wrought with conflict.

The entire interaction was tense, with Cherry continually giving Scissors instructions on how to cut her hair. As Cherry sat on edge in Scissors' chair, the giant clippers buzzing in the background, her friend Sam stood leaning on the wall attempting to comfort her, interjecting that Scissors knew what she was doing and that Cherry was going to look good. Sam is a young African American woman with long, curly hair. Cherry was on a mission to feminize her friend, and she constantly encouraged Sam to style her hair, wear makeup, and make her uniform look nice. Well into the haircut, the underlying conflicting stances toward hair between Cherry and Scissors become apparent:

*Excerpt 4.8. Scissors and Cherry (Part 1)*

- |   |           |   |
|---|-----------|---|
| 1 | Cherry:   | But kind of low though,                 |
| 2 |           | I'm gonna shut up, you know what to do. |
| 3 | Scissors: | (0:08) You have good hair, huh?         |

4 Cherry: I don't know what good is, but, (?) wake up (it seems to be) [in a good mood].  
5 Scissors: [You do], you've  
6 got good hair. So.  
7 Cherry: [Ok].  
8 Sam: [((Laughs))]  
9 Cherry: For a black, huh?  
10 Scissors: Well, you know it=  
11 Sam: =For a black? ((Laughs))  
12 Scissors: For a black. [Yeah you're (?)]  
13 Cherry: [Well because their hair's not]  
14 Because their hair's not  
15 Girl you can pick that comb up I don't care  
16 Scissors: No, [uh uh]  
17 Cherry: [Ok look], oh let me show you something.  
18 You see right here?  
19 Scissors: Mhm.  
20 Cherry: Can you fix, where this is?  
21 Scissors: Yeah, yeah. [Going to. Yeah.]  
22 Cherry: [Thank yeah, ya::y.]

The tension is immediately apparent in line 1, with Cherry giving Scissors a directive, even while vocalizing that Scissors knows what to do in line 2. After a brief pause in verbal communication, during which Scissors is cutting, Scissors tells Cherry she has “good hair” (line 3). This African American in-group term can represent multiple stances toward hair, depending on who is uttering it to whom. Like other in-group terms that can have positive connotations within African American contexts, such as Nappy and Kinky, when they are uttered by a white speaker they become political, engaging a long history of racialization through hair (Banks 2000, Smitherman 1977). These terms are often taken up as racist, and can have consequences for out-group members that utter them. In this instance, Scissors voices mainstream beauty norms, mobilizing the loaded term to compliment Cherry by associating her with the white standard of valuable hair. This voicing is also an attempt by Scissors to claim knowledge and skill in styling black hair in the face of Cherry's suspicions. In line 4, Cherry immediately disaligns with Scissors, claiming not to know what good is. She explains her hair is just in a good mood when she wakes up, taking the

counterhegemonic stance that “hair is just hair,” a stance sometimes adapted by Black women to destabilize the loaded racial and political messages in hair (Jacobs-Huey 2006). Scissors repeats her claim in lines 5-6, rejecting Cherry’s diffusion of the loaded term. Cherry treats it as a faultable (Goffman 1981), or an element “in an individual’s linguistic performance that either the speaker or the listener can find fault with, or can find reasons to try to repair or to counter” (Irvine 2009: 53). Faultables can prevent a speaker from successfully taking up a particular voice, which occurs in line 9. Cherry treats it as a racist statement and denies Scissors the voice of expertise. In line 11, Sam tries to mitigate the situation, repeating Cherry’s question with a laugh. While Cherry is explaining why she took offense to the statement, Scissors drops a comb on the floor. Cherry stops her explanation and highlights her own African American identity, using the discourse marker “girl” in line 15 as she tells Scissors she can pick up the comb. Discourse markers are elements in speech that do not have a strict grammatical meaning, but play organizational functions and/or serve to indicate speaker stance (Kiesling 2004). In this case, girl, associated with African American English (Smitherman 1977), indicates Cherry’s stance as a black woman. She is able to take that stance through the discourse marker while at the same time shifting the frame from a political discussion about hair back to a haircutting session, focusing on the task at hand and preventing the ideological disagreement from spiraling and ending the cut.

Once it has been mobilized in the interaction, “good hair” is primed to reemerge. Cherry brings the term back into the interaction after asking Sam if she is going to have the best haircut on the yard, renegotiating its ideological force by quoting Scissors:

*Excerpt 4.9. Scissors and Cherry (Part 2)*

- |   |           |   |
|---|-----------|---|
| 1 | Cherry:   | Yeah, I’m gonna have the best haircut on the yard.  |
| 2 |           | (0:03) But since I have (.) (( <i>raising her hands to make air quotes</i> )) “good hair” |
| 3 | Scissors: | Yeah.   |

4 Cherry: Yeah ((*Laughs*)).  
5 Sam: You really do.  
6 Scissors: You have good hair.  
7 Cherry: I don't know.  
8 Scissors: You know what that means, come on.  
9 Cherry: I know, but it just doesn't wake up,  
10 you know what, I can't be, I have to be modest about it,  
11 especially being, um, you know, black? around a lot of women who do not.  
12 Scissors: Right.  
13 (0:02) You know.  
14 (0:09) Everybody has their own thing.  
15 Everybody has their own thing, everybody has good hair or, you know,  
16 Someone has good hair, someone has good teeth, someone has  
17 You know, there's always [something  
18 Cherry: [Well I have] hair, feet, hands, nose, lips  
19 Scissors: Alright  
20 Lori: ((*Laughs*))  
21 Scissors: [(?)]  
22 Cherry: [(?) ((*Laughs*))  
23 Cherry: But you have to love you.  
24 Scissors: No, exactly, everybody's got something.  
25 Cherry: I just get a tummy tuck, I'll be alright.

Describing her new haircut, Cherry voices Scissors in line 2 saying she has “good hair.” As she says the line, she uses her fingers to put air quotes around the term, visually representing that she herself is not mobilizing the term, but rather she is animating the voice of Scissors. This minimizes her responsibility towards the words, an attempt to prevent them from leaking into her own voice as they are directly attributed to another speaker (Irvine 2011). Cherry's quote allows her to make claims to good hair without being seen as judging other black women and valuing mainstream beauty norms. Her overt quoting may be particularly important in this context since her friend Sam is participating in the interaction and may take offence to the mainstream usage of the term. Sam acts as a mediator, however, granting Cherry the ability to use the term as a compliment to herself by agreeing that Cherry has good hair in line 5.

This not only invites the use of the term, but retroactively excuses Scissors' earlier use. Cherry steps down from her critique of Scissors, while still engaging in a political discussion of

hair. She softens her explanation that race matters in hair (lines 9-11) through the use of hedges. Hedging is a linguistic means of navigating a speaker's relationship to their utterances, often indicating a lack of commitment to them or softening their stance (Lakoff 1975, McConnell-Ginet 2004). Cherry places "um" and "you know" between "being" and "black," hedging her black identity in contrast to her previous assertion of a black stance after Scissors' use of "good hair." Through this hedging, Cherry informs Scissors that being black has implications for her claims to mainstream ideals of hair. Scissors, on the other hand, takes a colorblind stance, voicing mainstream values that deny the racial implications of hair by claiming everyone has something (lines 14-17), echoing Gray's stance on hair. Her colorblind stance aims to deflect the racist implications of her previous utterance. Cherry, however, has repurposed the term. By quoting Scissors' utterance, she has turned it into a compliment, associating herself with the mainstream values embedded in the term vis-à-vis Scissors' voice.

Cherry's deployment of the mainstream meaning of "good hair" demonstrates one of the implications of stylists' voicing of discourses of beauty: they associate their clients with symbols of value and worth in the humiliating environment. Critical to the language of expertise in prison, the voice of mainstream or alternative aesthetic values situates stylists' abilities in cultural systems of value, giving meaning to the semiotics of hair and their abilities to cultivate it. In light of the prison's severe challenges to women's humanity, these voicing efforts allow stylists to make claims to dignity, an expert stylist under a particular framework of beauty. Although their interactions with clients must negotiate the aesthetic values they orient to, mainstream symbols of femininity dominate across aesthetic value systems, while carrying differing implications within those systems. Stylists' discourses of beauty, then, provide a realm for their clients to make claims

to dignity through association with those dominant symbols, formulating a coherent self through beauty work.

### **Multimodal Voicing**

While inmate stylists linguistically take on multiple voices to create a professional identity, their voicing efforts extend beyond the realm of the verbal and into the material. The multimodal nature of voicing in the construction of social personae has already become apparent in the lack of tools and the emblematic inmate bodily display, both of which “speak” to stylists’ position as inmates and challenge their fluency as professional stylists. In addition to these institutionally enforced figures of personhood, however, stylists manipulated the physical world to construct and display their expertise. Using their tools, their hands, and their clients’ hair, they embed their professional abilities into the material world, physically indexing their skill. These multimodal representations constitute significant claims to dignity. Through them, stylists construct a socially readable inner core identity, a coherent self that has been unchallenged by the extraordinary prison.

One of the ways state-hired barbers demonstrated their proficiency as a stylist was by using their limited tools like they were traditional tools of the trade. A good barber was one who was able to use clippers just like they would a pair of scissors, wielding the giant, buzzing, vibrating relic from the 1970s into a graceful instrument for precision cutting. Ge-Ma used to tell clients that she knew when she was released from prison all of the expensive salons would be cutting with clippers. For instance, during one haircut she told her client, “Can you see me in an upscale salon breaking out the clippers? Hey, it’s a new way! Seriously, I mean they’re doing it with the, uh, with the string? And waxing. I mean instead of waxing they’re using the string and I heard they’re charging like sixty bucks.” Citing the popular trend of threading, which involves

removing eyebrow hairs by twisting threads over them (a common hair removal technique in prison using stray threads pulled from uniforms to compensate for the lack of tweezers, although contrary to Ge-Ma's assessment, the trend outside of prison has its roots in Eastern beauty practices), she claims that clippers could gain value in the mainstream. Her assessment of the future popularity of clippers elevated the status of her tools to instruments of high fashion.

Infusing value into the sorry toolset state barbers were provided was usually less overt. For example, at the beginning of the interaction between Scissors and Cherry explored above, Scissors attempted to mitigate Cherry's distrust through the skilled use of her tools. The following excerpt demonstrates the ideological tensions between stylists and those tools:

*Excerpt 4.10. Scissors and Cherry (Part 3)*

1	Scissors:	From here
2	Cherry:	How do you know girl?
3	Scissors:	Because I can tell
4	Cherry:	Ok.
5	Scissors:	Uh huh
6	Cherry:	If you can take the clipper and make it like lay down
7	Scissors:	Yeah I'll just, I'm gonna [cut it, (on my)]
8	Cherry:	[Yeah but]
9	Scissors:	I'll, yeah, I, [I got you]
10	Cherry:	[You got] shears girl? (( <i>Looking at the barber box</i> ))
11	Scissors:	Huh?
12	Cherry:	You got shears?
13	Scissors:	No. I, I got this though
14	Cherry:	Ok, you know this way, cause I'm real picky I'm sorry.

In line 1, Scissors explains to Cherry where she will start the cut, and Cherry questions her expertise. Expecting Scissors not to know how to cut black hair, Cherry is on guard. When she asks Scissors to clip a piece of her hair in line 6, and Scissors says she'll cut it in line 7, Cherry takes this not as an expert opinion but as a faultable, an indication that Scissors is far from fluent in professional styling. Cherry not only asks if Scissors has shears in line 10 (which she very well knows she does not), but also looks to her barber box to point out that she is ill equipped,

enforcing the faultability of her use of the word “cut.” This response denies Scissors the voice of the expert, as she is lacking professional tools. Scissors follows by stating that she’s “got this,” indicating that she can indeed “cut” without scissors.

Later in the haircut, Scissors continues her efforts to transform the clippers into scissors, with slightly more success than the previous excerpt:

*Excerpt 4.11. Scissors and Cherry (Part 4)*

1	Scissors:	So you don't clipper this here do you?
2	Cherry:	Uh (.) I shear it. At home I would <u>shear it</u> .
3		But since your um, all you have are clippers, uh go ahead
4		Just take it. You know what to do
5	Scissors:	I'll just, you know what I'm just gonna do it now. I'm just gonna do it like this.
6	Cherry:	A number five? I [guess you should, ok]
7	Scissors:	[No I'm just gonna do it with the] scissors
8	Cherry:	Ok. [Ok]
9	Scissors:	Or with the [clipper, but (?)]
10	Cherry:	Thank you.
11	Scissors:	You're welcome.

Scissors asks Cherry if she would clipper a part of her hair (line 1), and Cherry forcefully responds that she would shear it, putting verbal emphasis on those words (line 2). She goes on to say that since shearing is not possible in this salon, clipping it is acceptable (lines 3-4). Again, Cherry is pointing out Scissors' limitations as a stylist, emphasizing that Scissors does not have the tools Cherry would use to cut her own hair. However, in line 7, Scissors calls her clippers scissors. She has shown Cherry her abilities with the clippers at least enough that her slip of the tongue is not taken up as a faultable by Cherry. While the entire haircut remains tense, as evident in part one of their interaction (Excerpt 4.8) explored above, Cherry grants some expertise to Scissors as she performs the functions of scissors with her clippers. Stylists and clients continually negotiated the indexical significance of barber tools in interactions like this one. To go through with a haircut,

clients almost had to grant them partial status as professional tools, associating the barber with expertise as the tools took on such a significance.

In addition to their tools, stylists' hands also became a tool of the trade, a figure of personhood supporting or contesting their fluency in the voice of expertise. The power of stylists' hands extended beyond individual hair care interactions. Some stylists' hands were infused with the power to grow hair while others, tainted with bad juju or transmitting a hoochy-dooky, stunted growth, and sometimes were blamed for hair loss. Bling-Bling, a Latina woman in her early forties, explained that her hair, which she had been growing out the entire 17 years of her incarceration, got "stuck" around her waist for two years. She finally realized that it was her barber, elaborating:

Their juju gets on, eh, I truly believe that person that cuts your hair, they have, whatever, comes outta the hands, jumps onto your hair. And if they have bad (.) karma, juju, whatever you wanna call it, that's why my, I, I have growing hands. When I cut people's hair, even if I don't like you, your hair will grow... You can be the nicest person there is, but what's truly inside your soul, what comes out of your hands.

Bling-Bling was excited to meet me and participate in my study. As an old-timer, she felt she could tell me how it really was. Coming to prison at age 25, her entire adult life was spent fighting her case and learning to navigate life in prison. While she managed to get her life sentence severely reduced in 2007, she remained in prison until 2012. She had worked as a barber on a medium-security yard for many years; a yard she much preferred to the huge, dorm-style unit she was spending the last few years of her prison time on. Explaining her quest for hair growth in prison, she describes herself as having "growing hands." This self-description makes clear the link between the language of expertise and claims to humanity; growing hands symbolizes an inner core identity despite the prison environment. Her assessment, like Lee-Lee and Laura's talk of hoochy-dooky, emphasizes the metaphysical realm of hair care. Through their metaphysical

properties, growing hands challenges prison humiliation, renegotiating the racial and de-feminizing connotations of the prison environment to claim dignity and self-worth. Bling-Bling infuses her hands with the ability to impart ideal femininity onto others—to grow hair—pledging her own inner purity untainted by the prison. Even as she lost the ability to grow her own hair for two years, a significant challenge to her sense of self in prison distancing her from cultural control over her hair, she denies the possible reading of her hair as abject. Rather, she puts forth an inner being that cannot be deformed from prison life. Conversely, those who truly belonged, the real prisoners, were given away by their hands' refusal of femininity.

The idea of “growing hands,” common across the yard, engages larger ideological connections between gender, race, and purity to claim inner value. For African American women, who often kept their hair braided to promote hair growth, this idea fostered strong loyalties between clients and their stylists. As we saw with Lee-Lee and Laura, a good stylist/client relationship resulted in hair health, a symbolic representation of purity in spirituality, social relationships, and prison life. African American women in particular experienced hair loss from the lack of proper hair care technology, or over-perming as a means of managing hair. Attempts at growing hair therefore often included the simultaneous goals of re-growing parts of hair that were thin or bald and of growing hair long. Neither of these goals, or their coexistence, should be read as an uncomplicated reproduction of mainstream ideals. As discussed previously, analyses of African American women's ideas of beauty demonstrate a complex relationship between their aesthetic values and mainstream beauty norms. Black women's core ideas about beauty often contrast to the mainstream in that they consider beauty ethical rather than purely aesthetic, valuing elements of movement, spirituality, and self-worth as a part of bodily aesthetics (Banks 2000, Jacobs-Huey 2006, Parker et al 1995, Rubin et al 2003). Under this framework, thin or bald spots

may carry indications of inner imbalance, troubled spiritual relations, or low self-worth, adding to their humiliating force.

At the same time, features of black hair have long been racialized and discriminated against in the mainstream, promoting ideas about “good hair” as long and straight/wavy within the African American community (Banks 2000, Battle-Walters 2004). Complicating the assumption of ideological invisibility, however, women sometimes strategically orient to the mainstream, as Cherry did in her interactions with Scissors (Excerpt 4.9). In these cases, women often understand that their own vision of beauty may be read as a political statement and adapt their look to avoid the social consequences of counterhegemonic aesthetic ideals (Banks 2000, Gibson 1995, Rubin et al 2003). Mainstream beauty norms are but one of a set of aesthetic values and ideals that may be at play in hair care decisions, and a unified aesthetic voice is impossible (Banks 2000). The efforts of many African American women to grow their hair in prison thus have complex ideological underpinnings. In the hyper-racializing context of the prison, in which African American and Latina identities are seen as naturally criminal (Davis 2003), efforts to produce mainstream beauty aesthetics through long hair may be seen as attempts to deny the racial stereotypes of criminality, uncleanness, hypersexuality, and impurity. While not necessarily trying to be white, the semiotics of femininity offer a realm to negotiate the challenge to humanity incarceration and an inmate identity presents. The cultural priming to consider spirituality and well-being in hair allows long and/or full, healthy hair to become an expression of inner purity, a reflection of living right in prison. Growing hands is the ultimate realization of this inner state.

The significant work stylists undergo to take on the voice of expertise through their hands puts stylists’ expertise at risk long after an individual hair care session. Jacobs-Huey (2006) recognized the importance of the enduring semiotics of clients’ hair for the construction of African

American stylists' expertise, explaining, "their work 'walks the street'--that is, clients publicly display stylists' work on their head wherever they go" (35). This semiotics depends on a small community where the information of who did one's hair is widely known. The highly public, insular, and small population on the prison yard, and limited number of stylists, magnifies the significance of the voice of clients' hair in prison. For barbers and informal stylists, their styles "walk the yard" sending messages about not only their abilities, but also their persona. While Jacobs-Huey observed the delicate ways stylists tried to claim ownership over their clients' head, recognizing a forceful approach may drive their clients away, these efforts were often very direct in prison. Taking on a client is a significant risk; if your client's hair stops growing, or worse starts thinning or falling out, it speaks to your inner being, your criminal nature or your purity. This loaded meaning likely influenced the common attempts by stylists to keep their clients in their chair alone.

The following consultation between Kat, an informal hair braider, and Cheerio, her client and an informal hair braider herself, demonstrates the forceful nature of ownership claims. Both African American, Cheerio sought out Kat's services because she has a reputation as a skilled stylist that can get African American hair to grow through braiding, and Cheerio has been experiencing severe hair loss. A middle-aged woman who had been incarcerated many times throughout her life, Cheerio was a skilled hustler making her living in prison off of not only hair care, but also selling homemade cards, candies, and various other goods. Her extensive social network, made up of women she knew both from the street and her various prison terms, fostered her ability to make a good living off of her many hustles. She was energetic and social despite her many painful medical conditions, such as a gallbladder on the verge of bursting and possible

cancer, that were not receiving adequate medical care. Her periods of extreme pain were interspersed with a lively social life on the prison yard.

