

THE INFORMAL ECONOMY OF INCARCERATED WOMEN

A Thesis

Presented to

The Faculty of the Department

Comparative Culture Studies

University of Houston

In Partial Fulfillment

Of the Requirements for the Degree of

Master of Arts

By

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August 2015

Acknowledgments

First, I owe my greatest debt of gratitude to Dr. Andrew Gordon who has provided constant encouragement, support, and guidance that, in many ways, made this work possible. Whatever insufficiencies in this thesis are entirely mine and not his. Dr. Gordon has provided invaluable correction and suggestion throughout this process. He has shared himself as an anthropologist and scholar of sensitivity and dedication, and provided sustained and energetic support of my work in every phase of research and writing. I thank him for many hours of conversation, work and patience. Next, I thank Dr. Melinda Kanner, who knew I would go to graduate school to be an anthropologist before I did. It was years of discussion that taught me to think critically and to examine the world through more than one lens. Finally, I thank David Tiberius Shaw who passed away two months before I began graduate school. David provided support and carried more than his fair share of the weight to ensure I could focus on my work.

Abstract

This research focuses on the lives of incarcerated women through an examination of specific aspects of an informal economy created and maintained inside the formal system of strictures and punishment. The informal economy consists of culturally specific exchanges of goods and services, the accumulation, distribution and display of resources, specifically commissary. Commissary, a small retail counter established by the prison system and located on each facility, becomes a space carved out to initiate a set of practices that manipulate, display, power and social prestige. Each inmate is socialized into the world through intense observation essentially decoding entirely new symbols of affluence, social status and capital thus allowing her to recognize advantageous opportunities. This thesis identifies forms of social organization and strategies that allow for participation in the informal economy, thereby improving the likelihood of meeting economic and emotional needs.

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CHAPTER 1: INTRODUCTION

The men and women incarcerated in the United States live inside penal institutions designed to control every aspect of life. Movement, food intake, social interaction, and access to medical care exist outside individual control. This thesis explores the question as to whether inmates have any possibility of meeting this abnegation with various forms of resistance or opposition. These might be expressed in, among other ways, through the creation of underground subcultures in which inmates might exercise some degree of personal expression and might develop alternate systems. Language, individual variations of the presentation of self, and systems of economic exchange are among forms of resistance that have attracted research interest. In particular my research investigates a large, well-organized alternative economic system among female inmates in Texas. This system of exchange is rooted in social relationships and expressed through every aspect of inmate life.

The corrections culture in the United States houses millions of men and women convicted of crimes from misdemeanors to capital murder, drawing sentences from probation to death penalty decisions. In significant disproportion African Americans are arrested, accused, and convicted of crimes as their white counterparts, and sentencing of African Americans is significantly stiffer and more punitive than for similarly situated white offenders. The research described herein explores a specific dimension of this complex of law, behavior, and participatory jurisprudence. Incarcerated women, living in starkly deprived conditions, create thriving subcultural systems of self-expression.

Prison is the site of a rich subculture complete with an elaborate informal economy. Each woman is able to adapt in this new world by learning a variety social strategies and social organizations. From this array of choices each woman may work to best meet her wants and

needs. Whether it be getting her hands on items as modest as soap, becoming the head of household of an extended family or holding a position of prestige by running an underground business, opportunities and strategies have been created, revised and passed down over decades. This research works to gain insight to the ways in which a woman may adjust to life in prison without her freeworld support system, her customary access to resources and to varying degrees her identity.

Part 1: Statement of the Problem

In 2012 I began to conduct my own research into the ways resources were accumulated and distributed by prison families. While conducting interviews I realized the participants spoke of commissary more than I had anticipated and not just in the context of prison families but in a variety of social arrangements including an economic relationship resembling an employee/client arrangement.

Commissary is a small store located in prison where women with funds can purchase a variety of items. The word *commissary* is also used to refer to any items purchased from the commissary. The significance of this topic was punctuated by the introduction of an extensive vocabulary used to discuss the variety of relationships, motivations, norms and behavioral expectations, techniques, transactions, and sanctions in the context of commissary.

The purpose of my research is to identify the methods women use to maximize their access to resources inside prison. Strategies include the cultivation of mutually beneficial relationships, a system of reciprocity and the creation of an informal market of goods and services.

This research relies primarily on the reports of a single key informant. The data gathered through interviews and observations has culminated in a body of work resembling a life history.

For contrast and depth, I interviewed three additional women some of which knew each other inside and outside of prison. This allows for a more robust picture of the world in which these women lived, it also allows me to compare each informants' recollections. Although my informants have been out of prison for several years I believe the memories of their experiences, observations, and perspectives are valid and have provided a rich, detailed picture of prison life.

Background

In the mid-2000s I worked in a Texas Department of Criminal Justice (TDCJ) women's prison. The unit I worked on was designated for incarcerated women classified as mentally retarded or impaired. A unit is a smaller, self-sustaining free standing part of the larger prison system. It is called the Mentally Retard Offenders Program (MROP). The women in the program were referred to as MROPS (pronounced EmRops). MROPS exhibited a wide range of impairment. Some women were borderline "retarded", some claimed to be faking it so they could get a disability check when they were released. Some women were exposed to drugs and alcohol in the womb, some had been so severely abused they had suffered permanent brain damage. The special program included psychiatric treatment, a counselor, and special classes, one of which was occupational therapy. My position was teaching assistant for the occupational therapy (OT) classes; part of a program ran by UTMB for incarcerated women who are mentally impaired.

In the classroom I was able to interact with a variety of women of all ages and backgrounds. I sat with them working on projects and listening to gossip detailing who was cheating on who or who was using who for her commissary. One of the most interesting observations was family role play, adult women referring to each other as Lil Baby, Mama, and PawPaw. Each woman played the part of her adopted role: the naughty child, the nagging mother, and chastising daddy. Another behavior I observed frequently was the *passing* of items

from one inmate to another. According to the TDCJ Offender Orientation Handbook, passing, also referred to as *traffic and trading*, is handing an item to another inmate it is against prison rules and can result catching a *case* (2015). A *case* is a formally reported infraction incurring some form of punishment.

The occupational therapy classroom was not monitored by a correctional officer so women took advantage of the opportunity to *pass* (to discreetly give something to someone else) without fear of punishment. Women would pull various items from inside their cloths and discreetly pass it to someone else under the tables where the receiver would carefully tuck it somewhere in their clothes. Sometimes it would be a *kite* (a letter or note) from a friend or lover, a treat for a friend or family member (ex: a bag of chips or grooming items such as hair grease) or a transaction between acquaintances (ex: repayment of an item *fronted* (loaned) or items earned for services rendered to another inmate). Sometimes women would hold hands under the table, or have lover's quarrels. I heard gossip of sexual activity under the table but never witnessed it myself. I heard promises of repayment and promises of future gifts almost always "when my money comes". I was immersed in a culture I had little knowledge of and had not yet been trained in ethnographic methods.

Prison Site

Several trips to Gatesville as a visitor and as a participant in a volunteer program provided the opportunity to visually absorb the way the institution dominates the landscape. Every aspect of natural geography, human engineering, and signage established the sealed and impenetrable world. Pulling onto the main road, void of any other traffic, I felt as though I was under scrutiny. All movement inside and outside of the prison gates occurs under complete surveillance, from the internal closed circuit monitors and patrolling officers to the external

series of towers and rifle sentries. It is difficult to distinguish one unit from another, and although the signs along the road instruct drivers not to stop I was frequently disoriented requiring that I stop, back up and turn around until finding the right location.

The bulk of Texas women's prison units are found 3 miles northeast of Gatesville. West of Dallas, west of Waco, Gatesville is a central Texas town known only for housing Texas's female criminals. Most of the units particularly the small ones are on State School Road, named for its prior incarnation as boys home run by the Texas juvenile corrections systems. This is a common occurrence across the United States, closed state run juvenile facilities or smaller men's units are repurposed into female detention centers. In order to accommodate the rising population of female inmates, new prisons have been erected; the newer prisons are often private run facilities and employ a higher degree of surveillance than cottage style units.

From the freeworld perspective units are clusters of unremarkable, flat, brick buildings, these buildings are the dorms where inmates are housed. Some units have a few metal buildings, referred to as barns, those are also living spaces built to accommodate the growing population. Neither dorms nor barns are air conditioned, with the exception of two units that house women on psychotropic medications. Each unit has a laundry room, a chow hall (a dining hall), a recreation yard, and a command building, aka headquarters. The command building contains the infirmary, commissary, the chapel, class rooms, and visitation.

Population

According to The Sentencing Project, a research and advocacy for prison reform, the number of women incarcerated in the U.S. increased by 587% between 1980 and 2011. Over 1 million women were under state or federal supervision as of 2010 (The Sentencing Project 2015). State or federal supervision is defined as incarceration in prison or jail, residence in a

halfway house (a transitional home where the individual eases into freeworld life under intense supervision) and/or probation or parole (characterized as conditional release monitored by an agent of the state).

The Sentencing Project, a research and advocacy group for prison reform calculated the rates of incarceration by race over a decade and over a single year. Their findings reveal the magnitude of racial inequality in the justice system.

From 2000 to 2010, the rate of incarceration decreased 35% for black women and increased 28% for Hispanic women, and 38% for white women... In 2011, black women were incarcerated at 2.5 times the rate of white women (129 versus 51 per 100,000). Hispanic women were incarcerated at 1.4 times the rate of white women (71 versus 51 per 100,000)0020 ---The Sentencing Project 2015

Issues of poverty, addiction, mental health, and disenfranchisement contribute to an ever-growing population of prisoners. Addressing these issues, among an ethnically diverse population within the context of crime and punishment would require a large scale prison reform effort. Cultural attitudes about rehabilitation and retribution vary from state to state making it difficult to coordinate efforts to slow down the rate of incarceration and prevent recidivism. Recent events have raised public awareness of the long standing issues of racism and criminal justice system. New research into the social realities of incarcerated individuals may work toward changes in policy or procedure in the criminal justice system along with providing a more accurate picture of the people classified as criminals.

Organization

As I studied the literature of incarcerated women I found little to no literature directly related to the informal economy of women's prisons. What proved to be most relevant to my research are ethnographies and quasi-ethnographies from the early to mid-20th century. These ethnographies occurred prior to the implementation of extensive security precautions currently in

use. As a result the researchers were able to observe and interact with the women inside of the facilities. Chapter 2 begins with a review of women's prison scholarship, the early studies of incarcerated women and the most prolific works focusing on this population. This is followed by a presentation of literature on the informal economy of men's prisons and the concept and conditions of a total institution as presented by Erving Goffman.

"Commissary is king", *"commissary is necessary"*, these mottos revealed the importance of commissary in day-to-day life, access to commissary was said to be a matter of survival. "Survival" was not generally meant literally, the term had been endowed with a new meaning manufactured in response to an environment of scarcity. Chapter 3 discusses the theoretical perspectives of symbolic interactionism and substantivism as presented by Marshal Sahlins with an emphasis on the concepts of relative deprivation, affluence and reciprocity.

Chapter 4 discusses the issues that influenced the research design, the methodology employed and the techniques useful analyzing qualitative data.

Chapter 5 is a compilation of data collected from all four participants. These findings outline and describe the forms of social organization found in prison subculture and reveal a number of social strategies utilized to gain access to commissary. This portion also includes participant commentary providing insight into which strategies are regarded as deleterious to the group.

Chapter 6 is organized into 2 parts. Part 1 is a discussion of the findings. Here I will demonstrate how prisoner adaptation is achieved by forming advantageous relationships and alliances and adopting the social strategies that will best facilitate their access to resources and raise their social status. Part 2 discusses the relevance of this research and of future works examining the subculture created and maintained by incarcerated women. I will review the

limitations of the research and consider the possibility of further research with a tighter lens on specific phenomenon revealed through interviews. Finally, I will close by addressing the role of anthropology in the study of incarcerated women and the further research into the subjective experiences of incarcerated women.

CHAPTER 2: LITERATURE REVIEW

Prison scholarship in the 21st century has seen little change and has been accused of being repetitious (Waquant 2002). Although there has been interdisciplinary discourse (largely promoted by feminist scholars) calling on academia to practice a greater amount of self-awareness in the interpretation of subjective prison experiences, preconceived notions of “traditional” gendered behavior for male and female prisoners continue to prevail (Forsyth and Evans 2003; Thomas 2003; Cuhna 2014). Previous inquiry into prison life has primarily focused on male prisoners particularly in the context of gang affiliation, violence and sexual activity (Rhodes 2001). It is interesting to note that the most frequently studied incarnations of female prisoners are woman as mother or woman as sexual being (Heffernan 2003). Lesbianism and sexual activity have historically been a preoccupation in the research of female prison life, followed by social structures, such as pseudo families, and the effects incarceration has on the children of inmates (Severance 2004). More recent work has included comparisons between male and female prisoners with a focus on threats to security (Pogrebin and Dodge 2001).

This chapter will include a discussion of the relative lack of anthropological scholarship about incarcerated women and prison culture. I will present the five most frequently cited works all of which were published in the mid-20th century. Each study focused on sexuality, social relationships and adopted roles and identities. This will be followed by recent works about the

informal economy in men's prisons. Finally, I conclude the literature review with a discussion of the total institution as presented in Erving Goffman's *Asylums*.

PART 1: Addressing the Lack of Literature

Existing academic work examining the prisoner and prison life has been largely dominated by the disciplines of psychology, sociology and criminology and is often commissioned and funded by correctional departments for the purpose of improving methods of social control; particularly in the case of male inmates (Rhodes 2001). There is a conspicuous disparity in the literature, particularly in the discipline of anthropology, studying the experiences of incarcerated men and incarcerated women. It has been speculated that deviation from cultural and gender norms alienates a large portion of society, resulting in unequal attention to the social problems of at-risk women and subpar treatment of women who find themselves in the criminal justice system (Owen 1998). Female criminals defy the myth of the ideal woman, first in their failure to prioritize their roles as mothers and wives then in their disregard of the law (Owen 1998).

Another reason is a lack of allotted resources and funding. Criminal justice systems are more likely to fund research directly related to the imperatives of the system (Thomas 2003). These imperatives include providing cost/benefit analyses of prison programs, monitoring gang affiliation and activities, assessing security risks and enhancing techniques of social control. Incarcerated women are less of a security risk than men therefore less funding and research are allocated to the population (McCorkel 2003). Female deviant behavior is managed through the distribution of harsher, more frequent punishments for minor infractions in contrast to males (Burke 1992; Pogrebin and Dodge 2001; Heffernan 2003). Punishment includes the loss of privileges such as participation in AA meetings, acceptance into job skills and trade programs,

entrance into education programs, the confiscation of property or even the denial of family visits (TDCJ 2015).

Conditions of inequality in the *freeworld* (the colloquial term used to describe anything not in or of the criminal justice system) are essentially repackaged, formalized and expressed in a number of ways inside U.S. prisons. Institutional marginalization, societal attitudes toward women drug abuse, crime and punishment, lack of funding and the reluctance of the criminal justice system to grant access to the population most likely contribute to the anthropology's limited collection of research into the subculture of the female inmate in the U.S. (Rhodes 2001; Waquant 2002; Lutze 2003, Thomas 2003; McCorkel 2003).

Ethnographic research into the daily existence of incarcerated women can require physical proximity to inmates and regular entrance into the institution (Richie 2004). This involves a significant amount of bureaucratic deliberation including the consideration of security risks, assessing possible legal issues and creating an environment where the inmates are afforded the privacy associated with research participation but are still under full surveillance (Owen 1998, Watterson 1996). Most state and federal prisons are not willing to spend the time, money or effort required to accommodate such research projects (Richie 2004). Limited access to the population of interest also has thwarted methodological techniques such as participant-observation, especially in states where attitudes towards crime lean heavily to punishment rather than rehabilitation. It is most likely a combination of reasons that make women's prison research more difficult to accomplish, including the state where access is being requested and/or the social and political climate men

Part 2: Seminal Works on Incarcerated Women

Early Works

Sociologist Lowell S. Selling conducted research in a female juvenile corrections facility in 1931, there he observed the ways the young women organized their social world. Selling used the term *pseudo family* to discuss a network of women resembling a traditional heteronormative family unit in which each woman is connected to each other through role play. Selling's article *The Pseudo Family*, provided insight into the phenomenon of constructed kinship in a same-sexed environment where women are separated from their consanguineal relations (1931). He also documented romantic relationships, some of which included sexual interaction. Selling established a typology of relationships, expressed as stages of homosexuality: a) lesbianism, b) pseudo-homosexuality, c) mother and daughter relationship, and d) friendship. Each stage of relationship was assigned a status based on degree of deviance; lesbianism and pseudo-homosexuality designated as pathological, mother/daughter relationships and friendships designated as non-pathological (Selling 1931).

Selling believed that the creation of play families was, in part, fostered by the cottage model. The cottage model is a remnant of the 19th century criminal justice system. It was designed to resemble the conditions of a home rather than a traditional prison so that women could be socialized into a life of domesticity and the complementary role of homemaker (Selling 1931; Burke 1992; Banks 2003). This model was also thought to be effective for the reform and re-socialization of children, juvenile correctional facilities were built using the same designs and schedule. Reliance on the cottage model continued into the middle 20th century, the physical structures are still largely in use without the expectation of domestic socialization (Banks 2003). The women I spoke with were housed in cottage style facilities built in the early to mid-20th

century. Although understood to have been analyzed through a lens of paternalism and dated gender expectations, Selling's work continues to be one of the most cited pieces of literature in the study of incarcerated women, particularly in works focusing play families, role play and homosexuality.

Later Studies

Some of the most thorough research conducted of incarcerated women occurred in the mid to late 20th century. The examination of prison life found that the culture of women's prisons differed from men's prisons in a number of ways, the most significant way being the emphasis on social relationships (Ward and Kassebaum 1965; Watterson 1996; Owen 1998). Researchers found that personal relationships played an integral part of female prison life. These findings promoted the study of social roles and structures (Banks 2003). Same-sex relationships and the creation of play families were described as adaptive strategies meant to allow women to perform traditional gendered roles in a same-sexed environment of deprivation (Giallombardo 1966; Foster 1975; Propper 1986). The study of incarcerated women continued to be laden with sexual bias and gender expectations throughout the 20th century.

While considered to be invaluable contributions to the larger body of knowledge, the work conducted in the 60's and 70's produced remarkably similar findings irrespective of the differences in time, location, or population characteristics. This may be evidence of how deeply entrenched gender norms and expectations were in the population of interest or the researchers' reliance on the functionalist perspective. The most significant differences in the interpretations were the researchers' explanations for how a population of incarcerated women came to settle on the roles they chose. The three most pronounced perspectives cited were the theories of deprivation, importation and subculture (Owen 1998). Initially, created through research into the

issues of male prisoners, in the context of female prisoners these theoretical perspectives were most frequently used to as a way to examine the phenomena of lesbian activity (Forsyth, Evans, and Foster 2002).

Research conducted by David Ward and Gene Kassebaum began by looking for female versions of established “types” of male prisoners (*Women’s Prison: Sex and Social Structure* 1965). Instead of fitting into typified roles recognized by the entire prison population (as seen in male prisons) they found that women created roles that worked to promote social cohesion among small social groups, primarily their romantic partners or their prison family. Ward and Kassebaum believed that the conditions of deprivation, namely access to men, motivated women to change their sexual identities, perform male gender roles and partake in same-sex relationships (Ward and Kassebaum 1965). Their work relied heavily on deprivation theory. The foundation of deprivation theory is that separation from familiar people, places and identities leads to the participation and embracement of a lifestyle that might have previously been avoided (Ward and Kassebaum 1965; Foster 1975; Owen 1998).

Sociologist Rose Giallombardo’s work in Alderson federal prison provided tremendous insight into the day to day experiences of incarcerated women (*Society of Women: A Study of a Women’s Prison* 1966). Giallombardo discovered elaborate networks of friends and families, connected to each other through designated titles generally reserved for those related by blood or marriage. She also proposed that extended familial networks allow women to perform the gendered roles most congruent with their pre-incarcerated identities. Giallombardo found that more women preferred the role of femme over the masculine role of butch and the formation of large kin networks accommodated this preference by creating more non-sexual female roles to be filled. Women could be cousins, mothers, daughters, aunts and grandmothers, leaving the male

roles to be played by “real lesbians” (Giallombardo 1966; Owen 1998) Giallombardo did not believe that women’s participation in kin groups were individual responses to the deprivation of prison shaped by each woman’s cultural background. She believed the prison social system as a whole was imported from the freeworld. The society of women in prison was meant to mimic popular cultural ideals of a family based on a traditional idea of a gendered dichotomy, including performances of masculinity and femininity and the behavior expectations of family members (Giallombardo 1966; Owen 1998; Banks 1998). Giallombardo subscribed to the importation perspective. Importation theory proposes that prison culture does not exist in a vacuum, the inner workings of prison life are influenced by the outside world. The rules, norms and expectations are imported from the outside world (Giallombardo 1966; Owen 1998; Forsyth, Evans and Foster 2002). The way prisoners adapt to prison life is influenced by past experiences, the ideological beliefs of the society in which it exists, as well as the institutional rules and guidelines (Forsyth, Evans and Foster 2002).

Esther Heffernan’s research focused on social organization and role adoption as a way to deal with life in prison (*Making in in Prison: The Square, the Cool, and the Life* 1972). Her research revealed greater detail into the subculture of women’s prisons. She found that women are able to create their own culture by deciding what has significance and meaning within the institutional limitations imposed on them (Heffernan 1972; Propper 1978). By creating their own sets of values and norms and by deciding what constitutes a good life or a bad life they are exercising agency where none is afforded. Like the research of others before her, Heffernan believed social order, roles and status played a tremendous role in quality of life (Owen 1998). Having a support system particularly families or lovers, was a crucial part of being a part of the prison subculture. Heffernan’s research found that the more an inmate internalizes prison culture,

the “easier time” she does. Heffernan described three varying forms of adaptation to prison subculture: a) the Square, she has a difficult time letting go of the outside world and participating in what would be considered deviant behavior by freeworld standards. Squares are the most likely to do “hard time”, b) the Cools have developed methods of operating within the formal and informal systems where control and manipulation bring desired results, and c) the Life, she embraces the deviant activities of street life (Heffernan 1972). The Life’s presentation of self is unabashed and unapologetic therefore commands a degree of respect—that in itself is a part of the prison subculture. Heffernan also concluded that socialization into the prison subculture does not happen right away, it can shift over time, and it can take on the attributes of some positions while leaving others behind (1972).

Part 3: Prison’s Informal Economy

In contrast to the available literature of women in prison, literature documenting and researching the informal economy of men’s prison is abundant. It is a phenomenon of great interest, particularly to the disciplines of criminal justice and sociology. This inmate run economy is highly organized, reaches beyond prison walls, generates a great deal of revenue and is often affiliated with gang activity, and corrupt or complacent correctional officers. Recent research and publications, such as David Skarbec’s article, *Prison Gangs, Norms and Organization* (2012) and *Participation in the Prison Economy and Likelihood of Physical Victimization* (Heith Copes et al. 2011) offers a comparison between the informal economies of men’s and women’s prisons. The goods and services in the informal economy of men’s prisons reach beyond washing clothes and selling spices from the kitchen this economy includes the sale of cell phones, drugs, pornography, tattoos, sex and weapons (Copes et al. 2011; Skarbec 2012). While participation in men’s informal economy holds greater risk, both economies were created

in response to an environment of deprivation. The instrumental purpose of both economies is the enhancement of one's quality of life, by securing reliable access to commissary or cultivating a position of power or status.

Part 4: The Total Institution

Each of aforementioned works examined forms of adaptation to prison life. Prison life is occurs within the physical, emotional and psychological confines of a penal institution. The penal institution, in its historical and cultural meanings, has been well described and defined by the classic works of Erving Goffman—*Asylum: Essays on the Social Situation of Mental Patients and other Inmates* (1961) and Michel Foucault—*Discipline and Punish: The Birth of the Prison* (1977).

Goffman's *Asylums* describes and elaborates the characteristics of the total institution. The prison, as all total institutions, regulates every aspect of an individual's life. The primary purpose of the total institution is the separation of individuals from the rest of the community. In the case of the penal institution confinement serves as both punishment of convicted individuals and protection of society from such individuals (Goffman 1966). Foucault describes the ways in which the prison facility designed by the society in which it is located can be understood as a translation of power relations through the organization of space and movement of those labeled "criminal" (Foucault 1977; Stoler 2003; Scott 2011).

In an attempt to rehabilitate and punish offenders prisons incorporate deindividualization, or identity suppression, achieved by regulating and controlling the physical environment, inmate movement, access to material goods and replacing an identity with a number (Goffman 1961). Identity suppression begins by homogenizing physical appearance, minimizing access to identity equipment such as, cosmetics, clothing options, hair maintenance and decorative accessories and

through the separation from the outside world, all actions that reinforce one's role identities (e.g., work, family, hobbies) (Goffman 1966; Scott 2011).

CHAPTER 3: THEORETICAL ORIENTATIONS

Goffman and Foucault each in their specific ways, provide the foundation I am able to build. My thesis and subsequent research examines the strategies employed by imprisoned women as they navigate through each step of the socialization process, a process designed to be enforced every minute of every day for years at a time. I found that women were able to subvert the goals of incarceration and adapt to the environment by creating a subculture that allows for maximum exploitation of two social systems. Social organization, whether prison families, same-sex romantic relationships, friendships, cliques or employer/employee relationships allow women to continue to acquire and maintain the material goods and social relationships they have been purposefully denied. This is achieved through a number of adaptive and creative methods.

This research examines the social strategies used by incarcerated women to meet their wants and needs in the condition of punitive detainment. Having access to "things", even if only temporarily, can greatly improve a woman's quality of life, whether it's hand drawn stationary, a clock radio, or a pinch of garlic stolen from the prison kitchen. Each of the aforementioned items is acquired through different forms of exchange, only one is recognized as legitimate by prison policy. The informal economy operates primarily through the exchange of non-money items. Goods and services are endowed with a value that is negotiated among inmates. Values may fluctuate based on supply, demand, or even the status of buyer and the seller. Each woman entering the system must learn how the informal economy operates in doing this she learns how the prison subculture operates.

Substantivism

The theory of economic substantivism states that “the principles of economic life... [must] acknowledge the social, cultural and political structures, in which it is enmeshed” (Bălan 2012). Karl Polanyi proposed economics could be understood as a process of interaction between a person and their environment (Bălan 2012). Polanyi’s focus on the “interchange of [one’s] nature and social environment, in so far as this results in supplying [him or her] with the means of material want” (Bălan 2012). Prison is an environment of formal rules, regulations, and control. There are enforceable rules governing the transactions of made at the commissary and rules governing how much one can spend, how much one can own, even how one must store the items purchased. Prison is an environment of informal self-governing rules. The informal economic system provides greater opportunity for participation and exchanges can be negotiated. The informal prison economy has been formed and revised by generations of prisoners interacting with two very different communities. The informal methods of acquisition and distribution constantly shift to get around new rules and regulations.

Marshall Sahlins: Stone Age Economics (1974)

Relative Affluence/Relative Deprivation

In the mid-1970s the work of Marshall Sahlins challenged the conventional concept of affluence, at the time primarily regarded as the ability to have increasingly effective ways of acquiring material goods to meet an ever increasing sense of need and want for goods and services (Stone Age Economics 1973)He argued that affluence must be revised to develop a cross culturally meaningful analysis, measured not only in the acquisition and display of excess but in the ability to not devote large portions of time to production. This allows the society to spend more time on social relationships, in turn allowing for the elaboration of culture. While

Sahlins work focusses on the economic systems of small scale Paleolithic/Neolithic cultures his ideas can be applied to my own work. Women prisoners have adapted to the prison environment in ways that are consistent with many of Sahlins's ideas. According to prison literature the methods of acquisition, distribution and exchange and social organization in women's prisons have been transmitted over 8 decades in different prisons through the United States, with a relatively degree of consistency.

I believe Sahlins's analysis of economics in small scale societies can be used to examine prison's informal economic system. Similar to small scale societies relatively small groups, living in close proximity in a uniform environment where there are limited opportunities for western market-style purchases, or participation in production. The subculture of women's prisons has an elaborate informal, informal economy, which relies heavily on culturally specific systems of reciprocity; I believe these systems are amenable Sahlins' analysis.

All formal economic exchanges are tightly regulated in prison, consequently women are highly motivated to find a new ways of viewing and displaying affluence. Women in prison understand affluence in the traditional freeworld sense but also understand that freeworld affluence is not achievable in prison. Within the confines of prison there is a finite variety of goods, there is a finite amount of money allowed to be spent, and there is a finite amount of goods one may keep in their possession and there is a finite amount of time allowed for making purchases. In these circumstances affluence must be achieved, experienced and displayed in a new way.

The economic system described by Sahlins allows for the continuation of affluence through the creation, maintenance and cooperation of elaborate social structures (1974). This is absolutely relevant to my research; creating social structures are one of the ways women adapt to

prison and this begins with the economic system. As a reaction to systematic relative deprivation the population created a new obtainable version of affluence. This required changing what signified affluence and each new member is socialized to and adopts this standard. In prison, just as in the freeworld affluence includes the conspicuous display of material goods, but also the ability to purchase services. This is possible because there are women of lesser financial status who are unable to participate in the formal economy. These women are willing and able to perform services so that their lives in prison may be enhanced as well. This is a new social relationship, a client/employee dynamic.

Reciprocity

Sahlins concept of reciprocity has been presented as one of the vital mechanisms that allow for the perpetuation of a culture, this is achieved in part through the maintenance of social relationships. “A material transaction is usually a momentary episode in a continuous social relation...the connection between material flows and social relation is reciprocal”, here Sahlins explains that the actual exchange between people is less important than developing or nurturing a relationship. A healthy social relationship in which all parties are satisfied increases the chances of long term access to material or social goods and services and provides relatively cooperative and support societies (1973: pg 186-187). Sahlins describes three types of reciprocity.

According to Sahlins, generalized reciprocity promotes or sustains the mutual support and cooperation of a group (two or more individuals) by providing goods or services without expectation of return. This may occur in relationships inside or outside a household these but is generally practiced among individuals who have had close, long-term relationships (as defined by the culture) and usually includes a high degree of face-to- face interaction. Sahlins suggests generalized reciprocity also works to establish a distinction between ranks. The data collected

during this research and past literature has led me to believe this is the least practiced form of reciprocity in a prison environment. The most interesting explanations were provided by incarcerated or previously incarcerated women themselves.

Balanced reciprocity is described as the most common form of reciprocity. This form of reciprocity is a practice used to move through the world shared with others individuals and occur in long or short term relationships where spoken or unspoken peace/alliance contracts are established. These exchanges take many forms from explicit arrangements, such as transactions of goods and services (not unlike market exchange in large scale societies) to tacit but commonly understood expressions of good will or acknowledgement. While there are utilitarian benefits in balanced exchanges, the preservation of social relationships are of highest priority. I believe that balanced reciprocity is vital to adaptation to the prison world.

Negative reciprocity is an imbalanced exchange where one participant acts in self-interest violating the cultural norm. Again, the literature and data discuss forms of negative reciprocity a great deal. Each of my informants has spoken of negative reciprocity on numerous occasions, providing personal experiences and anecdotes of women with whom they shared living space. There is an elaborated shared vocabulary used to discuss negative reciprocity indicating the significance of these incidents to the population. Women in prison refer to negative reciprocity as *being taken advantage of, being ripped off, scammed, screwed over, done dirty, got the shaft, got hustled, got punked, turned out* and much more. Symbolic and linguistic analysis may explain in what ways imbalanced exchanges in the informal economy effect personal dynamics and social organization.

Polanyi and Sahlins' Substantivist economic analysis provides a link from which the relationship between the environment, in this case, the total institution and social groups can be

connected. Arguably institutions, such as prison, require a rather intense form of socialization and adaptation because it is almost completely separated from the rest of society and is purposefully designed to deprive women of their kin or social group, material goods, ways of expressing their identities. All these factors foster the creation of a new, parallel system of acquisition, exchange and distribution, one that is almost uniformly understood and participated in by every individual who is incarcerated. I have found that “the economic creating the social” portrays inmates as passive reactors and is unable to fully account for the creation of new identities, gender and sexual fluidity, the cultivation of hierarchy and status, all of which are tightly woven with the creation and maintenance of social relationships and organization from kin groups to client/employee arrangement. There are features of prison life that are best understood when evaluating women prisoners as social actors making deliberate decisions and actions based on the social and economic environment.

Erving Goffman-The Impression of Self in Everyday Life (1957)

Symbolic Interactionism

Symbolic Interactionism allows for the analysis of social positioning of the actor as she reads the social environment. This means individuals rely on an array of culture specific symbols and ritualistic symbolic behavior to guide their actions. This allows the actor to present the version of them that seems the most relevant at the moment and to gauge the boundaries of a given social interaction with a relative degree of confidence. When a social environment or interaction is “read” incorrectly or the actor is unaware of the meanings behind the symbols, behaviors or cues it may cause a great deal of stress. It is situations like these that stimulate varying levels of culture shock.

Erving Goffman efficiently describes the first step to social action “When an individual enters the presence of others they commonly seek to acquire information about him or to bring into play information that already exists...Information about the individual helps to define the situation, enabling others to know in advance what he will expect of them and what they may expect of him” (The Presentation of Self in Everyday Life 1959). Symbols and symbolic behavior fortifies the understanding of prison as a subculture, economic system, lexicon, social rituals, and behavioral expectations. It is tightly connected to learning “how to be” an inmate. Entering prison is often experienced as culture shock, it’s arguable that the social actor’s distress stimulates intense constant observations as she begins to learn the lexicon, noticing in what ways women present themselves so that their “presentation of self” is read by others, how people are organized and regarded and what constitutes status markers. Goffman can be used to explain the entire process of socialization, social organization and identity formation while Sahlins’ provides the motive, incentive and reward for understanding and participating in this particular subculture. Each woman interviewed told numerous stories that differed in detail, but discussed the same thing, insincerity. For incarcerated women insincerity is *running game*. *Running game* or *hustling* means strategizing to gain commissary by *cozying up* (pushing in on someone in the guise of a friend) with *someone who has* (access to commissary).

Language and Subculture

The relationship of a culture or subculture to its language—in all its varieties—provides insight into the thought patterns of members of the culture. From the earliest work of Franz Boas to the work of Edward Sapir and Benjamin Whorf, the relationship between language and culture has been central in anthropology. Language reflects those matters of greatest significance to a community. Importantly, however, at the same time, language shapes the very nature of

reality—both social and material reality—for members of a community. Sociolinguistics in particular is interested the matters of language in terms of a specific set of factors, including class, race, gender, setting, and a number of additional considerations that must be considered in evaluating any speech act. Among other factors, these help define a group in the women's correctional institution. At first glance the array of slang terms might strike the fieldworker the most vivid linguistic element at play, but quickly the next linguistic factors reveal themselves, including kinesics, proxemics, and any individual inmate's internalization and active use of the language of the institution itself.

The prison slang of women's prisons in the United States reflects certain continuities over generations as well as linguistic patterns that had a vibrant local or national history and went extinct. Regarding the women's prison in Texas as a speech community reveals additional aspects of the social lives of incarcerated women and the central role of the economy in the operation of the informal subculture that regulates the lives of these women as much as the regulations imposed by the institution.

Some aspects of the linguistic behavior in the study population provide particular insight into the social mechanisms that provide structure and the social dynamics that provide the fuel that keeps alive this well-ordered and tightly structured invisible community. Most obviously inmates communicate with each other using an elaborate slang lexicon. This lexicon covers a number of categories of objects, subjects, and behavior. My interviews reveal a number of significant linguistic patterns that require additional analysis but preliminary review suggests that several categories dominate the slang lexicon: words for economic exchanges that can be characterized as negative reciprocity. Clearly the subcultural ambivalence that, on the one hand supports or tolerates the prevalence of a personal economic strategy that relies heavily on

negative exchanges, and, on the other hand, holds in contempt those who engage in “rip offs” and other similar behavior. A second category of elaborated lexicon and invented slang terms concerns personal relationships, including romantic relationships, sexual relationships, and “play families.” An additional category of slang involves explicit kinship terminology, such as play daughter or penitentiary son. The specific terminology used during each interview revealed the ways in which participation in the informal economy shaped each informant’s prison experience.

CHAPTER 4: METHODOLOGY

Chapter 4 will discuss the difficulties and special considerations in researching incarcerated populations. This is followed by a discussion of the issues that influenced my research design. Next, I will provide outline of my methods of data collection, and introduce the participants in my study. Finally, I will present my techniques of data analysis.

Methodological Challenges

My population of interest and the issues discussed in this thesis could pose a number of methodological challenges. Prison as a site of ethnographic inquiry is often mired in bureaucracy, limiting opportunities for observation and participation. Access to the population and institutional approval of research design may be policy-driven or restricted by state funding (Cunha 2014). Establishing intimate contact and building trust may be slow going in an environment under constant surveillance (Waldram 1998). The focus of my research is the social and economic workings of the prison subculture especially in the context of the informal economy, participants may be reluctant to freely discuss their own perspectives or participation in fear of disciplinary action or social retribution. Participant observation could be highly disruptive to prisoners’ way of life. The discretion needed to accomplish illegal activities may be difficult to achieve with a researcher the vicinity.

The historical abuse and exploitation of captive populations has rightfully led to greater scrutiny and examination of proposed and executed research involving incarcerated human subjects (Waldrum 1998; Wacquant 2002). Although participation in prison research is voluntary, unintentional exploitation is still possible as prisoners are situated in the condition of social and financial deprivation, inmates might be compelled to participate as way to have a momentary reprieve from the monotony of prison life. Even if every permission, procedure and precaution was met there is the still the possibility of inadvertent harm in the form social and economic disruption—it was important to consider whether the benefits of this research worth risking the sanctity of their way of life. It has been suggested that research conducted with every ethical consideration and precaution could actually work to empower the population characterized by their lack of freedom and autonomy (Murphy and Johannsen 1990; Fleuhr-Lobban 1994).

All proposed research inside of prison is reviewed on a case by case basis and the department of criminal justice protocol for varies by state. Each prison system closely monitors all research not only to protect incarcerated individuals but to protect researchers from possible manipulation, deception, physical harm, and maintain levels of safety and security (Wacquant 2002).