When I observed Kat styling her hair, I immediately knew something was up because she was unusually quiet, letting her friends Tia and Tania and her girlfriend Maxi speak for her. Her usual conversational dominance and boisterousness, normally only heightened when I would video or audio record her interactions, was striking in its absence. I learned through the interaction that their relationship was tense because Cheerio had been re-braiding her own hair after Kat put in the initial style, and had continued to perm her hair while Kat worked as her stylist.<sup>4</sup> Tia, Tania, and Maxi are each against Cheerio's self-styling attempts, and they take her quietness as an opportunity to let both her and Kat know how they feel about it. Gathered around a picnic table in the incredibly hot Arizona summer, Kat is explicit about the rules of their hair care relationship as she braids a unique style into Cheerio's hair. Kat's ownership claims take the form of explicit instructions and a signature stamp woven into the hairstyle itself:

*Excerpt 4.12. Kat and Cheerio*

- |    |       |   |
|----|-------|---|
| 1  | Kat:  | Every two weeks and no more perms.  |
| 2  |       | [Every, every other Friday].  |
| 3  | Tia:  | [I told her, I told her what] you.  |
| 4  | Kat:  | And I'm gonna make your hair so can't nobody do it over.                    |
| 5  |       | Ha, ha, ha.   |
| 6  | Maxi: | <i>((Laughs))</i>   |
| 7  | Lori: | [What does that mean]?  |
| 8  | Tia:  | [Ye:::ah]   |
| 9  | Kat:  | So if [after a week you don't like it? And I'm not even charging] you dude. |
| 10 | Tia:  | [She doing it in a style so can't nobody do it over].                       |
| 11 | Kat:  | For, after a week, if you don't like it we'll just do it again next Friday. |
| 12 |       | But I'm [making your hair always] so you can't have somebody rebraid it,    |
| 13 | Tia:  | [Look at her trying to (?) her].  |
| 14 | Kat:  | That's not going to happen anymore either.                                  |
| 15 | Tia:  | <i>((Laughs))</i>   |

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<sup>4</sup>As discussed in Chapter Three, hair relaxer is available for purchase from commissary, while tools for maintaining natural African American hair are heavily restricted. As the perms became the most practical way for many women to maintain their hair, they often experienced hair loss from over-use, or improper application.

16 Cheerio: You're the boss.  
 17 Kat: [If you don't like] my terms, you and your woman can tell me to get on.  
 18 Maxi: [I told her!]  
 19 ((Laughs))  
 20 Tania: M-m-m.  
 21 Tia: ((Laughs))  
 22 Kat: Cause I'm telling you what my terms are.  
 23 Tia: ((Laughs)) Ok.  
 24 Kat: Cause I know I can make it grow, you just have to do,  
 25 Please just for a little while.  
 26 Tia: Do what she say. She told me (to tell)  
 27 Maxi: [She won't do it, believe it].  
 28 Kat: [I'm not even going to] charge you dude, just  
 29 Just if you going, if you got every Friday and we'll do it every Friday till it gets  
 30 to where,  
 31 We could do it every two weeks, but  
 32 It can grow if you just  
 33 Tia: Leave it alone.  
 34 Kat: Mhm.

Cheerio's attempts to style her own hair through braiding and perms while patronizing Kat's braiding services has significantly challenged Kat's expertise because Cheerio's hair is continuing to fall out. Kat's ability to grow hair is therefore contradicted by Cheerio's style as she walks the yard. In this excerpt, Kat gives Cheerio direct terms of her service. She instructs Cheerio: not to perm her hair anymore (line 1), not to re-braid it herself or let anyone else re-braid it (lines 4, 12, and 14), and that she will do it every two weeks (lines 1, 2, and 31), or even once a week if Cheerio is unhappy with the style (lines 9, 11, and 29). She emphasizes the contractual nature of these terms throughout the interaction, directly stating that these are her terms for service that must be followed (lines 17 and 22); telling her she is actually braiding it in such a way no one will be able to re-braid it (lines 4 and 12); and emphasizing that she's not even charging Cheerio for the services (lines 9 and 28).<sup>5</sup> The overarching message Kat is giving to Cheerio is to "leave it

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<sup>5</sup> Kat's offer of free services is likely influenced both by her need to reclaim her growing abilities and the new pants that Cheerio gave her (new uniforms were hard to acquire and heavily valued).

alone,” as Cheerio’s friend Tia fills in for her in line 33, letting her as the stylist control the hair and get it to grow.

Kat not only directly states her terms, but she also uses a number of modalities to underline them. As she tells Cheerio, she is braiding her hair in a manner so that no one can re-do the style, a statement she follows with a fake laugh in line 5 indicating that she knows Cheerio has been breaking their implicit terms. She re-iterates this point in lines 12 and 14, this time telling Cheerio she knows she’s been re-braiding. To prevent this, she is using the hair itself as a signature stamp, weaving a pattern into her braid that Cheerio, or another braider, won’t be able to figure out. She tells Cheerio she can meet her desires and get her hair to grow in lines 24 and 32, but only if she follows these terms and leaves her hair alone. Her use of the discourse marker “dude” in lines 9 and 28 navigates the difficult situation of giving direct orders to a client and expecting compliance. Cheerio points out this dynamic in line 16 stating Kat’s the boss. Kat needs to ensure that Cheerio won’t violate the terms and continue to conduct her own hair styling. Both times she explains that she’s not charging Cheerio, supporting the need for her to comply, she uses the discourse marker “dude.” This allows her to mitigate some of the authority she is claiming over Cheerio and express solidarity, perhaps reminding Cheerio they share the same goal of getting her hair to grow. Dude’s historical roots lie partially in African American English, where it stands as an in-group term expressing solidarity (Hill 1994, Smitherman 1977). Kiesling’s (2004) analysis of the term points out its double-indexicality, as it points not only to solidarity but at the same time to distance, indicating a close but not too close stance. Kat’s use likely has multiple discursive functions, pointing to a shared African American identity and similar hair care knowledge, their position as inmates and hair stylists, and finally to her professional distance, where she is claiming ownership and authority over Cheerio’s hair despite these shared

positionalities. Dude tells Cheerio she knows the importance of these terms, nudging her to accept and follow them in the pursuit of hair growth.

Kat's terms of service, and other stylists' claims over their clients' heads, are not simply about ensuring business and maintaining a clientele. Cheerio's hair has implications for Kat's identity, and its growth would re-voice Kat's expertise. As their hair speaks back to their stylist, what clients do to their hair, and who they let style it, can become a threat to their stylist's expert identity. Stylists therefore have a loaded investment in the enduring semiotics of the hair they do. The urgency of fixing a client's hair when they stray was apparent in Ronda's demands to re-braid Gray's hair (Excerpt 4.5), as well as her insistence that Gray doesn't cut her hair (Excerpt 4.6). In the language of expertise, multimodal representations of skill make powerful claims to dignity. Speaking the voice of the beauty expert through their tools, their hands, and their clients' hair constructs an inner purity displayed in the physical realm of the prison.

## **Conclusion**

Stylists draw on the heteroglossic nature of language within the extraordinary context of prison to speak a language of expertise, negotiating the multiple challenges that context makes to their professional identity. Through cosmetologist speak, discourses of beauty, and multimodal representations of their skill, stylists voice the beauty expert. As Jacobs-Huey (2006) points out, the linguistic realm is a central avenue through which stylists can construct a professional identity in the face of challenges to their expertise. This linguistic effort informs not only the construction of expertise in prison, but also the significant linguistic and semiotic practices through which women construct a coherent self in the face of constant humiliation. Successful stylists gain dignity through their voicing efforts, cultivating an inner purity linked to incredible value and worth in the prison environment. They also help clients navigate the empty time of prison

punishment and its humiliating control over their hair, reframing it in the rich semiotics of hair and mainstream values of beauty.

Attention to the language of expertise informs the critical social work through which incarcerated women make claims to dignity, as well as the significant challenge incarceration makes to their humanity. As Chapter Three explored, women are constantly humiliated through the regulation, restriction, and control over their hair, which has significant ideological implications for their sense of self. The potential for hair to abject, to slip to the realm of body dirt, is navigated in stylist/client interactions through this language of expertise. Drawing hair into the realm of cultural production, these interactions are critical to women's abilities to maintain a semblance of dignity as their hair is a site of state domination. The next chapter continues to inform the interaction between humiliation and dignity, exploring women's relationship to discipline on the prison yard. Discipline is a perpetual threat to women's linguistic and semiotic practices, as these can at any moment become the site of punishment, further embedding humiliation into daily life as they construct these practices as pretensions. These highly significant hair care interactions, then, carry with them the potentiality to further humiliate if they are taken up in the realm of discipline.

**CHAPTER 5 – “I HAVE TO READ IT OUT LOUD”:  
NEGOTIATING AUTHORITY IN PRISON DISCIPLINE**

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**Animating Authority**

*Excerpt 5.1. Cherry Disciplinary Hearing (Excerpt of Part 3)*

- 1       Sergeant:       Ok, now we're to the second ticket.  
2                       [This is] the disorderly conduct ticket written by Officer Hunt.  
3       Cherry:        [Oh man]  
4                       I don't want you to read that one out loud.  
5                       ((Laughs))  
6       Sergeant:       ((Laughs)) I have to read it out loud.

In the middle of her disciplinary hearing, Cherry successfully got the sergeant to break the legal frame he had established, laughing as he pointed out the scripted nature of the interaction. The three of us were in a small, windowless office where women on the yard were tried for any tickets they received. Women could be ticketed by any officer or prison employee for a rule violation, and the hearings were intended to determine their guilt or innocence as well as issue a punishment. This was the first formal disciplinary hearing I had observed after five months of fieldwork in the prison, and I did all I could not to draw attention to myself. The sergeant sat behind a wooden desk, imposing in his brown uniform despite his small stature. Cherry was facing him, her large frame slumped over in her prison oranges. I sat awkwardly next to her, obviously out of place in my street clothes. Cherry was being tried for two tickets: a 25B (disobeying a verbal or written order) and a 10B (disorderly conduct). She anticipated that the second ticket—issued after she had verbally insulted an officer—would receive harsh punishment, and therefore attempted to influence the sergeant's reading to obtain a softer verdict. Her plea that he not read it out loud was an effort to prevent the animation of her insult. He broke frame for a moment, but only to point out that the script required him to read aloud the ticket. He denied her request, read the ticket, took her plea, and, finally, issued her punishment.

This chapter explores the disciplinary process on the minimum-security yard of ASPC Summerville. Disciplinary potential is an ever-present force on the prison yard, even as rule infractions commonly go unpunished. The informal hair care rituals and the rich semiotics of hair described in the previous chapter, for instance, can develop in the space between rules and rule enforcement. These and other linguistic and semiotic practices allow women to negotiate inmate symbolism and make claims to dignity in the extraordinary context. While critical to women's sense of self in prison, disciplinary sanctions are always a possibility. In this case, Cherry is being punished for talking with her friends as well as for insulting an officer, both practices she engaged to navigate her life in prison. When such practices are punished, an officer asserts his/her authority over incarcerated women and initiates a form of discipline. Verbal directives and disciplinary hearings are the official methods of discipline on the yard. A common, unofficial disciplinary method involved requiring women to wear a jumpsuit (the iconic clothing worn during intake) for a period of time instead of their regular uniform. Each method of discipline strengthens the humiliating force in the rules and regulations discussed in Chapter Three by which the prison gains control over women's bodies. By these methods, the practices women develop to formulate a coherent self are punished, humiliating women and contesting their claims to dignity.

Within disciplinary interactions, representatives of state power animate their authority. While primed to do so based on their position in the institution, insignia, and uniforms, authority also relies on its performative enactment through mechanisms like gesture, tone, and language (Lincoln 1994). In moments of discipline, officers bring the authority invested in their position to life, effectively constructing the force of state power. As official and unofficial forms of discipline enter the social life of the prison, incarcerated women negotiate state authority, while

nonetheless remaining constrained and dominated by it. I focus in particular on a linguistic analysis of disciplinary hearings like Cherry's as a site through which to explore the animation of authority and the state power it engenders.

Mirroring court proceedings, disciplinary hearings purport to give voice to the defendant, allowing women to contest their tickets and explain their actions. Studies of courtroom interactions from the field of linguistic anthropology, however, draw attention to the ways law and language intersect to support structures of state power and silence those marginal to the law (D'hondt 2010; Matoesian 1999, 2000; Mertz 1994; Philips 1984). Focusing on the participant roles (Goffman 1981) enacted in the disciplinary script, I demonstrate the negotiation of authority in prison discipline. The sergeant's voicing of the disciplinary script asserts authority through a number of linguistic mechanisms, including legalese and predetermined speaking roles that index a courtroom, taking on the voice of the state, and wielding the power of silence to his favor. These mechanisms merge together multiple representations of the state into a unified "I," a voice of state authority. The sergeant has to read the ticket out loud or this unification would fail, his individual voice remaining prominent. Cherry must play her part as prisoner, taking the role granted to her in the script. Although Cherry participates in the negotiation of authority, getting the sergeant's voice to emerge if ever so briefly, the sergeant quickly reasserts his authority. As he returns to the script, Cherry's actions are put on trial by the institution as represented in the sergeant's voicing of the state.

I argue that these moments of discipline legitimate state domination over incarcerated women, normalizing the continual humiliation and degradation produced by that domination. Women's practices to construct a coherent self that violate arbitrary rules become threats to authority. As officers animate that authority in moments of discipline, whether through official

or unofficial methods, the extraordinary conditions of prison punishment fade to the background. In either method of discipline, officers speak not as their individual selves, but from their position in the institution. Similarly, incarcerated women are placed into their position as prisoners, forced to speak the voice of the inmate. The linguistic mobilization of these roles in disciplinary interactions thus creates a gap between the institutional role and the self. As Katz (1993) explores, this gap allows for the incremental production of “extraordinary evil” as personal responsibility is overridden by institutional necessity. Extraordinary evil is thus a possible effect of the routine functioning of modern bureaucracies. The humiliation and degradation of incarcerated women occurs in such a gap. Degradation is incrementally amplified as officers sometimes engage extreme forms of bodily violence. This disciplinary hearing is integral to the more severe punishment of isolation in CDU Cherry faces later in her prison term, and that which Ciara was subjected to (described in Chapter Three). All of which are part of the fabric of prison life that normalizes the domination of their bodies.

### **Everyday Discipline**

As described in Chapter Two, the recently built minimum-security yard of ASPC Summerville was designed to maximize the gaze of the state<sup>1</sup> through surveillance technology that erased zones of invisibility. Cameras and direct observation were central to the yard’s built environment. However, despite attempts at constant prisoner visibility, the state’s gaze remained fragmented because most of the activity on the yard was unobserved and the rule infractions<sup>2</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> As a state-run prison, I use the term “state” in a literal sense to refer to the state of Arizona (the entity that operates the institution and invests it with the power to punish). As this chapter explores, the state is represented in various forms on the prison yard, including officers and surveillance technology, which animate state power.

<sup>2</sup> The Arizona Department of Corrections has a state-wide system for classifying rule infractions. Each infraction is given a formal class (A, B, or C) and a number within that class (the number refers to the specific violation). Offences in class A can be tried as major felonies, B as less serious felonies, and C as misdemeanor level offences. Cherry’s 25B is then a lower level felony offence, the 25 referring to disobeying a verbal or written order. Violation of the rules of appearance discussed in Chapter Three were C level offences, unless designated as disobeying a verbal or written order or disorderly conduct (both B level violations).

depended on face-to-face interactions for enforcement. Further, individual officers differed in their use of formal, informal, and no consequence judgments for rule infractions. With over 1,200 women on the unit, only a small subset of rule infractions resulted in disciplinary sanctions. Consistent with findings reported in the literature on women's prisons (Belknap 2007, Girshick 1999), rule enforcement appeared arbitrary and chaotic. Most often, minor rule violations had no consequences, allowing women to engage in self-expressive practices as they bent the rules to adapt to prison life and to construct a sense of self. As a result, women developed daily routines around illicit practices, such as the informal hair styling sessions explored in the previous chapter. The combination of continual surveillance and random enforcement nevertheless made punishment an ever-present possibility that never fully faded into the background. Women negotiated this ever-present force by variously ignoring it, mocking it, complaining about it, and adapting punishable behaviors. Their strategies spoke back to the disciplinary mechanisms, negotiating the authority invested in those mechanisms by their position as a technology of state power.

Lincoln's (1994) analysis of authority complicates the assumption that one's office (such as an officer of a prison institution) alone constitutes authority. Rather, the successful deployment of authority depends on "the whole theatrical array of gestures, demeanors, costumes, props, and stage devices through which one may impress or bamboozle an audience" (5). While the power invested in an officer to punish is inherent in his/her position in the institution, it is also articulated in his/her uniform, badge, radio, and other officer regalia. The time and place further legitimates officer authority, granted the power to punish within the

confines of the prison.<sup>3</sup> Yet the audience must be bamboozled, whether through respect or fear for the office of authority. The prison capitalizes on the possibility to bamboozle through fear, backing up state representatives with the ability to use physical force and bodily violence to punish. As my analysis of disciplinary interactions will explore, officers further animate their authority through a variety of linguistic mechanisms in the moment of discipline, constructing their role as a representative of state power in the verbal realm. Further, my own description of the sergeant's stature in the hearing described above recognized his imposing posture. These various assertions of authority formulate state power on the prison yard.

Verbal directives from officers to change behaviors were the most common form of discipline. These directives were often barked over the loudspeaker by the officer stationed in main control watching the yard's cameras live-stream. The cameras could zoom onto a woman's ID tag and the officer could call her out by name. Three loud beeps signaled such announcements. Often, the beeps rang out without an announcement following them. Thus, even when no individual officer's voice called out a direct order, the beeps reminded the women that they were being watched and thereby served as an index of the state's gaze.

"Beep, beep, beep!" The beeps were so common that they often faded to the background, part of the constant chatter of the prison yard. One day, I was walking on the yard with Muñeca (introduced in Chapter One), when the familiar beeps rang out. No announcement followed, but Muñeca acknowledged the beeps, filling in the significant silence by yelling, "Put your hair in compliance!" At the same time, her response revealed her awareness that she was breaking the rules of the yard by wearing her hair down. She answered herself, "Fuck you, I'm going inside," before walking in the door to her housing unit. Muñeca's interaction with the beeps negotiated

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<sup>3</sup> Indeed, some officers reported animosity from individuals when uniformed outside of the prison, and aimed to distance their persona from an officer. One officer even told me that she changed out of her uniform in her car, during her drive home, in case she chose to stop at the bank or the grocery store on the way.

their indexical authority. By quoting an imagined officer, she simultaneously fractured and mocked the authority invested in the beeps as a representation of state power. That is to say, her double-voiced utterance (Bahktin 1981, 1984a)—containing her voice and the imagined officer’s—provided an instance of what Chun (2004) calls “mocking,” as a commentary on the state through the use of a directive in her own voice. Mocking the imagined officer, she challenges the investment of authority in officers through their relationship to technologies of state power.

While Muñeca verbally challenges that authority, she nonetheless goes inside her housing unit (where women are allowed to wear their hair down), answering the punitive call. Women’s behavior was continually shaped by the threat of punishment even as they challenged state authority in the social realm. This is evident in women’s adaptation of their behaviors according to the reputation of the officer on duty. For instance, Toni had an appointment with Ge-Ma for a haircut. Their interaction is detailed in Chapter Two (see Excerpt 2.2). Although she always got Ge-Ma to cut her hair, doing so was technically against the rule (“bay hopping”) that restricted women from entering housing units that were not their own. This limited Ge-Ma’s legitimate clientele to those housed in her bay, which Toni was not. As they are about to walk into the bay, Toni knew that this haircut could result in disciplinary sanctions and questioned the probability of those sanctions:

*Excerpt 5.2. Ge-Ma and Toni (Part 2)*

- |   |        |  |
|---|--------|--|
| 1 | Toni:  | (( <i>Whispering</i> )) What cop is in here right now? |
| 2 |        | Ge-ma?   |
| 3 | Ge-Ma: | Huh?   |
| 4 | Toni:  | What cop is in here?                                   |
| 5 | Ge-Ma: | Oh, a really nice one.                                 |

Toni’s query revealed both her awareness that her regular hair care practice was punishable and her negotiation of state authority. She recognizes that authority isn’t uniformly enacted by

officers, but rather is variable based on officer temperament. Like Muñeca's mocking, Toni's question underscores women's understanding of the fractured nature of the state's power.