Methods

My research design is the result of two substantial considerations: First, I considered possible ethical considerations unique to interviewing on a prison unit. Participation may result in disciplinary actions and/or observed participation may negatively affect the way an inmate is treated by COs or by other inmates. Second, I was unsure whether my research topic and research design would fall within the parameters of the Texas Department of Criminal Justice

and the Internal Review Board protocol. The Department of Criminal Justice website provides the following information describing the review process after submitting the research application and all required documents:

The review process usually takes between 30 and 60 days, depending on the specific project. Reviews include a criminal background investigation by the Office of the Inspector General, a Peer Panel Review by the appropriate division(s), a legal review by the Office of General Counsel, and final approval by the appropriate Division Director.

http://www.tdcj.state.tx.us/faq/faq_external_research.html#APPLYING

Although participant-observation, spending time with women as they are immersed in the day-to-day realities of prison life, would be the ideal way to explore and identify the social strategies and forms of social organization used to participate in the prisoner informal economy and anticipated a lack of interest in my research interest and selected to forego applying for permission to conduct research within a TDCJ unit effectively changing my population of interest to previously incarcerated women. Following the style of scholars who study prison culture at a distance, I also rely on my informants' memories in lieu of "real time" interviews and observations (Pogrebin and Dodge 2001; Skarbeck 2012). Each informant has been out of prison for several years, their retrospective narratives, the memories of their experiences, observations, and perspectives provide a rich detailed picture of prison life.

Over the 18 months my key informant provided me with a fairly comprehensive description of prison life as she experienced it. While she alone provided enough data to compile a life history, the inclusion of additional participants allowed for a more robust picture of the world in which these women lived. This research had first been intended to take the form of a life history although not in the strictest sense. The life events as told by Cindy are meant to "reveal a personal world of meanings that [could] then be placed in cultural context" (Langness and Frank 1988), while the narratives collected from the additional subjects revealed repetitive

themes, and provided insight into the degree of which these women understood and followed the prisoner's code and cultural practices.

Participants

The subjects used for my research were identified through an established contact, Cindy, a student at University of Houston-Downtown. She was independently familiar with the issues I proposed to study. Cindy was candid about her criminal past, and enthusiasm led me to three additional women whose experiences in prison were relevant to the objectives of this research. Cindy had personal knowledge of previously incarcerated women who she believed would be interested in participating. I was able to interview a total of 4 subjects each one fit the necessary criteria for participation:

1. Each participant had to be a female over the age of 18 and under the age of 64
2. Each participant had to have been incarcerated in jail or prison
3. Each woman had to no longer be under state supervision

I provided each qualifying participant with a brief written description of my research, a verbal overview of the consent form and two hard copies of the consent form: one of which I kept for my files one was given to the informant to keep. Prior to the interview, subjects were reminded that participation was entirely voluntary, compensation was unavailable, all measures are being taken to ensure the protection of identities and she could end participation at any point without consequence. Once she agreed to participate, together we established our first meeting for the interview.

Cindy was my primary source of data. Soon after the interview process began she introduced me to three previously incarcerated women with whom she had contact. The following portion introduces these three participant and provides details relevant to the research

including: history of criminal activity, level of education, occupation, reported history of substance use and abuse, reported sexual orientation and the methods used to make purchases from commissary. This is followed by a profile of Cindy, how she came to be incarcerated and recollections of her most recent prison experience.

Stacy: my second subject lived and worked with Cindy while locked up. They also worked together outside of prison. By chance the two ran into each other in a McDonald's parking lot. Soon Stacy began working in the dining hall of a large public university where Cindy had been employed. Stacy is an African American woman who appears considerably older than the late forties she claims. She is HIV+ and her health has been declining over the last two years. Her appearance reflects long term heroin and marijuana abuse. She is extremely thin, with dark ashy skin; her corn rowed hair is slightly disheveled. When we first spoke Stacy worked to use "proper" formal speech. Eventually I was able to create a more authentic exchange by referring to her as Ms. Stacy. The title "Ms." is frequently used by young women in the African American community to designate respect, age, and wisdom. Stacy quickly responded, becoming more relaxed, evident through the switch to Black English Vernacular, the use of prison argot and an array of expletives.

Stacy is unable to remember how many times she has been incarcerated or the precise charges; she attributes her extensive criminal history to a lifetime of addiction to crack, heroin, alcohol and marijuana. Her most recent conviction resulted in a 15 year sentence for aggravated robbery, 10 of which she served in prison and 5 of which under state supervision. Stacy spent the majority of her sentence in the toughest, most violent unit, working as kitchen staff. Eventually she was relocated to Trustee Camp, a low security unit, where she was assigned a "good job" working in the boiler room. Stacy identifies as bisexual, has had several girlfriends and was

sexually active during each period of incarceration. Her family was unable to support her financially; she was able to purchase the prison necessities early on but spent the majority of her sentences acquiring commissary by other means. Prison necessities include a fan, a clock radio and headphones, a *hot pot* (a pot that heats up water) and *hygeines* (the term for personal care and grooming products).

Deena: Deena is my 3rd informant. Although we had contact on four occasions, her schedule allowed her to participate in only two formal interviews. She and Cindy met at a used car dealership, while making small talk the two women discovered they had both been incarcerated at the same time. Deena, a Latina woman in her late thirties, comes from a working class family, is married with two adult children and one grandchild. She is thin, has dark curly-frizzy shoulder length hair and wears a great deal of eyeliner and mascara. Although she got pregnant with her first child in high school, she stayed in school and earned her high school diploma. She is currently the secretary at a used car dealership. After several arrests (and jail time) for DWI (driving while intoxicated) she received a heavier sentence of 3 years prison time. She does not identify as an alcoholic, she believes she simply was caught driving with a buzz too many times. Humiliated and depressed she spent almost her entire sentence in her bunk crying. Finally, in the last few months she began to leave her bunk, socialize, play games and watch TV. Deena's family was able to send her money on a fairly regular basis. She did not receive much but was able to acquire the prison necessities and go to commissary at least once a month. Deena identifies as heterosexual and believes homosexuality is a sin.

Ava: Ava, my fourth participant, is a friend of a friend of Cindy's. She is a 40-something year old Caucasian woman, with a fair complexion and extremely long light brown hair. Her aesthetic presentation resembles the bohemian style of the nineteen seventies. One of her eyes is

slightly crooked and one of her feet is turned in. Her twisted foot affects her gait so when she walks her long hair sways back and forth. Although seemingly shy and insecure, she was extremely articulate enthusiastic participant. Ava was born and raised in a small town, she said her family had always been poor; she had never had a job, and reported no drug abuse although her husband was addicted to crystal meth. Ava was 20 when she was incarcerated, she had stabbed her abusive husband during an altercation and to her surprise he died. She said “it was such a small knife and such a small wound”. She was sentenced to nineteen and a half years. Ava was pregnant when she was arrested and had her baby in a prison hospital handcuffed to the bed. After she gave birth the prison doctors immediately gave her baby son to her mother-in-law, without letting her hold him. She said even the correctional officers felt bad for her and tried to console her. Abused as a child by her parents and then as an adult by her husband, she had little trouble adjusting to life in prison because her “real life” was ruled by fear, abuse, isolation and uncertainty. She speaks of prison fondly; she enjoyed her jobs, chatting with the officers and tutoring other inmates. She identified as heterosexual when she went into the system but after 3 years she became involved in an emotional and sexual relationship with another inmate. Although Ava’s family was unable to send her money on a regular basis, she was able to accumulate what inmates consider the prison necessities and go to commissary at least once a month. Currently Ava lives with her deceased husband’s aunt (her mother-in-law still has custody of her baby) and takes classes at a community college.

Interview Process

Prior to the formal interviewing process I again asked the participant to listen to an oral explanation of the consent form. This included the explaining that no compensation was available for participation. I explained that participants were asked to partake in a minimum of

two semi-structured face-to-face interviews. I also requested permission to record our interviews on a digital recorder, explained the privacy protocol and made sure she understood that she was welcome to participate even if she did not agree to being recorded. Finally, I explained that she was free to refuse to answer any questions and she could withdraw at any time without any consequence. I then asked her to read over it and provide a signature.

Interviews took place in several locations including fast food restaurants, parking lots, and a laundry mat. Each interview was recorded and later transcribed. Interviews usually ran around one and a half to two hours. Each woman completed precisely two interviews except for my key informant who participated in at eleven interviews, three telephone phone conversations and three visits.

Interviews began open-ended, starting with general questions about their stay in prison. Listening to each participant's stream of consciousness, repetition and emphasis allowed me to take note of significant topics or themes, refine the questions I asked and the ways that I asked them. The open-ended portion of the interview allowed me to shape questions to be used during the semi-structured portion. Some of the topics I raised and asked of each woman included who they spent time with, what they did together, whether they received financial and emotional support, and how they perceived their quality of life in prison.

I also had the opportunity to join my key informant while she ran errands, this included visiting her mother, driving around to find the best gas prices, going to the wig shop and washing clothes at a laundry mat. It was not convenient to record all excursions so I took notes after each visit was over. The observations made during the errands provided insight into the way to shape questions for later interviews.

The final interview with my key informant was used as an opportunity to confirm previous statements, allow her to include final comments or questions across, and to share any thoughts about her experience.

Data Analysis

This research is a collection of subjective experiences and perspectives of four women during their most recent period of incarceration. Limited access to incarcerated women stimulated my decision to rely on my informants to act as proxies for the larger population (Langness and Frank 1988; Bernard 1995). The data explores the relationship between the social system and the economic system in women's prisons. The narratives of these women provided by my informants allow me to gain insight into the experiences of a larger population of incarcerated women, this includes the effects of the physical and social environment on the prison subculture and the collective responses of material and social deprivation. Reliance on qualitative data required that I take a phenomenological approach to data analysis. Examination of the transcripts revealed two particular narratives and a number of themes. The qualitative data analysis Key Word In Context (KWIC) revealed what is meaningful in the prison subculture, the culturally specific use of terms and the ways in which they are related to or can be applied to other concepts (Bernard 1995). This was particularly useful in compiling a glossary of prison argot.

CHAPTER 5: FINDINGS

This chapter is organized into four parts. Part 1 describes formal and informal aspects of prison life; this includes entering the prison system, learning about commissary, the informal economy and how to fit in. Part 2 provides some background from my key informant, Cindy. Her contributions paint a vivid portrait of prison life. She describes the social world, the

economic world and the ways in which the two intermingle. Part 3 presents and describes five forms of social organization found in prison subculture and finally Part 4 presents a number of social strategies used to acquire commissary and participate in the informal economy. The findings chapter consists of personal observations and experiences from myself, Cindy and three traditional participants. This work describes the circumstances of prison and the methods women use to adapt.

Prison environment is bland and uniform, the buildings are almost all the same, the foods served are always the same, women are dressed in the same white uniforms, despite it all each woman has the capacity to adapt and find a way to exercise creativity and to create and perform a familiar or new identity. This is achieved through careful observation and execution of established social strategies and social organizations. From this array of choices each woman may work to best meet her goals. Whether it is getting her hands on items as modest as soap, becoming the head of household of an extended family or holding a position of prestige by running an informal business, the opportunities and strategies are there. These strategies have been created, revised and passed down over decades.

This research works to gain insight into the ways in which a woman may adapt to life in prison without her support system, her customary access to resources and to varying degrees her identity. Upon incarceration, each woman must learn to live by the codified protocol of the penal system meant to maintain control of her possessions, movements, and body (Foucault 1977). Violations of these rules and regulations result in a number of punishments proposed to be commensurate to the infraction (TDCJ2015). In addition to learning how to operate in the formal world of incarceration each woman must learn how to operate in the social world of her fellow inmates. The process of adapting to the customs and the norms of behavior in the inmate

subculture requires complex strategies. One possible approach involves the formation of alliances—social relationships that are designed to maximize the safety and security for the inmate (Pogrebin and Dodge 2001). Making wise choices about how to interpret signals, read behavior, absorb the argot and navigate this social world is delicate business. The social strategies of the prison subculture were created, maintained and revised with the specific intention of affecting a prisoner's quality of life, each strategy employed and relationship forged will have long term effects (Owen 1998, Skarbek 2012). The degree in which a woman chooses to establish a relationship or participate in the informal economy is one way she may exercise control over some part of her life. Confronted by a maze of opportunities and limitations; decisions are deliberately chosen to maximize the opportunity of each actor, this is what Michel de Certeau refers to as “tactical poaching” (The Practice of Everyday Life 1984).

Part 1: Prison Life

Participation in the prison subculture means understanding and adapting to the economic system. Newly incarcerated women discover immediately that the economic system revolves around commissary. The following portion of this chapter will reveal the relationship between formal economy, informal economy, cultural norms, rituals, behavioral expectations, and the importance of learning the symbols and symbolic behavior necessary to adapt to the prison subculture.

“Commissary is Necessary”

All women entering the penitentiary have access to the same resources, two state issued bras, three pair of underwear, three pairs of socks, one night gown, three uniform shirts and pants, three tiny bars of soap (each about half the size of hotel soap), a tiny toothbrush and tooth powder, a comb, feminine hygiene products and toilet paper. A woman's placement in the

hierarchy of potential friends, family, or lovers begins immediately after her fellow inmates see how much she was able to accumulate in addition to the state issued items each woman is distributed. Her cultural capital is measured by purchasing power at *commissary*, also referred to as “*the store*”.

Having access to anything other than what is issued by the state enhances the inmate’s quality of life and social status. Inmate lives revolve around *commissary*. Settling into prison subculture begins with acquiring goods, skills and strategies that build up access to commissary. Settling into prison subculture also mean they learn to appreciate and execute cooking, art, cosmetics and hair styles unique to the prison environment. Newly incarcerated women soon realize that none of these things are readily available to them without access to commissary.

Commissary is a prison store accessible to inmates with funds including but not limited to stamps, paper, pens, envelopes, feminine products, *hygeines* (the term for grooming items including soap, shampoo, nail file, tweezers, mirror etc...), cosmetic items and various types of food. Food, *hygeines*, and stamps are the items that replace money in economic transactions. Commissary also includes more costly items, referred to as *blue slip* items. Purchasing blue slip item requires the inmate to make a formal request by filling out a form that happens to be on blue paper. Items include shoes, fans, clock radios, head phones, ear buds, *hot pots*, blow dryers and *gender boxes* (a tool box used to hold hygiene items). These items have the inmate’s identification number marked or engraved on the item and she is required to save the receipt for the entire time she owns the object. This is an effective way of deterring passing blue slip items between inmates.

There a number of ways to read a person’s status based on the amount of blues slip items she has, or the frequency in which she is able to purchase those types of items and especially

whether she afford to eat only commissary food, but a woman who has been incarcerated for a year or more and has no blue slip items is considered extremely poor. This level of economic deprivation often motivates others to donate items, sometimes anonymously, sometimes not, sometimes in private, sometimes in public but in general not consistently or reliably. High priced items may or may not be considered status markers, a number of factors are taken into consideration. Factors include whether an individual considers the item a want or a need, it depends on how many high price items a woman has, how long she has been incarcerated, the condition of the item and what the item is. A fan, a hot pot and a radio are considered basic needs. Doing without these items is “doing hard time”, and new comers are anxious to acquire these items. Being able to afford boots or athletic shoes from *commissary* would position someone into something like the middle class, while having all these items and a gender box and hairdryer would appear to place the woman in something like the upper middle class.

The primary and institutionally legitimate way of accumulating goods in prison is to purchase items from what is available at commissary. Purchases made through commissary are similar to a debit transaction in the freeworld, the inmate uses her *Inmate Identification Card* as a debit card and purchases are taken from *Inmate Trust Fund*, similar to a bank account. Family and friends deposit money into the account, referred to as *putting money on one's books*. When released from prison, all money in the trust fund is returned to you in the form of a check. There is no limit to how much money can be deposited in your inmate trust fund but there is a cap on the amount of money you can spend during each *spin*. A *spin* is a period of two weeks, the cap is \$75.00 per week, not including *blue slip items*. Around Christmas time the *commissary* temporarily offers a variety of new food items and the cap per *spin* is raised to \$100.00 per week. This is an exciting time for commissary shoppers as this is one of the few times when they have

limited access to something novel. Women often ask their families to send more money around Christmas so they can stock pile items that will not be available later in the year. Having special items in your possession throughout the year is an indicator of status and affluence. Although the department of corrections restricts the amount of money a woman can spend in a given period of time women get around it by having outsiders put money on someone else's books and having them make your purchases. Later items are collected and the fellow inmate is compensated for the service. The department of corrections also requires you to be able to store all purchased items inside your locker space. This problem may be solved by recruiting and compensating another woman for locker space. Renting someone else's locker space allows one to accumulate more than you can legally store. The ideal recruit has little to no access to money; this increases the likelihood that she remains trustworthy so that the mutually beneficial arrangement can continue.

The communal living arrangement means your dorm mates know how often you go to commissary, whether you are able to make large or small purchases and even what you like to purchase. Being able to go to commissary regularly increases your social status. It is evidence that someone outside of prison cares spends money to ensure you are comfortable while incarcerated. This evidence includes receiving regular mail, photos, magazine subscriptions, visits or "special mail". *Special mail* are state approved items purchased and sent from approved freeworld vendors, this includes books, journals, puzzle books, calendars, white or colored paper and envelopes. Special mail is an indicator of high status.

Financial Status and Goods and Services

A high status affluent woman in prison is described as a woman whose *money goes long*, meaning they are never without, are able to purchase high dollar items and hire other inmates to

do just about anything they would like. Women who have access to large amounts of money are able to transfer money from her account to another women's inmate trust fund. This usually happens between lovers or family but it may also be a way to pay for good or services.

Most women who have *steady money* (a fairly reliable flow of money provided by family or friends) use commissary to pay for goods and services.

Using commissary as payment for goods and services is the most common economic arrangement for women participating in the informal economy. For example, Cindy washed clothes for commissary. After she washed a certain amount of clothing she would then determine the dollar value of her services. Before commissary day, Cindy gave her "employer" a list of which items she would like to purchase with the credit she earned. This form of transaction requires that the two women negotiate the service and the fee and then trust each other to fulfill their part of the agreement.

Some women's *money is funny*, meaning their money is sporadic and varies in amount. In general these women use the money from their inmate trust fund to purchase the most important things, starting with hygiene. Next, they work to accumulate over time the items that are vital to living in relative comfort this includes a hot pot (for in-dorm cooking), a fan, a clock radio, a bowl and coffee cup. Women whose money is funny supplement their income by finding work. Establishing a working relationship with a regular employer allows them to achieve relatively continual access to commissary food regardless of whether or not they have money in their books.

Women who receive little to no economic support from the freeworld are referred to as indigent. Once designated as indigent by the institution the inmate qualify for indigent mail, five stamps and envelopes per week so she may still correspond with the outside world (TDCJ 2015).

Indigent mail is passed out during mail call and is packaged in a large bright yellow folder, everyone knows what the envelope means. Indigent women work for other inmates to get what they need or are sometimes gifted items, such as hygiene or food. Indigent women are not unlike charity cases, women heavily involved in prison church purchase items for indigent women as a way to tithe to the church. The inmate label as indigent is expected by her fellow inmates to spend what resources she may come upon in a respectable way. The indigent woman is expected to play a particular role in order to solicit empathy and generosity of her fellow inmates. Deviation from this role may result in not only fewer handouts by those she offended but she may be subject to gossip which may thwart future handouts. The indigent women, the poorest of all, have to be extra careful not to offend her fellow inmates or to be noticed by correctional officers. If they are known indigent inmates but are seen with food or new hygiene they will be questioned about the goods and may potentially lose their items if they are unable to produce a receipt for the item.