Toni further challenges the assumption of uniform authority through the use of the word cop, rather than officer, in her query. The official name for officers is Correctional Officer (C.O.), a change in terminology from guard that followed efforts to signal the professionalization of corrections over the past three decades (Josi and Sechrest 1998). I learned the importance of this role label switch when I accidentally used the disfavored term "guard" in correspondence with a prison official, who responded, "I need to gently remind you of a sensitivity corrections professionals have to the term/designation 'guard.' That is seen as a pejorative that diminishes our professional status." One of the many fumbles of my fieldwork, this correspondence not only assisted my development of a bureaucratic language that facilitated access to my field site, but also cued me into a continual linguistic power struggle. Toni's use of the term cop, common on the yard along with guard and rent-a-cop, mobilized this indexically powerful terminology. Cop, while less directly offensive than guard, also contrasts to the professional term Police Officer. Her choice of the term spoke back to the authority invested in officers. It assigns them the role of rule enforcer, rather than the professional status of a "corrector" of recalcitrant behavior.

However, in a face-to-face interaction, as is evident in the disciplinary hearings explored below, women strategically adapted their language and used C.O., officer, or other respectful designations. This displays incarcerated women's knowledge that their common terms for officers may be derogatory, as well as the limits of their linguistic challenge to authority. Once officers engaged that authority in disciplinary interactions, women typically granted them authority as they faced the possibility of severe punishment if they made a direct challenge to it. For instance, Cherry's direct insult to an officer resulted in her disciplinary hearing explored in

this chapter, and a later challenge to an officer was cause for her solitary confinement. Women's linguistic negotiation of authority in the social life of the prison follows other linguistic and semiotic moves explored throughout this dissertation. These moves navigate their position as inmates, aiming to maintain a sense of self and claim dignity in the face of constant humiliation. And like other practices, they remain continually framed by the threat of punishment that prevents contestations of authority from effecting their position as prisoners.

### **Informal Discipline**

Women's daily practices could be reprimanded when they least expected it. The ever-present possibility reified women's powerlessness over their own bodily practices. When punished, the humiliation inherent in prison punishment was amplified. While the direct cause of punishment was breaking a rule, it effectively constructed the practices women developed to navigate prison life as pretensions. Thus, women were humiliated for claiming anything other than an inmate identity. For instance, Olivia, a young Latina woman, was chatting with two of her friends, China and Maxi. She knew both from the outside and was telling them about her experience of being humiliated as a result of an incident that occurred the day before as she was walking on the yard when called over by two officers:

#### *Excerpt 5.3. Olivia, Maxi, and China (Part 1)*

- 1      Olivia:      She's all come here, and I was like oh fuck. My fucking shirt. And so I went over  
 2                    there and Fingado's all, come here, I'm gonna search her. So she's all searching  
 3                    me, and she's all, cause my ID was down here, like right here, where I always  
 4                    have it? And she's all no I want it up here. So she put it, after I put it up here, she  
 5                    keeps searching me, oh girl.
- 6      Maxi:      (I went through some) bullshit yesterday too.
- 7      Olivia:      He's all come Monday, she's like, um, (4) she's all come, come Monday, I'm  
 8                    gonna put you in the jumpsuit. I was all no but I have, no, no, no, no, I was like  
 9                    my shirt was tucked in just the back of it was coming out of it.
- 10     Maxi:      When did he tell you this?!
- 11     Olivia:      Yesterday, over there.

Olivia was in the middle of this narrative when I joined her and her friends on a picnic table on the yard. She was singled out for not having her shirt tucked in, and for wearing her ID tag too low, although it was where she always wore it. The little bits of her self-presentation that she tried to control by how her shirt lays and where she clips her ID are punishable. As soon as she is called over, she knows that her shirt is improper, her only recourse for self-acceptance is to think “oh fuck.” Like Toni’s question about the cop in the bay, Olivia’s daily practices are framed by the knowledge that at any moment they can be “called out.” The officer’s decision to search her was sparked by her improper, and therefore suspicious, self-presentation.

Although the search revealed nothing, Olivia was told she would be punished through an informal penalty aimed at humiliation: the jumpsuit. Rules of appearance, such as not tucking in a shirt, sagging your pants, and wearing hair down, were often reprimanded by requiring the offender to wear the jumpsuit for a period of time, ranging from days to weeks. The penalty is informal because it is not part of the documented punishments, but women cannot contest being “put in the jumpsuit.” Officers who engaged the punishment animated their individual authority through direct domination. As Olivia relays the story to me, Maxi, and China, she is able to construct the ridiculous nature of the interaction, and Maxi clearly agrees with her sentiment in lines 6 and 10, calling it bullshit and expressing shock. Nevertheless, Olivia is left with the fear that come the following Monday she would be placed in the iconic suit.

In addition to being hot and confining in the Arizona heat, the neon-orange single piece jumpsuit applied humiliating force through its indexical linkages to dress required during R and A; it re-imposed the symbolic entry into prison that strips women down to a mere body (discussed in Chapter Three). Capitalizing on the creative force of indexicals (Silverstein 2003), re-imposition of the jumpsuit was a performative enactment of state power that humiliated by

reinstating, however temporarily, the prison-entry conditions. Rosenberg, a former U.S. political prisoner, recognizes the powerful force of the jumpsuit to reduce as she describes her intake into prison, “Finally, one of the CO’s picked up an orange-colored jumpsuit from the floor. It was enormous. I looked at it with disgust, particularly since the others were at that moment ripping up my own clothes and putting them in a plastic garbage bag” (2011). Placing the small woman in a men’s size 40 jumpsuit swallowed her up. The jumpsuit indexes this process of reduction, the status of being new, naked, and without privileges constructed through the rituals of humiliation during intake. Pointing backward, it defined the daily practices of the body women develop as pretensions; pretensions, the jumpsuit proclaims, women have simply by wearing uniforms, let alone trying to personalize them. Taking away the ability to personalize their clothing, it instructs women that they are nothing, just pretending to be something else.

Even as an assertion of individual authority that disaligns from official state methods of punishment, officers’ ability to initiate the informal punishment depends on their role as a representative of the state backed by force. Their use of the jumpsuit constitutes an iteration of state power, making claims to what types of domination their position entitles them to and expanding the category of authority. The visual, public threat of the jumpsuit thus created the state’s authority to take away everything you had worked for, to collapse time and throw you back to the beginning. Tellingly, the jumpsuit is also the last thing women on this yard wear in prison, once they turn in their state-issue and leave the unit’s gate to wait overnight in a holding cell. Symbolically, prison time is united at the beginning and end of one’s sentence, emphasizing a prisoner’s lack of control to the last moment of incarceration.

Olivia’s story displays the humiliative force of the jumpsuit against which she pleads with the officer, claiming that her shirt was tucked in. Portraying herself in the humbling position

of begging an officer (something looked down upon on the yard) is outweighed by an understood need to negotiate the future possibility of time in the jumpsuit, which she claimed she really did not deserve. Later in the same conversation, China, a young African American woman, tells me that she had to wear the jumpsuit for three days the week before because her shirt was untucked. When I ask her what the experience was like, her friend Maxi jumps in:

*Excerpt 5.4. Olivia, Maxi, and China (Part 2)*

- 1       Maxi:            She was a fucking, Shaina was a (?), everybody was like look at her looking all  
2                        cute with her jumpsuit.  
3       Lori:            ((Laughs))  
4       Maxi:            She [did],  
5       China:            [(?)] I was pissed.  
6       Maxi:            She, she, she was rocking that thing.

Although Maxi tries to renegotiate the indexical force of the jumpsuit, claiming that the women on the yard thought China looked cute in the iconic suit, China interrupts, insisting that she was pissed about having to wear it. Maxi may have been trying to save face in front of me, a researcher, defending China against the humiliating connotations of her punishment. Such renegotiation was fairly common, the particularities of this instance notwithstanding. Remy, a participant in one of the disciplinary interactions explored below, was also forced to wear the jumpsuit at one point. She told me that she rocked it, even put on a fashion show for the women on the yard. The conjunction of humiliative force and officers' intent was not predetermined, because women devised means to negotiate the jumpsuit's connotations, yet they could only go so far. The threat the jumpsuit carried to throw them back to the beginning was very much real, as women's confinement in CDU demonstrates.

Indeed, even as Maxi reinterpreted the outfit's ability to degrade China, China herself made no such claim, at least not to me. Instead, she goes on to recount how she had asked for a formal punishment—a ticket—to avoid imposition of this informal humiliation:

*Excerpt 5.5. Olivia, Maxi, and China (Part 3)*

- 1      China:            I was pissed.  
 2      Lori:                That's awful.  
 3      China:            I was mad.  
 4      Lori:                So (.) it's just cause your shirt was untucked?  
 5      China:            I was mad, I was like, just give me a, give me a ticket I don't wanna wear the  
 6                            jumpsuit, and then he, he advised, yeah,  
 7      Lori:                Did you get a ticket too?  
 8      China:            No, I did not, instead of getting the jumpsuit, but Lieutenant Alone made me put  
 9                            the jumpsuit on, and. So, yeah, it was just bad, I was pissed. I was super pissed.

China's account of her resistance to the informal punishment accepted its humiliating force and indicated the lack of recourse available to women when an officer decided to impose the humiliation. Unlike the formal ticketing procedure, they have no way to speak back to the officer or to contest their punishment. The jumpsuit represents the ways state power permeates daily life on the yard. Informal, undocumented consequences to rule violations are imposed to keep alive the semiotic system of authority by which officers make and maintain women's lack of power to interpose a personal identity that diminishes their reduction to the state-imposed prisoner.

As indicated in line 6 of China's account, in addition to verbal directives or jumpsuits, a rule violation may result in being "advised." Verbal advising from an officer initiates the formal ticketing process, as it is meant to indicate that the individual will be ticketed for the violation. Yet, as many women informed me, being advised did not always result in a ticket. Instead, officers often advised someone and for whatever reason (and the rumors were vast on this one) did not then write the ticket. A ticket did not have to be written by the advising officer, yet in many instances the advising officer did not have another officer write the ticket. Thus, advising could serve another type of informal penalty, delivering humiliation as a reminder that it could have been written, and leaving the woman waiting for the possibility that never materialized. A woman who has only been advised and not ticketed does not face any formal consequences for

the rule violation; however without the procedure the ticket would initiate she has no recourse. She cannot negotiate the penalty for the infraction, because she cannot dispute an instance of advising and the officer's decision that a rule has been violated is validated by default as it simultaneously upholds the officer's authority. Attention to advisory begins to shed light on the complex ways authority is woven into the daily fabric of life on the yard, running deep beyond uniforms and badges and into the possibilities of language use and self-representation.

In opposition to the informal means of making and reaffirming the power structure, the ticketing process makes visible these undercurrents as they contribute to naturalizing a strict divide that delineates the state from the inmate as each take on their institutional role in disciplinary hearings. The officers' animation of their authority creates a complex web of informal and formal punishments and the threat of punishment that are daily life in prison. The inmates' position in the institution is enacted and played out through this disciplinary web.

### **Formal Discipline**

Traffic regulations reference the most mundane interaction a state has with its citizens. Likewise, in the prison system, a ticket formalizes a rule violation and also makes use of a routine method of state control. Despite the seeming ordinariness of this usage, as part of the lexicon of prison discipline it requires analytic attention because there is nothing about the ticket metaphor's use that is obvious or inevitable in this lexicon. Indeed, although Cherry faces two tickets in her disciplinary hearing, to the outside world these are not tickets but "disciplinary infractions." Publically available over the internet, any interested party can peruse a current or former inmate's prison disciplinary record.<sup>4</sup> There, all guilty tickets appear as disciplinary infractions, followed by the date of the violation, the technical name of the infraction, the date of

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<sup>4</sup> Traffic tickets are also a matter of public record, however they are more difficult to obtain (usually, there is a fee involved in accessing an individual's driving record and a wait time).

the conviction, and the charge. The designations of infractions, according to my participants, are often misleading from an outsider's perspective. For example, a theft infraction includes a prisoner taking her own allotted food out of the cafeteria, whereas inappropriate sexual contact includes hugging or high-fiving. What ticketing in the prison and wider society share is the reminder that action permitted (i.e. license to drive) is a privilege that can be taken away when misused. The prison operates on a phase system (see Table 5.1), with women earning privileges for good behavior which ticketing can take away for a period of time, with a possible consequence of moving women down a phase (see Table 5.2). Like driving, then, the ticketing of incarcerated women for their behaviors constructs everything they have on the yard as a privilege that can be regulated and taken away no matter how they may integrate the privileges in their routine. Framing the disciplinary process in this way normalizes ticketing as part of the state's effort to make or represent its gaze as constant, and thereby making possible (if incompletely feasible) regulation over even the most mundane of actions. The extraordinary fades to the background, metaphorically ordinary, even necessary, state regulation.

*Table 5.1. Phase System*

Phase	Privileges
I	Visitation: One four hour visit/week Phone: One 15 minute call/day Spending limit on commissary: \$40/week
II	Visitation: Three four hour visits/week; Two food visits/year Phone: Two 15 minute calls/day Spending limit on commissary: \$60/week
III	Visitation: Four four hour visits/week; Four food visits/year Phone: Unlimited 15 minute calls/day Spending limit on commissary: \$80/week

*Notes: Everyone starts as a Phase I and can move up to the next phase after six months without a ticket. To move up a phase, an individual must have passed their mandatory eighth grade equivalency exam. Money for phone calls and commissary must come from the individual, whether through work in prison or sent to them from the outside.*

Table 5.2. Ticket Punishments

Ruling	Definite Punishments	Possible Punishments
Dismissed	<b>None</b>	
Informal Resolution	<b>Ticket goes on Prison Record Cannot phase up for six months</b>	<i>May be used as cause to up the punishment on a future ticket, or to major a minor violation</i>
Verbal Reprimand	<b>Ticket goes on record (Prison and Public) Cannot phase up for six months</b>	<i>May be used as cause to up the punishment on a future ticket, or to major a minor violation</i>
Minor/Misdemeanor	<b>Ticket goes on record Cannot phase up for six months Loss of Privileges (LOP): Privileges suspended for a period of time (often two weeks): no phones, no visitation, no commissary, no TV (if you have one) Extra Duty: Have to work for a certain number of hours without pay</b>	<b>Drop a Phase:</b> <i>If you get two minors within 90 days you drop a phase, three within 90 days you return to a phase one</i>
Major/felony	<b>Ticket goes on record Cannot phase up for six months Drop to a Phase 1 If none of the other possible punishments: LOP Extra Duty</b>	<b>Inside score raised:</b> <i>Security classification is based on an outside-inside score, with inside determined by perceived danger within prison (usually a raised inside score means movement from a minimum- to a medium-security yard)</i> <b>Loss of good days:</b> <i>Individuals earn good days for early release based on time served (in Arizona you serve 85% of your sentence)</i> <b>Probation:</b> <i>Cannot earn good days for a period of time</i> <b>Trial for another offence:</b> <i>If determined severe enough, an individual may face a trial(outside of prison) and a new sentence</i>

Once materialized, the accused woman is informed of the ticket and given a time for a disciplinary hearing. Before Cherry's disciplinary hearing, I had only taken part in the phase known as the pre-trial wait, where the accused women sit in a row of plastic chairs lined up in the hallway outside the disciplinary sergeant's office. Similar to a court arraignment process, individuals would give their ID tag to Rose Rogers, the woman introduced in Chapter Two, to sign in; she wrote their names on a list in the order of their arrival and gave the list and ID tags to

the sergeant. At any given time, a number of individuals sat, facing a white wall, waiting for their name to be called. Rose was nearing the end of her twelve-year sentence, daydreaming about life with real forks and perfume and worrying about leaving her wife behind in prison. She essentially acted as a court receptionist, handing out appointment slips to women, setting out the plastic chairs before hearings, taking IDs and names, and chasing down those who failed to show up. While many jobs on the prison yard allotted bureaucratic duties to incarcerated individuals, Rose's was perhaps the most overt. Delegating such duties blurred the lines just enough to the benefit of the power structure: the anger at a ticket could be partially absorbed by the messenger, who in actuality carries no power. Despite this position, because Rose commanded respect on the yard for her status as an old-timer; she received little animosity from other women.

After a woman's name is called, she enters the sergeant's office. All of the tickets on the unit are heard by its only disciplinary officer, Sergeant Cooper. Sergeant Cooper was a well-established Sergeant in the prison, having worked his way up from a rank-and-file officer. Although I do not know when he took up the position of disciplinary sergeant, he had been in the position long enough that at one point during my fieldwork he transferred to another position, and a new Sergeant took over this role.<sup>5</sup> During the formalized interaction, the sergeant informs the accused of their charges, gives them a chance to defend their action, and, when found guilty, decides the penalty for the ticket. Following a formal script, the sergeant emphasizes his role as a representative of the state, claiming authority through bureaucratic process. His animation of the script engages a number of linguistic mechanisms that further display this authority in the interactional moment, including indexing a courtroom through the legal frame, taking on the voice of the state, and wielding the power of silence.

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<sup>5</sup> The prison promoted high turnover between positions. For instance, rank-and-file officers were limited to three years on one yard, and many reported the frustrations of having to transfer to a new yard after finally figuring out how to effectively work one type of yard.

### *Drawing a Courtroom*

I had known Cherry Kool-Aid, introduced in Chapter Four, for almost a year when I witnessed the hearing that would determine her guilt and punishment for two rule infractions. I met her during my fieldwork in Zero County Jail, where she was eager to tell me her life history. An African American woman in her early 40s, Cherry spent most of her life in California where she had served two terms in state prison. Although she moved to Arizona to get her life together, she was entangled with the law and hoping to be able to avoid prison. Explaining that she was unique among women in jail, she emphasized her strong family background and solid education in order to ensure that I knew not everyone locked up was “ghetto.” Cherry wore her black hair short and presented herself as refined and stylish, describing her luxurious lifestyle prior to incarceration. Friendly and welcoming, I missed her once she was put on lockdown for getting into an altercation with an officer. Confined for 23 hours a day to one of the two-person cells lining the walls of the jail’s dayroom, our communication was quickly cut off. When she was unexpectedly released on probation, I didn’t know if I would see her again.

As I was walking around the yard during my second month of fieldwork in Summerville, I ran into Cherry hanging out on the bleachers. She gave me an air-high-five, reminding me to be mindful of the prison’s rules against physical contact with other people, and quickly explained that she violated her probation on purpose. Many of my participants debated the merits of prison versus probation, and in Cherry’s case she chose to spend several months in prison rather than be surveilled by the state for three years on the outside. A few months after she hit the prison yard, she got into an altercation with an officer and was moved to Complex Detention Unit (CDU) for punishment. Also known as the hole, CDU is the same 23/7 lockdown unit where Ciara was attacked by mice (see Chapter Three). The next time I saw Cherry after she was moved to CDU,

she had been released from prison and returned as a parole violator, this time on a medium-security unit. Although her perceived danger to the outside remained the same, based on her initial crime of forgery, her inside score was raised based on her defiance of officers.<sup>6</sup>

At the time of this disciplinary interaction, Cherry was a staple on the minimum-security yard where I was conducting my fieldwork. We would pass the time sitting on the bleachers in front of her housing unit, her and her friends gossiping about the women that would walk by, commenting on their uniforms, weight, and hairstyles, pointing out many nuances in appearance that weren't immediately apparent to me as one of the only people on the yard not wearing oranges. I joined Cherry for her second disciplinary hearing. The hearing drew on ideological features of legal language and proceedings to construct the interaction as a courtroom drama. Thus, although post-incarceration, these formal hearings indexically pointed to criminal court proceedings. As Cherry's hearing begins, the sergeant animates the disciplinary script:

*Excerpt 5.6. Cherry's Disciplinary Hearing (Part 1)*

- 1 Sergeant: Ok you've got two tickets pending, one ticket for a 25B resisting or disobeying a  
2 verbal or written order, um do you understand that charge?  
3 Cherry: I don't understand, I don't know which one it is though, is it the one from being  
4 in the laundry room?  
5 Sergeant: U:::m, the 25B is for::: (. ) laundry room, socialization, yes.  
6 Cherry: Ok, yeah.  
7 Sergeant: Uh, the other one's a 10B for disorderly conduct. That one's being, uh, wrote by  
8 Officer Hill. Do you understand that charge?  
9 Cherry: I do understand that one. But the first one? [Um] mist-, Sergeant Cooper?  
10 Sergeant: [Ok.]  
11 What do you, what, hold up.  
12 Cherry: Uh huh.  
13 Sergeant: What do you don't understand about the charge?  
14 Cherry: Because we can be inside the laundry [room] till twenty-two hundred hours  
15 washing.  
16 Sergeant: [Ok.]  
17 Ok, hold up. A-, all I need to know right this moment is that you understand the  
18 charge.  
19 Cherry: Oh surely, [yes, yes, yes].  
20 Sergeant: [And then], then I can go on, ok.