Freeworld Funds

Women legitimately obtain funds for commissary purchases from the freeworld, usually through family, friends, lovers, money earned prior to incarceration and/or sometimes even their church community but there are other methods of having money deposited into their trust funds. The following techniques straddle the line between legitimate and illegal. Each of these strategies can sincerely and legally work to meet social, emotional and economic needs, but are often regarded by both the inmate world and the prison system as a con

One method is cashing checks. An incarcerated woman may have family members forge their signature on social security or disability checks in order to keep money on their books. Pulling it off requires a trustworthy partner in the freeworld, an understanding of state and

federal assistance and bureaucratic inefficiency. Deena explained how she was able to have money on her books by continuing to have her *crazy checks* (a disability check received by being diagnosed as mentally ill) cashed while she was locked up. She had gone to jail a few times for short sentences, six months for driving while intoxicated, then six months for probation revocation. Because reapplying for benefits took so much time and effort she just didn't report that she was in jail. She said she was scared at first but having the money to go to commissary every week was "too nice to give up." The second time she went to jail she did the same without getting caught. The next time she was locked up it was a three year sentence in "real prison." This time she only cashed enough checks to make sure she could set herself up with the costly prison necessities (hot pot, fan, clock radio and headphones) then she instructed her family to report her incarceration to Social Security Disability and the checks stopped coming. Deena reported that doing time without making commissary every week was doing much harder time but figured it was better than *catching a new case* (being charged with another crime). Deena believed the key to not getting caught is only doing it for a short period of time.

Trickin' is another method of acquiring freeworld money. *Trickin'* is short for "turning tricks" another way of speaking about prostitution. Women who were exotic dancers, or worked as prostitutes in the freeworld may receive money from more than one regular client in exchange for sexually explicit letters (that may include bodily fluids) or the promise of future services. These men (or women in the case of same-sex relationships) are referred to as johns, tricks or sugar daddies. Cindy was impressed by the trickin' she observed sharing,

These women at Hobby, man, some of them were fine, I mean FINE, beautiful women and they had these men sending them money, tricks and sugar daddies from before they got locked up. They be putting money on their books I mean BIG money these girls didn't want for nothin' and these men be comin' to see them drivin' who knows how far to visit them and not even an open visitation they couldn't even touch these women but

they kept on and kept on like puppies (laughing) but hey if they both are getting' what they want more power to them

---Cindy

Another way of receiving funds from the freeworld is to make pen pals. In the inmate world having or looking for a pen pal is understood to mean you are “runnin’ game” or “workin’ on something” (in the process of cultivating a flow of resources). Although it often involves varying degrees of emotional manipulation and exploitation it is considered, by prison code, to be an acceptable way to *handle your business* (doing what you have to do to get what you need or want.) Some women are looking for someone to correspond with or eventually develop “real” feelings for the person (or persons) they write but the consensus among the women I interviewed is that the primary incentive for paying to be posted on a pen pal site is to find someone who will send them money. Women have their picture and profile posted on a prison pen pal website for varying fees, the higher the fee the better representation and exposure they receive on the site. This means a larger picture and profile, prominently positioned and a longer duration at the top of the list, some sites offer to play the music of your choice when someone stops to look over your picture and profile (<http://www.meet-an-inmate.com>). This may include creating false profiles, posting photographs of themselves from 20 years ago or posting a photo of another woman, always a younger, attractive woman. Cindy said she knew women that posted photos of their daughters in order to attract potential pen pals. She elaborated by saying:

Some women are tellin’ men that they love them and will go live with them when they get out but they just biding their time collecting that money, living it up and all they got to do is write them dirty letters (laugh) I laugh but these women are handlin’ they business! This is funny though because it had gotten so bad that they [the prison] made this poster of a rat, with a burglar mask and he was an extortion rat, and extortion rat had a bag over his shoulder and in the bag they had cookies and chips and candy, commissary and the rat was looking at you and it said “We will prosecute for extortion”

---Cindy

Intermingled Lives

The smaller satellite units in Gatesville are similarly designed, cottage style dorms, each with approximately 40 cubicles approximately 8ft by 5ft, 1 metal bunk per cubicle, a metal side table welded to the head of the bunk and a metal box welded beneath the bunk (the *lockbox*). The lockbox is where all personal items are to be stored. Clothing, shoes, towels, wash cloth and toilet paper maybe stored outside of the lockbox. A clock radio and hotpot may be stored on the metal table, with a few specific hygiene. Each woman complained that “they” [TDCJ] constantly changed what was allowed to be outside of the lockbox. In the past the inmates could display one greeting card and two photos in addition to hygiene, the policy continued to change until eventually no cards or photos could be on the table unless the inmate was inside the cubicle. Depending on which unit you were assigned to, the cubicle wall was 3 and 3 ½ feet tall. Some semblance of privacy was afforded you if you sat on the floor while your neighboring bunkmates were out were in their cubicles. If a male CO was assigned to the dorm you had one of two options you could go behind the shower wall or curtain. If the showers were taken you were required to make sure he wasn’t walking down the rows of cubicle then quickly squat on the floor to change clothing.

Incarceration is understood to be a mechanism purposely designed to contain and control bodies. Ritualistic pat downs, strip searches, and random inspections of body cavities are anticipated humiliations. The amount of calculating that goes into showering or using the restroom suggests the power of private humiliations and vulnerabilities, the public performance of bodily functions and the exposure of public showers in a potentially hostile environment is perhaps underestimated.

Most dorms had three or four toilets. The toilets were “partially private”, meaning they may or may not have a door or walls to separate one toilet from the other. If there were walls or

doors, they may or may not be high enough for your dorm mates to watch you and every dorm on every unit had a toilet to be avoided. According to Deena some women's bunks were maybe 12 feet away from the toilet stalls. They had to endure the sights, sounds, and smells of thirty something fellow inmates. The shower set up was described similarly. Although inmate janitors cleaned the dorms everyday there was frequently mold and mildew in the showers and shower curtains if there were shower curtains. Ava shared that she could laugh about it now but when she first got in the system it was really stressful, she showered as fast she could, avoided eye contact and was so nervous about using the restroom that she became painfully constipated.

If you are shy you better get over it, it might be you have to trade privacy for cleanliness...after you've been there a while you don't give a damn! you just care about being able to get in the shower before the hot water runs out....you stop thinking about how embarrassing it is to go [use the bathroom] in front of people you're grateful if the plumbing is working right!... all that time you spent stressing when you first get in...it really is a shock I guess.

---Ava

Under almost constant surveillance, women primarily socialize in public, meaning in the dayroom or recreation yard. Acceptable leisure time, socializing is limited to "hanging out", watching television, talking, reading, writing and sharing letters or photos, playing board games, drawing, gossiping, primping before going to rec (recreation) to flirt. Other forms of leisure are not allowed and can result in catching a case. They must be executed discreetly and require a lookout to warn when the laws (COs) are coming. The following activities may result in a low level case such as sharing food, traffic and trading, washing state issued clothes, passing, or being out of place (inside another inmate's dorm). Activities that may result in a serious high level case include kissing, fondling, *giving* or *getting head*, fighting, or using drugs.

Passing or traffic and trading commissary occurs in every type of relationship and can be considered an indicator of whether someone is *running game* (manipulating or using someone);

this is determined by observing the flow of goods. Watching other women's actions or listening to their conversations is called *being up in people's business*. Women are interested in relationships of all type but especially romantic relationships. Of particular interest is "who is sharing commissary, flirting, cheating, exhibiting domestic caretaking behavior or high risk behavior and who is having sex". This information allows women to make speculations about the women they live among.

Social Expectations

There is a socially acceptable way to shop, all women are expected to the standards but the newcomers and the *indigent* (poor) are the most closely scrutinized. Most women quickly learn that there are established guidelines for shopping, deviation from these guidelines reveal a woman's priorities. Cleanliness should be the concern above all others. Malicious gossip occurs when, among other things, a woman does not follow the acceptable purchase plans.

Women who are considered *indigent* by other inmates endure a heightened degree of scrutiny. Often women will donate *hygiene* items to women observed to have very little or nothing at all and if the *indigent* woman is continually grateful there seems to be no problem. If an *indigent* woman has the opportunity to go to the store but purchases food instead of hygiene items she loses respect among the women in the dorm, becomes the subject of gossip and risks the chance of losing assistance.

Hygeines are the first items to be purchased; this is a significant part of inmate culture and is carefully monitored by other inmates. The appearance of cleanliness is very important. Being , labeled as *trifling*, appearing physically or socially *messy*, will lead to social rejection thereby hindering one's ability to establish strong relationships and/or gain entrance into the informal economy. If you appear unhygienic you increase the likelihood someone they will *call*

you out (make an accusatory statement in public). This is meant to humiliate and possibly initiate a physical altercation resulting in *bad blood* between the one who called you out and everyone she is loosely affiliated with. *Bad blood* is negative or hostile feelings between two or more women. Bad blood between an individual well-known in the dorm will hinder one's ability to establish beneficial relationships.

The second priority in the unspoken shopping plan often includes items for correspondence (e.g., pens, pencils, pads of paper stamps and envelopes, colored pencils, and legal-size envelopes). For those who rely on friends, family, or pen pals for money these items are tantamount to their tools. Items purchases from this point forward are markers of affluence.

After ensuring you are able to keep clean and stay in touch with your family (priorities one and two) inmates most frequently begin the accumulation of staples—food items that can be used on their own or as the foundation of more elaborate dishes. This would include items such as packages of ramen noodles, bottle of liquid cheese, salt and pepper or a bottle of tobacco sauce. The next level of purchasing habits are *treat items* including but not limited to bottled water, sodas, cookies, candy, snack cakes, granola bars, and ice cream. These items are assumed to be removed from the list when high priority items must be purchased. What constitutes staples or treats differs for each woman. The staples of women with large, steady, reliable deposits of money into her *inmate trust fund*, may be considered items of luxury to a woman with an unreliable flow of *freeworld* money.

The final part of shopping is creating the list and filling out the proper form to be presented at the *commissary*. This form must be filled out in a specific way, access to a commissary list or commissary rules and instructions are difficult to obtain. You must rely on the help and instruction of another inmate. This assistance often includes an unspoken expectation of

a tip in the form of a commissary item. Many considerations go into the process of a tip. The expectation of a tip depends first and foremost on the financial status of the helper. It is good manners to tip if the woman primarily relies on informal exchanges of goods and services to acquire resources. The mistake of not tipping will most likely be pardoned if the inmate is new to the system and has not yet learned prison etiquette. It may be later explained to the new inmate by an older inmate and the new inmate may have a chance to redeem herself so that her entrance to the shared living space begins well.

Conspicuous Consumption

Just as the bright yellow indigent mail packet is a public signifier of an inmate living in relative deprivation, there are a number of items that announce an inmate's economic and social affluence. Conspicuous consumption is one of the ways inmates display status effectively attracting the individuals who themselves have status and steady supply of resources. Cliques and families are the most likely to participate in conspicuous consumption. The most frequently observed displayed of wealth and status was reported to be conspicuously giving things to other people, primarily large expensive commissary meals.

In Cindy's dorm, one woman regularly cooked large elaborate meals in the common room, she would then walk around calling various people to "come and get what she got for them". When a new woman came to the dorm and put on her own display of generosity, she found herself pulled into an unsupervised restroom and sharply corrected by the first woman and her support group. I asked Cindy why a woman would be threatened by another for sharing food. Cindy said it wasn't about the food, it was about making sure the new woman knew who was top dog.

Conspicuous consumption and relatively affluent women have access to what are considered luxury items, items that are difficult to acquire. Cindy explains the range of items and the amount of value women place particular items:

Everything is for sale, every freakin' thing is...if you've been the system for a while you can accumulate make-up for a while it could be mostly used up but you can still sell them for \$10.00 because they don't sell those colors anymore and they are in demand big time people really go for the make-up, that's what I'm saying make up, make-up you can really maneuver with make-up, one side comb I could sell for \$10.00, supply and demand! That's more than they sold them on commissary but they don't sell them anymore and people really wanted that something special. Supply and demand baby, I mean, I mean there was some pretty lucrative things you can do, there was money everywhere to be made.

--Cindy

Part 2 Cindy's Story: A Story of Rehabilitation

The most extensive and detailed interviews were provided by my key informant, Cindy. This portion of the chapter provides insight into her personality and the meaningful personal experiences she shared about incarceration and her freeworld life. My decision to employ aspects of the life history approach is its capacity to "interrelate the private with the public, the personal and the social" (Schwartz 2001). Cindy's contributions provide the social world that allows each participant's contribution may be positioned in greater context.

My impression of Cindy was constructed over a year and a half of interviews, phone conversations, and on a few occasions running errands and shopping. Our interviews took place in a sandwich shop near her job or in a laundry mat parking lot. She introduced me to her mother, invited me into her home, to her church, she took me wig shopping, and taught me how find the best deals on gasoline. Cindy is good natured, articulate, observant, quick witted, and for the most part has a positive attitude about life, this I attribute to her religious beliefs. She also is clever, a skilled problem solver and very persuasive. These skills have allowed her to thrive in the streets, in the prison system and now in the "legitimate" world.

A Story of Rehabilitation

While incarcerated she decided to work toward her GED, then prepared for and passed the college entrance exams, and eventually began taking college courses in prison. Cindy currently is working toward a Bachelor's Degree in Social Work. She has managed to find employment and a place to live; this is no small feat if you have an extensive criminal record. Cindy has a small, clean, decorated apartment, is well dressed and drives a new model car. This is the only version of herself she allows her coworkers, church family and consanguineal family to see.

Without solicitation Cindy shared with me the tougher parts of her life, her struggles, her imperfections, and her disappointments. Several times she called to talk about an emotionally charged confrontation or event. It was through these phone calls I was able to see what she calls "the old Cindy", a number of times she came close to physical confrontations at her job, with her neighbors, and once in the road after a fender bender. Over the phone Cindy revealed the struggles she had been experiencing during our period of contact. In impromptu telephone conversations Cindy addressed a number of subjects that she had not described in our face to face interviews: She revealed that her husband was emotionally abusive and unfaithful; she cannot really afford her car; she has come close to academic suspension; her money troubles have pushed her to consider committing crimes again; she has come close to using drugs again; she relies on food to cope with depression and has gained close to 70 pounds since she was released from prison. In one of our first interviews she told me that she didn't understand why but she felt more like her real self with strangers than with the people she is close with. Her statement, her willingness to share private and potentially embarrassing details, and the

corroboration of the women with whom she was incarcerated has led me to believe that Cindy has attempted to be as candid as possible.

One detail to be mentioned before presenting Cindy's story. Although Cindy understood that no compensation was available for participation in the study (other than picking up lunch) during the first two months of the study she asked to borrow money several times. This occurred always a few days before or a few days after a formal interview. I began to contemplate fazing her out of the study and focusing greater attention on another participant. My greatest concern was that she would pull out late in the study if I continued to disappoint her. I now think she was just testing the boundaries of our relationship.

Cindy was sentenced to 15 years in a Texas women's prison for robbing two Dominos Pizza stores with a toy gun. She spent 10 years locked up for 2 robberies that yielded neither cash nor pizza. Her partner in crime (and in life) was her new husband of 6 months, Bughead. She began to call him Bughead while incarcerated. It is not a term of endearment, she announced that he is not an attractive man and he was not an emotionally or financially supportive husband while she was in prison. He was given the minimum sentence of 2 years for his part in the crime. Prior to sentencing Cindy had admitted to being the "master mind", she both planned and committed the actual robberies and she had a criminal record, while Bughead had no prior arrests and was the designated getaway driver. But this does not account for the discrepancy in their sentences.

Cindy has been arrested more times than she can remember, the arrests were made for a variety of misdemeanors and minor felonies ranging from traffic tickets, to possession of marijuana to assault. These charges resulted in either probation or time served in county jail, but

over time she *picked up* (was convicted of) two felony charges, one for selling drugs and one for terroristic threat.

Cindy explains that the terroristic threat charge was not as bad as it sounds. She discovered that her boyfriend was having sex with men. She was so angry she screamed hateful homosexual slurs outside of his apartment and threatened to kill him over the phone. He recorded her calls and took it to the police. She had no idea that it was against the law, let alone a felony that would result in prison time. Both felony charges resulted in 18 month sentences. She explained that “back then prison was like a revolving door”; parole came easy and she never served more than a couple of months in an actual prison facility. Cindy said back then being locked up was almost like a vacation from regular life, she had no desire to “turn her life around” and while she was locked up she was planning the next *big score* (a money making venture usually through illegal actions). By the time she was released she had made arrangements to pick up where she left off selling drugs.

Even though a decade had passed since her last prison sentence this last conviction was felony number three. In Texas a 3rd felony conviction falls under the “three strikes law” meaning she had to receive a mandatory minimum sentence of 10 years. The judge gave her the minimum and a little more on top of that.

Cindy refers to her husband and herself as the cartoon Bonnie and Clyde. The clumsy, comical execution of their robberies included her dressing in a make-shift burka robbing the first Dominos using a Middle Eastern accent while brandishing a toy gun. She had been an assistant manager at this particular store and was quickly recognized, no one cooperated with her demands, nor did anyone from the second store they attempted to rob. After the second attempt the two of them hopped into their getaway car making it across the street before getting a flat

tire. They were arrested on the spot. According to her, the cops were laughing at their comical fiasco. Cindy doesn't just tell the story of the crime she reenacts it. She reenacts every role using different voices, accents and registers, different facial expressions, different gestures and laughs so hard she literally holds her hands to her stomach and tilts her head back in a full on laugh complete with a "keekeeke" sound and a few tears leaking out. After a deep breath she moans "oh girl" slowly lowering and shaking her head. "Girl, it was humiliating, humiliating." The circumstances that led to the criminal act (dubbed a "crime spree" in the small local suburban newspaper) were told in a far more somber manner.

This part of her story is riddled with pain, shame, and regret that Cindy continues to feel even though more to 15 years has passed. Cindy had struggled with drug addiction for most of her life, her drug of choice being crack cocaine, but prior to the robberies she had been clean for several months, except for smoking marijuana (according to Cindy didn't count as a real drug.) She had her own apartment, was working two jobs and raising her four kids on her own—three boys and one girl ranging from age 10 to 15. She was going to church, where she met her husband Bughead. He was the pastor's nephew, had a position in the church and seemed to be a promising candidate for a husband. She said at first he seemed great, he did nice things to help her and the kids like take their laundry to the laundry mat in a giant bundle on his bicycle (without being asked to), he had his own car washing business, and he would make small sweet gestures like riding his bike all the way to her work just to say "hi", in hindsight she believes that she wasn't really seeing him for who he was, but for who she wanted him to be.

Cindy explained that she wanted this marriage (her third) to be right according to her Christian beliefs so she elected to not have sex with Bughead until they were married. Cindy then confesses that this was a ploy to try to get him to marry her; she says that 10 years ago she

would have never admitted that. Consequently, they married after 3 months of courtship. He moved into the apartment and their troubles started right away.

Cindy is a heavy set African American woman, about five feet 4 inches tall and approximately 275 pounds. She is an attractive woman in her mid-50's but could easily pass for her early forties. She has a light complexion with freckles, large medium-brown eyes with thick eyelashes, full lips, and what is often referred to by African Americans as "good hair." Although Cindy has always been admired for her beauty and has had no problems attracting men she admits to having long-term issues with body shame. This shame increased exponentially as her new husband avoided having sex with her, eventually telling her she was fat and he simply wasn't attracted to her. During the first six months of her marriage to Bughead, Cindy turned to drugs again to cope with the verbal abuse, humiliation and his constant reminders of her weight.