<sup>6</sup> As described in Chapter Three, prisoners are classified based on their danger to the outside (determined by their initial crime and sentence) and the inside (variable based on their behavior in prison).

- 21 Cherry: Yes.  
 22 Sergeant: Do you need a staff assistant?<sup>7</sup>  
 23 Cherry: Nhn.  
 24 Sergeant: Ok.  
 25 I'll give you your time here as soon as I get through my process, ok.  
 26 Cherry: Ok. Thank you.

Although the three of us were seated in a cramped office without a judge, lawyers, or other key legal players, Cherry and I were immediately cued into the legal frame through a number of linguistic mechanisms: the legal language, predetermined turns of talk, and the yes-no question format. Constructed in moments of interaction, a frame organizes talk according to social norms and presuppositions embedded in the frame (Goffman 1997). The sergeant's deployment of the script produces these framing devices. Controlling the floor, he animates the authority of his office and paints a courtroom around him, placing himself in the role of judge and holding Cherry accountable to the legal frame. Both are effectively positioned in their social roles: the uniforms and insignia of sergeant and prisoner animated in the linguistic realm.

The sergeant's use of the formal names for rule infractions, evident in his descriptions of the tickets in lines 1-2 and 7, indexes legal language. On the yard, "put your hair in compliance" or "tuck in your shirt" are the mantras of discipline. The hearings, on the other hand, insist on the formal class and number of the infraction, as well as the technical description. Cherry's continuing to talk in the laundry room after being given an order to stop becomes a 25B, resisting or disobeying a verbal or written order. Mertz's (1994, 1998) exploration of courtroom interactions recognizes the power dynamics produced through legal language. Although ideologically pointing to objectivity and legal neutrality, the deployment of legal language supports the power of key legal players (judges and lawyers) while marginalizing those without access to that language. In the case of disciplinary hearings, the use of the formal name for rule

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<sup>7</sup> A staff assistant (an officer from the yard) is provided if a woman cannot read or write, or does not speak English.

violations obscured the actions of women that were being tried and reduced their ability to defend those actions. Even when women knew why they had been ticketed, the translation of their behaviors into legalese often created confusion, which became an index of the power they lacked in the proceedings. In Cherry's case, although she knew the actions she was being tried for, she still needed clarification to fulfill her role in the script. In lines 3 and 4, Cherry asks to which rule violation the sergeant is referring before she can state whether or not she understands the charge. Even as the sergeant addresses her concern in line 5, he favors technical language and uses the word "socialization" to describe her activities (talking with others). Cherry's confusion over the technical name for her rule violation marks her as illiterate in the disciplinary proceedings, which helps to create her social role as the accused.

The predetermined roles of talk also emulate courtroom mechanisms through the script's yes-no question format. In criminal proceedings, this format grants power and authority to the question-asker (typically the defense and prosecuting attorneys), while limiting the possibilities of self-representation for the addressee (Philips 1984). The sergeant, in the combined role of persecutor and judge, leads and controls the interaction, granting Cherry the floor only to respond to his yes-no questions. When Cherry resists this limitation in lines 9 and 14-15, refusing to affirm her understanding of the charge without giving a defense of her actions, the sergeant reasserts his role as judge, metapragmatically describing the script in lines 17-18, 20 and 25, and insisting on both the predetermined turns of talk and proper content for her turn. While Cherry and the sergeant are clearly in different power positions before the interaction, the legal framework re-inscribes the larger power dynamics of the prison while unfolding under the guise of legal neutrality (D'hondt 2010, Matoesian 1999, Mertz 1994, Philips 1984).

In addition to linguistically reasserting the socially stratified roles of the participants, the script also disfavors a personal perspective from the sergeant. Like a judge in a courtroom, who represents the legal institution through seemingly neutral legal language and proceedings (Mertz 1994), the sergeant becomes a stand-in for the prison as the script emphasizes the multivocal nature of his utterances. Bakhtin (1981, 1984a) describes language as heteroglossic, filled with multiple voices associated with various contexts, personae, and moral sentiments. While all utterances are multivocal, necessitating a nuanced analysis of the speaking self, some are intended to highlight their multivocal nature (Hill 1995, Keane 2011). In this case, the script is designed to minimize the sergeant's individual voice and maximize the prison's voice, highlighting his authority as a representative of the institution. Contained within that voice are the prison, the sergeant, the ticketing officer, and the rule that was violated, all of whom are granted authority through the legal frame to try Cherry, moving toward a unified voice of the state. This distribution of voices pivots Cherry's word, as prisoner, against the prison, rather than against the sergeant as a non-legal persona.

As a legal frame is constructed, the hearing becomes multivocal, linked to a "shadow conversation" of criminal court proceedings. Shadow conversations are real or imagined speech events that inform another speech event, the two events dialogically related to one another through a shared frame (Irvine 1996). The framing of the disciplinary interaction as a courtroom drama extends the hearing into the power structure beyond the prison. The sergeant's office becomes a part of the state's criminal court proceedings, fading the distinction between pre- and post-conviction. The proceeding that converted Cherry's social role to prisoner is reanimated, the sergeant's authority extended beyond the prison. Like the dynamic security classification of prisoners, the original conviction is continuous with hearings like this one, the threat of the

prisoner evaluated throughout prison time. The shadow conversation of criminal court blurs the distinction between inside and outside.

### *The “I” of the State*

The multivocal nature of the sergeant’s utterances complicates a simple understanding of his role as a “speaker” in Cherry’s hearing. As Hymes (1974) pointed out, “The common dyadic model of speaker-hearer specifies sometimes too many, sometimes too few, sometimes the wrong participants” (54). Inspired by the limitations of the dyadic model, Goffman (1981) broke down the speaker/hearer relationship, pointing to the complexity of social roles both embedded in and played out in every social interaction. Rather than standing in a static relation to one another, participants in an interaction draw on a complex web of indexical relations to negotiate their relationship to one another, to the speaking and referential contexts, and ultimately to the content of their own utterances (McIntosh 2005).

Within this indexical web, the one producing an utterance, the individual commonly referred to as the “speaker,” depending on their relations may be taking on simultaneously various roles. That individual, the “talking machine,” is by default an “animator” (Goffman 1981: 144). The principle, on the other hand, is “someone whose position is established by the words that are spoken, someone whose beliefs have been told, someone who is committed to what the words say” (144). By contrast, the sergeant’s performance of the script is intended to animate the sentiments of the prison. Thus, the script highlights the sergeant’s role not as producer of utterances, what Goffman calls the “author,” but rather as solely their animator, because at no time is he speaking for himself, he is merely enacting a formal process established by the institution, thereby making the prison the “principle” of the utterances he produces. This

distribution of speaker roles aligns the sergeant with his office as a representative of the state, claiming authority based on his institutional role.

While the prison, as principle, sets the frame and makes its sentiments known, the script requires a significant shift in footing, or change in alignment through the management of utterances (Goffman 1981), in the next step of the process: the reading of the ticket. As the sergeant informed Cherry in the excerpt cited at the opening of this chapter, he has to read the ticket aloud. The script guides the sergeant to take on the voice of the officer that wrote the ticket, in this case Officer Hill, who is ushered into the role of author:

*Excerpt 5.7. Cherry's Disciplinary Hearing (Part 2)*

27 Sergeant: (18) I see you've only had one ticket.  
 28 Cherry: Mhm.  
 29 Sergeant: (9) Ok, uh on the first ticket?  
 30 Cherry: Yes.  
 31 Sergeant: That was written by Officer Hill.  
 32 Cherry: Yes.  
 33 Sergeant: It states that on February second two thousand thirteen at twenty-one twenty  
 34 hours I noticed four inmates gathering in high side laundry room socializing.  
 35 When I addressed the group and directed them to leave the area one inmate left.  
 36 Inmate Kool-Aid decided to remain in the laundry room with two other inmates  
 37 and refused (.) my verbal directives to leave the laundry room area. I verbally  
 38 informed inmate Kool-Aid that she would be receiving a ticket for, uh, for the  
 39 violation and this report was written by CO2 Hill. How do you plead on that  
 40 guilty, not guilty, [or no plea?]  
 41 Cherry: [Not guilty!] Can I say why?  
 42 Sergeant: Ok.  
 43 Cherry: Thank you.  
 44 Sergeant: Why are you saying you're not guilty?  
 45 Cherry: Because we were washing and I wrote him up and gave it to another sergeant  
 46 Moron and she said she would give it to you because it didn't make sense,  
 47 because in the book it, I tried to show him we can wash till twenty-two hundred  
 48 hours. And he didn't wanna hear anything. And we literally were washing our  
 49 clothes. Washing, folding, drying, you know the whole shebang. And I did leave  
 50 out after I put my clothes in the washing machine. But I was trying to finish  
 51 before twenty-two, it's on page thirteen. Before twenty-two h-, twenty-two  
 52 hundred hours, came. Because I had, he was so angry that I took my clothes out  
 53 of the dryer wet so he could stop fussing.

- 54 Sergeant: Ok, there was no ICS going on, there was [no emergency counts going on, none  
55 of that?]
- 56 Cherry: [No there was nothing, emergency  
57 count] I mean count was over, after it cleared we went in the laundry room to  
58 wash, he said we were congregating, we can't talk in the laundry room? We were  
59 being quiet, he just didn't want us in there, but I told him we were washing. And  
60 I hung my clothes on the end of my, uh, on my chair wet.
- 61 Sergeant: (7) Ok on this one I'm gonna dismiss it.

In lines 33-39, the sergeant reads the ticket against Cherry in full, a verbatim animation. This emphasis on the written text gives weight to the officer's version of events because written texts are granted more ideological authority than verbal ones (Matoesian 2000). The officer's authority is further embedded in the ticket's language. It is written in a report genre indexing authority through objectivity: the ticket "states," the officer "addressed," "directed," and "verbally informed" the defendants, who "refused...verbal directives." The time is given in military time, further constructing the report genre, and the ticket opens and closes with the date, time, and writing officer. Cherry is presented with an authoritative text representing her actions.

In addition to the written report holding weight over the verbal defense of the defendant, the sergeant animated the ticketing officer through direct reported speech. Voloshinov (1973) explored the discursive power of reported speech, which provides a linguistic realm for speakers to negotiate not only their relationship to their utterances, but also the meaning of those utterances as the animator comments on them through their retelling. When he begins to read the ticket, the sergeant marks it as direct reported speech saying "it states" in line 33 and maintaining the original deictic expressions, where "I" points to the writing officer. This form of reported speech engages the ideology of language as purely referential, purporting to represent the reported context faithfully and thereby foreground the reported speaker over the reporting one (Goffman 1981, Hill 1995, Matoesian 1999). Again the script emphasizes the sergeant's role as mere animator, and "As a result, it bestows an aura of objectivity, authority, and persuasiveness

to the current moment of speech” (Matoesian 1999). The disciplinary script harnesses the authorial power of direct reported speech to legitimate and grant strength to the charges against Cherry, pivoting her word against the authoritative text.

No matter how faithfully it is reported, direct reported speech is never an objective reporting of the past. Instead, the original speech is fundamentally transformed through its contextual transfer, entering the reporting context with new meaning and motivations (Matoesian 2000, Tannen 1989, Voloshinov 1973). The sergeant’s animation grants authority to the ticket and merges two distinct voices of the state. Benveniste’s (1971) discussion of the speaking subject notes that the self emerges in interaction through the formation of a deictic field, engaging indexical connections between the self, others, and the object world through their linguistic positioning within that field (for instance, the subject becomes “I” when it is animated in distinction from a “you”). Reported speech opens the door for multiple deictic fields to be imposed on one another, creating the possibility of leakage from one voice to another (Irvine 1996). The “I” that emerges in lines 34, 35, and 37 not only points to Officer Hill, who advised Cherry of her offense, but at the same time points to the sergeant as the speaking subject in the current context. Thus, as he reports the words of the ticketing officer, that voice leaks into his voice as animator. The two voices merge together through the maintenance of the original deictic field, author and animator becoming one.

This linguistic unification collapses three different interactional contexts: the original incident, the writing up of the incident in a formal ticket, and the disciplinary hearing. The intertextual gap that arises as discourse travels across contexts (Briggs 1993) is minimized as the sergeant’s voice is increasingly multivocal. The script merges together the officer’s gaze over Cherry and her friends washing their clothes, the officer’s documentation of his gaze, and that of

the sergeant trying Cherry for the ticket. Rather than two officers charging Cherry, it is one, or rather none, as the mode of their animation makes them both iterations of the same principle. The fractured gaze of the prison is thus pieced together through the performance of the disciplinary script, formulating a unified gaze over Cherry in this interactional moment.

After reading the ticket, the sergeant asks for Cherry's plea. Cherry pleads not guilty, and, recognizing the script, asks for permission to give her defense in line 41. While she does not have the "crucial form of social power" (Briggs 1993: 419) the state has to recontextualize discourse through the formal ticketing procedure, Cherry is able to grant some authority to her verbal defense by drawing on the language of the report genre. She first used this language in line 14, as she attempted to defend her actions before her turn to do so, claiming that they could be in the laundry room until "twenty-two hundred hours." Her use of formal, military time reemerges in lines 47-48 and 51-52 when she is given the floor for her defense. In addition, she has brought her own form of written authority, handing the sergeant the rule book they are given upon entering the unit, and telling him what page he can find the formal rule for washing in line 51. In essence, Cherry is taking on the voice of the state herself, voicing official rules and regulations to grant authority to her version of events. She successfully defended her actions, getting the sergeant to disagree with the ticketing officer, creating a fracture in the unified voice of the state, and achieving a dismissal, the only outcome with no consequences. To gain this favorable outcome, Cherry was complicit in her role in the interaction. She deferred to the sergeant's authority, spoke in her role, and even voiced the state's language of authority and domination to defend her actions. Thus, while she gained leniency through these methods, she nonetheless has been reasserted in her social role of prisoner, legitimating the very power structures that tried her in the first place.

### *Silence*

Moving on to the second ticket, Cherry is aware that trouble is about to arise and takes preemptive steps to minimize the damage. The second ticket involves Cherry saying, “you short man with a short man complex” to an officer. If the sergeant reads the ticket in the same frame as the first, merging his voice with the ticketing officer’s, she will essentially be forcing him to animate an insult toward himself. Her ability to get the sergeant to move away from the unified voice in the previous ticket, therefore, may be to her advantage in the second. Before the formal reading of the ticket, Cherry attempts to break the frame even further as she anticipates the moment of animation. The sergeant maintains his authority despite these efforts, utilizing the power invested in silence as an index of authority (Lincoln 1994).

#### *Excerpt 5.8. Cherry’s Disciplinary Hearing (Part 3)*

62     Cherry:            Oh, thank you, ‘cause I know the next one I’m in trouble. (2) Thank you  
63                        Sergeant Cooper.  
64     Sergeant:         Mhm.  
65                        (20) Ok, sign right there.  
66                        That one’s yours.  
67     Sergeant:         Ok, now we’re to the second ticket.  
68                        [This is] the disorderly conduct ticket written by Officer Desmond.  
69     Cherry:            [Oh man]  
70                        I don’t want you to read that one out loud.  
71                        ((Laughs))  
72     Sergeant:         ((Laughs)) I have to read it out loud.  
73                        Ok.  
74     Cherry:            Oh man.  
75                        (6) Could you be lenient a little bit please?  
76                        (5) I did get smart alecy whatever it says.  
77                        And I got smart ((Laughs)) alecy because  
78     Sergeant:         Ok.  
79     Cherry:            Ok, ok.  
80     Sergeant:         So you don’t need a staff assistant for this one?  
81     Cherry:            No.  
82     Sergeant:         Ok, so, on uh February second two thousand thirteen approximately twenty-two  
83                        hundred hours, I CO2 Desmond advised inmate Kool-Aid that she needed to  
84                        lower her voice. She was continually disruptive in the bay and yelling toward the

85 officers. Uh, I advised her once again that she needed to lower her voice, and I  
 86 would issue a ticket. Inmate Kool-Aid then stated quote unquote you short man  
 87 with a short man complex. Uh, among other  
 88 Cherry: ((Laughs))  
 89 Sergeant: Obscenities lowered, lowered in her voice. I CO2 Desmond advised inmate  
 90 Kool-Aid of disciplinary and CO2 Hi- uh Desmond wrote this report. [How do  
 91 you plead] on this one?  
 92 Cherry: [Uh, ok.]  
 93 I'm guilty because I did, because he kept, this, this officer was telling that officer  
 94 a lie about this ticket, I said you're a liar. So he got mad. And I did say that he  
 95 was being mean. I said it. I did it. I'm guilty. Please be lenient.  
 96 Sergeant: (6) Ok with the guilty plea and the information in the ticket I will be assessing  
 97 LOP for fifteen, [fifteen days and] twenty hours loss of uh,  
 98 Cherry: [Oh my God man!] Ok.  
 99 Sergeant: fifteen days of loss of privileges, twenty hours of extra duty.  
 100 Cherry: But no extra days on my time?  
 101 Sergeant: No.  
 102 Cherry: Thank you (?), thank you sir.

As the ruling on the first ticket comes to a close, Cherry attempts to influence the sergeant's reading of the next ticket in lines 62-63, thanking him and preparing him for the more extreme rule infraction. In lines 69-71, she continues this attempt, exclaiming that she doesn't want him to read it out loud, followed by laughter. This laughter could mark Cherry's embarrassment that I was there, recording the interaction for an imagined future academic audience. While this may indeed be part of the reason for her mitigating moves, Cherry had told me about the insult before the hearing and I knew of many of her adversarial interactions with officers. I read her mitigating moves as an attempt to break the frame and prevent the merger of the sergeant's and the ticketing officer's voices, displaying her awareness of the disciplinary script's unification of the voices of the state. She succeeds in getting the sergeant to break frame, laughing in line 72 and metapragmatically stating that he is animating a script.

This break in frame is brief; the sergeant reasserts his authority by claiming the power to control silence in line 78. Silence is critical to a display of authority as it marks the audience's

recognition of that authority: “when an authorized speaker advances to an authorizing and authorized place, the audience falls quiet” (Lincoln 1994: 9). In an institutional setting, power can be wielded by controlling that silence, the silent individual maintaining authority over the one that is expected to self-expose (Gal 1995). Such powerful silences are evident in Excerpt 5.7 explored above: the sergeant pauses for 18 seconds (line 27), 9 seconds (line 29), and 7 seconds (line 61), each time maintaining the floor through these significant gaps. These silences are an outcome of preoccupation, the sergeant reading or writing on the computer, but they are significant as he controls them. Holding the floor through these long, “pregnant pauses” (Mendoza-Denton 1995) indicates that powerful words are to follow. His authority was amplified as he wielded silence to index the value of his words over Cherry’s throughout the hearing. In this excerpt, there is a 20 second silence in line 65, as the sergeant gets the ticket for Cherry to sign. Having established his power to initiate and end silences, Cherry oversteps her role in the interaction in lines 74-77, filling the silence to further mitigate her actions. Although he lets her do so briefly, preoccupied looking at the computer, he interrupts her in line 78. He abruptly cuts her off in the middle of her utterance with one word: ok. She responds in line 79 with “ok, ok,” recognizing that she overstepped her role, granting the sergeant authority, and giving control of the floor back to him.

The sergeant then continues on to read the ticket. This reading contains more hesitations than the previous one, with “uh” appearing in lines 82, 85, 87, and 90. These subtle additions to his reading distance him, ever so slightly, from the written words as they are reminders that he is reading, not authoring, the ticket. In lines 86-87, the insult Cherry has worked to soften appears. The sergeant directly reports the speech of Cherry, stating “you short man with a short man complex.” Her speech is formally marked and bounded as direct reported speech through the

quote/unquote beginning the line. Unlike the reading of the ticket that minimized the gap between voices through the leakage of “I” into the current deictic field, Cherry’s voice is separated through its recontextualization in the ticket. Documented in a ticket, it is a violation. It is an object of scrutiny, evaluated first in the ticket and then in the sergeant’s animation of it. The officer writing the ticket critiques, but does not take up, her voice, the use of “I” would be toxic, potentially blurring the line between Cherry and the voice of the state. The officer and the sergeant maximally distance their voice from hers with a clear beginning and end, a quote unquote, and verging no further into her deictic field than to utter the “you” marking her as separate from the officer she insulted.

The incredible danger in this performance of state power for Cherry is that the sergeant will read the insult as directed at him, should the performance be successful in creating a unified voice of state power. All of Cherry’s interactional work before this moment has separated the voices of the state, allowing the sergeant’s voice to emerge if only vaguely. This minimizes the blow of the insult, rather than her hurling it at the sergeant through his animation of the ticket, it remains an insult given to another officer at another time. She has maximized the intertextual gap, breaking the legal frame and exploiting the fractures in the state’s gaze. After she pleads guilty and admits to the rather serious charge of disorderly conduct, she grants the sergeant authority through her silence, allowing him a 6 second pregnant pause (line 96) before he reads the verdict. The verdict is relatively minor—15 days LOP (Loss of Privilege) and twenty-hours extra duty. Her fear of getting extra time on her sentence is not realized.

She reacts to the ruling at first by exclaiming, “Oh my God man!” but quickly adds “Ok.” (line 98), and ends the interaction with, “thank you sir” (line 102). These reactions demonstrate the ambiguous nature of her small victory. While “Oh my God man!” expresses shock and

dismay at receiving LOP, her addition of “Ok” recognizes that while the outcome is not ideal, she avoided getting extra days on her prison sentence. The sergeant did not assert his authority as a representative of the state outside the bounds of the prison, though that potential was ripe as the disciplinary hearing indexed her criminal trial, retried her as a prisoner, and had the potential to extend her sentence. While she avoided this, she became complacent in her role as prisoner. She granted the sergeant authority over her, adhering to their positions in the institution, and even animated the voice of state authority herself. Her “thank you sir” at the end signifies her deference to the sergeant. The authority of the state signified in badges, uniforms, and other regalia was realized in the interaction, as was Cherry’s position as a prisoner. Cherry’s moves failed to contest state authority, even as they granted her a lenient sentence. The reification of the power structure through this hearing becomes apparent in Cherry’s later punishment of CDU. While Cherry’s moves were strategic, they stayed within her role as prisoner only negotiating authority through the language of the state. When she later defied an officer’s authority on the yard, she was punished through confinement to CDU. Challenging both her role as prisoner and the authority invested in officers as representatives of the state caused utter domination and extreme confinement, the severe enactments of state power fostered by the gap between individual and institutional roles made visible in the disciplinary hearing.

### **Tucked in Shirts**

Another participant, Remmy, also attempted to fracture the voice of the state when she was called to disciplinary for a 25B (disobeying a verbal or written order), although she was less successful than Cherry at gaining a favorable outcome. Remmy was a prominent force on the yard, keeping track of social networks, fights, and goings on among the women. She was an eager participant in my fieldwork, immediately introducing me to her large social network,

explaining prison lingo, and always letting me know when she was getting her hair done so I could join in the hair styling sessions. An African American woman in her early 30s, she always had her hair styled. When I first met her, it was usually done in intricate braids. She only let one stylist braid her hair, and her hair braiding sessions were significant social events. Her friends would gather around and poke fun at Remmy's squeamishness, complaints, and faces, which Remmy would defend claiming she was tender headed. Later, when her wife was transferred to the unit, she let her put twisties in her hair so she wouldn't be limited to her braider's availability. Although her uniforms were stained from working the night shift in the kitchen, her hair styles gave her a put-together appearance. The way she presented herself, however, was under scrutiny. She was ticketed because that presentation had been deemed "out of compliance." Her appearance was cited for two infractions: she, like many other women on the yard, had her face painted with an SF for the San Francisco 49-ers on the day of the Super Bowl (painting it with hobby craft paint) and her shirt was considered untucked.

As we entered his office, the sergeant animated the same disciplinary script he performed with Cherry. Like Cherry, Remmy is immediately confused by the legal language, marginalizing her from the legal frame and inscribing her position as prisoner:

*Excerpt 5.9. Remmy's Disciplinary Hearing (Part 1)*

1	Sergeant:	Ok, you had one of these in May, which you got LOP for,
2		This is a 25B for disrupting,
3		For disobeying a verbal or written order.
4		((Clears throat))
5	Remmy:	Of?
6	Sergeant:	Do you understand the charge?
7	Remmy:	(1) Uh (.)
8		Wait, wait, wait, wait, I, I, I did what?
9	Sergeant:	I said that you've already had one of these, in this, last twelve month period,
10		This is a 25B for,
11		Disobeying a verbal or written order.
12		Do you understand [the] charge?

13 Remmy: [Yes.] ((*Nodding head*)) Yes=  
 14 Sergeant: =Ok, that's, that's what [that's] exactly what I said. ((*Laughing*))  
 15 Remmy: [Oh yes.]  
 16 I'm sorry, it's,  
 17 Sergeant: ((*Laughing*))  
 18 Remmy: I'm sorry.  
 19 Yeah.  
 20 I've had a rough morning, I'm sorry.  
 21 (13) Sarg can I say something please?  
 22 Sergeant: Uh when I give you, get to that point.  
 23 Remmy: Ok.  
 24 Sergeant: Do you need a staff assistant today?  
 25 Remmy: No. ((*Shaking head*))

After stating that Remmy had the same ticket previously, the sergeant gives the formal name for the charge against her in lines 2 and 3, briefly starting to name the incorrect rule infraction. The translation of her offences—having paint on her face and her shirt untucked—into their technical name—a 25B—causes Remmy to exclaim, “Wait, wait, wait, wait, I, I, I did what?” in line 8. The sergeant reiterates that she had the same charge before and restates the formal name, offering no interpretation of the charge (lines 9-11). This time, Remmy affirms that she understands it. The sergeant breaks frame in lines 14 and 17, laughing. This deviation from the script separates his voice from the institution for a moment, likely expressing his frustration that he had to repeat himself, which is indicated in line 14 (“Ok, that’s, that’s what that’s exactly what I said.”). Following his laughter, and perhaps inspired by it, Remmy takes the opportunity to deviate from the script and apologize for her confusion, going on to explain it in lines 18-20. When she receives no response from the sergeant, after a very long pause (13 seconds) she asks if she can say something in line 21. He denies her the ability, rejecting her insertion into his pregnant pause and claiming his authority by explaining she can say something when he gives her the floor at the appropriate point in the script (line 22). Remmy’s confusion re-inscribes her

position as prisoner. Her lack of access to the legal frame naturalizes her inferior position to the sergeant and indexes his authority over her.

The hearing hinges on Remmy's self-presentation on the prison yard. The state's scrutiny over her appearance is encapsulated in the ticket, which constructs her as "out of compliance."

This construction is evident in the body of the ticket:

*Excerpt 5.10. Remmy's Disciplinary Hearing (Part 2)*

26 Sergeant: (12) Ok, so, um, this was written by Officer Moran,  
 27 And, uh she states that on February third, two thousand thirteen at eighteen fifty-  
 28 five hours, I CO2 Moran, 34567, was posted in main control.  
 29 I made several announcements on the yard for inmates to be in compliance,  
 30 Inmate was out of compliance on the yard with her shirt untucked and her face  
 31 painted. Inmate Grow was verbally advised by CO2 Rosenfield, 178456, on  
 32 February third two thousand thirteen at eighteen fifty-five hours and this report  
 33 was written by CO2 Moran.  
 34 How do you plead on that, guilty, not guilt or no plea?  
 35 Remmy: It's gonna be no plea because, uh my shirt was tucked in,  
 36 But I did have the paint on my face.  
 37 But the officer that was in our bay, I did not know it was against the rules and  
 38 policy because he ↑didn't say anything.  
 39 All of us had our face, all, all I had was this,  
 40 Red circle, with S F on it, on my cheek.  
 41 Sergeant: Ok there cannot be anything, put on your face that is not authorized by the  
 42 department.  
 43 If your face is painted in any way [other] than with the makeup that is authorized  
 44 Remmy: [Uh huh].  
 45 Sergeant: by the department,  
 46 Remmy: Ok.  
 47 Sergeant: Then you are out of compliance.  
 48 Remmy: Ok.  
 49 Sergeant: Ok?  
 50 Remmy: Well then I'm, I-, I'm guilty sarg, then,  
 51 Cause I had that paint on my face.  
 52 I did that.  
 53 (.) For the forty-niners.  
 54 Sergeant: And you know every day we're always, uh,  
 55 Announcing somewhere, or somebody's announcing, that you need to be in  
 56 compliance.  
 57 Red: Right.  
 58 With your shirt tucked in.

Before reading the ticket, the sergeant controls a 12 second pause. He then animates the ticketing officer, Officer Moran, framing his reading as direct reported speech by starting off with “she states” in line 27 and maintaining the original deictic field evident in the “I” in lines 28 and 29. The report genre is again created through formal language, opening and closing the ticket with the officer, date, and time (in military time), and using formal verbs indexing objectivity: the ticket “states,” the officer was “posted,” the inmate was “out of compliance” and “verbally advised.” Three officers are involved in this ticket: Officer Moran (who was stationed in main control, made the announcement to the yard, and wrote the ticket), Officer Rosenfield (who advised Remmy of her violation), and the sergeant currently trying her. These three distinct voices are contained within the sergeant’s animation, unified as he leaks the reported deictic field into the disciplinary hearing’s field. He further emphasizes the unity of the voices of the state in lines 54-56, explaining that someone, somewhere is always announcing the need to be in compliance. The distinctions between officers are minimized, as they are constructed as an authoritative front that can announce, ticket, and try an individual at once, through fractured increments. The union of these three individual voices of the state minimizes the gap between reported and reporting contexts. In this case, the reported context contains not only the writing of the ticket and the verbal advising of Remmy, but also the time the announcement was made to the yard. Together with the reporting context, four distinct times and places are flattened onto one another, constructing the continuous, ever-present authority of the state through the performance of the disciplinary script.

Remmy responds by giving no plea, claiming her shirt was tucked in (line 35). She attempts to break the unified voices of the state in her defense: in lines 36-40, she admits that she had paint on her face but claims the officer in her bay didn’t say anything, and therefore she

didn't know it was against the rules. Pointing to a representation of the state as flawed and out of sync with the other voices, she opens the door for a fracturing of voices and a sympathetic reading like Cherry's. In this case, however, she is unsuccessful, and we learn how concerned the state is with bodily control. Everything on her face, she is told in lines 41-47, must be authorized by the department. Her face becomes an object of scrutiny, constructed as a direct threat to state authority through Super Bowl face paint.

This emphasis on bodily control becomes even clearer as Remmy attempts another line of defense. While she agrees that the message to be in compliance is loud and clear in lines 57 and 58, admitting that someone is always reminding you to be in compliance with your shirt tucked in, she questions the officer's representation of her shirt as untucked:

*Excerpt 5. 11. Remmy's Disciplinary Hearing (Part 3)*

59 Remmy: Can I ask you another question?  
 60 Sergeant: Mhm.  
 61 Remmy: If I stand up, ok.  
 62 You see my shirt here?  
 63 Sergeant: Yes, it's folded over which is not allowed.  
 64 It's supposed to be tucked in.  
 65 Remmy: Thank you.  
 66 Ok.  
 67 Sergeant: Ok, I'm just gonna give you a verbal on this one.  
 68 Please don't [(?) again].  
 69 Remmy: [How's my shirt supposed to be] sarg?  
 70 Sergeant: It's supposed to be, clipped in just like mine is. ((*Gesturing to his uniform*))  
 71 Where you can see the belt.  
 72 Remmy: So?  
 73 Sergeant: Like that, mhm.  
 74 Remmy: Every day?  
 75 Sergeant: Every day.  
 76 Yep.  
 77 Remmy: Alright. ((*Reblouses shirt as she sits*))  
 78 Sergeant: Cannot be folded over.  
 79 Remmy: Ok.  
 80 Sergeant: Just sign right there.  
 81 And I'll send you a copy of the ticket.

82 Remmy: Ok.  
 83 Sergeant: Ok.  
 84 Remmy: Thank you.  
 85 Sergeant: Uh huh, you're welcome.

Asking the sergeant for the floor again, she stands up to show him her shirt's positioning to prove that it was tucked in at the time of her ticket. Her shirt is "bloused," meaning it is tucked in and then pulled out over the waistband and folded over. I was anticipating this move, as Remmy had told me before her hearing that she was going to question the officer's interpretation of her folded over shirt as untucked. Having been incarcerated for a year and a half, she assumed she knew the proper way to wear her shirt. She hoped this would grant her leniency because she was worried about being found guilty, afraid that her security score would be raised enough to move her to a medium-security unit for such a minor infraction. The sergeant's response in lines 63-64 predictably upholds the technical rule and aligns with the officers' voices represented in the ticket: shirts had to be fully tucked in to make the waistband visible.

The sergeant mitigates his ruling as "just" a verbal in line 67 (verbal reprimands, while not linked to direct consequences, nonetheless go on your record, prevent you from phasing up, and often cause a future minor ticket to be majored). Remmy, unsatisfied by his mitigation, overlaps his speech in line 69 to take back the floor and demand an explanation of how the shirt is supposed to be tucked. Her question implies that although the message to be in compliance may be clear, the content of that message is not. Remmy gets up and (properly) retucks her shirt to question his decision on the status of her shirt. His actions (gesturing to his uniform) and language ("just like mine is") in lines 70 and 71 unifies the state's position on appearance. Remmy silently protests, reblousing her shirt as she utters "alright" and sits down (line 77). Her silent protest does nothing to impact her punishment; her appearance remains the object of state

scrutiny and she is humiliated for her attempt to claim dignity by portraying something other than an inmate identity through the blousing of her shirt.

Although Remmy's fears of moving to a medium-security unit for having some paint on her face and a folded-over shirt were not met, a couple of months after this interaction she was moved to medium-security for getting into a fight in her dorm. For over a month, she had been waiting to get released, as her release date came and went.<sup>8</sup> In anticipation of that anticlimactic date, she had a going away party on the yard and got her hair braided in a special style. Stuck in limbo not knowing when she would get out, her frustration with prison grew along with her temper. One day, while I was observing haircuts with one of the prison stylists, Ge-Ma, an incarcerated woman came in and told us all not to leave the dayroom because there was a fight on the other side of the bay. Always a focal point on the yard, rumors immediately started flying about who it was and what went down. The emphasis on fights was encouraged by the prison's version of a walk of shame, marching the individuals involved across the yard in shackles. I pieced together that it was Remmy, and was immediately worried about what would happen. I knew that CDU would be her next stop, and that she would remain there for an indefinite period of time. When I walked in the administration building, I saw the power of the officers' authority to dominate. Remmy was sitting in a plastic chair in the hallway, defeated, glaring at the floor her arms and legs shackled together. In front of the sergeants and officers completing her paperwork, I whispered "I'm sorry." She looked up at me and blankly told me they were taking her to CDU now, "I'm a dangerous person and they gotta lock me up." Her blank look took on

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<sup>8</sup> Release dates are much more fluid than one might expect, depending on what kind of release date it is. Few people remain in prison until their max date (the date the state cannot hold you any longer). Most were released on parole, or on a program. Both of these conditions of release led to loose release dates, that often came and went with no word as technicalities—such as a parole officer approving your address—had not been completed.

an aura of fear as she told me she'd never been to CDU before, but then her positive, eager demeanor crept back in as she told me she'd have a new report for me when she got back.

Remmy never made it back. After three days in CDU, she was moved to a medium-security unit and lost six of her good days.<sup>9</sup> When I went to the unit to visit her, Remmy was still unsure when she would be released but she estimated that she would spend a month or so on the new unit with two-person cells and restricted access to the outside. As we sat in visitation, she told me it wasn't so bad over here since she got along with her cellmate alright. She also explained the fight to me, and her narrative differed dramatically from the ROY (rumor on the yard) which had constructed it as a manifestation of Remmy's hot temper, that she simply attacked a woman out of nowhere. Remmy's version of events told of a preplanned fight. She carefully explained to me all of the players and plans that had gone into it, crafting a story of drama and revenge. Briefly, Remmy's friend Sheena found out that her girlfriend wanted to cheat on her, so Remmy and Sheena came up with a plan: Sheena would start a fight with her girlfriend and Remmy would break it up. This way, the girlfriend would get the message that she couldn't cheat or hide her desires to do so, but the fight wouldn't get out of hand. The hope was that Remmy would avoid consequences as the one breaking up the fight, but she ended up taking the fall for the whole event.

Remmy's severe discipline—shackled, isolated in CDU, and eventually moved to higher custody—is an ultimate expression of state power. All of the mundane enactments of power—the uniforms, the jumpsuit, the tickets, the disciplinary hearings—prepare the prison for such a moment of utter domination. This process, referred to as strategic incrementalism by Katz (1993) in his exploration of “extraordinary evil,” allows the extraordinary to become ordinary. Through

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<sup>9</sup> Individuals earn good days for early release based on time served (in Arizona you serve 85% of your sentence). One possible punishment for major rule violations is a loss of these good days.

these routine, banal regulations, Remmy had become a site of domination well before her shackles restrained her, long before she spent her first few nights in a barren, solitary cell. The disciplinary hearing I joined her for was one manifestation of this domination, an indexically strong reminder that she was subject to the authority of the state. As their institutional roles were animated in the hearing, the sergeant and Remmy as individuals were distanced from those roles. This gap normalized the sergeant's, and other state representatives', domination over her. By the time of her fight, likely spawned by the prison's lack of concern with her release date, the need to contain her, to confine her body for days with next to nothing, was normalized.

### **Face-Covering**

A final interaction highlights the state's regimentation of the possibilities of bodily expression even in slumber, as a sleeping body was not exempt from the state's authorial gaze. Princess Di was called to the sergeant's office after receiving a ticket for covering her head as she slept. She was one among many women ticketed for the same offence, and the narrow hallway was full of mostly African American women waiting to be seen. The common practice of hair wrapping (covering hair with a cloth) facilitated the over-representation of African American women for the offence. While technically against the rules of the yard, many African American women wrapped their hair before bed to maintain braided styles or perms, often using underwear to do so as they were not provided with a proper do-rag or anything else. This practice generally went un-ticketed until one month during my fieldwork when nightshift officers went on a head-covering ticketing spree. Many of the ticketed women had wrapped their hair regularly throughout their incarceration and for the first time were punished for doing so.

Princess Di was caught in the ticketing sweep, although she was not wrapping her hair but rather was covering her face with the sheet while sleeping. Proud to have an old number,

Princess Di referred to herself as an OG, or old gangster. While she was identified by the prison as Hispanic, she called herself a “blaxican” (Black and Mexican) and told me she had lots of problems maintaining her hair in prison. For a while, her daughter was on the yard, and would style her hair for her. Later, when her daughter was moved to CDU, she was unable to do much of anything with it. Her biggest issue was a lack of access to hygiene products. Chapter Two details how she was forced to choose between hygiene and medical care, and she eventually chose the former. Even so, she rarely had the money to buy basic hygiene, let alone the perm she longed for to make her hair more manageable in prison.