The family lived paycheck to paycheck, she worked as an assistant manager at Dominos pizza and he washed cars and received a *crazy check* (a disability check acquired by being diagnosed with a psychiatric disorder). Cindy told me that Bughead was not really crazy, his mother had orchestrated his diagnosis and applied for assistance when he was very young. It took only a single two-day crack-smoking binge to spend all the money meant for rent and bills. Cindy says her back was against the wall and she was determined to set things right. She had to get the money to take care of her kids somewhere. Historically, Cindy maintained her drug habit by selling drugs, shoplifting, running scams, seducing and robbing men, and stealing. She figured she could just do this one job, catch up on her bills and get her life back on track. She felt that she had tried to be a dutiful Christian wife, she worked full time, shopped, cleaned, took care of the kids, and tried to look pretty for her husband. According to Cindy, she did what she was supposed to do and Bughead, in a way, acknowledged the role he played in triggering Cindy's

relapse. This is why he agreed to take part in the quick-nobody-gets-hurt robbery that would resolve their money problems.

So here we go off to freakin' jail. I'm like 'Oh my god' you know? You know you think about everything! you think about what you did wrong, you think about if you'd made better choices, especially in my situation you think about your children (pause) and um it was a very, very traumatic experience for everybody involved and for somebody who is a drug addict, which I was, that caused the whole downfall in that situation, huh (a reflective chuckle) you just, you just can't wrap your mind around how you got here. You are basically in your heart a good person.

---Cindy

During the first few interviews Cindy frequently gets lost in her thoughts. There are long pauses, deep breaths. I can see her watching events unfold in her mind's eye. She's there. She's revisiting the fear of the uncertain, the shame, the pain her children endured in her absence. She has a tendency to smile with her head slightly tilted when she talks about painful things. She chuckles to herself almost like she forgets I'm there. Sometimes, she shakes her head as if she is still in disbelief. A few times her face flushes and tears try to form but she shakes it off and shifts into another gear. During the first interview I quickly discover that when Cindy shares something deeply personal she does one of two things, she reprises an array of Christian platitudes or she goes into "entertainer mode" telling animated stories, and literally singing and dancing. I understood these to be her way of handling emotional stress.

Mid-way through our first interview Cindy described herself as an imperfect Christian who strives to live right and a happy person who loves to laugh and to make people laugh but occasionally succumbs to bouts of rage. For the most part this is how Cindy presented herself. In all the time we spent together she was funny, clever, kind to others, and came across as honest. She shared many versions of herself and a wide range of linguistic registers. She went from polite, formal, proper English to African-American vernacular speech to comedienne who wasn't afraid of acting silly to an intimidating, rage-filled woman willing to resort to physical violence.

I spent time with each of these versions of Cindy but I think it would be safe to say her resting state essentially matched the way she described herself. She liked to laugh, to entertain, tried to treat others with respect and kindness, was quick to accept responsibility and was apologetic for what she considered to be un-Christian behavior.

Every woman I spoke with began with a “I-used-to-be-this-type-of-person but now I’m this-type-of-person” narrative. Every woman I spoke with was changed “by the grace of God” and believed that the most recent time they were incarcerated was *the* “wake up call.” She attributes her changed-for-the-better-self to “Jeejus” (Jesus). According to Cindy, she served a long sentence because He knew it would take that much time to thoroughly change her heart, break her addiction to drugs and easy money, to stop lying to everyone including herself and face who she really was. Cindy was the most candid about her past self. She also seems genuinely and continually surprised how different of a person she is now. As Cindy tells it, she had lied for so long about who she was and what she had done in life that she herself had forgotten they were lies. Cindy’s old self was an amazing fabrication crafted with skill and detail. Cindy had no problem sharing this part of her life, now that it was in her past she no longer felt embarrassed or ashamed of the lies, now it was another hilarious story she acted out.

I was somewhere, ah the pastor’s house, a matter of fact and...I said I was such the liar, that my life was *such* a lie I mean I had built this person who didn’t have any criminal record, who had some college, and was in the military!! Everything a person would want to hire and I had it down to a T!...I had my fictitious GED and my fictitious military ID...And nobody knew! I mean idiots! Nobody knew! They had no idea and oh my gosh it was just, it was amazing how I had made this fake identity, I thought it was hilarious! (laughing) And, and the people [from her church] looked at me like ‘wow you was that much of a liar?’ I was like ‘well hey you know I’m a new person now don’t look at me like that!’ keekeeke! The façade I had created around myself...hmmm mmm (shaking head) I mean for me, it was survival down basic. I had children, I needed to work and make decent money where I could support my family and not be on welfare and that was the bottom line for me and the situation in...
---Cindy

The metamorphosis from the old Cindy to the new Cindy began about 2 years into her sentence. She befriended a woman she met while the two of them were being transferred from jail to prison. She repeats several times that she does not know why she opened up to this woman, but she attributes much of the new Cindy to their connection and how she was able to begin dismantling old Cindy with someone she had known for only a few months. Even as her lies were exposed their relationship continued to solidify.

Oh, I never forget, girl (laughing) me and my friend was talkin' "blah, blah, blah" I don't remember what it was, oh I mentioned somethin' bout getting' my GED, it was just one of the lies that built another part of a lie I had made for myself and she stopped and said 'I thought you said you had your GED!' And I stopped cause I din't know what she was talkin' about and then I said 'Oh, girl that was a lie, come let's go' (big laugh) she stops and she looks at me and she has this look on her face like, 'she said it like it's no big deal!' then she laughed! (kee-kee-kee) I was so nonchalant and then we kept walking! Oh, girl you shouda' seen her face! I don't know why this person I decided to be honest with but she kept on walking with me like 'ok'

---Cindy

One of Cindy's first stories is how she met her best friend, Monica. Her friendship with Monica is unique in a number of ways. For Cindy it was the first real "woman" friend, her first close relationship formed as an entirely cleans and sober individual, and they met at a time when she lost the emotional and financial support of her friends and family. Each woman was cut off from their previous worlds and their previous selves all while adjusting to a new reality.

They *hit* prison (entered prison) at the same time and together experienced the entire intake process together, body cavity searches, medical exam, psychological exam, intelligence exam, uniform distribution, job and housing assignment. At one point in time the prison facility was short of general population bunks so the two women were assigned in a two-person segregation tank together. Cindy paints an unpleasant picture.

The 5 by 12 foot tank was usually reserved as punishment for severe disciplinary infractions. There was no air conditioning, no fan, and no circulation of air at all. The walls and

floors were grey concrete, the door was made of steel and had a slot just big enough to pass meal tray through and a small Plexiglas window. There were two grey steel bunk beds each with a flat plastic mat. There was a steel toilet sitting directly in front of the bunks, if you had to “pee” or go “booboo”, you did it in front of your *bunkie* (the person with whom you share close sleeping space). If one *bunkie* was new to the system you taught her how to *courtesy flush*. Cindy describes this as “flushing and flushing that booboo down while your butt creates a seal trapping in the smell”. Connected to the back of the toilet was a sink with a water spigot that would dribble water out of the top of the spigot, sometimes there was a tiny piece of blue prison soap approximately one third the size of complementary hotel soap. The spigot was of little use as a water fountain so they were forced to wait for a cart with a water jug to come to the door (3 times a day) for the single serving of water dispensed in a cone paper cup. Cindy explained that it was in these conditions the two women got to know each other.

They locked me into this two man cell with a white lady and she seemed so sad and uh and I am who I am! just being myself and uh next thing...I know I'm singing George Michael songs bouncing around...with a guitar singin' George Michael songs and that lady looks at me like 'who the hell is this?' (laugh) she realized somebody in the room (laugh) uh, lo and behold you would never know it, me and that lady would be true friends. We continued to be friends and I consider her a sister...She had to feel out 'is this somebody who wants to take advantage of me?' or use her kindness for weakness and I had to let her know 'cause I DID care for as a friend! I don't know why I was so comfortable with tellin' her my lies I mean I NE-VER EV-ER *never in my life confessed to anything!*...for some strange reason I became vulnerable with her I became open and that's something I never had with anybody not even my family... ---Cindy

Cindy explains that she and her friend were sent to different units for about a year and a half and by coincidence they were assigned to the same unit in the same dorm. There they spent approximately two years in that dorm, over this time they grew closer to each other until her friend was released made parole. Her friend told Cindy that she would write her and try to send

her money, she did for the next 10 years. When mail came from Monica, Cindy proceeded to perform a special “happy song” in front of the rest of the dorm.

‘My freeend! and I would hold the mail up high so the people in the dorm could see and say ‘my-frien my-frien my fre-en-en-en!’ all the way to my cubicle and every time I got money I would say, I would have tears rolling down my eyes and they would say ‘why you crying?’ and I said ‘I’m not so much crying as I am weeping’ if you could understand that I told them ‘this is not my, this is not my blood relative, God has touched her heart on my behalf, no one has taken care of me and she takes care of me so well’

---Cindy

I asked Cindy to tell me more about their friendship. What was it that made them friends?

How was this friendship expressed? How did a hot cramped cell and some George Michael songs lead to a decade long friendship. The tale of her friendship and sisterhood began with a story about commissary. It includes Cindy and Monica’s sharing of resources as friends, their established economic arrangement and sharing resources with someone outside of their dyad.

The anecdote requires an explanation of a common social interaction among crack smokers.

When acquaintances smoke crack together often one person smokes all of their crack before the other person. As this person begins to come down from the high they crave more crack but have none. At this point the crack-less person tries to convince the other to share what they have left.

I was reading my book and eating too many cookies, so I take these devil cookies and I give ‘em to someone else, so later on, a couple of days later I’m wantin’ some cookies so I go to Monica’s cubicle and say (in a child-like voice with a cutesy face) ‘can I have some cookies?’ And Monica says ‘NO!’ and I say ‘why not?’ And she says ‘you smoked up all your cookies up an now you wanna come smoke up all my cookies!’ Well yes I had smoked up all my cookies before [meaning she ate them quickly] but this time it wasn’t like that and she’s like ‘You’re not gonna to come up here smoke up my cookies’ And I said (in a cutesy voice similar to a pouty kid) ‘I *didn’t* smoke up all my cookies, I gave them away ‘cause I was eating them up too fast and she said ‘I don’t care you shouldn’t gave up your cookies thinkin’ you can smoke up mine, NO!’ and later on she came to my cubicle and she said ‘here’s some cookies’ and I said (big happy smile!) ‘oh thank you!’ because I wanted to eat cookies and read a book (laughing! keekeeke!)...

---Cindy

Cindy had fairly limited resources; she could only make purchases if she was getting work. Cindy did not a surplus of goods but she and Monica helped each other out as best they could. I asked Cindy having limited commissary for herself, how she decided who she was going to give her cookies.

“It was whoever just, whoever just popped in my head or I saw and would say ‘hey do you wanted to have some cookies?’ but it would never be someone who already had something already, it would be someone who wouldn’t have nothing... yeah someone who din’t have none ‘cause I know, I know, what it’s like to not have *anything* and you look around and everyone has all these good things, because they would really appreciate it”
---Cindy

At this point in Cindy’s incarceration, she felt she was beginning to get settled. She had been in prison approximately 2 years, her friendship with Monica was “blossoming” and she had a way to get what she needed from commissary. I asked Cindy about how she got along with other women in the dorm.

I believed because I missed my children I took to one female who was kinda like a daughter to me and that was after a couple uh, years in the system I would say. God I can’t remember her name! (leans back and tilts her head to the side) I don’t remember her name for nothing but I remember how our relationship started. I like a comedy called Martin and she would actually act out some of the scenes and I loved that about her (laughing) Lil Baby! Lil baby is what we called her that’s right! And you know I don’t even think I never knew her real name! That’s a damn shame (chuckles). Yeah ok she would say (in a nagging kid voice) ‘Come on come on Ms. Vickie let’s do it’ [meaning sing and dance] and I would say ‘no I’m don’t feel like doin’ it today’
---Cindy

Cindy proceeded to play the role of herself, Lil Baby, Martin from the sitcom and the backup singers from the sitcom. She gets up from her seat at the fast food restaurant and performs the song and the dance. It was a very physical performance; she had a big smile on her face but did not laugh until the entire song was over. This is what she refers to as going all the way. The people in the restaurant seemed amused.

In the following excerpt Cindy described how she came to adopt Lil Baby. While she was happy to share food with Lil Baby, Cindy was concerned that she would be used.

I think that how she became a daughter to me she made me smile and laugh, oh that girl (laughter slowing down)...She was in her twenties, (nodding) she was in her twenties. God I still can't remember her name I can't remember her name for nuthin'... I remember one day I said 'you know what? I never ain't never had a daughter in prison but I think you gonna be my baby in prison'....You know at first I think she thought like 'Cha Ching' (making the money sound, laughing). I think she thought 'She's gonna share everything, she's gonna give everything' and, and, and that was, that was, I don't know if that was me being cautious you know... I did test her, you know, if she was going to use me I couldn't really gauge [whether Lil' Baby's was taking advantage of her] But she did allow me to have that moment 'cause I guess I needed it. I missed my children so much and it was real comfortable, I got to, I got to baby her and see to what she needed, you know what I'm sayin'?

Because Lil' Baby had limited access to her own resources one must wonder, in what way could Lil' Baby demonstrate that she was not "using" Cindy.

She would come to me for advice. She would come in my cubicle and she would put her head on my shoulder and say 'I need a hug' and I'd give her a hug it was really, it was really good, it was good (smiling). You know...and when I moved on it was ok because she was young, you know what I'm sayin'? I didn't try to fit in with that crowd Lil Baby's peer group] She had that life and she had Mom [speaking about herself]. It was good, it was good... I would cook and I would feed her, I would say (in an authoritative African American motherly voice) 'come in eat girl, your food is ready'. She would always have some story to tell me to entertain me...(pause) You know how your child will just sit next to you and rattl'n off ?and I'd look at her and she'd be talking and she would say thank you and I'd hug her...but sometimes that girl, she'd tax my nerve...Oh, that child! And she would be like (in an obstinate child's voice) 'Miss Vickie you need to come up off that bed, you need to come off that bed and come out of your cubicle. You never come out of this cubicle!' and I'd say (scolding voice) 'girl you better give me my cover!' and she would always come and bother me. Sometimes it was ok but sometimes I wasn't fooling' in that playfulness...I wanted her to be a good pet, 'Stay over there when I want you I'll call for you!'...This is terrible (laughing with her head hanging down shaking in a shameful way) this is a terrible way to look at her but she was like everybody's little pet, she did it to everybody!...the people just was friendly with her and when she would come around they'd say (authoritative African American motherly impression) 'come on girl come over here and get this food' and she'd come! That's how she made it there.

---Cindy

Lil Baby's resource was her company, she was affectionate, she told jokes, sang and danced she even acted naughty. She was able to gain access to food, care and comfort by acting as a surrogate child, forming relationships with the inmates who missed their children.

Part 3: Social Organization and Stories of Social Ties

Anthropologists have long contested the precise meaning, correct usage and application of the term social organization in the context of both small scale societies and large scale societies (Firth 1955). In this section I will broach the topic of social organization in the context of the subculture of women's prisons.

I am relying on a broad actor-oriented definition of social organization described by Roland Firth as the sum of the "roles individuals play in relation to one another" (Elements of Social Organization 1951). Firth suggests those immersed in a society recognize the diverse patterns of behaviors distinctive to the coordination of a particular grouping (Firth 1955).

There are several versions of each form of social organization; I categorized them as friends, romantic relationships, cliques, prison families and economic relationships. I elected not to include the category of "acquaintances". With the exception of economic relationships, "acquaintances" is often used as a catch all phrase used to describe almost every form of relationship (Bentley and Korbette 1992). This is not unique to the women I interviewed, earlier studies state that women are often reluctant to admit to having social ties with other inmates, categorizing terms acquaintances, associates, or simply stating "I stick to myself". It has been suggested that distrust of other prisoners, the belief that women who attempt to befriend others in order to gain access to commissary cause women to minimize the status of relationships (Ward and Kassebaum 1965; Giallombardo 1966; Watterson 1997; Owen 1998; Bosworth 2003). This interpretation is consistent with my findings but I suggest that another factor may come into play

especially in the context of post incarceration. Women may be reluctant to categorize a relationship as friends, lovers or family if they feel as though they are not living up to the standards of what constitutes a “real” friend, lover or family member. By downgrading the relationship status to “acquaintances” women can avoid dissonance for *falling off*—quit writing, sending money or visiting after release.

Cindy provides excellent examples. Her friend who became a sister continued to write and send money years after she was released. Cindy said her dorm mates were amazed and some were even jealous, maintaining a relationship for years after separation is fairly unusual. Cindy followed in her sister’s footsteps and kept in touch with someone she refers to as an acquaintance. Two years before she was released Cindy had a neighboring bunkie with whom she spoke to every day. They trusted each other enough to share private details about their lives, read letters from home, talked about their children and cried in front of each other. Cindy and her bunkie shared a common interest, reading, they collected books to share with one another. They did not go to the dayroom to hang out, they both preferred to stay in their bunks and read. When Cindy made parole, she wrote her bunkie a few times, sent cards, sent her a little bit of money once and purchased \$100.00 worth of books to have delivered to her. Soon after that Cindy wrote her bunkie to let her know that there would be little correspondence from that point forward. Cindy says that her bunkie was grateful and understood Cindy had a life to live. For the purpose of this research I would classify their roles, interactions and behaviors as those that occur between friends.

Friendships

Deena’s first friendship developed in county jail, she was new to the system and still trying to figure out “how things worked”. Scared of being bullied or manipulated for commissary

she stuck to herself. County time is considered *hard time* (the lack of stimulation and distraction often increases emotional distress) and Deena spent the majority of her time crying and sleeping.

She eventually ventured out of her cell and met Jane:

“I had kinda regular money...I was always worried I was gonna be bullied or tricked or manipulated out of my commissary so I was super suspicious and never offered to share or anything...[Jane] never asked me for anything and I trusted her, as soon as I could I moved my mat into the same cell as hers so we were bunkies... I had a t-shirt from commissary that I could never get clean...one day she offered to wash it for me just because it was something to pass the time. She got it soooo clean! Anyways we got closer and I started to share my food with her because it just seemed like the right thing to do because she helped me with my shirt, eventually she started to make way better meals mixing the jail food and my commissary food and cooked new different types of meals. I joked one day that we were like husband and wife I brought in the money and she did the house work! At the time I thought I was so clever and funny for thinking that. When I got to real prison I found out that is exactly how the world went round. People traded commissary or actually paid people for work or whatever AND there really were husbands and wives!”
---Deena

Deena believes she and Jane understood that although they liked each other they were not going to pursue a relationship in the freeworld. When Deena *pulled chain* (transferred from jail to prison) Jane “inherited” everything Deena could not take with her. Deena had *steady money* and had accumulated a fair amount of “luxury items” over her six month stay in the county jail.

According to Deena “luxury items” in county jail were superior to “luxury items” in prison. Jane inherited what amounted to an entire, fully stocked inmate household. This includes on 2 pillows, a large plastic storage box (that acted as a pantry, a prep area and table), all commissary food and kitchen items such as a hot pot, can opener, cups, bowls, and spoons, a full array of hair products and hygiene, pads of paper, pencil (and sharpener), and pens. Jane inherited contraband as well, a homemade deck of cards, items collected for art projects—candies and their wrapper for coloring, a razor, pieces of card

board and various items that had not yet been confiscated. Deena said leaving everything to Jane was “such a good feeling”. Jane received no money, mail or visits from the freeworld and her friendship made Deena’s time in county jail so much easier it seemed “only natural” that Jane inherit her stuff.

Cliques

Social systems and networks, especially in the context of same-sex relationships and prison families, have been one of the most prominent themes in past research into women’s prisons. In the nineties, scholarship in the discipline in criminal justice began to suggest that cliques and prison families, were the equivalent of prison gangs and be treated as such (Forsythe and Evans 2003). In men’s prisons gangs are classified as cliques who have organized their group around illegal operations or activities (Skarbec 2012). The women I spoke reported having no knowledge of female gangs; they spoke instead of cliques and families. A clique is loosely defined as a group of people, bound together by a common feature or interest. Inclusion provides a sense of acceptance, belonging, unity and identity (Skarbec 2012). Each group member receives or has access to emotional support, resources and protection, likewise each member is expected to provide the same forms of support and protection for fellow members.