As we waited for her disciplinary hearing, she told me she hated the cornrows her daughter put in her hair because they were frizzy and loose, a consequence of her inability to wrap them at night. She thought she was avoiding a ticket for head-covering, but she was swept up in it anyway. It was a long wait, as the narrow hall was filled to the brim. Unlike most of the women waiting, who were chatting about the racist and culturally insensitive nature of the tickets, Princess Di kept to herself, quietly waiting and every once in a while talking to me about her day. Finally she was called in, and the sergeant animated the now familiar script:

*Excerpt 5.12. Princess Di’s Disciplinary Hearing (Part 1)*

1	Sergeant:	Ok. Um, you’re being charged by (.) Officer Cole, for 25B for disobeying a
2		verbal or written order.
3		Do you understand that charge?
4	Princess Di:	(2) Yeah, I cover my [(.) my], face.
5	Sergeant:	[Mm]
6		Yeah, I’ll, I’ll get to that part.
7		I, right now I just have to go through my process, an:, see that you understand the
8		charge.
9		Ok?
10		Do you need a staff assistant?
11	Princess Di:	(3) What do you mean?
12	Sergeant:	Can you read and write?
13	Princess Di:	Yeah.
14	Sergeant:	Ok, then you don’t need that.
15		Ok, so now I read the ticket to you, once I get done reading the ticket I’ll take a
16		plea of guilty, not guilty, or no plea. Ok?

17                                   When that's happened, after I get that, then I'll hear whatever you got to tell me.  
18                                   Ok?

The charge—a 25B for disobeying a verbal or written order—depends on proving intentionality. The head-covering must be constructed as a defiant, rather than accidental, act. The hearing thus hinges on the motivations and demeanor of Princess Di, who is marginalized from the legal frame from the beginning. After the sergeant reads the formal name for the charge and seeks confirmation that she understands it, Princess Di translates the 25B into a lay description of what she actually did after a 2 second pause (line 4), stating that she covered her face. The sergeant is quick to cut her off, describing the script in lines 6-9 and holding her accountable to the yes-no format of the question. Although he ends his description with a rising intonation ok, indicating he is seeking confirmation that she understands the script, he does not wait for her response. The next question in the script—do you need a staff assistant (line 10)—is followed by a long pause (3 seconds) after which Princess Di asks, “What do you mean?” Princess Di’s silences, unlike the sergeant’s explored above, do not indicate her authority at holding the floor, but rather her confusion and disfluency in the legal frame. The sergeant elaborates her marginalization from the legal frame by further silencing her. He denied her ability to respond to the questions posed in both lines 9 and 10. Rather than allowing her to address the question of a staff assistant, he takes her confirmation that she can read and write (line 13) as her answer. This silencing constructs Princess Di as an individual lacking in legal knowledge that must be managed and controlled within the legal frame (Philips 1984).

Compared to the other disciplinary interactions I observed, including the two discussed above, the sergeant’s performance in this one stood out to me as unique. His shortness and curtness controlled and diminished Princess Di’s voice to a more extreme degree than even called for in the script—he literally, not simply ideologically, silenced her at various moments.

This over-exertion of his role as leader of the turns-of-talk, as judge, highlights the re-inscription of social roles through the legal frame (D'hondt 2010, Matoesian 1999, Mertz 1994, Philips 1984). He amplifies his authority over her, maximizing his role as a representative of state power and her position as a prisoner, an object of state scrutiny.

Virtually silenced, Princess Di is read the ticket that charges her with covering her face during her sleep:

*Excerpt 5.13. Princess Di's Disciplinary Hearing (Part 2)*

19     Sergeant:        So it says on May seventeenth two thousand thirteen approximately twenty-three  
20                           oh five hours while inmate, while CO2 Cole, 91011, was conducting a face to ID  
21                           formal count, uh, inmate Di 098765, was covered (.) her head, and she (.) was  
22                           advised to uncover her head so I could conduct a face to ID count. Again on May  
23                           eighteenth two thousand thirteen at approximately zero zero six hours while I  
24                           CO2 Cole was conducting (6) informal, informal count, inmate Di 0987565 was  
25                           covered, her head, and once again she was advised to uncover. And said quote I  
26                           don't give a shit, don't bother me, and became defiant and disruptive. Uh,  
27                           unquote. Uh, the, the statement is the quote unquote. And became, uh, defiant  
28                           and disruptive. Inmate Di 098765 was advised of this disciplinary report at  
29                           approximately zero zero six hours and this report was written by CO2 Cole on  
30                           May eighteen two thousand thirteen.  
31                           How do you plead on that guilty, not guilty, or no plea?

The sergeant's reading of the ticket contains a number of linguistic stumbles. The pauses (lines 21 and 24), uh's (lines 21, 26, and 27), and self-repairs (lines 24 and 27) peppered throughout his reading mark linguistic disfluency in his animation of the ticket. Perhaps a manifestation of sloppy handwriting, exhaustion, or annoyance, the stumbles nonetheless have the effect of distancing his voice from the ticketing officer's voice, expanding the intertextual gap rather than minimizing it as the script is intended to do. In addition to these markers of disfluency, his introduction of the ticket contrasts to the other two—rather than the ticket or the officer “stating,” this time “it says.” While attributing the direct reported speech to “it” (the ticket) highlights its status as a written document, thus investing it with ideological authority, “says” carries less force as a marker of objectivity than “states.” Although the reasons for his less

assertive performance of the script in this interaction are unknown, the effect is a disunion between the sergeant, the ticketing officer, and the institution, with the sergeant's role as mere animator remaining prominent through his reading.

During his stumbled animation, we learn that Princess Di is charged with covering her face during informal count (not an official prison count, but an hourly health and well-being check). In the middle of the ticket's description of the reported event, Princess Di's voice is directly represented (lines 25-27). Her quote is a necessary piece of evidence to support the ticketing officer's claim that her face-covering was a defiant act. In the quoted utterance, however, the toxic "I" emerges, threatening to leak into the sergeant's voice as he utters the I of Princess Di. This merger of voices is primed through the unclear boundaries between the two voices in the written ticket—the ticketing officer returned to his own voice, commenting that Princess Di became defiant and disruptive, before he wrote the unquote to bind her utterance. His sloppy reporting deviates from the report genre and creates a hazardous situation for the sergeant. Recognizing the danger of his animation, the sergeant treats the officer's representation of her speech as a faultable, or an aspect of speech that interlocutors react to as problematic (Goffman 1981, Irvine 2009), and deviates from the ticket. In line 27, he explains that the statement was the quote/unquote. Similar to apologizing for a taboo word uttered as reported speech of another (Hill and Irvine 1993), this move shows the sergeant's awareness of the possibility for leakage as he attempts to contain it. His considerable deviation from the script to do so—breaking frame to comment on the reading itself—is an effort to salvage what I have claimed is the overarching goal of the script: to unify the voices of the state against the prisoner. Uttering her "I" without this linguistic work threatens to blur these boundaries, especially as his

performance up to that point has been weak. His voice remains distinct, and therefore subject to the invasion of a quoted utterance.

After this recovery work, the sergeant waits for Princess Di to give her plea. Claiming no plea, she takes the floor to explain why her face-covering was not a defiant act:

*Excerpt 5.14. Princess Di's Disciplinary Hearing (Part 3)*

32 Princess Di: No plea, because, can I say something now?  
 33 Sergeant: Mm, you can say whatever you need now.  
 34 Princess Di: Ok, officer A-, Cole, whatever his name is, uh  
 35 He did come to my bed, and, banged on my bed, ((Bangs on desk))  
 36 Three times, when he was doing count.  
 37 Sergeant: Ok.  
 38 Princess Di: I didn't have my head covered, I had my ((Holds hands over mouth))  
 39 My mouth covered.  
 40 With a sheet,  
 41 Cause I don't cover myself with a blanket.  
 42 (.) But I have the fans, people's fans toward me,  
 43 And I'm real cold, than cold, on the corner.  
 44 I-, [I-, live] on the corner by the, by the door.  
 45 Sergeant: [Ok, ok]  
 46 Alright, h-, help me understand the, what you just said.  
 47 Because I, it wasn't quite clear to me.  
 48 Ok, can you repeat that?  
 49 (.) That statement again?  
 50 Princess Di: I sleep by the corner of the bed.  
 51 On, [by] the door.  
 52 Sergeant: [You]  
 53 By the door? Your bed's by the door.  
 54 Princess Di: By the door.  
 55 Sergeant: Ok.  
 56 Princess Di: Ok, I'm bed 50.  
 57 And, the, the neighbors' fans are, are (.) s-, supposed to be pointed up, but it, the  
 58 air comes to me, and I get real stuffed up, and, real stuffed up and I can't breathe.  
 59 Sergeant: Ok.  
 60 Princess Di: You know.  
 61 So I have to sit up at night sometimes, to, you know ((waving hand in front of  
 62 face)), s-, breathe again, be able to breathe again.  
 63 Sergeant: Ok.  
 64 Princess Di: But I cover my, ((holding fingers under nose))  
 65 My mouth, you know.  
 66 So I don't get too much air, going, into my system.  
 67 Sergeant: Ok.  
 68 Princess Di: And I did not, speak of him that way,  
 69 Speak that way to him.  
 70 It was a third inmate that, that,  
 71 That said that, um, I don't give a shit, she even admitted it to me that she was the

72 one that said it.  
 73 I don't know how it got (.) mixed up with me, but I told him I couldn't breathe.  
 74 And that's the honest to God truth.  
 75 Sergeant: Mhm.  
 76 Princess Di: I-, I swear on it.  
 77 I don't never re-, disrespect officers.  
 78 Sergeant: Ok [so have you ever,] have you put in for a bed move?  
 79 Princess Di: [I know better than that.]  
 80 Sergeant: Have you tried to get a bed move?  
 81 If that's the case?  
 82 Princess Di: I don't think that=  
 83 Sergeant: =If the door's a problem and the of-, and the inmates living around you, they  
 84 have fans that are, are causing you to keep your face covered, because of the air,  
 85 then I would put in a be-, a bed move to Truman?  
 86 Princess Di: (2) I never thought of it, about that, I, I didn't think that.  
 87 Sergeant: And that would probably alleviate your problem right there.  
 88 Princess Di: Cause another inmate did the same thing, she moved because of that reason.  
 89 She got deadly sick.

Princess Di disputes the accuracy of the ticketing officer's version of events: she describes her act as health-related, rather than defiant; disagrees that she covered her face with a blanket at all; and explains that the quote attributed to her in the ticket wasn't hers. In her narrative, she covers her mouth with a sheet so she can breathe despite all of the air blowing on her. Further, she grants the quote to another woman.

Her attempt to shift the narrative is punctuated by a number of socially meaningful linguistic and meta-linguistic markers. In line 35, she physically animates what the officer did to her bed, banging on the sergeant's desk, emphasizing the invasive nature of the officer's actions toward her while she slept. She explains the multiple sources of the invasive air blowing on her in her sleep through short, blunt statements (lines 38-44), perhaps reflecting her difficulty at expressing herself within the legal frame. The sergeant cuts her off in line 45, overlapping her speech and then asking her to explain herself (lines 46-49). She continues to have trouble expressing that her bed is by the door, and he overlaps her again in line 52 to clarify. His interruptions display his authority and control over the floor. Princess Di eventually takes the language of the state and gives her bed number to legitimate this information (line 56).

Finally, in line 71, she animates the utterance that was attributed to her in the ticket, directly reporting “I don’t give a shit” as the speech of another woman. This utterance has now traveled from the original time and place (at night, during informal court), to a written representation in a ticket, to an animation of that ticket in a disciplinary hearing, and now to a defense. Although each time it is directly reported, preserving its deictic field and purporting to objectively represent what really happen, it is fundamentally changed through each contextual transfer (Voloshinov 1973). By the time Princess Di utters it in her defense, it has become a piece of evidence against her. While we have seen the power of direct reported speech to minimize the intertextual gap, Princess Di’s reanimation attempts to maximize it. She animates the utterance now to distance herself from authorship of it in the past. In this case, direct reported speech becomes an avenue for Princess Di to reclaim ownership over her own words. It allows her to signal objectivity in her retelling of the narrative while redistributing the participant roles in the original context.

In lines 76-77, Princess Di continues her defense by acting as her own character witness, claiming that she never disrespects officers. The sergeant asks if she’s filled out the paperwork for a bed move (line 78), which Princess Di overlaps (line 79) indicating she had not yet finished her defense. Unlike the sergeant’s overlaps, hers is not taken up. He reasserts the topic shift he initiated in line 78, repeating the question in line 80. This move again signals his authority through control over the floor. His question implies that Princess Di is responsible for her own position (ignoring the multiple factors that put her in that bed, led to her inability to breathe in it, and caused an officer to invasively reprimand her in her sleep), thus constructing her face-covering as a defiant, or at least irresponsible, act.

Finally, the sergeant continues to give his ruling:

*Excerpt 5.15. Princess Di's Disciplinary Hearing (Part 4)*

90 Sergeant: Ok, the reason why I'm saying that is because this man is going to keep doing his  
 91 job. He's required by law to make sure that you're alive and breathing and that  
 92 you're, accounted for in that bed.

93 Princess Di: I'm aware of [that.]

94 Sergeant: [Ok?]

95 If he sees you covered up, and he knows that your face has got to be uncovered,  
 96 you gotta realize co-, uh, we do (.) six counts at, on graveyards. So, you know,  
 97 it's uh, you're getting counted every hour.

98 Because we gotta know that you're alive and you're there in that bed.

99 So, um, the, the other issue is not give the officer any crap about doing [his job].

100 Princess Di: [But I]  
 101 did not, talk back to him, uh, Sergeant Cooper, I respect all the officers on the  
 102 yard you can ask 'em anything about inmate Di, I've never disrespected officers  
 103 as long as I've been on, in prison.  
 104 In their, [under their] jurisdiction. [Under their custody.]

105 Sergeant: [What was this last] [What was this last], uh, disrupting count,  
 106 what was that about?  
 107 Was you out of place during count in February?

108 Princess Di: When I couldn't hold my urine.  
 109 (3) I told you that, my kidneys are, are failing.

110 Sergeant: You got a chronic condition?

111 Princess Di: Yes I do.

112 Sergeant: You got a chrono for it?

113 Princess Di: No but you can call the doctor.

114 Sergeant: No, you need to do that yourself, get your own chrono, to let the officer or any  
 115 staff member know that you've got a chronic condition that you may have to get  
 116 up and go use the restroom for.  
 117 (.) That way you don't get in trouble if it's during count.  
 118 See what I'm saying?

119 Princess Di: I understand.

120 Sergeant: So, eh, you might, the next time you see medical you may wanna try and get that.

121 Princess Di: I will.

122 Sergeant: Ok, there's a couple of inmates on the yard that have that.  
 123 That's just a recommendation I'm not, I'm not saying you have to.  
 124 ((long pause, prints and writes))  
 125 Ok, I'm gonna informal your ticket today, uh, this is your chance to prove to me  
 126 that you're, going to try to do something about, either getting moved, make sure  
 127 your face's not covered, you know, or go get your, and, maybe getting your  
 128 medical chrono paper letting you know that if the staff member catches you  
 129 somewhere that you're not supposed to be, during count.  
 130 Ok, so this is, I'm giving you a chance to prove to me that the, that this is not  
 131 going to be an ongoing problem.  
 132 Ok?

133 Princess Di: No it's not.

134 Sergeant: ((long pause, writing)) Ok, sign right there and I'll send you a copy.

135 Princess Di: Where?  
 136 Right here?

137 Sergeant: Yeah you need glasses? ((handing her his glasses, laughing))

138 Princess Di: Yeah.

139 Sergeant: Alrighty, have a good day.  
 140 Princess Di: Ok, thank you Sergeant  
 141 Sergeant: Uh huh.

In lines 90-92, the sergeant explains that the ticketing officer was simply doing his job. Rather than emphasizing that he is animating the voice of the institution through an inclusive “we” (Goffman 1981), he singles out the ticketing officer in his explanation. “This man” will do “his job” as “he” is required by law to do so. This linguistic move separates the sergeant’s voice from the ticketing officer’s and minimizes the principle’s voice, deviating from the disciplinary script’s preference for a unified voice. Perhaps the sergeant is commenting on his disapproval of the way that officer is doing his job, or, possibly, the script has failed to unify these many voices. Princess Di demonstrates her acceptance of that officer’s authority over her in line 93, stating, “I’m aware of that.” In lines 94-98, the sergeant explains hourly counts as a fact of prison life that necessitates heads being uncovered. He returns to the voice of the institution, taking up the “we” and placing the officer’s actions within the voice of the state (lines 96 and 98). Although a sloppy merger, the sergeant maintains his role as a representative of the state.

Right after this merger, he individualizes the officer again in line 99, telling her to respect an officer doing his job. At this moment in the hearing, it is the relationship between her and this particular officer on trial. Princess Di responds by re-defending herself as not the voice of insult, extending her relationship with this officer to her interactions with other officers in the institution (lines 100-104). The sergeant interrupts, cutting her off in line 105 to put her character on trial. He reaches back to a former rule infraction, where she was charged with going to the bathroom during count, to try and establish a pattern of behavior and frame the face-covering as defiant. He again blames her for her conditions of imprisonment, claiming she must get a chrono from medical so that she can take care of her bodily needs—something she has not done because she can’t afford the \$4 fee to go see medical. Finally, he gives her an informal (line 125). This ruling

means she is guilty of the rule infraction but it does not warrant a punishment (a verbal reprimand is considered a punishment). Like a verbal reprimand, however, the ticket goes on her prison record (though it does not appear on the public record) and could be cause to major a minor ticket in the future.

The interaction ends with the sergeant poking fun at Princess Di, asking her if she needs glasses in line 137. His joke, a response to Princess Di's serious question of where to sign the ticket, asserts his individual authority, separating his voice from the state's voice. The sergeant relies on his authority as a representative of the state, but emphasizes his personal domination over Princess Di by breaking frame and poking fun at her marginality from the legal script and the institution. She is unaware of the ticket's language, uneasy with making her mark on the page. She does not respond with laughter, rather bluntly says yeah in line 138.<sup>10</sup> She is humiliated. She has been put in her place as a prisoner through the formal hearing, and the sergeant has abused his authority based on their social roles to mock that position.

Walking back out to the yard after the hearing, Princess Di asked me what an informal was. She didn't know the consequences of the hearing she just sat through, and they were not clearly laid out for her. The language of discipline was deployed against incarcerated women all the time without explanation, marginalizing them not only in the moment of interaction but also in the fallout that they may or may not have access to. As I followed Rose Rogers in her duties, I noticed that she was often called on for an interpretation, a potentially hazardous role alleviating the need for explicit explanation by the state, just enough to prevent overwhelming demand, while allowing the disciplinary process to remain vague and distant from those affected by it. I

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<sup>10</sup> She may, indeed, need glasses. Many women had their glasses taken away when they entered prison if they had metal frames, since they were construed as potential weapons. Those with plastic frames, or a sympathetic intake officer, could keep their glasses; others had to navigate daily life without corrective eyewear as the prison made no attempt to replace these glasses unless someone had a sentence of a year or more.

explained to Princess Di what I had learned from the fractured bits of information I pieced together, giving some meaning to her informal outcome. Her marginality from the legal proceedings naturalized her position as a prisoner, marking her dominated by the absolute authority of the state as mobilized in the disciplinary hearing.

Immediately after her hearing, Princess Di illustrated this impact of discipline through a ghost story. She told me that many women in her bay spoke of a ghost that went around grabbing their butts as they slept. Practically responding, I asked if she, or anyone, had kited the incidents. She replied, flatly, no. As I read over my fieldnotes, I am struck not only with how silly my question was—how would one kite a ghost?—but also that I was not more outraged. Sexual abuse toward incarcerated women from officers is common (Sudbury 2005), and would not be surprising if it was overtly occurring. Even if it was caught on the camera's constantly watching the bays, it is possible the administration looked the other way. The framing of the story as a ghost story somehow deterred my own concern, but attempting to interpret the story now it no doubt points to the abuse and degradation of incarcerated women. The ghost story encapsulates multiple avenues of abuse experienced through daily life in prison. Creating a mythical situation out of the constant abuse made possible by state domination (whether overt butt-grabbing, regular strip searches and UA's (see Chapter Three), confinement to solitary conditions, or the various micro-aggressions women in prison face on a daily basis, such as prostitute jokes, which were often told directly to incarcerated women or about them) provides a way for women to talk about that abuse. The ghost story is another linguistic avenue through which Princess Di navigated her position as a prisoner: it personifies the state's authority, domination, and constant gaze over her body. This allowed her to comment on the state as an entity, citing outrage at its

invasiveness into her physical being. The mythical ghost represents the degradation of incarcerated women, representing the constant abuse built into the fabric of prison.