Cindy was impressed by two cliques in particular. Each group was connected through a shared identity; the first was connected by ethnicity (“The Latinas”), the next connected by sexual orientation (“the Gay Community”). Cindy believed that the formation of the Latina clique “was a matter of speaking Spanish and cooking Spanish food” not outright racism. She explained that the Latina women liked to cook elaborate meals large enough to feed the entire group. Everyone in the group contributed something, and regardless of the size of their

contribution, each member received of a portion of the big meal. This collaboration of cooking and eating together is referred to as a *spread*.

Cindy shared her admiration for the ways in which these groups embraced and supported each other both emotionally and materially. She explained that in the gay community, even the women who were “only” *gay for the stay* found acceptance and support among the clique:

These people [the lesbian and bisexual women] have the concepts of giving, sharing and being polite and doing the right thing, the way Christians are supposed to do but don't. They was about twelve when they all sat down together it was huge! They always give, they always have, nobody goes without! They treat their own good! The gay people they have a circle of people in they group and when they cook something, everybody get something even if they're not that close. One of things they do is make coffee balls, they take the coffee grounds and mixed it together with ground up cookies and do some stuff to them, they are expensive to make, expensive especially to share with people you don't even really know. Everybody would always plan something for the weekend. Everybody would take turns and plan something for the so called gay community. None of them was ever without, none of them was ever hungry, none of them was ever in need and that's the concept they looked out for each other and that's just how it was! It's somethin' to see! But you can't be envious of them. ---Cindy

Romantic Relationships

Romantic prison relationships are frequently a topic of interest to social scientists, the general population and incarcerated women. There are a number of factors that make the prison romance interesting to the public, the prisoners and to academia, some factors include sexual fluidity, fluidity in the presentation of gender, and prison as a setting of social control, deprivation, and surveillance conjure images of forbidden love and sex. Earlier research into love and sex among incarcerated women concluded that “real” lesbians, women who were lesbians prior to incarcerated, were held in lower esteem by their fellow prisoners and COs, than women labeled as gay for the stay (Selling 1931; Giallombardo 1966; Potter 2004). Women who appeared to be lesbian were segregated from the general population and locked in “daddy tanks” as to not seduce the women presumed to be “normally straight” (Jackson 2011). Incarcerated

women distinguish “real” lesbians by their masculine appearance or male gender performance. Several names are used to differentiate “real” lesbians from women whose presentation of masculinity is believed to be part of a scheme meant to acquire commissary. These names include but are not limited to: stud broad, butches, dyke, he/she, bull dagger, and bull dyke.

In the past, sexual orientation was assumed to be a fairly stable trait generally determined at a young age and consistent within one’s life span. Many studies have been conducted refuting that assumption. Kelly K. Kinnish, Donald S. Strassberg and Charles W. Turner conducted one such study detailed in their article Sex Difference in the Flexibility of Sexual Orientation: A Multidimensional Retrospective Assessment (2005). Their study found significant self-reported changes in sexual orientation for gays and heterosexuals. Women reported a greater occurrence of change over time than men. The authors suggested that women “learn to be sexual in the context of social relationships and subordinate sex to love”.

The romantic relationship in prison, more than any other form of social organization, is the most reliable route to commissary security. Intimate gestures, including sharing meals, gift giving, or ensuring she has hygiene and food are common among romantic couples especially if the women live in the same dorm. Because being in a romantic relationship can be seen as materially beneficial, romantic relationships are the most closely scrutinized forms of social organization. Female inmates are preoccupied with whether or not someone is taking advantage of someone else—especially if the women are known to be sexually active. Many women believe same-sex relationships are not about love, they are about being *hungry*. Hungry, in this context, means wanting to have treats, snack and commissary meals.

Stacy spoke frequently of “lesbian predators”. Providing cautionary tales to newly incarcerated women, warning them about the women who only wanted to “git with you” for your commissary:

I tell them new girls what not to do, you know girls prey on you, you know? the girls try to be they girlfriend. Because some people like, *run so much game* [manipulate] in prison. A lot of people don’t get commissary and commissary’s necessary! I think they like trying to see what they can get and see what a person will give em

---Cindy

Stacy had a number of girlfriends, throughout her prison career. She never mentioned emotional or physical attraction for any of these women but she did share that she preferred White and Spanish women. Stacy laughed as she remembered how other inmates would call her and one of her White girlfriends “Salt and Pepper” and her a Spanish girlfriend “Mocha Latte.” Stacy’s preference for White or Latina romantic partners supports Cindy’s report that most romantic relationships and prison families were bi-racial. Cindy speculated that mixed race partners were beneficial for Black and White women but in different ways. White and Latino women received more financial and social support from their families than African American women, so having a White girlfriend is helpful when in material need. Having an African American girlfriend bestows White or Latina women with street credibility, respect and raises her social status. Stacy had her own reasons for preferring White and Latino women:

I always never really messed with my race that much ‘cause most my race in there is ignorant, you know? So I mostly mess with White. I ain’t got nothin’ against my Black girls don’t git me wrong now. It’s just that I choose not to. And that’s what it was. I just used to deal with people that had sense, if you had sense then you had me, you know? You had my attention, you know?

---Stacy

Stacy was very aware of the potential *mess* of getting involved with a user. She was involved in several fights, both verbal and physical, several times over girlfriends, over girlfriends. Cheating and flirting and being used were the primary catalysts for drama and mess.

One of Stacy's relationships seemed to include all of the ingredients for relationship troubles, I asked about the dynamics of one of her longer lasting relationships:

I think I was the most dominant in my relationship because I cooked, I did her clothes, I pressed her clothes that's just how I am. I did all that stuff the only thing, is she could braid hair. She was a Mexican girl, what was her name.... Melissa! and she could braid! Me and her didn't go to the store that much, we used to hustle and when we used to hustle we shared. You know what I'm saying? I was giving her money if I had money and she was eating off me. We used to, she used to make cups and sell them for like 3 or 4 dollars. You know and different stuff so she could get paid for braiding. Nar one of us was using each other for anything. We was hustling together and she had her stuff and we would put it together and cook and she needed hygienes, I git it if I need hygeines she would get it that's just how it was. She was just selfish 'cause she would try to hide me in the dorm and then she wanted to keep a girlfriend outside the dorm that was our problem. That [other] girlfriend would say 'yeah you're only together 'cause you're in that dorm together' you know steady going on and on so....

---Stacy

Stacy seemed content with this relationship. She made sure Melissa had what she needed; she handled the domestic duties of washing, pressing and cooking while Melissa braided hair and sold crafts. Stacy knew her girlfriend was *steppin' out* (being unfaithful) with another woman but continued with the relationship. From the outside, it looks as though Melissa was *runnin' game* on Stacy. Stacy does not remember it that way, she saw herself as the "dominant one in the relationship". If Stacy increased her access to resources through her relationship with Melissa, she might have been the "dominant one", although Stacy did not verbalize it being able to acquire commissary may have taken precedence over monogamy.

Prison Families

Scholars have referred to them as fictive kin or pseudo families. Inmates refer to them by the roles they perform, mommas, babies, cousins, grandpas. I am relying on the term prison families to discuss forms of social organization characterized by the use of familial language as referents for the people they interact with. Pierre Bourdieu concisely offers in his article *On the Family as a Realized Category* "if it is accepted that the family is only a word, a mere verbal

construct, one then has to analyze the representations that people form of what they refer to as family” (1977). Incarcerated women connect and rely on the same roles and expectations associated with family outside of prison to family inside of prison.

Prison families vary in size, degrees of emotional investment and expected levels of commitment. Families range in size, from the mother/daughter dyad to the extended multigenerational family complete with grandparents, parents, aunts and uncles brothers and sisters. Degrees of separation, particularly when younger members change the roles of their friends to cousins, may extend families beyond the awareness of the founding matriarch or patriarch. Whether the family is a roleplaying game of momma and naughty child, husband and wife adopting a child or a large system of kin folk who will fight tooth and nail to protect each other, it takes the presence of a woman willing to play the role of child to transform romantic partners or friends into family or cliques into families. Cindy describes the way in which children play a central role in a family.

This particular group, the women that was in the relationship were maybe 2 or 3 years older [than the child] and I think they took to her because she made their relationship; she helped solidify it in a way. [Impression of the child] ‘Mo-om! Da-ad!’ you know, make it a family. It catered to the façade of the female in her mind, it kept her getting food, feeding them dinner the baby would be like ‘We you gonna have dinner ready mom?’ and the dad who maybe got money once a month. She didn’t look too bad but she didn’t have it like the lady had so she would maybe make dinner. And then the child would have friends, and she had a real good friend she called Auntie so Auntie would come over sometimes and eat with them and she would bring a little something too. --
-Cindy

In prison food sharing is the primary way of reaffirming relationships and displaying connectedness. Food sharing holds a substantial amount of meaning. Distributing commissary takes several steps and entails risk. Sneaking food to another inmate requires technique and organization and the effort of at least two people. Being caught could result in catching a case,

confiscation of items and disciplinary action. Mom and Dad from Cindy's dorm had to "secretly" feed their child every day. Child was indigent and a sudden abundance of food or an elaborate meal would be conspicuous and draw the attention of *the laws*:

That child wants to know what's goin' on with her mother and father. This child, who I would say was homeless in prison, 'cause there's such a thing to not have anybody and to be alone in prison, I mean literally alone you know? You might have one stick of deodorant or some toothpaste that the officers allow you but you can't have anything 'cause they know nobody send you nothin'. That's why this particular child cares so much about her mom and dad stayin' together. If they break up she don't have that support anymore. Ain't nobody gonna take care of her if she just another woman. Unless she get a girlfriend with some money or latch on to another family. That's why every time the mom and the dad fight she's up there workin' hard on them playin' the cute baby role. And it works, it works. Cause there's happy family again eatin' dinner and watching TV. like they home or somethin'. She'd really become these people's child because that's all they had.

---Cindy

Sincerity in a relationship accounts for the majority of prison gossip, and family makes for good drama. The greater the benefits of being in the relationship, the more women expect to see a performance of authentic feeling of love and appreciation—this is how they measure intention. According to Cindy, the motives and participation in a family change depending on economic positioning:

In this particular group the Auntie had the money and the woman who played the mom had the money. The one that played the dad, she had a little bit of money but not like Auntie and Mom, so the child and the dad were in like cahoots against the mom and the Auntie. It was a user thing, a user thing it never was really a family no wait how can I say this better? It was in their [the child and the dad] best interest to make sure the family rans smooth

---Cindy

Cindy explains that neither one of these women were "really gay" it was just a long game. The women were merely playing house to make time easier. The mom, she was gay for the stay, she wanted to run something, meaning have some form of power or control. In prison power and control primarily comes from big money. According to Cindy, the dad "had it made".

She was in a long term relationship with a woman who would provide for her and all she had to do to maintain the relationship was braid her hair like a *little boi*, *walk hard* and on occasion provide sex, these presentations of masculinity are not taught but are read by everyone in prison culture from the COs to the inmates (Fischer 1977). In prison, *boi* is a slang term for a woman whose gender presentation is that of a youthful male or masculine androgyny (Peckham 2005), *walking hard* is a form of locomotion usually used by young Black men meant to convey self-confidence and masculinity. For the child it was about *survival*, she didn't have anything to offer other than her company. According to Cindy "her cuteness is what she had to bring to the table" and the dad orchestrated the addition of "their child". In this particular case changing the romantic dyad to a family triad increased access to commissary. Playing the role of mother included cooking family meals.

Auntie also worked to keep the family peace but her presence was not influenced by the need for economic stability. Auntie was older than the rest of the family and had her own money. Auntie's affiliation with the family provided her with status and respect. Auntie's investment was perfunctory and included coddling and reprimanding the child, providing and partaking in the occasional family dinners, "dropping by" to play dominos and being part of the family drama. Auntie's performance of counsel and guidance during public drama commanded the attention of dorm mates and positioned her as an experienced woman worthy of respect, thereby increasing her social capital. Granting this woman (whose real name was never revealed) the honorific of Auntie presupposed that she would play this role for the family while keeping just outside the triad's private sphere.

Extended Families

The only time I seen big families was at Hobby, at Hobby they got *big time* [sentences] I'm talking 50, 60 years plus life...Those families got aunties, uncles, children, nieces, it

was like FAM-IL-Y! and the girls played girls and boys were for real boys. To me right there that was people who wanted to have people who loved and cared for them. It wasn't just about survival, you know? gettin' into families so they can have [commissary]. Even people who didn't have, they were still part of the family...they were more so the nieces and children you know what I'm sayin'? but they played their part! They knew their role. They were playful, funny they knew their part and they played it up! I'm not sayin' they were puttin' on a show but I am saying that they fell into character...some being goofy and that got them the role of a nephew or a child, it's like that, it depends on your cuteness you get adopted. Even if you are indigent, if you're outgoing and you don't cause problems you are in [into the family]! They were like somebody who was performing, you know just how to work the crowd. And they like you so much they invite you, they go 'sit down, come over here and sit down let me talk to you!' And there you are! You find yourself in their presence, they want you in their presence and that's how it begins. At Hobby they're very serious about their family and they very serious about their relationships.

---Cindy

Economic Dyads

Once an inmate has had a chance to take in her immediate surroundings and figure out how she is situated within the inmate world she must decide where she will position herself in relation the other women. An inmate's access to commissary largely determines what her life in the penitentiary will be like. Whether her money goes long or she is classified as indigent, participation in the informal economy requires her to cultivate an economic relationship with another inmate. In order to continue an advantageous economic relationship all parties must create and maintain a social relationship. The economic exchange is an example of balanced reciprocity. This form of balanced reciprocity is often viewed as a direct exchange occurring after both parties negotiated terms believed to be of equal benefit. This is not merely a direct economic exchange; there are social interests to consider and relationships to be preserved particularly if the economic arrangement occurs between friends or family (Sahlins 1971). Cindy provided an example of having one foot in each of two different forms social organization and how economic forces can affect the social:

I remember one event. I used to wash her [Monica her friend/sister] clothes. I decided that's how I wanted to do it because we was friends and I didn't want to be askin' her for

stuff all the time. At least if I washed her clothes it would be even... I would wash peoples clothes to get things, like a little job, also she had this thing with her hands and um and she did do it herself sometimes but she had this thing where her hands ached. And I said 'well I'll do it' and I felt good about it because, you know, I'm *earning* what I get, it's not like (pause) I'm not like always depending on her you know? 'Cause we was friends to do anything for! and I'm earning it and it's a good thing, it was a good place, a good place... Yeah, it was a good thing and I *wanted* it to be like that 'cause I wanted her to know I valued her friendship and not just for what she could do for me and I felt good about it!

---Cindy

For every good for sale or service offered, there is an economic arrangement to be negotiated between a provider and recipient. Participation in the informal economy also requires a degree of tact and an understanding of an unspoken etiquette. Each washer understands that newly transferred inmates are potential customers. This applies to the washers arrival into a new dorm as well. Cindy understood that impression management was important in trying to develop a new economic relationship. Approaching someone too soon is seen as tacky or desperate, women will not want to enter a potentially long term economic relationship with you.

Conditions of scarcity can raise the status of a provider even if they do not have a steady flow of money from the freeworld. Luxury items are status markers especially if they are hard to find. Make up and jewelry no longer offered in commissary, meat or spices stolen from the kitchen and drugs are items in demand for those who can afford them. Inmates who control distribution of such items enjoy a higher degree of status in an economic dyad than inmates who provide domestic services.

Part 4: Social Strategies

Commissary's utilitarian and pragmatic functions are imbedded in an already over determined gender system of shopping. Each informant described commissary as something to look forward to, something to break the monotony. Although commissary was "not much of a store" Deena stated that she would "get a buzz" from the ritual of shopping. This ritual includes

browsing through the commissary list, selecting the items you would like, budgeting, standing in line to make your purchases, unpacking your bag of goods, and storing it in your lockbox. This feeling may be achieved regardless of the amount of money available.

The department of corrections recognizes the status and power associated with the accumulation of wealth among inmates and has created policies limiting spending allowances, the amount of property one may accumulate and forbidding sharing or passing of any items purchased from commissary. These limitations inspire the development of new novel ways of circumventing rules and policies so that inmates may continue to enhance their quality of lives. Once an inmate has reached the limit of possibilities of accumulation and ownership of state approved items she is left with disposable income. A market of goods and services is created by inmates. This informal market of goods and services created an economy accessible to those who cannot participate in the formal economy. This economy essentially created a working class who continually creates new services, new goods, new ideas and new ways of attracting customers. This allows for conspicuous consumption. Any woman with money on her books can buy a t-shirt but more affluent women can afford to pay someone else to wash, dry, fold and press that t-shirt.

The Hustle: “If you spot it, you got it” ---Cindy

In prison, *hustle* is a catch all phrase meaning a job, scheme, method, plan, or strategy in general a system of getting something done. In the context of the informal economy it means any way of gaining something, often through creative, clever or unique avenues. Economic transactions or exchanges are generally forthright. Cindy called her various methods of acquiring commissary her “little hustles”.

Cindy provided the greatest amount of insight into the ways hustles worked. She also articulated, in detail, the social strategies used in women's prison and was able to explain what was considered right and not right according to the prison code. I had presumed there was only *the* prison code and it would be straight forward—black and white when actually the line between what is considered right and wrong is grey and bends depending on age, race, gender, status, sentence length, and by which dorm or unit an inmate finds herself in. Each participant was able to talk about the dishonest strategies used in prison by reporting the actions of others. Only Cindy alluded to the fact that she had in the past also employed unscrupulous hustles again by comparing herself to another woman.

See what these women don' know is I know their game, their little hustles, the way they cozy up to the people who has money Oh yeah girl I know! If you spot it you got it!...You spot, you got it means, if you see something or *call someone out* (meaning make an public accusation)it's because you done did that yourself. Like I can be honest with myself, I know what I done, the way my mind worked to get what I wanted so when someone is acting a certain way or doin' certain things I already know what they saw and what they be thinkin' cause I been that same person. She can act all like she innocent and all, all, indignant (laughing) but it's alright, I ain't mad atchu, do what chugotta do, but just know I gottcha number, mmm hmmm (laughing)

---Cindy

Even though Cindy recognized a manipulative hustle she held no ill will towards this particular women understanding that this woman was just trying to get by.

Hustles-Negative or Balanced Reciprocity

Hustling is also code (in the prison world and the freeworld) for a scam or trickery. Whether it is taking advantage of someone through manipulation or blatantly refusing to complete an exchange, the *hustler* does not fulfill their side of a deal, social or economic, explicit or implicit. This form of trickery may be a matter of survival but often includes a feeling of satisfaction and a lack of remorse. This most definitely occurs but forms of negative reciprocity

like those resulting from hustling someone out of something are not beneficial in the long run--- particularly if you wish to participate in the informal economy. Hustling (negative reciprocity) occurs more frequently in social relationships than in economic relationships. This is reported to be the primary reason why women are distrustful of each other.

The presence of disposable income in this environment of relative deprivation has allowed a number of services to emerge. For some women, like Cindy and Stacy, these “little hustles” are about survival. Providing goods and services are their only source of income. Cindy realized this as soon as hit prison, she explains she had no hygiene and had to figure out what her hustle would be. She had to learn to hustle. She began by observing which goods and services were in demand, then she determined what she was able to do. At this point she had not yet accumulated the means of production necessary to “make money” so she had to rely on state issued items and borrowed materials.

To get by you look at the situation, you look at what people are doin’ to get commissary. Ok when I went in I had nothing goin’ into prison. I had nothing’. I had no hygiene and I needed hygiene! I cannot draw and I cannot braid, I suck. So what I did was I made stationary! [Drawing on paper and envelopes] You see the people who are artists and you see people shading colors and I thought to myself ‘I can do that’. I’d get my indigent packet and made envelopes, I made a sea, a sky, some sea gulls in the background, I cut a box with a razor for waves then another one for clouds and took some map pencils, I borrowed some map pencils, and shaded it with a piece of cloth I cut off a [bunk] sheet. So I sold 5 pieces of paper and an envelope for 75 cents. And I’d never forget it was a white girl and she saw me and said ‘what are you doing?’ and I said ‘well I’m getting some stationary together ‘cause you know I need some hygiene and I’m gonna sell it these four pieces of paper and an envelope 75 cents you can’t beat that’ You know? She bought all of my stuff and she bought more than I needed. But she respected the fact I believe that here I was trying and I wasn’t begging you know expecting somebody to owe me something nobody owes me anything and she bought all my hygiene.

---Cindy

Learning to hustle, means appraising the environment, observing the women with whom you live and trying to figure out the niche you can fill in order to gain access to resources. Sex for commissary is no different. Cindy reported that “everything was for sale; you can even buy

head (oral sex), even that was for sale!” Many incarcerated women have lived on the fringes of society relying on which ever hustles have brought them their desired outcomes. Sometimes it is dealing drugs, robbery, and embezzlement; sometimes it is exchanging sex for money. In the face of institutional deprivation there is no particular reason to forgo a tried and true method of acquiring resources as long as there are willing participants. Sex is a commodity inside and outside of prison. The single sexed environment of prison increases the value of willing sexual partners, especially if they perform a male gender role. Every woman I interviewed stated that little bois have no trouble finding girlfriends to support them. Because there is a stigma attached to prostitution it is often packaged differently than in the freeworld, women, especially if they are performing the male gender role, are able to flirt, seduce and have sex with a number of women. These women are referred to in a number of ways from *players* to *hustlers* to *commissary whores*. If a woman is in a relationship but appears to not have authentic feelings for her girlfriend she is considered a whore.

Goods and Services

A woman with skill and experience will find a built in population of potential “regular customers”. Braiding, scratching, oiling or greasing the scalp, cutting, styling, and applying perm, almost every woman in prison will have one or more of these services provided. African American hair requires a degree of routine care. So important is hair care, hair grease is one of the first items donated to indigent women. Women with access to resources can afford intricate, labor intensive braided designs, or perms and trims. One of Cindy’s hustles was to sneak left over perm solution from the beauty shop located in the command building where she worked. She would then either sell or give it to someone who could not afford perm solution.

Stacy explained with pride that she was able to provide great haircuts with only a razor removed from a state issued razor blade; she boasted that it was word of mouth that brought her customers from outside her dorm

When I was in there I cut hair I used to cut the little bois hair I used to cut the White girls hair I cut they ends if they wanted, whatever they wanted I could do all that and I did just with a razor blade and a comb... if I had to cut it out there on the rec yard I got paid with stamps I used to charge, you know I used to charge five dollars cause if they catch me with a razor blade that's a major case.

--Stacy

Stacy understood that this service held a particularly high risk, as did her customers. This was an illegal service performed outside the dorm, and possession of a razor blade is a high level case, a case that the parole board looks at when considering release. This service required a special form of payment, stamps are easy to traffic out of the dorm and can be traded for commissary inside the dorm. Stacy performed a cost benefit analysis when considering performing this job. At some point she decided \$5.00 was worth the risk.

Selling art is a fairly steady source of income for those who have a knack for it. Commissioning art to send home is one the few things a woman, especially women with children can do for her friends and family. Prison art includes greeting cards, stationery and matching envelops, origami, decorated handkerchiefs and plastic mugs. Almost every piece of art is commissioned and personalized. The most frequently requested works are for birthday, Christmas, Valentines and anniversary cards. Women who rely on art sales for commissary have their tools. This includes basic items, pens, pencils, and paper, safety scissors, colored pencils, and if the commissary sells them, watercolors. Then there are unconventional items colorful candy wrappers, colored candies (such as M&Ms), powdered milk (used to make glue), and

instant coffee. One of the most important tools required are “patterns”. Patterns are anything that can be traced or to inspire original art. Artists who get the most work have colored paper and children’s coloring books sent to them from the freeworld. Customers browse through the patterns looking for something their children, friends, family or girlfriends might like. Art projects are usually done at a table in the day room; this public performance announces who is the resident artist, what patterns they have and their level of skill.

Intimidation is a social strategy. Cindy explained that not every woman entering prison, learns the error of her ways, and turns her life around; she believes that women who come into prison often do the same things they did out in the world perhaps altering their methods slightly to accommodate to prison life.

I’ve actually seen, some women bully other girls for sex. You didn’t really see it that often, you hear about it...it don’t come out in the light of day really. You know you don’t really expect it to happen on the female’s unit but when you go to a female unit like Hobby where those people are hard core doin’ hard time they don’t give damn, they in there forever and a day you know? and the bigger girls what I’m talkin’ bout when I say bigger girls I’m talking about BIG 5’9”, 6 foot 200 and something pounds makin’ women have sex with them you know and makin’ them feed them and buy them stuff literally just bullyin’ people. We had, we had a few white girls makin’ shanks and keepin’ them under the mat because they were just that scared.

--Cindy

Being a look out is service offered. Cindy’s observations included romantic relationships and prison families, in this case it appears that intimidation can shape social relationships and the women being bullied must adapt to the dynamics of a family that is created and maintained by fear. Cindy explained the circumstances of the bunkmates behind:

There was this one so-called family whose bunks were grouped together in the corner where the cameras couldn’t see, this was in state jail, and really I say so-called because they grouped together and ate together but because they were basically scared! This one big ole woman, I mean big she wanted to have sex with this little white girl. So she made this girl her wife and had sex with her. This poor girl she couldn’t talk to nobody because

that big girl be jealous and talking shit. Nobody liked that woman she was mean as hell but she would feed everybody pretendin' all like 'we all a family and I'm daddy and she mama' but it wasn't really like that. She fed everyone with the understanding that they was supposed to be her look out when they screwing and none of those women better say nuthin' and they knew it! I'm tellin' you those women didn't want to be friends with her, let alone family!! I mean they didn't match, you looked at them and it didn't make no sense 'why those girls hanging out with that big ole street woman?' come to find out they was scared as hell and the "so called" mama she didn't want to be with "big daddy" but what she gonna do? either get her ass beat to a bloody pulp or eat this food, smile and play nice. ---Cindy

Cindy mentioned the strategy of being a *lookout* for women having sex. Being a *lookout* (keeping an eye out for COs so that others can do something illegal) is one way people express concern for the well-being of another inmate. Although the aforementioned event described by Cindy relied on the subtle intimidation of prison family members, being a lookout can be a service performed in a client/worker relationship or more intimate relationships like friends or family. The difference between the two types of relationships performing the same job is that the client/worker arrangement includes an agreed up exchange of goods for services once the transaction is complete each individual goes their separate ways. Being a *lookout* for a friend or family means you are invested in that relationship and the "reward" for the potentially risky task is generally not an established fee. The return on this service may be the security of knowing that person is in debt to you.

Women who are able to accumulate a great deal of commissary can *run store*. In prison commissary is currency and *commissary day* is payday. Going to the store means items can be immediately acquired with the understanding that the item must be repaid plus a previously negotiated interest payment. Many women gladly pay the interest for the convenience of acquiring the item without having money presently on their books and being able to acquire things without waiting for the next commissary day. Several factors go into determining the interest rate: how much the storekeeper likes the customer, the customer's financial situation, the

customer's payment history, the availability of the item, the demand for the item, and how frequently the commissary is running. Interest rates can also be determined by how difficult it is to start and maintain the business.

Several steps and considerations go into opening a store. First, you need startup money. This means asking someone in the freeworld to put legitimate money into your inmate trust fund. The amount of money you can spend at the commissary per week is limited so it may take a while to accumulate a surplus of items. You must determine what it is people will want to buy and what will bring you the most profit. You must be able to store all your merchandise in your lockbox so that your bunk is in compliance. This is very important; you do not want to attract the attention of the COs. All commissary must be stored properly this means either asking someone you trust to hold your stuff in their lockbox or renting lockbox space from someone with plenty of room, (renting out lockbox space is another strategy for acquiring commissary). Either way, having to store your merchandise outside of your own box is risk. There are many concerns that must be addressed in order to run the store, you have to be careful not to get caught passing the commissary, you have to hope the woman holding your stuff does not eat your stock, you have to hope the woman holding your stuff does not get shipped out of the dorm (taking your stuff with her), you have to hope that an officer does not confiscate all the merchandise stored in someone else's lockbox. Running store can mean one must hire others to keep look out, discreetly let potential customers know about the store, distribute or pass items, collect payments or even administer whatever type of consequences that may occur as a result of nonpayment. Running store means risking a major case, the confiscation of all your commissary, loss of commissary privileges (among others) and having the COs keeping a closer eye on you for a long while. This

strategy is particularly interesting because an inmate who can afford to open a store is not in financial need.

When a woman has everything she wants and needs from commissary she may have nothing to look forward to, especially if she has been incarcerated for a long time. Running store is a way to cultivate status and prestige. Running store allows one to *be the boss* in an environment where everyone is supposed to be on equal ground. Being the boss commands respect, popularity, and often fear; perhaps even more importantly being the boss means you have the attention of the most sexually and socially attractive women (or boys). Being the boss may be a way to play a familiar roll from your pre-incarcerated life. Finally, being the boss is also just something to do a way to break up the monotony of everyday life.

Illicit drugs are scarce on the smaller Gatesville units but *psych-meds* (psychotropic medication) are fairly accessible. Cindy, Stacy and Deena all sought psychiatric help when they first hit the system. Many women are prescribed medication to for systems related to depression, anxiety and insomnia. They are distributed twice a day at the nurse's station. Distribution of medication is monitored by a CO who checks between the inmates' fingers and peers into their mouth. Cindy and Stacy explained it was fairly easy to tuck their medicine in their cheek to be sold at a later date. Cindy explained the process of becoming a "drug dealer" in prison:

Some people have nothing [access to commissary] so they use what they got, some people get in and they get on psych meds like, I acted like the crazy person, got on these psych meds and start selling these psych meds and because I wasn't a recovered person I was taking them too. So it's not just to sell but to use and other people want to use so it's a circle again supply and demand, truthfully something it boils down to you're doin' it now to survive cause a real good psych med pill can go for at least \$20.00 you can break it in half and still sell it and make money it depends on what you got...You can get a good \$15.00 a piece on those patches that give the morphine. You know what I'm sayin? They was being used and it was not at its potential but it still had dope and people was sellin' it, people was buyin' it and it was unbelievable that one patch could get you two or three hundred dollars! These people, they are taking a risk, on some level it was, it was

about survival, on some level it was about 'I'm the man, I got it goin' on, can't nobody stop me' Those were all part of that.
---Cindy

CHAPTER 6: DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSION

The research presented here has sought to explore the relationship between the informal economy of women's prisons and the dynamics of the prison subculture. This includes describing a number of social strategies. My study has covered relationships and individual strategies created and refined by incarcerated women as a way to meet the material and emotional needs systematically removed through incarceration. I began with a review of the environment from which the informal economy emerges. I sought to explain the relationship between social organization, social strategies, reciprocity, and the informal economy and the ways women regulate the social system by scrutinizing her dorm mates.

I explored the patterns of response to life in prison, the kind of tightly controlled and monitored institutions Erving Goffman examines in *Asylums* (1961). One of the proclaimed goals of the penal institution is to re-build offenders—homogenizing bodies is a vital step in re-creating acceptable members of society. The institution of prison uses segregation and deprivation as punitive devices to reshape the behavior of the offender in preparation for reintroduction into society. Separation from familiar environments, family and social groups, material items that provide comfort, and allow us to perform our self-identity is often used to explain the various changes incarcerated women might exhibit after imprisonment (Sykes 1958; Watterson 1996). Less contact with outside world exacerbates the feeling of isolation and deindividualization established as part of punishment and rehabilitation. The conditions imposed by the institution designed to punish deviant behavior actually stimulate a set of new deviant

activities in the form of an illegal informal economy and a subculture designed to include even the poorest inmates.

Impression Management

Whether discussing their own social life or those of fellow inmates, each woman interviewed shared two narratives. I believe these narratives work as methods of impression management, early in the interview process, before a level of comfort had been established each woman attempted to use “proper” language resulting in a number of hypercorrections. Narrative one was revealed early in the first interview and began without solicitation; it is what I refer to as the “I-used-to-be-that, but-now-I’m-this” narrative. This portion was meant to neutralize any preconceived notions I may have had about the informant as an ex-offender and to emphasize her new identity. This narrative began with a description of the “type” of person they were before and at the time of incarceration. This was accomplished through anecdotes about previous bad behaviors, illegal activities, their attitudes of the legal system and was punctuated by an exemplar story that would allow me to appreciate the extent of change in their way of life. At this point the three informants who had children prior to incarceration mentioned their role as a mother and their love for their children. This narrative uniformly included a discussion about the ways they have changed, their goals in life, what they are doing now and in what ways it differs from before the big change.

Three of the participants explained that it was the most recent period of incarceration that finally motivated a serious shift in behavior and self-concept and this was made possible a through spiritual awakening, specifically through going to chapel in prison and developing a relationship with Jesus. While each woman shared the “I-used to-be-that, but-now-I’m-this” narrative Ava’s differed in several ways. Ava was a battered woman incarcerated for killing her

abusive husband; she reported no history of substance abuse, gave birth to her first child in prison and did not mention any spiritual or religious leanings. For Ava it was not drug addiction or a life of crime she had to overcome, it was living in poverty and seclusion with an abusive husband. The changes she experienced in her behavior and self-concept had to do with being in a predictable social environment and having access to a college education.

The women who had been previously incarcerated or admitted to having substance abuse issues spoke about their children immediately after revealing the negative aspects of their pre-incarceration lives. They expressed regret for what their children may have endured during their incarceration, addictions or while they were engaged with criminal activities. Next, they explained in what ways they did not fail their children and articulated their unfailing love. The predictability of these storylines reflects an acute awareness of societal expectations of women with children. Each woman was compelled to establish and define their roles as mothers directly after presenting their history of deviance. I suspect it is meant to diffuse or ameliorate anticipated negative judgment. Narrative One worked to make the informant feel more at ease. If I understood her to be a new person changed for the better she could speak freely of her time in prison.

The second narrative was used when talking specifically about prison life, this is the point where the relationship between social groups and commissary becomes most apparent. Prison life was told through stories of the “Me Woman” (my informant) and the “She Woman” (all the other inmates). All four women explained how they were able to obtain commissary and how other women was able to obtain commissary. She Women often exhibited a number of tactics for person advantage regarded less that ethical among their peers. She Women are fake, she runs game, she’s a user, a manipulator and messy. While the She Woman was not *always*

presented in a negative light, Me Women (my informants) *never* displayed the aforementioned behaviors.

The presence of She Woman allowed informants to share strategies she may have employed at one time or another without admitting to any particular bad behavior. “Being bad” is characterized first and foremost by negative reciprocity in economic and social relationships. Bad behavior is also characterized by being messy, snitching, bullying and fighting, and stealing, all behaviors that may result in increased surveillance and random cell searches.

Stacy’s interviews included a number of dark She Women stories, often gruesome accounts of rape, violence, bullying, and exploitation. Cindy, having lived and worked with Stacy in prison considered Stacy as a She Woman. This anecdote provides an example of a manipulative strategy from the perspective of the user and one being used and an outside observer.

Stacy’s most recent period of incarceration, a new woman (Janet) entered the dorm and out of concern Stacy approached her to warn her of the bad manipulative women in prison. Janet was described as a sweet, older lady from a good family, who had never been in prison before. According to Stacy, Janet wasn’t really a criminal she was there for something minor like drinking and driving; she was scared and Stacy offered to look out for her. Stacy kept her promise, protecting Janet from everyone and everything; she also did nice things like escort her to church or the library, helped her make her commissary lists, washed her cloths and cooked her food, Stacy said “it was like [they] were girlfriends but there was nothing like that going on”. Stacy offered that she never asked Janet for a thing; Janet just gave her stuff out of the goodness of her heart. Somehow Stacy convinced Janet’s family to put \$200.00 on Stacy’s books so she could better take care of their mom. Stacy emphasized that the money was not for her but for

Janet. Other women in the dorm had been watching this go on for a while and started to warn Janet about Stacy's strategy. They said that Stacy always attached herself to new women offering protection and then mooching off of them. Janet separated herself from Stacy but not before Stacy spent the \$200.00 (at this point in the story Stacy said the money was a gift from Janet). Stacy did not understand what happened, she said that she did offer help to new women, but only because she knew they would be scared and need a friend. She figured that the other women in the dorm were jealous, though she offered no reason why.

Cindy was familiar with Stacy's version of this story; and stated that Stacy was running game. It happens with great frequency to women new in the system, they are scared, they don't know the penitentiary rules or the prison subculture rules, they cannot tell who is really nice and who is using them. Janet was an easy mark and Stacy "cozied up" to her before anyone else had a chance to teach about prison life. Stacy was exactly one of the people she warned others about.

The significance of commissary and the informal economy in the lives of incarcerated women is apparent in the ways the topic of commissary is intertwined in every aspect of inmate life. In his book, *Stone Age Economics* (1974) Sahlins argues that the economic system shapes the social system of small scale societies, especially the domestic groups. Each form of social organization found in prison, cliques, friends, prison families and romantic partners benefits from the informal economic system. Joining or creating social groups is both a strategy to acquire resources on the individual level and a method of perpetuating an established advantageous social therefore material relationship. Balance reciprocity and gift giving within a social organization works to strengthen social ties and allows the flow of goods to benefit group members. As soon reciprocal exchanges become imbalanced conflict occurs, sometimes non-material resources may be used to maintain balance. This is often the case in prison families and

romantic relationships public displays of love or jealousy drama also act as a resource as it brings attention, therefore status to the group.

Each informant knew and recited the slogans “*Commissary is King*” and “*Commissary is Necessary*”. It was even described as vital for survival. Sahlins and Goffman allow me to understand the use of the term “survival” in the context of the informal economy is not literal but relative. The condition of incarceration recodes the term when used in the context of the economic system of a specific culture, in this case the subculture of women’s prison.

This guideline for prison living is supported by the theoretical perspective of symbolic interactionism. Every woman entering prison had to learn two sets of the rules, rituals and regulations of incarceration. The women’s prison in Texas provides an Offender Orientation Handbook to inform women what is expected of them and what constitutes unacceptable behavior. There is no hand book explaining the norms, values and behaviors of the prison world. The socialization process requires each woman to interpret signals, read behavior, recognize what has meaning and value, reshape her idea of “normal” and often reshape her performance of self (Barthes 1957; Scott 2011). Learning how to fit into the social system has a tremendous effect on her quality of life. Observing the social interactions of fellow inmates who are established allow her to recognize that finding an ally, whether in the form of a lover, a child, or a friend is pivotal to her success (Scott 2011). The extent in which she embraces and participates in the prison world can determine whether she does hard time or easy time (Forsythe, Evans, and Foster 2002).