### **Conclusion**

These various forms of discipline bring state power to life in the daily operations of the prison. Animated in moments of discipline and maintained through the constant threat of punishment, the state takes on an ever-present force, a ghost invading women's being even in slumber. This force constrains the possibilities for women's negotiation of the self, amplifying the humiliation of prison punishment. Women's moves to claim anything other than an inmate identity become threats to authority, indicative of their inner danger, and subject to punishment. Talking is suspicious, a bulging shirt conceals, a sleeping body defies. As they are repositioned as prisoners in disciplinary interactions, their efforts to construct a coherent self become pretensions. They are further humiliated in these interactions that reinscribe their role as prisoner. Even as they engage in linguistic and semiotic moves to navigate officers' authority in both social life and disciplinary interactions, those moves were confined by that social role.

Stepping over the line can initiate the physical force and bodily violence behind officers' authority. Cherry's movement to CDU for defiance of officers, like the shackling and confinement of Remmy, demonstrates this possibility. These acts of domination have been incrementally realized throughout the mundane moments of discipline on the prison yard. Every animation of officer authority creates a gap between the individual and the social role: None of the interlocutors in the disciplinary hearings were provided the space to speak "as themselves" or as individuals. They were all animated and bound in their social roles, save brief moments where a personal voice broke through only to be recaptured by the disciplinary script. This gap fosters the ability for "extraordinary evil" (Katz 1993) to be realized in the prison context. Total

domination becomes naturalized, constructed as necessary to ensure the maintenance of authority and appropriate social relations. Thus, women's efforts to claim dignity in the extraordinary context are heavily limited by the continual negotiation of authority. The consequences of this limitation are vast, including not only bodily violence but also mental instability, a consequence I expand on in the conclusion to this dissertation.

## CHAPTER 6 – CONCLUSION

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### **Undoing Being Ordinary**

Towards the end of my fieldwork on the minimum-security yard of ASPC Summerville, I had gotten far too comfortable conducting research in the extraordinary context. A month before I left the field, I had an encounter with one of my participants that removed this comfort as it threw me back into the state of confusion and distress I had experienced at the start of my fieldwork. That day, I went to see Ge-Ma, the bay barber detailed in Chapter Four, and was immediately taken aback, shocked at her thin, frail body and the deep, dark bruises around her eyes. Unsure how to react, I smiled and asked her how she was doing. She launched into a long, semi-coherent rant complaining about all of the women in her bay. Everyone mistakenly thought something was wrong with her, she explained. They kept invading her privacy and asking her how she was doing when all she wanted was to be left alone. The rant was out of character; Ge-Ma was one of the most positive women I met and hardly ever complained about anything or anyone. She was always talking to and socializing with other women, and her demand for privacy, while understandable in the context that lacked any private space, was striking. Together with her rapid bodily transformation, this character shift marked the beginning of a dramatic change in her mental state.

I worked closely with Ge-Ma throughout my fieldwork. As one of the women I got to know well, I spent a lot of time observing her haircuts and talking to her about her job as a stylist in prison. This job was a point of pride for her, and she enjoyed having me watch her work. I also talked to her often when she wasn't styling hair, passing the time together on the yard. She loved to ask about my life "outside," giving me relationship advice and paying close attention to the events in my life. Often, I would just listen to her stories, which were elaborate narratives

about the wealthy lifestyle she used to enjoy before leaving her abusive husband, including ski adventures, hair shows, and her work at high-end salons. After release, she planned to return to the high-end hair world, but she also wanted to work at a cheap salon on the side so that the women she met in prison could afford her services.

Ge-Ma's physical and discursive transformation I first witnessed that day, marked most dramatically in her frail body and blackened eyes, followed two events that altered the normalcy she had managed to construct in prison: the giant electric clippers she used to cut women's hair broke, and she received a letter from her family in anticipation of her upcoming release. The former event meant that Ge-Ma could no longer perform her craft, threatening the professional stylist identity she had cultivated through the linguistic and semiotic construction of expertise discussed in Chapter Four. Her claim to dignity in the extraordinary environment was suddenly destabilized. I know little about the latter event. I don't know the content of the letter, only that it impacted Ge-Ma to an extreme degree. Right after she got it she was sullen for a few days, telling me that she got the letter but uncharacteristically not wanting to talk about it. Ge-Ma had told me many times before about her estranged relationship with her children, grandchildren, and ex-husband. They were all angry at her for her incarceration, as well as the drug abuse, alcoholism, and homelessness that preceded it.

Her role as a grandmother, however, remained deeply central to her sense of self, reflected in her self-chosen pseudonym, "Ge-Ma," which she told me was short for Grandma. I knew her release date was coming, and we had talked at length about her fears of release—she had no money, nowhere to go, no family or friends to support her. However, these conversations were usually uplifted by her excitement about the future, her reinvigorated love of hair styling as a motivation for all her future plans. Although I do not know the content of the letter, it changed

Ge-Ma's outlook on the future. My assumption is that the letter amplified the fact that she was about to be released from prison to a new extraordinary environment, without resources, support, or the tools necessary to construct normalcy.

This dramatic transformation continued to progress over the next month. Ge-Ma rapidly lost touch with reality, engaging dissociative discourses that described someone implanting satellites into her brain, talking to Jesus on other planets, and her ex-husband, who she said was controlling the prison. These discourses were accompanied by a range of self-mutilating bodily practices, including pressing her eyeballs (which created the dark circles), and continually beating her arms and legs. She stopped bathing and washing her clothes and bedclothes. Some of the women in her bay began to take care of her, doing her laundry, trying to get her to bathe, and attempting to get her to eat. When they were successful in convincing her to bathe, she refused to take off her clothes, showering in her uniform. As her behavior became increasingly disruptive, other women tried to get her moved out of the bay. Often, she would stand and stare at people, wander around the bay aimlessly, and break out into odd songs and dances. She stopped staying in her bed during count and overnight; instead, she sometimes walked outside during count and when she would have been sleeping. Her behavior was a major rule violation, to which some officers, likely aware of her mental state, responded by getting her and bringing her back in, while others ticketed her. Even so, I did not learn that she ever received formal punishment for the violations. Soon, Ge-Ma added to these behaviors ritualistic dances on the yard, during which she would stop walking, stand erect, her clear plastic walkman in her hand, and point in various directions as she made grand gestures.

Apart from the impact the content of the letter may have contributed to it, Ge-Ma's descent into madness highlights the critical role women's linguistic and semiotic practices play

in their navigation of prison life. Explored throughout this dissertation, I have claimed these are a means through which women cultivate a sense of self in the extraordinary environment, making claims to dignity where humiliation is a constant force. Losing the tools through which she constructed normalcy in the prison environment, and facing release into another extraordinary environment, Ge-Ma was no longer able to do “being ordinary” (Sacks 1984). The sense of self she had crafted as a valued stylist could no longer withstand the prison’s humiliative force. Her expert stylist identity was fractured as she approached a release date surrounded by uncertainty. In what appears to be a reaction to these forces, Ge-Ma engaged in animalistic behaviors, enacting the challenge incarceration made to her humanity. Her story indicates the ultimate implications of a punishment system built around humiliation and degradation—the capability to foster madness.

Although I did not collect data on mental health, and because her transformation occurred near the end of my fieldwork I was unable to make it a research focus at the time, this ethnographic event complicates the current trends in literature on mental health in prison. Recent literature generally focuses on one of two issues, or the relationship between the two: the lack of treatment and inappropriate incarceration of people with preexisting mental health conditions (Belcher 1988, Kupers 1999, Lamb and Weinberger 1998, Rhodes 2004, Sigurdson 2000); and the propensity for the extreme conditions of solitary confinement to exacerbate or create mental health issues (Arrigo and Bullock 2008; Benjamin and Lux 1977; Grassian 1983; Haney 2003; Rhodes 2004, 2005b; Romano 1996). An important avenue for future research, I argue that this literature misses the ways madness in prison can be created out of the mundane methods of prison punishment. Ethnographic fieldwork adds a dimension to this research that other methods may obscure as the process of adaptation to prison, and the multiple factors that may disrupt,

hinder, or challenge that adaptation, may not come to the forefront without long-term attention to the dynamics of prison life. Following Ge-Ma for a significant period of time and attending to her linguistic practices as she navigated institutional life provided a framework through which to interpret her transformation. The dramatic changes in her face-to-face interactions with me and others on the prison yard, including both inmates and officers, indicated a catalyst that led to her mental decline. Madness in prison does not rely on the extreme conditions of solitary confinement, or the preexisting mental health challenges of incarcerated people, as current literature suggests. Rather, the everyday, minimum-security conditions of prison punishment are sufficient to cause severe mental decline. That is, if the institution is successful in controlling incarcerated individuals through the removal, or serious erosion, of outside identity and the replacement of that identity with an inmate identity, when the reformulated identity is lost or an individual faces a transition to an environment outside of prison where it is no longer useful or appropriate, the logical conditions for mental decline are in place.

### **Mental Health in Prison**

In this section, I provide a broad overview of the two major threads in current research on mental health in prison in order to make clear the complications Ge-Ma's story presents to this research. Largely focusing on national trends under the new penology, the increase in mentally ill inmates is seen as an outcome of the rapid growth of the U.S. prison system, the turn to harsh, punitive punishment practices, including the increased use of solitary confinement, and a decline in social services outside of prison. An older tradition in prison research, with its roots in Goffman's (1961) analysis of total institutions, considers the prison environment as harm-inducing, potentially creating institutional dependency by infantilizing inmates and eroding their self-esteem (Goodstein and Wright 1989). This tradition offers more to Ge-Ma's story,

enlightening the adaptations she made to prison through her linguistic and semiotic practices and the harm these caused when the environment changed and she faced impending release.

Unpacking the potentially harm-inducing aspects of the prison environment, however, requires detailed ethnographic study, a method that has little been employed in recent studies of prisons addressing the impacts of the rapid changes in modern punishment.

Current research on mental health in prison focuses on the overrepresentation of individuals with preexisting mental health conditions in prison and/or the mental health implications of solitary confinement. This literature tends not to address the relationship between minimum- and even medium-security conditions of incarceration and mental health. One of the oversights of this gap in the literature is that the extreme conditions of solitary confinement are not fundamentally distinct from other forms of confinement. While no doubt more severe, this dissertation has argued that extreme and mundane conditions of confinement are similarly structured. I have demonstrated the continual challenge incarceration presents to identity, dignity, and humanity. In particular, Chapter Three pointed out the interrelationship between Ciara's time on the minimum-security yard and her various terms in solitary confinement. Individuals often move across these spaces of confinement, which are structured by the same threads of humiliation and domination, during their incarceration.

One of the major trends in the literature on mental health in prison deems prisons the "asylum of last resort" (Belcher 1988). Following the deinstitutionalization of public psychiatric hospitals in the 1970s and 1980s, many former (and would-be) residents of these hospitals ended up in prison (Belcher 1988, Kupers 1999, Lamb and Weinberger 1998, Rhodes 2004, Sigurdson 2000). A lack of community support and treatment, combined with common homelessness and public psychotic episodes, funneled many individuals with mental illnesses into the criminal

justice system. Rather than getting psychiatric attention, mentally ill individuals who committed misdemeanor crimes were criminalized (Lamb and Weinberger 1998). Once in the system, these individuals remained entangled in it, often moving in and out of prison with little to no support on the outside. This process was common and widespread, replacing psychiatric care with incarceration for large numbers of individuals (Sigurdson 2000). The role of prisons as asylums of last resort continues today as public health services remain minimal. Since deinstitutionalization, individuals with mental health conditions have been arrested at higher rates than the general population, and make up a disproportionate percentage of the prison population (Kupers 1999, Lamb and Weinberger 1998, Rhodes 2004).

Prison only exacerbates mental health issues from a lack of treatment, attention, and sometimes sadistic treatment by officers. Mentally ill prisoners are generally not distinguished from other individuals during intake, and end up in various security custodies based on their initial crime and potential behaviors in prison (Rhodes 2004). Some of these individuals receive no psychiatric treatment at all (Kupers 1999, Lamb and Weinberger 1998, Rhodes 2004, Singurdon 2000). According to this literature, for those who do receive services, the treatment is often limited and poor quality. This lack of services and attention often creates behavioral issues. As described in Chapter Three, individuals' security scores can change throughout their prison term based, in part, on behavior in prison. When mentally ill prisoners have trouble adjusting to general population conditions, they "accumulate infractions and—as if falling through a sieve—are sorted into control units and into special units for the mentally ill" (Rhodes 2004: 103). In these units, officers can be sadistic in their treatment of those they consider mad and uncontrollable (Kupers 1999, Rhodes 2004). Thus, those with preexisting mental conditions often end up in the severe, extreme, degrading conditions of long-term solitary confinement.

These solitary conditions in and of themselves are the subject of the other trend in research on mental health and prisons: the ability for solitary confinement to create madness. This literature is largely a response to the increased prevalence and duration of solitary conditions in U.S. prisons. Once reserved for specific punishments, the extreme conditions of solitary confinement have become the norm in supermax prison facilities. These facilities have seen a rapid expansion in the last three decades of the 20<sup>th</sup> century (Haney 2003; Rhodes 2004, 2005b), with Arizona as one of the states that led the trend (King 1999, Lynch 2010). Supermax facilities “house prisoners in virtual isolation and subject them to almost complete idleness for extremely long periods of time” (Haney 2003: 126). Individuals are often housed in these facilities for the duration of their sentences, getting little to no time outside of their cells. Like Ciara’s description of CDU in Chapter Three, when given time outside, individuals in supermax facilities are generally shackled and led to caged enclosures (Haney 2003, Rhodes 2004). In these facilities, the animalistic treatment of prisoners is undeniable.

Over 60 U.S. supermax facilities existed in 2005, housing more than 20,000 prisoners for long periods of time, sometimes extending to life (Rhodes 2005b). These extraordinary conditions are supported by the assumption, perpetuated not only in the media but also among officers working the facilities, that they contain the “worst of the worst,” prisoners who are uncontrollable, defiant, and incapable of reform (Haney 2003; Rhodes 2004, 2005b). Officers sometimes engage in extreme, creative punishments that are specifically aimed to degrade and humiliate those they see as uncontrollable (Rhodes 2004). The impacts of extended periods of solitary confinement have been well documented (Arrigo and Bullock 2008; Benjamin and Lux 1977; Grassian 1983; Haney 2003; Rhodes 2004, 2005b; Romano 1996). Deemed Special Housing Unit Syndrome (SHU Syndrome), these conditions create psychiatric issues that are

similar to Post Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD). They include increased anxiety, irritability, social phobias, and sensitivity, making it nearly impossible for some of those housed in these units to readjust to society after release, or even to integrate into lower security conditions in prison. Individuals with no existing mental health issues often suffer these effects from supermax facilities. For those with preexisting mental health issues, who often end up in this type of confinement for the reasons discussed above, the impacts on their mental health are tremendous. This literature thus argues that the extreme conditions of solitary confinement are not only unnecessary, but also profoundly damaging to the individuals housed in them. They are instruments of domination and terror that create madness.

Following both these threads of analysis, once Ge-Ma exhibited signs of severe mental illness she received inadequate treatment and spent time in solitary conditions. The mental health services offered in the unit were minimal. Women could go to see a psychologist, although the visit was over a television screen. The primary purpose of this visit, according to many of my participants, was to put women on psychiatric medication. I was also informed on multiple occasions that you could get whatever medication you wanted (provided it was one of the drugs the prison gave out). Women reported asking for medications by name, and receiving doctor approval for them. Little to no counseling or follow-up services were provided after the initial visit. These practices follow Belknap's (2007) findings that women in prison are over-prescribed psychiatric medications. Incarcerated women have much higher rates of psychotropic and tranquilizer drug prescriptions than do men. This over-use of medication has been analyzed as an outcome of prison staff desires to socially control women (Auerhahn and Leonard 2000, Balknap 2007). This follows my analysis in Chapter Three that incarcerated women are constructed as women unbound, requiring taming by the state.

Anyone could access this limited set of psychiatric services, but they had to voluntarily do so. Ge-Ma refused to go. The only knowledge I had of her mental health history was from a casual conversation we had months before about her past. Many years ago, she put herself in a rehabilitation facility for alcoholism. According to Ge-Ma, they diagnosed everyone in the small rehab with bipolar disorder and put them all on psychiatric medication. She took it for one year, during which time, she explained, “I was just like no emotions, I, whatever they put me on I couldn’t feel, crying, or anything.” She never wanted to take psychiatric drugs again; she felt like she was just a body and not herself. I assume that this experience influenced her refusal to seek psychiatric services while in prison. Indeed, she did mention the incident a few times when I asked her if she would consider going to talk to the psychiatric service. Maintaining a sense of herself, even in an altered mental state, was a more pressing concern than gaining the control-directed care this service offered.

As a researcher in this context, I felt the need to intervene and offer what assistance I could. Unfortunately, the options were incredibly limited. I consulted my Institutional Review Board about what to do in such a case, and found that my legal duty was simply to let her know the services were available and how to access them. This offered little assistance to navigating the situation. The only other service available was the mental health unit, the same unit in which Muñeca was housed when she put herself on suicide watch (see Chapter Two). If a woman was determined to be a threat to others (not to herself), then she was forcibly confined to that unit. This unit, a 24/7 lockdown unit, houses women in solitary conditions with nothing but a green plastic cloth they can wrap around their naked bodies to use as a blanket (as previously noted, women called this the “turtle suit”). They are observed by officers and released once they are no longer seen as a threat to others. Many women wrote kites trying to get Ge-Ma moved to the

mental health unit, and every once in a while they succeeded in convincing the administration she was a danger to them. She was taken to the unit three times in the span of a month, and each time she came back more agitated and upset than before she went. Ge-Ma would describe being tied down and drugged (which may or may not have been the case), and plead not to be sent back there. After many conversations with persons more experienced than I in prison research and the administration, it became clear that there were no other options. For my last month in the field, which was also her last month in prison, I spent a lot of time with her. She appeared to have lucid moments when I was around, and I hope that this helped her in a small way. I do not know what happened after her final month in prison, because I was unable to get reliable contact information from her, and, therefore, I haven't been able to contact her since her release.

While the literature on mental health in prison does illuminate what I observed after Ge-Ma's descent into madness, it fails to explain the descent. My remaining analysis of her descent is highly limited. Her story, however, indicates a pressing need for future ethnographic research in order to inform the complexity of mental health in prison. While Ge-Ma was diagnosed at one point years before as bipolar, she exhibited mental stability for several months in prison while I worked closely with her, clearly able to function in the prison environment. During this time, she was not receiving any mental health services or on any medication to my knowledge. In addition, she is one of the relatively few women I worked with that had spent no time in solitary confinement (that is, before her mental shift). This was her first time in prison. Incarcerated less than two years, she was only housed in minimum-security conditions on one yard, never locked in a cell (except possibly in county jail), and was coming close to her release date. According to the literature reviewed above, she is not at risk for mental health issues. Rather, her story represents the mundane conditions of confinement left out of those analyses.

Her story also indicates that fear of release may shape behavior in prison even after a relatively short prison sentence in minimum-security conditions. Goffman's (1961) analysis of total institutions points out that successful adjustment to prison may cause a problematic release, as an individual becomes institutionally dependent and therefore unable to function without the strict structure of prison life. In addition to that possibility, individuals released from prison often face a lack of family or other support, like Ge-Ma, and a range of legal and social discriminations that can hinder readjustment, including barriers to housing, work, and limited civil rights (Fletcher 1999, Garland 2001, Wacquant 2001). Release, then, is not separate from the prison experience but a part of it, and anxieties about life after prison may impact prison time just as prison time may impact adjustment after release.

### **Broken Clippers**

There's no way to describe it, you know? I mean, huh, I tried to write in my letter, because they're so mad at me, I told you I intentionally went and got drunk on probation, I just was sick of it, and you know what I did now? There's no way I'd of been happy at Cost Cutters for the rest of my life. And I, I didn't realize how much I missed pampering people? Now I don't care if I stand at the shampoo bowl all day.

Months before Ge-Ma's transformation, I was hanging out with her right after she finished a haircut. It was the interaction between her and her client Toni explored in Chapter Two (see Excerpt 2.2). Convincing Toni that her hair was healthy, Ge-Ma defended her decision to trim only a small amount of Toni's hair. She voiced mainstream beauty norms, as she often did, in her consultation. Long hair is sexy and beautiful, she told Toni, associating her client with the valuable symbols of femininity. Ge-Ma succeeded in constructing her expertise, and the haircut ended with a hug between the two. After Toni left, Ge-Ma began to tell me about the resentment her family held towards her for being in prison. They had barely spoken to her since she was incarcerated, blaming her for the situation because she chose to get drunk while on probation. She was put on probation for child neglect, after the neighbors reported that her

grandchildren were playing alone outside while she was drinking. The charge is an example of the intertwinement of the law and ideologies of motherhood discussed in Chapter Three. While on probation, Ge-Ma struggled with alcoholism, drug abuse, and homelessness. She had on-again-off-again employment at what she called “chop shops”—places like Cost Cutters that had high volumes of clients and offered quick, affordable haircuts. Holding on to the work was difficult. It was not only her drinking that interfered, but she had also lost her passion for styling work. She preferred to work at high-end salons, attending hair shows and setting the bar in hair fashion, and the chop shops held no interest or satisfaction for her. Unable to meet the many demands of probation—staying sober, having a stable residence, and holding regular employment—she violated its terms knowing it would be revoked and she would be sent to prison, which caused a dramatic rift in her relationship with her family.

Now, however, reflecting back on what she saw as a decision to go to prison, Ge-Ma felt that her incarceration had revived her love for pampering people. Chop shops, high-end salons, or even the shampoo bowl would hold the satisfaction she was missing before. If only, Ge-Ma explained, her daughter could understand that the women in prison weren’t bad. Thanks to them, she felt like she had found herself in here, regaining what she saw as her true passion. If her daughter knew that, she would forgive Ge-Ma for the pain she caused to her and her granddaughter. She went on to elaborate:

I would have died working in a Cost Cutters forever. You know and I, I just, I, I don’t know how to explain to her, that I, you know, I made this decision right, but, and I’m sorry that it hurt both of them, but, uh, I’m sorry. You know it, I never dreamed I’d be here either, but nobody does. But it’s not as bad as people perceive...I know that as close as I get to people God has me here for a reason, I guess to help others.

Through a narrative of her history as a hairstylist, Ge-Ma was able to interpret her time in prison under a framework of personal growth. Hair styling in prison became a reference point for her to

evaluate her progress as, in her understanding, it revived her stylist identity. This allowed her to give value to her incarceration, presenting it as a part of God's plan. Ge-Ma's desire to share this narrative with her estranged family indicates its importance to her sense of self; her prison history and her stylist identity enmeshed.

Indeed, Ge-Ma often focused on her stylist history in interactions with clients, relaying a very similar narrative:

I just didn't think I wanted to do it anymore. It's terrible, but it's something I knew I wanted to do since I was little. You know? So, I'm just so blessed that God gave me this opportunity to make me realize how much I've missed, I could cry, that's how much it means, I mean it means so much to me, you know? I just love it.

Ge-Ma's cultivation of an expert stylist identity on the prison yard was critical to her ability to construct this narrative of personal growth and progress. As discussed in Chapter Four, she was easily the most popular bay barber on the yard, with women signing up for appointments with her months in advance. Ge-Ma had a knack for easing women's discomfort and creating a beauty shop atmosphere in the stark white dayroom in which she cut hair. Her crooked barber chair came to life as the clients who sat in it opened up to her and valued her services. Her successful deployment of the language of expertise, orienting heavily to mainstream beauty norms as she elaborated the semiotics of hair, was a key avenue through which she constructed this normalcy in the extraordinary environment. The consultation between Ge-Ma and her client at the opening of Chapter Four, which inspired the title of this dissertation, illustrates her deployment of mainstream beauty norms: "I mean there's no reason every girl in here shouldn't leave with long hair, with healthy, beautiful hair." As she filled the empty time of prison punishment with the ability to cultivate ideal femininity for her clients, she filled this time with meaning for herself. She gained dignity and value through her expert stylist identity, returning to what she defined as her core self: the stylist she always knew she wanted to be but lost somewhere along the way.

When her clippers broke, then, this personal narrative and the sense of self it provided was suddenly destabilized, just as she was approaching the prison gates anticipating no support from her family. I was with Ge-Ma when the clunky old clippers finally gave out. She was about to trim a young woman's bangs, and when she turned on the electric clippers they made an erratic cry. The clippers were always loud and vibrating, but this time the noise was both erratic and booming. There was clearly something wrong with her styling tool. Ge-Ma laughed and said this would never happen in a salon, continuing, "You'd think you were on Candid Camera, like, is this really happening?" Recognizing the extraordinary conditions framing her work as a prison stylist, Ge-Ma quickly strategized about what to do. She asked the client if she wanted her to try and cut her hair anyway, and, looking horrified, the client asked if she could have them fixed. Ge-Ma was aware that the prison would invest nothing in trying to fix them, but told her client to come back later anyway. She promised to do what she could to obtain a tool and fix the cut. To add to the absurdity of the situation, a woman with a lopsided haircut came in right after Ge-Ma's client left. The woman had been at another bay barber in the middle of a haircut when those clippers broke. Ge-Ma explained that her clippers had the same fate.

Keeping a light-hearted attitude, Ge-Ma told me, "I work for the prison. They're not the most, it just means I get to appreciate that much more when I get out on my own, all of it, you know?" The initial failure of the tool so vital to her dignity in prison wasn't met with much concern, although she did spend the rest of that day trying to get the clippers fixed or find another pair to use. She asked me if I wanted to follow her to talk to the officer in charge of the clippers. I did, and watched as the officer told her outright that the prison wouldn't fix them, and would not replace them until the administration was flooded with kites from women complaining that they weren't able to get haircuts. Ge-Ma's next attempt involved looking for other bay

barbers to borrow their tools. She learned that not just two of the clippers broke, but three out of the four bay barbers were now tool-less in a coincidence (or perhaps something more sinister) fostered by the prison's use of outdated, old technology. The prison didn't provide new clippers for over a month, which meant that most women couldn't get (legal) haircuts on the yard during this time. There was one working bay barber for over 1200 women.

From this point on, I don't have any recordings of Ge-Ma, as her rapid descent into mental health issues after the incident made me concerned about her ability to consent. I present her story in detail, however, because it offers a glimpse into the possible implications of the dynamic relationship between prison punishment and women's linguistic and semiotic practices, the dynamic that I have been exploring throughout this dissertation. This is an important issue that must be addressed in research on mental health in prison, particularly through detailed ethnographic study. While Ge-Ma's transformation must have occurred over time, it appeared to happen in an instant. The time between her clippers breaking and my shock at her appearance was only 17 days. I saw her between the two events, but the changes in her body and persona somehow escaped my notice until that day, when they hit me in the face and reminded me of the extraordinary context in which I was conducting my fieldwork. I spent the remainder of my time in the field largely trying to make sense of it and assist Ge-Ma in whatever capacity I could, which turned out not to involve much more than listening to her.

### **Flipping the Script**

When I first recognized these changes, Ge-Ma must have been aware that her rapid, dramatic bodily transformation would cause my concern. Without prompting, she began to explain away the physical signs of distress. Her thin body was a result of exercise, her hard work walking the yard finally paying off. And the black circles around her eyes were a beauty

technique—she was engaging in “eye massage” to prepare for her upcoming release. They just don’t understand, she defended herself, I’m a professional and I know that I’m going to look younger when I get out! Even as she lost more and more touch with reality, she clung to these justifications. In her more lucid moments, she would repeat the beautification value in her new bodily regime. The beating of her arms and legs were self-massages, a beauty ritual critical to her future body, her post-release beauty. Once, when I was spending time with her, she told another bay barber, Leah, that she was a beautician with such advanced skills that other people couldn’t comprehend her techniques, and their concerns were simply misunderstandings. During this conversation, Leah was trying to comfort Ge-Ma’s obvious distress. She told Ge-Ma to make sure to take care of herself before she worried about her family. Breaking the rules to give her a hug, Leah told Ge-Ma that she wished her the best.

The mainstream beauty norms I was used to Ge-Ma voicing became the justification for her bodily mutilations; she flipped the script. Carr’s (2011) work with women in drug rehabilitation describes “flipping the script” as: “formally replicating prescribed ways of speaking about themselves and their problems without investing in the *content* of those scripts” (3, emphasis in original). Women would draw on the performative (Austin 1962) force of speech—the ability for utterances to create changes in the world—to project an individual invested in personal change. Their performance of the therapy script was strategic: they presented themselves in the appropriate manner to receive the benefits of participating in the rehab program, while rejecting the idea of therapy itself and engaging in behaviors contrary to this performance. Creating a disjuncture between outward performance and their inner states, these women worked the system, resisting its ability to manipulate their sense of self. Ge-Ma was not performing a script in the strict sense of the term. However, she was drawing on a

discourse of value and worth outwardly in order to cover up, explain away, or divert interest from her self-mutilating behaviors. Dominant discourses of beauty became Ge-Ma's justification for these behaviors, mobilized to deflect the concerns over her well-being that she saw as invasions of her privacy. Ge-Ma may have believed that these were beauty techniques, in which case her outward performance and inner state would match. If so, her discourses of beauty would be flipping the script in another way, creating a disjuncture between the discourses and the beauty rituals she attributed to them.

While Ge-Ma's story is unique among my participants, self-mutilating behaviors (such as cutting and suicide attempts) have been well documented among incarcerated women, and are more prevalent in women's than in men's prisons (Belknap 2007, Faith 1993, Maeve 1999, Miller 1994). Research attributes the gendered disparity in self-mutilation to women's previous experiences of abuse and psychological distress, as well as their tendency to internalize anger. These factors, combined with a lack of access to mental health services in prison, foster self-harm. Similar factors may have played a role in Ge-Ma's self-mutilating behaviors, yet her story indicates that the conditions of confinement can promote these behaviors. Her shift in mental and physical well being occurred at a point in time, apparently in reaction to changes in her circumstances and impending release. In addition, her flipping the script indicates the challenge these catalysts presented to her ability to construct normalcy. The relationship between mainstream discourses of beauty and Ge-Ma's sense of self carried through her dramatic transformation. She continued to try and construct an expert stylist identity by reinterpreting these discourses to include the self-mutilating behaviors indicative of her deteriorating mental and physical state. While in this case she failed to construct an expert identity, she clung to the discourses that had been successful throughout her incarceration.

The linguistic and semiotic practices through which Ge-Ma had adapted to the prison environment no longer supported a coherent self. Her voicing efforts, so successful in creating the beauty expert previously, came to signify maladaptation as the prison environment shifted through both her loss of work and her upcoming release. Her self-mutilated body indicated distress despite her outward discourses of mainstream beauty. Placed in its ethnographic context, Ge-Ma's descent into madness can be better framed as an outcome of the prison environment's harm-inducing potential (Goffman 1961) than a mentally ill inmate falling through the cracks as current research may indicate. The dynamics between the institutional forces aiming to create an inmate identity and Ge-Ma's moves to maintain a sense of self set into motion the conditions for mental decline as that environment changed. While my analysis is preliminary, it points to the critical role the prison environment plays in the experience of prisoners (Goodstein and Wright 1989) and therefore the importance of long-term study and ethnographic methods for understanding modern punishment.

In addition to Ge-Ma's experience, there were many other complicated relationships between my participants and mental health on the prison yard. Although I did not gather data on mental health directly, it was a prevalent issue. The observations I did make regarding women's psychiatric needs and treatment similarly indicate a complex intertwinement of minimum-security conditions of incarceration and mental health. For instance, Ciara and Corina, the couple introduced in Chapter Three, flipped the script in another way. After Ciara lost her job on the yard, they were afraid she would get moved to another minimum-security unit. To prevent this, they both requested psychiatric medication for hearing voices. The unit was "watch and swallow," meaning all women in minimum-security custody who took certain drugs were housed on this unit. "Watch and swallow" drugs were those determined to be risky (because women may

refuse to take them, instead, holding onto them to sell or trade them on the yard). All women prescribed these drugs had to line up outside of the medical building to take them, with an officer checking their mouths to make sure the pill was swallowed. This process in and of itself is worthy of analytical attention, as it exacerbates the surveillance of individuals in need of psychiatric medication. In addition, it constructs those individuals as deviant and deceptive through the inspection of their oral orifice, similar to the strip searches described in Chapter Three that formulate the grotesque.

The medication provided to treat hallucinations were “watch and swallow.” Ciara and Corina’s made-up hallucinations would therefore ensure they remained on the yard. While I cannot be sure it was because of their psychiatric scheme, they did remain on the same yard until Ciara’s release. Soon after that, Corina was moved to medium-security for getting into a fight. They were able to pull off this scheme with relative ease because the prison handed out prescriptions without much concern or follow up (except ensuring that they either swallowed the pills or formally refused them). Ciara and Corina mobilized assumptions about incarcerated women as untamed and in need of social control as a means to influence their situation in prison. They flipped the script, strategically performing a mentally ill prisoner while this outward projection didn’t match their inner state. In their attempt to ensure that they stayed on the same yard, however, they had to take powerful psychiatric medication and stand in line once a day to have an officer search their mouths. In addition, they may have added to the perceptions of incarcerated women as manipulative and conniving (Belknap 2007); if their “faking it” were discovered, the administration may use the case as an excuse to decline or minimize available mental health services in the future. Their strategic moves remained very much in the boundaries of their position as incarcerated women, under the framework of humiliation and domination.

In addition to Ciara and Corina's flipping the script, some of the other issues I encountered around mental health included women deciding to purify themselves from drugs they had been taking on the outside, stopping psychiatric medication without counseling or medical supervision; women who could not get the mental health drugs they were prescribed on the outside, or having lots of lag time between prescription refills; women getting on psychiatric drugs out of boredom; women being moved in and out of solitary confinement and having mental breakdowns (like the experience Ciara describes in Chapter Three); and women with severe mental illness being moved onto the minimum-security yard and endangering other women. These anecdotes reveal the incredibly complicated role of mental health and mental health care on the minimum-security unit. In addition, they reveal the interactive dynamics of rules and regulations based on particular incidents or behaviors that, raised to the level of stereotypes, become naturalized as a criminal nature reproduced in prison life. In this case, rules and regulations over women's psychiatric medications naturalize a gendered criminal identity—a manipulative, out of control female inmate—continually enacted in daily life in prison through the regulated relationship to mental health services.

### **Anthropology of Confinement**

This brief discussion of the mental health issues I encountered during my fieldwork points to a significant gap in the current literature on mental health in prisons. Ge-Ma's story in particular initiates a range of questions that cannot be fully answered through the recent trends in that literature. While further research is necessary to support my analysis, her story indicates that minimum-security conditions and the fear of release from those conditions carry the potential to create madness. Ge-Ma lost the critical linguistic and semiotic mechanisms through which she constructed normalcy and cultivated a sense of self in the extraordinary environment. At the

same time, she faced release into an environment where those tools were no longer relevant. Her descent into madness calls into question the common assumption that prison and release are separate events, challenging the boundaries between inside and outside. It also requires attention to the dynamic relationship between the mundane conditions of confinement and the construction of normalcy through social life in prison.

These dynamics have been elaborated throughout this dissertation. I have argued that the extreme conditions of solitary confinement are predicated on the same threads of humiliation and domination that frame punishment across all spaces of confinement. The prison environment itself, therefore, is extraordinary. Women's linguistic and semiotic practices reveal their negotiation of that extraordinary environment. Muñeca's preparations for court that opened this dissertation—her hair styling, homemade makeup, and matching uniform—are moves to cultivate a coherent self and claim dignity in the face of constant humiliation. Simple practices like Muñeca's beautification rituals, Ge-Ma's hair styling, and even Remmy's blousing of her shirt are thus critical tools for constructing normalcy out of the severely abnormal. At the same time that these practices are essential to women's sense of self in prison, they are continually manipulated by the institution. They may become subject to punishment, or, as in Ge-Ma's case, rapid removal, and therefore further humiliate. Ge-Ma's story highlights the ultimate implications of the prison environment I encountered during my fieldwork: the constant humiliation of prison punishment threatens the very humanity of those incarcerated. Women's efforts to make claims to dignity in the face of that challenge can come unbound, destabilizing their sense of self and possibly setting into motion the conditions for mental decline.

While humiliation is one dominant trend in modern punishment, the history of Arizona, its politics, and local ideologies of criminality produce unique mechanisms of humiliation that

incarcerated individuals must navigate. Through a focused analysis of the linguistic and semiotic construction of the body in women's experiences of incarceration in Arizona, this dissertation has added to the small set of current anthropological analyses of modern punishment. The emphasis on surveillance and control in this context shaped women's experiences of incarceration and created a difficult field situation. My focus on beauty rituals and hair care allowed me to navigate this sensitive, restrictive ethnographic context and to collect linguistic data from naturally occurring face-to-face interactions. Through attention to the voices incarcerated women took up in these interactions to negotiate their imposed inmate identities, I have unpacked the interrelation of gender ideologies, societal conceptions of prisoners, legal changes, punishment practices, and individual experiences of incarceration. Sociolinguistic analyses, in particular, have brought these connections to the forefront. The on-the-ground adjustment to a prison environment and its rules and regulations reveals the ideologies that drive prison punishment and the continual efforts of incarcerated women to claim dignity.

My analysis has relied on long-term, ethnographic knowledge of the prison context, and I conclude by reiterating that ethnographic methods can provide a nuanced understanding of modern punishment. The incredible growth of the U.S. prison system over the past three decades presents a number of issues, including the rise of mentally ill inmates, increased racial and gender disparities, vast human rights violations, and high recidivism rates, each of which require detailed analytic attention. As discussed in the Introduction, Anthropology is in a unique position to explore these and other vital issues in the prison system. Research that focuses on nation-wide trends tends to analyze them under the dominant rhetoric of the new penology and misses the localized histories and institution-specific dynamics that shape modern punishment (Lynch 2011). Anthropology has a long tradition of detailed localized studies, as well as a framework for

unpacking the role of institutions in society. In addition to advancing knowledge of the prison system, the field of anthropology can benefit from ethnographic work in prisons. Studies like this one inform the anthropological concept of culture, including the power dynamics that define citizenship and criminality, construct and maintain boundaries between the two, and engage the concept of humanity in those boundaries. The challenge prisons present to humanity enlightens what it means to be human in conditions that strip away culture and the symbolic practices for forming a coherent self. In addition, attention to the construction of the self in prison enhances sociolinguistic inquiry. Mainstream ideologies of gender, beauty, and criminality intersect to shape the treatment of incarcerated women and their linguistic and semiotic efforts to maintain a sense of self in reaction to that treatment, highlighting the ways ideology and practice intersect to construct difference and maintain societal hierarchies.

Anthropology therefore has the potential to further theoretical knowledge of the U.S. prison system at a time when that knowledge is critical. The field has the tools to unpack the prison institution—specifically its prowess to construct categories of people and create and sustain societal power dynamics—while at the same time revealing the local dynamics and histories that shape the prison environments incarcerated individuals must navigate through daily life. This dissertation has unpacked the local dynamics between humiliation and dignity for women incarcerated in the state of Arizona, revealing the constant humiliation of prison punishment that challenges the humanity of incarcerated individuals. It demonstrates the integral role prisons play in U.S. society—the institution is implicated in creating and sustaining hierarchies of domination and producing difference through the everyday practices of modern punishment.

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