...you can kinda handle the laws (COs), I could handle the laws, once I learn to play the game, there was no problem, I did my thing, they knew, but if you play it cool, they let it slide. It’s those fe-males you gotta watch out for, you got to keep your eye on them ...that’s why I stick to myself
---Cindy

Stories of the She Woman reveal a culture of peer surveillance. Intense scrutiny works to maintain the established social system in which women appear to commit to. Suzie Scott describes this self-imposed social control as *performative regulation*. Performative regulation is a way to describe “the way in which inmates monitor and sanction each other’s behavior by sustaining a shared belief in the institutional reality” (Scott 2011). In the case of women’s prisons the shared belief is “commissary is king”. Women understand that commissary effects one’s quality of life, allows for the cultivation of power, prestige and display of status. This explains the constant preoccupation with the way women interact with each other, peer surveillance keeps the group informed about who is a threat to their supply of commissary, and who is a path to a supply of commissary. New members are appraised carefully in terms of their potential liability or their relative contribution to commonly held resources.

Conclusion

Several months into the interview schedule I realized that there are advantages to focusing on previously incarcerated women rather than those still under state supervision. First, was the lack of surveillance, subjects could speak freely about actions they may have been reluctant to share while locked up. Second, was the length of interviews. In the freeworld interviews are not constrained by the prison schedule or interrupted by count time. Subjects could talk without interruption allowing the conversation to flow organically. Finally, having extended access to the subjects allows for the researcher to see more than one version of each woman. For example, in the case of Cindy, I spent months interviewing the rehabilitated Christian college student version of herself, before I met the version of her she called the old Cindy. The old Cindy had outbursts of rage, so intense her landlord threatened to call the police.

Limitations

Relying on the subjects' recollections of their prison lives, is not without concerns. The memories of incarcerated women and released women can lead to embellishment; to exercising effort to impress the ethnographer, to attempt to find a pitch the subject imagines is the goals of the interviewer therefore distorting their reporting. Self-report might be sanitized or may be painted in especially dark colors.

Perhaps especially with this population the social distance between the ethnographer and subject may seem vast. Stacy, is illiterate, has an extensive criminal record and at the time of our contact, was actively abusing drugs. She consistently referred to me as ma'am and mirrored my language. In an attempt to close the gap I switched registers and began to refer to her as Miss. Stacy (and honorific term of address commonly used in the African American community when speaking to an elder). She responded quickly and the interview became more fluid.

The Significance of this Research

In addition to contributing to the larger body of knowledge, this research could expand the research focus and conversations among many disciplines attention to the lives of incarcerated people in a time of unprecedented incarceration rates. In-depth examination into the informal economy of incarcerated women could begin to fill a gap in the literature. Research into the subjective experiences of incarcerated women could give anthropology an opportunity to expand the discourse of disenfranchised populations like the women I interviewed in this vigorous era of mass incarceration.

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Glossary

Handle your business: taking whatever steps required to accomplish your goals

TDJC: Texas Department of Criminal Justice

MROP: Mentally Retarded Offender Program

MROPS: An inmate in the Mentally Retarded Offender Program

OT: Occupational Therapy

Passing/Pass: (Also referred to as trafficking and trading) physically handing or transferring by another means any item from one individual to another without the consent of an officer, this especially commissary

Trafficking and Trading: (also referred to as passing) physically or transferring by another means any item from one individual to another without the consent of and officer

Case: (disciplinary case) a formally reported infraction resulting in a various

Kite: a note or letter

Front/Fronted: The distribution of an item or items after negotiating repayment sometimes with the expectation of interest

Count time: The ritual of counting each and every inmate a minimum of 3 times in a 24 hour period. Count time works to assure all inmates are accounted for

Contraband: any item in the possession of an inmate contrary to the rules and regulation. Contraband is organized into three levels divided into 3 levels, dangerous (ex: weapons or chemicals), non-dangerous (ex: anything altered, damaged, or forbidden such as a t-shirt with the sleeves removed, broken shower shoes or paper without an inmate's number written on it) and documentary (ex: documents not acquired through authorized channels such as magazines without a visible name and address)

CO/ COs: Correctional officer, an employee of the criminal justice. Duties include counting, observing and escorting inmates. Additional duties include observing, counting, and escorting inmates. Additional duties include maintain secure environment, conducting pat down and strip searches, and checking dorms or cells for contraband.

Jumped: assaulted

To fold: allowing yourself to be assaulted without fighting back, it is usually achieved by curling on the floor in a ball. Folding is the only way to avoid receiving a case or disciplinary action in the event of a physical confrontation

Putting your business out for the world to see: using little to no discretion, in personal matters including conspicuous displays of resources, social status, and romantic issues

The mess: anything that may cause trouble emerging from a source other than one's person life (i.e., hustles, conflict, illegal actions, social drama among inmates and/or staff, gossip and rumors)

Messy: someone who deliberately observes and inquires and gossips about activities unrelated to their own personal life

Hustle: a job, scheme, method, plan, or strategy meant to acquire or access material wants and needs. A hustle may or may not involve unscrupulous tactics

Running game: manipulating

Falling off: corresponding by mail with less frequently until all contact ceases. This often occurs as the released individual becomes fully distracted by their freeworld life

Offender: (inmate) one who has been convicted of crime, replaced the term convict

[Doing] hard time: serving a sentence with little stimulation or distraction resulting in higher degree of emotional distress, hard time maybe unconsciously self-imposed especially for newly incarcerated individuals.

Pull chain: transfer from jail to prison (or from one prison unit to another) with a group of inmates

Steady money: having reliable access to funds for commissary purchases. Steady money is comparable to middle class

Hungry: desiring commissary food

Stepping out: being emotional and sexually unfaithful to one's romantic partner

Rec: the time allotted for recreation

Gay for the stay: participating in a same-sex relationship (with or without sexual relations) when segregated from the opposite sex

Run something: having power or control over something

Little Boi: a woman whose presentation of self is that of youthful androgyny or masculinity

Walking hard: a form of locomotion usually used by young African American men meant to convey self-confidence and masculinity

Stud broad: a masculine presenting lesbian

Segregation: the condition of being housed in a cell usually as disciplinary action

Spread: a large meal shared among a group (usually 3 or more). Each member contributes something, unless they are poor, in which case the other members provide

Stepping out: being unfaithful in a monogamous relationship

The laws: correctional officer

Big money: Rich. Is able to spend as much money on commissary and blue slip items as permitted by the institution and to pay for goods and services through the informal economy

Money goes long: Rich. Is able to spend as much money on commissary and blue slip items as permitted by the institution and to pay for goods and services through the informal economy

Survival: being able to acquire at the very least hygiene

Big time: long prison sentences

Washers: individuals who earn commissary by washing and drying clothing

Call someone out: to make a public accusation

Players: a flirt, someone who makes romantic and sexual overtures to gain access to commissary from women who hope to be in a relationship, usually a little boi

Hustlers: a prostitute or someone who seduces women to gain access to commissary (sex may or may not occur)

Commissary whore: one who receives commissary from more than one girlfriend at the same time, usually a little boi

Lookout: someone who warns those committing illegal activities that COs are coming, lookouts are often paid and are closely affiliated with those committing the illegal activities

Running store: a service of providing commissary (primarily food) in between commissary days with the expectation of returning the same item plus a previously negotiated interest fee

Commissary day: the day inmates go to commissary, it is scheduled once a week and organized by dorms

Cozying up: pushing in on someone in the guise as a concerned friend

Trifling: dirty, unclean, poor hygiene or untrustworthy, nosy, trouble maker, a liar

Not real: fake, untrustworthy, insincere especially in the context of a romantic relationship

Freeworld: the world outside of prison, is used as a noun and an adjective

UNIT COMMISSARY PRICE LIST

Assorted Drinks

Cool Off 20pack only	\$ 1.25
Tea, box only	\$ 2.50
Name Brand Soda	\$ 0.40
Bottled Water	\$ 0.20
Hot Chocolate Bag	\$ 2.40
Columbian Coffee	\$ 2.75
Plantation Coffee	\$ 1.30
Cappuccino	\$ 0.25
V-8 Reg/Spicy	\$ 0.85
Grapefruit	\$ 0.60
Orange Pineapple Juice	\$ 0.60
Orange Juice	\$ 0.60
Kiwi Straw. Juice	\$ 0.60
Generic Sodas	\$ 0.25
Vault Soda	\$ 0.40

Chips & Snacks

Lg. Corn Chips	\$ 1.60
Tortilla Chips	\$ 1.50
Chips/cheese/nacho/plain	\$ 0.55
Party Mix	\$ 1.30
Pork Skins	\$ 0.65
Cheese Popcorn	\$ 0.80
Tom's Salsa Verde Chip	\$ 1.25
Jalapeno or BBQ Chip	\$ 1.40
Hot Fries	\$ 0.25
Cracker Sandwich prib/che	\$ 0.15
Saltines	\$ 0.27
Honey Grahams	\$ 1.75
Round or Club Crackers	\$ 1.75
Baked Potato Chip	\$ 1.50
Cheese Nips Box	\$ 2.10
Peanuts Salted or Hot	\$ 0.40
Caramel Corn/Fiddle Faddle	\$ 1.00
Cheese Puffs	\$ 1.55
Sunflower Seeds	\$ 1.70
Caribbean Crunch	\$ 0.90
Energizer Trail Mix	\$ 0.40

Ice Cream

Pints Regular/No-Sugar	\$ 1.75
Fudge Bomb	\$ 0.40
Nutzo	\$ 0.35
Crunch Bar	\$ 0.40

Candys

Tootsie Pops 5pk	\$ 0.60
Chick-O-Stick	\$ 0.12
Butterscotch Candy	\$ 0.75
Fruitylicious hard candy	\$ 1.00
Mint Sticks Reg/Fruit.	\$ 0.10
Candy Bars	\$ 0.55
Pasquel Candy	\$ 1.60
Hot Shots	\$ 1.00
Peanut Butter logs	\$ 0.80
Orange Slices	\$ 0.75

Meat Product Pouches

Sardines Smoke/Hot	\$ 0.65
Beef Pot Roast	\$ 1.00
Chili with Beans	\$ 1.00
Chili no Beans	\$ 1.05
Tuna	\$ 1.15
Mackerel	\$ 0.75
Spam Regular	\$ 1.00
Vienna Sausage Chicken	\$ 1.20
Beef Tips	\$ 2.75
BBQ Shredded Beef	\$ 2.50

Dressings

Salad Dressing	\$ 1.40
Sandwich Spread	\$ 1.55
Mustard	\$ 1.10
Ketchup	\$ 1.55
BBQ Sauce	\$ 1.30
Strawberry Pres.	\$ 1.65
Grape Jelly	\$ 1.40
Peanut Butter	\$ 1.85

Condiments

Bean Dip	\$ 0.75
Sweet Magic	\$ 0.95
Powdered Milk	\$ 1.00
Jalapenos	\$ 0.20
Pickles or Hot Pickles	\$ 0.60
Hot Sauce Reg/Jal/Habane	\$ 0.60
Squeeze Cheese Jalapeno	\$ 2.10
Salsa-Medium 15oz	\$ 2.40
Chili Con Queso 15oz	\$ 2.40
Salt & Pepper	\$ 1.50
Butter	\$ 1.60

Dry Goods

Ramon Soups	\$0.25
Rice	\$0.95
Oatmeal -Inst. Varitey	\$1.60
Refried Beans pouch	\$0.95
Potatoes,chs,herb	\$0.95
Frosted Mini Wheats	\$2.50

Cookies

Dutch Made CC/macm	\$0.95
Cookies of the Week	\$1.00
Vanilla Wafer	\$1.30
Oatmeal Creams	\$1.40
Nutty Wafer Bar	\$1.25
Moon Pies	\$0.35
Cereal Bars 12pack	\$2.55
Fig Bar (New)	\$0.25

Bread & Pastries

Bread	\$1.40
Wheat Bread	\$1.40
Pastries	\$0.65
Flour Tortillas	\$0.70

Grooming

Shave Soap	\$0.30
After shave Lotíon	\$0.50
Hair Brush	\$0.55
Petroleum Jelly	\$0.75
Brushless Shave 5oz	\$0.50
Baby Oil	\$0.50
Baby Powder	\$0.65
Medicated Powder	\$1.70
Amerifresh Conditioner	\$0.90
Cocca Butter Lotion	\$0.95
Hair Food Amerifresh	\$1.00
Hair Pomade	\$1.00
Ultimate Hold Gel	\$1.25
Anti-Fungal Foot Powder	\$0.75
Med. Cream	\$0.95
Ambi Cream	\$4.65
Blue Magic	\$2.45
Aloe Vera Cream	\$1.05
Magic Shave	\$3.70

Miscellaneous

Chap-et	\$ 0.70
Lip-ex Medicated	\$ 0.55
Cough Drops	\$ 0.80
Q-Tips	\$ 0.55
Commissary Bag	\$ 2.50
Lg. Bowl	\$ 0.80
Mug	\$ 0.95
Detergent	\$ 1.95
Spoon	\$ 0.35
Soap Dish	\$ 0.35
Photo Album	\$ 1.65
Lock	\$10.50
Legal Wallet	\$ 1.00
Reading Glasses	\$ 2.85
I.D. Holder w/clip	\$ 0.40
Dominoes	\$ 5.25
Chess Set	\$ 7.75
Nail Clippers	\$ 0.25
Shaving Mirror	\$ 7.00
Ear Plugs	\$ 0.15
Flossers	\$ 1.20
Mouthwash	\$ 1.10
Razors	\$ 2.20

RAZORS can not be sold to Ad-Seg.Offenders

Vitamins

Amino Protein	\$ 4.00
Daily W/Iron	\$ 1.80
Vitamin C	\$ 1.75
Vitamin E	\$ 2.15
Calcium	\$ 2.75
Whey Protein Pwd	\$ 0.60
Vita-Milk Thistle	\$ 2.55
Omega 3	\$ 4.90
Garlic	\$ 2.65

HOLIDAY ITEMS

Summer Sausage	\$ 1.25
Holiday Prib, mix only	\$ 0.35
Choc. Covered Nuts	\$1.00
Regal Grahams	\$ 1.35

***Correspondence**

Legal Pad	\$ 1.15
Typing Paper	\$ 0.55
Carbon Paper 10pg	\$ 1.15
Stick Pens	\$ 0.25
Envelopes Plain	\$ 0.02
Stamped Envelopes	\$ 0.45
Stamps (Limit 30)	\$0.42 ⁴⁴
Stamps .03cent	\$ 0.03
Eraser	\$ 0.35
Writ Envelopes	\$ 0.50
Dictionary Eng& Sp	\$ 6.50

**** Hygiene**

Amerifresh Shampoo	\$ 0.85
Dandruff Shampoo	\$ 1.00
Baby Shampoo	\$ 1.15
Speed Stick antipers.	\$ 1.85
Speed Stick deod.	\$ 1.85
Shower Scuffs Lrg	\$ 1.50
Shower Scuffs XLrg	\$ 1.50
Oraline Toothpaste	\$ 1.35
Colgate W/Baking	\$ 2.00
Toothpaste-Sensitive	\$ 1.20
Toothbrush	\$ 0.35
Efferdent Dent Clean	\$ 7.85
Effergrip Adhesive	\$ 4.30
Bar Soap	\$ 0.10
Fixodent	\$ 4.25
Toilet Paper	\$ 0.55
Combs	\$ 0.20

Shoes

Work Boots	\$ 17.50 B
Riddell tennis shoes	\$ 31.95 B
Boot lace. Brown	\$ 0.80
Shoe Lace white	\$ 0.50

Electrical

9" Fan Whirlwind	\$ 22.00
Typewriter Clear Tech	\$ 99.85
Night Light	\$ 15.00
Radio	????
(Headphones	\$5.50
No Warranty)	

Coffee Pot w/insert	\$ 21.00
Clock Battery opp.	\$ 4.75
Battery for clock, AA	\$ 0.30
Coax Cable 36"	\$ 1.60
Transformer	\$ 2.15
Light Bulb	\$ 0.70
GED Calculator	\$ 10.75
Dipole Antenna	\$ 1.60
Multi Plug (blue Slip)	\$ 7.20
Analog Watch	\$ 10.85

Medications

DMS Cough	\$ 0.70
Chlorphen-Anthist Bx	\$ 1.44
Aspirin Bx	\$ 1.20
Alamag Anti-Acid Bx	\$ 1.80
Hemorrhoid Ointment	\$ 1.05
Triple Ointment	\$ 1.60
Sunscreen SPF30	\$ 1.40
Ibuprofen	\$ 1.20
Laxative	\$ 1.35
Non-Aspirin(Tylenol)Bx	\$ 2.50
Cortisone Cream	\$ 1.80
Pain Relief Lotion	\$ 4.60
Nasal Spray	\$ 0.85
Eye Drops	\$ 1.70

If you or someone you know is being extorted contact the Extortion Office.

You must write your name and TDC number on every stamp and envelope within 1 hour of purchase or it can be confiscated!

Art Supplies

Water Color Pad	\$ 5.35
B Colored Pencils	\$1.05
B Water Colors	\$ 1.20
B Jumbo Env. 16x20	\$ 0.70
B Illustration Board 2pk	\$ 3.85
Drawing Pad	\$ 1.00
Prctractor	\$ 0.35

B non-restricted correspondence	
B Pencil Sharpener	\$ 0.50
Pencils	\$ 0.15
Cards TOY/Love/B-day	\$ 0.40

Typing Supplies

Olympia Ribbon 813	\$ 1.95
Olympia lift-off 823	\$ 0.40
B Ribbon SC H Series	\$ 3.40

Clothing

LG & XL T-Shirt	\$ 4.45
3x & 5X ea T-Shirt	\$ 4.45
Wash Cloths	\$ 0.40
Handkerchief	\$ 0.45
Socks (one pair)	\$ 0.70
Gym shorts XLG	\$ 4.75
Gym Shorts 2X	\$ 4.75
Gym Shorts 3X & 4X	\$ 5.25
Thermal Shirt 1x-3x	\$ 6.50
Thermal Pant 1X	\$ 4.25
Thermal Pant 2X	\$ 4.50
Thermal Pant 3X	\$ 4.75

Procedures

Two completed lists (SO-7) required in blue or black ink. If a sub is wanted indicate it on both slips. We will sub like items if available.

Commissary Slips must be filled out before coming into the Commissary area. Only adjustment are to be made at that time.

ALL SALES ARE FINAL

Blue Slips-Can be transferred upon 1-80 notification of your move (this unit only)

All Purchases will be made on one trip including special and medication.

Commissary Restrictions****Hygiene Restricted Items:**

1 Toothbrush, 1 Shower shoes
1 Deodorant, 1 Shampoo, 1 Toothpaste,
1 Toilet Tissue, 5 bars of Soap, 1 Comb

***Correspondence Restricted Items:**

Limited to \$20.00. Listed under correspondence

Level 2 and 3 Ad-Seg Offenders Restricted to :

(\$ 10.00) of items listed under *Correspondence.

And are Restricted to a Hygiene spend every 13 days. No matter how it falls in the spend.

Are restricted from purchasing Gym Shorts.

Commissary orders to be delivered must be

picked up by 0545 on day scheduled.

Seg and Close custody must send in any item for warranty inspection with their I.D. card, property slip on their store day.

ATTN: Fans are an emergency item

and can be purchased by any Offender

regardless of Level or Restriction W/ Blue Slip

ANY ITEM BELOW \$25.00 COMES OFF REGULAR SPEND.

NOTE: "B" denotes item that must be Blue Slip

